

“**The Finish of Patsy Barnes**” by Paul Laurence Dunbar

“**The Drummer Boy of Shiloh**” by Ray Bradbury

Literary Analysis: Comparing Characters of Different Eras

A **character** is a person who takes part in the action of a literary work.

- A *dynamic character* develops and learns because of events in the story.
- A *static character* does not change. Static characters are often used by writers to develop conflict. These characters are not usually the central characters in a story.

Just as in real life, characters in fiction are affected by the **settings** in which they live. The forces that shape characters can include their jobs, living conditions, and major historical events. When a major historical event—such as a war or an economic downturn—occurs in a story, it can force characters to make difficult decisions for their own survival. Both “The Finish of Patsy Barnes” and “The Drummer Boy of Shiloh” present boys who live through challenging times. In one story, a recent move and a sudden illness have a devastating impact on a poor family. In the other, a war threatens to change the life of a soldier forever.

DIRECTIONS: Answer the questions about the characters in these stories.

1. Describe Patsy at the beginning of “The Finish of Patsy Barnes.”

2. What is life like for Eliza and Patsy Barnes in Dalesford?

3. What does Patsy accomplish by the end of the story?

4. How does Patsy develop and change through events in the story?

5. Describe Joby, the drummer boy, at the beginning of “The Drummer Boy of Shiloh.”

6. What does Joby think of his drum at the beginning of the story?

7. What causes the general to notice Joby as he walks by?

8. How has Joby—and his feelings about the drum—changed by the end of the story?
