Characterization Definition

Characterization is a literary device that is used step-by-step in literature to highlight and explain the details about a character in a story. It is in the initial stage in which the writer introduces the character with noticeable emergence. After introducing the character, the writer often talks about his behavior; then, as the story progresses, the thought-processes of the character.

The next stage involves the character expressing his opinions and ideas, and getting into conversations with the rest of the characters. The final part shows how others in the story respond to the character's personality.

Characterization as a literary tool was coined in the mid 15th century. Aristotle in his Poetics argued that "tragedy is a representation, not of men, but of action and life." Thus the assertion of the dominance of plot over characters, termed "plot-driven narrative," is unmistakable. This point of view was later abandoned by many because, in the 19th century, the dominance of character over plot became clear through petty bourgeois novels.

Types of Characterization

An author can use two approaches to deliver information about a character and build an image of it. These two types of characterization include:

1. **Direct or explicit characterization**

This kind of characterization takes a direct approach towards building the character. It uses another character, narrator, or the protagonist himself to tell the readers or audience about the subject.

2. **Indirect or implicit characterization**

This is a more subtle way of introducing the character to the audience. The audience has to deduce for themselves the characteristics of the character by observing his/her thought process, behavior, speech, way of talking, appearance, and manner of communication with other characters, as well as by discerning the response of other characters.

Characterization: describe the characters listed below.

1. **Madame Loisel:**

    Direct characterization:

    Indirect characterization:

2. **Madame Forstier:**

    Direct characterization:

    Indirect characterization:

3. **Monsieur Loisel:**

    Direct characterization:

    Indirect characterization: