

Writing to Describe – Introduction (Day 1)

Language Arts/Grade 6

Created by Keli Jacewitz

Lesson Plan Summary: In this lesson, students will investigate how and why authors write descriptively so that they can incorporate descriptive writing into their own research papers. Students will explain how descriptive writing helps authors create pictures in readers' minds, which allows readers to visualize people, places, events, or objects the authors write about. This lesson is Part 1 in the "Writing" series.

Objective(s): The student will analyze the purpose of descriptive writing and will research the historical background of slavery and the Underground Railroad.

Standard(s):

Writing/Purposes. The student writes for a variety of audiences and purposes and in a variety of forms. Write to inform, including to explain, describe, report, and narrate.

- Write to inform/tell/explain/define
- Compare/Contrast
- Attributes list (Characteristics of something)
- Write to describe hierarchical: Best to worst; most meaningful to least meaningful.

TEKS §110.22. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 6. (b)(15)(C)

Writing/Grammar/Usage. The student applies standard grammar and usage to communicate clearly and effectively in writing. Write in complete sentences, varying the types including compound and complex, and use of appropriately punctuated dependent clauses. Edit drafts to ensure originality and variation in sentence structures.

- Judges the most effective sequencing of sentences in a paragraph (e.g., chronological order, order of importance, spatial order).
- Uses modifiers, phrases, and clauses effectively in his or her writing.
- Differentiates among fragments, run-on sentences, correct sentences, and pairs of sentences that need to be combined.
- Determines the most effectively expressed revision of a group of sentences in need of combining.

TEKS §110.22. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 6. (b)(17)(B)

Prerequisite Skills: Basic writing and reading skills; the ability to follow along and fill in the blanks; basic knowledge of laptop computers and computer safety skills.

Anticipatory Set: Journal – Instruct the students to each pick one room in the school to write about. Tell them to be as detailed as possible and write down everything about the place without saying what it is. Their classmates are going to try and guess which room they picked, so they should be as descriptive as possible.

Allow a few volunteers to read their description and give students the chance to guess which room they are describing. After a few volunteers have read, tell the students that this is what we are going to spend the next week learning – how to write to describe. Emphasize adjectives and adverbs that make the descriptions vivid. The students will remind the teacher of the definition for an adjective and an adverb. Have students give multiple examples.

Pass out one [Writing to Describe Notes Sheet](#) (Cornell notes) to each student. Have the students take notes about writing to describe from the PowerPoint. Do not fill in the summary section yet.

Modeling: Pass out 2-3 sticky notes to each student. Show the students the “Barbershop” picture from the TIDES website: (<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2006/u/?EastTexRC,16>). Ask the students to jot down a few descriptive words of the picture they see. Tell them to be sure to make the statements factual, not based on feelings. Have students share their brainstorming of words used to describe the picture.

On the board, the teacher will create a T-Chart with “Positive Connotation” written on one side, and “Negative Connotation” written on the other. Have students place their sticky notes on the correct side of the chart. Discuss the words they chose and point out how good use of strong words can help the reader visualize what the author is trying to say.

On the board or overhead, brainstorm events that could be taking place at the time of this picture. Since this is a hierarchical order paper, have students talk about the best things in life during this time and the worst things about life during this time.

Check for Understanding: Ask how the different brainstormed words can help us describe the picture.

Guided Practice: The teacher will show the students the National Geographic website (www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/) about the Underground Railroad. Use the projector to show the students the path the slaves took.

Additional Resources for Guided Practice: If your class has access to *Discovery Education Streaming* (<http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com/index.cfm>), show each video from United Streaming to introduce the historical background: “Life on Southern Plantations” (3:17), and “Riding the Underground Railroad” (3:46). The students are to complete the [“Life in the South” worksheet](#), as they are watching, to ensure they pay close attention. It might be necessary to play each video twice to give the students the opportunity to get the blanks filled in, but the videos are so short it won’t take up too much instructional time.

