

# “Exploring Shakespeare”

## An Introduction of Character and *Hamlet*

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**Grade level:** 9 – 12

**Time allotment:** One 45 – minute class period

**Overview:** In the play *Hamlet*, students must recognize and identify character traits of individual characters. These descriptions of characters allow students to encounter a relationship between characters and plot. Hamlet is a unique character with erratic behavior. This behavior pattern consists of many personalities, which reveal the traits of a round character.

Students will be introduced to the literary terms *round character* and *characterization*. The activities used will include clip art, video, and comic strips. Students will view examples of clip art depicting a round character and describe the character traits as an introduction activity. Students will record the changes of the character on a chart given by the teacher. Students will then view the video “Exploring Shakespeare”. The video clip will show a sample of personality changes Hamlet experiences throughout the play. Students will record the changes on a chart given by the teacher. Students will focus on body language, facial expressions, and actions to help determine characterization. The culminating activity will allow the students to continue focusing on round character and characterization by listing or describing the character changes in a series of comic strips.

**Subject matter:** English

### **Learning objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Identify a round character
- Identify characterization
- Describe character traits of individual characters

### **Standards:**

The objectives will in part meet the Virginia Standards of Learning for English, which can be found at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us>

English 9.3

Explain the relationships between and among elements of literature: characters, plot, setting, tone, point of view, and theme.

English 9.5:

- Compare and contrast the elements of character, setting, and plot in one-act plays and full-length plays.
- Describe how stage directions help the reader understand a play's setting, mood, characters, plot, and theme.

### **Media Components:**

- Video –*Exploring Shakespeare*, #101, “Hamlet” (Act I scene 2, Act III scene 1, Act II scene 2)
- Web sites– [www.comics.com](http://www.comics.com)  
This web site will give access to a variety of comic strips. Students can be given a particular comic, or students can choose based on interest.
- Microsoft Clipart - <http://office.microsoft.com/clipart/default.aspx>  
This web site will provide the necessary images for a round character. The particular clip used for this lesson will be the “Screen Beans.”

### **Materials:**

For each student:

- Character Charts (see attached papers)
- Computer with Internet access

For the teacher:

- “Screen Bean” PowerPoint
- TV/VCR
- LCD projector

### **Prep for teachers:**

The teacher should do the following to prepare for the lesson:

- View the video clip of *Exploring Shakespeare*, #101, “Hamlet” (Act I scene 2, Act III scene 1, Act II scene 2)
- Create copies of Character Charts (see attached papers)
- Bookmark the websites used in the lesson on each computer
- Set up the PowerPoint on the LCD projector for the introductory activity, as well as the learning activity
- Identify the focus of all activities in the lesson
- Define the **focus for media interaction**

## Introductory Activity:

**Step one:** Teacher should pass Screen Bean Character Chart to students.

**Step two:** Teacher should explain the directions of the Screen Bean Character Chart, as well as what the students will see from the LCD projector. Teacher should give a **Focus for Media Interaction** by **saying**: “In the following PowerPoint we will see a character that portrays different personality traits. Using the chart I have given you, please describe briefly the personality traits of the screen bean character as you look at the different slides. Try to be as specific as possible. Now, look at the screen. In each box on your paper, you will describe the different attitudes of the character. Each box should have individual characteristics of the same character.”

**Step three:** Students will view the “Screen Bean” clip art from the LCD projector and describe the personality of each clip art on the Character Chart given by the teacher.

**Step four:** After students finish descriptions, teacher should prompt answers from students by **asking** the following question for each slide: “How did you describe each screen bean?” The teacher should also **ask**, “What features helped you predict the attitude of the character?” (Teacher has the option of asking this question after the students view each slide, or the teacher can wait until the end of the slide show).

**Step five:** Teacher should direct focus to the definition of round character from the PowerPoint on the LCD projector. Teacher should **say**: “As you can see, the definition of a round character is a character with many personalities. During this assignment, you have described a round character. You have been able to describe this character because of facial features, behavior, and/or actions. This should help you with describing any type of character.”

## Learning activity:

**Step one:** Teacher should pass Hamlet Character Chart to students.

**Step two:** Teacher should explain that the directions for the Hamlet Character Chart are similar to the directions for the Screen Beans chart. Before the activity begins, the teacher should **say**, “Do not worry about the language or the plot of the video. We will discuss it in more detail when we focus on the play. It is not important that you understand the story, but that you can describe the character because of his actions, facial expressions, tone of voice, behavior, etc.” Next, the teacher should **say** the following:

“Just as we did with the Screen Beans chart, you will describe the different personality traits of Hamlet. Try to be as specific as possible. Now, look at the screen. In this box, you will describe the attitude of the character from the viewing of the video. Each box should have individual characteristics about the character.” The teacher should give a **Focus for Media Interaction** by **saying**, “Remember the traits you found with the screen bean and look at gestures, behavior, facial features, and the sound of Hamlet’s voice to help you understand his personality.” The teacher should also instruct students to follow the number sequence of the chart. The students will view three segments, so the students should use two boxes for each video segment.

