

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Characterization

**Characterization** is the way authors develop and reveal a character's personality, values, and motivations. Direct characterization tells readers explicitly about a character through description. Indirect characterization shows character traits through dialogue, thoughts, actions, appearance, and how others react to them. Authors use both methods to create complex, believable characters that drive the story forward.

**Read the following short story excerpt and answer the questions.**

### The Playground Hero

Marcus stood at the edge of the basketball court, dribbling nervously while the other kids chose teams. At thirteen, he was taller than most of his classmates but had never been picked first—or even fifth—for any game. His worn sneakers had once been white but were now a dull gray, and his glasses were held together with tape at one corner.

"I'll take Jayden," announced Tyler, the eighth-grade star athlete who always served as team captain.

"Then I want Zoe," said the other captain, pointing to the fastest girl in their class.

Marcus sighed and stared at his shoes. Same as always. He'd be one of the last picked, if not the very last.

When only Marcus and two other kids remained, something unexpected happened. The new kid in school,

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Characterization

Elisa, who had been chosen as a captain for the first time, pointed directly at Marcus. "I want him," she said confidently. Tyler laughed. "Seriously? Four-Eyes can't even make a layup."

Elisa crossed her arms. "I've been watching. He always passes to the open player, and he sees the whole court. That's what my dad says makes a good player."

During the game, Marcus surprised everyone—including himself. With someone finally trusting him, he made smart passes, set up perfect screens, and even sank two three-pointers. When Elisa's team won by one point, she high-fived Marcus and said, "I knew you could do it. Sometimes people just need someone to believe in them first."

Marcus walked home with his head held higher than it had been in years. For the first time, he couldn't wait for tomorrow's gym class.

**1. How does the author characterize Marcus at the beginning of the story? Provide two specific details.**

---

**2. What does Elisa's dialogue reveal about her character?**

---

**3. How does Marcus's character change by the end of the story, and what causes this change?**

---

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Characterization-Answer Key

1. How does the author characterize Marcus at the beginning of the story? Provide two specific details.

**Provide two specific details. The author portrays Marcus as insecure and overlooked through his nervous dribbling, expectation of being picked last, worn-out sneakers, and taped glasses that suggest he's not valued by peers.**

2. What does Elisa's dialogue reveal about her character?

**Elisa's dialogue shows she's observant, values teamwork over flashy skills, and has confidence in her own judgments. She sees potential in people that others miss and stands up for her decisions.**

3. How does Marcus's character change by the end of the story, and what causes this change?

**Marcus transforms from insecure to confident as shown by "walking with his head held higher" and excitement for gym class. This change occurs because Elisa believed in him, giving him the confidence to perform well.**