JUNIOR CYCLE ENGLISH · FREE REVISION SHEET

The novel 1: character

↗ Léim

Learning outcomes (2015 specification): R6, R7, R4, W8. Play the game: **leim.ie/character-clues.html**

1. Show, don't tell

Writers rarely say "Mia is kind". They **show** it, and you find the clues: “Mia gave half of her lunch to the new boy.”

2. STEAL: five ways to show a character

Speech	what they say, and how: *“It should have been me.”*
Thoughts	what goes on in their head: *He wished he had trained harder.*
Effect on others	how other people react: *The others groaned but did what she said.*
Actions	what they do: *He handed the wallet in.*
Looks	what they look like or wear: *His jumper was creased.*

3. Words for what a character is like

kind · brave · shy · bossy · selfish · lazy · honest · jealous · funny · clever · rude

Stronger words for the exam: generous, loyal, determined, confident, arrogant, sly, caring, hard-working, stubborn.

4. Trait or feeling?

A **trait** is what someone is like (it lasts): *brave, honest*.
A **feeling** is how they feel right now (it passes): *scared, happy*.
Character questions want **traits**.

5. Point, quote, explain

Point: Ciarán is selfish.
Quote: he “grabbed the biggest slice”
Explain: he takes the most before anyone else sits down, so he thinks only of himself.

6. Characters change

Say what they are like at the **start** and at the **end**, with a quote for each. Leah: shy (“stared at her shoes”) → brave (“walked on stage”).

Classic mistakes: a feeling instead of a trait · a point with no quote · a quote that doesn't prove the point · copying a whole sentence · two traits with only one quote · describing what happens instead of what the character is like.

Exam tip: one trait per paragraph, each with its own short quote. "Two qualities" means two separate points.

PRACTICE · 27 QUESTIONS

Have a go

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A. Three short extracts

FIONN

1. Fionn found a wallet with €50 in it outside the chipper.
2. For a second he thought about the new football boots he wanted.
3. Then he walked straight into the Garda station and handed it in.
4. The owner, an old man, shook his hand and called him a credit to his parents.

1. Line 2: which STEAL method?_____
2. Line 4: which STEAL method?_____
3. What is Fionn like? Which line proves it? Quote it.

_____

LEAH

1. Leah wore her hood up, even indoors.
2. When the teacher asked her name, she stared at her shoes and whispered it.
3. Nobody in the new class knew she could sing.
4. But at the talent show she walked on stage, took the microphone and sang.

4. Line 1: which STEAL method?_____
5. Line 3: which STEAL method?_____
6. What is Leah like in line 2? Quote it._____
7. What is she like in line 4? Quote it._____

AISLING

1. "You hold the map, you carry the bags, and nobody talks," Aisling said.
2. The others groaned but did what she said.
3. At the crossroads she spotted the moss on the trees and worked out which way was north.
4. She hoped nobody would notice that her hands were shaking.

8. Line 1: which STEAL method?_____
9. Line 4: which STEAL method?_____
10. Aisling is bossy. Which line shows it? Quote it.

_____

11. What is she like in line 3? Quote it._____

B. Trait or feeling? Write T or F.

12. embarrassed
13. bored
14. honest
15. kind
16. brave
17. selfish
18. happy
19. scared

C. What does each quote show? Word bank: brave, funny, jealous, lazy, rude, selfish

20. Darragh: "stayed in bed until ten past eight"
21. Tadhg: "had to laugh"
22. Conor: "scowled and looked away"
23. Ciarán: "grabbed the biggest slice"
24. Saoirse: "rolled her eyes"
25. Niamh: "waded in after it"

D. Exam-style

SAOIRSE

1. Saoirse rolled her eyes when her nan asked about school.
2. Her nan smiled and went back to her knitting.
3. Later, she remembered that her nan had come all the way from Sligo.
4. She made her nan a cup of tea and sat down beside her.

26. How does Saoirse change? Quote once for the start and once for the end.

_____

_____

27. What does her nan's reaction in line 2 tell you about her nan?

_____

CHECK YOUR WORK

Answers

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A	1. Thoughts · 2. Effect on others · 3. honest: “handed it in” (line 3)
A	4. Looks · 5. Effect on others · 6. shy: “stared at her shoes” (line 2) · 7. brave: “walked on stage” (line 4)
A	8. Speech · 9. Thoughts · 10. bossy: “and nobody talks” (line 1) · 11. clever: “worked out which way was north” (line 3)
B	12. F · 13. F · 14. T · 15. T · 16. T · 17. T · 18. F · 19. F
C	20. lazy · 21. funny · 22. jealous · 23. selfish · 24. rude · 25. brave
D	26. At the start she is rude: she “rolled her eyes” when her nan asked about school. By the end she is kind: she “made her nan a cup of tea” and sat with her. 27. Her nan is patient and forgiving: she just “smiled and went back to her knitting” instead of getting cross.

Worked examples

Fionn, line 2: Thoughts
“For a second he thought about the new football boots he wanted.” We see inside his head: he is tempted. That makes handing the wallet in (line 3) even more **honest**.

Leah, line 3: Effect on others
“Nobody in the new class knew she could sing.” The line is about other people, not Leah's own words or actions. Their surprise at the talent show is coming.

Trait or feeling?
“Scared” is how Niamh might feel in the river. “Brave” is what she is like: she is scared and still “waded in after it”.

Aisling: two traits, two quotes
Bossy: “and nobody talks”. Clever: she “worked out which way was north”. One quote can't prove both.

Got one wrong? Find the line again and ask: does the character DO, SAY or THINK this, or is it someone else? Then play **Character Clues** at leim.ie/character-clues.html: the "Go back over these" list at the end shows the clue for each mistake.

All extracts written by Léim. Léim is independent and not connected with the State Examinations Commission or the NCCA.