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| **STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**  Teacher GuidANCE | C:\Users\Felix\AppData\Local\Temp\Temp1_smallpox-logo(2).zip\smallpox-logo.jpg |

# NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINKS (ENGLAND)

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| **Upper KS2 (ages 9-11)** |
| **Writing**  Describing characters   Considering how authors have developed characters and setting  **Reading** Drawing inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts   and motives from their actions  Identifying and discussing themes |

# KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

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| **By the end of this activity children should be able to:** |
| * understand and use the key concepts relating to characters –  hero, villain, goal, obstacle, climax, theme, character development * apply these concepts to analyse characters in film and literature * apply their understanding to enhance their own creative writing |

# Lesson Activities

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| **Key questions** | **What makes a character interesting? What is character development?** | | |
| **Overview** | **An English activity exploring character and character development**  Children learn about the key concepts relating to character and character development, using familiar examples from across film and literature. They apply these concepts to analyse the JAMES film and then to compose their own stories or scripts. The skills learned in this activity apply to all forms of storytelling, but are particularly relevant to drama. They are based on the approach used by professionals in the film, TV and theatre industries. | | |
| **Teaching Time** | 2 hrs + | | |
| **Key Vocabulary** | hero/protagonist  goal character development | villain/antagonist obstacle | climax theme |

