SLATE

Lesson Objective	(Prewriting) Students will develop a character for a literary composition by identifying key traits and details that will demonstrate those traits.	
Vocabulary	**trait**: a characteristic that contributes to a character's personality **characterization**: the way an author portrays a character **SLATE**: an acronym to help students remember methods of characterization: Says, Looks like, Acts, Thinks, Effect on others	
Reviewed Vocabulary	character, portray	
Instructional Materials	**Teacher**	**Student**
	• Teacher Masters • Timer	• Student Booklet • Independent Practice—Students must have an outline for the plot of a short story or personal narrative that they might write, and a specific character in mind.

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<tr><td>Teacher Note</td></tr>
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Teacher Note
This lesson should be administered after the Character Map lesson of the Reading Module, in which students analyze character development using the acronym SLATE. In this SLATE writing lesson, students use the same methods of characterization to develop a character for their own writing.

Preview

A big part of what makes reading enjoyable is getting to know the characters. Readers want to know whether they like or dislike characters, whether they support them or want them to fail, and whether or not they can relate to a character who shares their own strengths or weaknesses. Our job as writers is to make the characters come alive to our readers. The way we portray our characters is called *characterization.* We show readers who our characters are by using the characters' speech, thoughts, effect on others, actions, or looks.

When we plan a story, we can consider the traits—or characteristics that contribute to a character's personality— that we want our characters to have and choose details that will help the reader recognize those traits. That's what today's lesson is all about.

Engage Prior/Informal Knowledge

1. Students complete a silent warm-up to review the SLATE acronym.

   Distribute the *SB#1: Engage Prior Knowledge—Silent Warm-Up.*

   You have previously learned five ways that an author can describe a character, using SLATE. In the lists below, circle the word that each letter stands for.

   Set the timer for 2 minutes.

2. Review the silent warm-up.

   Display the *TM#1: Engage Prior Knowledge—Silent Warm-Up*. When 2 minutes have passed, have students share responses. Note student responses on the display, and provide corrective feedback as needed.

Demonstrate

Demonstrate completing the character map.

Display the *TM#3: Demonstrate and Practice—Writer's Character Map* and direct students' attention to their copies.

Teacher Note
For this Demonstrate section, you can use either the script below or your own original story to model plotting out ideas on a plot diagram.

I am going to demonstrate creating a character map for a character in a story I might write.

I am going to write about a student named Paul who stayed out past the time his parents told him to come home. His mom is the character I am going to use for my character map. The first step is to write the character's name on the line at the top. I have written "Paul's mom" on the line.

Next, I am going to use SLATE. The first row shows how I might characterize Paul's mom by what she *says*. First, I have decided on the character trait I want to demonstrate to my reader. I want the reader to know that Paul's mom is caring. In order to show that she is caring, I will write something she *says*. I will write that she says, "Even though you're grown up, you're still my baby!"

The second row shows how I might characterize Paul's mom by showing what she *looks like.* First, I have decided that I want the reader to know that Paul's mom is worried. Then I wrote the SLATE word that I'm going to use to show that: *looks.* In the last column, I wrote exactly how she will look when Paul comes home late. Because she's worried, she will have been crying, so she will have red eyes and a red nose.

Practice

1. Practice completing the *TM#3: Demonstrate and Practice—Writer's Character Map* with class input.

    Now we are going to practice together. First, we decide what we want the reader to think or feel about the character. We can use a trait we've already used or a new one.

Display the *TM#4: Practice—Character Traits List* and direct students' attention to their copy.

    Let's think of a new word that we might want to use to describe Paul's mom. Look at the Practice—Character Traits List to get ideas for words. Choose a word to describe his mom, one that would suggest that she is an interesting character that readers might relate to. *(Answers will vary. Possible answers include: bossy, demanding, generous, kind, funny.)*

Display again the *TM#3: Demonstrate and Practice—Writer's Character Map.*

    The next letter in SLATE is *A.* What does the *A* in SLATE stand for? *(Acts)*

Write *Acts* in the next row.

    How might Paul's mom *act* to show that she fits our description? *(Answers will vary, but should both match your chosen word and describe a specific action.)*

In the last column, write exactly what Paul's mom will do to show that she fits our description. You should be very specific, even including exact words you think you will want to use in your story.

Record student responses in the final column.

2. Students work in pairs to complete the *SB#2: Demonstrate and Practice—Writer's Character Map.*

> **Now you will work in pairs for 5 minutes to complete the last two rows of this worksheet for the model story. Decide what other character traits you want to demonstrate for Paul's mom. You can choose to repeat one of the traits we've already used, such as *caring* or *worried*, or you can choose another character trait. Then, think of something that Paul's mom could *think* that would show that character trait. Repeat the process to complete the row that shows the character's *effect on others*.**

Have students restate the instructions and check for understanding. Set the timer for 5 minutes.

Circulate among the students, check for understanding, and provide corrective feedback as needed.

When 5 minutes have passed, ask for no more than five students to share their ideas for each row.

3. Explain the application of the *Writer's Character Map.*

> **When you write a short story, you might not use all of the SLATE characterization you come up with. In a very short story, you might only use two or three SLATE details for each main character.**
>
> **If you were writing a story with these ideas, you would want to choose only the strongest details to include.**

Independent Practice

1. Have students complete the *SB#4: Independent Practice.*

Teacher Note

The Independent Practice requires that students have previously identified (or been assigned) a topic for a short story or personal narrative, and that they have at least one character in mind for development.

2. Collect the materials, score the work, and check for mastery.