

“Uncle Marcos” from The House of the Spirits by Isabel Allende

Literary Analysis: Character

A **character** is a person or an animal that takes part in the action of a literary work.

- A **round character** is complex, showing many different qualities—revealing faults as well as virtues. For example, a character might be sensitive in some situations but insensitive in others. A **flat character** is one-dimensional, showing a single trait.
- A **dynamic character** develops, changes, and learns something during the course of a story, unlike a **static character**, who remains the same.

The main character of a story is almost always a round character and is usually dynamic. The main character’s development and growth are often central to a story’s plot and theme. As you read, consider the traits that make characters seem round or flat, dynamic or static.

A. DIRECTIONS: *For each numbered item, write a sentence telling what character trait or traits the passage reveals.*

1. After a short time, bored with having to appear at ladies’ gatherings where the mistress of the house played the piano, with playing cards, and with dodging all his relatives’ pressures to pull himself together and take a job as a clerk in Severo del Valle’s law practice, he bought a barrel organ and took to the streets with the hope of seducing his Cousin Antonieta and entertaining the public in the bargain.

Character traits of Uncle Marcos: _____

2. In the face of this stain to the family reputation, Marcos was forced to give up organ grinding and resort to less conspicuous ways of winning over his Cousin Antonieta, but he did not renounce his goal.

Character traits of Uncle Marcos: _____

3. He had lost his airplane and had to return on foot, but he had not broken any bones and his adventurous spirit was intact.

Character traits of Uncle Marcos: _____

B. DIRECTIONS: *Write a brief character analysis of Uncle Marcos. Tell whether he is flat or round and dynamic or static. Give examples from the story to support your statements.*

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Reading: Reflect on Details and Events to Determine
an Author’s Purpose

An **author’s purpose** is his or her main reason for writing. In fiction, the specific purpose is often to convey the story’s theme, message, or insight. Pause periodically while reading and **reflect** on the story’s details and events to determine the author’s purpose. Ask questions such as, *What significance might this event have?* or *Why does the author include this detail?*

Based on your reflections, formulate ideas about what the author’s purpose might be.

A. DIRECTIONS: *Write one or two sentences telling why, in your opinion, Isabel Allende might have included each of the following details or events in “Uncle Marcos.”*

1. Uncle Marcos sleeps during the day, stays up all night, and performs strange experiments in the kitchen.

2. He refuses to take a job in his brother-in-law’s law firm.

3. He embarrasses the family by serenading Cousin Antonieta with a barrel-organ and a parrot.

4. He builds an airplane and takes off in it.

5. He gives up the fortune-telling business when he realizes that it is affecting people’s lives.

B. DIRECTIONS: *Think back over the events and details of the story and your answers to the questions above. Then, in a sentence or two, write what you think the author’s purpose is in “Uncle Marcos.”*
