

SMART™ Lesson

Mystery and Suspense: Analyzing Character Development

When we read a mystery or suspense story, we are often drawn to the characters in the story. As we read, we begin to understand the characters more deeply as their personalities and behaviors are revealed through the unfolding of the plot.

What is Character Development?

Character development refers to the way in which an author creates and develops the personalities of the characters in a story. This can include describing their physical appearance, their thoughts and feelings, and how they interact with others in the story.

The development of characters in a mystery or suspense story is particularly important because we need to understand the motives and actions of the characters in order to solve the mystery or experience the suspense.

Types of Characters

There are several types of characters that you might encounter in a mystery or suspense story:

- **Protagonist:** the main character who is trying to solve the mystery or stop the suspenseful event from happening
- **Antagonist:** the character or force that is creating the mystery or suspenseful situation
- **Suspect:** a character who is believed to have committed the crime or caused the mysterious situation
- **Red herring:** a character who is introduced to mislead the reader away from the true suspect or solution

Questions for Analyzing Character Development

As you read a mystery or suspense story, ask yourself the following questions to help analyze the development of the characters:

- How does the author describe the physical appearance of the character?
- What does the character say and do?
- How does the character interact with other characters in the story?
- What are the character's motives and goals?
- How does the character change or develop throughout the story?

- What role does the character play in the plot?

Worksheet Questions

1. What is character development?
2. Why is character development important in a mystery or suspense story?
3. Name and describe the four types of characters that you might find in a mystery or suspense story.
4. What are some questions that you can ask to analyze the development of a character?
5. Choose a character from a mystery or suspense story that you have read. Describe how the author develops this character throughout the story.

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