

Essential Skill: Character Traits

Alex the Alien

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, writers. It's Margaret.

I have a friend, Marco, who is working on creating his very own animated web series. A web series is a show made up of multiple parts, or episodes. You watch it on the Internet. Marco writes all the stories and figures out what happens in each episode. He also creates sketches of the characters and settings for the show to take place.

As the writer, Marco brings his characters to life by deciding how each of his characters will respond to what happens in the story. If they're shy, what would they think? If they're creative, what would they do?

Shy and creative are *character traits*—they're words that help us describe what characters think and what characters do. There are lots of different traits: Determined, lazy, funny, polite, kind—lots of other ones, too! Marco uses examples from different shows to help him learn how to create great characters. This is one from a show made for young kids.

- *Where are your parents?*

- *Well they have to be somewhere around here.*

- *Excuse me, do any of you recognize this egg? Your eggs don't look like this? Okay, thank you.*

- Excuse me, do you have any idea where this egg—oh, I'm sorry, I'll just let you sleep then.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: What character traits would you use to describe the main character and why?

HOOK 2

Maybe you said, the main character was kind because they wanted to return the egg to its family. Or maybe you said, they were polite because they always said, excuse me and thank you. Whatever you said is great!

The character in this story could be described as helpful, persistent, and brave. Character traits like these help to quickly communicate something about a character. But they don't say much about who that character really is. Like what do they do that makes them hopeful, persistent, or brave?

In the story, wanting to return the lost egg shows the trait of being helpful. Not giving up shows persistence and talking to the different animals shows bravery. Marco loves how this story doesn't just tell you about the character, but shows you the character's personality through what the character does. It's through a character's thoughts and actions where characters really start to come alive.

Meet Peko. He is quiet, kind, and a picky eater. Just like you, his day is filled with lots of different thoughts and feelings. Watch this clip. What actions or words show Peko's character traits?

- Mom: Naomi, Peko!

- Naomi: Come on. We'll be late for the bus.

- Peko: Coming. Hey, wait up.

- Mom: Don't forget your lunch, you two.

- **Naomi:** *Thanks, Mom.*

- **Naomi:** *Come on!*

- **Peko:** *Okay. Okay.*

- **Naomi:** *Bye, dad!*

- **Dad:** *Have a good day.*

- **Peko:** *Not again.*

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss. How is Peko feeling? What actions or words show his personality or character traits?

HOOK 3

Maybe you said that he's hungry and he can't wait to eat his lunch, or that he keeps looking at his sandwich and thinking how bad it is. Whatever you said is great!

The writer of this story could have written, "Peko feels hungry. He doesn't like his lunch." That's okay, but here's what they wrote instead, "Peko pauses, without answering his mom. He slowly walks to pick up his lunch. He quickly smells the lunch bag. His face reacts to the smell. Once on the bus, Peko opens his lunch and sees the sandwich. He groans, "Not again."

Wow! By giving Peko things to do and showing what he is thinking, Peko starts to come alive in our imagination and in the writing. And the more we understand and relate to characters, the more we care about them and about their story.

When Marco creates a new story and needs to create characters that feel real, he always asks: How would they respond? What would they think? What would they do?

Now it's your turn. You get to be the writer of Marco's next episode and figure out how the character of Alex the alien would react to different situations in the story. You'll start with the character traits of Alex and then decide what would Alex think and what would Alex do in different situations.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

In today's lesson, you'll need someone to share ideas with. This could be a partner or someone you sit near. When everyone has a partner, click the arrow to go to the next step.

STEP 3

Alex is an alien. Marco has given Alex three character traits, kind, funny, and shy. In Marco's new story, three scenes take place in a school cafeteria. It's crowded, loud, and filled with students coming and going.

In scene number one, a student named Bob is looking for a place to sit and eat. Here's how Marco describes how Alex would respond: Alex sees Bob looking for a place to sit and thinks, "He could sit here." Alex draws a funny face on a napkin and quietly holds it up while pointing to the empty seat. Bob laughs and sits down.

Discuss with your partner: How does this description show Alex's character traits of being kind, funny, and shy?

STEP 4

Find "Scene 1: Bob" on your worksheet. Reread the description and then circle the part that shows what Alex is thinking.

STEP 5

Reread the description, and then underline the part that shows what Alex does.

STEP 6

Marco used what Alex was thinking—"He could sit here." And doing—"Alex draws a funny face on a napkin and quietly holds it up while pointing to the empty seat," to show Alex's character traits.

In the next scene in the cafeteria, a teacher named Mr. Yapper looks for something that he has lost.

Discuss with your partner: What are some things that Alex might be thinking when Alex sees the teacher looking for something? Remember, Alex's character traits are kind, funny, and shy.

STEP 7

Maybe since Alex is kind and shy, Alex thinks, "I should help him but I don't want to make a fuss." Or since Alex is funny, Alex thinks, "He kind of looks like a confused puppy!" There are lots of different things that Alex could think of.

Find "Scene 2: Mr. Yapper" on your worksheet. Write a sentence describing what Alex is thinking here. If you need help, you can use your Idea Bank.

STEP 8

Now that you've written what Alex is thinking, what are some things that Alex might do? Would Alex ask Mr. Yapper what they're looking for? Or would Alex quietly look for something that might be lost?

Discuss with your partner: What are some things that Alex might do in this situation?

STEP 9

In the "Scene 2: Mr. Yapper" section on your worksheet, write a sentence describing what Alex does here.

STEP 10

Take turns reading your sentences with your partner.

STEP 11

In the final scene in the cafeteria, another student, named Slug, trips and drops his full food tray all over the floor.

Discuss with your partner: What are some things that Alex might think and do to respond to Slug dropping his food tray? Remember, if you need help, you can use your Idea Bank.

STEP 12

Find "Scene 3: Slug" on your worksheet.

Write three or more sentences describing what Alex thinks and

does in the scene here. If you want to do more, you could describe how Slug reacts to Alex. If you need more space to write, use the back of your worksheet.

STEP 13

Take turns reading what you wrote with your partner.

WRAP UP

Great job, writers! Starting with the character traits of Alex, you were able to help Marco identify what Alex might think and do in the show's cafeteria scenes. The character of Alex the alien is now much more complex and real, helping to bring Marco's new story and animations to life.

So remember, anytime you need to create characters for your stories, just ask: what would they think, and what would they do?

See you next time, writers.