

What is Direct and Indirect Characterization?

If the writer, in order to reveal the personality of a character, directly tells the readers his mental or physical traits, it is known as direct characterization. However, if the writer, instead of directly telling what the character is all about, wants his readers to use their imagination and read in between the lines, if he wants them to make their own opinion about the character, by looking at the way the character speaks, thinks, acts and looks or how the other characters react to him, it is known as indirect characterization. Thus, direct characterization is about "telling" the readers while indirect characterization is about "showing" the readers, about the personality of the characters. Given below are some direct and indirect characterization examples, to make the difference between the two clearer.

Direct Characterization Example # 1

Jane was a beautiful young girl. She had golden hair and blue eyes, which made her stand out from the rest.

Indirect Characterization Example # 1

When Jane walked in the room, nobody could help but look at her stunning, gorgeous face. She commanded attention wherever she went due to her good looks.

Direct Characterization Example # 2

Jim was an honest man. He never cheated anybody in his entire life.

Indirect Characterization Example # 2

Jim was very unlike any other businessman. He made sure that all his clients got what they had paid for.

Direct Characterization Example # 3

Linda was a strong woman who lived her entire life on her own terms, without compromising and without ever being apologetic for anything.

Indirect Characterization Example # 3

You would not expect Linda to do what other women would normally do. When she was eighteen, she ran away from home and got married to a thirty-nine year old painter. The marriage however did not last long. At the end of one year, Linda was left with a two-month child and a divorce. This did not kill Linda's spirit though. She soon moved to the city and got herself a job as a dancer at the newly opened Evans theater.

Direct Characterization Example # 4

John cared a lot for the well-being of others. There was an old couple living alone near his house. John used to buy weekly groceries for them and even check on them everyday, just to see how they are doing.

Indirect Characterization Example # 4

An old couple living near John's house considered him just like their own son. John did all that for them what even a son these days won't do. He would shop for them, get them things and say hello everyday.

