

## ANALYZE CHARACTER

**Characters** are the people who take part in a story. By analyzing a character's traits and motivations, you can understand the character—and the story—better.

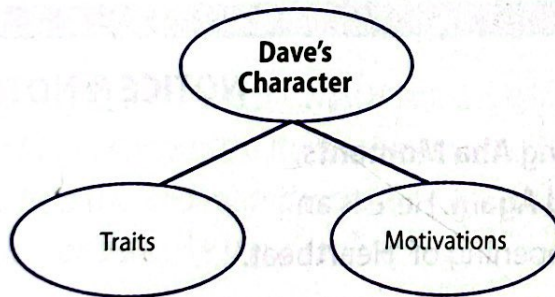
**Character traits** are the qualities shown by characters or the expressions of their personality.

The writer may state the character's traits, or you may need to infer traits based on the character's words, thoughts, actions, appearance, or relationships:

**Character motivations** are the reasons why characters act the way they do.

To understand motivations, think about how the setting and other characters influence a character's actions.

As you read "Heartbeat," think about what the thoughts, words, and actions of Dave, the main character, reveal about him. Copy and complete this diagram to help you analyze his traits and motivations.



## ANALYZE CONFLICT

Every story is built upon a **conflict**, a struggle between opposing forces. Two types of conflicts often appear in stories:

*two types:*

- An **external conflict** is a struggle against an outside force, such as nature, a physical obstacle, or another character.
- An **internal conflict** is a struggle that occurs in a character's mind, often due to a clash in feelings, thoughts, or values.

Authors may also use the **setting**—the time and place of the action—to shape the conflict and its **resolution** (how the conflict is resolved).

As you read "Heartbeat," look closely at the struggle that Dave faces. Infer whether it reveals a primarily external or internal conflict. Think, too, about why the conflict is important and how it is resolved.

## GENRE ELEMENTS: SHORT STORY

- has a single idea and can be read in one sitting
- develops one or more characters
- presents a plot with one main conflict
- includes a setting
- may be realistic or imaginary
- often conveys a theme or lesson about life

## BACKGROUND

Born in 1974, **David Yoo** has often felt like an outsider. While attending an international school in Korea, he was the only Korean American student among German and Saudi Arabian classmates. When his family moved to Connecticut, he again encountered few Asian peers. He published his first book, *Girls for Breakfast*, when he was twenty-nine. The book is a humorous account of a Korean American teenage hero's efforts to fit in at a suburban American high school.



# HEARTBEAT

Short Story by David Yoo

## SETTING A PURPOSE

As you read, pay attention to the way that the main character talks about himself and to the things that he decides to do. Note details that help you understand what he is like—his traits and motivations—and why he has a conflict.

1 **M**y nickname's "Heartbeat," because my friends swear that you can actually see the pulse on my bare chest. I've always been skinny. Everyone assumes I'm a weakling because I'm so thin (I prefer "lean and mean" or "wiry"), despite being a three-sport athlete. I decided to do something about it this fall when Sarah, the girl I have a crush on, said, "Oh my gosh . . . you are so skinny." She was visibly repulsed by my sunken chest as I stepped off the soccer bus after practice. I silently vowed to do everything within my power to become the "after" picture. I was sixteen years old, but looked like I was eleven.

2 For the rest of fall, I did countless push-ups and curled free weights until I couldn't bend my arms. I got ridiculously strong and defined, but I wasn't gaining weight.

## NOTICE & NOTE



### Notice & Note

Use the side margins to notice and note signposts in the text.

### ANALYZE CHARACTER

**Annotate:** In paragraph 1, mark three things that Dave says other people say to him or think about him.

**Infer:** What does beginning the story with this information suggest about the kind of person Dave is?

**repulse**  
(ri-pūls') v. Something that repulses you makes you want to reject it because you find it disgusting.

Heartbeat 103

## TEACH

## BACKGROUND

Have students read the background and the biographical information about the author. Introduce the selection by telling students that David Yoo is a Korean American writer known for his true-to-life stories and young-adult novels that mix humor with brutal honesty about being different. Yoo's writing is known for its endearing self-deprecation and the way it reveals the insecurities we all feel, but hate to admit.

## SETTING A PURPOSE

Direct students to use the Setting a Purpose prompt to focus their reading.

## ANALYZE CHARACTER

Remind students that a **character's traits and motivations** are revealed by what he or she says, thinks, or does.

**(Answer:** Dave describes himself in a humorous way; but because he begins by sharing negative views of himself, he seems like a person who is rather down on himself, who is not very confident, and who cares a lot about what others think of him.)



For **listening support** for students at varying proficiency levels, see the **Text X-Ray** on page 98C.

## TEACH

### ANALYZE CONFLICT

Remind students that **external conflict** in a story is between a character and an outside force or other character, while **internal conflict** is a struggle the character grapples with within his or her own mind. (**Answer:** Dave seems to struggle mostly with his thoughts and feelings about not looking very athletic, despite being an athlete. This indicates an internal conflict: His main problem is caused by the way he thinks and by his desire to impress other people.)

highlight



For **speaking** and **reading support** for students at varying proficiency levels, see the **Text X-Ray** on page 98D

### CRITICAL VOCABULARY

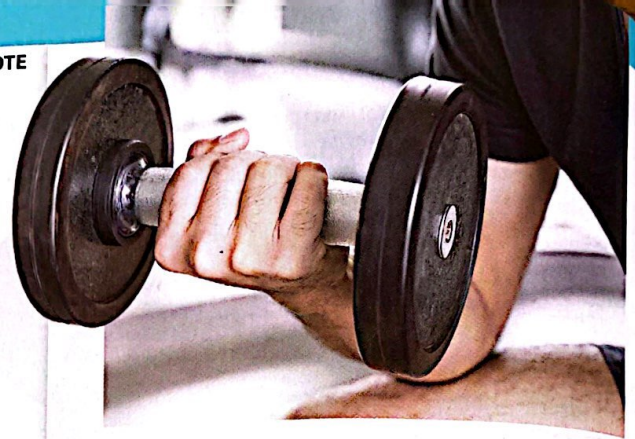
**metabolism:** The human body turns food into energy in a process called metabolism. The food we eat can turn into muscle or fat or can be burned off with physical activity.

**ASK STUDENTS** why Dave is complaining about having a fast metabolism. (*Dave is trying to gain weight, but his body burns all the calories he eats.*)

**moot:** Dave views eating a Snickers as pointless to his



### NOTICE & NOTE



#### ANALYZE CONFLICT

**Annotate:** In paragraph 2, mark Dave's motivation for exercising.

**Draw Conclusions:** Does Dave struggle mostly with an external conflict or an internal conflict? Explain.

#### metabolism

(mī-tāb'ə-līz'əm) *n.* A living thing's *metabolism* is the chemical processes that give it energy and produce growth.

#### moot

(moot) *adj.* Something that is *moot* is unimportant or irrelevant.

#### futile

(fyoot'ē) *adj.* When something is *futile*, it has no useful or meaningful result.

I wanted to be thicker. I didn't care about getting stronger if nobody could tell. I did research, and started lifting heavier weights at lower reps and supplemented my meals with weight-gainer shakes, egg whites, boiled yams, and tubs of cottage cheese. I forced myself to swallow the daily caloric intake equivalent of three overweight men and still wasn't able to increase my mass. (I have a ridiculously fast metabolism.) Over Christmas break I cut out all useless movement, like Ping-Pong and staircases, because I'm like a sieve—the 83 calories in a mini-Snickers bar is moot because I waste 90 chewing it.

3 I returned to school in January depressed, because I was still Heartbeat in everyone's eyes. I constantly weighed myself. At least once an hour, no matter where I was, I'd find a bathroom so I could take off my shirt and flex in the mirror for a couple of minutes. I was so frustrated that nothing was working—but the frustration didn't last. I was sitting in study hall two weeks ago when Sarah said the magic words: "Have you been working out, Dave? You look bigger." I couldn't tell if she was being sarcastic. I went home and inspected myself in the mirror. I did look bigger!

4 But then I realized the reason: I'd accidentally worn two T-shirts under my rugby shirt that day. It was just an illusion. I was futilely stuffing my face and religiously pumping iron and failing to alter my appearance, and now I'd stumbled on the simplest solution to looking bigger. I felt like I was reborn.

5 I went to school the next day wearing two T-shirts under my turtleneck. I felt solid. By the end of last week, I was wearing three T-shirts under my rugby shirt. This Monday I tucked four T-shirts under my plaid button-down. It gave me traps that didn't exist. My Q-tip-sized shoulders transformed

into NBA-grapefruit deltoids.<sup>1</sup> I could tell my classmates subtly regarded me differently. It was respect. Sarah gave me a look I'd never seen before, as if she felt . . . *safer* around me. I was walking down the hallway at the end of the day and must have twisted awkwardly because suddenly my zipper literally exploded, and all my T-shirts spilled out of my pants. Luckily, the hallway was empty and I was wearing a belt.

6 I realized I had artificially outgrown my clothes. My buttondowns were so tight that a few seconds after jamming the extra layers into my pants, the pressure would suddenly bunch the cloth up in random places so it looked like I had a goiter<sup>2</sup> on my shoulder or something. I complained to my parents over dinner last night. "I don't fit into anything anymore," I said. "It reflects poorly on you guys. You could get arrested."

7 "What are you talking about? You look the same as always. You're still my little boy," my dad replied, putting me in a headlock and giving me a noogie. I glared at him.

8 "I need a new ski jacket," I said. It was true. I could barely clap my hands with all the layers I was wearing. I was getting out of control at this point. The four T-shirts under my wool sweater were smushing my lungs together like a male girdle. It was a small price to pay; nobody called me Heartbeat anymore, I reminded myself.

9 After dinner I went to a party. Even though it was winter, I opted to hang out on the back porch as much as possible because it was so hot inside. Being indoors was like a sauna, but Sarah was in the basement so I headed that way. We were talking and she noticed that I was dripping with perspiration. "You're trembling," she said, touching my shoulder. She thought I was nervous talking to her and probably thought it was cute, but in reality I was on the verge of passing out because I was wearing four tight T-shirts and two long-sleeves under my wool sweater, not to mention the sweatpants tucked into my tube socks to add heft to my (formerly chicken-legs) quads. She squeezed my biceps.<sup>3</sup>

10 "Jeez, Dave, how many layers are you wearing?"

11 I couldn't even feel her squeezing them.

12 "I have to go," I said, excusing myself to another corner of the basement. Everyone was smushed together. It was so hot

<sup>1</sup> traps . . . deltoids: traps (short for trapezius) are large, flat upper-back muscles; deltoids are triangular muscles that connect the top of the shoulder to the arm.

<sup>2</sup> goiter: swollen thyroid gland often visible at the bottom of the neck.

<sup>3</sup> quads . . . biceps: quads (short for quadriceps) are long muscles in the front of the thigh; biceps are the large muscles in the front of the upper arm.

## NOTICE &amp; NOTE



## AGAIN AND AGAIN

**Notice & Note:** In paragraph 5, mark each phrase that includes the word *T-shirts*.

**Analyze:** What does the growing number of T-shirts tell you about Dave's state of mind?

## LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

**Annotate:** In paragraph 8, mark the prepositional phrase that separates a subject and predicate in a sentence.

**Analyze:** How might the prepositional phrase in this sentence confuse subject-verb agreement?

## CONTRASTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

**Notice & Note:** In paragraph 9, mark the sentence that shows a contrast between what Sarah believes and Dave knows to be true.

**Interpret:** How does the contrast add to your understanding of Dave?

## AGAIN AND AGAIN

Explain to students that this signpost is used when a word or a phrase appears over and over in a story. Sometimes the word or phrase has an unusual meaning, and other times an author uses repetitious language to draw attention to an important element of the story, such as the **character's development** or the story's central conflict. (**Answer:** *Dave is losing sight of reality. He's become attached to the illusion that he appears much bigger. As a result, he believes that he's winning more respect from his friends and attention from Sarah. He's hooked on the illusion, so he tries to maintain it.*)

## LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Guide students to identify the sentence in paragraph 8 that includes a prepositional phrase between the subject and the predicate. Remind students that removing a prepositional phrase from a sentence is a good way to check for subject-verb agreement. (**Answer:** *The prepositional phrase "under my wool sweater" includes the singular noun sweater, which could confuse subject-verb agreement because the subject of the sentence is the plural word t-shirts.*)

## CONTRASTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

Explain to students that this signpost is often used when a character behaves in a way that contradicts past behavior, or in a way the reader wouldn't expect. By contrasting what Dave believes Sarah is thinking with the reality of why Dave is trembling, the author is revealing important information about Dave's **character development**. It also shows that Dave may not know what Sarah is thinking. (**Answer:** *The contrast shows that Dave is misunderstanding Sarah's concern that his extra clothing is causing him to overheat and that he is making himself ill.*)

## TEACH

### AHA MOMENT

Explain to students that this signpost is often used when a character has a sudden realization that creates a change in the character's behavior, or propels the character's development, allowing for the character to come to a significant realization. **(Answer: Dave suddenly understands how crazy it was for him to try to pretend to be someone he isn't. He was making himself miserable all because of how he thinks people perceive him. He relies on new self-talk: I'm not disgustingly thin. I am wiry. I'm lean and mean.)**

### ANALYZE CONFLICT

Remind students to analyze Dave's thoughts and actions in order to understand the conflict he is experiencing. **(Answer: Dave is now seeing himself more clearly, and he has more realistic expectations of how others see him. He has changed from the beginning of the story, when he didn't care about getting stronger "if nobody could tell.")**



### NOTICE & NOTE

**delirious**  
(dĭ-lĭr'ē-əs) *adj.* Someone who is *delirious* is temporarily confused, often because of fever or shock.

### AHA MOMENT

**Notice & Note:** Mark what Dave suddenly realizes in paragraph 12.

**Infer:** What can you infer from that evidence, along with the question at the end of paragraph 12?

### ANALYZE CONFLICT

**Annotate:** In paragraph 13, mark two reasons why Dave decides to stop wearing extra layers. Number them 1 and 2.

**Interpret:** Has Dave resolved his conflict? Explain.

everyone except me was hanging out in T-shirts and tank tops. I was sopping and delirious and felt claustrophobic. My chest was cold because I had four drenched T-shirts underneath my sweater. It looked like I was breaking out with Ebola\* or something. When I coughed people turned away from me in fear. *Abandon ship, abandon ship!* I had no choice but to take some layers off. I lurched to the bathroom. My arms were ponderously heavy as I pulled off the sweater. Just lifting my arms exhausted me, and I had to stop midway and take a rest by sitting on the edge of the tub, gasping. I slowly peeled off the layers, one at a time. I took off my pants and peeled off sweatpants, too, down to my undies. I dried myself off with wash cloth. My red T-shirt had bled onto the three white T-shirts because of the sweat, so they now were faded pink tie-dyes. I hoisted the bundle of clothes and was shocked at the weight. I jammed them into the closet. I'd retrieve them later, before. I put my sweater back on without anything underneath. After two weeks of constricting my air supply and range of motion by wearing upwards of six layers, I was amazed at how much freedom I had with my arms. I felt like dancing for the first time in my life. I suddenly realized what I really looked like at this party: a padded, miserable, and frustrated puffball, burning up in all my layers. All this because I hate nickname?

13 I got home and realized I'd left my bundle of wet clothes back at the party. I took this as a sign. My days of wearing extra layers was officially over. <sup>(1)</sup> Had Sarah fallen for the padded n sh'd be falling for someone else. Besides, <sup>(2)</sup> winter wasn't going to last forever, and I couldn't just revert back to wearing just one set of clothes like a normal human being come spring.

\* Ebola: deadly virus that causes high fever and bleeding.



change in my outward appearance would be the equivalent of a sheared sheep. From now on, I was going to just be me.

14 That was last night. *I'm not disgustingly thin*, I constantly remind myself. I am wiry. I'm lean and mean.

15 Outside it's snowing again. There's a party tonight, and my friends are on their way to pick me up. I don't know what to wear, so I lay out four different outfits on the floor as if they're chalk outlines of people. A car horn honks ten minutes later and I still haven't decided on an outfit. Maybe I'll just wear all of them.

### ANALYZE CHARACTER

**Annotate:** Mark the sentences in paragraph 15 that show Dave's indecision.

**Draw Conclusions:** Has Dave's essential personality changed?

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these questions before moving on to the **Analyze the Text** section on the following page.

1 In paragraph 2, the details about Dave's attempts to gain body mass suggest that he —

- A wants to get quick results without making an effort
- B is disciplined and determined to reach his goal
- C is strong and healthy but not very athletic
- D cares about his health as much as his image

2 Why is the party scene important to the story's plot?

- F At the party, Dave realizes that looking thicker isn't really important.
- G Dave loses his extra clothing, and his deception is revealed.
- H While dancing with Sarah, Dave is able to say how he feels about her.
- J Dave's friends finally express their appreciation of him there.

3 Which of these best sums up the conflict in the story?

- A Dave struggles to get the respect of his classmates.
- B Dave struggles to gain control of his metabolism.
- C Dave struggles to think correctly about his body image.
- D Dave struggles to persuade Sarah to accept him as he is.

## APPLY

### ANALYZE THE TEXT

Possible answers:

1. **DOK 3:** Dave says, "I didn't care about getting stronger if nobody could tell."
2. **DOK 4:** When Dave's father says, "You're still my little boy," he sees the "real Dave," the boy he loves. He isn't fooled by Dave's attempt to look "thicker," nor does he seem to care what Dave looks like on the outside.
3. **DOK 3:** Before he takes off the layers, Dave feels "sopping and delirious" and "claustrophobic." His arms are "ponderously heavy," and just lifting them exhausts him. After he takes off the layers, he is amazed at how free he feels—free enough to dance.
4. **DOK 2:** Dave realizes that if Sarah had fallen for him with the padding, it wouldn't have been the "real" Dave.
5. **DOK 4:** Dave has resolved his conflict by accepting himself as he is. For example, he calls himself "wiry" and "lean and mean" rather than "disgustingly thin."



## RESPOND

### ANALYZE THE TEXT

Support your responses with evidence from the text.



NOTEBOOK

1. **Cite Evidence** Reread paragraph 2. How can you tell that Dave is motivated by other people's feelings rather than by his own?
2. **Analyze** Dave thinks his friends view him with more respect than that he's wearing the layers. How does what Dave's father says in paragraph 7 bring that idea into question?
3. **Compare and Contrast** How does being at the party affect Dave's actions? Contrast how Dave feels before and after he takes off his extra layers of clothing at the party. Cite details from paragraph 12 to support your answer.
4. **Interpret** According to paragraph 13, how has Dave's thinking about Sarah changed? Explain.
5. **Notice & Note** As the story ends, what do Dave's thoughts suggest about how he has resolved his conflict?

### RESEARCH

Dave, the main character in "Heartbeat," thinks about his behavior. Would he feel so self-conscious if he had resolved his conflict differently?

**RESEARCH TIP**  
Focused questions can help you research a topic more quickly and successfully. For example, to get a better understanding of a topic, ask questions like: