

A characterization is simply a thick, careful description of a person in a historical point in time. This is a good exercise for thinking and capturing the *ethos* of a person. What are they like in the moment? Think about the uses when characterization might be helpful, or useful. And you should consider how all of the progymnasmata entries might be used and recombined in other kinds of writing. A fable might be used in a political speech, or a characterization might be used in a car commercial, and so on.

This may be written in the 1st person, as if you are taking on the mask of the character. This exercise was sometimes called *impersonation*. It may also be written in the 3rd person, from an outside perspective looking on and describing the person in context. In either case, quotations are often used in this exercise.

You might describe Abraham Lincoln moments before giving the Gettysburg Address, or what Shakespeare was like as a teenager. Or, you might describe Lincoln reappearing in the year 2156, and considering how he might respond to that world.

Novelists obviously create many characters, each with unique personalities. Writing such an impersonation often involves a good understanding of history, culture, and psychology—not to mention a good ear for language patterns.

Classically, impersonation had three approaches:

- Character—the presentation of a known person (often speaking in a specific situation—what would the poet Milton have to say to Rap artist Eminem if they met in a fast food restaurant? A silly example. But you get the point.)
- Image—the presentation of the ghost or spirit of a known person, perhaps unable to speak in a normal, conversational sense. (Imagine the ghost of Johann Sebastian Bach hovering along the outside of the crowd at a Jazz concert).
- Person—the presentation of an entirely created personality.

Remember, your goal here isn't so much to express your own opinion about these issues, but to place the ideas of these people in new contexts, while maintaining the character of the people. That is, what would these people be likely to say, think, or do in a specific context?

For You:

Write a 250 word characterization in which you describe a particular person at a particular point in time.

Think about how you are going to make it strange and unique. Post it to your blog, and turn in a hardcopy to me.