

# Types of Characters in Literature

Every piece of writing in literature is replete with an array of characters who have distinct roles and personalities. Here, we make an attempt to classify these characters into specific roles and personality traits. Take a look.

The expanse of literature is immense and figuring it out is not as easy as we would assume. No matter how much we attempt to narrow down the various elements of literature, there are so many intricacies in these that defining them completely and having every aspect fit into the mold of this definition is not only impossible, but also unfair. Among the various elements of literature come the types of characters that are used in numerous forms of writing. Again, an attempt has been made to fit these characters into archetypal roles and personality traits. However, no character can be bound to such typicality as there is always a little more that flows out of that mold. Here of course, we try to provide you the established descriptions of these characters, with examples from the famous Harry Potter series so that you can relate to them better.

## Characters Based on Personalities

There are certain types of characters who are described based on the personality traits they possess. These personality traits, though usually typical of the roles these characters play, may not always be associated to these roles. For instance, it is not necessary that the main character in a piece of writing should be deep and fully developed. It could be the character's friend, the enemy, or any other character who is this intense personality that readers know more about.

Character Type	Description
<b>Flat Character</b>	<p>Flat characters have few but easily recognizable traits that make them stereotypical characters. For instance, the stepmother who humiliates her stepdaughter, the school bully, the one teacher who is mean, the mother who is only focused on having her daughter married, are all flat characters. In short, there are not many facets to this character's personality that are revealed to the reader.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Mr. Filch, the caretaker of Hogwart's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is a flat character, with his only undying obsession being finding students breaking school rules.</p>
<b>Round Character</b>	<p>A round character is someone who has more facets to her/his personality than a flat character. This is a character that develops through the story and therefore, her/his qualities are difficult to identify completely, right up to the end. The personality of such a character is not consistent, which makes the character more realistic than others in the piece of writing.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley, Hermione Granger, Ginny Weasley and Severus Snape are among some of the round characters in this series.</p>
<b>Static Character</b>	<p>A static character's personality does not change throughout the piece of work, and save for the initial introduction, there is not much to learn about such a character.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> In the Harry Potter series, we find that Professor McGonagoll or Bellatrix Lestrange are static characters as we notice that their personalities are consistent and do not change; nor does our knowledge of these characters increase throughout.</p>
<b>Dynamic Character</b>	<p>A dynamic character is someone whose personality changes through the course of writing, due to a change in the situation or the plot. This may be from weak to strong, from strong to weak, from a cheery person to a person in distress, and the like. While one would assume that a dynamic personality would be the protagonist, it is not always necessary.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> These traits are evident by example of Neville Longbottom, Harry Potter's classmate, who is the perpetually petrified student at Hogwart's. However, toward the end of the series, he leads an army of students to fight against Voldemort, the evil character feared by all.</p>
<b>Confidant</b>	<p>The confidant is someone the main character confides in, and it is through these confessions that the personality of the main character is revealed.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> In the Harry Potter series, there are numerous characters who play confidant to Harry Potter that show us his diverse personality. Some examples are Remus Lupin, Albus Dumbledore, Ronald Weasley, Hermione Granger, Hagrid, and Sirius Black.</p>

<b>Foil</b>	<p>The foil is someone who is used as a contrasting character to enhance the personality of another character.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> A brilliant example of this in the Harry Potter series is that of Draco Malfoy, who is exactly the opposite of everything Harry Potter and his friends stand for. This contrast is evident throughout the series.</p>
<b>Stock Character</b>	<p>Often assumed to be a flat character, a stock character is actually one who represents stereotypical personality traits which may root from culture, appearance, or situations. Such characters are very easy to identify.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> A character that fits into this description from the Harry Potter series would again be Professor McGonagoll, who is the stereotypical strict, rule-abiding teacher evident from her demeanor, her stern expression, her manner of talking, and the typical glasses that seem to define such teachers.</p>

### Characters Based on Roles

While the aforementioned characters were defined by personality traits, there is another way of classifying these characters, i.e. by way of the roles they play in the piece of writing.

Character Type	Description
<b>The Protagonist</b>	<p>The protagonist is the character who is central to the story. Though often the good guy, the protagonist can also be the bad guy (or the anti-hero) in the story. But this protagonist is someone the reader has to accept and understand.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Obviously, Harry Potter is the protagonist in the Harry Potter series, where he is the good guy. An example of the bad guy being the protagonist could be Hannibal Lecter in the novel Hannibal Rising by Thomas Harris. Here, he is the protagonist and the anti-hero.</p>
<b>The Antagonist</b>	<p>The antagonist, often termed as the villain of the story, is the character whom the protagonist must confront and defy for victory. The antagonist however may not only be a person, it could be a situation that is creating an obstacle in the path of the protagonist towards her/his final goal.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Clearly, in the Harry Potter Series, Lord Voldemort is the prime antagonist, while there are many others (followers of Lord Voldemort) who Harry Potter has to contend with in each book, such as Professor Quirrell, the Basilisk, Peter Pettigrew, and the like.</p>
<b>The Underdog</b>	<p>The underdog is a character who often is underplayed in a book, say someone who is the scapegoat or someone against whom all bets would have been placed in any given situation.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> We find that Neville Longbottom is the underdog in the Harry Potter series, who as described earlier, transforms from a petrified student to someone who leads a whole army in the fight against evil. He turns out to be someone the reader would never have expected.</p>
<b>The Sidekick</b>	<p>The sidekick of a character often has a weaker personality in comparison to the character her/himself. This is a person who sticks by the character's side all the time, and usually tends to do as directed by the character.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Gregory Goyle and Vincent Crabbe are sidekicks to Draco Malfoy in the Harry Potter series. Do not, for one instance, assume that Ron and Hermione are Harry Potter's sidekicks. These are strong characters in the series who have fully developed personalities and important roles to play in the entire story. Crabbe and Goyle, on the other hand, are merely present around Malfoy at all times, and do not really have any strong role to play.</p>

As mentioned earlier, there may be so much more to a character that does not fit completely into any of the aforementioned descriptions. However, this is an attempt to classify these characters as specifically as possible. You should also note that a specific character defined by the role she/he plays may also fit into the personality type that has been defined above. There could be overlapping dimensions to a character and making an inference is then left to the reader. If you happen to be defining a character, you will have to keep a variety of aspects in mind while doing so,

and you should definitely not limit your character to these definitions. Let your creativity flow; for all you know, a new definition may have to be created to fit your character into it.