

Short Stories

Character

A character is a person in a text such as a book, play or film. Philemon is the most important character in 'The Suit' and in this lesson will look at how his character develops and changes as the story progresses.

 Lesson Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- define character
- discuss how the author creates character

 Curriculum Links

LO 2: Reading and Viewing

- explain development of plot, subplot, conflict, character, and role of narrator where relevant
- explain mood, time-line, ironic twists and conclusions

 Lesson notes

Notes about character	An example from 'The Suit'
There are usually very few characters in a short story as the author does not have the time or the space to develop a lot of characters. There is usually one main character (the protagonist) and a few other characters. The focus is on the main character and the other characters are important only in so far as they have an effect on the thoughts, action and behaviour of the main character.	In 'The Suit', Philemon is the main character and Matilda, The Lover, Mr Maphikela and the people who come to the party are the other characters. The story is told mainly from the point of view of Philemon.
Our mental picture of a character is created from what the author tells us about the character's appearance personality and actions. The introduction and build up of a story are a good place to look for information about characters. During the first part of the story, the writer introduces and establishes the characters and situations.	At the start of the story Philemon is happy in his marriage and loves his wife Matilda. He is proud of his home and himself, he has a good job with a lawyer, he is an intellectual who likes to read and he is respected by his friends and his community.
Characters don't necessarily stay the same throughout a story. So look for evidence from later in the story, after the crisis happens to see how characters develop and change.	In 'The Suit' Philemon changes to become a cruel, brutal man who drives Matilda to her death.
Any claim that is made about a character must be supported by evidence from the text. Once you have gathered clues from the whole story, you can put them together to create a picture of the character.	For example, if you wanted to make the point that Philemon's character changes after he finds the suit you could mention that when Philemon makes Matilda take the suit out for a walk and the writer describes his idea as 'malevolent' which means spiteful and mean. Words like 'brute cruelty' also show that Philemon is no longer the same man we saw before, he is transformed into a fierce and wild man who Matilda knows could be violent and dangerous.

 TASK

Write a character sketch for Matilda that describes how her character changes through the story. Remember to support the claims that you make about her character with evidence from the text.