

# Characterization

## Practice It

① Click the link below to listen to instructions and hear me read “The Kid’s Table”.

<https://shorts.flipgrid.com/watch/10212869520753128>

② Fill out the characterization chart (attached below) on your own.

③ Click the link below to hear how I filled out my characterization chart.

<https://shorts.flipgrid.com/watch/10213233928438523>

# The Kids' Table

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2010

Anita Celli has written for Highlights. In this short story, a boy doesn't want to sit at the kids' table for Thanksgiving. As you read, take notes on when James feels grown up.

- [1] James was exhausted.<sup>1</sup> Twenty-two people, including seven kids under age six, were crowded into his family's house for Thanksgiving.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" called a little voice.

Oh no! Three-year-old Cara had found James's hiding spot, behind the sofa in the basement.

They weren't playing hide-and-seek. James was just trying to catch his breath. All day, he'd been grabbed and thumped by little cousins who thought he was a climbing gym. Cara now leaped onto James. He stood up and shifted Cara onto his back. She squealed and held tightly to his neck as he trudged<sup>2</sup> up the steps with her. James emerged in the kitchen where his mother, grandmother, an aunt, and two uncles were getting dinner ready.



*"I want a piggyback too!" by Craig Stapley is used with permission.*

- [5] "OK, time to let go. You're choking me," James gasped as he set Cara on the floor.

Suddenly, Mario, Dana, Kyle, Sean, Franny, and Lisa stormed into the kitchen, shouting. "I want a piggyback, too!" "No, it's my turn!"

James backed up against the refrigerator and shot a pleading look toward his mother.

"OK, kiddos," said Mom, taking the hint, "go wash your hands. It's almost time for dinner, and Jimmy needs to help me."

"Awww," whined the seven kids. Mom shooed them out. Aunt Brenda followed to make sure they found the bathroom.

- [10] "No rest for the main attraction, eh?" Mom ruffled James's hair. James ducked. He hated being treated like a little kid. He was almost as tall as his mom, after all. Mom handed him a stack of plastic plates. "Here, take these to the kids' table."

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1. **Exhausted** (*adjective*): very tired  
2. **Trudge** (*verb*): to walk slowly and with heavy steps

The kids' table. He'd forgotten that he would be eating with the babies, separate from the adults. He hoped the kids would be too hungry to bother him. As soon as he set down the last plate, the band of munchkins<sup>3</sup> charged back into the room.

Fortunately, Aunt Brenda saved him. "No, it's not time to play with Jimmy! Find a chair and sit down."

James sighed and started, looking for an empty chair when his mom patted his shoulder. "Maybe you'd like to sit with the adults this year," she said. "I saved you a place next to Dad."

It was Thanksgiving, but to James it suddenly felt like his birthday. The adults' table! No squealing, no soda spilled on his lap, no grubby<sup>4</sup> fingers stealing his corn bread. James sat next to his father, too happy to speak.

- [15] As the adults passed around the steaming dishes, James looked over at the little kids. They were unusually quiet, just picking at their food. The conversation around James centered on electric bills, how to repair a roof, and what to do with leftovers. He took a piece of turkey and peeked back at the kids' table, just in time to see Sean steal Cara's juice.

"Hey!" She grabbed it back.

"I don't have anything to drink!" Sean wailed.

"That's enough juice!" Aunt Brenda scolded.<sup>5</sup>

"Eat your turkey."

- [20] James' plate was full. He glanced at the kids, glad to be away from their silliness, and saw Sean poke Cara. Cara poked him back, and Sean started to cry. Before he realized what he was doing, James grabbed his plate, jumped up, and strode to the kids' table. "Hey!"

The children looked at James, surprised and excited. "Did you hear about the giant squirrel that pounded on the door this morning?" James asked.

They stared at him, wide-eyed.

"It was as big as a dog and demanded that we hand over Aunt Brenda's special walnut stuffing," James said."

"Did you give it to him?" asked Sean. All the kids hoped so. Aunt Brenda was wonderful, but her walnut stuffing? They wouldn't go near it.

- [25] "I almost got the pan to the door, but Aunt Brenda made me put it back," James said. He pulled over a chair and sat down.

"Awww," the children cried.

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3. a child or short person

4. **Grubby** (*adjective*): dirty

5. **Scold** (*verb*): to speak to someone angrily because you don't approve of their behavior

But one by one, they picked up their forks and began to eat. James continued, "I told him to come back later, that I was sure we'd have a lot left over."

"I can hear you, you know," called Aunt Brenda.

"We were just saying how the squirrel..." James pretended to explain, then clamped a hand over his mouth. He winked at the kids before continuing loudly, "I mean, we love your stuffing, Auntie Brenda."

[30] The children giggled and ate. Some of them even tried the walnut stuffing. A few of them discovered that they liked it!

James wasn't sure how he'd ended up back at the kids' table. He'd just felt needed somehow. Mom walked by and ruffled his hair. This time, it made him feel grown up.

# Characterization

Book Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Characters:

Minor Characters:

How did the characters feel/act at the beginning of the story? Use text evidence.

How did the characters feel/act at the end of the story? Use text evidence.

How did the character change in the story? How do you know? Use text evidence to support your answer.

What lesson does the character learn?