

SMART™ Lesson

Analyzing Character Motivations in Literature

Introduction

Characters drive the plot of a story, and their motivations determine why they take certain actions in the story. Understanding character motivations is important because it allows readers to understand the decisions and actions of the characters, and ultimately the overall themes of the story.

Step 1: Understanding Motivation

The first step in analyzing character motivations is understanding what motivation is. In literature, motivation refers to the reason why a character chooses to act in a certain way or make a specific decision. There are two types of motivation:

- **Internal motivation:** This refers to a character's personal beliefs, values, and goals. Internal motivation is often related to themes and morals that are present in the story.
- **External motivation:** This refers to the influence of external factors such as other characters, the environment, or social norms. External motivation is often related to the plot or conflict in the story.

Step 2: Identifying Motivations

Once you have a general understanding of motivation, the next step is to identify the specific motivations of the characters in the story. Here are some questions to consider:

- What does the character want?
- What is the character's goal or objective?
- What are the character's fears or anxieties?
- What do other characters think of the character?
- What is the character's relationship with other characters?
- What societal or cultural norms influence the character's decisions?

Step 3: analyzing Motivations

Once you have identified the motivations of the characters, the final step is to analyze them. Here are some questions to consider:

- How do the character's motivations drive the plot of the story?

- What themes or morals are present in the story that are related to the character's motivations?
- How do the character's motivations affect the other characters in the story?
- How do the character's motivations change over time?
- What are the consequences of the character's motivations?

Worksheet Questions

1. What is motivation in literature?
2. What are the two types of motivation?
3. What is the first step in analyzing character motivations?
4. What are some questions to consider when identifying a character's motivations?
5. What are some questions to consider when analyzing a character's motivations?
6. How does understanding character motivations help a reader understand a story?

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