**Step three:** Students will view the following acts from the video *Exploring Shakespeare, #101, “Hamlet.”* (Act I scene 2, Act III scene 1, Act II scene 2)

The first scene the students will view is Act I scene 2. **Cue** the video to the words, *Act I, Scene 2*. **Say**: “Watch for character traits in this first clip.” The teacher will **PLAY** the video, and then **PAUSE** after Hamlet says, “...within a month, let me not think upon it.” Teacher should prompt students by asking the following questions after the video clip.

“How would you describe his behavior?” (possible answers: upset and sad)

“Does he seem calm or angry?” (possible answer: calm)

“Does his body language help describe his personality?” (possible answer: yes, he stays relaxed and calm)

Students should be given time to fill in their Hamlet character chart based on what they saw in the first scene.

The next scene the students will view should be Act III scene 1. Give the students a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying: “Watch this next clip and see what personality traits are shown by Hamlet in this scene. See if you think they are different than the traits that were seen in the first clip.” The teacher will **FAST FORWARD** the tape to the scene when Hamlet moves the dagger to his neck and says, “...To die.” The teacher should **PLAY** the tape at this point, and then **PAUSE** the video after Hamlet points the dagger at his heart. The teacher should prompt students by asking the following questions after the video clip.

“How do Hamlet’s actions help you know how he feels about his life?” (possible answers: the position of the dagger towards his neck)

“Does he seem calm or angry?” (possible answer: calm)

“Does his body language help describe his personality?” (possible answer: yes, because he seems to be depressed)

Allow students time to fill in the character chart.

The last scene the students will view is Act II, scene 2. Give the students a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying: “Watch this final clip and see if Hamlet displays any new character/personality traits.” The teacher should **FAST FORWARD** the video to where Hamlet removes the dagger from his belt. The teacher will **PLAY** the video at this point, and then **PAUSE** after Hamlet drives the dagger into the piece of wood and yells, “...Vengeance!” After viewing the clip, the teacher should prompt the students by asking the following:

“How do the actions of Hamlet help you describe him?” (possible answers: his yelling and screaming shows his anger)

“Does he seem calm or angry?” (possible answer: he begins with a calm attitude, then becomes angry)

“Does his voice help describe his personality?” (possible answer: his anger intensifies as his voice gets louder)

After the video segment, the teacher should **focus** attention to the character’s behavior one last time. The teacher should **say** the following: “Make sure you describe how the character is changing his actions, behavior, and voice. This should help you better understand the various emotions of the character and thus the different facets of his personality.”

**Step four:** Students should be able to describe the various personality traits of Hamlet through his changes in body language, facial expressions, and actions in the different scenes. This information will be recorded on the student’s Hamlet Character Chart and should lend itself to a discussion about the changes in his personality as the play develops.

**Step five:** Teacher will prompt answers from the students by asking the following questions about all of the scenes viewed in the video.

- “What is wrong with Hamlet?” (possible answers – mad, angry, lost something important to him, or upset)
- “What are the different ways he is dealing with the problem?” (possible answers – panicking, yelling, out of control, or punishing himself)
- “What particular actions or expressions show that he is upset?” (possible answers – looking to the ground, the dagger, or voice)

**Step six:** Teacher will direct focus to the definition of characterization on the PowerPoint on the LCD projector. Teacher should **say** the following: “As you can see, the definition of characterization is the description of a character through actions, attitude, or behavior. Since we have seen and recorded various changes in Hamlet’s personality in the different scenes of the play, we have a clearer view of his complete character. During this assignment, you have described a round character.”

## **Culminating activity:**

**Step one:** Teacher should pass Comic Strip Character Chart to students.

**Step two:** Teacher should explain the directions of the Character Chart, as well as what the student will see from the LCD projector. Teacher should say the following: "Using the chart, describe the personality traits of the character. Try to be as specific as possible. Now, look at the screen. In this box, you will describe the attitude of the character. Each box should have individual characteristics. You will view three comic strips of the same character, so give two descriptions for each comic strip using two boxes."

**Step three:** Teacher should show students the web site [www.comics.com](http://www.comics.com) on the LCD projector.

**Step four:** Teacher should click on the desired comic strip. (Peanuts is the choice of the lesson creator)

**Step five:** Once Peanuts is chosen, the teacher should select a particular character from the choices at the bottom of the page.

