

How to Craft a Vivid Character?

S.T.E.A.L — the 5 elements of indirect characterisation

Your creative writing teacher has given your class the following task and she would like you to use it to write a short story. The stories will be displayed in school during *Creativity in Learning Week*.

You were walking by the Peninsula Hotel in Tsim Sha Tsui when you spotted your brother driving an expensive sports car. The last time you spoke to him, he was looking for a job.

Write a story about how you found out the truth.

Writing topic taken from Paper 2 of the 2012 HKDSE English Language Examination ©HKEAA



Speech

What does the character say? How does a character speak to other characters?

My anger and curiosity got the better of me. I confronted my brother bluntly, “How can a jobless man afford such a luxurious car? Where did you get the money?”

Thought

What is revealed through the character’s thoughts and beliefs?

Did he win the lottery and become rich overnight? Did he borrow money from his friends? My mind was filled with question marks and I figured out the simplest way to find out the answer was to ask him.

Effect on others

How does the character treat others? How do other characters interact with the character?

My brother was speechless for a moment, but he then burst into laughter, laughing so uncontrollably that he had to hold his stomach. “I’m just hired as a part-time actor,” he explained, “and you are more imaginative than my director!”

Action

What does the character do? How does the character behave?

Thinking about the illegal things my brother might have done to get the money, I stomped my feet and clenched my fists so tightly that my thumbs hurt.

Look

How does the character dress? What does the character look like?

My brother’s hair was slicked back with gel, looking as sleek and smooth as an egg tart, while mine was as messy and wiry as a broom. Looking at my brother’s glamorous designer suit, I couldn’t help feeling pathetic wearing a fake branded T-shirt.