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# AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR MASTERCLASSES

NOTES FOR TEACHERS & LIBRARIANS

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## JAMIE LITTLER & LAURA ELLEN ANDERSON CREATING CHARACTERS: USING WORDS AND PICTURES



### BEFORE WATCHING THE VIDEO AND READING THE EXTRACT:

#### GET IN THE ZONE!

In their film, Jamie and Laura talk about the importance of good characters in books. A story without characters, they say, might be a bit boring ... and we tend to agree!

To get children into the right frame of mind for creating their own characters, encourage them to think about their own personality traits, for example: are they brave, bold, kind, funny, intelligent, positive, eccentric?

Ask pupils to choose one trait and to create their own freeze-frames representing how it would look and how it would act if it were human.

Choose a confident pupil to come to the front and share his or her freeze-frame with the class. All of the other pupils should create a quick portrait sketch of what they can see. How do the shapes and positions created by their classmate help to convey a particular personality trait?

### AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO AND READING THE EXTRACT:

*Taken from Chapter 1 of Amelia Fang and the Bookworm Gang and Chapter 1 of Frostheart (you can download the extracts at [worldbookday.com/online-masterclasses/creating-characters-using-words-pictures](http://worldbookday.com/online-masterclasses/creating-characters-using-words-pictures)).*

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you name Amelia's friends in this first chapter? What relationships do they each have?
2. Why does Amelia 'love' The Pumpkin Whisperer? What does she wish?
3. Why does Laura Ellen Anderson use capital letters when Florence speaks? What does this tell us?
4. What is the tone of the opening page of Frostheart? How does it make you feel?
5. What can you tell about Ash from his introduction on page 4? Pick out key words and phrases.
6. What are the relationships between Ash, Flare, Ryse and Shyne? How can you tell?
7. Can you see any similarities between the two extracts that you've looked at here?

## FUN ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY 1: THE LAYERS OF A GOOD CHARACTER

*Laura Ellen Anderson says that making a good story is like baking a cake. You need to give characters lots of layers to make them more believable.*

- Draw a large outline of a cake. Within it, create five different layers: one for Strengths, one for Weaknesses, one for Likes, one for Dislikes, one for Things That Make You Uncomfortable.
- Imagine you are a character in a book. Complete your own Character Cake. Within each of the layers that you have already created, write down the different parts of your identity.
- When you have finished your cake, decorate it to your own tastes to make it look delicious! Create another Character Cake for one of your friends or family members, or even someone in your imagination

### ACTIVITY 2: NO-ONE IS COMPLETELY PERFECT

*Jamie Littler talks about how we all have things we're good at and things we're bad at, things we like and dislike. He says that no-one in this world is completely bad or evil – and equally, no-one is completely perfect.*

- In pairs discuss what the word “perfect” means. Does “perfection” exist? Why or why not?
- Pick one of your favourite characters in a book or a film. How might you describe him or her as being imperfect? For example, Jamie Littler’s character Ash is imperfect because he lacks confidence and he is not very good at physical activity – he isn’t a typical action hero.
- Carry out interviews with your favourite characters based on the theme of imperfection. What would you ask them? What might they say in return about their own imperfections?

### ACTIVITY 3: DRAWING CHARACTER TRAITS

*Jamie and Laura describe how they try to show their characters’ strengths and weaknesses in their illustrations. Jamie shows Ash’s strengths,*

*weaknesses and flaws in the way that he draws him. For example, the fact that Ash’s shoulders are slumped shows that he is timid.*

- Start by role-playing different actions with a partner. Try the following actions: hands on hips, crossed arms, angry face, smiling face, shrugged shoulders, standing up straight, leaning on your elbow.
- What does each action make you think of the person you’re looking at? For example, does it make you think they are charming? Funny? Intelligent? Confused? Write down an adjective for each action.
- Use what you’re seen to help you create a drawing of a brand new, believable character.

## SHARE A STORY

amie Littler and Laura Ellen Anderson both create vivid characters using both illustrations and words. Can you think of another story that uses this technique? Take ten minutes to share your story with your classmates, teachers, friends or family. Who is your favourite character in the story you have chosen?

## SPARK YOUR IMAGINATION...

### AN INSPIRING SHARE A STORY CHALLENGE FOR YOU from Jamie Littler and Laura Ellen Anderson...

*Draw two characters that are very different from each other but that complement each other and make a good team. Next to your drawings, list your two characters’ strengths as well as their flaws, and their likes and dislikes. Don’t forget to try to make them as believable as possible! Can your classmates tell how your characters make a good team?*

### DID YOU KNOW?

There are more brilliant Masterclass films and resources featuring amazing authors and illustrators over at [worldbookday.com/online-masterclasses](https://worldbookday.com/online-masterclasses). Don’t miss out, download them today!