

The Devil and Tom Walker

Literary Analysis

Washington Irving reveals the personality traits of his characters through **characterization**. In stories, such as “The Devil and Tom Walker,” the author achieves characterization in two primary ways:

- In **direct characterization**, the narrator describes the character in direct statements.
- In **indirect characterization**, the author reveals personality traits through the words, thoughts, and actions of the characters.

Reading Strategy

The time and place in which a story is written or set is called its **historical period**. Each historical period has a social or cultural attitude created in part by political and religious ideas. These attitudes influence plot, setting, and characters. Authors reveal the **social influences** of a time period by using the following elements:

- descriptive details
- narrator’s comments
- characters’ dialogue

For example, Washington Irving refers to Native Americans as “savages,” a term that most modern people find offensive. Irving used the term that was commonly used in 1720s New England. Use the following chart to track examples of the social and cultural attitudes Irving presents and to judge the effectiveness of the author’s presentation.

1720s New England Attitude	Effectiveness

The Devil and Tom Walker

1. **Evaluate:** What kind of people do you think Tom Walker and his wife are? Explain.

2. **Literary Analysis:** In this story, Irving reveals personality traits of the characters through **indirect** and **direct characterization**. Complete the following chart with specific details that reveal the characters' personality traits.

Detail	Character	Personality Trait	Indirect or Direct Characterization

3. **Reading Strategy:** Complete the Reading Strategy chart that you began on the Before You Read page. What cultural or social attitude of 1720s New England most influences the story? How does this attitude affect the story's plot and characters?



Writing About the Essential Question

How does literature shape or reflect society? Judging from the events of this story, what do you think Washington Irving might say about the effects of greed on society?

“The Devil and Tom Walker” by Washington Irving
Literary Analysis: Characterization

Characterization is the way a writer reveals and develops characters. With **direct characterization**, the writer makes explicit statements about a character. With **indirect characterization**, the writer makes statements that allow the reader to make inferences about a character.

Examples: Tom Walker was a miserly fellow. (direct characterization)

Tom Walker fed his horse the bare minimum. (indirect characterization)

DIRECTIONS: *The numbered items are examples of indirect characterization. The lettered items are examples of direct characterization. On the line, write the letter of the item that has the same meaning.*

- _____ 1. Passersby often heard her voice raised in arguments with her husband.
- _____ 2. Tom sat down and had a comfortable conversation with Old Scratch.
- _____ 3. The one thing Tom would not do was to become a slave-trader.
- _____ 4. Tom refused to allow his debtor any more time, foreclosing on the home.
- _____ 5. Seeing Old Scratch outside, Tom turned pale and his knees shook.
- _____ 6. Tom's wife urged him to do whatever he had to do in exchange for wealth.
- _____ 7. Tom began to go to church every Sunday, praying loudly and strenuously.
- _____ 8. Tom had his horse buried with his feet uppermost, so he would be ready for riding on the last day, when the world would be turned upside down.
- a. Tom was not afraid of the Devil.
- b. Tom was a heartless money-lender.
- c. Tom was afraid of the Devil.
- d. Tom was outwardly religious.
- e. Tom's wife loved money more than she loved her husband.
- f. Tom was not completely bad.
- g. Tom was superstitious.
- h. Tom's wife was a quarrelsome woman.