



Macbeth Characterizing the Witches

Characterization is the way a writer creates and develops complex characters. Writers create characters through either direct or indirect characterization. **Direct characterization** is when the narrator or another character in the story directly describes the character in some way. **Indirect characterization** is when the audience makes determinations about the character based on the character's actions.

Find five poetic or literary devices that Shakespeare uses in Act 4, scene 1, to characterize the witches as diabolical and wicked. For each example, identify the device, provide a properly cited quote from the text that portrays the device being used, and explain how the device characterizes the witches as diabolic or wicked.

Some poetic and literary devices are:

assonance: the repeating of vowel sounds in a line or several lines

alliteration: the repeating of consonant sounds at the beginning of several words in a line or several lines

metaphor: a figure of speech that compares two unlike things

simile: a figure of speech that compares two unlike things using *like* or *as*

hyperbole: an extreme exaggeration

personification: a figure of speech in which human qualities are given to an inhuman thing

repetition: the repeating of something, for example, a word, sound, or phrase

tone: the attitude of the writer, usually conveyed through word choice

If necessary, research online to find additional poetic or literary devices. Record the terms and definitions in your notebook.

1. Device:

Quote:

Characterization of the witches:

2. Device:

Quote:

Characterization of the witches:

3. Device:

Quote:

Characterization of the witches:

4. Device:

Quote:

Characterization of the witches:

5. Device:

Quote:

Characterization of the witches:

RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Answer Key

Sample Student Response

1. Device:

assonance

Quote:

“Round about the cauldron go, / In the poisoned entrails throw. / Toad, that under cold stone”
(4.1.4–6)

Characterization of the witches:

There are ten “o”s in these lines. Shakespeare uses the repetition of the vowel sound “o” to create an ominous mood in this scene, characterizing the witches’ supernatural essence through the spooky sounds that come from their chanting around the cauldron.