

Text Structure Overview

Events are part of the narrative structure. An effective narrative structure contains the following components.

Orientation	Complication	Temporary resolution	Reappearing complication	Resolution
The narrator:	The narrator:	The narrator:	The narrator:	The narrator:
<p>Creates a visual picture by describing events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time • place • circumstance <p>Introduces characters by describing/evaluating characteristic features/significant attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appearance • nature • likes and dislikes • habits <p>Foreshadows a problem or complication that affects how the story is to progress. This may be indicated by an emotional reaction felt by a character.</p>	<p>Introduces the problem or complication which creates a disturbance concerning the setting, time or characters.</p> <p>Tension is possibly created. There is uncertainty about what might happen.</p>	<p>Provides a possible answer to the problem so far or relieves the tension being created.</p>	<p>Reveals the problem is not fully resolved or a new problem occurs that adds to the tension. <i>'Out of the frying pan into the fire.'</i></p>	<p>Solves the problem and may have learnt from the events and reflects on this learning.</p>

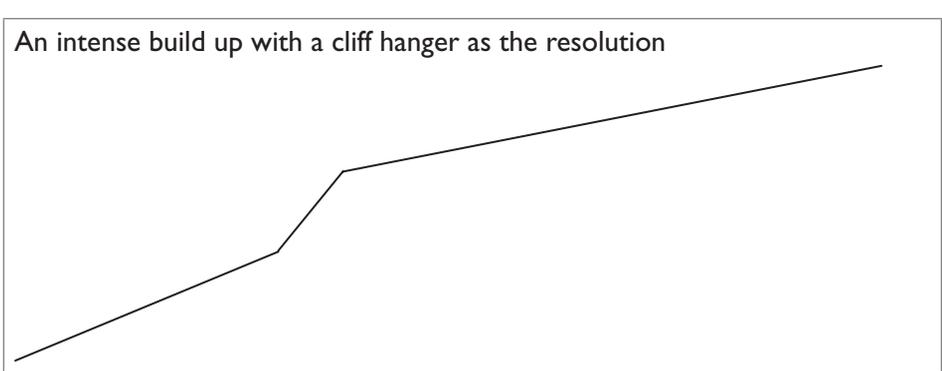
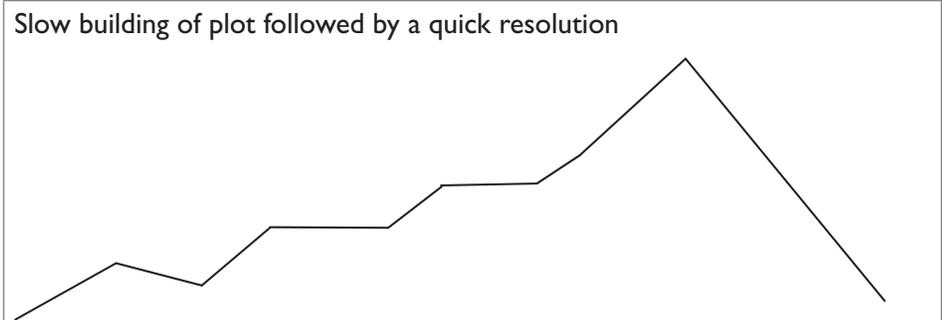
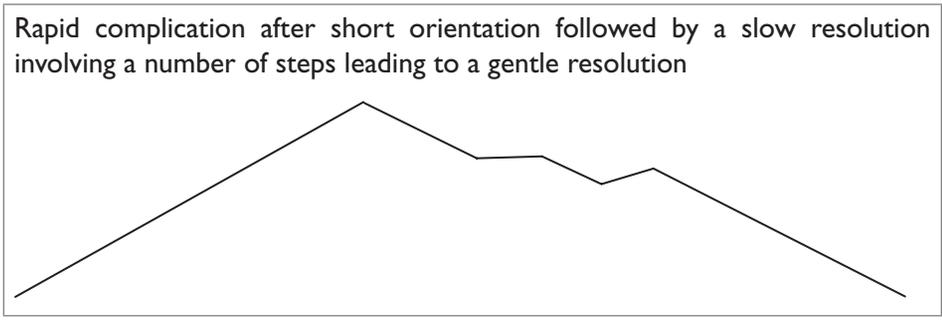
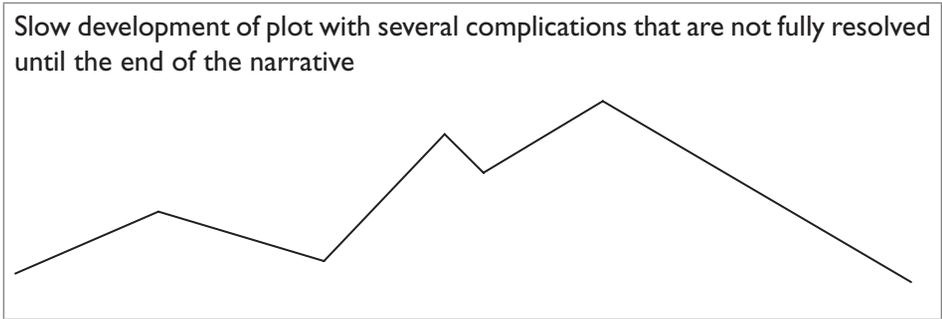
Transferred into a line graph, the way narrative plot is developed can create a different pace. Students can create line graphs as they identify the *pace* in the text structure.

