Year 6 Narrative Unit 1 – Fiction genres

Fiction genres (4–5 weeks)

This is a relatively free-standing narrative unit, and could be taught at any stage of the autumn or spring terms in Year 6. Whenever this unit is taught though, the level of reading and writing expected and the word, sentence and presentation skills integrated within it must clearly build on previous learning and towards end-of-year expectations.

Phase 1

Children are introduced to and explore the wide range of genres covered by children's fiction. They explore their own and others' reading preferences within this range and extend their own reading repertoire as they work towards identification and appreciation of the distinguishing features of each genre.

Phase 2

Children explore further the features of two or more contrasting genres, through engagement with and analysis of short story examples. These stories provide models for subsequent writing and their structure and language are analysed to help in this.

Phase 3

Children choose a particular genre, and plan, draft, write and improve a full short story in that genre. Teacher demonstration and peer collaboration support this, together with continued reference back to the features identified in phase 1 and the models explored in phase 2. Consideration of paragraph and sentence structure also feeds into the process. Outcomes are shared and evaluated as examples of the genre, against pre-agreed criteria.

Overview

- Read a short story that exemplifies a particular genre. Identify features typical of the genre and note the narrative structure. Select a paragraph to analyse in more depth. Look at the structure and note, for example the way that comments are sequenced to follow a character's thoughts.
- Read an example of a story from another genre. Make comparisons and identify typical features. Analyse the structure of the story noting the way that the passing of time is represented.
- Plan and write a short story that conveys the passing of time in a non-linear way, for example using flashbacks.
- Make a collection and display of different fiction genres. Ask children to add to it based on their own wider reading experience. Children write comments or summaries to label books on display and pass on information and recommendations to others in the class.
- Select a genre and use drama activities to explore typical characters, setting, events. Children plan and write their own extended story to presentation standard. Demonstrate and support children in using different narrative techniques to engage the reader and to use paragraphs to add pace or emphasis.
- Read an example of a parody and discuss features. Have further examples available for independent reading. Work collaboratively in a small group to write own parody, for example of a fairy tale.
1998 Framework objectives covered:

Year 6, Term 2: T1 narrative structure; T2 analyse paragraphs; T7 key features of literary text; T8 reader's response; T9 writers from the past; T10 genre as model for writing; T11 story with flashbacks; T13 parody; T14 commentaries on texts.

Objectives

To ensure effective planning of literacy teachers need to ensure they plan for all elements of literacy effectively across the year ensuring that assessment for learning is used to plan and amend teaching. It is essential that core skills such as phonic strategies, spelling, and handwriting are incorporated into these exemplar units to ensure effective learning.

Most children learn to:

(The following list comprises only the strands, numbered 1 through 12, that are relevant to this particular unit. Where there are relevant Steps in Learning for an objective, a link has been included.)

1. Speaking
   • Use the techniques of dialogic talk to explore ideas, topics or issues

3. Group discussion and interaction
   • Understand and use a variety of ways to criticise constructively and respond to criticism

6. Word structure and spelling
   • Use a range of appropriate strategies to edit, proofread and correct spelling in their own work, on paper and on screen

7. Understanding and interpreting texts
   • Understand underlying themes, causes and points of view
   • Understand how writers use different structures to create coherence and impact

8. Engaging with and responding to texts
   • Compare how writers from different times and places present experiences and use language

9. Creating and shaping texts
   • Use different narrative techniques to engage and entertain the reader
   • Select words and language drawing on their knowledge of literacy features and formal and informal writing

10. Text structure and organisation
    • Use varied structures to shape and organise texts coherently
    • Use paragraphs to achieve pace and emphasis
11. Sentence structure and punctuation

- Express subtle distinctions of meaning, including hypothesis, speculation and supposition, by constructing sentences in varied ways
- Use punctuation to clarify meaning in complex sentences

12. Presentation

- Use different styles of handwriting for different purposes with a range of media, developing a consistent and personal legible style

Prior learning

Check that children can already:

- Identify and discuss the various features of a fiction text; including characters, settings, themes and dilemmas, the author's intentions, the structure and organisation of the text and the way language is used to create effects for the reader.
- Discuss their responses to a range of fiction they have read.
- Use a range of approaches and learning strategies; for example role-play, dialogue and experimental writing, to extend and explore their understanding of and response to works of fiction.

Teaching sequence phase 1

Exploring different genres of children's fiction through reading, discussion and oral presentation (5 to 6 days)

Note: Children working significantly above or below age-related expectations will need differentiated support, which may include tracking forward or back in terms of learning objectives. EAL learners should be expected to work within the overall expectations for their year group. For further advice see the progression strands and hyperlinks to useful sources of practical support.

Teaching content:

- Drawing on children's experiences, discuss the way fiction books might be sorted and classified in a library or bookshop, for example crime, romance, historical.
- Arrange a 'Book Sort Day': in groups, children are given physical access to a wide range of children's fiction books, for example from the school or class library. Encourage them to scan each book quickly and make an assessment as to what sort of book it is, then begin to devise categories (genres) into which the books can be sorted and classified. Categories might well include: adventure stories, animal stories, fantasy, historical, stories from other cultures, school stories, but initially allow children to devise and decide on their own categories. Add titles to each category from children's own reading experience. Take feedback from groups with children explaining and justifying their categories. Then work towards an agreement and listing of the main genres and their characteristics, while remembering that some titles will not fit neatly, or may cross genres. Make displays of the outcomes for reference during the remainder of the unit.
- Communicate and discuss children's preferences and identify reasons for choices. Present and share to other children in the school (or beyond the school via email, the Internet, etc.). Compile lists such as ‘Our Top Ten Adventures’, ‘Top Ten Sad Books’. Use genre collections and children's own experience to write (and possibly publish) book recommendations of the type: 'If you liked…then you might enjoy…'.
- Allow children, in groups, to select a genre and then put together a presentation of read-aloud extracts, etc. to show 'What makes a good [genre] story'. Groups rehearse, make their presentations and share ideas. Use this discussion to further identify key features of each genre and add to the class lists or display.
• After teacher modelling, provide examples of 'mystery' text: pages, paragraphs or chapters from a range of genres (including perhaps some very clear examples of particular genres mixed with more difficult cross-genre extracts). Identify the genre, annotating the text for key features that provide clues or evidence for the decision. Explain choices and justify it to others. (This could also be done, for example, with cover only, illustrations only, book blurb only.)
• As a game, different children or groups tell or write an account of the same (given) incident but in a different allocated genre. They have to provide clues to the genre without stating it. Others identify which genre it is, and advise on how to make the account a better or clearer example of that genre.

Learning outcomes:

• Children can identify and discuss the principal features of different genres of children's fiction.
• Children can explain reading preferences in terms of the different genres.

Teaching sequence phase 2

Reading and analysing, in the form of short stories, examples representing different children's fiction genres (4 to 5 days)

Teaching content:

• Identify and read a quality children's short story that epitomises one of the key genres explored in phase 1. (It needs to be a story rather than a novel at this stage because it will provide a model for children's writing in phase 3.) This could be of children's choice, or relate to another curriculum area. Use discussion, role-play and text-based activities to explore children's response to the text.
• Through teacher modelling, then with children in groups, analyse and annotate the text to identify the key features of the genre.
• Do the same with a particular paragraph or paragraphs to analyse, for example, language use in more detail.
• Consider the structure of the story and make story maps, tension graphs, etc. to interpret the structure in ways that will provide models for subsequent writing (Aspects of narrative: Story structure).
• Repeat this whole process with another short story representing a different genre.

Learning outcome:

• Children can analyse the language and organisational features of fiction genres.

Teaching sequence phase 3

Writing a fully developed short story in a particular genre of the writer's own choosing (6 to 9 days)

Teaching content:

• Allocate, or allow children to select, the genre in which they wish to write a short story. Provide, or allow them to collect, stimulus material and ensure that they have the opportunity to explore the potential story content. (Children will probably need to write individually, but could be grouped with others working on the same genre for collaboration and mutual support, improvising to explore possible characters and themes, acting as response partners, etc.).
• Drawing from class display, support children in identifying the key elements of their genre before beginning, and use these as a checklist when writing.
• Following teacher modelling, plan the structure of a short story in the particular genre, drawing on the models or frames from phase 2, or on alternative stories children have read and analysed (preferably building it up in about three or four manageable sections, chunks or stages).
• Allow drafting, writing and improvement (with a response partner or group, or following plenary feedback) of each of the sections of the story, focusing on engaging language appropriate to the genre.
• As a whole class, revisit one or both of the stories from phase 2, particularly focusing on the paragraph structure, and how it is used to enhance or drive the telling of the story. Model, then children practise as appropriate.
• Children revisit their own writing to focus on improving paragraphs.
• As a whole class, revisit one or both of the stories from phase 2, particularly focusing on variety and appropriateness of sentence structure (including compound sentences and their punctuation). Model, then children practise as appropriate. Use Grammar for Writing (Key Stage 2) (Ref: 0107-2000).
• Children revisit their own writing to focus on improving sentence use.
• Polish and 'publish' the story outcomes (remembering electronic possibilities such as Internet posting, podcasting, alongside paper publication and wall displays). Evaluate and self-evaluate the stories against agreed criteria and with reference to the features of the chosen genre as identified earlier in the unit.

