

Text type: Narrative

Narrative is central to children's learning. They use it as a tool to help them organise their ideas and to explore new ideas and experiences. Composing stories, whether told or written, involves a set of skills and authorial knowledge but is also an essential means for children to express themselves creatively and imaginatively.

The range of narrative that children will experience and create is very wide. Many powerful narratives are told using only images. ICT texts tell stories using interactive combinations of words, images and sounds. Narrative poems such as ballads [The Highwayman](#) tell stories and often include most of the generic features of narrative. Narrative texts can be fiction or non-fiction. A single text can include a range of text types, such as when a story is told with the addition of diary entries, letters or email texts.

Specific features and structures of some narrative types

Children write many different types of narrative through Key Stages 1 and 2. Although most types share a common purpose (to tell a story in some way) there is specific knowledge children need in order to write particular narrative text types. While there is often a lot of overlap (for example, between myths and legends) it is helpful to group types of narrative to support planning for range and progression. Each unit of work in the Primary Framework (fiction, narrative, plays and scripts) provides suggestions for teaching the writing of specific forms or features of narrative. For example: genre (traditional tales), structure (short stories with flashbacks and extended narrative), content (stories which raise issues and dilemmas), settings (stories with familiar settings, historical settings, imaginary worlds) and style (older literature, significant authors).

Features of traditional tales

Traditional or 'folk' tales include myths, legends, fables and fairy tales. Often originating in the oral tradition, examples exist in most cultures, providing a rich, culturally diverse resource for children's reading and writing. Many of these stories served an original purpose of passing on traditional knowledge or sharing cultural beliefs.

They tend to have themes that deal with life's important issues and their narrative structures are often based on a quest, a journey or a series of trials and forfeits. Characters usually represent the archetypal opposites of good and evil, hero and villain, strong and weak or wise and foolish.

The style of traditional stories usually retains links with their origins in oral storytelling: rich, evocative vocabulary, repetition and patterned language, and strong use of imagery. When written in a traditional style, they also use some archaic language forms and vocabulary. Many regional stories include localised vocabulary and dialect forms.

Different types of traditional tales tend to have some narrative features (purpose, characters, language, style, structure) of their own.

Purpose:

The essential purpose of narrative is to tell a story, but the detailed purpose may vary according to genre. For example, the purpose of a myth is often to explain a natural phenomenon and a legend is often intended to pass on cultural traditions or beliefs.

Link to:

[Units by year group](#)
[Progression paper on narrative](#)

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>The most common structure is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an opening that establishes setting and introduces characters; • a complication and resulting events; • a resolution/ending. <p>Effective writers are not constrained by predictable narrative structure. Authors and storytellers often modify or adapt a generic structure, e.g. changing chronology by not telling the events in order (time shifts, flashbacks, backtracking). Children can add these less predictable narrative structures to their own writing repertoires.</p>	<p>Language features vary in different narrative genres.</p> <p>Common features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presented in spoken or written form; • may be augmented/supplemented/partly presented using images (such as illustrations) or interactive/multimedia elements (such as hypertext/images/video/audio); • told/written in first or third person (I, we, she, it, they); • told/written in past tense (sometimes in present tense); • chronological (plot or content have a chronology of events that happened in a particular order); • main participants are characters with recognisable qualities, often stereotypical and contrasting (hero/villain); • typical characters, settings and events are used in each genre; • connectives are widely used to move the narrative along and to affect the reader/listener: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ to signal time (later that day, once); ◦ to move the setting (meanwhile back at the cave, on the other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on your intended style and impact. • Plan before writing/telling to organise chronology and ensure main events lead towards the ending. • Visualise the setting and main characters to help you describe a few key details. • Rehearse sentences while writing to assess their effectiveness and the way they work together. • Find some different ways of telling what characters think and feel, e.g. describe what they did or said. • Use some strategies to connect with the reader/listener, e.g. use repetition of the same phrase or the same language pattern; ask them a question or refer to the reader as 'you'. What on earth was happening? Who do you think it was? • Show how the main character has changed or moved on in some way at the end. • Read or listen to the whole text as if you are the reader/listener or try it out on someone else: check that it makes sense and change anything that could work better.

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> side of the forest); ◦ to surprise or create suspense (suddenly, without warning). 	

