

Characterization

Characterization, an effect of point of view and narrative perspective, is the process by which a writer reveals the personality of a character, making that character seem real to the reader. Authors have two major methods of presenting characters: telling (**direct characterization**) and showing (**indirect characterization**). In **direct characterization**, the author intervenes to describe and sometimes evaluate the character for the reader. For example, the narrator may tell the reader directly what the character's personality is like: humble, ambitious, vain, gullible, etc. **Indirect characterization** allows the author to present a character talking and acting and lets the reader infer what kind of person the character is. There are five different ways that a writer may provide indirect characterization:

1. by describing how the character looks and dresses,
2. by allowing the reader to hear the character speak,
3. by revealing the character's private thoughts and feelings,
4. by portraying the character's effect on other individuals—showing how other characters feel or behave toward the character, and
5. by presenting the character's actions.

Characters can be convincing whether they are presented by showing or by telling, as long as their actions are motivated. Motivated action by the characters occurs when the reader or audience is offered reasons for how the characters behave, what they say, and the decisions they make. Plausible action is action by a character in a story that seems reasonable, given the motivations presented.