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Character’s Motives

A character’s motives are the reasons the character acts as he or she does. Sometimes an author tells you what a character’s motives are. Other times you must use clues in the text and your own knowledge to figure out the character’s motives.

A character’s motives are revealed through
• traits
• thoughts
• words
• actions

Understanding a character’s motives can help you better understand why the events in a story happen.

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Tip
To figure out a character’s motives, ask yourself, *What is this character’s goal? How might he or she reach that goal?*
Read the paragraph below. Then look at the graphic organizer. It shows how Doris’s motives are revealed by her traits and by what she thinks and does.

Doris looked longingly at the guitar in the window of the music shop. Her father’s guitar had been ruined in a fire. Dad seemed sad without it. Doris missed the sound of Dad softly strumming the guitar in the evenings. “I wonder if I can work in exchange for a guitar,” she thought. Doris entered the shop and shyly asked to speak with the owner.

Try This!

Reread the paragraph. What is another motive Doris may have for getting her father a new guitar?
Monkey Business

It was the night of Hoover School’s talent show, and things were not going well for Vivian Lee. She was dressed as a clown and trying **desperately** to make people laugh. She flopped around in her big shoes and honked her round, red nose, but no one laughed. “This clown isn’t funny at all,” someone **sneered**.

Neil Cooper ran onstage. “Has anyone seen Rocco?” he asked **urgently**. “Rocco’s a monkey. I need him for our talent trick.”
Just then, a shriek came from the audience. “Get this thing off me!” Sandy Paulsen shouted indignantly. Neil ran over. Rocco was holding on tightly to Sandy’s long hair. Finally, Neil pried Rocco’s paws off of Sandy’s hair.

Rocco scrambled up Neil’s arm all the way up to his head, and the audience roared with laughter.

“I guess monkeys are funnier than clowns,” Vivian said grudgingly. Then Rocco tapped on Neil’s head as if it were a drum, and even Vivian had to laugh.
Genre Study

Historical fiction is about people, places, and events from the past. As you read, look for

• characters who have feelings that real people have.

• details that help the reader picture the setting.

Comprehension Strategy

Monitor comprehension by stopping to reread text you did not understand.
After a storm damages their houseboat, Chang’s family finds shelter in a barn that belongs to the family of Mei Mei, Chang’s good friend. Chang was born mute, but the music he plays on his flute is as beautiful as any voice. He worries about what has happened to his home and when he’ll be able to play his flute in private again.
The next day the rain stopped, but the floodwaters were still high. Mei Mei and her family urged Chang and his parents to walk up to their house for a visit. “won’t you come and play your flute for us?” Mei Mei’s father urged Chang.

Chang shook his head. His music was private and important to him, something to share only with his family and close friends.

For the next two days, Chang and his parents stayed in the barn. Mei Mei and her family continued to supply them with meals. They were grateful, but they longed to be home.

Chang was sick of the smell of hay. He could hardly wait to sit out on deck in the marshy air, while his mother cooked supper. He wanted to see the stars again, and to play night music without bothering buffaloes. He was homesick.
At last the river lowered and calmed. The sun sliced through the clouds and glittered on the water.

Chang’s father said, “It’s safe to go back now.”

Both of Chang’s parents thanked Mei Mei and her family for their kindness. Then they all squished through the muddy earth back to the wharf.

Smiles spread across their faces as they looked at the houseboat. The damage to the cabin hardly showed from this side. You could almost pretend nothing had happened.

His father said, “I’ll go on board first and make sure it’s safe.” After a moment he called, “It’s very damp in here, but steady enough.”

Chang and his mother followed. Chang saw at once that the cabin was wrecked. There was a gaping hole in one side. Some of their shelves were gone. Water had soaked their bedding and clothes.

His mother sagged against a wall. Her face was pale and strained. “How can we ever fix this?” Her voice shook.

His father answered slowly, “I don’t know.”

Chang and his parents worked all day. They pried off a loose board and nailed it across the bottom of the hole in the cabin, so the water could not come in. They rinsed wet clothes and bedding and stretched them to dry in the hot sun. They mopped the floor and dried out the cabinet where their small stock of food was stored. They coiled up ropes and folded nets.
As the day went on, Chang’s father spoke more hopefully. Soon he would be catching and selling fish again. Little by little, they would earn enough to buy lumber and other supplies to repair the cabin. It might take a long time, but eventually they would make the houseboat as snug and tight as ever.

