

Extracts: Character

Let's look at some examples of characters with this extract activity. As you read, think about the characters you've created in your writing. How real are they? What makes them interesting? How have you made them come alive?

'Cooking with Salt Water' from the Fiji Islands

Despain, Pleasant. "Cooking with Salt Water." In *A River of Stories*, compiled by Alice Curry, 18. London: Commonwealth Education Trust Books, 2011.

"Long, long ago, when the islands were ruled by the great chiefs Sun and Sea, an old woman named Amara excelled at growing and cooking vegetables. Amara's village was located near the top of a steep volcanic mountain overlooking the ocean. Each day the old woman cooked savoury dishes while gazing out upon the blue and green water far, far below."

Notice how in the very first sentence, we're told the names of three characters in the story – Sun, Sea, and Amara.

And notice how quickly we're shown what Amara does. (She cooks every day, while gazing down at the sea.) We said before that it's all right to tell us about your characters, but showing us what they do and say is even better. We're also told what Sun and Sea do: they rule the islands.

'The Greedy Fisherman' from Brunei Darussalam

Read MacDonald, Margaret. "The Greedy Fisherman." In *A River of Stories*, compiled by Alice Curry, 71. London: Commonwealth Education Trust Books, 2011.

"Si Perawai threw out his long fishing line, then pulled it in. Threw out his long line, then pulled it in. But each time he pulled in the line, there was not one fish on it."

Notice how Si Perawai is named right at the start. Do you get the feeling that he's a hard-working but poor man? The author never tells us this, but she shows her character working hard, yet getting no reward. We can imagine someone poor and hard-working.