LINKS TO UNITS BY YEAR GROUP

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Narrative					
Narrative - Unit 1 Narrative - Unit 2 Narrative - Unit 3 Narrative - Unit 4 Non-fiction - Unit 5	Narrative - Unit 1 Narrative - Unit 2 Narrative - Unit 3 Narrative - Unit 4	Narrative - Unit 1 Narrative - Unit 2 Narrative - Unit 3 Narrative - Unit 4 Narrative - Unit 5	Narrative - Unit 1 Narrative - Unit 2 Narrative - Unit 3 Narrative - Unit 4 Narrative - Unit 4	Narrative - Unit 1 Narrative - Unit 2 Narrative - Unit 3 Narrative - Unit 4 Narrative - Unit 5	Narrative - Unit 1 Narrative - Unit 2 Narrative - Unit 3 Narrative - Unit 4 Revision - Unit 1
Additional text-based units - Narrative					
Unit 2 - The Story of Jake and Bones				There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom The Midnight Fox Street Child	There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom The Midnight Fox Street Child
Dialogue and Playscripts					
Narrative - Unit 3	Narrative - Unit 2	Narrative - Unit 5	Narrative - Unit 5	Narrative - Unit 5 Narrative - Unit 6	Revision Unit 1
Additional text-based units - Dialogue and Playscripts					
Unit 2 The Story of Jake and Bones					

- [Download this text type](#)

Adventure

Purpose:

To entertain

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF ADVENTURE WRITING TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>Typically a recount or retelling of a series of exciting events leading to a high impact resolution. The most common structure is a chronological narrative. Building excitement as the hero faces and overcomes adversity is an important element, so more complex structures such as flashbacks are less common. Archetypal characters are the norm and much of the building tension comes from the reader predicting who or what represents the threat (the villain) and what is likely to go wrong for the hero.</p> <p>Longer narratives build tension in waves, with one problem after another accelerating the adventure in several sections or chapters, with the high point of tension near the end.</p> <p>The story can take place in any setting where there is the potential for adventure through a danger or threat.</p> <p>ICT 'adventure' texts often employ different structures, allowing the user to select different routes through the order of events, sometimes with different resolutions that depend on the choices made by the reader.</p>	<p>An effective blend of action, dialogue and description develops archetypal characters who the reader will care about, at the same time as moving the plot along at an exciting pace.</p> <p>Description adds to the sense of adventure by heightening the reader's awareness, e.g. a sense of potential danger (The cliffs were high and jagged ...) or dropping clues to encourage involvement through prediction (The captain welcomed them aboard but his eyes were narrow and cruel-looking ...)</p> <p>Dialogue is an element of characterisation but is used more to advance the action than to explore a character's feelings or motivation. "What was that noise? Did you hear it too?"</p> <p>Language usually has a cinematic quality, with powerful, evocative vocabulary and strong, varied verbs for action scenes. (He leaped from his horse, charged into the banquet hall and hurled himself onto the table where the prince was devouring a chicken.)</p>	<p>Create characters your readers will have a strong opinion about. Make the reader like your hero so they want him/her to succeed.</p> <p>Create a villain that is a good match for the hero, someone the reader definitely doesn't want to win in the end. Don't forget that villains we dislike most often work in subtle ways. They do sneaky, mean things that they might just get away with.</p> <p>Keep the plot moving but vary the pace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use fast-moving action to create excitement at a high point; • slow things down a little with description or dialogue when you want to build tension and create suspense. <p>Can you surprise the reader at the end? Perhaps someone who seemed insignificant saves the day and turns out to be a real hero, or perhaps a character that appeared good and helpful turns out to be two-faced.</p>

Mystery

Purpose:

To intrigue and entertain.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF MYSTERY WRITING TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING		
Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>Structure is often chronological, even in a longer narrative, but complex structural techniques are sometimes used for effect. Different structures can be used for layering of information or drip-feeding facts to build up a full picture for the reader, e.g. using flashbacks to fill in information needed that wasn't provided earlier in the story or organising sections so they tell the story both before and after a key event. Knowing what is going to happen and then reading about it happening can add to the suspense.</p> <p>Settings are often places the main character is unfamiliar with. Different cultures often share views about the kinds of settings that seem mysterious (deep, dark forests, old, uninhabited places, lonely rural landscapes). Other settings can be very familiar places (school, home, the local town) but with an added ingredient that triggers the mystery (a stranger arrives in town, a parcel arrives, people begin acting strangely, something unusual happens).</p>	<p>The narrator uses questions to exaggerate the mystery, e.g. Who could it be? Why had the car suddenly stopped?</p> <p>Language is used to intensify the mystery, particularly adjectives and adverbials. Some typical vocabulary is associated with this narrative type (puzzling, strange, peculiar, baffling, weird, odd, secretive, unexplained, bewildering).</p> <p>Use of pronouns to create mystery by avoiding naming or defining characters, especially when they first appear in the story. (First line: He climbed in through the window on the stroke of midnight. The wind howled and there was no moon.)</p> <p>Use of the pronoun 'it' to suggest a non-human or mysterious character. (And that's when I saw it, creeping carefully along behind the hedge. It wasn't much taller than me.)</p>	<p>Use questions to highlight key moments as the mystery deepens (A sudden noise! What could be making that low mumbling sound?).</p> <p>Decide what the mystery is before you begin writing and introduce it fairly soon so the reader wants to find out the solution.</p> <p>Keep readers interested by hinting and suggesting but don't give too much away too soon. Drop clues and puzzles for the reader to pick up and think about along the way.</p> <p>Make adventurous word choices to make your reader really think about what you're describing.</p> <p>Don't just say someone is 'mysterious', make them seem mysterious by describing them, their actions or what they say.</p> <p>Don't describe everything in detail. What is left out can</p>

