

# LITERARY ELEMENTS...

## Character, Plot, and Theme



# CHARACTER-DRIVEN STORY



In short, a character-driven story is one where the focus will be more on character development than on the plot, but your character **WILL** still develop



In these stories, you are more likely to feel fully engaged with the character and become more focused on their personal journey.



In a character-led story, the emphasis is on the character's emotions and the reasons why they make the choices and decisions that they do.

# PLOT-DRIVEN STORY



In plot-driven writing, the story will be more focused on action, with a developed and exciting plot.



As a reader, you will be drawn into the action and the twists and turns of the changing circumstances that influence and motivate the characters.



So how do you choose between writing a character-driven story versus a plot-driven one?

# PLOT DRIVEN VS CHARACTER DRIVEN: CHOOSING BETWEEN THEM

The key difference between a plot-driven story and a character-driven one is that in a character-led narrative, the focus is more on the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist and the decisions that they make.

Whereas, in plot-driven narratives, the action and occurrences that unfold will be the main point of focus (flat arcs are good for this)

When writing character-driven stories, the plot is the mechanism used to develop character, and in plot-led stories, the character is used to view and comment on the plot.

Very often the type of genre that you are writing will help you decide whether your story would work better as a plot-driven, or character-driven piece.

# HERE ARE A FEW THINGS THAT YOU MIGHT WISH TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING WHETHER YOUR STORY SHOULD BE PLOT-DRIVEN OR CHARACTER-DRIVEN.

- What genre are you writing in?
- What is your usual writing style - do you like to develop your characters in depth, or are you more drawn to the action and environment?
- What are the overall messages and themes of the story? What would you like your reader to take away and learn? Something about the character's growth? Or something about the events and actions that surround them? (Think arcs)
- What type of books do you most enjoy reading?

## Plot-Driven Story

Jurassic Park

Lessons in Chemistry

Hunger Games

Harry Potter

## Character-driven Story

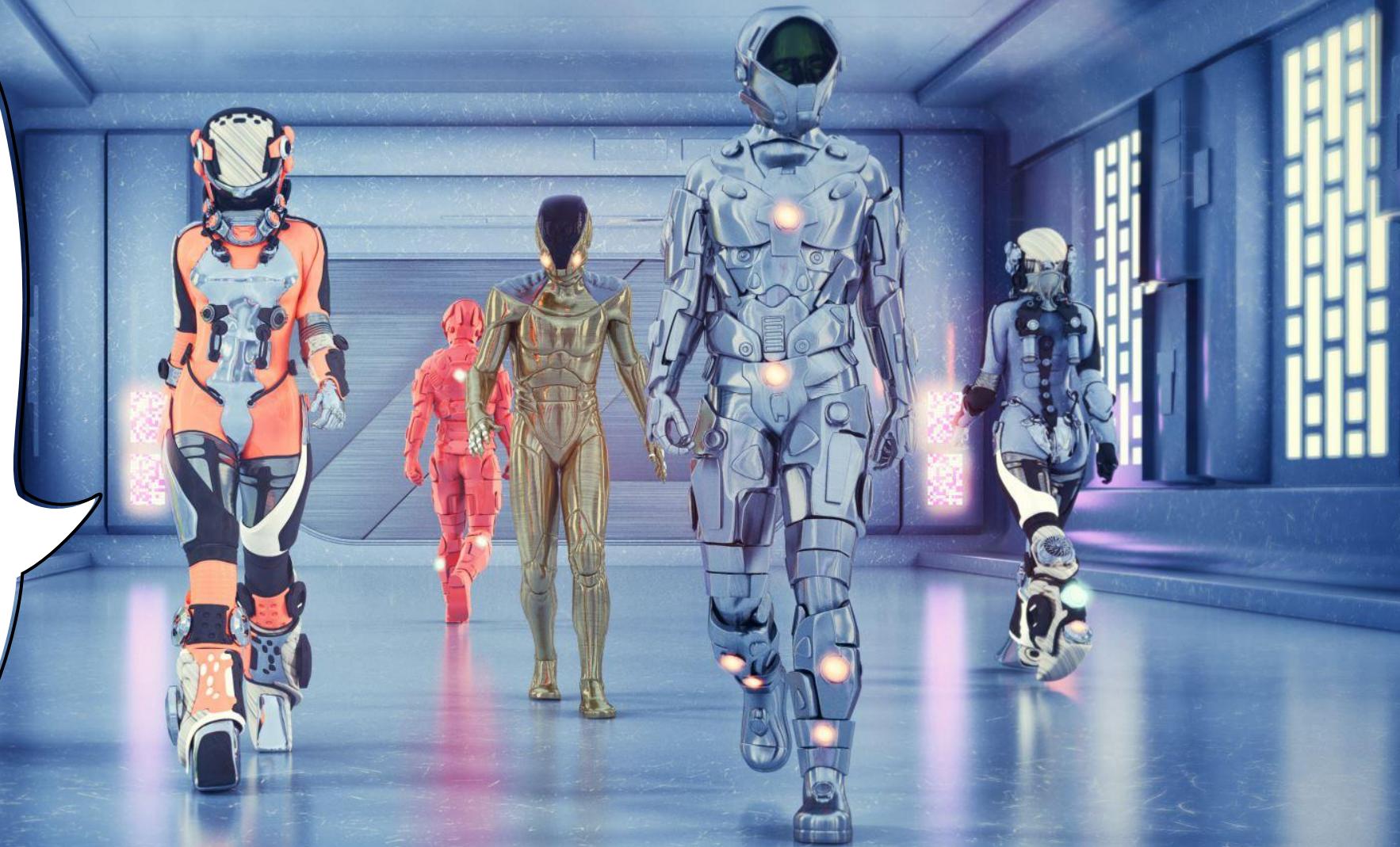
Where the Crawdads Sing

Circe, Song of Achilles

Where the Forest Meets the Stars

Girl on the Train

WHAT IS A  
CHARACTER IN  
FICTION?



# CHARACTER:

A character is a person or an animal who takes part in the action of a literary work.

Characters can be divided into four types...



# ROUND AND FLAT CHARACTERS



A round character is complex. A round character might have a mix of good and bad qualities.

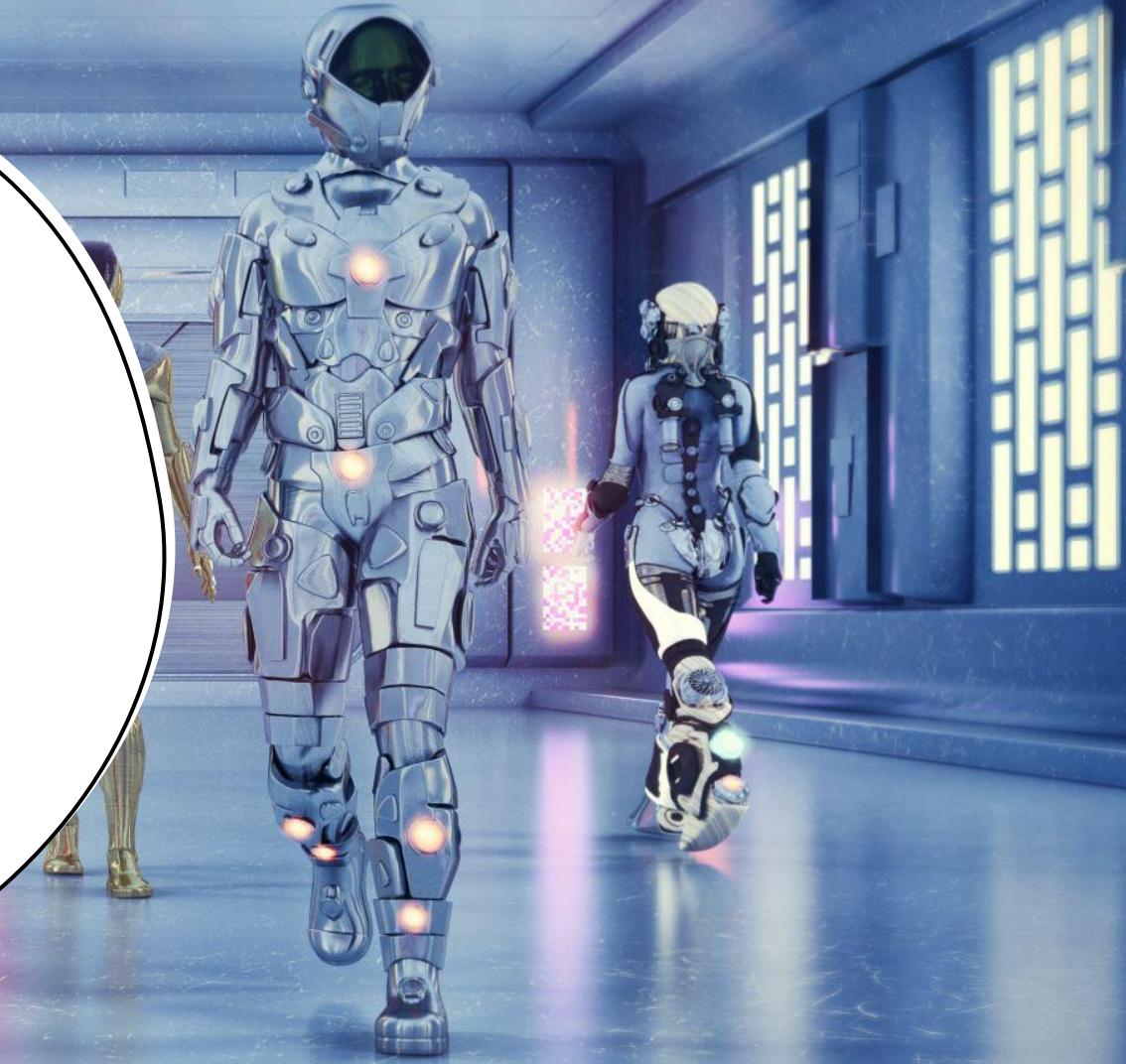


A flat character has only one main characteristic.

## DYNAMIC AND STATIC CHARACTERS

A dynamic character changes as the story goes on.

A static character stays the same from beginning to end.



# ROUND/FLAT & STATIC/DYNAMIC CHARACTERS



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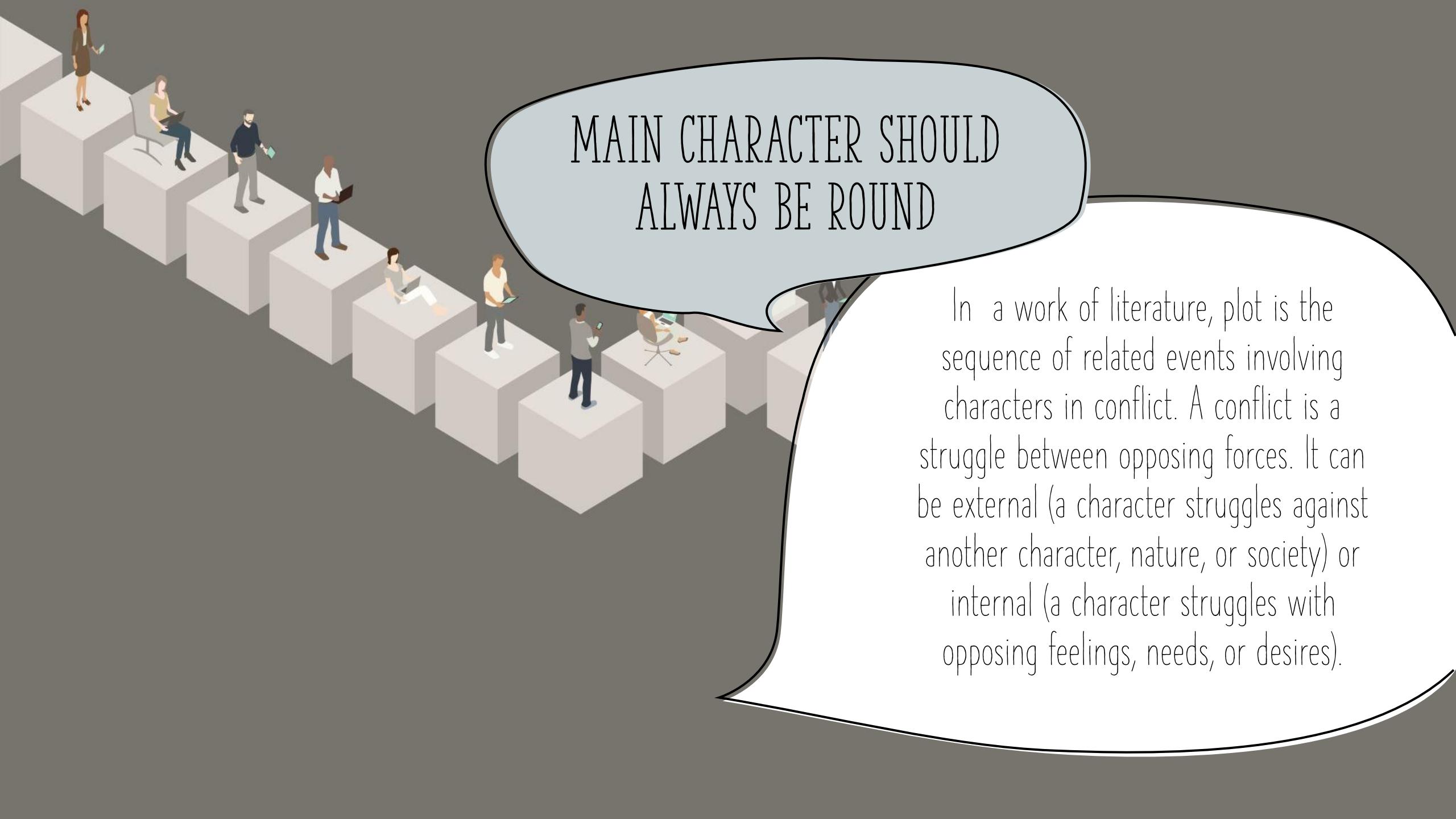
CHARACTER + PLOT  
= THEME

