

Worksheet 1

The Open Window

Clever Characterisation

Characterisation refers to the way authors convey information about the characters they create and is an important component in making a narrative text more compelling to an audience. In *The Open Window*, the author has used effective characterisation of the young lady (Vera) by describing her behaviour through her actions, speech and thoughts. This information has been conveyed in two ways:

Direct characterization – the author has explicitly told us what the character is like. For example, the beginning of the story, Vera is described as *a very self-possessed young lady*. Then, we discover probably the most important aspect of her personality in the very last sentence - *Horror was her speciality*.

Indirect characterization – the author implicitly makes us aware of Vera's personality through her actions (particularly body language), what she says and most importantly - *how* she says it. This becomes particularly apparent through her interactions with her house guest, Framton Nutter, and is confirmed by the way he reacts to her.

Task 1: Analyse how the author has used indirect characterisation to let us know more about Vera's character by answering the following questions:

1. *'She smiled innocently and offered him a chair.'* How does her 'innocent' smile and good manners betray her true nature?
2. *"Do you know the people around here?" "Then you know nothing about my aunt?"* What was Vera's motive in asking these two questions?
3. *And the girl looked down dramatically...She paused and choked back a sob...She broke off with a little shudder...* How does her body language support her story?
4. *She was silent. She wiped her eyes, went to the window and looked out.* Why does Vera do this?
5. *She looked at Framton accusingly.* Why does the author use this adverb to describe how Vera looked at Framton?
6. Vera is present when Framton explains to Mrs Sappleton that the doctor has ordered him to rest - *"No excitement, no frights," he whispered. "N-n-nothing to worry me."* But, rather than feel remorse about the concocted story she has just told Framton, Vera continues the charade by staring out the open window with *an expression of dazed horror in her eyes*. What does this tell us about Vera's character?
7. In the last paragraph, Vera calmly explains to her aunt Framton Nutter's reason for bolting. What further information does the use of this adverb tell us about the type of person Vera really is?

Task 2: Identify examples in the story of how the author has used direct and indirect characterisation for the other characters, Framton Nutter and Mrs Sappleton.

Extension Activity:

- *'All three were swallowed up in a treacherous piece of bog.'* Write an informative text explaining what a 'bog' is and what causes it.