

Text Production: Narrative

Narrative

Definition

Narrative writing tells a story. Narratives usually present characters involved in some action or conflict. Narrative writing aims to entertain the reader but can also seek to inform or challenge the reader. Narrative writing can be imagined, factual or a combination of the two.

Structure

Narratives typically include:

- Orientation (who, where, when),
- Complication (need for action),
- Resolution (response by characters),
- Evaluation (what has been learnt from story).

Language can be casual or formal. Story told can be linear, use flashbacks or include multiple plots.

To make your narrative original AVOID:

- Ideas that have been done before...
The party/formal/date that results in a hospital experience
The break up
The bully

(List some more....

.... and now make sure you avoid them too!)

- Clichés, such as: ‘the single tear slid down her cheek’ Add to this...
- Stereotypical, two-dimensional characters such as *the perfect girl*

A Tip

- These characters and ideas are not clichéd when they are given interesting descriptions and original backdrops/settings. If you take a clichéd character out of her comfort zone s/he could be quite interesting.

Eg Instead of perfect pretty girl reigning perfect terror at school make her vulnerable and powerless when she has to feed an elderly man in a nursing home. Here none of her usual charms has any effect.

Instead look for ways to make your writing original:

- Consider a foreign setting, it could also be within a historical context.

A boy, in midst of China's cultural revolution, is taught piano by ambitious but impoverished mother every afternoon at bare wooden kitchen table using torn flap of a cardboard box for a keyboard. She sounds out the notes beating a spoon against the table. From humble beginnings a concert pianist is born...

- Or write about someone famous, perhaps before they were well known. You will need to do some research so that the terms and phrases you use are historically accurate. Or only do a bit of research and leave make the character anonymous so that you don't risk being historically inaccurate.

Voice and Structure

- Narrative viewpoint for your short story doesn't have to be in third person. It can be a combination of 1st and 3rd and use a combination of character perspectives eg funeral, wedding (special event of some kind) write the internal monologues of different characters
- Your structure, while it must show orientation, complication and resolution, it can take a less traditional form...eg write a letter from one character to another, which explains something he/she can only express in writing.

Writing exercise

Troy has been working as a checkout 'chick' for fourteen years and he wants some time off to visit a rare stamp shop in Northern Ireland. He has to convince his supervisor, Hilda, that he deserves a break.

Write Troy's letter – remember to use the narrative construction.