

Characterization: Characterization is the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character. Characterization is revealed through direct characterization and indirect characterization. **Direct Characterization** tells the audience what the personality of the character is. Example: “The patient boy and quiet girl were both well-mannered and did not disobey their mother.”

Explanation: The author is directly telling the audience the personality of these two children. The boy is “patient” and the girl is “quiet.”

Indirect Characterization shows things that reveal the personality of a character.

There are five different methods of indirect characterization, “STEAL”: ___
• Speech • Thoughts • Effect on others • Actions • Looks.

Types of Characters

Protagonist: The main character of a narrative; its central character who engages the reader’s interest and empathy.

Antagonist: The character, force, or collection of forces in fiction or drama that opposes the protagonist and gives rise to the conflict of the story; an opponent of the protagonist.

Round: A character that is convincing, true to life. A character that has many different and sometimes even contradictory personality traits. A character that undergoes some type of change or development in story, often because of something that happens to him.

Flat/Static: A character that does not change in the course of the story. A character that is stereotyped, shallow, and often symbolic. A character that has only one or two personality traits.

CHARACTERS IN MIDNIGHT’S CHILDREN

Saleem Sinai

- Saleem Sinai is the protagonist and narrator of *Midnight’s Children*. He is born, along with one other child, at the exact moment of India’s independence. His identity, however, is switched at birth. As a result, he is raised by a prosperous family in Bombay, while his counterpart and future rival, Shiva, is raised in

poverty. Saleem has the powers of telepathy and a preternaturally acute sense of smell, which allow him to find the other children of midnight and create the Midnight's Children's Conference. As he approaches his thirty-first birthday, he says he is nearing death. His body is literally falling apart, and it's only a matter of time before he crumbles into dust. Driven by a desire to beat his biological clock, Saleem narrates his life story to his devoted and loving caretaker, Padma. His tale, which begins with his grandfather Aadam and is at times unreliable and contrived, represents not only his individual life story but also the entire history of postcolonial India. All the major events in his life correspond to important political events in Indian history, leading him to compare his narrative to religious texts. Given his fantastic birth and extraordinary powers, the prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi, seeks to destroy him along with the other midnight's children.

- **Aadam Aziz**

Saleem's grandfather. Aadam is the patriarch of the family, a doctor and skeptic whose loss of faith leaves what he refers to as a "hole" inside of him. Aadam falls in love with his wife, Naseem, after only being allowed to see her through a hole in a perforated sheet.

- **Ahmed Sinai**

Saleem's father. A shrewd businessman who is nonetheless destined for failure, Ahmed spends much of his marriage fighting his wife and his alcohol addiction.

- **Mumtaz (Amina Sinai)**

Saleem's mother, and the daughter of Aadam Aziz. Born Mumtaz, she changes her name to Amina after her marriage to Ahmed. A loving, devoted mother, she inherits her father's skepticism and her mother's determination. Despite being married to Ahmed, she is never able to forget her first husband, Nadir Khan.

- **Mary Pereira**

Saleem's ayah and surrogate mother. Mary is responsible for switching Saleem and Shiva at birth out of a misguided sense of social justice. In order to compensate for her crime, she dedicates her life to raising Saleem.

- **Shiva**

Saleem's archrival. Shiva is born at exactly the same moment as Saleem. While Saleem is raised in a loving, wealthy household, Shiva is raised in abject poverty by a single father. He is blessed with a pair of preternaturally strong knees and an amazing prowess in war. Shiva is named after the Hindu god of destruction, who is also the god associated with procreation.

