

Exercise 11.1

"CHARACTER"ISTICS OF INTELLIGENCE

Pattern Recognition

Historically, intelligence was defined as a specific set of cognitive abilities used primarily in academic settings. Contemporary theories of intelligence, however, tend to stress "multiple intelligences," suggesting that mental abilities are too diverse to fall under one label. Although there is some disagreement over the exact nature of these different intelligences, Robert J. Sternberg, Richard Wagner, and some of their colleagues have described three different intelligences: academic, practical, and creative. Academic problem-solving skills are those measured by more traditional intelligence tests and focus on an individual's ability to answer well-defined problems with objectively correct answers. Practical intelligence is often termed "common sense"—the ability to successfully complete the often ambiguous and complex tasks that are a part of everyday life. Creative intelligence involves seeing unexpected patterns and solutions when presented with novel situations.

Below are some classic literary and cinematic figures. Using the triarchic classification of the Sternberg and Wagner framework of intelligence, analyze each character's intellectual profile. Provide a rationale for each answer. Then, pick some of your own favorite characters and identify their intelligences (and lack thereof).

| Character | Academic | Practical | Creative |
|-----------------|---|--|---|
| Scrooge | Strong: his career as an accountant dictates good analytic skills | Strong: his money-making abilities attest to his street smarts | Weak: he conforms to conventions to an extreme degree |
| Mary Poppins | | | |
| Sherlock Holmes | | | |
| Winnie the Pooh | | | |
| Don Quixote | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

After completing this exercise, you should be able to

- explain the components of Sternberg and Wagner's theory of multiple intelligences.
- identify the intellectual strengths and weaknesses of fictional literary figures.
- apply the theory of multiple intelligences to new examples.

Exercise 11.1

"CHARACTER"ISTICS OF INTELLIGENCE

Pattern Recognition

| Character | Academic | Practical | Creative |
|-----------------|---|---|---|
| Scrooge | Strong: his career as an accountant dictates good analytic skills | Strong: his money-making abilities attest to his street smarts | Weak: he conforms to conventions to an extreme degree |
| Mary Poppins | Strong: her tutoring skills are unparalleled | Strong: she is interpersonally shrewd ("practically perfect") and skilled at solving problems | Strong: her strategies for child care reflected unconventional but successful solutions |
| Sherlock Holmes | Strong: his detective career offered the opportunity to show off an impressive range of knowledge | Strong: his problem-solving skills were legendary | Strong: he adopted unusual costumes and creative approaches to catch criminals |
| Winnie the Pooh | Weak: No sign of book-learning for poor Pooh! | Weak: poor Pooh works hard to "think, think, think" but such efforts are rarely successful; he often has difficulty figuring out how to do the tasks of everyday living | Strong: Pooh usually takes an unconventional point of view in coping with the world |
| Don Quixote | Strong: Prior to his quest, Don Quixote was respected as a learned man | Weak: Don Quixote's problem-solving skills were exquisitely unsuccessful | Strong: Don Quixote's romantic and nonconformist view of the world was impressive |

| Character | Academic | Practical | Creative |
|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Your example | | | |
| Your example | | | |

What were your examples? Did you notice any patterns in either intellectual strengths or weaknesses of the characters you selected?