

Character profiles

This activity examines the story vocabulary used to create strong and identifiable characters and helps to explore the potential for the children to develop this understanding and create a full character profile. The children will be encouraged to 'zoom in' on high-profile characters, enhancing the image already offered. This will enable them to develop a repertoire of their own when creating characters in their story

writing. As high quality texts are read and examined, the children will be able to detect how characters are allowed to develop through a story as events impact on their lives.

What to do

- 1 Select a book that is either already known to the children or that is currently being read with them. Focus on one character, revisiting the text at the point at which he or she is first introduced.
- 2 Read this first description from the text and ask the children to note words or phrases that are key to this introduction to the character. It would be useful at this stage, with more experienced readers and writers, to examine language of inference as well as literal references, for example in any texts written in the first person. With less experienced readers, the focus will probably remain on adjectives and adverbs to support their understanding of the characters.
- 3 Discuss what is known about the character at this stage of the novel – his or her appearance, interests, how s/he feels and so on, referring to the text to identify key language. In *Fruit and Nutcase*, we know at the beginning that Mandy is sparky and creative, and that her good, if irreverent, relationship with her parents is of great importance to her.
- 4 Ask the children to work in pairs to create questions to ask about the character at

Literature links

This activity will work well with any story that offers a rich description of characters, particularly those with whom children of this age can identify. The work of David Almond, for example in *Kit's Wilderness* or *Heaven Eyes* (both Hodder & Stoughton) would be good for this purpose as these have strong central characters who experience both

emotional and physical challenges. This will engage children who might have different expectations of the stories. Gillian Cross's *Tightrope* (Puffin) or *Fruit and Nutcase* by Jean Ure (Collins) would also help children to follow a complex character through a challenging set of events.

