

Character and Style Analysis Words List

Student Resource

Understanding and successfully conveying to the reader how authors characterize people in their works is crucial to success in analytical essays. Many standardized tests deal with characterization and style analysis. The following lists have been compiled to help students select the most precise word to describe a character's personal qualities or an author's style. Words have been checked using lists from EDL (Educational Developmental Laboratories) to ensure reading levels and reader accessibility for middle grades through high school English classes. The lists include both positive and negative descriptors.

Character Traits

Physical Qualities

manly, sturdy, strong, muscular, brawny, handsome, beautiful, pretty, lovely, good-looking, charming, well-groomed, dainty, delicate, graceful, elegant, attractive, ravishing, neat, skillful, agile, nimble, active, lively, spirited, vivacious, glamorous, bewitching, enchanting, classy, weak, feeble, sluggish, frail, decrepit, thin, emaciated, portly, sloppy, obese, unkempt, sickly, frail, unclean, ugly, hideous, homely, awkward, clumsy, bizarre, grotesque, repulsive, loathsome, horrible

Mental Qualities

educated, scholarly, learned, wise, intelligent, talented, intellectual, gifted, rational, reasonable, sensible, prudent, shrewd, observant, clever, ingenious, inventive, subtle, cunning, crafty, sharp, logical, resourceful, calculating, intuitive, knowledgeable, unintelligent, nonintellectual, unschooled, ignorant, illiterate, irrational, foolish, crass, prejudiced, narrow-minded, simple, shallow, dull, idiotic, deranged, demented, senile

Moral Qualities

innocent, righteous, upright, pure, forgiving, temperate, truthful, honorable, decent, trustworthy, straightforward, respectable, wicked, mean, corrupt, infamous, notorious, immoral, unprincipled, vulgar, deceitful, dishonest, dishonorable, foul, lewd, lustful, cruel

Spiritual Qualities

religious, reverent, pious, devout, faithful, holy, saintly, angelic, godlike, spiritual, devoted, skeptical, agnostic, atheistic, irreligious, impious, irreverent, sacrilegious, materialistic, godless, fiend-like, spiteful, fanatical, wicked

Social Qualities

civil, tactful, courteous, polite, cooperative, genial, hospitable, gracious, amiable, cordial, sociable, flirtatious, good-natured, cheerful, jovial, jolly, suave, debonair, elegant, quiet, unsociable, anti-social, antagonistic, abusive, aggressive, discourteous, impudent, impolite, insolent, ill-mannered, jealous, unrefined, ungracious, annoying, sycophantic, pompous, sullen, sulky, grumpy, crabby, belligerent, critical, cynical, caustic, sleazy, classless, condescending, crude

General Personal Qualities

distinguished, noble, admirable, influential, impressive, genteel, refined, aristocratic, cultured, generous, charitable, altruistic, philanthropic, humane, merciful, gentle, kindly, patient, sympathetic, compassionate, ambitious, conscientious, punctual, enthusiastic, determined, confident, courageous, solemn, serious, cautious, eloquent, persuasive, witty, reserved, meek, humble, modest, natural, shy, sensitive, thrifty, appreciative, consistent, kind, defiant, judgmental, nonchalant, indifferent, moody, melancholic, petty, stingy, domineering, ruthless, incompetent, unreliable, unstable, cowardly, headstrong, impulsive, apathetic, insensitive, extravagant, insincere, hypocritical, overconfident, arrogant, proud, stubborn, rebellious, envious, traitorous, odd, obnoxious, malicious, spiteful

Style Analysis

Author Descriptors

cultured, intellectual, sensible, rational, analytical, imaginative, perceptive, optimistic, idealistic, religious, sympathetic, sophisticated, sentimental, original, clever, witty, humorous, unprejudiced, realistic, romantic, uncultured, nonintellectual, shallow, opinionated, intolerant, pessimistic, cynical

Diction and Author’s Style Descriptors

exact, precise, concise, clinical, ironic, metaphorical, poetic, plain, simple, forceful, natural, formal, smooth, polished, classical, literal, figurative, colloquial, extravagant, euphemistic, pompous, vague, harsh, coarse, awkward, unpolished, crude, vulgar, obscure, grotesque

Syntax and Sentence Descriptors

loose, periodic, balanced, parallel, antithetical, inverted, long, short, euphonic, rhythmical, ornate, mimetic (imitative), journalistic, disjointed, incoherent, rambling, awkward, jerky, cacophonous, monotonously similar, jumbled, disorganized