

Characterization is the process writers use to develop and represent the traits, motives, and psychology of a character in a narrative. It brings fictional beings to life and can be categorized into two primary forms: direct and indirect.

### The Two Main Types of Characterization

- **Direct Characterization:** The narrator explicitly tells the reader about a character's traits (e.g., personality, background, or physical appearance). It is straightforward and leaves little room for ambiguity.
- **Indirect Characterization:** The writer reveals a character's traits through inference. Instead of stating who the character is, the reader discovers their personality through the character's own words, thoughts, actions, appearance, and interactions with others.

### Common Techniques for Indirect Characterization

Authors often use the S.T.E.A.L. method to show, rather than tell, what a character is like:

- **Speech:** What the character says and how they say it.
- **Thoughts:** What the character reveals about their inner mind.
- **Effects on others:** How other characters react to or feel about them.
- **Actions:** What the character does and how they behave.
- **Looks:** The character's physical appearance and clothing.

### Why it Matters

Effective characterization gives a character believable motivations, internal consistency, and an engaging story arc. When used in conjunction, direct and indirect characterization can create complexity and tension—such as when a character's outward claims (direct) contradict their actual behavior (indirect).