

Boost Free Lessons - Year 10 English

Lesson 9: Stereotypes and Representation

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Worked Example 1

Why is the character below a stereotype, and how would you fix it?

Mr Petrov was the strict teacher. He never smiled, he loved detentions, and he hated noise.

1. A **stereotype** is a character reduced to a single expected trait, with no detail that could not be guessed.
2. Every detail here follows from *strict*. Nothing surprises the reader.
3. The fix is **specificity**: replace general traits with particular, observed details.
4. Then add a **contradiction**. Real people are inconsistent, and one detail that does not fit makes a character human.

Model: Mr Petrov marked in green because red made students stop reading the comment. He gave detentions the way other people give parking tickets, without heat, and he kept a jar of spare pens nobody was allowed to thank him for.

Worked Example 2

What is the difference between a stereotype and a character type?

1. A **character type** is a recognisable role, such as the mentor or the rival. Types are useful shorthand.
2. A **stereotype** is a type that has stopped being examined, where the role explains the whole person.
3. The test is whether the character can surprise you. A type can; a stereotype cannot.
4. Stereotypes based on identity carry additional harm, because they teach readers to expect real people to behave that way.

A type is a role a character occupies. A stereotype is a character who is nothing but that role, and cannot surprise the reader.

Remember: A **type** is a role. A **stereotype** is a character who is nothing but that role. Fix it with **specificity** and one detail that **contradicts** what the role predicts.



Question 1: Write whether each description is a **type** or a **stereotype**.

1. The clumsy best friend who exists to make jokes.

2. A mentor who withholds advice for reasons of their own.

3. The bully who is cruel in every scene and never explained.

4. A rival who turns out to have been right about something.

5. The genius who solves every problem instantly.

6. A parent who is supportive but consistently wrong.

7. The new student who is shy, and nothing else.

8. A coach who is generous in public and harsh in private.



Question 2: Read the passage below, then answer the questions.

The librarian was quiet and fond of rules. The coach kept the team sheet folded in his back pocket all week before he named it. The captain, who everyone expected to argue, was the one who asked to be dropped.

1. Which character in the passage is most stereotyped? Explain.

2. Find one detail that makes a character specific rather than generic.

3. Which character contradicts what the reader first expects?

4. Rewrite the description of the stereotyped character.

5. Why does a contradiction make a character feel real?



Question 3: Answer the following questions.

1. Invent a character defined by one trait, then add a detail that contradicts it.

2. Explain the difference between a character type and a stereotype.

3. Why is it a writer's responsibility to avoid harmful stereotypes?

4. How can specific detail prevent a character becoming a stereotype?





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Answers and Model Responses: Stereotypes and Representation**Question 1**

1. Stereotype
2. Type
3. Stereotype
4. Type
5. Stereotype
6. Type
7. Stereotype
8. Type

Question 2

1. Model: the librarian, who is described only as quiet and fond of rules, with no detail that could not be guessed from the job.
2. Model: the coach keeping the team sheet folded in his back pocket all week before naming it.
3. Model: the captain, who is expected to be confident but is the one who asks to be dropped.
4. Model: The librarian kept a list of every book that came back damaged and never mentioned it to anyone, though she knew exactly who was responsible for each.
5. Real people are inconsistent. A detail that does not follow from the character's role tells the reader they are watching a person rather than a function.

Question 3

1. Model response: Dana was the loudest person in any room she entered, and she wrote every one of her sister's birthday cards three weeks early, in pencil first.
2. A type is a recognisable role, such as the mentor or the rival, and it is a useful starting point. A stereotype is a character who never develops past that role and can never surprise the reader.
3. Fiction teaches readers what to expect of people. A character who exists only to confirm an assumption reinforces that assumption outside the story, which is why identity-based stereotypes cause real harm.
4. Specific detail is observed rather than assumed. A reader can guess a generic trait before it is stated, but they cannot guess a particular one, which is what makes the character feel individual.

