

Lesson 7

Describing Characters in Plays



Learning Target

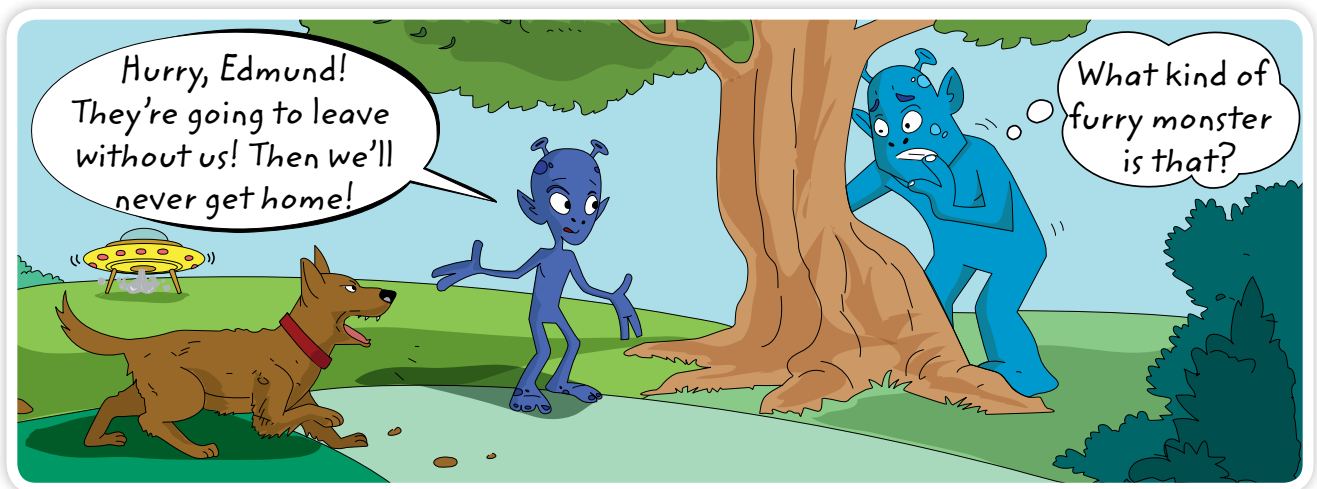
Describing details about the thoughts, feelings, and actions of characters in a drama will help you better understand what you read.

- ▶ **Read** When you read a **drama**, or play, you learn about the **characters** by what they say and do. A character is a person, animal, or made-up creature in the play.

Identifying details about a character's thoughts, feelings, words, and actions helps you figure out what each character is like.

Character traits are special qualities of the characters, such as shyness or honesty. **Motivations** are the reasons why characters act, think, and feel as they do. Moreover, the traits and motivations of different characters affect how they behave as a result of earlier events in the story.

Study the cartoon below to identify details that tell you about Edmund.



► **Think** What have you learned so far about identifying details that help you understand and describe characters? Think about the important information you identified as you looked at the cartoon. Complete the *Character Trait Chart* below to help you understand what Edmund is like.

Character: Edmund (alien)

Trait	Details from the Cartoon (Thoughts, Feelings, Words, Actions)

- **Talk** Share your chart with a partner.
- Did you identify the same trait?
 - Which thoughts, feelings, and actions did each of you include as clues that show Edmund’s character trait?



Academic Talk

Use these words and phrases to talk about the text.

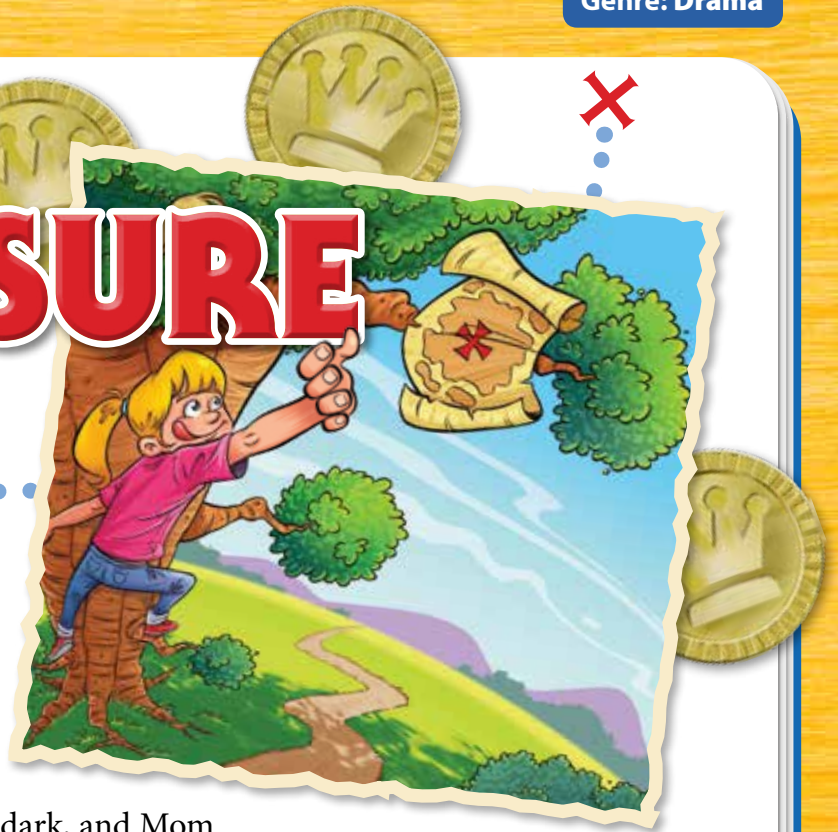
- **drama**
- **character**
- **character traits**
- **motivations**