**Step six:** Teacher should choose one of the characters and allow the students to view the different personalities of that character through three comic strips.

**Step seven:** Students should now complete the activity by following the same directions from the two previous character chart assignments, i.e. String Beans and Hamlet. Students will complete this assignment by describing a character on a computer from the web site [www.comics.com](http://www.comics.com) or the newspaper.

**Step eight:** Students will complete a description of the character in the Character Chart using at least three different episodes of the same comic strip.

**Step nine:** Teacher should prompt answers from the students by asking the following questions:

- "What makes this character a round character?" (answers will vary)
- "What clues give insight on the character?" (answers will vary)

## **Cross – Curricular Extensions:**

- Drama – The viewing of a dramatic play.
- Journalism - The use of comic strips as a source of communication.

**Community connections:**

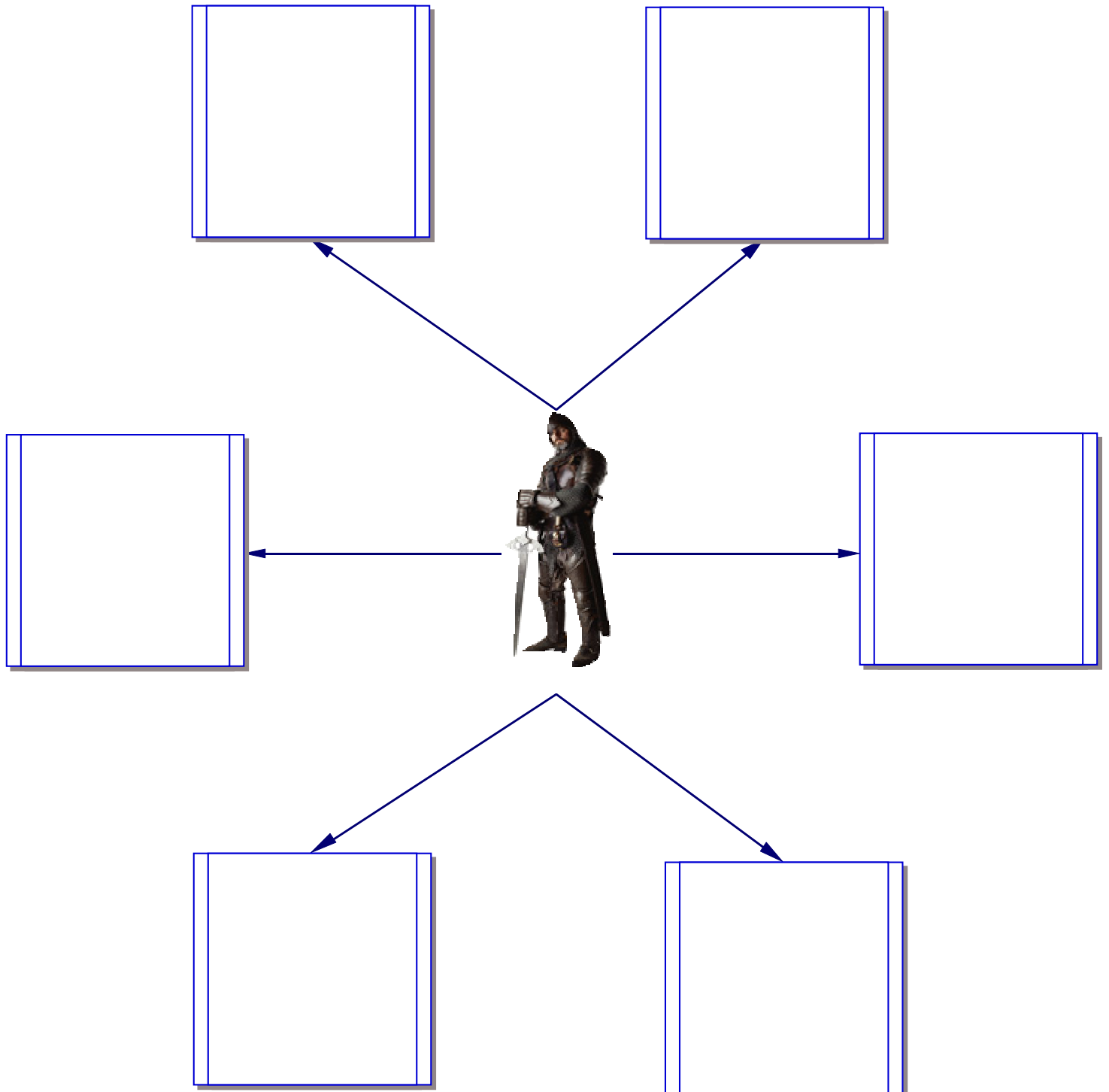
- Have a cartoonist from the local paper discuss the importance of character personality in a comic strip.
- Attend a local play.