**Learning outcome:**

• Children can plan, draft, write and improve an engaging short story in a particular genre using appropriate language and organisational features.

**Objectives for strands 6, 11 and 12**

Throughout the unit, children should focus, as and when appropriate, on the word structure, sentence structure, spelling and presentation objectives identified in the first section above. As well as being integrated into ongoing activity, this will probably also involve some regular short sessions that have a specific spelling, grammar or presentation focus.

**Complete teaching sequence**

**Phase 1: Exploring different genres of children's fiction through reading, discussion and oral presentation (5 to 6 days)**

Note: Children working significantly above or below age-related expectations will need differentiated support, which may include tracking forward or back in terms of learning objectives. EAL learners should be expected to work within the overall expectations for their year group. For further advice see the progression strands and hyperlinks to useful sources of practical support.

**Teaching content:**

• Drawing on children's experiences, discuss the way fiction books might be sorted and classified in a library or bookshop, for example crime, romance, historical.
• Arrange a 'Book Sort Day': in groups, children are given physical access to a wide range of children's fiction books, for example from the school or class library. Encourage them to scan each book quickly and make an assessment as to what sort of book it is, then begin to devise categories (genres) into which the books can be sorted and classified. Categories might well include: adventure stories, animal stories, fantasy, historical, stories from other cultures, school stories, but initially allow children to devise and decide on their own categories. Add titles to each category from children's own reading experience. Take feedback from groups with children explaining and justifying their categories. Then work towards an agreement and listing of the
main genres and their characteristics, while remembering that some titles will not fit neatly, or may cross genres. Make displays of the outcomes for reference during the remainder of the unit.

• Communicate and discuss children's preferences and identify reasons for choices. Present and share to other children in the school (or beyond the school via email, the Internet, etc.). Compile lists such as 'Our Top Ten Adventures', 'Top Ten Sad Books'. Use genre collections and children's own experience to write (and possibly publish) book recommendations of the type: 'If you liked…then you might enjoy…'.
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Learning outcomes:

• Children can identify and discuss the principal features of different genres of children's fiction.
• Children can explain reading preferences in terms of the different genres.

Phase 2: Reading and analysing, in the form of short stories, examples representing different children's fiction genres (4 to 5 days)

Teaching content:

• Identify and read a quality children's short story that epitomises one of the key genres explored in phase 1. (It needs to be a story rather than a novel at this stage because it will provide a model for children's writing in phase 3.) This could be of children's choice, or relate to another curriculum area. Use discussion, role-play and text-based activities to explore children's response to the text.
• Through teacher modelling, then with children in groups, analyse and annotate the text to identify the key features of the genre.
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• Repeat this whole process with another short story representing a different genre.

Learning outcome:

• Children can analyse the language and organisational features of fiction genres.

Phase 3: Writing a fully developed short story in a particular genre of the writer’s own choosing (6 to 9 days)

Teaching content:

• Allocate, or allow children to select, the genre in which they wish to write a short story. Provide, or allow them to collect, stimulus material and ensure that they have the opportunity to explore the potential story content. (Children will probably need to write individually, but could be grouped with others working on the same genre for collaboration and mutual support, improvising to explore possible characters and themes, acting as response partners, etc.).
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• Children revisit their own writing to focus on improving sentence use.
• Polish and 'publish' the story outcomes (remembering electronic possibilities such as Internet posting, podcasting, alongside paper publication and wall displays). Evaluate and self-evaluate the stories against agreed criteria and with reference to the features of the chosen genre as identified earlier in the unit.

Learning outcome:

• Children can plan, draft, write and improve an engaging short story in a particular genre using appropriate language and organisational features.

Objectives for strands 6, 11 and 12

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Assessment

Assessing pupils' progress

In this exemplified unit we have identified the 'main' assessment focuses for reading and writing. However, it is important to remember that teachers should interpret and adapt the teaching sequence to meet the needs of particular classes and this may affect the types of evidence which it is desirable and possible to gather.

