

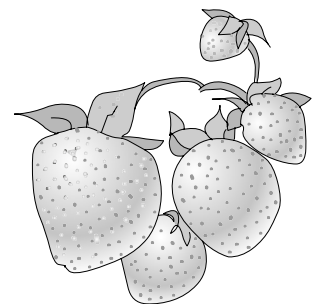
Writing a story 1

Developing characters

- Names can give very strong clues to a character's personality. For instance, in the Harry Potter books there's a character called Severus Snape, who Harry doesn't like. The name sounds sinister. The 's' sounds remind you of snakes, and 'Snape' sounds like the word 'snake'. In the same books, Mr Lupin is a werewolf. The Latin for 'wolf' is 'lupus', so 'lupine' actually means 'wolf-like'. Charles Dickens did the same thing. The teacher in *Hard Times* is called Mr Gradgrind ('Noses to the grindstone, there ...') and the horribly sweet heroine is called Esther Summerson.

Can you think of any other examples like this in the books you've read?

- You are going to develop your own character. Do the following exercise.
 - Choose a name that gives a clue to your character's personality. Choose your first name from these three: Spud, Arthur and Pat.
 - Add to the first name you've chosen the name of an animal, bird or fruit as the surname. Don't tell anyone what you've chosen and don't mention the surname you've chosen in your piece of writing.



- c. Now write about your character doing some everyday activity, for example, getting up, going shopping, or getting ready to go out. When you do this, the important thing to remember is that you must convey the characteristics suggested by his/her name in what you write. Before you do this, read the example below.

Pat Sparrow out shopping

Pat hopped off the bus, her bright little eyes twinkling. It was the sales and she was after a bargain. She had decided it was time to start wearing something a bit brighter than her usual brown. She caught sight of herself in a shop window: there she was, small and round, with a soft brown jumper and brown velvet trousers. She darted into the nearest clothes shop. There were so many people, though; she began to feel a bit nervous and twitchy. She fluttered from one rack to another, but it was no use, she couldn't hang around in this crowd. She would really have to fly.

1

3. a. Work in groups. Read out your pieces of writing to each other, but only say the first name of the character. Then see if the people listening can guess the surname of the character.
- b. What made some character's surnames easier to guess than others? Discuss this in your group.

Extension

4. Think of a person you don't know, but who you've seen around and noticed for some reason or other. Make up a name for them that fits what you imagine them to be like. Write about a day in the life of the person, trying to convey what they're like.