Following the videos, the teacher will ask the students how they would describe life in the South during the time of slavery. What kinds of people were involved? What role did the slaves play? Would the South have existed then without the labor provided by the slaves? Do you think you would have tried to escape via the Underground Railroad? What do you think traveling on the Underground Railroad might have been like?

Closure: Give each student a post-it note. Have them write down the definition of an adjective and an adverb. The student will write down one example of each. The post-it is their ticket out the door. Collect these as the leave to their next class.

Students will complete the summary section of their [Writing to Describe Notes Sheet](#) before they leave.

Independent Practice: Pass out the [Character Role: Information Organizer](#). The teacher will have already cut up the character role strips and placed them in a paper bag. Students will draw the name of their character out of a bag. Next, have them fill in the character portion of their research packet so no

one forgets. Have them begin to brainstorm a few ideas about the type of character they will be researching. Collect the packets from the students and hold on to them until day 2. Make sure everyone has their own name and their character written down on the packet.

Enrichment: Students who complete their work early can write a one page story of their own about the “barbershop” picture. The story can detail the characters and events taking place.

Remediation:

- ESL students can work with a partner.
- SPED students can receive Cornell notes that are fill in the blank, CM/resource per mods.
- GT students can complete the enrichment project.

Assessment/Rubrics: Post-it note with the description of an adjective and an adverb.

Resources: Based on the original lesson by Melissa Rabinowitz, Jane Long Middle School

Materials:

“Barbershop” picture from TIDES website (<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2006/u/?EastTexRC,16>)

[Blank Note Sheet](#) (Cornell Notes)

[Fill-in-the-blank Note Sheet](#) (Cornell Notes) for SPED

[Fill-in-the-blank Note Sheet Answer Key](#)

[“Life in the South” fill-in-the-blank worksheet](#)

[“Life in the South” worksheet Answer Key](#)

[Writing to Describe PowerPoint](#)

[United Streaming Video](#) “Life on Southern Plantations” (3:17)

[United Streaming Video](#) “Riding the Underground Railroad” (3:46)

National Geographic Website – <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/>

Research Packets, 1 per student, including:

- [Character role information organizer](#)
- [Paper Outline \(Questions to Think About\)](#)
- [Organizing Your Research](#)

Computer

Projector

Speakers

Character Role Strip – cut up

Paper Bag

Post-It Notes – 2 per student

Chalkboard, whiteboard, or overhead

	Name: _____ Class: _____ Period: _____ Topic: Writing to Describe Date: _____
Questions/Main Ideas:	Notes:
Why should we write to describe?	Descriptions give the reader a vivid _____, allowing them to see the images _____ want them to see.
How can we create good descriptions?	Authors sometimes use _____ or _____ to describe. - Adjectives describe _____ and answer: 1) What kind? 2) _____ one? 3) How _____? 4) How much? Example: The purple, furry dog ran by. - Adverbs modify _____, adverbs, or adjectives and answer: 1) Where? 2) _____? 3) In What Way? 4) To _____ extent? Example: Close the window quickly. Example: She was very sad.
Summary:	

<p>Questions/Main Ideas:</p>	<p>Name: _____</p> <p>Class: _____ Period: _____</p> <p>Topic: Writing to Describe – Answer Key</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Notes:</p>
<p>Why should we write to describe?</p>	<p>Descriptions give the reader a vivid picture, allowing them to see the images you</p>
	<p>want them to see.</p>
<p>How can we create good descriptions?</p>	<p>Authors sometimes use adjectives or adverbs to describe.</p>
	<p>- Adjectives describe nouns and answer:</p>
	<p>1) What kind?</p>
	<p>2) Which one?</p>
	<p>3) How many?</p>
	<p>4) How much?</p>
	<p>Example: The purple, furry dog ran by.</p>
	<p>- Adverbs modify verbs, adverbs, or adjectives and answer:</p>
	<p>1) Where?</p>
	<p>2) When?</p>
	<p>3) In What Way?</p>
	<p>4) To what extent?</p>
	<p>Example: Close the window quickly.</p>
	<p>Example: She was very sad.</p>
<p>Summary:</p>	

Name: _____ Date: _____

Life in the South

Fill-in-the-blank Notes United Streaming Videos

Directions: As we are watching the two United Streaming videos, listen carefully and fill in the blank with the information from the movie. The movie is very short and the information is presented very quickly. You will need to be an expert listener for this activity.

