

# Analyzing Character Development

Theme: *Recognizing Potential*

What makes the characters in a story seem real? It’s all in the details. Authors can describe the characters’ **attitudes**, or how they think, act, and feel. They can also describe the characters’ **motivations**, or the reasons for their actions.

Often, a character’s attitude and motivation change during a story. As the story unfolds, readers learn more about a character based on how that person responds to events.

**Study the cartoon. For each panel, think about what the boy does and why he does it.**



**Complete the chart below, based on details you can see in the cartoon above.**

What the Boy Does	Why He Does It	What This Shows About Him
He takes an ice-cream cone from a little girl.	He might think it is funny.	He is not always kind; he likes to play jokes.
He hesitates when the girl becomes very upset.	He wonders if his joke was such a good idea.	
He gives the ice-cream cone back to the girl.		

**Describe how the boy seems to change over time.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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Characters in stories often change in response to events. If this sounds familiar, it should. It’s one of the ways in which authors make their stories similar to real life.



Read the first part of a story about a girl named Rosalyn.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

### Lost! *by Janelle Aaker*

“Peanut!!” Rosalyn yelled hoarsely for the fiftieth time as panic surged through her veins. How often had Gram said, “Ros, without you and Peanut, I’d be lost”? Well, now yappy, pampered little Peanut *was* lost.

“I was so distracted by my texting that I dropped his leash,” Rosalyn groaned. “How can I face Gram?”

“Peanut!!” Rosalyn hollered into the woods. “I have to be careful or I’ll get lost, too,” she worried. “I need . . . a *map*.” Rosalyn darted back to Gram’s house, returning moments later with a pencil and paper.

*10 steps—tree*, she scribbled and illustrated. “Peanut!” Then, *12 left—bush*. “Pea—!”

“Yap,” Peanut barked as Rosalyn finally saw him, his leash tangled in branches and his paws flailing. Rosalyn nearly shed tears of joy.

*(continued)*

**Explore how to answer this question:** “Based on her responses to events, what kind of person is Rosalyn? Support your response with details from the story.”

To answer this question, pay attention to what Rosalyn’s responses to story events say about her.

**Complete the chart to show how Rosalyn responds to events. Consider what character trait each response reveals.**

What Happens	How Rosalyn Responds
Peanut gets lost.	Rosalyn is upset because Gram loves Peanut.
Rosalyn worries about getting lost, too.	
Rosalyn sees Peanut.	

**Describe Rosalyn’s character. Use details from the story and the chart to support your answer.**

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### Close Reading

At first, Rosalyn thinks of the dog as “yappy, pampered little Peanut.” **Underline** the sentence on this page that shows how her attitude toward Peanut has changed.

### Hint

What conclusion does Rosalyn reach at the end of the story?

**Continue reading about Rosalyn and Peanut. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.**

*(continued from page 62)*

“Oh! Peanut!” Relief flooded over Rosalyn as she rushed toward the distressed dog. “I’ve never been so happy to see anyone!” She untangled the leash and embraced the disgruntled animal. Then, referring to her map, Rosalyn retraced her steps and escorted Peanut home.

Later, when Gram returned home, Rosalyn confessed everything. “I’m sorry,” she concluded, “I’d be lost without you—and Peanut.”

**Circle the correct answer.**

Why does Rosalyn’s attitude toward Peanut change?

- A** Losing Peanut makes Rosalyn realize how important the dog is to both her and Gram.
- B** Rosalyn is sure she’ll get into trouble for texting instead of watching Peanut.
- C** Rosalyn’s fear of getting lost in the woods makes her understand how Peanut feels.
- D** Rosalyn is grateful to Peanut for giving her the chance to become a better person.



### Show Your Thinking

Look at the answer that you chose above. Write down at least two details from the story that helped you identify your answer.

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With a partner, compare and contrast Rosalyn’s character at the beginning and end of the story.





Read the drama. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.

Genre: Drama



Yu does not stay the same throughout the play. To help me analyze his growth, I'm going to underline clues from the play that show how his character develops.

### Close Reading

What a character says reveals details about him or her. **Circle** particular words Yu says that show what he thinks about hiking at the play's start.

At what point in the play does Yu's attitude about hiking change? **Draw a box** around the line that shows the shift in his feelings.

## Reaching the Top *by Ken Ruble*

- 1 YU [*breathlessly*]: Just how much farther is it, Lian?
- 2 LIAN: The top is just around the bend—won't be long now!
- 3 YU: That's what you said an eternity ago! Are you sure?
- 4 LIAN: Dad and I hiked this trail three times last month.
- 5 YU: Seeing the same old rocks sounds as fascinating as watching a turnip grow. Where exactly are we going again?
- 6 LIAN: You're beyond hopeless, Yu. We're on the Kinsman Ridge Trail now, heading to the summit of Cannon Mountain, about 4,080 feet above sea level.
- 7 YU: More like 4,080 blisters above sea level. Would it really have been so horrible to have taken the aerial tramway?
- 8 LIAN: That would be so—anti-climactic! It'll be worth it, I swear—there's nothing quite like that magnificent view.
- 9 YU [*muttering*]: Tramways are an excellent form of transportation—nice comfy seats, no shooting foot pain . . .
- 10 LIAN [*exclaiming from out of sight*]: Oh, Yu! Come see!
- 11 [YU *glumly trudges up the trail to join LIAN at the summit, which affords a miles-long view of the White Mountains.*]
- 12 YU [*breathless with awe, not exhaustion*]: Wooooow! This is so not what I expected—we're on top of the world! Look at that giant one over there—can we climb that, too?
- 13 LIAN: Climb a mountain? Oh, that would be too *difficult*.
- 14 YU [*earnestly*]: No, we could do it. It would be *worth* it.



