







Finding examples of characterisation techniques

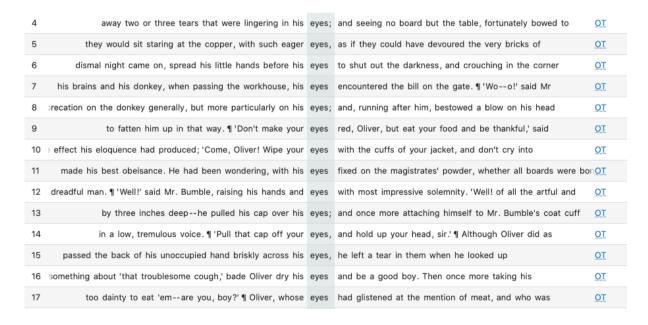
It's always useful to carefully observe what successful authors do. Reading lots of stories will give you plenty of practice! Additionally, you can zoom in on specific techniques by using the CLiC web application. CLiC can help you research words and phrases that are frequently used to describe fictional characters and their body language.

Example: The eyes as the mirror to the soul

Below are examples of how Dickens uses the word eyes in *Oliver Twist*. What meanings does the description of the eyes help to convey in each of the three examples?

- (1) Oliver, whose **eyes** had glistened at the mention of meat, and who was trembling with eagerness to devour it, replied in the negative; and a plateful of coarse broken victuals was set before him.
- (2) 'Save us!' said the old lady, with tears in her eyes.
- (3) 'Not I,' said Monks, turning away his **eyes** and beating his foot upon the ground, as a man who is determined to deny everything. 'Not I.'

As eyes are so meaningful, we also talk about 'eye language' as a special type of body language. To find more examples of eye language, you can look at a 'concordance', i.e. a list of all the occurrences of eyes in *Oliver Twist*, as in this sample here:



To retrieve a full list follow these easy steps.

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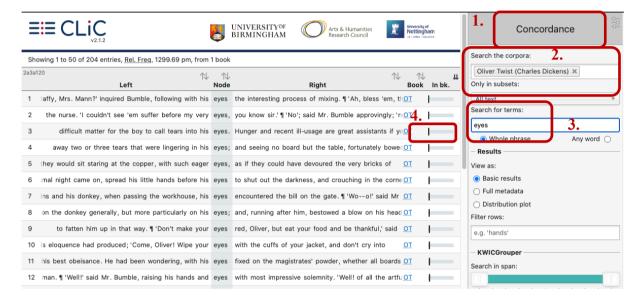






Exercise: Retrieving examples of eyes in Oliver Twist

- 1. Open the CLiC website in the Chrome browser (clic.bham.ac.uk)
- 2. Click on the "Concordance tab" (1.)
- 3. Under "Search the corpora" (2.), select "Oliver Twist".
- 4. Under "Search for terms", enter "eyes" (3.). When you hit return you will see the examples of eyes appear in the concordance view.



5. To get from a concordance line to a full text extract, click on the slider to see the "in bk." ("in book") view (4.). Your search word will be highlighted in yellow.

This was no very great consolation to the child. Young as he was, however, he had sense enough to make a feint of feeling great regret at going away. It was no very difficult matter for the boy to call tears into his eyes. Hunger and recent ill-usage are great assistants if you want to cry; and Oliver cried very naturally indeed. Mrs. Mann gave him a thousand embraces, and what Oliver wanted a great deal more, a piece of bread and butter, less he should seem too hungry when he got to the workhouse. With the slice of bread in his hand, and the little brown-cloth parish cap on his head, Oliver was then led away by Mr. Bumble from the wretched home where one kind word or look had never lighted the gloom of his infant years. And yet he burst into an agony of childish grief, as the cottage-gate closed after him. Wretched as were the little companions in misery he was leaving behind, they were the only friends he had ever known; and a sense of his loneliness in the great wide world, sank into the child's heart for the first time.



A **concordance** displays all occurrences of a word in a text (or set of texts). It enables you to explore words in context and across the development of a text.

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Other resources you might want to check out

- Our CLiC Activity Book: www.birmingham.ac.uk/clic-activity-book
- A short video on CLiC: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnP2fkuocAA

You can use and adapt this handout for your own classroom activities as it is available

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