Pacing in narratives

There can also be a gradual escalation of events. This can be represented as a series of minor complications that the character must respond to.

There may be a major complication in the narrative that is not resolved until the end, with a number of minor complications along the way which may be resolved in part or whole as they arise or later in the story. These minor obstacles are usually related to the major complication and serve to sustain interest and suspense, leading to the main crisis or climax.

At each changing point, complications (including twists, parallel plots, side stories and cliff hangers) can change the pace of the narrative.



Developing a complication

To develop a complication, the character should be presented with some sort of experience or disruption that alters the usual pattern of events. This could be accomplished in a number of ways, for example:

- putting the character in an awkward predicament – being in a different time period; being in a strange land; having unusual powers
- creating a dilemma where a decision must be made – which leader to support; who to believe and follow
- devising a crisis that leads to heroic deeds – rescuing someone; defeating an enemy.

In developing a complication, it is important for students to focus on how characters feel when confronted with problems and obstacles. They should be encouraged to use words that express emotions and attitudes.

Sophisticated structures

Not all writing follows a linear, time ordered model. Sophisticated structures, sequences and plot devices can include:

- circular
- parallel
- foreshadowing and flashbacks
- side or back stories
- stories within stories
- epiphany.

Skill Focus: Identifying text structure

STAGES 1–2

Strategies

Assisting students to use self regulation skills while reading

Self regulation skills assist students to:

- know how to think through activities using modelled scaffolds
- be aware of, plan and implement comprehension strategies for different text purposes
- check whether they understand text and whether the messages they have interpreted make sense (Carnine, Silbert and Kameenui, 1997)

Mapping a narrative which visually assists students to cluster ideas, identify structure and use words and illustrations to record information

Activities to support the strategies

Modelled

Shared reading experience – *Gorilla* by Anthony Browne

Highlight the usual construction of a narrative, referring to frameworks that are displayed in the classroom. That is: a narrative is usually constructed through a sequence of events that goes wrong in some way and causes a problem for the character/s. Sometimes writers introduce the complication quite early in the story and the focus is then on solving the problem.

Exploring deep knowledge and providing the metalanguage for deconstruction (QTF)

Use a well known narrative to model strategies for identifying events in texts.

Link to the way previous texts have been deconstructed as you record the summary on the board. This provides a framework for students to use when they deconstruct the new text.

