

Tracing character development

You will learn how to:

- explore how character is revealed and developed throughout a text
- use relevant references to support your ideas.

Writers **imply** things about a character through descriptive language. They may also describe the same features in different ways throughout a piece of writing to show how the character changes and develops.

Explore

When a writer introduces a villain into their story, they may not reveal straight away how bad the character is. This makes it more exciting for the reader when they discover the villain's true nature.

- 1 Read the following extract and answer the big five questions.
 - a) What is happening in this extract?
 - b) Who is telling the story?
 - c) Where is the extract set?
 - d) When does Dracula make a move towards his visitor?
 - e) Why might Jonathan be visiting Dracula?
- 2 Think about how the writer introduces the character. What impression do you get of Dracula? Does this change as you read on through the extract?

Extract 1

Within, stood a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere. The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a **courtly** gesture, saying in excellent English, but with a strange intonation: 'Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!' He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed as cold as ice—more like the hand of a dead than a living man.

From *Dracula* by Bram Stoker

Key term

imply: to suggest something, through your choice of words, rather than saying it directly



Vocabulary

courtly: very polite in an old-fashioned, formal and possibly regal way

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- 3 Look at the following quotations from the extract. Which ones make Dracula seem polite and harmless and which ones make him seem strange and creepy?
 - a) 'a tall old man, clean shaven'
 - b) 'clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour'
 - c) 'The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a courtly gesture'
 - d) "'Welcome to my house!'"
 - e) 'holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince'
 - f) 'it seemed as cold as ice—more like the hand of a dead than a living man'
- 4 Using the quotations from Question 3, copy and complete the table below. An example has been given.

Highlight one detail from the quotation (a word, phrase or punctuation mark)	Identify the technique used here	What this detail suggests about Dracula
a) 'a tall old man, clean shaven'		
b) 'clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour'		
c) 'The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a courtly gesture'	adjective	suggests he is being friendly and showing his visitor respect
d) "'Welcome to my house!'"		
e) 'holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince'		
f) 'it seemed as cold as ice—more like the hand of a dead than a living man'		

Writers often focus on specific features of a character's appearance, such as their face, and leave readers to infer what their appearance suggests about that character. When exploring how a character develops, it can be a good idea to track how a particular feature is described, such as movement, facial features or expressions, clothing or speech.

Read the next extract from *Dracula*, looking closely for references to Dracula's facial features.

Extract 2

His face was a strong—a very strong—aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

From *Dracula* by Bram Stoker

- 5 Using details from the extract, make a sketch of Dracula's face. Label your sketch with quotations from the passage. For example, his eyebrows should be 'almost meeting' and 'bushy'.
- 6 Next, look at the labels on your sketch. What different impressions do these descriptions give you of Dracula? Add to your labels to explain what each facial feature suggests about him. For example:

The adjective 'pale' and the noun 'pallor' show that Dracula has skin that is unusually white and bloodless. This could suggest that Dracula is someone who avoids daylight, or that he is ill or dying.

Develop

Read the following extract from later in the novel. Once again, the story is told in the first person from the perspective of a young Englishman called Jonathan Harker who has travelled overseas to visit Dracula on business.

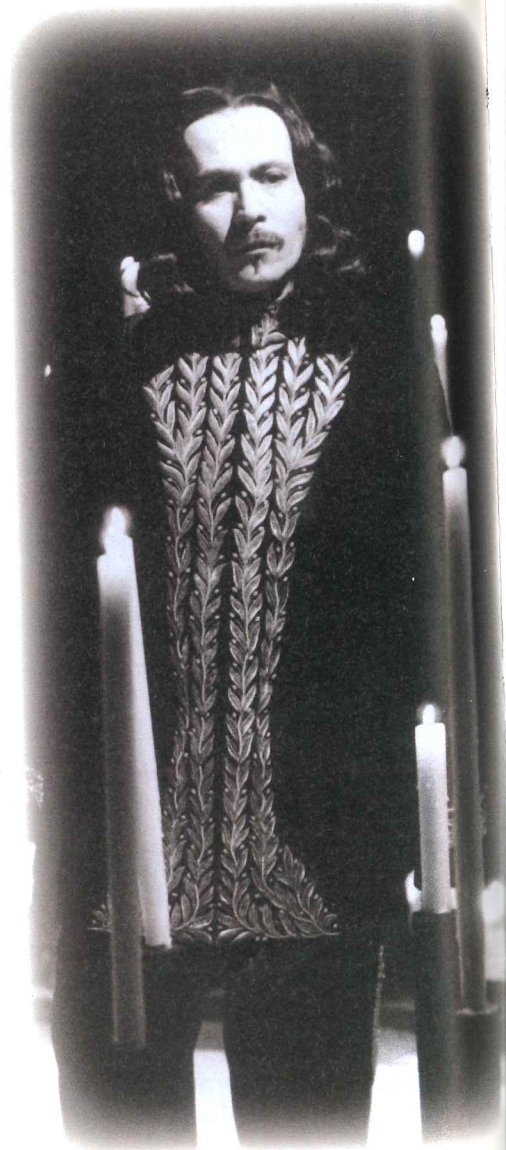
The writer develops the **characterisation** of Dracula after he is angered by a group of women that live under his roof and are his servants.

Vocabulary

aquiline: curved

ruddiness: redness

pallor: pale appearance



Key term

characterisation: the way a character is created and developed by a writer