

Skill: Identify and infer stated and implied character traits
8th Grade Assessment

NONFICTION: Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: Wesleyan University
Commencement, Middletown, CT, May 25, 2008

These are some statements that President Obama made to a college graduation.

During my first two years of college, perhaps because the values my mother had taught me –hard work, honesty, empathy – had resurfaced after a long hibernation; or perhaps because of the example of wonderful teachers and lasting friends, I began to notice a world beyond myself. I became active in the movement to oppose the apartheid regime of South Africa. I began following the debates in this country about poverty and health care. So that by the time I graduated from college, I was possessed with a crazy idea – that I would work at a grassroots level to bring about change.

I wrote letters to every organization in the country I could think of. And one day, a small group of churches on the South Side of Chicago offered me a job to come work as a community organizer in neighborhoods that had been devastated by steel plant closings. My mother and grandparents wanted me to go to law school. My friends were applying to jobs on Wall Street. Meanwhile, this organization offered me \$12,000 a year plus \$2,000 for an old, beat-up car. And I said yes. ...

It wasn't easy, but eventually, we made progress. Day by day, block by block, we brought the community together, and registered new voters, and set up after school programs, and fought for new jobs, and helped people live lives with some measure of dignity. ...

We will face our share of cynics and doubters. But we always have. I can still remember a conversation I had with an older man all those years ago just before I left for Chicago. He said, "Barack, I'll give you a bit of advice. Forget this community organizing business and do something that's gonna make you some money. You can't change the world, and people won't appreciate you trying. But you've got a nice voice, so you should think about going into television broadcasting. I'm telling you, you've got a future."

Now, he may have been right about the TV thing, but he was wrong about everything else. For that old man has not seen what I have seen. He has not seen the faces of ordinary people the first time they clear a vacant lot or build a new playground or force an unresponsive leader to provide services to their community. He has not seen the face of a child brighten because of an inspiring teacher or mentor. He has not seen scores of young people educate their parents on issues like Darfur, or mobilize the conscience of a nation around the challenge of climate change. He has not seen lines of men and women that wrap around schools and churches, that stretch block after block just so they could make their voices heard, many for the very first time.

Source: Wesleyan University

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

1. What is a character trait that Barack Obama tells he learned from his mother?

- a. honest
- b. legal
- c. example
- d. advice

2. What is a character trait that the older man advised Barack Obama to have?

- a. smart
- b. dedicated
- c. selfish
- d. rich

3. What is a trait that Barack Obama wants the people listening to his speech to have?

- a. caring
- b. confident
- c. careful
- d. cynical

4. What shows that Barack Obama has this trait: empathy, which means understanding other people?

- a. his examples
- b. his speech
- c. his law school degree
- d. his friends

5. *Write your own answer to this question.*
How can you infer what a person's character traits are?

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	a	c	a	a

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. By the person's actions.

Skill: Identify and infer stated and implied character traits

8th Grade Fiction: A New Day

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I visit my grandparents in Mississippi in the summers. It is hot there, but it is fun. And it was hot in Chicago, too. I liked the change. I listen to my grandfather tell stories about the way things were. He had met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He tells about the marches he joined. He tells about the changes he had seen.

My grandmother says to me, and my cousins, "Your grandfather was a hero. He stood up for civil rights. It was dangerous. But he went to the marches. He was one of the first African Americans to register to vote in this county. At first I was so worried that I would start to cry if he was not home by nighttime. But I joined him. I marched, too."

My grandfather is humble, though. He doesn't take credit for being brave. He says, "It was Dr. King who was the hero. We all did it together. He was the man who brought all the change. He inspired the freedom marches."

When I went to last summer, my grandparents kept us busy. They took me, and my cousins into town every day. We would go door to door to check that people were registered to vote. If they weren't registered, we would ask if we could get them to register. If they said yes, then my grandfather would come to drive them to the office to register. Everyone said yes. So we got a lot of people to register.

When we came back to Chicago, there were signs all over about the election. It was exciting. My teacher said that this was an unprecedented time. Never before had an African American been nominated by a major political party to be President of the United States. I felt proud that I had been part of the election.

Then it was election day. We were watching the news on the TV. One by one the states were counting the votes and reporting who won. It was getting clear that Barack Obama was going to be elected.

At 9:00 pm, my grandfather called from Mississippi. He said, "Jerome, now it is a new country. We have made the really big change." I heard my grandmother in the background. She was crying. I asked if she was sad. "No," he said, "those are tears of joy. We have overcome."

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

6. What is a trait that is literally stated about the grandfather?

- a. old
- b. brave
- c. voter
- d. march

7. What is a trait you infer about the grandfather?

- a. determined
- b. sad
- c. discouraged
- d. happy

8. What is a trait you infer about the grandmother?

- a. worried
- b. doubtful
- c. courageous
- d. sad

9. What is a trait you infer about Jerome?

- a. respectful
- b. studious
- c. careless
- d. angry

10. *Write your own answer to this question. How do you infer the traits of a character in a story?*

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Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	6	7	8	9
Answer	b	a	c	a

Question 10 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

10. By the person's actions and what the writer tells about the person.