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
		often be scarier than what is described.

Science Fiction

Purpose:

To entertain and, sometimes, to speculate about the future.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF SCIENCE FICTION WRITING TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>Can use any of the varied structures typical of narrative. The setting is often a time in the future so may use structures that play with the time sequence, such as flashbacks and time travel.</p> <p>Science fiction typically includes detail about the way that people might live in the future, predicting in a creative and imaginative way how technology might advance.</p>	<p>The plot usually includes adventure so action is fast-moving.</p> <p>Where futuristic characters are created, dialogue may use unusual forms and vocabulary, or even alternative languages.</p> <p>Description is important to convey imagined settings, technology, processes and characters.</p>	<p>Even if the story is set in the future, you still need to create a setting, characters and plot that readers can believe possible.</p> <p>Make sure you have main characters the reader will care about (e.g. a likeable hero) even if the characters are non-human.</p> <p>Use description carefully when you want your reader to imagine something they have never seen.</p>

Fantasy

Purpose:

To entertain and to fuel the imagination.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF FANTASY WRITING TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>May simply be a basic chronological narrative set in a fantasy world but some fantasy narratives extend the 'fantastic' element to the structure as well. For example, the story may play with the concept of time so that characters find themselves moving through time in a different way.</p> <p>Some fantasy structures focus on character development or description of setting at the expense of plot so that the actual order of events becomes less important or even impossible to follow.</p>	<p>Description is very important because fantasy uses settings (and often characters) that must be imagined by the reader.</p> <p>Imagery plays an important role in helping to describe places and things the reader has never seen.</p>	<p>Choose adjectives carefully to describe the places and things in the story.</p> <p>Use similes to help the reader imagine what you are describing more clearly. (The glass castle was as big as a football field and as tall as a skyscraper. Its clear walls sparkled like blocks of ice in the sun.)</p> <p>Don't make everything so fantastic that it is unbelievable.</p> <p>Make what happens as interesting and detailed as the setting where it happens. Don't get so involved in creating amazing places and characters that you forget to tell a good story about what happens to them.</p>

Historical fiction

Purpose:

To entertain and, sometimes, to inform.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF HISTORICAL FICTION TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>The narrative is about something that has already happened in the past so a series of events is usually the underlying structure.</p> <p>The writer can adapt the structure to achieve a specific effect. For example, the story can begin with a main character looking back and reflecting on the past (I was just a lad then. Let me tell you what happened ...).</p>	<p>Historical settings need detail to make them authentic and to give important 'mapping' clues to the reader. When was this happening? Whereabouts is this story taking place?</p> <p>Appropriate archaic language is used, including old-fashioned words that have fallen out of usage, e.g.</p>	<p>Include accurate historical detail to create the setting (The winter of 1509 was bitterly cold and many poor country folk were starving) or let the reader work it out (The young prince had just been crowned King Henry VIII when a country boy called Tom arrived in London).</p> <p>Use the right kind of old-fashioned language when characters speak to one another.</p> <p>Description is important for the setting and characters but you can add historical detail in different ways to give variety:</p>

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>Sometimes, a historical narrative begins with the final event and then goes on to explain what led up to that by moving back in time to tell the whole story.</p> <p>Historical fiction requires a historical setting but can also be an adventure or a mystery.</p> <p>It can also give a fictionalised account of real events or additional, fictional detail to things that really happened.</p>	<p>Let me carry thy basket, old dame.</p> <p>It can also include models of sentence grammar no longer commonly or informally used, e.g. That which you seek, you shall find in the forest.</p>	<p>Description: The little girl was wearing a long cloak and woollen hood.</p> <p>Action: He threw his sword to the floor and rushed down the stone spiral staircase.</p> <p>Dialogue: Wait, I'll get a candle to light our way.</p>

Contemporary fiction

Purpose:

