

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**character development:** the process of fleshing out important literary characters

**main character:** the most important character in a literary work

**round character:** a complex, highly developed character

**flat character:** a character who is not highly developed

**dynamic character:** one who undergoes important changes as the plot unfolds

**static character:** one who remains the same throughout the story

**foil:** a character who exists to provide a contrast with a main character

**stereotype:** a flat or simplified character, defined by a single trait or fixed pattern

## HERE'S HOW

**Step 1: Identify the main character.** Ask yourself: Who is the character or characters the narrative focuses on? Generally, the plot of a short story focuses on one main character, but a novel may have several main characters.

**Step 2: Analyze a main character's development.** Main characters usually face a challenge or problem. As they try to overcome these obstacles, they tend to change or learn something. To analyze character development, ask yourself:

- Have the character's feelings about himself or herself changed?
- Has the character's appearance or behavior changed?
- Do other characters treat the character differently?
- Has the character learned a lesson, accepted something, or made a decision?

**Step 3: Recognize round and flat characters.** Usually, main characters are round and minor characters flat. To determine whether a character is flat or round, ask yourself:

- Does the character seem like he or she could be a real person?
- Does the character have a variety of character traits and personality dimensions?
- Does the character exist mainly to advance an event in the plot?
- Does the character exist mainly to provide a contrast to a more important character?

**Step 4: Recognize dynamic and static characters.** Main characters are more likely to be dynamic—to show development over the course of a story. Minor and flat characters tend to be static—less likely to develop. Finish reading a selection before determining whether a character is dynamic or static. Then ask yourself the questions in Step 2.

**Step 5: Recognize foils and stereotypes.** Foils and stereotypes are two kinds of flat characters. Writers use foils to emphasize certain traits in their main characters. Stereotypes can be used to reveal a main character as well or to provide comic relief.

## There Go the Glasses

## Excerpt 1

Ellen, the stage manager, yawned. She looked at Pete and pointed to her watch. Behind Pete, Glenna placed a pair of spare drumsticks alongside her tom-tom. Andy fiddled with a knob on his bass. Pete winced at a giggle he heard through the curtain.

He gulped, took a pair of black sunglasses out of his back pocket and put them on. Pete had not yet stepped into the hot lights, but he was already sweating. His head whipped back to look at Glenna, who grinned and shook her fist at him in mock anger.

With Pete out front, the Squids were about to make their stage debut, at the school's annual Talent Night. The curtain parted.

Uh-oh, Pete thought.

## Excerpt 2

"One, two, three, NOW," Glenna shouted. It was boom, crash, then a power chord due from Pete to kick off the Squids' first song.

Except his pick had slipped from between his fingers. Andy came in on the downbeat, then looked over at Pete and mouthed the words, "What are you doing?"

Boom-da-boom-da-da-boom-boom-boom: Glenna was setting speed records, Andy was filling in the blanks, and Pete was fumbling for one of the picks taped to the body of his guitar.

The power chord came one full measure too late. In about three seconds, it was time for Pete to start singing. What he wanted to do was start running for his life.

## Excerpt 3

The Squids' third song, "I've Got Issues," featured a slide guitar solo from Pete. Just ahead of his cue, he leaped in, tearing off a long, high, sweet, stinging flurry of blues notes that told a story of pain. Frustration. And joy. It was just like he had rehearsed it five hundred times in Andy's garage, and it was better than he had ever played it before.

He was sweating again, but now it felt good. He glanced up at the audience. No one was giggling. He turned very slowly to look back at Glenna, and this time it was Pete's turn to grin.

He snatched the sunglasses off his brow, tossed them into the crowd, and savored the applause as he returned to his solo without missing a beat. Pete took a long look around the auditorium. He didn't want to miss a thing.

**from "The Lottery Ticket"**  
**by Anton Chekhov**

Ivan Dmitritch, a middle-class man who lived with his family on an income of twelve hundred a year and was very well satisfied with his lot, sat down on the sofa after supper and began reading the newspaper.

"I forgot to look at the newspaper today," his wife said to him as she cleared the table. "Look and see whether the list of drawings is there."

"Yes, it is," said Ivan Dmitritch; "but hasn't your ticket lapsed?"

*[Ivan Dmitritch glances at one set of numbers that suggest his wife may have a winning lottery ticket. He begins daydreaming about the things they would do as lottery winners. Below, he is imagining a grand vacation together.]*

"She would begrudge me every farthing," he thought, with a glance at his wife. "The lottery ticket is hers, not mine! Besides, what is the use of her going abroad? What does she want there? She would shut herself up in the hotel, and not let me out of her sight . . . I know!" And for the first time in his life his mind dwelt on the fact that his wife had grown elderly and plain, and that she was saturated through and through with the smell of cooking, while he was still young, fresh, and healthy, and might well have got married again.

*[His daydreams continue in a similar vein until . . .]*

In order to annoy his wife he glanced quickly, to spite her at the fourth page on the newspaper and read out triumphantly:

"Series 9,499, number 46! Not 26!" Hatred and hope both disappeared at once, and it began immediately to seem to Ivan Dmitritch and his wife that their rooms were dark and small and low-pitched, that the supper they had been eating was not doing them good, but lying heavy on their stomachs, that the evenings were long and wearisome. . . . "What the devil's the meaning of it?" said Ivan Dmitritch, beginning to be angry. "Wherever one steps there are bits of paper under one's feet, crumbs, husks. The rooms are never swept! One is simply forced to go out. Damnation take my soul entirely! I shall go and hang myself on the first aspen tree!"

**Character Development**

**Directions:** Read the three excerpts from “The Lottery Ticket” on the **Practice Model**. Then, for each question, circle the *best* answer.

1. Who is the main character in “The Lottery Ticket”?
  - a. Ivan Dmitritch
  - b. his wife
  - c. the narrator
  - d. Anton Chekhov
  
2. Who is the minor character in “The Lottery Ticket”?
  - a. Ivan Dmitritch
  - b. his wife
  - c. the narrator
  - d. Anton Chekhov
  
3. What triggers the change in the main character?
  - a. excitement over winning the lottery
  - b. confusion over whether the lottery ticket is a winner
  - c. a fantasy of what he could do with the lottery winnings
  - d. a small household income
  
4. Over time, the main character becomes
  - a. thrilled with his/her new wealth
  - b. frustrated by a life he/she had been satisfied with
  - c. eager to embark on a long journey
  - d. jealous of the youth and vitality of others
  
5. The character development shows that the main character is a
  - a. static character
  - b. dynamic character
  - c. foil
  - d. stereotype

# Character Development

**Directions:** Read the three excerpts from “The Lottery Ticket” on the **Practice Model**. Then fill in the graphic organizer below.

1. Identify the main character.	
2. What makes him or her important to the story?	
3. Is the main character flat or round? Explain, citing examples from the text.	
4. Is the main character static or dynamic? Explain, citing examples from the text.	
5. If the main character changes, is it for the better or worse? Explain, citing text examples.	