Chang felt better when he heard this. Maybe things weren’t so bad after all.

In the late afternoon, Mei Mei came over, carrying dry charcoal and matches, and a basket of fresh vegetables. “For your first supper at home.”

Chang’s mother took the basket. Her tired face brightened. “We’ll have a grand meal! Thank you, Mei Mei. Please stay and eat with us.”

The girl agreed. She and Chang sat out on the deck, swinging their legs. The sun was sinking behind the highest peak of the mountains. Chang’s father had let the cormorants free in the river to fish for themselves. The birds splashed in the calm water, sending out showers of golden light.
“Let’s go to the market tomorrow,” Mei Mei suggested. “It’ll probably be a nice day.”

Chang nodded, almost contented now. In the river the birds played one of their games, tossing a stick. Mei Mei laughed, her laugh ringing like a bell.

Chang’s mother cut up the vegetables and started charcoal burning in the brazier. Then she went inside, but in a minute she burst out of the cabin, eyes brimming with tears. “My wok!” she cried. “My wok is gone!”

“Ah, no!” her husband exclaimed. “We must find it!”

He and Chang and Mei Mei crowded into the cabin. The wok had been kept on a low shelf in an alcove. Somehow they still expected to see it there, but now the alcove was empty.

They looked everywhere. It was truly gone.

Stunned, the family realized that when the water swirled in and took out the shelves, it must have carried the utensil away.
Mei Mei thought they should search the cabin one more time. They did, but it was no use. “I’m so sorry,” she said miserably. “You know what they say—in a flood, a wicked river spirit always steals something.”

But why, Chang wondered, did it have to be the wok? Gladly he would have given up his checkers game instead, or even his kite with the dragon painted on it. He knew how much the wok meant to his mother.

She covered her face with her hands. “We’ll never have the money to buy another.” She began to cry.

Chang’s father put his arms around her. “Boil up the vegetables in your iron pot,” he suggested gently. “Supper will still be good.”

She got out the old pot and made soup with the vegetables. But none of them felt like eating now. They ate a little, then stopped. Mei Mei went home.

In the night, Chang’s mother cried and cried. As he listened, a sharp sorrow stabbed Chang. If only he had money . . . if only he were rich . . .

Usually Chang did not think much about being poor. But now it struck him that so many things were out of his reach.

Once the village storyteller Bo Won had told a story about a poor boy who found treasure in a milk jug, but Chang had never known this to happen in real life.

The next morning Mei Mei came over early. Chang tucked his flute under his arm. He and Mei Mei walked the path to the market. Many other people were out today, smiling and enjoying the sunshine for the first time in days. The end of the flood had brought a holiday feeling to the village.

A tangle of thoughts stirred in Chang’s mind. There was one way he might be able to do something for his mother. There was one hard, painful way.
When they reached the market, Mei Mei led him to a row of small shops lining one side of the street. Everything was more expensive here than in the stalls that filled the market square. Mei Mei couldn’t afford to buy in these places, but she liked to look in the windows and pretend.

“Maybe I’ll get some of those silk flowers,” she said with a giggle. “They’re much prettier than cheap paper ones.”

The next shop had fancy bowls and cups in the window. “Or the rice bowl shaped like a turtle,” Mei Mei said.

The last window was full of cooking utensils, including woks. One of these caught Chang’s attention. It was even handsomer than his mother’s had been. It was bigger, and the handle was made of polished wood. And a lid came with it. His mother’s had not had a lid.

Chang wanted this wok desperately, but the price on it made him feel poorer than ever. He moved on. At one of the stalls, Mei Mei bought a small almond cake for each of them.

