

## Paper 2: Character Analysis

### METHOD OF RESEARCH: Observation, Interview

In a crowd we may all look alike. But even the most innocuous-looking among us has had some adventures, endured some hardship, and tried to make a sensible plan for his or her life. The purpose of an interview is to ask perceptive enough questions to find the details that make a person distinctive. You've done research by observing a place. This time you'll do your research--gather your facts--in an interview with someone you don't know. As in the last paper, you need to concentrate and gather the facts that will speak for themselves and convey an impression or substantiate your topics sentences. In the paper you write, you should not offer us a random series of questions and answers but a thoughtful portrait of the person you interview. The hardest part of the paper may be getting up your nerve to ask someone to be interviewed. But it won't be nearly as difficult as you think; people like to talk about themselves.

The person you interview should be (1) someone over 40 years old, or (2) someone whose occupation you don't know much about, or (3) someone whose background is very different from yours. Don't bother to interview a person your age, or a member of your family, or a neighbor whom you know well. You won't learn much from such an interview.

Before you go to the interview, prepare a list of questions. Once you've asked a few of those questions, and you find yourself comfortable with the person you're interviewing, you should find yourself asking spontaneous questions and forgetting those on your list. Take careful notes, for the person's own words will usually be more effective than your own. Before you leave, ask permission to call the person back in case you need more information.

#### Important pointers:

1. Use the person's own words in your writing when they add color or when they say something in a way that you could not have or would not have.
2. Do not, however, relinquish control in your paper to your interviewee or to your notes. You are the writer. You organize and paragraph the paper not necessarily according to the chronology of the person's life or the order in which the person told you about events in his or her life but rather according to the points you want to make about the person--those things that you think define the person or make him or her worth writing about.
3. In your introduction, let your readers know why this person is worth reading about.