

Understanding and successfully conveying to the reader how authors characterize people in their works is crucial to success in analysis 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 School through High School English classes. The lists range from positive connotations to more negative.

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, slangy, 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, un-unified, incoherent, rambling, awkward, jerky, cacophonous, monotonously similar, jumbled, disorganized

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, stupid, 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, unprincipled, 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