Read

The TREASURE

by Mabel Astor

- 1 [*Setting: IRIS and GUS, her younger brother, stand in a forest. IRIS holds a map.*]
- 2 IRIS [*studying the map*]: We're supposed to turn left up here by that big tree.
- 3 GUS [*nervous*]: But it's getting dark, and Mom told us to be back for dinner.
- 4 IRIS [*annoyed*]: Seriously, Gus? We're searching for buried treasure! The world won't end if we get home a little late.
- 5 GUS [*nodding his head*]: Yeah, I guess you're right. [*hesitantly*] But . . .
- 6 IRIS: That's more like it. Let's get going! We can't let Victor and Elsa beat us.
- 7 [*They start walking. A sudden breeze whips the map from IRIS's hand.*]
- 8 IRIS: Oh no! The map! [*A huge wind gust whisks the map into a tree.*]
- 9 GUS: Now what are we going to do?
- 10 IRIS: I guess one of us is going to have to climb up there.
- 11 GUS: But I'm afraid of heights.
- 12 IRIS [*shivering*]: I am, too, but do you think I'm going to let that stop us? We're so close!! [*She takes a deep breath and starts climbing.*]
- 13 GUS: Look! It's, it's . . . [*points to a gold coin in the dirt under the tree*]



Close Reader Habits

Underline the details that tell what motivates Iris's behavior.

Explore

How would you describe Iris in the drama *The Treasure*?



Stage directions are clues that help you learn what each character is like.

Think

1 Complete the Character Trait Chart below to help you describe Iris.

Character: Iris

Traits	Details from the Drama (Thoughts, Feelings, Words, Actions)
<i>competitive</i>	
	<i>Iris shivers when she sees Gus think about climbing the tree.</i>
<i>determined</i>	
	<i>"Oh no! The map!"</i>

Talk

2 Describe Iris. Point out details in the drama that helped you understand her character traits. Use the chart above to help organize your thoughts.

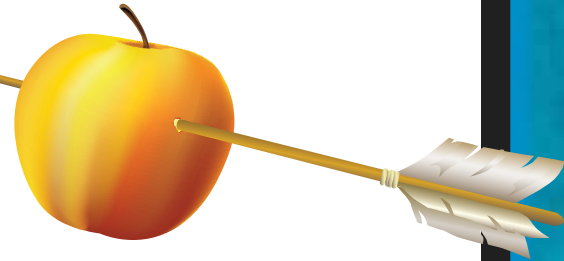
Write

3 Short Response Write a short description of Iris's character traits. Include details from the drama that helped you identify what she is like. Use the space provided on page 112 to write your response.

HINT Reread lines 8–12. What does her reaction to Gus tell you about Iris?

William Tell

adapted from a Swiss folktale



- 1 [*Setting: A busy marketplace in Altdorf, Switzerland*]
- 2 WILLIAM: Come, my son. I have sold the cowhides. Now we must buy the things your mother has asked us to get.
- 3 ALBERT: Yes, Father. And what about a toy for little Lewis?
- 4 WILLIAM: You are a good boy to remember your little brother.
- 5 OFFICER: Stop, man! Why do you not salute the cap of your king!
[*The OFFICER points to a pole. On top is a cloth cap. It belongs to the Austrian king, who has conquered Switzerland.*]
- 6 WILLIAM: I love my country. But I refuse to honor the Austrian king, who forces suffering upon my people.
- 7 OFFICER: Then I'll arrest you as a traitor! What is your name?
- 8 WILLIAM [*standing tall*]: William Tell.
- 9 OFFICER: And this is your son? [*looks to a nearby SOLDIER*] Soldier! Tie the boy to that tree over there!
- 10 WILLIAM: Leave him be! He is only a child!
- 11 OFFICER: I hear you are a famous shot. Perhaps you can shoot an apple from the head of your son? If so, I will let you go free.
- 12 WILLIAM: Never, you villain! I would rather die than risk hurting him. Now let him go, and take me to jail!
- 13 OFFICER: You will both die unless you shoot the apple as I say.
- 14 WILLIAM [*thinking aloud*]: Oh, dear life, what am I to do?
- 15 ALBERT [*trembling*]: Father, I want to go home.
- 16 WILLIAM: Stand still, my brave boy. I promise I'll not hurt you. [*He shoots, and then he falls to his knees, sighing with relief.*]
- 17 SOLDIER: The apple is split! That was a fine shot!
- 18 OFFICER [*frowning*]: I did not believe anyone could make it. I suppose I must honor my word and set you free.

Close Reader Habits

What kind of people are the officer and William Tell? Reread the play. **Underline** details that show the traits and motivations of both characters.



Imagine what happens on a stage. Think about what the characters say and do.

Think Use what you learned from reading the drama to respond to the following question.

- 1** This question has two parts. Answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

Which phrase **best** describes a character trait of the officer?

- A** sly, but fair-minded
- B** heartless and cruel
- C** bossy, but friendly
- D** respectful and polite

Part B

Identify **three** lines from what the officer says that **best** support your answer in Part A. Write your evidence in the box below.

Talk

- 2** Discuss the character traits of William Tell. What details from the drama reveal more about his thoughts, feelings, and actions? Use the Character Trait Chart on page 113 to organize your ideas.

Write

- 3 Short Response** Describe the character of William Tell. Include details from the drama in your response to support your description. Use the space provided on page 113 to write your response.

HINT Identify the details that explain why William Tell reacts to the officer's words as he does.