What is characterization?

Characterization is the way writers bring a character to life by creating and describing a character for the reader.

There are two types of characterization:

- Direct characterization
- Indirect characterization
Direct characterization

When writers use direct characterization in their writing, they tell us what type of character we are reading about:

Example: “The patient boy and quiet girl were both well mannered and did not disobey their mother.”

As readers, we don’t have to wonder what the characters look like or what their demeanor are. The writer TOLD us 😊 DIRECTLY.
Indirect characterization

- Writers most often use indirect characterization to show (not tell) things that reveal the personality of a character:

Remember the word, STEAL...
The letters in the word “STEAL” can help you remember the five different ways writers use indirect characterization to create characters:

“S” stands for SPEECH.

Why it works:
Writers help readers learn about a character by giving the character something to say and a unique way to say it. This brings out the personality of characters. 
“S T E A L”

“T” stands for THOUGHTS.
What can we learn about the character through reading his/her/its private thoughts?

Why it works:
Writers allow readers to learn the private thoughts of characters to learn the personality of characters.
“STEAL”

“E” stands for EFFECT ON OTHERS

What can be learned about the character by reading how other characters feel or act around the him/her/it?

Why it works:

Writers create relationships for characters to help readers learn the personality of characters.
“A” stands for ACTIONS.
What does the character do?
How does the character behave?

Why it works:
Writers create actions for characters to help readers learn the personality of characters.
“STEAL”

“L” stands for LOOKS.
What does the character look like?
How does the character dress?

Why it works:
Writers use descriptions of characters’ physical attributes to help readers learn the personality of characters.
Indirect characterization

STEAL

- The character’s **speech**,  
- The character’s **thoughts**,  
- The **effect** the character has on others,  
- The character’s **actions**,  
- The physical “**looks**” of the character
For the character that corresponds to each number, provide a detail of him or her using **direct characterization**.
For the character that corresponds to each number, provide a detail of him or her using **one STEAL indirect characterization strategy**.
Direct or Indirect?

Look at this example and figure out if the writer used **direct** or **indirect** characterization:

From *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton:
(Sodapop talking to Ponyboy)

“I'm happy working at a gas station. Working with cars. I'm dumb. It's alright, I don't mind. You're not Pony. You'd never be happy doing something like that.”
Look at this example and figure out if the writer used **direct** or **indirect** characterization to help us figure out the personality of Dallas Winston (Dally) in this passage:

From *The Outsiders*:

(Dally talking with Johnny)

“Johnny, you don't know what a few months in jail can do to you, man. You get mean in jail, I just don't wanna see that happen to you like it happened to me, man. Understand?”