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| **Stage/summary** | **Running Notes** |
| **The protagonist and their goal** | Storytelling is all about **characters**. Good stories have strong, captivating characters at their heart. They can be based on real people (like James), or be completely made up (like Spongebob Squarepants).  The main character in a story is called the **protagonist** (the **hero –** who can be either male or female). They are usually introduced at the very beginning of the film/story and the story is told through their eyes (their *perspective*). We root for them throughout the film.  The **plot** usually begins when the protagonist **wants** something and tries to get it, or is given a **task** to complete. This is called the character’s **goal**. It is their mission or quest, or something they want more than anything in the world. The protagonist’s desire to fulfill their goal is what drives the story forward.  *For example, in Kung Fu Panda, Po’s goal is to become a kung fu master.*  *In Lord of the Rings, Frodo’s goal is to destroy the ring in Mount Doom in Mordor.*  **Discussion**  Pick a film and/or other story and identify the protagonist and their goal at the beginning of the film.  What attracts the audience to the character and makes us interested in them? Are they funny, brave, clever, vulnerable, or charming? Do we feel sorry for them, concerned for them, intrigued by them?  How many films with female protagonists can they think of, apart from *Frozen*?! What about black, Asian, gay, disabled, or other “minorities”? Should there be more diversity in the heroes in films?  Read the first chapter from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl. Who is the protagonist? What is his goal?  *He desperately wanted something more filling and satisfying than cabbage and cabbage soup. The one thing he longed for more than anything else was . . . CHOCOLATE.*  The chapter ends with the line: *And oh, how he wished he could go inside the factory and see what it was like!* |
| **The antagonist and obstacles** | During the story, the protagonist has to overcome **obstacle**s that lie in the way of their goal. This is what creates the drama (also called **dramatic conflict**).  Often the obstacles are created by the **antagonist** (the **villai**n), who wants to stop the protagonist achieving their goal.  *In* Kung Fu Panda*, the antagonist is the evil snow leopard Tai Lung who is trying to get the Dragon Scroll having been denied it before. Po must protect the Scroll and defeat him in the process proving that he is a true kung fu master.*  *In* Lord of the Rings*, Frodo faces many obstacles, including climbing the Endless Stair mountain, facing Shelob the spider, being captured by Orcs, and resisting the power of the ring. Throughout his journey, Golem is trying to steal the ring from him.*  **Discussion**  Look back at your list of protagonists and identify the antagonist (villain) in the story, if there is one.  What about Charlie and the Chocolate Factory? Is there an antagonist in the story? Could it be Willy Wonka? Or perhaps the other children?  Is Willy Wonka a hero or villain, or somewhere in between? Is there a difference between the book and the film(s)?  Can you think why it might it make a character interesting if we’re not quite sure if they are good or bad? |
| **Character development and theme** | The obstacles that the protagonist faces get **bigger and bigger** throughout the film. This keeps the audience (or reader) interested in the story.  At the end of the film, the protagonist faces the **biggest obstacle** of all. This is called the **climax**. It’s the most exciting part of the story.  By this time, the protagonist has usually **changed** in some meaningful and interesting way. They have learnt an important lesson about life, or changed their minds about something, or become a better person. This helps them to overcome the final obstacle and achieve their goal. This change is called **character development**.  *In Kung Fu Panda, Po is accidentally proclaimed to be the Dragon Warrior. He is fiercely ridiculed and doesn’t believe in himself, but after battling through rigorous training, he learns to master his own kung fu style. In the climax he fights and defeats Tai Lung and earns the respect of everyone who made fun of him. He has achieved his goal of becoming a true kung fu master.*  Sometimes, a character’s **goal changes** as the character develops. They realise that their original goal was not what they really wanted.  *A classic example is Scrooge in A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. Scrooge begins as a cold-hearted miser who wants Christmas to be abolished but ends up being a warm, charitable soul who loves Christmas.*  The way a character develops tells us what the film is “really” about – the **theme**.  *In Kung Fu Panda, Po learns that everyone, including himself, is special in some way.*  *In Lord of the Rings, Frodo learns that a tiny little hobbit from the Shire has the strength to save the world.*  *In A Christmas Carol, Scrooge learns the error of his ways and the true meaning of Christmas.*  If a character **doesn’t develop** much during a story, it can leave the viewer feeling **dissatisfied** and **emotionally disconnected** from the film. They leave the cinema – or close the book – asking what the point was in the protagonist overcoming all those obstacles if they don’t learn anything or change.  **Discussion**  Look back at your list of protagonists and discuss how they change by the end of the story.  Use the way the main characters develop to help you identify the themes of the stories. |
| **JAMES short film – Discussion**  The class discusses characters in JAMES film | Watch the JAMES film again if needed. You might like to ask some questions before to encourage children to watch actively.  **Discussion**  Who is the protagonist in JAMES?  Why do you think the filmmakers chose to tell the story from this character’s point of view? Why did they choose him to be the hero?  Could another character have been the hero? How would this have changed the story?  Which character did you like best? Why?  What is James and John’s goal at the beginning of the film?   *(To find work so they can feed the family)*  What do you think might happen if John refused to let James take part in the experiment?  How does James feel about the experiment?  What obstacles does James face to achieve his goal? *(He must take part in both parts of the experiment)*  Do these obstacles get bigger as the story goes on? *(The first part of the experiment only involves cowpox. The second part of the experiment involves smallpox so the stakes are higher for James – there is more risk)*  Do you think Dr Jenner is the antagonist? In what way is he good and in what ways is he bad?  *(On the one hand he is using James in a potentially dangerous experiment, but on the other hand he believes he is protecting James and helping rid the world of smallpox – and he is sure of his methodology)*  At the end of the film James changes his mind and decides to go back to Dr Jenner and complete the experiment. How does this show character development?  *(He realises that although he is just a little boy and he is scared, it’s up to him to help his family; he becomes brave; he realises his father is in an impossible situation; he also thinks it is worth endangering his own life to save the world from smallpox)*  What does this suggest that the themes of the film might be?  (*Bravery, family, coming of age, growing up, belief in science*)  The climax of the film is when James makes the decision to go back to Dr Jenner and complete the experiment. Is it an exciting climax? Do you think it would be more exciting if we actually saw the final part of the experiment?  Why do you think the filmmakers decided to end the film where they ended it?  **You might like to pick another film or story to discuss similar questions.** |
| **Writing**  Children write their own stories | Children now apply key ideas to their own stories or feature film outlines.  Children should think about and plan their stories before they start writing. They should start by thinking up a protagonist that has a goal, and thinking about how that character will change and develop by the end of the story. They might do the planning in groups and then write their own stories.  If the children write feature film outlines, groups can pitch their ideas to the rest of the class. The class gives feedback and vote for which film they want to give money to get made!  **Tips - Some things to think about to help the children plan their story**  You need to think carefully about your protagonist (hero) before you start writing. Try and make them as interesting and captivating as possible!  Who is your protagonist? Are they a real historical person or a made up character?  What is their goal? What do they want? What is their mission? Try and make it something really interesting or exciting!  What obstacles will they face?  Is there an antagonist who will put these obstacles in their way? Why are they trying to stop your protagonist from achieving their goal?  Think about character development. How will your protagonist change by the end of the story? What will they learn?  What is the theme of your story?  **Get to know your character!**  Before you start writing, you need to know your character inside out, almost as well as you know yourself. If you asked Ian Fleming (the writer of James Bond novels) what Bond liked to have for breakfast, he could tell you – scrambled eggs most days! Work in pairs. Pretend to be your character whilst the other person asks you questions. Then swap over.  Some ideas for questions:  How old are they? Do they go to school or have a job? Where do they live?  What’s their greatest fear? Do they have any secrets that they don’t tell anyone else?  What kind of person are they? Brave, scared, shy, confident, happy, sad?  What do they look like: tall, short, long hair, wears glasses? What do they wear?  Did you learn anything new about your character?!  Are there any gaps you need to fill in? |