



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2010 Volume II: The Art of Reading People: Character, Expression, Interpretation

Forging Life: Characterization through Prose

Guide for Curriculum Unit 10.02.04
by Timothy A. Grady

Students spend years reading and analyzing fictional texts for character, but they spend almost no time on the act of how to create character in fictional prose. This unit is designed to help students learn how to create fictional characters "on the page," i.e., in prose fiction of their own making. The unit focuses on several specific characterization methods, on prose styles (and their effects), and on the patterns in which those methods and styles are used to represent the character as a whole. In other words, the unit centers on how to create bits of character in individual lines, as well as how all those bits (and lines) go together to create the overall character. The unit's overall goal is to help students construct characters better in the fiction they write, rather than just becoming adept at analyzing others' works (though those two goals are not mutually exclusive); as such, the unit's chief method of instruction is through the students' creative exploration of characters they create.

(Developed for Psychology of Story and Creative Writing, grades 11-12; recommended for English and Creative Writing, grades 9-12)

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