

## Descriptive Writing – Character

Extract from *Dracula* by Bram Stoker

Within stood a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere. He held in his hand an antique silver lamp, in which the flame burned without a chimney or globe of any kind, throwing long quivering shadows as it flickered in the draught of the open door. The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a courtly gesture, saying in excellent English, but with a strange intonation.

“Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own free will!” He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed cold as ice, more like the hand of a dead than a living man.

His face was a strong, a very strong, aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth.

These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine. But seeing them now close to me, I could not but notice that they were rather coarse, broad, with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal.

## Descriptive Writing – Character

Extract from *La Belle Sauvage: The Book of Dust Volume 1* (Chapter 1)

***Malcolm Polstead's life in the pub beside the Thames is safe and happy enough, if uneventful. But during a winter of constant rain, a storm is also brewing in Malcolm's life...***

Malcolm was the landlord's son, an only child. He was eleven years old, with an inquisitive, kindly disposition, a stocky build, and ginger hair. He went to Ulvercote Elementary School a mile away, and he had friends enough, but he was happiest on his own playing with his dæmon Asta  
5 in their canoe, which was called *La Belle Sauvage*. A witty acquaintance thought it amusing to scrawl an S over the V, and Malcolm patiently painted it out three times before losing his temper and knocking the fool into the water, at which point they declared a truce.

Like every child of an innkeeper, Malcolm had to work around the  
10 tavern, washing dishes and glasses, carrying plates of food or tankards of beer, retrieving them when they were empty. He took the work for granted. The only annoyance in his life was a girl called Alice, who helped with washing the dishes. She was fifteen years old, tall and skinny, with lank dark hair that she scraped back into an unflattering  
15 ponytail. Lines of self-discontent were already gathering on her forehead and around her mouth. She teased Malcolm from the day she arrived: 'Who's your girlfriend, Malcolm? En't you got a girlfriend? Who was you out with last night? Did you kiss her? En't you ever been kissed?'

He ignored that for a long time, but finally Asta leaped at Alice's  
20 scrawny jackdaw-dæmon, knocking him into the washing-up water and then biting and biting the sodden creature till Alice screamed for pity.



## Descriptive Writing – Character

Miss Trunchbull  
Extract from *Matilda* by Roald Dahl

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She was above all a most formidable female. She had once been a famous athlete, and even now the muscles were still clearly in evidence. You could see them in the bull-neck, in the big shoulders, in the thick arms, in the sinewy wrists and in the powerful legs.

5 Looking at her, you got the feeling that this was someone who could bend iron bars and tear telephone directories in half. Her face, I'm afraid, was neither a thing of beauty nor a joy for ever. She had an obstinate chin, a cruel mouth and small arrogant eyes. And as for her clothes... they were, to say the least, extremely odd.

10 She always had on a brown cotton smock which was pinched in around the waist with a wide leather belt. The belt was fastened in front with an enormous silver buckle. The massive thighs which emerged from out of the smock were encased in a pair of extraordinary breeches, bottle-green in colour and made of course twill. On her feet she wore flat-  
15 heeled brown brogues with leather flaps.

## Descriptive Writing – Character

Extract from *The Twits*

Mr Twit was one of these very hairy-faced men. The whole of his face except for his forehead, his eyes and his nose was covered with thick hair. The stuff even sprouted in revolting tufts out of his nostrils and ear-holes.

- 5 Mr Twit felt that this hairiness made him look terrifically wise and grand. But in truth he was neither of these things. Mr Twit was a twit. He was born a twit. And now at the age of sixty, he was a bigger twit than ever.

- 10 The hair on Mr Twit's face didn't grow smooth and matted as it does on most hairy-faced men. It grew in spikes that stuck out straight like the bristles of a nailbrush. And how often did Mr Twit wash this bristly nailbrushy face of his? The answer is NEVER, not even on Sundays. He hadn't washed it for years.

- 15 Mr Twit didn't even bother to open his mouth wide when he ate. As a result (and because he never washed) there were always hundreds of bits of old breakfasts and lunches and suppers sticking to the hairs around his face.

- 20 Mrs Twit was no better than her husband. She did not, of course, have a hairy face. It was a pity she didn't because that at any rate would have hidden some of her ugliness.

In her right hand she carried a walking-stick. Not because she needed help walking. The real reason she carried a stick was so that she could hit things with it, things like dogs and cats and small children.

## Descriptive Writing – Character

Extract from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. Mr. Dursley made drills. He was a big, beefy man with hardly any neck, although he did have a very large moustache.

- 5 Mrs. Dursley was thin and blonde and had twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time spying on the neighbours. The Dursleys had a small son called Dudley and in their opinion there was no finer boy anywhere.
- 10 One day, a man appeared outside of the Dursleys' house. He was tall, thin, and very old, judging by the silver of his hair and beard, which were both long enough to tuck into his belt. He was wearing long robes, a purple cloak that swept the ground, and highheeled, buckled boots. His blue eyes were light, bright, and
- 15 sparkling behind half-moon spectacles and his nose was very long and crooked, as though it had been broken at least twice.

This man's name was Albus Dumbledore.