Born at the stroke of midnight and named after the Hindu god of destruction, Shiva is Saleem's rival and counterpart. Switched at birth with Saleem, Shiva is robbed of his affluent birthright and raised in abject poverty. Blessed with a pair of enormous and powerful knees, Shiva is a gifted warrior and, therefore, a foil for the more mild-mannered Saleem. Shiva represents the alternate side of India: poor, Hindu, and as aggressive as Saleem is passive. As a young child, he is the leader of a street gang and possibly a murderer. He is driven by a determinedly individualist perspective and grows up unable to form any human attachments. Although he is a violent character, he is, nonetheless, a tragic figure, damaged and shaped by the forces of history and class. During the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, Shiva lives up to his name and becomes a war hero, eventually promoted to the rank of major. Along with his military reputation, Shiva also becomes a noted lover among the women of Indian high society, siring a number of illegitimate children. In the end, Shiva hunts Saleem down and turns him over to one of the camps opened during Indira Gandhi's state of Emergency, where Saleem, along with the other midnight's children, is administered an operation that renders him sterile. In this way, Shiva manages to effectively destroy the children of midnight.

- **Parvati-the-witch**

A real witch, and, like Saleem, one of the children born at the moment of India's independence. Parvati is Saleem's closest ally as a child and later becomes his wife. Despite her fantastic powers, she is unable to make Saleem fall in love with her and, as a result, embarks on an affair with Shiva that results in a child. In the Hindu religion, Parvati is the consort of Shiva.

- **Padma**

- Padma is Saleem's loving companion and caretaker, and she will become his fiancée at the end of the novel. She is the audience for Saleem's narrative. With strong, hairy forearms, a name associated with dung, and a cynical and often impatient ear, Padma represents the antithesis to Saleem's magical, exuberant, freewheeling narration. She hurries the narrative along, imploring Saleem to get on with the plot rather than veering off into tangents, and often she expresses doubts as to the veracity of Saleem's account. As a rhetorical device, Padma allows Rushdie the chance to acknowledge explicitly any doubts or frustrations the reader may feel in response to the novel. She is the practical voice of criticism. Because she is there to counteract its most extreme tendencies, she supports the novel's more willfully excessive indulgences. Saleem's frequent interruptions, digressions, and self-obsession are all, to some degree, made possible by Padma's expressions of doubt and frustration: the two sides work together to create a holistic reading experience. By explicitly taking into account the difficulties of the narrative, Rushdie is able to move beyond them.

- **Naseem Ghani**

Saleem's grandmother, and Aadam Aziz's wife. After marriage, Naseem becomes known as Reverend Mother, in part because of her religious devotion. As her husband withers away with age, Reverend Mother grows increasingly large and powerful.

- **William Methwold**

Saleem's biological father. An Englishman, William Methwold seduces women with his perfectly parted hair, which is actually a wig. He owns Methwold's Estate, a portion of which he sells to Ahmed Sinai. He sees his departure from India as marking the tragic end of an era.

- **Alia**

Saleem's aunt, and a sister of Amina. After Ahmed Sinai rejects her for her sister, Alia harbors a lifelong bitterness and determination to destroy her sister and her sister's family.

- **Hanif**

Saleem's uncle, and a brother of Amina. Hanif was once one of the most promising film directors in India. However, his dream to create art free from melodrama and superstition fails, and, as his career falls apart, he commits suicide.

- **Nadir Khan**

Amina's first husband. As a young man, Nadir Khan is the personal assistant to Mian Abdullah, as well as a bad poet. He falls in love with Amina but is forced to divorce her on account of his impotence. He later changes his name to Qasim Khan and becomes a communist.

- **Mustapha**

Saleem's uncle, and a brother of Amina. Mustapha is the ideal, obedient civil servant. He is so passive, he's nearly inconsequential—a fate he takes out on his children by constantly beating them until they have no personality left.

- **Emerald**

Saleem's aunt, and a sister of Amina. Emerald marries Major Zulfikar and enjoys an opulently comfortable lifestyle. Selfish and self-absorbed, she only reluctantly comes to her sister's aid.

