

Name that Trait!

A Character Study

GOAL

Students will demonstrate an understanding of character traits. They will recall facts, characters, and events from “Now Chinatown” and evidence for certain character traits.

OVERVIEW

A character sketch is a short piece of writing describing a psychological make-up that reveals or shows something important about a person or fictional character. Think about the different characters in “Now Chinatown”. Some are likeable, and some are not so likeable. Students will choose one main character from “Now Chinatown” to detail in an essay. This lesson is applicable to units in language arts, psychology, creative writing, and film studies.

METHODOLOGY

- Instruct students to think about the character of Lee. Then review character traits. Start with a problem or idea and then discover the solution or answers along the way. Where in the movie does she reveal her character traits?
- Instruct students to think of four characteristic traits of Lee. To initiate discussion:
 - Describe Lee’s personality.
 - What are some distinguishing features or traits that describe her character?
 - What does Lee say or do in the movie that proves your ideas?
- Have students return to the movie and repeat the exercise on their own analyzing the traits of either Steven or Chiang. Whenever possible, have students find specific quotations or actions and use them as examples of “evidence” to back-up the trait.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

- Use the essay as a springboard for a creative writing exercise. Have students imagine a character they want to write a story about. Using the essay, students can flesh out their character’s personality traits and brainstorm scenes or events that they want to incorporate into their stories.
- Instruct students to research a real life character from history, i.e. Napoleon, Sitting Bull, or Rosa Parks. Students should create a character sketch based upon their research.
- Encourage students to read. Students should create a character sketch for a famous fictional character from literary works such as A Streetcar Named Desire, The Glass Menagerie, or Death of a Salesman.