To entertain and, sometimes, to create empathy with familiar characters.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>Contemporary settings are often familiar ones.</p> <p>This type of narrative includes school stories, things that happen in the home or in local settings that children either know themselves or recognise. Stories therefore often reflect children's own experiences, are often personal and structured as a recount.</p>	<p>Dialogue plays an important part in the characterisation.</p> <p>Characters tend to use language familiar to children.</p> <p>Contemporary language features include the informal dialogue children use themselves, as well as familiar phrases from adults at home and school (Don't let me tell you again!)</p>	<p>Hero and villain characters are more difficult to create because the characters look like ordinary people, not superheroes or monsters. You can still create strong characters because they aren't always what they seem on the outside – a nervous little boy might turn out to be a brave hero and a smiling old lady might not really be a kind character.</p> <p>You don't need to write everything that is said to tell the story. Make sure you only use dialogue because it helps to create a character, provides information for the reader or moves the action along.</p>

Dilemma stories

Purpose:

To entertain and to explore issues or dilemmas.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF DILEMMA STORIES TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING		
Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>The strength of the story often depends on a character facing a difficult (or seemingly impossible) dilemma, with a limited choice of actions. A strong, simple story structure usually leads the character to the dilemma quite quickly and then makes the reader wait to find out how it is dealt with.</p> <p>The narrative makes the waiting interesting by adding to the suspense, for example by increasing the complexity or gravity of the dilemma or by threatening the right/chosen course of action. (The main character has decided to apologise just in time and is on the way to do so but has an accident and is taken to hospital - soon it will be too late.)</p> <p>Most forms of narrative can include stories which raise dilemmas.</p>	<p>Characterisation is fundamental. The main characters are often well-established from the beginning with additional detail such as background, history or interests included. The reader understands why a character feels the way they do.</p> <p>Key characters also develop and change over time, usually as a result of the events that take place in the story and particularly as a result of the dilemma they face and their resulting actions.</p> <p>Description, action and dialogue are all important for developing and deepening character and showing both why and how someone has changed.</p>	<p>Make sure the dilemma or issue to be faced is a really tricky one to deal with. If there is no easy or obvious answer, it will be even more interesting to read what your main character decides to do.</p> <p>If characters change during the story, decide how to show this.</p> <p>Do they behave differently? Do they speak differently?</p>

Dialogue

Purpose:

Although these forms of storytelling differ from narrative in that they are not necessarily 'narrated', they usually share the same purposes: to tell a story and to have a deliberate effect on the viewer/listener/reader. They include scripts for film/digital viewing or audio (e.g. digital audio recording or radio plays) and stories told using images and speech bubbles (such as comic strips) sometimes supplemented with an additional narrative element.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF DIALOGUE TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING		
Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>Structural conventions for scripting vary, particularly in their layout on the page or screen but they usually include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusive use of direct speech and absence of narrative text such as "she said". • Dialogue (conversation between two or more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use only direct speech. • Playscripts: apply the presentational conventions of a script consistently throughout. • Comic strip with speech bubbles, animations, multimedia and other dialogue:

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> name of character and the words they speak: MRS GRAY Hello dear. How are you? organisational information; (Scene 2 The kitchen DAY) stage directions. (ENTER Sita, dancing) <p>Comic strip and some digital animations usually include speech bubbles within the images; interactive texts may include combinations of on-screen speech bubbles and audio dialogue, e.g. accessed by rollover or mouse click.</p>	<p>characters) or monologue (one character speaking).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any necessary narrative information is provided by images (as in comic strip or animations) by stage directions (as in a playscript) or by supplementary narrative, e.g. when a comic strip with speech bubbles also includes some narrative below each picture. 	<p>keep the text fairly short and only include dialogue that moves the story on or gives important information; make the images and words work well together so they each add something special to the story.</p>

LINKS TO UNITS BY YEAR GROUP					
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Dialogue and Playscripts					
Narrative Unit 3	Narrative Unit 2	Narrative Unit 5	Narrative Unit 5	Narrative Unit 5 Narrative Unit 6	Revision Unit 1
Additional text-based units - Dialogue and Playscripts					
Unit 2: The Story of Jake and Bones					

Myths

Purpose:

