



Reading On The Move

Elements of Fiction: Character Traits

Characters are the people, animals, or ideas in a story. The development of the characters is what moves the action, or plot, of the story forward.

The things that characters do, say, feel, and think, show us what kind of people these characters are. As readers, we draw conclusions, or make inferences, based on the characters' actions and thoughts that allow us to connect certain traits with each character. **Character traits** are descriptive adjectives that tell us about the specific qualities of each character. Character traits can be physical (*He was tall and handsome.*), or they can be aspects of a personality (*He was pushy and mean.*). Even you have certain traits that make you who you are. These traits are called *your character*. Character traits can be made up of different factors. These factors are:

Appearance: What does the character **look** like?

Actions: What does the character **do**? What do these **actions** tell you about the type of person the character is?

Words: What does the character **say**? Do the words the character uses tell you anything?

Feelings: What does the character **feel**? The character's feelings can be determined by what the character **does**, **says**, and **thinks**.

Think about each character trait in the chart below. Use your dictionary or the Internet to look up any words you don't know. Name someone you know, or have heard of, who has each character trait. If you don't know anyone in your life who fits the character trait, think about characters you have read about or watched on TV or at the movies. Write the name of the person and then explain why the person has that particular trait. The first one is done for you.

Character trait	Person you know	Explanation
adventurous	Kurt	Kurt is adventurous because he goes sky diving, white water rafting, and drives a motorcycle.
bossy		
pretty		
charming		
funny		
logical		

Now, describe yourself. Fill in the chart below based on what you know about yourself.

Appearance: (What do you look like?)

How tall are you? _____

What color is your hair? _____

What color are your eyes? _____

What color is your skin? _____

What country are you from? What country is your family from? _____

Actions: (What do you do?)

What type of work do you do? What does that say about you? (If you work in a physical labor job, are you strong? Are you a hard worker? Are you responsible?)

What hobbies do you have? (What do you like to do for fun?)

What do these hobbies say about you?

Feelings:

How would you describe your personality? Are you friendly? Quiet? Shy? Are you happy? Lonely? Sad? Content? Why do you feel this way?

Read the fable below and answer the questions that follow. A fable is a short story that has a moral, or teaches the reader a lesson.

The Fox and The Crow

A crow who had stolen a piece of cheese was flying toward the top of a tall tree where he hoped to enjoy his prize, when a fox spied him. “If I plan this right,” said the fox to herself, “I shall have cheese for supper.”

So, as she sat under the tree, she began to speak in her politest tones: “Good day, master crow, how well you are looking today! How glossy your feathered wings and your breast is finer than the breast of any eagle. And your claws—I beg your pardon—your talons are as strong as steel. I have not heard your voice, but I am certain that it must surpass that of any other bird just as your beauty does.”

The **vain** crow was pleased by all this sweet talk. He believed every word of it and flapped his wings to show his pleasure. He liked especially what his friend fox said about his voice. He foolishly had thought that maybe his caw was **a bit rusty**. So, laughing to himself to think how he was going to surprise the fox with his most beautiful caw, he opened his mouth extra, extra wide.



Down dropped the hunk of cheese! The **wily** fox snatched it before it touched the ground. As she walked away, licking her chops, she offered these words of advice to the silly crow: “The next time someone praises your beauty, be sure to hold your tongue.”

1. Name two character traits of the crow. Explain your answer.

2. Name two character traits of the fox. Explain your answer.

3. What does the word **vain** mean in the third paragraph of the story?

- a. to be happy
- b. to be careful
- c. to care too much about how one looks
- d. to worry too much about the weather

4. What does it mean that the crow thought his caw may be “*a bit rusty*”?

- a. out of practice
- b. dirty
- c. made from metal
- d. a terrible singer

5. What is another word for **wily**?

- a. sleepy
- b. clever
- c. unaware
- d. mean

6. What do you think is the moral of the story?

The **protagonist** is one of the main characters of the story and is involved in the central conflict. Usually, readers can connect most with the *protagonist*. An **antagonist** is a character, idea, or thing that goes against the protagonist. You get to know the protagonist and antagonist through their thoughts and actions.

Example: In the story that you just read, *The Fox and the Crow*, the protagonist is the crow. The crow is a main character and is minding his own business. The antagonist is the fox because she tricks the crow and takes his cheese.

A **myth** is a made-up short story that tries to explain how the world works. Also, myths often touch upon how people should treat each other. These stories describe big things that happen to people because of the choices that they make. Myths usually take place in ancient times, before history was recorded.

