**Narrative forms – Purpose, Structure and Features**

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| **Type** | **Purpose** | **Structure** | **Features/ Knowledge for the writer** |
| **Fantasy** | To entertain and fuel the imagination | * May be simple chronological, linear story-telling however, the fantasy element can stretch to the structure e.g. playing with the concept of time. | * Description is very important because fantasy uses settings or characters that must be imagined by the reader. * Imagery plays an important role in helping to describe places and things the reader has never seen. |
| **Science Fiction** | To entertain and, sometimes, speculate about the future | * Setting is often a time in the future so structures may involve playing with time sequence e.g. use of flashbacks and time travel. * 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. | * The plot usually includes adventure so action is fast-moving. * Dialogue may be used in unusual forms and may include unusual vocabulary or even alternative languages. * Description is important to convey imagined settings, technology, processes and characters. |
| **Mystery** | To intrigue and entertain | * Often chronological in structure but different structural techniques can be used. * Layering of information or drip-feeding of facts to build up a full picture for the reader e.g. using flashbacks to fill in information that wasn’t provided earlier. * Settings are often places the main character is unfamiliar with e.g. mysterious locations like deep, dark forests, old inhabited places, lonely rural locations. * Settings can also be familiar locations but with an added aspect that triggers the mystery e.g. a stranger arrives in town, a parcel arrives, people start acting strangely. | * Use of questions by the narrative to exaggerate the mystery e.g. Who could it be? Why had the car suddenly stopped? * Language is used to intensify the mystery particularly using adjectives and adverbs. * Use of vocabulary that is associated with the narrative type e.g. puzzling, strange, peculiar. * Use of pronouns to create mystery by avoiding naming or defining characters. * Use of the pronoun ‘it’ to suggest a non-human or mysterious character. |
| **Adventure** | To entertain. | * Typically a recount or retelling of a series of exciting events leading to a high impact resolution. * Common structure is chronological. Building excitement as the hero faces and overcomes adversity is important so flashbacks are less common. * Archetypical characters are the norm and a lot of tension building comes from the reader predicting who or what represents the villain and what is likely to go wrong for the hero. * Longer narratives build tension in waves, with one problem after another accelerating the adventure with the high point of tension near the end. * The story can take place in any setting where there is potential for adventure through danger or threat. | * A blend of action, dialogue and description develops archetypical characters who the reader will care about and moves the plot along at pace. * Description adds to the sense of adventure by heightening the reader’s awareness. * Dialogue is an element of characterisation but is used more to advance the action rather than to explore the character’s feelings or motivation. * Language usually has a cinematic quality with powerful vocabulary and strong, varied verbs for action scenes. |
| **Historical Fiction** | To entertain and, sometimes, inform. | * The narrative is about something that has happened in the past so a series of events is usually the underlying structure. * 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. * Sometimes, a historical narrative begins with the final event and then goes onto explain what led up to that by moving back in time to tell the whole story. * Historical fiction requires a historical setting but can also be an adventure or mystery. * It can also give a fictionalised account of real events or additional, fictional detail to things that really happened. | * Historical settings need detail to make them authentic and to give important ‘mapping’ clues to the reader. When was this happening? Whereabouts is the story taking place? * Appropriate archaic language is used including old-fashioned words that have fallen out of use. * 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. * Description can be used to propel action and dialogue. |
| **Fairy Tales** | To convey cultural information that influences behaviour. These are some of the oldest stories told and are found in a range of cultures. | * Setting is nearly always vague e.g. once upon a time. * Structure is most typically a recount in chronological order, where events retell what happened to a main character. * Often the hero or heroine is searching for something and in many tales dreams are fulfilled with a little help from magic. * ‘Fairytale endings’ are common but many fairy tales are darker and have a sad ending. | * Language often reflects the settings, in the past, using archaic or regional vocabulary and grammar. |
| **Fables** | To teach the reader a lesson they should learn about life. The narrative drives towards the closing moral statement. | * Shared understanding between the storyteller and audience that the events told did not actually happen so fables do not need to convince. * The structure is usually simple and they are often very short with few characters – often only two. * Structure is typically the simplest kind of narrative with a beginning, complication and a resolution. * Two (or more) characters (often animals) meet, an event occurs and they go on their way with one of them having learned an important lesson about life. | * The short, simple structure leaves little room for additional details of description or character development. * Dialogue is used to advance the plot or to state the moral, rather than to engage a reader with the characters. * Characterisation is limited by specific e.g. a lazy duck was making its way to the river. * Limited description because the settings are less important that the events. * Action and dialogue are used to move the story on because the all-important moral is most clear in what the characters do and say. * Conjunctions are an important language feature to show cause and effect and to give coherence to a short narrative. |
| **Dialogue, play scripts and film narratives** | To tell a story and have a deliberate effect on the viewer/listener/reader. | * Structural conventions for scripting vary, particularly in their layout on the page or screen but they usually include:   + Name of character and the words they speak   + Organisational information   + Stage directions * Comic strip and some digital animations include speech bubbles within the images. | * Use only direct speecj * Apply the presentational conventions of a script consistently. * For comic strips with speech bubbles keep the text fairly short and only include dialogue that move the story on or provides important information. |
| **Myths** | To provide a fictional explanation for a natural phenomena. To pass on cultural, religious or spiritual beliefs and traditions | * The plot is often based on a long and dangerous journey, a quest or a series of trials for the hero. * The plot 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 especially in their original form. They provide a very useful contrast with shorter forms of traditional narrative such as fables. | * Rich vocabulary evoking the power of characters and settings. * Use of imagery to help the reader imagine. Similes are used widely. * Vivid descriptions 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 that some other types of traditional story. * Myths provide good examples of the use of symbols. |
| **Legends** | To provide information about the way particular people lived and what they believed. | * Structure is usually chronological, with one episode told after another. * Some legends tell the whole life story of the hero as a series of linked episodes; each one a story in its own right. * Common structures include:   + Chronological episodes   + Journey stories   + Sequential stories   + Life stories and community histories | * Language features are very similar to those of myths:   + Rich, evocative vocabulary   + Memorable language use   + Use of rhythm and repetition techniques   + Imagery – similes, metaphors and symbolism. * Legends written in a traditional style often use more literary language than fairy tales or fables. * Modern versions such as 21st century retellings or new legends may use more contemporary, informal language. |