In order for a judgement to be made against writing assessment focuses 1 and 2 it is important that children are given space and time to develop their own ideas and define their own purposes for writing. Opportunities to plan for this will arise throughout the literacy curriculum as well as through the application of skills across the curriculum.

The suggested outcome for this unit is a short story in a particular genre. The teaching of this unit should support the collection of evidence against Reading assessment focus 7 (relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts and literary traditions) and Writing assessment focus 3 (organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events).

Evidence against a variety of assessment focuses will be collected at many points during the teaching sequence. Independence and opportunities to make decisions are integral to children's development in reading and writing, and it will be important to collect evidence of achievement against the assessment focuses from occasions where children can demonstrate some independence and choice away from direct teaching.

Suggestions for the collection of assessment information against a range of assessment focuses are found below.
Opportunities for assessment

The following are examples selected from the teaching content for this unit of work that will support planning for effective assessment as an integrated part of the teaching and learning process. Evidence gathered during this ongoing work will contribute to the periodic assessment of pupils' progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcomes</th>
<th>Example of teaching content and assessment opportunities</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Approach to assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children can identify and discuss the principal features of different genres of children's fiction.</td>
<td>The class begin to explore different story types. Sentences from a variety of stories are displayed on the IWB and the children are asked: What type of story is this extract taken from? How do you know? In groups the children begin to investigate a wide selection of books, teasing out the typical features of story genres explicitly - identifying common settings, dilemmas, characters, plots, typical vocabulary and style. They are encouraged to jot down and justify their reasons for classification and these are shared during the plenary.</td>
<td>Written notes. Children's discussions, oral responses and justifications.</td>
<td>Teacher observation. Teacher discussion. Oral feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children can analyse the language and organisational features of fiction genres.</td>
<td>Working in pairs, children are given a story in a chosen genre. They decide what genre they believe the narrative to be and work to test this hypothesis through an investigation of the text. They explore the characters, setting, style of language and language use noting interesting features and annotating and marking the text as appropriate. They work to deconstruct the plot and structure of the text using story modeller, extracting the plot and considering how the narrative has been structured for coherence and impact on the reader. Through use of snowballing technique each pair of children join with another pair who have investigated the same story. They compare their findings and analysis of the text. Groups of four then join another group who have explored a different narrative within the same genre. They compare the similarities and differences between the narratives. During a plenary the findings are shared and discussed. Notes made will become part of the working wall for use later in the teaching sequence.</td>
<td>Children's discussions and oral responses. Written notes.</td>
<td>Teacher observation. Teacher questioning. Oral feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children can plan, draft, write and improve an engaging short story in a particular genre using appropriate language and organisational features.</td>
<td>The children are in the process of writing their short story in a chosen genre. During a guided writing session the children are guided by the teacher to explore and improve use of language linked to the chosen genre. Before the session the teacher has selected an extract of one child's work and this is projected for the children to see. The group discuss how the language could be adapted and changed to have the desired effect on the reader in order to better fit with the genre. How does the writer want the reader to feel at this point in the story? How can this be achieved? In pairs the children are given one small part to redraft. These improvements are shared and discussed. Following the shared examples the children work on their own writing. The teacher has highlighted sentences for each child to redraft. At the end of the session the teacher summarises the work and examples are shared. Clear links are made to the success criteria for the narrative.</td>
<td>Drafted sentences (from guided group work). Final written narratives.</td>
<td>Marking and feedback (oral and written). Writing conferences to analyse - marking and feedback alongside children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key aspects of learning

For further information, see the booklet Progression in key aspects of learning (Ref: 0524-2000) from Learning and teaching in the primary years: Professional development resources (Ref: 0518-2004G).

Information processing

Children will identify and refine classification criteria and sort fiction examples accordingly. They will quickly appraise particular texts and look for a range of information clues to support classification of texts into different genres.

Evaluation

Children will share responses and outcomes orally and in writing. They will apply the criteria they have identified in order to make decisions and judgements. They will give feedback to others and judge the effectiveness of their own work.

Reasoning

Children will construct reasoned arguments based on their views and responses to the books or stories read.

Empathy

In discussing and writing about the books or stories, children will need to imagine themselves in another person’s position. They will explore techniques that facilitate this process.

Communication

Children will develop their ability to discuss and debate issues and personal responses in respect of both the form and the content of the stories they are reading and writing. They will often work collaboratively in pairs and groups. They will communicate outcomes orally and in writing.