Use the ‘think aloud’ strategy to model the process. Include self regulation statements such as:

On this page the characters are introduced. I can learn about where the story is being set, who is in the narrative and what the characters like to do. I have found the orientation of the narrative because I can see the place, the characters and what they are doing. I know to expect that events will follow. I am going to look for the first one. The picture shows the first event where Hannah and her dad are having breakfast at the same table. The next event is in the words and I can also see it in the matching picture. I have already found two events but not a complication yet. I need to keep reading the words and the pictures.

K–6 Outcomes

- | WSI.9: Writes elementary texts
- | WSI.14: Discusses functions of different stages of a text
- | WS2.9: Writes a range of literary texts
- | WS2.14: Recognises and discusses the organisational structure of a range of literary texts

Item & Stimulus

Writing task criterion 2
Text Structure



Item Descriptor

Organises narrative features including orientation, complication and resolution into an appropriate and effective text structure

Statements of Learning for English (p. 17)

Students have the opportunity to draw on their knowledge of texts and language to clarify meaning. They know the typical generic structure of imaginative texts (orientation, complication and resolution).

Guided

Exploring deep knowledge (QTF)

Discuss with students what they know about narrative texts, drawing their attention to other sessions that have involved narrative deconstructions. For example:

When we looked at Gorilla by Anthony Browne we found the orientation introduced the main character Hannah. She was alone in her room. The words and pictures introduced the setting.

Shared reading experience

Read *Alexander's Outing* by Pamela Allen to the class.

After reading, plot the main events on a story sequence on the board. As you are plotting the sequence, use 'think aloud' strategies to explain how you identify and justify your decision about the main points.

Use language such as:

In the beginning, Alexander began his day by ... this is where the author develops his setting. Is it important? Do I need this? Let me check the pictures to see if it was in the orientation.

Exploring student understanding (QTF)

As the teacher models the deconstruction of the text he or she should:

- ask students for their advice in identifying the text structure
- ask students to identify ideas in the narrative using the text structure to guide them
- refer students back to the book as a source for checking ideas and locating information.

This assists students to:

- self regulate as they read and after they read
- select information essential to the plot
- practise reading behaviours such as re-reading to make sense, predicting what happened next, skimming and scanning the page.

The teacher asks students to identify where they think the complication is first introduced and then say how they identified the complication. Talk about the events that follow the complication and how the characters attempt to solve the problem to create the resolution.

Students construct a sequence for *Alexander's Outing* by Pamela Allen.

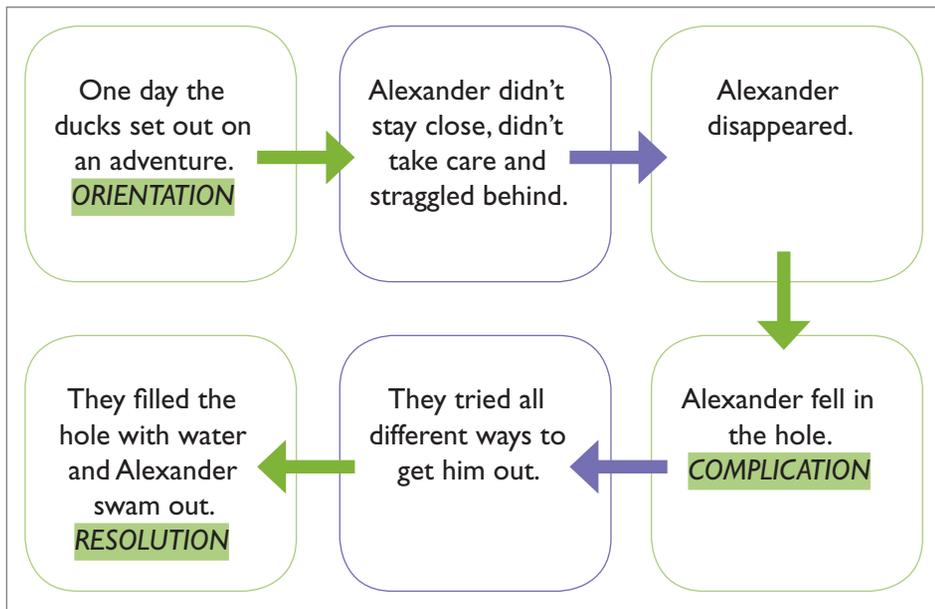
Students can record their story sequence on art paper with or after the guided activity. This can be illustrated. It is important that students identify and label the 'boxes' with the junctions of orientation, complications/problems, resolution.

Independent

Exploring student understanding (QTF)

Students choose a text at independent reading level (greater than 90% accuracy rate) and deconstruct the storyline using the mapping strategy to identify and record the storyline of a narrative text. Students on similar levels can work in pairs.

The provision of a scaffold and guidance through the recording of ideas such as the one shown below will assist students with additional educational needs.



Skill Focus: Identifying text structure – complications

STAGE 2

Strategy

Joint text construction – develop a text as a whole class or in a small intensive group.

Activities to support the strategy

Guided

As a whole class, construct an orientation for a story. Provide a framework for the elements that need to be included in a simple orientation and together students create the orientation. They will need to decide:

- who will be involved and name them (which characters)
- what they will look like and what sort of personalities they might have
- where they live and what sort of activity they may take part in.

The class decides on the theme and topic for the narrative and this should involve a discussion where students explain why they have chosen the theme and ideas.

Independent

Exploring higher-order thinking (QTF)

Creating a ‘never ending story’

Using the A3 proforma provided, pairs of students write a problem or complication for the main character/s to deal with. The proforma is then passed to the next pair of students, who read the problem, discuss and then record ways to resolve the problem. They then pose a new problem and the proforma is passed on to the next pair of students.

After the students have jointly constructed the first draft of the ‘never ending story’, the problems are discussed. Students discuss what values, assumptions and personal feelings are a part of the choice of problems. This may involve reviewing both the school and social contexts that have influenced their choices.

The text edit will involve further higher-order thinking as the students jointly reconstruct the narrative.

Providing and referring students to word banks for literary devices and connectives will assist with tightening the text during the editing process.

K–6 Outcomes

WS2.9: Writes a range of literary texts

WS2.14: Recognises and discusses the organisational structure of a range of literary texts

Item & Stimulus

Writing task criterion 2
Text Structure



Item Descriptor

Organising of narrative features including orientation, complication and resolution into an appropriate and effective text structure

Statements of Learning for English (p. 17)

Students have the opportunity to draw on their knowledge of texts and language to clarify meaning. They know the typical generic structure of imaginative texts (orientation, complication and resolution).

Problems	Possible actions taken to resolve problem
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Share the final text with the class. Students discuss the effectiveness of each text.

Skill Focus: Identifying text structure – narrative structure

STAGES 2–3: Supporting ESL Students

Strategy

Text deconstruction – students analyse published texts to identify structure in narratives

Controlled (modelled)

Exploring metalanguage (QTF)

Students are given copy of a short narrative.

The short narrative is provided on OHT or as an enlarged copy. The teacher models how to identify and highlight the orientation, complication and resolution sections on the text.

Students are given this proforma:

NAME: _____
NARRATIVE PLAN
Title: _____
When? The time
Where? The place – setting of the story
Who? The people and or animals – main characters
Problems/Complications? What caused the problems? How did it create the problems?
Solution/Resolution

ESL Scales

- 4:1:13: Incorporates a number of identifiable stages in common texts
- 4:9:7: Maintains a storyline and some characterisation of events
- 6:9:1: Writes a variety of fictional and non fictional narratives using orientation, complication and resolution

Item & Stimulus

Writing task criterion 2
Text Structure



Item Descriptor

The organisation of narrative features including orientation, complication and resolution into an appropriate and effective text structure

Statements of Learning for English (p. 21)

Students have the opportunity to draw on their knowledge of texts and language to clarify meaning.

They know:

- the function of the different stages of imaginative texts (eg. an orientation sets the scene and introduces and describes characters
- that a sequence of events can build up complications and resolutions to create tension and surprise.

Teacher models how to deconstruct the text by recording details of the components of the text on the proforma.

Exploring deep knowledge (QTF)

The teacher provides several orientations from a variety of narratives on A3 paper. Students analyse the text orientations to identify common and differing elements.

Guided

Brainstorm and record a number of titles for a story.

For example: *The Haunted House, Lost at Sea, Space Adventure, Found*

Organise students in pairs or small groups. Using the scaffolding proforma provided, students choose a title and write an orientation that matches the scenario. Students share their orientation scenarios in a writers' circle. The teacher can create OHTs of students' texts and the class identifies the WHEN, WHERE, WHO using different colour OHT pens.

Independent

Exploring deep understanding and problematic knowledge (QTF)

Students are grouped into pairs. They work together to sequence narratives that have been cut out and segmented. Then they categorise the text into the headings of *Orientation, Complication* and *Resolution*

Students reorganise a jumbled up narrative from their guided reading text. They need to:

- order the events
- match the text to three structure sub-headings of *Orientation, Complication* and *Resolution*.

Guided

Students in pairs or groups compare two texts (one effective narrative and the other poorly constructed).

Using the scaffold provided, students analyse the components of each section of two narrative examples. An example is given below:

NAME: _____
NARRATIVE PLAN
Title: <i>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets</i>
When? The time <i>One dark night</i>
Where? The place – setting of the story <i>In the sky over Hogwarts</i>
Who? The people and or animals – main characters <i>Harry and Ron</i> <i>Hedwig</i> <i>Scabbers</i>
Problems/Complications? What caused the problems? How did it create the problems? <i>The car engine stopped.</i> <i>They crashed into a tree.</i> <i>The tree started attacking them.</i>
Solution/Resolution <i>The car engine restarts.</i> <i>They escape from the attacking tree</i>

Exploring deep understanding (QTF)

In pairs, students compare the two scaffolds and score the effectiveness of each component – 1 being ineffective and 5 being highly effective.

Skill Focus: Exploring narrative text structure

STAGE 4

Strategy

Identifying and analysing conflicts in narrative plots

Activities to support the strategy

Guided

Read the passage with the class and identify as a group:

- where the event should be placed in a narrative (orientation, the beginning or continuation of a conflict, a resolution)
- the conflicts or problems in each scenario
- the characters and their relationship.

Underline key words that helped you to make your decision.

The following day during year nine History, Bobby finds himself sitting near Attikus again. To avoid his gaze, Bobby looks down to the floor and sees a red pen on the floor near him. As he reaches for it, Attikus grabs for it but Bobby gets it first. He snatches it and Attikus loses his grip, sending the pen rocketing into Bobby's hand. Attikus stands, scraping his chair along the wooden floor. They begin to disagree over who owns the pen. They begin to talk faster, and then louder until they are both grabbing for the pen again. Now they feel like they can't back down – their classmates are watching. The teacher stops the lesson and glares like the sun at both of them.

KLA Outcomes

English 4.6.10: Students learn about the structures and features of imaginative texts including characterisation, setting, tension and climax, chronology and time, narrative voice, effective beginnings and endings

English 4.6.4: Students learn to use the features and structures of imaginative texts to compose their own texts and engage their audience

Item & Stimulus

Writing task criterion 2
Text Structure



Item Descriptor

The organisation of narrative features including orientation, complication and resolution into an appropriate and effective text structure

Statements of Learning for English

(pp. 25-26)

When students interpret imaginative texts, they:

- infer meanings and messages developed through the storyline

When students write imaginative texts, they:

- use ideas, details and events that are relevant to the storyline.

Ask students to repeat the process for the following passage.

James is skateboarding out the front of his house. Soon all the other guys in the street join him and bring their boards too. The fun explodes on the front lawn. They begin building ramps from old pieces of timber and bricks. Hours race by and night begins to creep up on them. Distant calls from mums are telling them to head home before the dark sets in.

The next day, as James is walking inside after school, he sees a flickering red in the grass. As he moves closer, he realises it is a twenty dollar note and picks it up. He's really excited but he knows the money isn't his. He wants to keep it really badly, after all, he isn't sure who it belongs to. This money could go towards new wheels for his skateboard – this could surely save his mum some money. He thinks that because he found it in his yard it could now belong to him. Before he knows it the note is folded and pushed deep into his pocket.

Ask students to plot the event, and identify and record the struggle for survival in the following passage.

As I stare out the window of my farmhouse the winds lash leaves against the glass. The stomping rain on my tin roof makes it difficult to hear the evacuation procedures on the radio. As the fierce lightning strikes it wakes the darkness and I can see the floodwaters rising. I am alone and with every flash I see the waters nearly blanket the chook pen. The cattle huddle on the last of the high ground. I can hear their fear but not over my heart beating in my chest and belting in my ears.

Discuss the results as a class.

Independent

Students complete a proforma which requires them to deconstruct texts using particular elements as they read a chapter of a chosen narrative. An example of a proforma is provided.

Ask students to read a chosen text and record the conflicts and struggles that they identify.

Plotting the structure of the narrative Problem or conflict	Linking in the characters Characters involved (relationships developed with other characters)	Identifying ideas Characters' reactions to the event (words, actions, thoughts)	Theme or underlying messages from the conflict

Exploring deep understanding (QTF)

Students convert the information from their summaries of the narrative to:

- a concept map to show relationship connections and complications
- a written analysis as a review.

Skill focus: Writing effective resolutions

STAGES 4–5

Strategy

Analysing resolutions in texts

Deconstructing endings from a variety of novels and picture books

Guided

Exploring higher-order thinking using Bloom’s taxonomy (QTF)

http://www.learnerslink.com/journal_article.htm

Discuss with students narrative resolutions (endings) that they have read before and identify common elements.

The focus can include: themes and messages, language used, character development or journey, changes in the setting.

How the resolutions are the same?	How the resolutions are different?

Exploring higher-order thinking (QTF)

Guide students to look for elements in the resolution including:

- situations that lead characters to a new understanding, place and or action in their life
- themes that are revealed in the ending
- the effectiveness of the last paragraph or last sentence
- how you could relate to the story and why.

Discuss the effect of the last sentence (language choice) in completing the underlying themes or asking a new question.

For example: *The Crime of the Agent Mariner* by Pia Santaklaus asks the reader a question:

Who could profit from these words? Why anybody can.

Give examples of endings that aren’t effective. Students may also be able to add to this list.

For example:

*They woke up and it was a dream.
They lived happily ever after.
Then they went to bed.
They never went there again.*

KLA Outcomes

English 4.6.4: Students learn to use the features and structures of imaginative texts to compose their own texts and engage their audience

English 5.6.3: Students learn to compose texts that demonstrate originality, imagination and ingenuity in content and language

Item & Stimulus

Writing task criterion 2
Text Structure



Item Descriptor

The creation, selection and crafting of ideas for a narrative

Statements of Learning for English (p. 30)

Students develop sustained imaginative texts with attention to time order, characterisation, consistent narrative point of view and development of a resolution.

Links

www.elit.edu.au

http://www.learnerslink.com/journal_article.htm

They all died.
After the accident there was nobody left.
The planet was destroyed.
That was the end of the story.
The end.

Exploring deep understanding (QTF)

Use a series of prompt questions to assist students to score or rate endings:

- Was the finish slow or fast?
- Did the ending surprise you or did you predict the ending?
- Was the ending descriptive? If so, did it describe the characters/the setting/feelings?
- Did the ending leave some things unresolved?
- Did it leave the story open for a continued series?
- Is there a coda, lesson or message for the readers?
- Could you identify the theme in the narrative, and was it made clear in the resolution?

Independent

Exploring deep understanding (QTF)

Ask students to gather examples of effective endings that they have found in books they have read, their own writing or the writing of others.

A good source of short stories written by primary children is *Brainstorms! Superior stories for superior kids*.

The students justify their choices, explaining why the endings are effective and what they contribute to the overall narrative in terms of:

- theme, ideas, messages and questions
- engaging the audience
- conveying the intended meaning of the author.