**Student Materials:**

- Individual computers
- Character charts
- Pencil
- Newspaper, if computer is not available

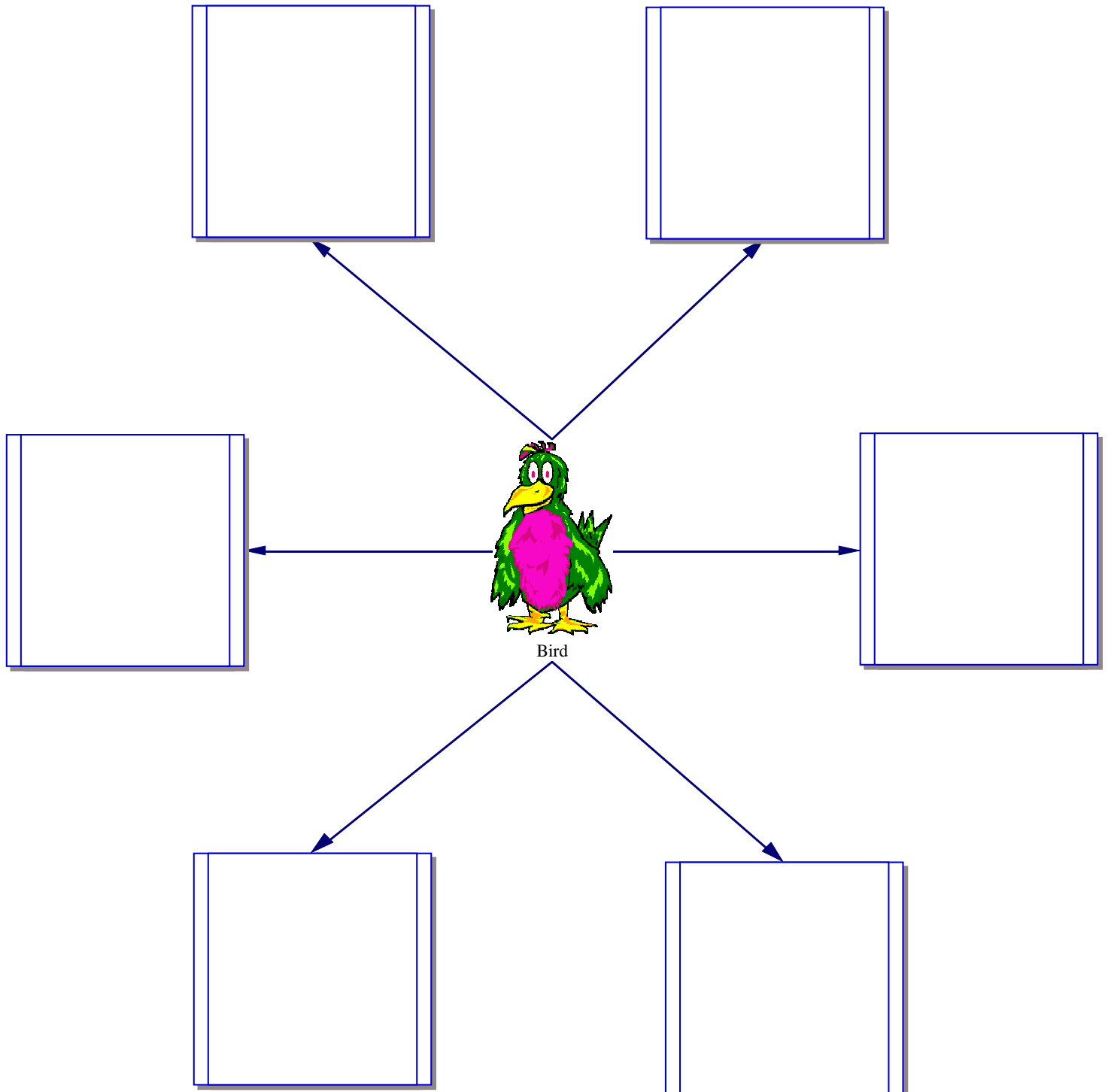
# Hamlet Character Chart

Describe Hamlet's personality from the video shown.  
Use descriptive words and give specifics.



# Comic Strip Character Chart

Describe the personality of one character from a series of comic strips.  
Use descriptive words and give specifics.



# Screen Bean Character Chart

Describe the screen bean's personality from each PowerPoint picture shown.  
Use descriptive words and give specifics.