To provide a fictional explanation for natural phenomena. Many cultures use myths to explain the world and its mysteries by handing them down from one generation to the next. Myths can also pass on cultural, religious or spiritual beliefs and traditions.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF MYTHS TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>The plot is often based on a long and dangerous journey, a quest or a series of trials for the hero.</p> <p>The plot usually includes incredible or miraculous events, where characters behave in superhuman ways using unusual powers or with the help of superhuman beings.</p> <p>Myths are often much longer texts than other traditional stories (apart from some legends) especially in their original form. They provide a very useful contrast with shorter forms of traditional narrative such as fables.</p>	<p>Rich vocabulary evoking the power and splendour of the characters and settings: Hercules hurled the glittering spear with all the strength of a mighty army.</p> <p>Use of imagery to help the reader imagine. Simile is used widely to help convey grand settings and describe awe-inspiring characters: Thor's hammer was as heavy as a mountain.</p> <p>Vivid description of characters and settings. Fast-moving narration of action to keep the drama moving along. Myths tend to make less use of dialogue and repetition than some other types of traditional story.</p> <p>Myths often provide good examples of the use of symbols: Theseus unwinds a thread behind him in the Minotaur's den – a thread could be seen as a symbol of his link between the real world of humans and the supernatural world of the gods.</p>	<p>Make the characters larger than life by giving them supernatural powers or strong characteristics like courage and wisdom.</p> <p>Create a negative character who is the opposite of your hero: good and evil, brave and cowardly, strong and weak.</p> <p>Consider including a character who is a 'trickster' to add to the fun or to create twists in the plot.</p> <p>Choose a setting that gives a dramatic backdrop for the action: (a huge, dense forest, a mountain shrouded in icy fog or a wide, sun-baked desert).</p>

Myths - more specific features

Purpose

The usual purpose of a myth is to provide an explanation for the origins of phenomena (thunder, day and night, winter) by telling the story of how they came to be. Most cultures used myths, handed down orally from generation to generation from an anonymous source, to explain the world and its mysteries, so mythology from different regions usually reflects the wonders that people saw around them in their own environment. Myths often provide narrative clues that help to build a picture of the beliefs, lifestyles and ideology of the people who first told them. There are many similarities between the myths of different cultures (Why the Crow is Black: Aboriginal Australian, Sioux and Dakota, Filipino and ancient Greek).

Themes

Myths are set in the past, usually a distant and non-specific past, and are presented (unlike fables) as something that actually happened. There is evidence that the content of some myths is based on real events and places that may have existed.

Myths explain why the world is the way it is and, for this reason, they reflect the basic principles of the religion or spirituality of the people. For example, Norse and Greek myths narrate what the gods did and how they interacted with humans. The most famous Hindu myths, The Mahabharata and The Ramayana, are epic tales that contain the teachings of Hindu sages told as exciting stories about the lives of people and gods. The social and religious status of myths varies from culture to culture but for some they continue to be sacred texts.

Opposites occur frequently in myths as themes, including:

- good and evil;
- night and day;
- calm and storm;
- wise and foolish;
- old and young;
- beautiful and ugly;
- mean and generous;
- just and unjust.

Like other traditional stories, myths use quests, journeys and trials as themes. The hero or heroine often has to undergo some kind of test (the trials of Hercules) or set off on a long and difficult journey where dangers arise at each stage (the Odyssey).

Plot and structure

The plot of a myth usually includes incredible or miraculous events, where characters behave in superhuman ways using unusual powers or with the help of superhuman beings.

Myths are often much longer texts than other traditional stories (apart from some legends) especially in their original form. They provide a very useful contrast with shorter forms of traditional narrative such as fables.

Characters

Characters typical of traditional stories appear in myths (talking animals, rich kings, foolish young men, clever villains) although the 'trickster' character is often a mischievous god (Loki, for example). The most notable character types in this sub-class are classic heroes and supernatural beings. Characterisation is an interesting focus for composition when children write their own myths or retell versions because the characters need to be awe-inspiring and larger-than-life.

Style

Rich, evocative vocabulary and use of imagery are typical but style is often more literary than other types of tales so that some versions offer a more challenging read for children. Myths often include very vivid description of characters and settings (dense, mysterious rainforest or icy, mist-shrouded mountain peaks) and fast-moving narration of action. They tend to make less use of dialogue and repetition than some other types of traditional story.

Simile is used widely to help convey grand settings and describe awe-inspiring characters. Myths also provide good examples of the use of symbols. For example, the thread that Theseus unwinds behind him in the Minotaur's den could be seen as a symbol of his link between the real world of humans and the supernatural world of the gods. The labyrinth itself could represent the confusion in his own life – he doesn't know 'which way to turn' to solve his problems. He feels 'lost'.