Life on Southern Plantations – Video

1. The North was considered Industrial, while the South was a _____l.
2. A boost in c _____n made the need for slaves greater.
3. For slaves, m _____e was not legal and they could be separated from their families.
4. The phrase “sold down river” referred to the M _____i River.
5. People known as Abolitionists called for an end to s _____y in the 1830’s.

Riding the Underground Railroad – Video

1. The most courageous effort by Abolitionists was called the U _____d R _____d. This was a network that helped slaves reach freedom in the North.
2. Someone who helped slaves to freedom was called a c _____r.
3. A healthy person could travel up to _____ miles during one night.
4. One conductor, T _____s Garrett, helped 2,700 slaves to freedom.
5. Harriet Tubman helped so many slaves reach freedom, they referred to her as the M _____s of her people.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Life in the South

Fill-in-the-blank Notes
United Streaming Videos

Directions: As we are watching the two United Streaming videos, listen carefully and fill in the blank with the information from the movie. The movie is very short and the information is presented very quickly. You will need to be an expert listener for this activity.

Life on Southern Plantations – Video

1. The North was considered Industrial, while the South was **agricultural**.
2. A boost in **cotton** made the need for slaves greater.
3. For slaves, **marriage** was not legal and they could be separated from their families.
4. The phrase “sold down river” referred to the **Mississippi** River.
5. People known as Abolitionists called for an end to **slavery** in the 1830’s.

Riding the Underground Railroad – Video

1. The most courageous effort by Abolitionists was called the **Underground Railroad**. This was a network that helped slaves reach freedom in the North.
2. Someone who helped slaves to freedom was called a **conductor**.
3. A healthy person could travel up to **18** miles during one night.
4. One conductor, **Thomas** Garrett, helped 2,700 slaves to freedom.
5. Harriet Tubman helped so many slaves reach freedom, they referred to her as the **Moses** of her people.

Character Role Strip

Directions: Cut up the roles for the research paper. Place the strips of paper in a bag. Let students draw one name to research for their descriptive paper.

Plantation Owner Runaway Slave Conductor

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Plantation Owner Runaway Slave Conductor

Plantation Owner Runaway Slave Conductor

Plantation Owner Runaway Slave Conductor

Name: _____

Period: _____

Date: _____

Character Role: Information Organizer

Character Role: _____

Website Name (Hint: National Geographic)	Website Address (Hint: www.nationalgeographic.com)	Fact to be used in your paper

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Paper Outline

Directions: In the boxes below, write a sketch or outline of your paper. This should not be word for word like your final draft. This is just bullet points of your main ideas.

Introduction – Who is your character? What are the main parts of your character's life?

Best – What is the best part about your character's life? List 5 points.

