ENGLISH

Lesson 3

Year 5

Topic: Fantasy stories

Exploring characterisation

Today you will:

- understand how to identify and use language that represents characters
- understand how to form and reflect on viewpoints about characters.

Resources

Text

Baillie, A and Harris, W 2012, *DragonQuest*, Walker Books, Sydney. (Or use an online search engine to find a read-aloud version of the story.)

Digital

Video — Precise vocabulary (4:28)

Key terms

character, characterisation, cline, modal verb, noun, noun group, opinion, precise vocabulary, verb, verb group

For definitions and explanations of terms, please see the Glossary.

Lesson

Note

This lesson is completed over two sessions.

Listen to a re-reading of *DragonQuest*

In this lesson, you will look at how the author of *DragonQuest* uses precise vocabulary to describe characters and their traits.



Characterisation is the process of creating a character in a story. Remember authors choose their words very carefully because they want to paint a picture in the mind of the reader. To do this, they use precise vocabulary.

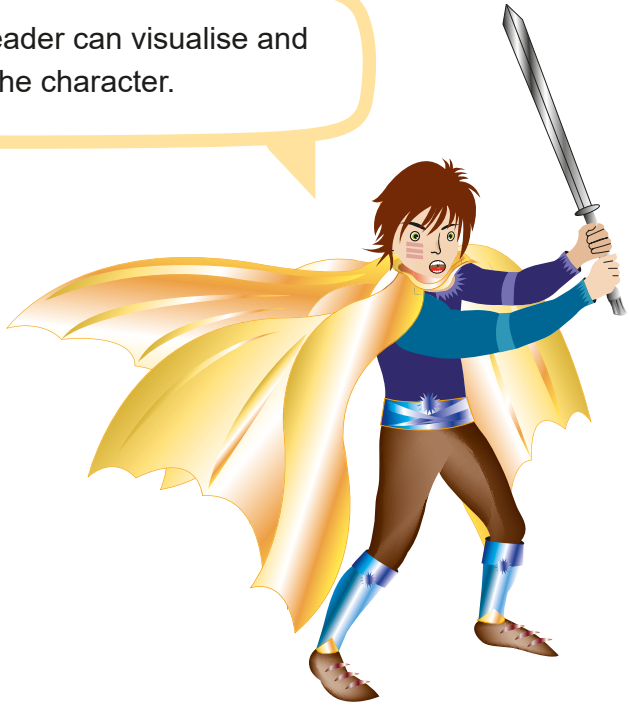
In *DragonQuest*, Allan Baillie uses some precise vocabulary to describe the characters in the story. In this way, the reader can experience the story through the eyes of the boy because the characters are described so vividly.

Precise vocabulary is made up of different language features such as nouns and noun groups, verbs and verb groups, and similes. By choosing these language features carefully, the writer creates a clear picture in the reader's mind of the characters and what they are like.



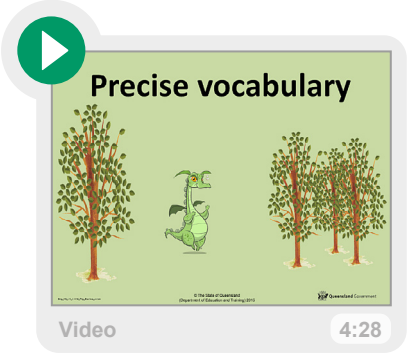
Why is it important that an author paints a clear picture of a character in a reader's mind?

It is so the reader can visualise and understand the character.



1. View the **Video — Precise vocabulary** again.

   In this video, you learned that authors choose their words carefully because they want to paint a picture in the mind of the reader. To do this, they use **precise vocabulary**.



2. Re-read the story *DragonQuest* or listen to an online reading of the book.

Examine language that builds characterisation



Now let's identify some precise vocabulary used by the author of *DragonQuest* to create a clear image in the mind of the reader about the characters. First of all, let's look at how he has used nouns and noun groups to describe the characters.

Authors use carefully selected nouns and noun groups to give the reader a clear description of characters.

For example:

- The **noun** *boy* could be *lad*, *youth* or *child*. Each of these nouns creates a slightly different picture of the type of character the boy is.
- The **noun groups** *the fearless boy* and *the timid boy* use precise vocabulary to give a clear picture of what type of character the boy is.

