Lesson 2: Creating Characters

Jacqueline's TOP TIP

2 How to create characters

I think the most important part of writing a story is getting to know your characters and making them seem real. Did you ever have imaginary friends when you were little? It's a similar process. Hold conversations with your characters in your head. Don't just think about their looks, though I always like to give some idea what sort of hairstyle my girls have, and what sort of clothes they wear. But mostly I care what they're like inside. Are they happy, sad, shy, cheeky, funny, naughty? What are their hobbies? What are their favourite television programmes? What's their favourite food? Do they like school? What's their best subject? How do they get on with their mum or dad and siblings? Do they have a best friend? Do they want a best friend?

Think it all through, jot things down. You probably won't need to put half these things in your story but somehow it will help bring your characters alive on the page.

### SMALL GROUP WARM-UP: FREEZE FRAME

To get pupils into the right frame of mind for creating their own characters, encourage them to think about their own personality traits, for example: are they brave, bold, kind, funny, intelligent, positive, eccentric?

Ask pupils to choose one trait and to create their own freeze-frames representing the trait.

Choose a pupil to come to the front and share his or her freeze-frame with the class. All of the other pupils should write a list of key words or even a short sentence describing what they can see.

Can pupils guess and describe each other's personality traits?
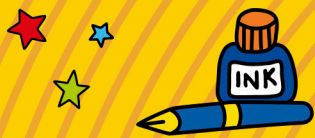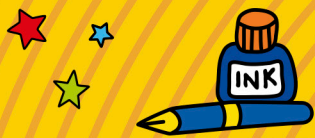
CREATIVE ACTIVITY 1: 3D CHARACTERS

Jacqueline Wilson explains how she doesn't just think about characters' looks and what sort of clothes they wear. Mostly, she cares about what they're like inside. She creates three-dimensional characters!

⭐ Imagine a really famous person is making a big speech for an award that they've just won – for example, a famous actress at the Oscar or a football manager after winning a match.

⭐ Draw an outline of a human body. Around the outside of the body, write down words to describe how the famous person appears to others when he/she accepts their award. How does this person come across to the public?

⭐ Write down a description of the famous person using all of the words on the outside of the body. Consider the way he/she looks, their body language, their facial expressions and the way they speak.

⭐ Inside the body, write down the emotions that the famous person might really be feeling. Use your imaginations!

⭐ Then, write an interior monologue of the person using all of the words on the inside of the body.

⭐ Consider how different these two pieces of writing are. Why is it important to present both the inside and the outside of a character?

Interior Monologue: *An interior monologue is the expression of a character's thoughts, feelings, and impressions in a narrative.*

CREATIVE ACTIVITY 2: CHARACTER WHEELS

⭐ Now, use your famous person to base a character on for a piece of writing – but **remember not to reveal his or her full name**!

⭐ Write a biography for your character, including their qualities and their flaws.
   Use the character wheel templates at the back of the pack to help you!

⭐ When writers build characters, they have to make sure that all of the elements of the character wheel are covered in detail. In order to achieve this detail, it might be helpful to create further wheels for each of the categories. For example, look at the next wheel below for 'character qualities/flaws'. Can you use it to go into more detail when describing yourself or your imagined character?

⭐ Add some segments to the Qualities/Flaws Wheel. Alternatively, create a new wheel for one of the other categories from the first Character Wheel. Go into as much detail as possible about your character – the more the better! Once you've created a few wheels, use them to write a paragraph describing your character.
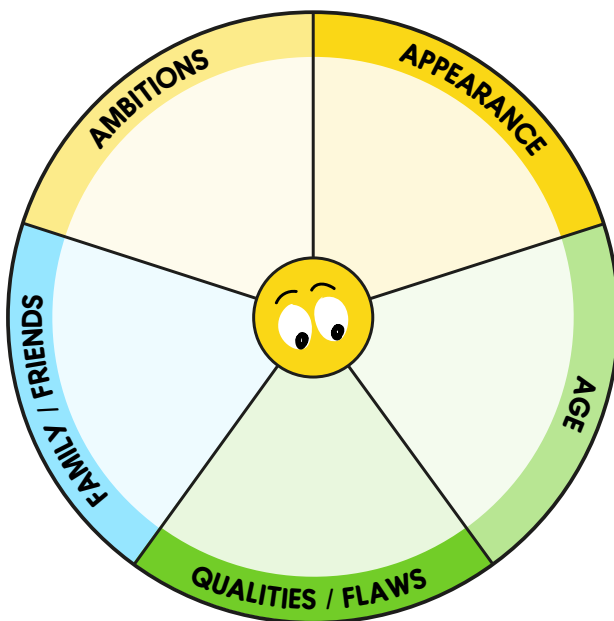
Character wheel 1
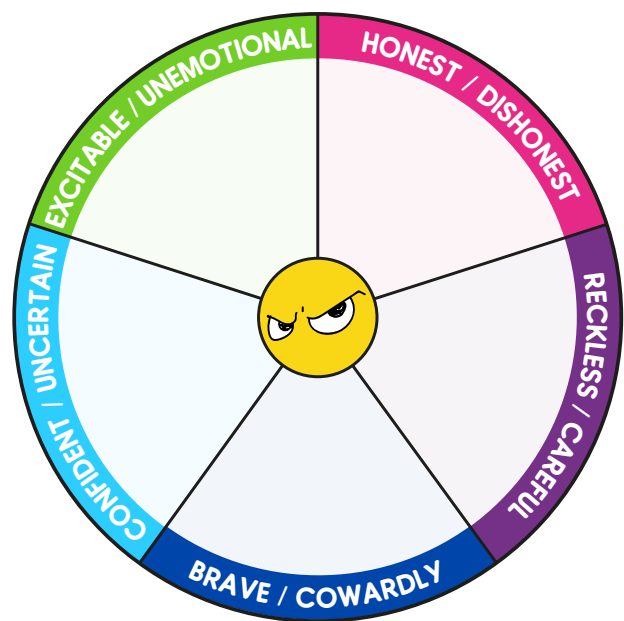
Character wheel 2 – character qualities/flaws

⭐ Use the large character wheel templates at the back of the pack ⭐