

DYNAMIC VS. STATIC CHARACTERS

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What Is a Dynamic Character?

A dynamic character is a character who undergoes significant internal change throughout the course of a story. The development of a dynamic character is often subtle and unstated and is not due to a change in the character's circumstances. A dynamic character is one who learns a lesson or changes as a person (either for better or for worse). Most main characters and major characters in stories are dynamic.

Dynamic characters are the opposite of static characters; while dynamic characters change throughout a story, static characters stay the same.

The term “dynamic character” is often confused with “round character,” and while they often overlap, they are not the same. A dynamic character is one who changes significantly throughout the story, whereas a round character is simply one who is interesting and layered. A character can be round without ever undergoing any changes throughout a story, so characters can be round without being dynamic.

4 Examples of Dynamic Characters

While dynamic characters are often protagonists of stories, any characters—from minor characters to antagonists—can be dynamic. Here are a few well-known dynamic character examples in movies and literature:

- **Scout Finch.** Scout, the protagonist of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, undergoes significant emotional maturation during the story. She starts as a self-focused, young girl with little empathy, as evidenced in her treatment of Boo Radley as an oddity, and she grows to become more empathetic and understanding of the people around her, shown later in the story in her ability to imagine life through Boo Radley's eyes.
- **Ebenezer Scrooge.** In Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge begins as a cruel, miserly man, turning away family members and refusing to donate to the poor. By the end of the story, he has faced significant internal conflict and has grown into a giving person, sending a turkey to his employee and dining with his nephew's family.
- **Neville Longbottom.** In the *Harry Potter* series, Neville begins as a frightened, awkward student. As he is shaped by conflicts with his friends and with the antagonists during the plot, his character changes into a brave young man, willing to fight for what he believes is right at the end of the series.
- **Anakin Skywalker.** Anakin's journey in *Star Wars* is full of significant internal changes, both good and bad. His transformation from Jedi knight to Sith lord is a great example of a dynamic character undergoing inner change that is negative—during his progression, he loses his “good guy” qualities and becomes an antagonist.

What Is a Static Character?

A static character is a type of character who remains largely the same throughout the course of the storyline. Their environment may change, but they retain the same personality and outlook as they had at the beginning of the story. It's common for secondary characters in stories to be static.

Static characters are the opposite of dynamic characters; while static characters stay the same throughout a story, dynamic characters undergo significant internal change.

The term “static character” is often confused with “flat character,” and while they do overlap, they are not the same. A static character is one who doesn’t undergo any significant change in a story, whereas a flat character is a one-dimensional character who isn’t layered or deep—rather, a flat character just has one or two traits that make up their whole personality. Flat characters are almost exclusively static characters, but not all static characters are flat—many static characters can be interesting and round.

3 Examples of Static Characters

While static characters are often antagonists of stories, any characters—from side characters to protagonists—can be static. Here are a few well-known static characters in movies and literature:

1. **Captain Hook.** The main antagonist of *Peter Pan*, Captain Hook is a cruel and buffoonish pirate captain who remains cruel and buffoonish throughout the story, ultimately being bested by Peter Pan. He never significantly changes or learns any lessons.
2. **Sherlock Holmes.** The famous detective undergoes no significant internal changes throughout any of the Arthur Conan Doyle stories—Holmes continuously regards the world with the same witty, confident attitude, even after encountering serious conflicts.
3. **Captain America.** While there are a lot of different versions of the Captain America story with varying levels of staticism, overall the character remains the same: he begins and ends the story as a moral person who wants to help others and serve his country. Even though he undergoes significant external changes, his internal traits remain the same.