They were near Zhao the trader’s booth. Chang looked over the merchandise. The thoughts that had been stirring in his head grew clearer. He knew Zhao usually had some old pots and pans. Sure enough, amid all the rest of the junk, there was a cheap wok—not fine, not well made, not large. But a wok, at least.
He nudged Mei Mei nearer Zhao’s booth.
“I don’t want to see that awful man again,” Mei Mei whispered. “We don’t even have anything to trade.”
Chang ignored this. He stepped over to the booth. Hard as it was, he did have something to trade. He touched Zhao’s sleeve and pointed to the wok. Then he held up his flute.
The trader looked at Chang’s offering and sneered. “Who would want that? It’s nothing but a little bamboo stick!”
“It’s not!” Mei Mei said hotly. “It’s a flute! And all he wants for it is that old wok!”
“Never!” Zhao said indignantly. “I might give you a box of pencils for it, but nothing more.”
Chang shook his head.
“It has to be the wok,” Mei Mei repeated stubbornly.
“Well, it won’t be!” Zhao retorted.
The argument went back and forth between them, louder and louder. People gathered.
Then a kindly voice asked, “Is that you, Mei Mei?”
Chang and Mei Mei turned to see Bo Won in the crowd. The blind old storyteller hobbled slowly toward them.
Mei Mei answered, “Yes, it’s me.” Quickly she explained about the loss of the wok and the trade Chang wanted to make.
“I’ve made you a fair offer,” Zhao said. “Pencils for a stick.”
He laughed heartily.
Some in the crowd laughed, too, but others looked at the flute curiously.
“I’d like to hear a tune,” a man called out.
Chang hesitated, embarrassed. Never in his life had he played for strangers. To them his music might be a poor thing, laughable, like his voice.
“Go on, boy. Play,” Bo Won suggested quietly.
There was a silence. Chang stood frozen.
The group around him was quite large now.
“Play,” Bo Won said again, more urgently. Chang realized that this might be his last chance ever to make music.

Suddenly he didn’t mind the crowd. Let them think whatever they liked.

He began to play. At first the notes were shaky, but then they steadied. The melody grew firmer, full of the sounds of his world. They were sounds that belonged to all these people, too. The murmur of the river that gave them a good life, and the drumming of long rains that could take it away again. Breezes in a bamboo grove. The springtime peeping of frogs.

The crowd listened attentively.

Chang went on. He played the ancient chants the fishermen sang as they poled their rafts in the evening.

Some people nodded, recognizing the tunes. They were pleased. Bo Won untied a kerchief and took out a coin. He threw it at Chang’s feet.

Chang was surprised by this. For a moment he didn’t know what to make of it. Then he realized it was how people paid the old man to tell his stories.

A few people in the crowd noticed. Now that Bo Won had given them the idea, they, too, stepped forward to throw coins.

“The boy plays well,” someone said, and more coins were thrown.
When Chang finally stopped playing, there was a pile of money around his feet.

Zhao cleared his throat. “Well, maybe somebody would like to have the flute, after all,” he said grudgingly. “Who can offer me a good trade for it?”

Several people spoke up. But Bo Won advised, “Count your money first, Chang.”

Chang scooped up the coins and counted them. He was amazed at how much there was. He remembered the wok in the shop, and saw that he had enough money to buy it.

He had found his treasure, not in a milk jug but inside himself, here in the market square.

He looked at Mei Mei, his face beaming with happiness, and tugged at her arm. They ran to the store. Chang pointed out the wok to the shopkeeper and poured his money on the table.

The shopkeeper counted it carefully, then gave Chang a few coins back. He put the wok in a box. “Would you like to have it wrapped as a gift?” he asked.

Wrapped as a gift! So this was how it felt to be rich! Chang nodded in delight.

The shopkeeper got a fine sheet of paper printed with butterflies. It pays to shop in a good place, Chang thought.

Outside, the noodle man was calling, “Wontons and rice sticks, noodle nests and bean threads . . .”

Chang still had a little money left to spend, and his mother would need something to cook in her new wok. Fried bean threads! Chang could almost taste them already.
Think Critically

1. Name three effects the flood has on Chang and his family.
   CAUSE AND EFFECT

2. What is Chang’s motive for wanting to replace his mother’s wok?
   CHARACTER’S MOTIVES

3. How does Bo Won help Chang? Use details from the selection to support your answer.
   SYNTHESIZE

4. The wok is very important to Chang’s mother. What is something that is very important to you? Why is it important?
   MAKE CONNECTIONS

5. WRITE How do Chang’s feelings about sharing his music change during the story? Use story details to explain your answer.
   EXTENDED RESPONSE
About the Author

Elizabeth Starr Hill

Elizabeth Starr Hill published her first story when she was 13 years old. Since then, she has written many books for young readers. Elizabeth Starr Hill likes to write about realistic characters who grow and change as they learn about themselves through interactions with nature. She loves to spend time watching nature at her home in Winter Park, Florida.
About the Illustrator