Legends

Purpose:

To provide information about the way particular people lived, and what they believed. Legends also help us to reflect on our own lives because they often deal with issues that are cross-cultural and relevant today.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF LEGENDS TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>Structure is usually chronological, with one episode told after another, for example as the phases of a journey or the stages of an ongoing battle. Some legends tell the whole life story of their hero as a series of linked episodes; each one may be a story in its own right.</p> <p>Common structures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chronological episodes; • journey stories; • sequential stories; • life stories and community histories. 	<p>Language features are very similar to those of myths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rich, evocative vocabulary; • memorable language use; • use of rhythm and repetition techniques; • formulaic openings and endings; • imagery: simile, metaphor and symbolism. <p>Legends written in a traditional style often use more literary language than fairy tales or fables. Modern versions such as twenty-first century retellings or new legends may use more contemporary, informal language.</p>	<p>Work out how the story will tell of a struggle, e.g. between good and evil, friend and foe, wise and foolish.</p> <p>When you've decided on your main character, decide on the structure you will use and what will be included in each episode/each stage of the journey or quest.</p> <p>Consider adding ingredients of magic or the supernatural to make your legend different from other kinds of stories.</p> <p>Use symbols your reader will recognise to help them get involved in the story, e.g. red for anger/danger, darkness for danger/evil, a light or flame for goodness and hope.</p>

Legends - more specific features

Plot and character

There are a great many similarities between myths and legends and some stories are categorised in both these subclasses of traditional tales. Although legends often include mythical beings and supernatural events, their narrative spine is more closely connected to the real world of human history. The events in legends tend to seem more likely and less fictionalised than those in myths.

Legends are usually based on real characters and events, even though these have been richly embellished and exaggerated over time. This gives the narrative an exciting quality because all the events seem to be within the realm of possibility even when the plot has become so widely adapted or updated that it is completely fictional.

The plot of a legend usually focuses on an individual character, a cultural hero or a person respected and remembered (Jason, King Arthur, Robin Hood, William Tell, Roland) but there are also legends about places (Atlantis, Shangri-La), objects (the Holy Grail, the Philosopher's Stone) and legendary animals (the Yeti, Loch Ness monster, Sasquatch, Chupacabra).

Structure and style

Structure is usually episodic, as in the phases of a journey over several years or the stages of a great battle. Some legends tell the entire life story of their hero as a series of linked episodes, each one a story in its own right, as in the King Arthur stories and the sagas of German-speaking and Northern European countries.

Common structures include:

- chronological episodes;
- journey stories;
- sequential stories;
- life stories and community histories.

Like myths, legends sometimes use a more literary style than fairy tales or fables.

For example:

- rich, evocative vocabulary
- memorable language use
- use of rhythm and repetition techniques
- formulaic openings and endings
- imagery: simile, metaphor and symbolism.

Theme

Legends employ many of the typical themes of traditional stories:

- good and evil
- friend and foe
- magic
- the supernatural
- rich and poor/rags to riches/riches to rags
- wise and foolish
- strong and weak
- just and unjust
- a quest or search
- a journey
- trials and forfeits.

Legends, like myths, reveal information about the way people lived, what they believed, what was important to them, what they valued and what they were afraid of.

They also convey meaning about the way we live our lives that make them relevant and interesting across cultures and time. This makes them worth repeating through generations and publishing as new versions or adaptations for twenty-first century readers. Brand new legends continue to be developed as part of contemporary literary and oral storytelling cultures.

Fairy tales

Purpose:

Fairy tales were originally intended for adults and children. They were passed down orally to amuse and to convey cultural information that influences behaviour, such as where it is safe to travel and where it is dangerous to go.

Fairy tales are found in most cultures and many derive from the oldest stories ever told. Some modern fairy tales could be included in the more recently categorised genre of 'fantasy'.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF FAIRY TALES TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>Setting is nearly always vague. (Once upon a time ... A long, long time ago ...)</p> <p>Structure is most typically a recount in chronological order, where events retell what happened to a main character that came into contact with the 'fairy world'.</p> <p>Often the hero or heroine is searching for something (a home, love, acceptance, wealth, wisdom) and in many tales dreams are fulfilled with a little help from magic. 'Fairy tale endings' (where everything turns out for the best) are common but many fairy tales are darker and have a sad ending.</p>	<p>Formulaic sentences are used: Once upon a time ... There was once a ... Long ago in the ... And it came to pass ...</p> <p>Language often reflects the settings, in the past, using archaic or regional vocabulary and grammar: Say these words thrice! I shall return and take thy gold. He knew not where he was.</p>	<p>Characters may be fairy folk or even talking animals but make sure they are still interesting, believable characters your reader will care about, e.g. a good-hearted hero, a scheming villain, a wise helper.</p> <p>Decide how the world of people and the world of fairy land will come into contact and how this will cause a problem.</p> <p>Use numbers and patterns that usually appear in fairy tales: the numbers 3 and 7.</p> <p>Use phrases that have a strong rhyme or rhythm or another kind of pattern: a magic sentence is repeated several times during the story, the hero must say a secret rhyme to escape, a line is used at the beginning of each section or chapter. (On and on walked the little old man.)</p> <p>Use different styles of language for the human beings and the characters from the fairy world when they speak, to make a strong contrast between them:</p> <p>"Eeeek! Who are you, you wrinkly old thing?" asked Tom.</p> <p>"Beware, child and address me with respect. I am not of your world," came the goblin's whispered reply.</p>

Fairy tales - more specific features

Origin, audience and purpose

The oldest forms of fairy tales were originally intended for adults and children. These early folk tales were passed down orally from generation to generation and later became increasingly associated with children as their audience. Their primary purposes are to amuse and to convey cultural information that influences behaviour (mountains can be dangerous places to travel alone, unselfish behaviour benefits the community and is rewarded, do as your parents tell you and all will be well).

Later adaptations, written in a more literary and sophisticated style, are also among the traditional stories known as fairy tales although the often gory and frightening content of the original stories was sometimes sanitised by those who composed new, written adaptations. Fairy tales are found in most cultures and many derive from the oldest stories ever told. New fairy tales are still being written today although some of these texts with fairy-tale elements (such as *The Hobbit*) could be included in the more recently categorised genre of fantasy.

Theme

The familiar themes of many traditional stories are prevalent in fairy tales:

- magic and skill
- safe and dangerous
- good and evil
- weak and strong
- rich and poor
- wise and foolish
- old and young
- beautiful and ugly
- mean and generous
- just and unjust
- friend and foe
- family/home and stranger/far away
- the origins of the Earth, its people and animals
- the relationship between people and the seen or unseen world around them.

Character

Fairy tales consistently include some of the most familiar and traditional archetypes of all folk tales (hero, villain, mentor, trickster, sage, shape shifter, herald). Human characters are simply the people who lived in the castles, cottages and hovels of the original stories: kings and queens, princes and princesses, knights and ladies, poor farmers, youngest sons, wise old women, beggars, tailors, soldier, a goose-girl. The main character is often humble, melancholy or hard-working and wants to make life better.

Characters also include a wide range of magical folk including animals or creatures who may have mystical powers yet behave with human characteristics. The names given to the inhabitants of the fairy world vary in different cultures but they include the 'little folk' (elves, imps, fairies, leprechauns, pixies/piskies, goblins and dwarfs) as well as the larger and often more sinister trolls, giants, ogres, wizards and witches.

Interestingly, the presence of fairies or talking animals is not necessarily the best way to identify a traditional tale as a fairy story. Many fairy stories do not include fairies as characters and the main characters in fables are often talking animals.

Plot and structure

The setting and details about when events took place are nearly always vague. (Once upon a time... A long, long time ago... It happened that... Once there was a small cottage in the middle of a forest...)

The stories tell the adventures of people in the land of fairy folk so plots usually include the use of magic, fantastic forces and fanciful creatures. Sometimes the inhabitants of the magical land of 'faerie' venture into the world of humans and this disruption of the status quo triggers a far-fetched sequence of events. Enchantments are common and rule-breaking has consequences.

Often the hero or heroine is searching for something (a home, love, acceptance, wealth, wisdom) and in many tales dreams are fulfilled with a little help from magic. 'Fairy tale endings' (where everything turns out for the best) are common. Heroes overcome their adversaries and girls marry the prince of their dreams but many fairy tales are darker and have a sad ending. The fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen, for example, include many where things go from bad to worse even for 'good' characters or where people's negative characteristics are their downfall at the end. (The little match girl dies tragically in the snow, the fashion-obsessed emperor becomes a laughing stock when he parades through the city wearing nothing at all, the toy soldier melts away to a lump of lead.) This means that careful selection of texts is required to ensure age-appropriateness.

Style

Fairy tales include good examples of the repetitive, rhythmic and patterned language of traditional stories. Phrases or expressions are repeated for emphasis or to create a magical, theatrical effect (so she went over the gate, across the meadow and down to the stream once more... not once, not twice, but three times...).

Fairy stories use:

- rich, evocative vocabulary
- the language of the fairy world (magic spells, incantations, charms)
- the spoken language of the ordinary people (dialogue, regional accent and dialect vocabulary, informal expressions)
- memorable language (rhyme, alliteration, assonance, repetition)
- formulaic openings and endings; imagery: simile, metaphor and symbolism.

Fairy tales are commonly presented as implausible but it is important to remember that in cultures where the inhabitants of the magical world are perceived as real, the stories may be interpreted more as legends, so that storyteller and reader/audience understand them to have some historical, factual basis.

Fables

Purpose:

A fable sets out to teach the reader or listener a lesson they should learn about life. The narrative drives towards the closing moral statement, the fable's theme: the early bird gets the worm, where there's a will there's a way, work hard and always plan ahead for lean times, charity is a virtue. The clear presence of a moral distinguishes fables from other folk tales.

A TABLE SHOWING CORE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS OF FABLES TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>There is a shared understanding between storyteller and audience that the events told did not actually happen so fables do not need to convince and their structure is usually simple. They are often very short with few characters – sometimes only two.</p> <p>Structure is typically the simplest kind of narrative with a beginning, a complication and a resolution. Two characters (often animals) meet, an event occurs and they go on their way with one of them having learned an important lesson about life.</p>	<p>The short and simple structure of the narrative leaves little room for additional details of description or character development.</p> <p>Dialogue is used to advance the plot or to state the moral, rather than to engage a reader with the characters and their qualities.</p> <p>Characterisation is limited but specific: A lazy duck was making its way to the river ... A crafty raven was sitting on a branch ...</p> <p>There is limited use of description because settings</p>	<p>They are portrayed as simple stereotypes rather than multidimensional heroes or villains.</p> <p>If your main characters are animals, make them behave like human stereotypes: a brave little ant, a wise old turtle, a cunning fox, a lazy donkey.</p> <p>Use the main characters to give your fable a title: The Ant and the Elephant.</p> <p>State the moral of your fable clearly at the end: a wise person always plans ahead.</p> <p>Establish the setting in the first line and introduce the two main characters as soon as you can.</p> <p>Give clues to your reader about what might happen: a greedy but impatient fox was watching the chickens from behind a tree.</p>

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
	<p>are less important than the events that take place. Action and dialogue are used to move the story on because the all-important moral is most clearly evident in what the main characters do and say.</p> <p>Connectives are an important language feature to show cause and effect and to give coherence to a short narrative.</p>	<p>Don't add too much detail of description and only use dialogue that helps to tell what happened.</p> <p>Use connectives when characters talk to one another, to explain or show cause and effect: "If you will give me your hand, I will help you over the river", said the wolf. "I can't possibly eat you because I'm a vegetarian," lied the bear.</p> <p>Use connectives to show your reader quickly and easily when things happened and how time passed: (One morning... as he was... first he saw... then he saw... When winter came... And then the grasshopper understood...) Questions are often the way one character introduces themselves to another in a fable: <i>Why do you howl so loudly? What are you writing so busily in your book, little bird?</i></p>

Fables - more specific features

Theme

Although they use many of the typical themes, characters and settings of traditional stories, fables have a very specific purpose that strongly influences their content. A fable sets out to teach the reader or listener a lesson they should learn about life. The narrative drives towards the closing moral statement, the fable's theme: the early bird gets the worm, where there's a will there's a way, work hard and always plan ahead for lean times, charity is a virtue. The clear presence of a moral distinguishes fables from other folk tales.

Plot and structure

Plot is overtly fictitious as the point of the story is its message, rather than an attempt to convince the reader of a real setting or characters. There is a shared understanding between storyteller and audience that the events told did not actually happen. They are used as a means to an end, a narrative metaphor for the ethical truth being promoted.

For this reason, fables do not carry any non-essential narrative baggage. There are usually few characters and often only two who are portrayed as simple stereotypes rather than multidimensional heroes or villains. Narrative structure is short (sometimes just a few sentences) and simple and there is limited use of description. Action and dialogue are used to move the story on because the all-important moral is most clearly evident in what the main characters do and say.

Character

The main characters are often named in the title (the town mouse and the country mouse, the North wind and the sun) and they are also frequently animals, another subtle way of signalling the fictional, 'fabulous' nature of the story and its serious purpose. Animal characters speak and behave like human beings, allowing the storyteller to make cautionary points about human behaviour without pointing the finger at real people.

Style

Many fables use the rich vocabulary, imagery and patterned language common in traditional tales but generally speaking, the shorter the fable, the more simple its use of language. In these short texts, use of vocabulary is often pared down and concise.

Fables tend to use:

- formulaic beginnings that establish setting and character very quickly (One day a farmer was going to market ... A hungry fox was sitting by the roadside...In a field, one spring morning...)
 - connectives to explain or show cause and effect (If you will give me... so the wolf...)
 - temporal connectives that hold the narrative together and give it a chronological shape (One morning... as he was... first he saw... then he saw... When winter came... And then the grasshopper understood...)
 - simple dialogue between two main characters, often questions and answers (Why do you howl so loudly?) or statements that reflect on a situation (You seem to have a wonderful life here in the town. My feathers may not be beautiful but they keep me warm in winter.).
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