Mastering Character Description: A Quiz with Max and Zara

Learning objective: To identify and use effective descriptive techniques, including expanded noun phrases, show-don't-tell, and figurative language to create vivid character portraits.

Read the short descriptive passage below, then answer the ten questions. Use your knowledge of Year 6 English skills to help Max the monkey and Zara the zebra solve these literary puzzles!

Max the monkey sat perched on the branch, his fingers tapping a rhythmic beat against the bark. His fur was a tousled mop of chestnut brown, and his eyes—bright as polished amber—darted around the jungle, searching for the next sequence to solve. Below him, Zara the zebra trotted by. Her coat was a striking, monochrome masterpiece of zig-zagging lines. She moved with the grace of a dancer, her hooves clicking a steady tempo on the dusty path. Zara stopped, her ears twitching, and let out a soft whinny that sounded like a cello being tuned. 'Max,' she called, 'the patterns of the canopy are shifting again!'

Word bank: Metaphor · Simile · Adjective · Adverb · Show-don't-tell · Personification · Expanded noun phrase · Relative clause

1. 1. In the phrase 'a tousled mop of chestnut brown', what is the main purpose of the adjective 'tousled'? A) To show Max is hungry B) To describe the texture of his fur* C) To explain his mood D) To describe the jungle (1 mark)

2. 2. True or False: 'Her eyes—bright as polished amber' is an example of a simile. (1 mark)

3. 3. Which technique is used in the phrase 'the patterns of the canopy are shifting'? A) Metaphor B) Personification C) Expanded noun phrase* D) Onomatopoeia (1 mark)

4. 4. What word class is 'rhythmic' in the phrase 'rhythmic beat'? (1 mark)

5. 5. 'Her hooves clicking a steady tempo' is an example of: A) Alliteration B) Onomatopoeia* C) Hyperbole D) Irony (1 mark)

6. 6. True or False: 'Show-don't-tell' means describing how a character acts or feels rather than just stating their emotion. (1 mark)

7. 7. Which of these is an expanded noun phrase found in the text? A) Max the monkey B) A striking, monochrome masterpiece* C) The dusty path D) A soft whinny (1 mark)

8. 8. What is the effect of comparing Zara's whinny to a 'cello being tuned'? (1 mark)

9. 9. Identify the relative clause in this sentence: 'Max, who loved a good challenge, sat on the branch.' (1 mark)

10. 10. Which word in the passage is an adverb used to describe how Zara moved? A) Striking B) Steady C) Grace D) None of the above* (1 mark)

Draw: Draw a character of your own invention. Add labels around them using at least three expanded noun phrases to describe their appearance.

Extension challenge: Write a short paragraph (3-4 sentences) describing a new character joining Max and Zara. Use one simile and one piece of 'show-don't-tell' to describe how they are feeling.