

- **How they say it:** How does the writer make the character speak? Are they always talking about the same thing? Do they have a particular way of talking, e.g. dialect, tone? What is the writer saying about their background, feelings or interests?
- **What other characters say or think about them:** How are you made to see them through other people's eyes? Do other characters like or dislike them, admire or despise them, trust or distrust them? Do you believe what others say about them?

ACTIVITY 4

A01

A02

SKILLS

CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS,
REASONING, INTERPRETATION

▼ CHARACTERS IN POETRY

Character is not unique to prose; poems often present readers with strong and well-drawn characters. Read 'Dulce et Decorum Est' by Wilfred Owen and answer the following questions.

- 1 Why do the poem's characters remain nameless?
- 2 How is description of the gassed man used to build up a strong visual image of him?
- 3 What do the final two verses (lines 15–28) tell you about the narrator's relationship with death?
- 4 How does the poem make you feel about the narrator?
- 5 Why do you think Owen wrote this poem?

KEY POINT

Understanding character is a critical part of analysing a text. Authors can convey meaning through characters' words and actions and how they interact with each other. Characters can also be used to show how a writer feels about a bigger theme or issue.

▼ 'DULCE ET DECORUM EST' BY WILFRED OWEN

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.