# HOW TO FIND THEME:

Character, obstacles, midpoint  
= realization



Click or copy and paste the link to watch the video: [https://youtu.be/T3PJkPsW8\\_M?si=1Va7hJ7HuKqrkMBC](https://youtu.be/T3PJkPsW8_M?si=1Va7hJ7HuKqrkMBC)



## MAIN CHARACTER SHOULD ALWAYS BE ROUND

In a work of literature, plot is the sequence of related events involving characters in conflict. A conflict is a struggle between opposing forces. It can be external (a character struggles against another character, nature, or society) or internal (a character struggles with opposing feelings, needs, or desires).

# THEME

Understanding characters is a key part of uncovering a work's theme, which is the insight that the text reveals.

A universal theme is a theme which applies to people regardless of the time-period or culture in which they live. To understand characters, it is important to recognize their motivations and the moral dilemmas they face.

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# FINDING THEME WITH THE 4 CHARACTER TYPES

ROUND/STATIC: (Negative change arc) Your readers should be able to ask and answer these questions:

- What did the character refuse to learn?
- What were the consequences of those actions? (Warning story)

ROUND/DYNAMIC: (Positive change arc) Your reader should be able to ask and answer these questions:

- What did the character learn?
- What were the consequences of those actions? (Lesson on how to live = change)

ROUND/STATIC: (Flat arc main character is static – the characters around her are dynamic.)

- What did the character accomplish?
- What were the consequences of those actions? (Did they happen to her or someone else?)

FLAT/STATIC: (Juxtapose side character using one opposite trait)  
How does this character's trait in juxtaposition to main character push the story forward?

FLAT DYNAMIC: (Juxtapose side character using one trait, but in the end, they change in some way to push the story forward and express theme)

ROUND/DYNAMIC: (Juxtapose their qualities and change arc with the main character to push the story forward)

# PRACTICE USING THE FOUR-CHARACTER TYPES:

**Identify each character as round or flat. Write your answer in the blank:**

1. John is too lazy to help his brother clean up. He is too lazy to make breakfast. He is too lazy to get up and see who is at the door. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Diane works hard at her job after school. She also loves playing soccer. She is trying to decide whether to give up her job to join the soccer team.  
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3. Felix usually follows the rules. His friends decide to go skateboarding in an outdoor mall. Skateboarding is not allowed there. Felix does not want to be left out, so he decides to go with his friends. \_\_\_\_\_

**Identify each character as static or dynamic. Write your answer in the blank:**

1. Beginning of the story: John is too lazy to help his brother clean up.  
Ending: John is too lazy to see who is at the door.  
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2. Beginning of the story: Supergirl believes she can solve most problems using her special powers.  
Ending: Supergirl is unable to save her friend from an illness. Supergirl realizes she can't solve every problem.  
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3. Beginning of the story: Felix lets his friends talk him into skateboarding where it's not allowed.  
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Happy Character Development using Juxtaposition!