

Character Bookmarks

“Keeping all of those characters straight is making me nuts!” cried Terrence a 12th grader in a large group discussion of *King Lear*. Oral review in large group class discussion was insufficient for students to recognize and connect the characters in a given text. Both efficient and struggling readers often express difficulty in keeping the characters straight in a complex text like a Shakespeare play, a Homer epic, or an Austen novel. Of course, recognizing and internalizing the roles of the characters is an important element as the students work toward the comprehension of a given text. Although charts, diagrams, and class discussions do aid the students to retain all of the characters’ roles and relationships in a given text, they still struggle. This is where the character bookmark can be a handy tool for the students as they read through a text. As we used character bookmarks, we discovered that the accessibility as the students read and the visual images supported the students as they internalized the characters’ roles. Using character bookmarks allows students to maintain an understanding about the characters of a story by listing the names and traits of the characters on the bookmark they are using in the classroom. Character bookmarks were a discovery that Katie made when she taught Dickens’s *Great Expectations*. The students complained that it was difficult to keep the characters straight in the novel. This handy tool aids the students in understanding the roles of the characters. Figure 3.3 is a template, and Figures 3.4 and Figure 3.5 offer some examples. Exhibit 3.10 shows the lesson plan for this tool.

Exhibit 3.10 Character Bookmarks

Materials: Copies of the Character Bookmark Template (Figure 3.3) and sample Character Bookmarks (Figures 3.4 and 3.4) markers, or color pencils.

Time: 15-20 minutes

Step 1: Instruct the students that there are many characters to monitor in the novel that we are reading in class. Each student should receive a character bookmark template. This simple tool will support the students’ text comprehension and understanding of characterization.

Step 2: Model for the students how to document the different character on their bookmark templates. You can use the samples that are found in Figures 3.4 and 3.3.

Step 3: The students can review the different characters that they have already encountered in their reading and place them on their bookmark. It is helpful to use different colors for the characters.

Exhibit 3.10 (continued)

Step 4: Instruct the students that they will record new characters as they encounter them on their bookmark and also add more information about characters that they have already documented.

IRA/NCTE Standard

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
 3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features. (e.g., sentence structure, context, graphics).
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Figure 3.3 Character Bookmarks Template

<p>Use a half sheet of 8.5 by 11 paper and fold in half. As the students read a text, they can document the different characters on their character bookmark. Encourage the students to create diagrams and pictures to help them identify the characters</p>	
<p>Title: _____ Character Bookmark – SIDE ONE</p> <hr/> <p>Character Name _____ *Add details and pictures in this space provided*</p> <hr/> <p>Character Name _____</p> <hr/> <p>Character Name _____</p>	<p>Title: _____ Character Bookmark – SIDE TWO</p> <hr/> <p>Character Name _____</p> <hr/> <p>Character Name _____</p> <hr/> <p>Character Name _____</p>

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Figure 3.4 Character Bookmarks—*Romeo and Juliet*

<p><i>Romeo and Juliet</i> Character Bookmarks – SIDE ONE</p> <p>Capulets:</p> <p>Juliet: Only daughters of family. Loves Romeo. Cousin of Tybalt.</p> <p>Nurse: A comic character who took care of Juliet her whole life. She often provides comic relief when needed, and Lady Capulet depends on her for advice regarding her daughter.</p> <p>Lord and Lady Capulet: Although they both truly love their daughter, neither one comes close to understanding Juliet's true feelings.</p> <p>Paris: Lord Capulet arranges for him to marry Juliet.</p> <p>Tybalt: Juliet's cousin who is tempestuous and teases Romeo. He is aggressive and violent.</p> <p>Friar Lawrence: Friend to both Romeo and Juliet. He secretly marries the couples and is an expert in potions and plants.</p>	<p><i>Romeo and Juliet</i> Character Bookmarks – SIDE TWO</p> <p>Montagues:</p> <p>Romeo: Young son of the family Loves Juliet About 16 years old Friends with Benvolio and Mercutio.</p> <p>Lord and Lady Montague: Very minor characters but their presence is felt in the play. The Montagues and Capulets are lifelong enemies.</p> <p>Friar Lawrence: Friend to both Romeo and Juliet. He secretly marries the couple and is an expert in potions and plants.</p> <p>Benvolio: Romeo's friend and cousin. He tries to quiet conflicts in the play.</p> <p>Mercutio: Romeo's friend. He loves wordplay and is a close kinsman of the Prince.</p>
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Figure 3.5 Character Bookmarks—*The Odyssey*

<p><i>The Odyssey</i> Character Bookmarks - SIDE ONE</p> <p>ITHACA</p> <p>Odysseus: Protagonist of the epic. Fought in the Trojan War and wants to go home to Ithaca. Husband of Queen Penelope and father of Prince Telemachus. He is known for being a strong, courageous, and cunning warrior. Athena protects him but Poseidon hates him.</p> <p>Telemachus: Odysseus's son who was an infant when his father left to fight in the war.</p> <p>Penelope: Odysseus's wife who waits for his return for 20 years.</p> <p>Penelope's Suitors: Antinous Eurymachus Amphinomus</p>	<p><i>The Odyssey</i> Character Bookmarks - SIDE TWO</p> <p>THE VOYAGE HOME TO ITHACA</p> <p>Odysseus: Protagonist of the epic. Fought in the Trojan War and wants to go home to Ithaca. Husband of Queen Penelope and father of Prince Telemachus. He is known for being a strong, courageous, and cunning warrior. Athena protects him but Poseidon hates him.</p> <p>Athena: Goddess of wisdom and war. She protects Odysseus.</p> <p>Poseidon: Brother of Zeus; puts many obstacles in Odysseus's way when he tries to return home to Ithaca.</p> <p>Zeus: King of the gods who sometimes allows Athena to help Odysseus return home.</p> <p>Calypso: Falls in love with Odysseus when he lands on her island-home of Ogygia.</p> <p>Polyphemus: One of the Cyclopes (uncivilized one-eyed giants) whose island Odysseus comes to soon after leaving Troy. Polyphemus imprisons Odysseus and his crew and tries to eat them, but Odysseus blinds him.</p> <p>Circe: The beautiful witch-goddess who transforms Odysseus's crew into swine when he lands on her island.</p>
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