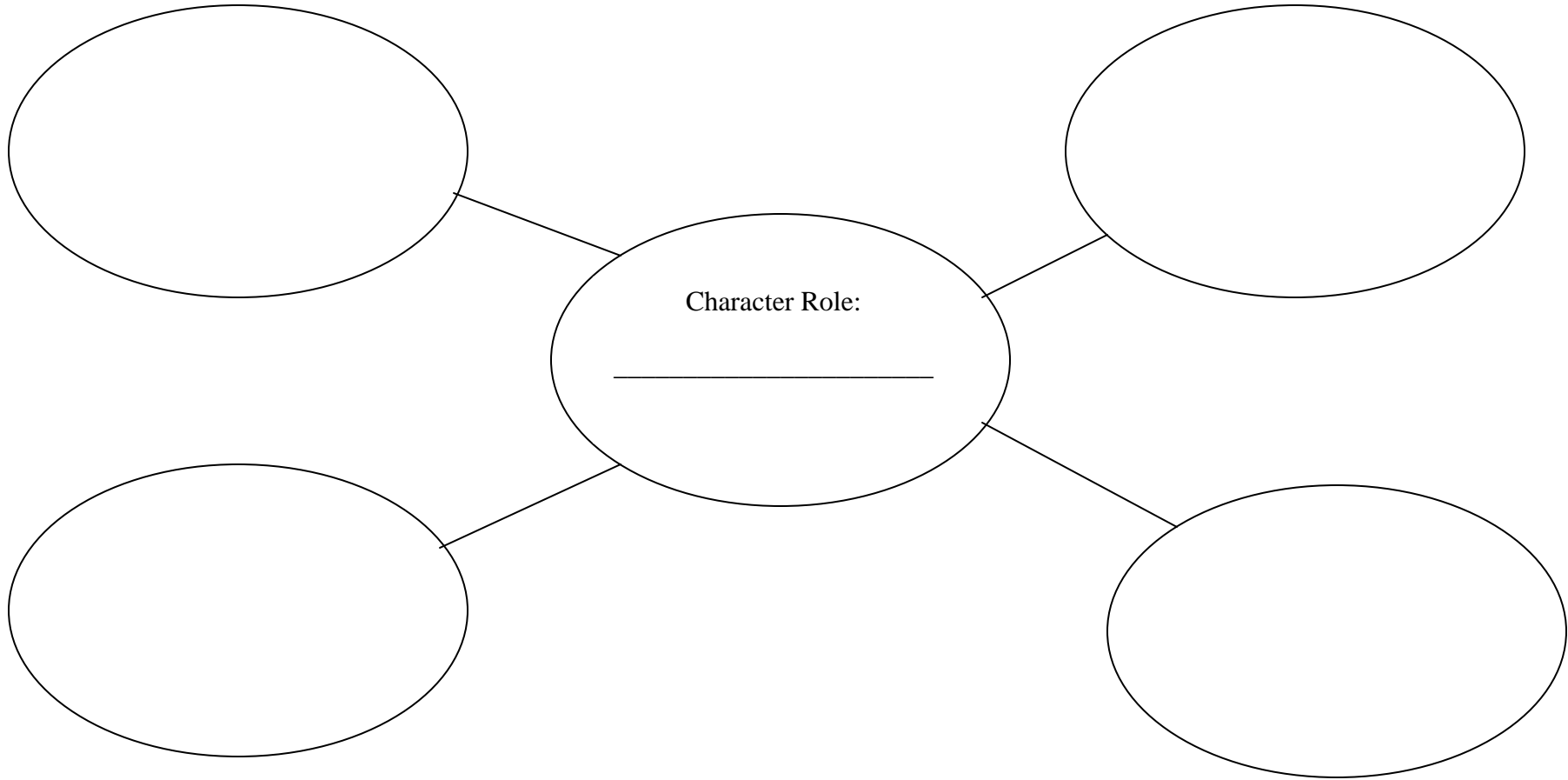
OK – What is the OK part about your character's life? List 5 points.

Worst – What is the worst part about your character's life? List 5 points.

Conclusion – Summarize the information from your character's life.

