

Characterisation

9th Grade

Direct and indirect — and why writers prefer the second.

DIRECT

- The narrator states it outright
- "She was generous."
- Fast and unambiguous
- Nothing for the reader to work out
- Can feel flat if overused

INDIRECT

- Shown through action and speech
- She emptied her purse into the tin
- Slower but far more convincing
- The reader draws the conclusion
- Speech, Thoughts, Effect, Actions, Looks

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

"Show, don't tell" is really an instruction to prefer indirect characterisation. The reader trusts what they worked out

An unreliable narrator uses direct characterisation that the indirect evidence contradicts. That gap is the point.