Use Dialogue to Establish Character Traits

1. Focus

**Explain Using Dialogue to Establish Character Traits**

** Say:** When characters talk in a story, it is called dialogue. Writers of science fiction and other types of stories use dialogue not only for telling what characters say, but also for showing readers what the characters are like. As readers, we can tell a lot about characters from what they say and how they say it. And it is often more interesting to learn about characters through dialogue than through a direct describing of a character by the writer. For example, a writer could tell you that a character named Kim is loud. Or the writer could show you the same thing through dialogue such as the following:

"I’m not ready yet!” Kim shouted to her mother.
Her mother cringed and said, “Kim, keep your voice down.
The neighbors complained about you yelling yesterday.”

**Example Text**

** Say:** Today I’m going to show you how to use dialogue to establish character traits in your science fiction writing.

**Model How Writers Use Dialogue to Establish Character Traits**

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for dialogue that establishes a character trait as you read the passage aloud.

"my-kroh-SAIR-uh-tahps," Liza muttered. Correct pronunciations were important to her.
Theo’s eyes lit up. “What’s so special about them? They can act like real animals, Dad!”

**Modeling Text**

** Say:** The dialogue in this part of the story gives me a lot of information about the characters, just from what they say and how they talk. Mr. Mackey comes across as humorously uninformed—you might even say clueless—when he mispronounces the name of the popular Dino-Pal. Then Liza mutters the correction to his pronunciation, and we read that pronunciations are important to her. I think this shows she is a little bit of a know-it-all, or at least that she

**Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn to use dialogue to establish character traits.
• Practice using dialogue that establishes character traits.
• Discuss how to apply this strategy to their independent writing.

**Preparation**

**Materials Needed**
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

**Advanced Preparation**
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the example, modeling, and practice texts onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, write the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper to support ELs.

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gets impatient if people are not informed about something. Finally, I read about Theo explaining why the Dino-Pals are special. Theo seems enthusiastic and passionate. From the different things the characters say in this dialogue, I can guess a lot about their character traits and their perspectives.

2. Rehearse

Practice Using Dialogue to Establish Character Traits

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

| Ali is friendly to everyone in class. Jem is grumpy. |

Ask students to work with a partner to rewrite and add to the sentences, using dialogue to establish character traits. Pairs of students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain how they used dialogue to show the characters’ traits.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain the word choices they made to create revealing dialogue. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their own science fiction stories.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that using dialogue allows us to share information about characters in science fiction and other stories. By using dialogue, we can show rather than tell readers what characters are like. As you write your science fiction story, remember to use dialogue to establish your characters’ traits.

Ask students to identify a section of their science fiction stories in which they can use dialogue to establish character traits. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferencing flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their science fiction stories in which they chose words in dialogue to reveal information about the characters.