### Hints

Why does Yu mention the tram more than once?

Which choice suggests that Yu would like the hike to be over?

What experience causes Yu to change his mind about hiking? What does the hike teach him?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 How does Yu feel about climbing up Cannon Mountain before he reaches the top?
  - A He is fascinated by the beauty of the rocks.
  - B He is happy to be hiking the trail again.
  - C He is troubled by the difficulty of the hike.
  - D He is frustrated by how slowly Lian walks.
  
- 2 Which sentence from the passage best supports the answer to question 1?
  - A "Just how much farther is it, Lian?"
  - B "Where exactly are we going again?"
  - C "This is so not what I expected—we're on top of the world!"
  - D "It would be *worth* it."
  
- 3 How and why does Yu change during the play? Include your ideas about how Yu responds to events as they unfold.

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Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

## from “Departure”

by Sherwood Anderson

1 All through his boyhood and young manhood George Willard had been in the habit of walking on Trunion Pike. He had been in the midst of the great open place on winter nights when it was covered with snow and only the moon looked down at him; he had been there in the fall when bleak winds blew and on summer evenings when the air vibrated with the song of insects. On the April morning he wanted to go there again, to walk again in the silence. He did walk to where the road dipped down by a little stream two miles from town and then turned and walked silently back again. When he got to Main Street clerks were sweeping the sidewalks before the stores. “Hey, you George. How does it feel to be going away?” they asked.

2 The westbound train leaves Winesburg at seven forty-five in the morning. Tom Little is conductor. His train runs from Cleveland to where it connects with a great trunk line railroad with terminals in Chicago and New York. Tom has what in railroad circles is called an “easy run.” Every evening he returns to his family. In the fall and spring he spends his Sundays fishing in Lake Erie. He has a round red face and small blue eyes. He knows the people in the towns along his railroad better than a city man knows the people who live in his apartment building.

3 George came down the little incline from the New Willard House at seven o’clock. Tom Willard carried his bag. The son had become taller than the father.

4 On the station platform everyone shook the young man’s hand. More than a dozen people waited about. Then they talked of their own affairs. Even Will Henderson, who was lazy and often slept until nine, had got out of bed. George was embarrassed. Gertrude Wilmot, a tall thin woman of fifty who worked in the Winesburg post office, came along the station platform. She had never before paid any attention to George. Now she stopped and put out her hand. In two words she voiced what everyone felt. “Good luck,” she said sharply and then turning went on her way.

5 George glanced up and down the car to be sure no one was looking, then took out his pocketbook and counted his money. His mind was occupied with a desire not to appear green. Almost the last words his father had said to him concerned the matter of his behavior when he got to the city. “Be a sharp one,” Tom Willard had said. “Keep your eyes on your money. Be awake. That’s the ticket. Don’t let anyone think you’re a greenhorn.”

6 After George counted his money he looked out of the window and was surprised to see that the train was still in Winesburg.

7 The young man, going out of his town to meet the adventure of life, began to think but he did not think of anything very big or dramatic. Things like his mother’s death, his departure from Winesburg, the uncertainty of his future life in the city, the serious and larger aspects of his life did not come into his mind.

8 He thought of little things—Turk Smollet wheeling boards through the main street of his town in the morning, a tall woman, beautifully gowned, who had once stayed overnight at his father’s hotel, Butch



Wheeler the lamp lighter of Winesburg hurrying through the streets on a summer evening and holding a torch in his hand, Helen White standing by a window in the Winesburg post office and putting a stamp on an envelope.

9 The young man's mind was carried away by his growing passion for dreams. One looking at him would not have thought him particularly sharp. With the recollection of little things occupying his mind he closed his eyes and leaned back in the car seat. He stayed that way for a long time and when he aroused himself and again looked out of the car window the town of Winesburg had disappeared and his life there had become but a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood.

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**Answer the following questions.**

- 1** How does George's attitude toward his hometown change as events unfold?
- A** He begins to miss scenes of his childhood.
  - B** He feels the town now belongs to his past.
  - C** He thinks that the townspeople are critical of him.
  - D** He begins to enjoy speaking with the people of the town.



**2** This question has two parts. Answer Part A, and then answer Part B.

**Part A**

Based on evidence in the text, which word best describes George?

- A** bold
- B** inexperienced
- C** ambitious
- D** friendly

**Part B**

Which paragraph from the story best supports the answer in Part A?

- A** Paragraph 4
- B** Paragraph 5
- C** Paragraph 6
- D** Paragraph 7

**3** George has a hard time leaving Winesburg because he realizes how much the people and place have meant to him. Write a paragraph in which you agree or disagree with this claim. Cite information from the text that supports your answer.

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 **Self Check** Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 44.