

Understanding Characterization

Examining Direct & Indirect
Characterization



Characterization

Characterization is the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character.



Characterization is revealed through



Direct
Characterization



Indirect
Characterization

Direct Characterization

Direct characterization tells the audience directly about the personality of the character.

This is the easiest of the two types to understand.





Example

"The patient swordsman and the wise wizard were both talented and did not like to lose."

Explanation: The author is directly telling the audience the personality of these two characters. The swordsman is "patient," and the wizard is "wise."

Indirect Characterization

Indirect characterization shows things that reveal the personality of a character.

There are five different methods of indirect characterization.





Speech

What does the character say?
How does the character
speak?

Example: The young prince fell to one knee before the maiden and announced, "My beloved, I will have thee; live with me and be my love."

Thoughts

What is revealed through the character's private thoughts and feelings?

Example: This cannot be my life. I have to find a way out, the jester thought as he performed in front of the town square.





Effect on others

What is revealed through the character's effect on other people? How do others feel, behave, or respond to the character?

Example: The townspeople gave a collective groan as the king's trumpeter interrupted their sleep to alert them to another one of the king's new decrees.

Actions

What does the character do?
How does the character
behave?

Example: Jason had finally made it through the ranks to lead general; it was only a matter of time before he would be able to execute his plan.



Looks

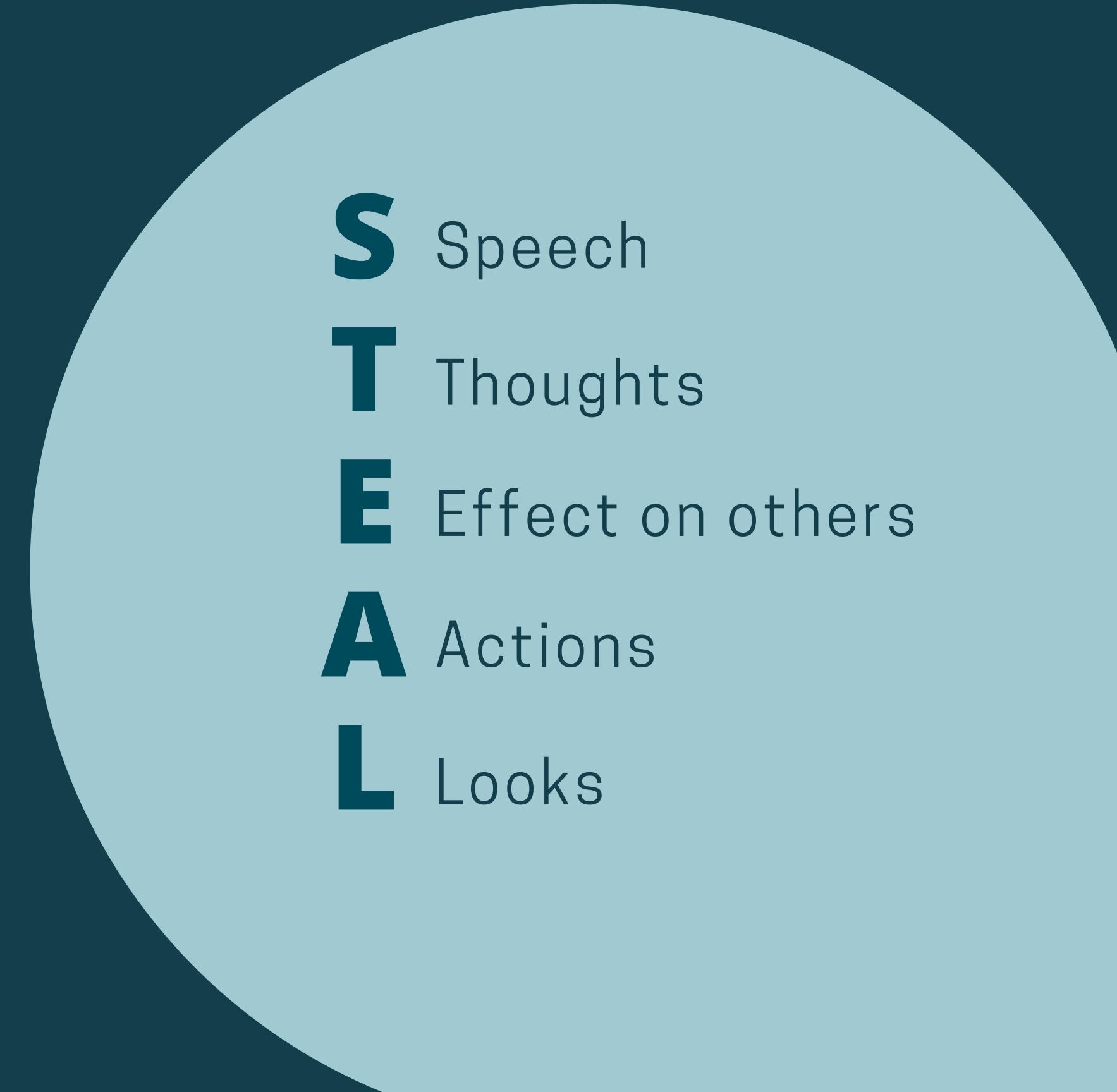
What does the character look like? How does the character dress?

Explanation: The burly welder arms were the size for four men.



Tip for indirect characterization

Use the mnemonic device of STEAL to remember the five types of indirect characterization



S Speech
T Thoughts
E Effect on others
A Actions
L Looks

Your turn

Now you know how authors reveal the personality of a character, use it in your novel.

Whose thought and actions are you going to write about in your story idea?