Pandora's Box

One day Zeus decided to ask his son to make a woman. The son did the best job that he could. He made the woman out of jewels and gold. Then the Four Winds blew the breath of life into her body. Other gods and goddesses each gave her a special gift. One goddess gave her the gift of great beauty. Others gave her musical talent and the gift of beautiful speech. Still others gave her fine clothes. When the woman was finished, all agreed that she was the prettiest woman they had ever seen. They gave her the name *Pandora*, which means "all gifts," because all of the gods had each given her a gift.

The last god to give Pandora a gift was Zeus. He wanted to give her something very special, but he saw that she already seemed to have everything. In fact, she was as beautiful as any goddess, and she looked perfect. However, Zeus knew that no human could be perfect. That power was left for the gods. He decided to give Pandora two gifts. The first gift was curiosity. Pandora would never be able to leave a question unanswered. His second gift was a golden box. However, this box was shut tight and locked. Zeus told Pandora to never, ever open it.

Pandora went to earth and married a wonderful man. They were both very happy together for many years. They had no troubles. However, Pandora's thoughts always went back to the box, which she was not supposed to open. But each time she was tempted, she remembered Zeus's instructions, so she put it aside.

One day, Pandora's husband announced that he had to go on a trip. He would be traveling far away for a few days to check on some land that he had bought. Pandora lovingly kissed him good-bye and wished him well.

For the first two days after her husband was gone, Pandora kept herself busy with chores such as sewing and gardening. Soon these tasks were finished, though, and she began to wander about the house looking for other things to do. Her eye fell on the golden box from Zeus. She looked away so she wouldn't be tempted to go near it. But, in the way that curiosity always works, Pandora could not stop thinking about the box and what might be inside. Perhaps it was a book of special secrets. Or maybe a beautiful necklace! Her wish to know what was inside the box grew stronger and stronger until she could no longer resist it. She just HAD to know! Just one little peek inside wouldn't hurt. And that wasn't really *opening* the box, was it? She could still keep her promise to Zeus.

Pandora's quick, light steps took her swiftly over to the shelf where the box was kept. She picked it up in her soft hands and twisted the key in the lock. There was a click, and before Pandora could grab the lid, the box flew open. Horrified, Pandora could only watch as frightening black insects flew out of the box. They had ugly-looking horns and sharp stingers. These were not insects, but actually all the evils of the world: hunger, anger, selfishness, sickness, worry....and many more. It was impossible for her to catch them. They quickly swarmed out the window and went to every place in the world.



Pandora now knew why her life had been so happy, and why Zeus had told her not to open the box. Sighing with regret, she started to put the box back

on the shelf. As she did, she thought she saw one more tiny figure at the bottom of the box. It was little, white, and seemed to be blind. Pandora knew that this was the spirit of Hope. Zeus had put her in there so that, no matter how much evil there was in the world, or how many bad things happened, there would always be hope to get us through.

Pandora spoke softly to Hope. Slowly she climbed out of the box and flew away on shining wings, a comfort to all those who could see her.

7. What two gifts did Zeus give to Pandora?
 - a. A golden box and Hope
 - b. A golden box and Evil
 - a. A golden box and Curiosity
 - b. Curiosity and Hope

8. Why did he give her those gifts?
 - a. Because she was a goddess.
 - b. Because she was human and no human is perfect.
 - c. Because she asked him for a special gift.
 - d. The gifts were for her birthday.

9. Why did Pandora open the box?
 - a. She was too curious.
 - b. She was mad at Zeus so she went against his word.
 - c. Her husband told her to open it.
 - d. It fell off the shelf and opened on its own.

10. The protagonist in this myth is _____.

- a. Zeus
- b. The Four Winds
- c. Hope
- d. Pandora

11. The antagonist in this myth is _____.

- a. Zeus
- b. Pandora
- c. Hope
- d. Curiosity

12. Why was the last spirit to leave the box the most important?

13. What is the message of this myth?

14. Describe Pandora's traits, both inside and outside.

Answer Key

1. The crow can be described as dishonest because he stole the cheese. He can be described as vain because he cares about how he looks and sounds. He can also be described as foolish for falling for the fox's trick.
2. The fox can be described as dishonest because he tricks the crow to get his cheese. She can also be described as wily because she is clever enough to trick the crow. She can also be described as greedy because she wants to take the crow's cheese instead of getting her own.
3. c
4. a
5. b
6. Just because someone is nice to you, or compliments you, doesn't mean they are your friend.
7. c
8. b
9. a
10. d
11. d
12. The last spirit to leave the box was Hope. Hope is important because she was the one good spirit among all the bad spirits. Without Hope, no one would survive all of the bad things in the world.
13. One moral could be that being too curious can get you into trouble. Another moral could be that Hope will get you through bad things.
14. Pandora was made of jewels and gold, so she was very beautiful to look at. She was talented with music and speech. She wore fine clothes. She was curious.