 Characterisation

A character is a fictional person featured in a text. The author constructs characters with certain things in mind:

| Purpose | Summary | Symbol (Create a symbol to code each potential element of characterisation) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Language is used to describe the character’s look, actions, and speech in order to help the reader imagine the sort of person they are. | Language |  |
| Readers use their own experiences to identify the sort of person the character is, and form their own opinion about the character by combining their knowledge with the author’s description. Therefore, the author’s intention and the reader’s impression of a character can be equally valid. | Personal Engagement |  |
| Characters can represent ideas and themes, a type of person, or social attitudes and values. | Representation |  |
| Characters can reflect generic conventions and other tropes that reflect specific types of texts, assisting the reader in identifying genre. | Generic Conventions |  |
| Characters can serve a function in the plot and ‘drive’ particular parts of the narrative. | Narrative Function |  |

Answer the questions and use your symbols to code them

Charlie Bucktin is the 13 year-old protagonist of the novel Jasper Jones. He reads classic books by American authors, wears glasses, and fears insects and bullies. Charlie loves language and aspires to be a writer but also feels that he is held back in life by his own lack of courage.

| Questions | Answers | Symbols |
| --- | --- | --- |
| What is your impression of Charlie? |  |  |
| In what way does Charlie not fit in with the interests of most teenagers in his town? |  |  |
| Charlie describes himself, “Of course being born without courage has proven to be a significant hindrance”. What does this choice of language reveal about him? |  |  |

Jasper Jones is 14 years old, half-Aboriginal, half-Anglo-Australian, and has a reputation as a troublemaker. Jasper’s mother died when he was a baby and he has had to raise himself due to his father’s neglect and alcoholism. Most of the town is quick to blame him whenever a crime is committed, however, they also tolerate him due to his talent as a football player.

| Questions | Answers | Symbols |
| --- | --- | --- |
| How does the character of Jasper Jones facilitate Charlie’s involvement in the mystery at the centre of the novel? |  |  |
| The novel is named after Jasper even though the story isn’t told from his point of view. What does this say about the novel’s themes? |  |  |
| Jasper’s language is full of colloquialisms such as “carn”, “fersure”, “unnerstand”, “somethink”, and “orright”. What does this suggest about the character? |  |  |

Eliza Wishart is the sister of the murdered girl at the centre of the novel, and goes to school with Charlie Bucktin, who has a crush on her. Eliza is intelligent and enjoys reading but projects a sense of aloofness in regards to her family life. She harbours a secret about her sister.

| Questions | Answers | Symbols |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Look up the definition of ‘aloofness’. Why do you think it applies to Eliza? |  |  |
| How does this quote, “Eliza looks so brittle, as though she might snap, but she stands firm”, use metaphor to describe her? |  |  |
| What social similarities are there between Charlie and Eliza? |  |  |

‘Mad’ Jack Lionel is a mysterious Corrigan figure who never leaves his house. He is feared by the local kids, who dare each other to steal peaches from his garden as a rite of passage. The town rumour is that Jack once killed a woman but the reality is that this woman was Jasper’s mother and that the death was accidental.

| Questions | Answers | Symbols |
| --- | --- | --- |
| In what way does Mad Jack Lionel fulfil a purpose in the novel in testing Charlie’s courage? |  |  |
| Charlie initially compares Mad Jack Lionel to serial killers and “assorted movie villains”, describing him as having a “crooked face (…) evil eyes”. What characters in other texts could this allude to? |  |  |
| What does Mad Jack’s isolation suggest about the attitudes of the town? |  |  |

Jeffrey Lu is Charlie Bucktin’s best friend and the son of Vietnamese refugees. He faces racist attitudes from the majority of teenagers in the town but relentlessly pursues a spot on the Corrigan cricket team nonetheless. Jeffrey often uses his migrant-background as a source of humour to make Charlie laugh.

| Questions | Answers | Symbols |
| --- | --- | --- |
| How is a shared vocabulary used to establish the close friendship between Charlie and Jeffrey? |  |  |
| Charlie and Jeffrey often allude to Batman and Superman. In what way is Jeffrey more like Superman than Batman? |  |  |
| Give an example of the racist treatment that Jeffrey or his family receive in the novel. |  |  |

Ruth Bucktin is Charlie’s mother. She and Charlie have an antagonistic relationship throughout the novel that eventually builds to a breaking point. Ruth comes from a wealthy family, resents her husband and home life, and is primarily concerned with presenting herself as worthy of the town’s admiration through her involvement with the CWA (Country Women’s Association).

| Questions | Answers | Symbols |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Why do you think Charlie and Ruth have such a strained relationship? |  |  |
| How important is conformity to Ruth and what might this suggest about life in Corrigan? |  |  |
| Ruth fulfils a purpose as an obstacle for Charlie to overcome. How does her function in the novel demonstrate Charlie’s growth? |  |  |

Wes Bucktin is a school teacher and also Charlie’s father. He encourages Charlie’s love for reading and uses books to educate Charlie on life’s lessons. Charlie looks up to Wes during most of the novel but struggles to understand why his father allows Ruth to treat him so badly.

| Questions | Answers | Symbols |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Charlie frequently compares his father to Atticus Finch, a heroic father-figure from the novel To Kill a Mockingbird. What does this comparison reveal about Charlie’s relationship with Wes? |  |  |
| In what way is Wes a stereotypical fictional father? |  |  |
| What does Charlie’s changing relationship with Wes reveal about both characters? |  |  |