Nancy Lane

Nancy Lane has been drawing pictures since before she could read. She enjoyed the art in her books so much that she decided to become an illustrator. She especially likes drawing people and animals as they enjoy nature. Nancy Lane enjoys walking in the woods at her home in Canandaigua, New York. While she worked on the paintings for this story, she listened to bamboo flute music for inspiration.

www.harcourtschool.com/storytime
Music

Evren Ozan, Musician

Interview

Time For Kids (TFK) reporter Harsha Viswanathan talked to award-winning Native American musician Evren Ozan. He plays the Native flute, which is a wood instrument. Harsha sat down with Evren when he was ten years old at his home in California. Here’s her report:

Although artists in the music circle tend to describe Evren as the “Native American Flute Prodigy,” “An Old Soul Returned to the People,” and the “Future of Native American Music,” I found him to be an exceptional ten-year-old who is smart, talented, creative, resourceful, inspiring, and on the whole, awesome.
TFK: I heard that you got your first flute in the Grand Canyon. Can you elaborate on that experience?

Evren: I went to a gift shop with my mom. I saw a flute that I liked and I picked it up. I started playing soon after that.

TFK: I read that besides skateboarding and spending time with your dogs and duck, you also enjoy tree house building. What attracted you to this hobby? How did you go about building one in your front yard?

Evren: My friends and I were bored one day, so we decided to ask my mom if we could build a tree house. We even tried to set up a business building tree houses, only the neighbors thought it was too dangerous, so we had to stop.

Once, my friends and I built a huge tree house and installed cool things in it like a shower. We used a hose with a special attachment in order to spurt the water out. My friends and I pretty much built the tree house by ourselves. Soon after we built our house, we ordered a pizza and we hoisted it up to the tree house like a house-warming party.

TFK: What is your favorite song to play on the flute?

Evren: Well, mostly when I play the flute, I improvise. I don’t really have a lot of songs in my head. I do have ideas in my head and they are all different. I usually compose my songs on the spur of the moment, not knowing how they will sound till I hear myself playing them.
Some of Evren's Native flutes.
TFK: *How do you get the inspiration for your songs?*

Evren: If I am practicing the flute and I make my mistake, it might sound good. It usually sounds different, but in a good way. I work with that note and try to develop it into a song. I don’t usually write out the songs. I keep them in my head.

TFK: *What is your life’s ambition?*

Evren: I would like to make a couple more CDs. I want to be a professional flute player, both silver flute and native.

TFK: *How did you get involved in making a CD?*

Evren: My teacher, Guillermo Martinez, makes wooden flutes. Once when we were on a trip to New Hampshire, we went to a flute shop to sell his flutes. As I was playing the flute to show the shopkeepers how it sounded, one of the shopkeepers asked me if I would like to make a recording of my song in his recording studio for free. I immediately thought, “that’s pretty good.” So, we recorded that CD, and we made another one after that.

TFK: *What happens when you go to the recording studio to make a CD?*

Evren: Sometimes when I go to the studio to record a CD, I make up my tunes right there and then. We compose the music just before we tape it.

TFK: *Do you ever get stage fright when you perform?*

Evren: I only get stage fright when there’s a big audience. I only get nervous when I play a song which I learned. I sometimes make up my songs while I’m on the stage itself!

TFK: *Do you like being famous? How does it feel to be famous?*

Evren: I don’t think that I’m famous. I just play the flute and have fun.
Comparing Texts

1. How would you feel about showing your talent? Would you feel as Chang does at the end of the story? Explain.

2. Compare the ways Chang and Evren Ozan feel about music.

3. Chang’s family replaced something that was important with something even more valuable. Has this happened to you? Explain.

Vocabulary Review

Word Sort

Work in a group. Sort the Vocabulary Words into categories. Compare your sorted words with the group, explaining your choices. Then choose at least one Vocabulary Word from each category. Write a sentence for each word.

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Fluency Practice

Repeated Reading

Work with a partner. Choose three paragraphs from “Chang and the Bamboo Flute.” Read the paragraphs aloud while your partner times you with a stopwatch. Then switch roles. Continue reading the paragraphs and timing each other. Note the improvement you make in your reading rate.

Writing

Extend the End

In “Chang and the Bamboo Flute,” Chang buys a new wok for his mother. Write a new ending that tells how you think Chang’s mother will react when she sees the new wok.

Chang’s Mother’s Reaction

Thoughts:
Words:
Actions: