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