Characterization

Authors generally present characters in two ways: directly or indirectly.

Direct characterization involves explicit descriptions of the characters' personality, appearance, and character. Readers don't have to "read between the lines" because the author is straightforward with revealing what the characters are doing, how they feel, what they are thinking, etc.

However, indirect characterization requires the reader to make inferences (conclusions or opinions that are formed because of known facts or evidence.)

Use **STEAL** to better help you understand characters when authors reveal details in an indirect way.

Speech (What does the character say to others? How does he or she say it? What is the character's internal dialogue, if any?)
Thoughts (What is revealed through the character's private thoughts?)
Effect on other characters (What can we infer based on the character's effect on other characters? How do other characters react to him or her?); **E**motions (What does the character feel, e. g., sadness, anger, hopelessness, optimism…?)
Actions (What does the character do and how does he or she do it?)
Looks (What are the character's physical features and traits? How does the character dress? How do other characters respond to his or her appearance?)