

*The Writing Center & Reading /Study Skills Lab presents:*  
**Tip Sheet on: Character Study**

## **CHARACTER STUDY**

A **character study** or a **characterization** in literature is a profile of an important character in a story, play or poem. This profile can include a description of the physical, emotional and intellectual qualities of a character. More importantly, it includes an analysis of the character's development and the character's importance to the story.

### **1. Understanding the character –**

- a. **Character traits and actions** – Carefully read the piece (story, play, poem, etc.) and pay close attention to descriptive narrative and dialogue. Look for clues to the character's appearance, age, health, wealth, and family or life circumstances. Look at the plot (including the words & actions of *supporting* players) and consider how the character behaves, develops and changes.
- b. **Character's importance** -- Beyond the traits and actions of the character is the role or importance of that character. The author has given him/her a place in the story. The student's goal is to understand this place. Why is the character interesting and important? Consider the author's setting and themes also when putting the character in context and identifying his/her significance.

### **2. Writing the essay on a character study –**

- a. **Introduction with thesis/ main idea** -- After getting to know and understand the character, the student tries to explain in writing who the character is and why the character is important to the story. Begin with an introductory paragraph that includes a thesis statement -- a sentence or two about the character's important qualities and an interpretation of the character's significance.
- b. **Body paragraphs** -- Continue the essay by adding paragraphs that support your main idea or thesis. Include specific details from the story, play, or poem that help explain your interpretation of the character. Supporting details can include quoted passages and dialogue that illustrate your thinking.
- c. **Conclusion** -- Finish the essay and tie it together with a concluding paragraph. The conclusion echoes the introduction; it refers back to the main point or thesis explained in the opening. In different wording, reiterate the character's major qualities and the character's significance.

MCC offers a **Writing Center & Reading/Study Skills Lab** at both the Bedford and Lowell campuses. Tutoring is available weekdays and some evenings, at no charge. Schedules are posted on the door. Drop in or make an appointment.

**In Bedford:** AR 214, Tel: 781-280-3727 or 3728.

**In Lowell:** City Campus, Room 406, Tel: 978-656-3364 or 3365.