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# How to Use Narrative Writing

- ❑ Introduce *Narrative Writing* by first defining narrative writing. Students should volunteer examples of books, short stories, television shows and movies that are examples of narratives.
- ❑ *Narrative Writing* allows both teacher and student to journey through all elements of narrative writing so that the concepts inherent in narrative writing will be understandable and accessible. Personal narratives, nonfiction narratives, narratives about literature, fairy tale narratives, and the short story will be explored. All sections encompass writing projects that follow the writing process. Publishing and technology ideas are provided.
- ❑ Begin with the components of narrative writing. Students will manipulate conflict, create realistic characters, practise with sensory imagery and figurative language, brainstorm themes, create settings, write effective dialogue, use strong action verbs, utilise transitional words and phrases, and experiment with point of view. When writing narratives, then, students will have had guided practice on each of the elements, along with a writing journal full of ideas and mini-narratives that can be expanded and shaped to meet specific needs of the various narrative writing topics presented in this book.
- ❑ Review the Writing Process (pages 7 and 8) and share the analogy of how writing is similar to growing a flower garden. Encourage students to illustrate each stage of the writing process, based on the analogy.
- ❑ *Narrative Writing* emphasises the pre-writing stage of the writing process. In order to get quality narratives, students need to think, plan, research, and internalise the topic. The more that students brainstorm, free-write, cluster, complete graphic organisers, read quality narratives and gather information, the stronger their narratives will be.



**Brainstorming**



**Clustering**



**Free-writing**



**Using Graphic Organisers**



**Reading Quality Narratives**

# Conflict

This section of *Narrative Writing* is composed of 13 separate but interlocking parts: conflict, characterisation, setting, verbs, dialogue, theme, transitions, the five W's + H, story structure, plot jots, figurative language, sensory imagery, and tools for writing. Specific examples and lessons are included for each part so that models and practice are available for instruction and review. All 13 components are important to effective narrative writing, none being insignificant. For our purposes, however, it might be said that without conflict there would probably not be any true narrative writing. There could be writing, yes—even excellent writing. But without conflict, that writing might better be classified as descriptive or expository. So we begin our study of narrative writing with conflict.

*Conflict* is the problem or obstacle the character is trying to overcome. Without conflict, our stories, as well as our lives, would be somewhat boring. Why?

For one thing, what story would be interesting without conflict? When we read, we cheer for the character, hoping she or he will triumph over the various conflicts. Often, there is more than one conflict, which keeps us on the edge of our seats and makes us ask, 'and *then* what happened?'

We have all dreamed of having a problem-free life. But what would happen if we were never confronted with a problem? Initially, we would be happy in our Utopian world. In time, however, life would become dull and monotonous. Would we be motivated to achieve higher levels? Probably not. By surviving and overcoming conflicts, we learn to believe in ourselves and to attack future conflicts with confidence.

Think about your favourite books. What were the obstacles or conflicts confronting the main characters? How would the narrative have changed if there were no conflicts?

Take Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*, for example. The conflicts are many: World War II, Phillip's boat being torpedoed, Phillip and Timothy lost at sea, Phillip losing his sight, Phillip and Timothy surviving on an island, Timothy's death, Phillip's survival on the island alone. As you can see, there is more than one conflict in *The Cay*. However, the main conflict of *The Cay* is overcoming prejudice. Timothy is black and Phillip is white. Phillip's blindness finally allows him to see that people are equal, regardless of the colour of their skin.

In *The Cay*, the faster one conflict is resolved, the sooner a new conflict raises its head. The series of conflicts makes the pages of the book turn by themselves. Not many of us share the experience of being in a war, being stranded on an island with a stranger who then dies, and being afflicted with no eyesight for over four months. But we do understand prejudice. Theodore Taylor makes Phillip's adventure real, so we not only empathise with his trials but also his realisations and triumphs.

Conflict is needed for good stories, and as seen in the deceptively simple *The Cay*, the conflict is often richer and more complex than we might suspect. In fact, all human behaviour in one way or another contains conflict of some type. It is a good writer's job to show us this in his or her narratives.



**Standards and Benchmarks: 1A, 1K**

## **Conflict** *(cont.)*

### **Conflict Types**

There are many types of conflict, and they might easily arise from simple situations. Examine the following examples:

#### **Person vs. Person**

You are at the laundromat and are about to put your clothes into the last dryer available when someone else beats you there. What do you do?

#### **Person vs. Machine**

The washing machine has finished its cycles, but the only clothes dryer available is out of order. What do you do?

#### **Person vs. Nature**

Since the dryer is out of order, you hang the soaking wet clothes on the clothesline. It starts to rain. Now what?


#### **Person vs. Self**

When doing the wash, you carelessly mixed the coloured clothes with the whites, and you used hot water. As a result, your family's light clothes are streaked, spotted and ruined. What next?

#### **Person vs. Society**

You decide to protest the council's policy of allowing only one laundromat. You are met with great opposition, as most residents would like a playground at the site you proposed for the new laundromat.

As you can see, laundry day has presented this character with conflict after conflict. Rarely do stories have just one conflict, just as each new day generally brings us several new conflicts. Sometimes conflicts are resolved quickly; others take days, weeks, even years. Unfortunately, as one conflict ends, another usually takes its place.



**Standards and Benchmarks: 1A, 1K**

## Conflict *(cont.)*

### Conflicts in Various Settings

As a class, generate a list of conflicts from all categories for the following places.

Conflict	Ice-Cream Shop	School Dance
<b>Person vs. Person</b>		
<b>Person vs. Machine</b>		
<b>Person vs. Nature</b>		
<b>Person vs. Self</b>		
<b>Person vs. Society</b>		



**Standards and Benchmarks:** 1A, 1G

# Conflict *(cont.)*

## Today's Conflicts

List the conflicts that have arisen today. (The conflicts may or may not be resolved yet. If a conflict has not yet been resolved, predict how it will be.)

**Conflict 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

How the conflict was resolved or prediction of how it will be resolved: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Conflict 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

How the conflict was resolved or prediction of how it will be resolved: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Conflict 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

How the conflict was resolved or prediction of how it will be resolved: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Conflict 4:** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

How the conflict was resolved or prediction of how it will be resolved: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Conflict 5:** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

How the conflict was resolved or prediction of how it will be resolved: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_