3. Read or listen to the beginning of the story where Allan Baillie is convincing the boy to join the quest.

   a. Find the word 'knight'. What word does Allan Baillie use to describe the knight?

Circle the word on the cline below.



b. Allan Baillie could have used the noun group *a big knight* or *an impressive knight* but he chose to use *an epic knight*. Why do you think he chose these words?

c. What image of the knight do the words *an epic knight* create in the reader's mind?



Now let's explore how verbs and verb groups make you feel about the characters.

Authors also carefully select verbs and verb groups that help create a picture of characters and how they behave.

For example:

- The **verb** *walk* could be *stroll*, *stride* or *tread*. Each of these words gives the reader a slightly different point of view about how the character moves.
- The **verb groups** (look for the word/s that describe/s actions and behaviours) *walks **fearfully*** and *strides **boldly*** create a clear picture of how the character moves and behaves.

4. Read or listen to the part in the story where the knight explains the safest way to cross the desert.

   a. Find the verb groups the knight uses to explain to the boy what they need to do to survive crossing the desert. (**Hint**: Look for the verb groups starting with *must*).

Modal verb — a verb that expresses a degree of probability (for example: I *might* come home.) or a degree of obligation (for example: You *must* give it to me.). Using modal verbs such as *must* makes the reader feel a sense of urgency and adds to the tension of the plot.

b. Tick the statement below which best matches what these verb groups tell the reader about the knight's character.

- ☐ The knight is not sure what they need to do to complete their quest.
- ☐ The knight is very certain of what they need to do to complete their quest.



Now let's look at how the author has used **similes** in *DragonQuest* to create clear images of the characters.

A **simile** is a literary device used to create a comparison between different things. For example:

The dragon flew *as* fast as the wind.

The dragon roared *like* a freight train.

Similes often use the words *like* or *as* to compare one thing with another.

5. Read or listen to the part in the story where Allan Baillie describes the 'whispering abyss'.

a. Find two similes the knight uses to describe how strong and brave he is. Write them in the space below.

b. What do these similes tell the reader about the knight's character? How do they do this?

c. How effective are the use of these similes in creating a clear image in the mind of the reader about the knight? Why?

Share viewpoints about characters

In *DragonQuest*, the character of the young boy is not described. However, you do get a clear picture of the kind of boy he is. How does the author do this? You learn about the boy's character through:

- the illustrations
- the descriptions of his actions.

These things affect our **opinion** of the boy — our **point of view** of his character.

When you state your point of view, you need to write a statement to be convincing. This is more formal than saying 'I think', 'I feel' or 'I believe'.

6. Read what these two characters have to say about the boy from *DragonQuest*.

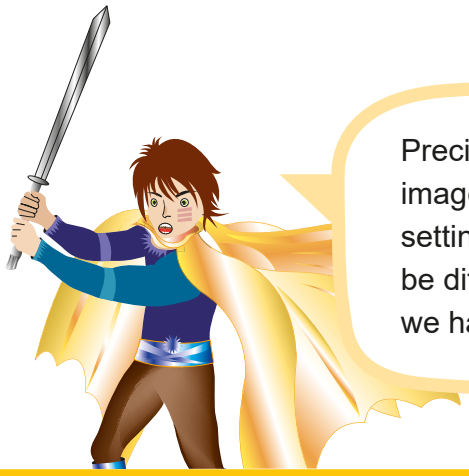


a. Which statement do you think is the most formal?

b. Which statement is the most convincing?

c. Which statement uses personal pronouns (I, my, he) to express an opinion? Remember that a personal pronoun is referring to a person speaking, being spoken to or being spoken about.

7. Write 2–3 sentences explaining your point of view or opinion about the knight's character from *DragonQuest*. (**Hint:** Starting your sentence with words like 'The knight … ' will make it a formal sentence and, therefore, more convincing).



Precise vocabulary helps us build up an image in our mind of what a character or setting is like. The image in my mind might be different from yours which shows that we have different points of view.

Reading

Remember to complete your daily reading today. You can read at any time, for example: when you first wake up, during free time or at bedtime.

At the end of each text, reflect upon:

- your enjoyment level
- interesting points about your reading and the text.