



It is often said that a strong character design consists of an easily-identifiable silhouette. Though the character may have much more detail in the final design, one can instantly evoke the physical attributes and attitude through an iconic rendering of the character.

One might also think this way about the character's personality. By distilling the inner lives of characters into single sentences, an author can gain a clearer understanding of their story and create memorable characters.

Purposes:

1. To demonstrate to the students the convergence of writing and drawing disciplines in comics storytelling.
2. To deepen students' understanding of how to infer characters' inner lives through their words and actions in a story.

Process:

1. The teacher invites the students to draw several of their favorite characters from Ben Hatke's *Zita the Spacegirl*. The students will be instructed to draw the character in a pose that typifies the character's primary attitude in the story.

Questions the teacher might ask the students:

- What is Zita's primary attitude or emotion? (*courage, impulsiveness, selflessness*)
- What is another attitude or emotion that Zita expresses in the story? (*curiosity, fear, frustration*)
- Can these attitudes be combined into a single pose?

Modification: The teacher may invite some students to stand in front of the class to demonstrate the various emotions or attitudes as the students call them out. The student may hold the pose so the rest of the class may use him or her as a model for the drawing exercise.

2. The teacher will invite the students to write a motto for the character under each drawing. The students will be instructed to create a motto that both expresses the character's chief attitudes and reads in the character's voice.

Questions the teacher may pose to the students:

- What advice would this character give to a random person on the street?
- How would the character say this differently than other characters? How does Strong Strong speak differently than Randy?

Extension: The teacher may instruct the students to create their own *opposite* character based on one of the characters from *Zita the Spacegirl*. Like the first exercise, the students will be invited to draw the character in a signature pose and write a motto for the new character below.

Questions the teacher may pose to the students:

- What would Strong Strong's opposite look like? How would his or her speech change?
- How does the opposite character's attitude change how they would respond to Zita?