

## Forms of writing: Narratives

### What is a narrative?

A narrative is an imaginative story but may be based on fact. Its purpose is to narrate events, entertain and engage the reader in an imaginative experience. Narratives can also be used to teach, persuade or inform the reader. They are different from recounts, as they include one or more problems that must eventually be resolved. Ideas can be presented in a narrative using words, images and/or sounds.

### Types of narratives

Folktales, fairytales, traditional tales, mysteries, science fiction stories, adventure stories, myths and legends, ballads, picture stories and animal stories are all narrative texts.

### Structure of a narrative

A narrative:

- has a **title**
- consists of three basic parts, the:
  - **introduction** (orientation), in which the main character(s), setting and time of the story are established (e.g. morning, night, in the olden days or present time); this part usually details who, what, where, when and why
  - **problem**, which involves the main character and may occur after an event or series of events
  - **solution**, whereby the problem is satisfactorily solved
- may include a **conclusion** (concluding comment or statement), in order to add humour to the ending or sum up the author's message.

### Language features

A narrative:

- focuses on specific participants rather than representing a general group  
e.g. 'Harry Horse' as an individual rather than representing 'horses' in general
- includes participants who are human, or animals with human-like characteristics
- uses adverbs and phrases to tell how, when, where and why (circumstances)
- uses dialogue to develop characters and relationships
- uses action verbs and verb groups (verbs with adverbs to add detail) and may also refer to what the characters say and feel
- uses linking words to do with time  
e.g. first, soon, later, then, after, finally
- usually uses past tense, but the tense may change to the present or the future when dialogue is used
- makes use of first person personal pronouns (e.g. I, we), but can be written in the third person (e.g. he, she, they)
- uses descriptive language including adjectives and adverbs to enhance and develop the story and help readers construct images and connect with the story.

## **Suggested process for developing knowledge about narratives**

- Direct modelling – present examples of the texts, including multimodal texts, and model ways to talk about features of narratives.
- Activate prior knowledge – help the student make connections between their own experiences/experiences in other stories and the experiences in this story.
- Discuss the purpose and audience of different narratives.
- Engage in directed and shared reading – read selected narratives and focus on specific aspects of the narrative structure and/or language and how the text works.
- Make explicit the reading strategies/prompts readers use to make sense of narrative texts, including:
  - their knowledge of narrative structure and language
  - semantic cues (cues related to ‘what makes sense’/the meaning of a text)
  - syntactic cues (cues related to grammatical structure)
  - graphophonic cues (cues related to letter–sound relationships).
- Explore explicitly the visual resources in the narrative such as illustrative details, colour, position and style.
- Identify the representations of people, places, events and/or things and compare to real-life experiences or other texts.
- Identify the parts of a narrative – attach labels to the parts/paragraphs to identify the title, orientation, problem, solution, characters, setting, etc.
- Identify differences between the text structure and language features used in narrative texts and other text types.
- Reconstruct text (based on generic structure) – reform the visual and written text by sequencing jumbled pictures, sentences or paragraphs.
- Model the writing/retelling of a narrative by choosing stories that are familiar and of interest to the student. Point out the narrative features as stories are written/retold.
- Joint construction of a narrative – work together to write/retell a narrative and encourage the student to contribute information and ideas and make suggestions about the structure and the language of the text.
- Independent retelling of a story – support the student to choose a story and retell it in their own words. Encourage the student to use some language from the original story. Prompt the student by asking questions related to each part of the story.

## **Points to help with retelling a story**

- Provide opportunities for the student to be involved in situations where different people share familiar/favourite oral stories.
- Help the student decide on a familiar story that they are confident to retell and share their retelling of the story with a familiar person/people.
- After reading/viewing a narrative text, encourage the student to discuss how the story was introduced, recall characters and main ideas, and discuss the sequence of events, the problems, solutions and conclusion.