



Resource title

[KS3 > Skills > Creative writing 2 \(KS3/4\) > Preparing for narrative writing](#)

How it works The resource gives advice and activities to support students in developing story structures and characters, and in ensuring that – like all good writers – they ‘show’ rather than ‘tell’ their readers.

The resource goes to the heart of the problems that beset students’ narrative writing and give rise to stories that lack structure and credible characters and situations. Many would disagree with the actual version of story structure the resource offers, but the point is that it is better for students to have a structure than not.

Try this! I find it works best if students work in groups on developing a common story idea against a given structure. This is particularly helpful to logical but less imaginative students – and vice versa. They can then all write their own stories against their shared structure and story-line. They are delighted by the differences in stories with the same framework.

Or these! Structure is the key to all good story-writing. Here are some other ideas that build on this resources’ approach:

- Get students to read a story and then agree on the key transitions in the story and its underlying structure. This means ‘back-mapping’ from the finished article to the framework on which it was built.
- Take a story and choose – say – five key sections of around 8 lines each. Include the opening and the ending. Jumble the sections and ask groups to put them into the order they think they appear in the story. Ask them to write a couple of missing sections.
- Get students to identify the structure of a film
- Get students to identify the structuring of a single scene of a film and then to ‘novelise’ it. (Original screenplays often turn up as novelisations to tie-in with a film’s release.)
- Get students to develop a graph that shows the ‘ups and downs’ in a story – for example in tension or reader sympathy. For an example of this, see pp.10 and 11 of the Stone Cold Teachit resource that you can find at: Stone Cold by Robert Swindells, Year 8 NLS Study Pack.
- Ask students to paste the opening paragraph of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* into Teachit’s Cruncher (Whizzy things), leaving the punctuation in (just uncheck the box). The result is fascinating and reveals how very simple language can be structured into something with real impact. Now they can put the words back into the right order.

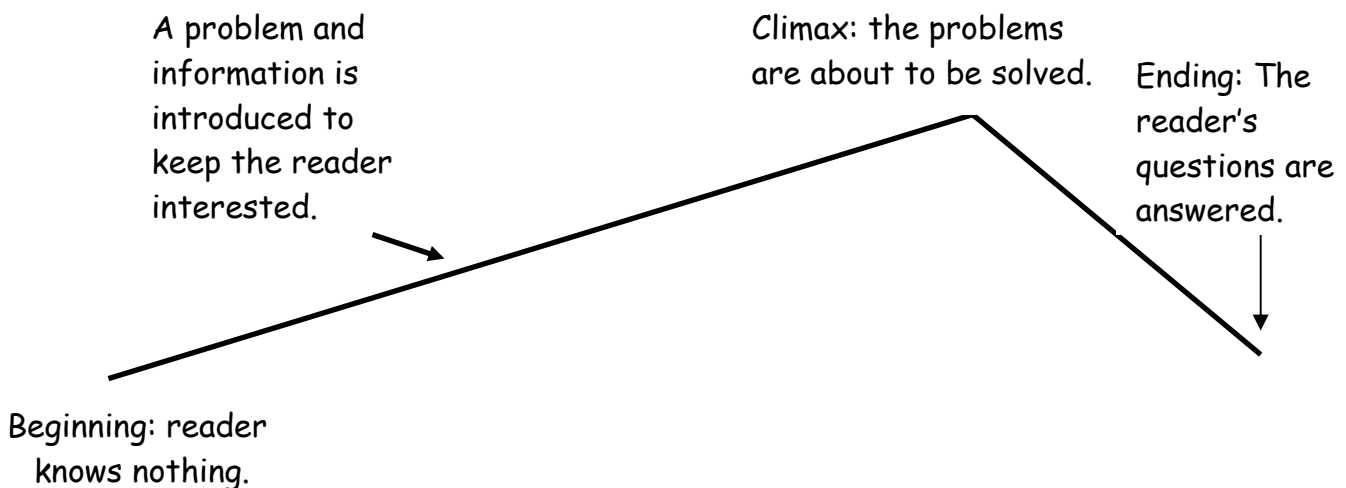
Richard Durant

Structure: Plan

Use the table below to plan your story

<u>First sentence</u> Direct speech, question, exclamation...	
<u>Beginning/Introduction/Exposition</u> What do you need to tell your reader about the place, characters and plot, while still keeping them interested?	
<u>Middle/Problem</u> What will you add that will keep your reader interested?	
<u>Climax</u> What is the event that is the climax of your story, just before all of the problems get solved and the reader's questions are answered?	
<u>Ending/Resolution</u> How will you end so that the problems are resolved and the reader is satisfied? Will you use an unexpected ending?	

Another way to visualise your story is as a graph like the one below:



Characters

Readers infer or deduce, a bit like a detective, information about a character, sometimes drawing on stereotypes, and sometimes realising the complexities of the character they are reading about.

A reader can infer, or work out, what a character is like from their:

- name

- personality

- appearance (looks)

- preferences: likes and dislikes

- interaction with other characters
 - what they do

 - how they talk

- what other characters say about them

Make notes under the above headings to plan two main characters.

Varied vocabulary and "Show, don't tell!"TASK: MAKE THE SENTENCES BELOW MORE INTERESTING!

A) Begin by changing the vocabulary so that is more unusual and varied.

B) SHOW; DON'T TELL! One way of making your writing more interesting is to SHOW rather than TELL. How could you show what some-one's mood is like or what the weather and atmosphere is like, without just telling the reader?

For example:

He was unhappy

He wiped away a glistening tear as he watched her turn away and move purposefully towards the door.

1. He was nice.
2. She was a kind person.
3. He was happy.
4. The wind blew hard.
5. She sat in the tree waiting for her friend.
6. The weather was good.
7. It was sunny.
8. He was angry.
9. The dog barked at the children.
10. Then he walked to school.