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

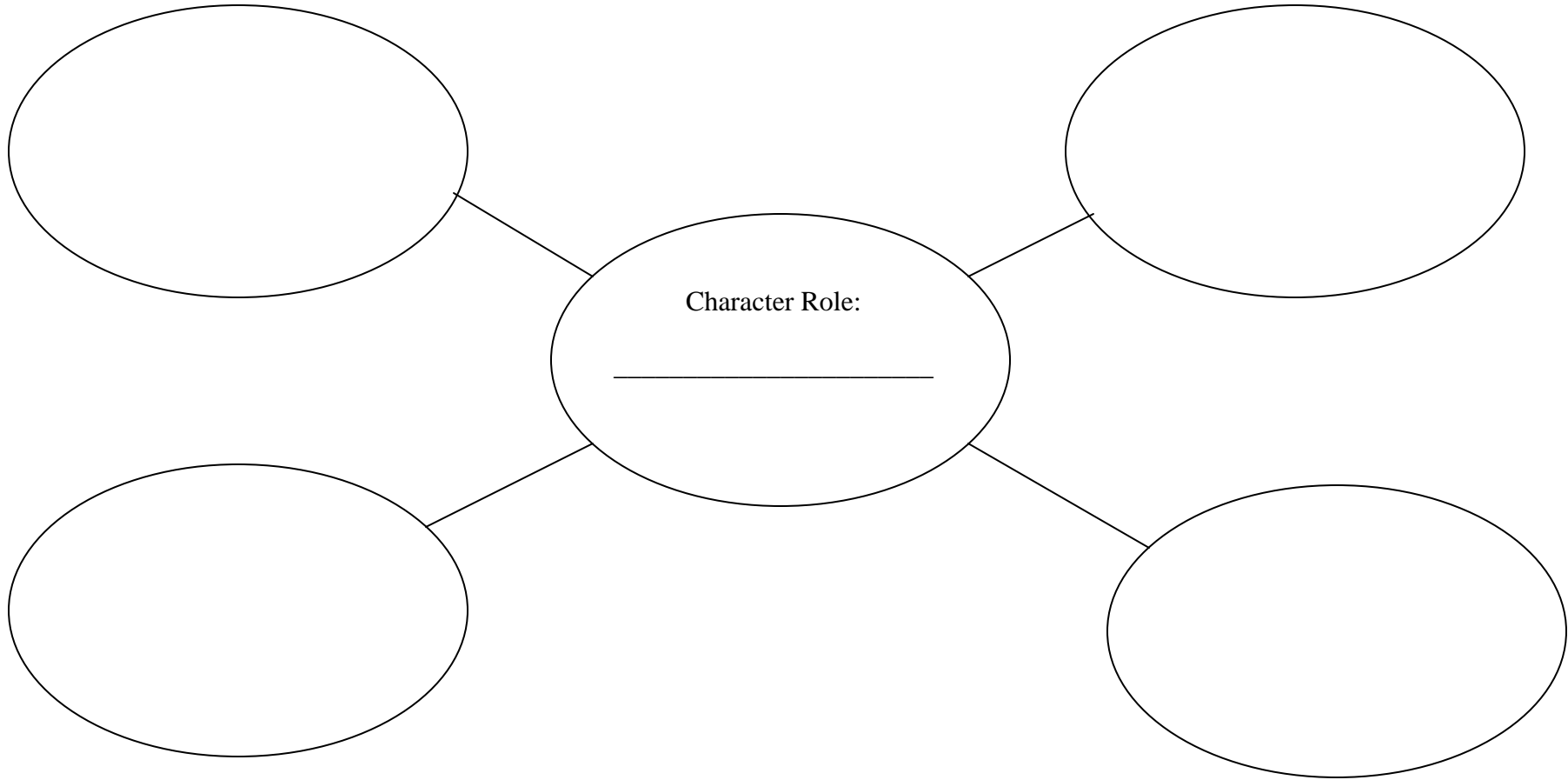
Organizing Your Research → The BEST Things



Remember, you are DESCRIBING this character's life. Include details to paint the picture of their life!

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

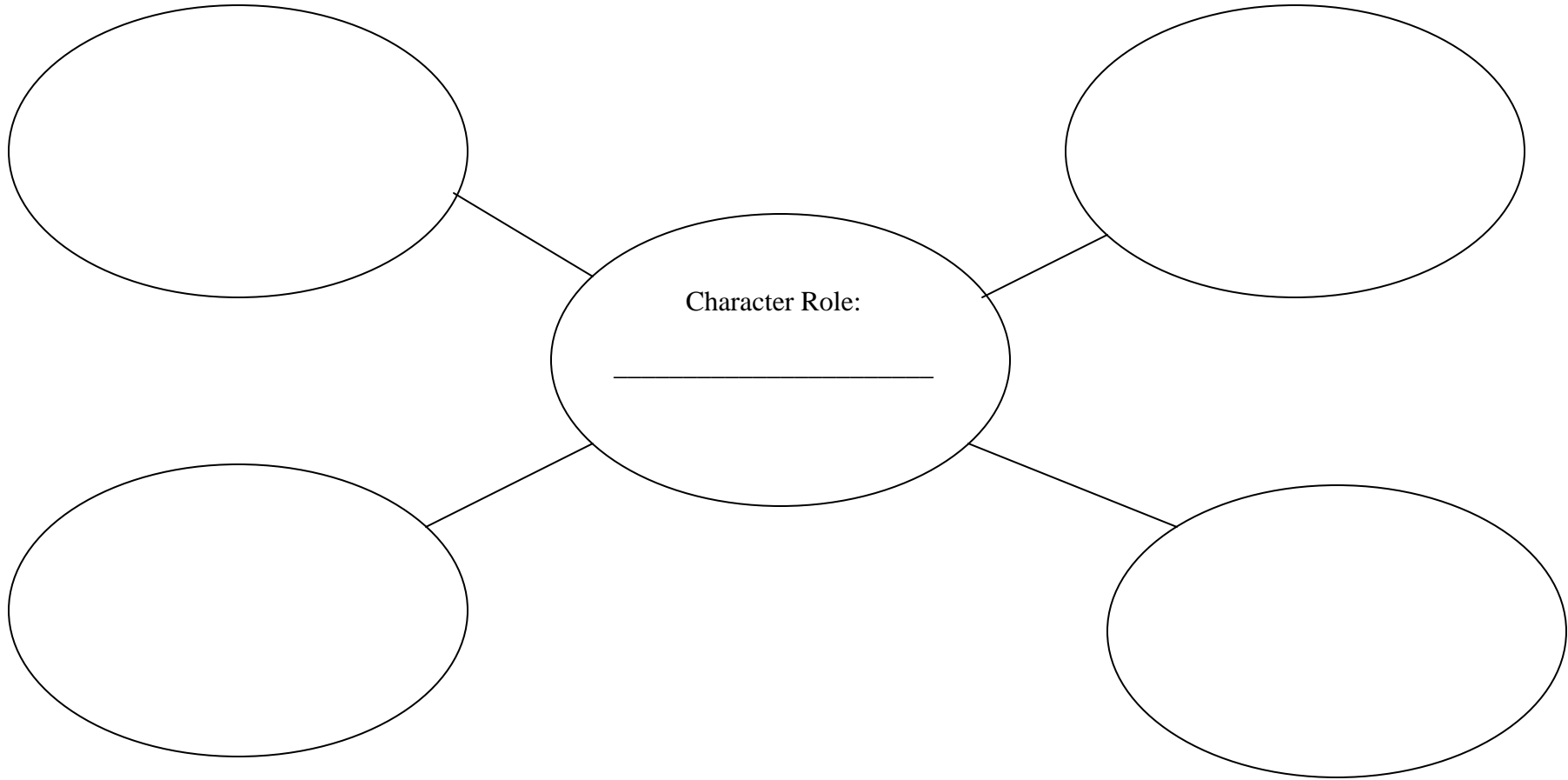
Organizing Your Research → The OK Things



Remember, you are DESCRIBING this character's life. Include details to paint the picture of their life!

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Organizing Your Research → **The WORST Things**



Remember, you are DESCRIBING this character's life. Include details to paint the picture of their life!