

## 5. Understanding characters

To really understand a character's role in a story, it helps to look at the character from several angles. When you're asked to describe or analyze a character, think **SADDR**, which stands for these ways of looking at a character (see page 156 for an example):

**Speech:** *What does the character say? What does this tell you about the character?*

For instance, Vernon Dursley "yelled at five people" at work. This is a clue that he can be unfriendly and that he doesn't really care about other people's feelings. On the other hand, Professor Dumbledore said many things that showed he was kind and understanding of different people. What are two examples of things he said?

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**Action:** *What does the character do? What does this tell you about the character?*

For instance, Hagrid brings Harry to Professor Dumbledore on a flying motorcycle. This is a clue that he is a little bit wild.

Dudley starts in Chapter One with prodding and poking at Harry. What are two other things he does that show what kind of person he is?

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**Description:** *What does the author say about the character? What does that description tell you about the character?*

*Example:* Albus Dumbledore is described as "tall, thin and very old." He also rummages through his cloak and laughs softly when he sees the cat (who is Professor McGonagall). This tells you that he has a sense of humor and might be a bit absent-minded.

*Your turn:* Professor McGonagall is described rather differently, as a "rather severe-looking woman" whose "black hair was drawn into a tight bun," who Albus Dumbledore thought sat "so stiffly." What kind of teacher do you think she would be?

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**Drawing:** Imagine what the character looks like and make a sketch of it. Professor McGonagall's neat hair and trim appearance are clues that she is a fastidious, neat and organized person. What does Albus Dumbledore's appearance tell you about his character?

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**Reactions of others:** *How do other characters in the story react to this character?*  
For instance, Professor McGonagall asks Albus Dumbledore a lot of questions about what has happened. She clearly thinks he knows a lot, and when Professor Dumbledore asks her to, she uses Voldemort's name, even though she doesn't really want to, showing that Professor Dumbledore is a well-respected person. How does Professor McGonagall react to Hagrid? What does this tell you about him?

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### 6. Conflict

What are two conflicts Dudley and Harry have in this chapter?

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### 7. Inferences: What's going to happen?

Often an author will give you a hint about what's going to happen. In Chapter Two, when Harry is at the zoo and has just enjoyed the ice cream that wasn't good enough for Dudley, we read that "Harry felt, afterward, that he should have known it was all too good to last." This is a hint that the good doesn't last, and that what is about to happen will end up being bad. What was it, and why was it bad?

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