DEVELOPING CHARACTERS
As you write about your character, remember to include all of these ways to develop your character:

**Reflection:**
Whether the narrative voice is first (I) or third (he or she), tell often and everywhere what your character is thinking and feeling.

**Okay:** George heard a noise at the foot of his bed and pulled the covers over himself.

**Better:** George, squeezing his eyes closed, grasped at his covers and pulled them up over his head. He was frightened of what could be lurking just beyond his bed and refused to release his tight grip on the sheets.
**DIALOGUE:**
Get your character talking as a way to reveal himself or herself.

*Okay:* “I just don’t think I can do it,” Joan said.

*Better:* Joan looked despondent. “I just don’t think I can do it,” she said as she handed Tim back his paper.

**FLASHBACK:**
Recall events from the past that show why your character is behaving as he or she does today.

*Okay:* Joan remembered a time when she got in trouble before and decided not to copy his paper.

*Better:* Joan recalled a time in fifth grade when she copied a good chunk of her friend Sam’s paper about recycling. Her teacher gave her a detention, and she had to rewrite the paper with two more pages. Feeling defeated, she handed the paper back to Tim. She was not going to get a detention for something like this for a second time.
Other Characters:

Compare and contrast your character’s actions, reactions, beliefs, or values with those of friends, family members, classmates, etc. How is he or she like the others? Shaped by the others? Different from the others?

Okay: Joan handed the paper back to Tim. Tim gave the paper right to his friend Bobby. Bobby was going to use Tim’s paper as his own. Joan felt disapproval, but did nothing about it.

Better: Joan just couldn’t copy the paper. She handed it back to Tim. “I want that!” yelled Bobby, as he grabbed the paper right out of Tim’s hands. Joan couldn’t believe it. Did he not just hear her tell Tim it was a bad idea?

“Bobby, how could you? That’s cheating,” Joan remarked feeling as if she was Bobby’s mother.

Bobby shot back at Joan, “Mr. Marcos will never find out. Don’t worry, and you better not tell on me.” He glanced at Joan waiting for a response. Although she knew cheating was wrong, tattling was even worse. She knew that Mr. Marcos was not that stupid; he will find out on his own.
**Beloved Object or Pet:**

Give your character something to love that reveals his or her private self or previous history. Maybe even have your character speak to the pet or comfort object.

**Okay:** Francis, the family dog, tackled Chris as he walked through the door. Chris loved Francis because he reminded him of a better time when John, his missing younger brother, was around.

**Better:** As Chris opened the door, Francis, his German Shepard, tackled him to the ground. Chris sat up. Although the tackle made him bump his head, in his eyes, Francis could do no wrong.

Francis was only nine weeks old when he came to the family. When John was around, they would play with Francis for hours after school. Chris showed his younger brother how to take care of Francis; they fed him, washed him, walked him, and even taught him cool tricks like standing on two legs.

Francis was all that Chris had left now that John was gone. “I’m always gonna love you and take care of you,” Chris said as he rubbed Francis behind his ears. Chris wasn’t going to let anything happen to Francis. He had no control over what happened to John, but with Francis, he had total control.