

4 Personality: four ways of explaining a person – Part 2

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English	Write it 3 times (English)
trait approach	_____
Big Five	_____
psychodynamic	_____
humanistic	_____

Recall

- You have described a friend as “outgoing” or “anxious”.
- You know people behave differently at home and at work.
- You have taken an online personality quiz and doubted the result.

New ideas

Read these first. Each idea has a short worked example. Then do the Practice below.

■ 1 Traits

The **trait approach** describes personality as stable dimensions. The **Big Five** - openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism - is the standard set because these five keep reappearing when large samples are analysed.

Worked example. Two people who both score high on conscientiousness are likely to be organised in situations neither has met before.

■ 2 What a trait does and does not predict

Traits predict behaviour **on average across many situations**, not on any single occasion. A quiet extravert at a funeral is not a contradiction of the trait.

Worked example. Someone high in extraversion still sits silently in a library - the trait predicts their behaviour across a year, not in one hour.

■ 3 Other explanations

The **psychodynamic** approach explains behaviour by processes the person is unaware of; the **humanistic** approach by the person's own drive toward growth and their self-concept. Each asks a different question, so they can all be partly right.

Worked example. The same shy behaviour might be described as a trait, as an unresolved conflict, or as a gap between the actual and ideal self.

Watch out: A trait is a description of a pattern, not a cause of it. Saying someone is late because they are disorganised explains nothing until something outside the behaviour is named.

Practice

2.1 Name the five dimensions of the Big Five. [2]

2.2 State what a trait predicts and what it does not. [2]

2.3 An extravert sits silently in a library. Explain why this is not evidence against the trait. [2]

2.4 State what the psychodynamic approach explains behaviour by. [1]

2.5 State what the humanistic approach explains behaviour by. [1]

2.6 Explain why calling someone disorganised does not explain their lateness. [2]