- **General Zulfikar**
Emerald's husband, and an important figure in the Pakistani army. General Zulfikar helps orchestrate a coup against the Pakistani government and makes money by smuggling items into the country. His constant abuse of his son, Zafar, eventually provokes Zafar into killing him.
- **Zafar**
The son of General Zulfikar and Emerald. Zafar wets himself throughout his life and is ridiculed and abused by his father as a result.
- **Aadam Sinai**
The biological son of Shiva and Parvati-the-witch. Saleem raises Aadam as if he were his own child. Aadam is just three years old at the novel's conclusion.
- **Picture Singh**
A snake charmer, and the leader of the magician's ghetto. Charming and diplomatic, Picture Singh is Saleem's closest friend. He is undone by his desire to prove himself the world's greatest snake harmer.
- **Wee Willie Winkie**
Shiva's father. Wee Willie Winkie is a poor man who earns a living by singing for the wealthy families of Methwold's Estate.
- **Vanita**
Saleem's biological mother. Vanita dies during labor.
- **Evie Lilith Burns**
A violent, tough American girl. Evie is briefly the leader of the children living on Methwold's Estate, and she is Saleem's first love.
- **Sonny Ibrahim**
One of the children living on Methwold's Estate. Sonny is Saleem's best friend. He is also in love with Saleem's sister, the Brass Monkey.
- **Joseph D'Costa**
A social radical who later becomes a ghost. Joseph D'Costa's political beliefs inspire Mary's decision to switch Shiva and Saleem, and his ghost later compels her to confess her crime.

- **Commander Sabarmati**
A high-ranking official in the Indian navy. After learning that his wife, Lila, has had an affair, Commander Sabarmati shoots her, kills her lover, and then surrenders. He temporarily becomes a national hero.
- **Homi Catrack**
A film magnate, and resident of Methwold's Estate. Homi Catrack has an affair with Lila, the wife of Commander Sabarmati, and is subsequently murdered by the commander.
- **Lila Sabarmati**
The wife of Commander Sabarmati. Lila's husband shoots her in the stomach for having an affair.
- **Doctor Narlikar**
A doctor, and Ahmed's business partner. Dr. Narlikar devises a scheme for reclaiming land from the ocean but dies before he can implement it.
- **Alice Pereira**
Mary's sister. Alice eventually works for Ahmed Sinai and is responsible for Mary's chutney factory.
- **Farooq, Shaheed, and Ayooba**
Three soldiers assigned to work with Saleem in the Pakistani army. Each one is eventually killed during the war.
- **Narlikar Women**
An unnamed, unnumbered group of "grossly competent" women who take over Dr. Narlikar's affairs after his death.
- **Mian Abdullah**
A political figure before independence. Mian Abdullah is the founder of the Free Islam Convocation, an organization dedicated to resisting the partition of India along religious lines.
- **Ghani**
Naseem's father. Ghani is a blind, wealthy landowner.

- **Tai**

An old boatman from Kashmir. Tai is a mysterious, ancient, and wise figure who remains resentful of the world's encroachment into his territory until his death.

- **Ramram Seth**

A prophet who predicts Saleem's future while Amina is pregnant.

The Brass Monkey (Jamila Singer)

Saleem's younger sister, initially known as the Brass Monkey, is born into the world with little fanfare. She eventually grows up to become the most famous singer in Pakistan, adored throughout the country. As a child, Saleem notes that the Brass Monkey learned at an early age that if she wanted attention, she would have to make a lot of noise, which is precisely what she does. She becomes a mischievous child who garners attention by destroying things and remains unable to accept love throughout her adult life.

The Widow

Indira Gandhi was the prime minister of India from 1966–1977, then again from 1980–1984, a term that ended with her assassination. Indira was the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, and the widow of Feroze Gandhi, an Indian journalist and politician. Though Mahatma Gandhi was a family friend and political ally, the two are not related.

With the arrival of Indira Gandhi and the State of Emergency, Rushdie fuses the two narratives with a single crisis. The reforms of the emergency, which included a widespread campaign of forced sterilization, were widely seen as massive abuses of government power and human rights. The nation of India is metaphorically thrown into perpetual darkness just as Saleem's wife, Parvati-the-witch, is killed and the magicians' ghetto destroyed. By making Indira Gandhi's campaign responsible for the destruction of the fictional midnight's children, Rushdie holds her accountable for destroying the promise and hope of a new future for India.

Courtesy : Dr. Md. Ejaz Alam