

Supervisión de Idiomas Extranjeros –INGLÉS-

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WRITING

WHAT IS WRITING?

Writing is a productive skill that is often under-exploited. Classroom writing often lacks a real communicative purpose and may seem to students a rather mechanical exercise to be read only by the teacher.

The idea of publishing gives children a reason for writing and doing a good job.

Publishing can be through e-mails, books, posters or cards, which are read by other children in the class, used in other classes, put in a school library, exhibited on a board.

Thus, though the teacher will still read the production; he will no longer be seen as the reason for writing but only as someone who is trying to help them write better.

NARRATIVE WRITING

There are many different types of genre in literature.

Genre means "category" or "kind".

Popular types of fiction genre include mystery, horror, westerns, science-fiction, fantasy and many others. They all have in common that they tell stories.

There are also many vehicles for narrative, such as language (oral or written), pictures (still or moving), gesture, and a mixture of some or all of the above. Narrative is present in myths, legend, fables, tales, short stories, novels, epic history among others. Narrative is present at all time, in all places, in all societies; indeed, narrative starts with the very history of mankind.

We, as teachers of a foreign language, expect our students to produce simple written texts connected to their real or imaginary world.

TEXT

LITERARY

NON-LITERARY

FICTIONAL

NON-FICTIONAL

A fictional narrative presents an imaginary narrator's account of a story that happened in an imaginary world. It is appreciated for its entertainment

value, possibly also for providing a vision of characters who might exist or might have existed, and a vision of things that might happen or could have happened. Although a fictional narrative may freely refer to actual people, places and events, it cannot be used as evidence of what happened in the real world.

· **A non-fictional narrative** (also factual narrative) presents a real-life person's account of a real-life story. Unless there are reasons for questioning an author's credibility, a factual narrative can serve as evidence of what happened in the real world. In principle, the author of a factual narrative is accountable for the truth of its statements and can always be asked How do you know?

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Narrative writings have a beginning, middle and ending.

The main elements in a narrative are:

· **Plot**

According to the dictionary, a plot is the plan of action for a play, novel, poem, short story, etc. When we read a story, we continue reading because we are waiting for the solution to a mystery, a moral to the story, or just a plain "happy ending"!

The plot is the main story of a piece of writing. It has a beginning, a middle and an end:

In the beginning we learn about the characters, the setting, and about a problem or problems that our hero needs to resolve.

In the middle is where most of the action takes place. Here is where our hero discovers that his problem is not so easily solved.

The ending is where our hero finally resolves the problem, or problems, and lives "happily ever after" (well, at least in fairy tales).

· **Setting**

The setting of the story is very important. It tells us where and when the story takes place.

The story's plot may depend heavily on the setting of the story. Scary stories are scarier at night, in haunted houses. Some stories take place in small towns or big cities. Some stories take place in mystical, magical places.

How can we communicate the setting to our readers? We can tell them outright, or even better, we can show them by using descriptive words and phrases. Never underestimate the power of a great setting.

· **Characters**

Stories have characters, and characters have problems.

A good story will have a challenging problem or conflict that the character overcomes or resolves. The things that happen during the process are all part of the plot of the story.

Characters can be portrayed directly through description or indirectly through the setting (the character may fit comfortably into the setting or be "an outsider"), action

(what a person does reveals character and affects the outcome of the plot), dialogue (what a person says reveals much about his character) and thoughts that give the reader a picture of what the character is like.

Problems/conflicts in stories are easily divided into four categories:

- Man vs. Nature
- Man vs. Man
- Man vs. Society
- Man vs. Himself

· **Structure**

The structure of a text refers to the organization of the story.

The following are examples of structures:

- v Chronological: the events of the story are as they happen in time.
- v Rising action: the story is structured around the cause and effect events, with the climax near the end.
- v Flash-back: the writer begins at the climax and then flashes back to the past.

The structure should be determined by the needs of the story.

Structure in story writing is a difficult concept, which should not be confused with plot.

· **Point of view**

It refers to who narrates the story. The following shows the most common points of view:

- v First person point of view, in which the narrator is a character in the story and speaks from a first person perspective.
- v Third person point of view. Using this point of view, the writer tells the story in the third person but from the viewpoint of one of the characters in the story.
- v Objective point of view, in which the narrator tells what can be seen or heard; he cannot enter any character's mind.

Tense is connected to point of view and can be extremely important to the story. When students decide on point of view they will have to decide on tense.

Inconsistency in tense is a common mistake made by beginning writers. Most stories are written in either the past or the present tense.

GETTING DOWN TO IT

The most basic narrative structure could be described as going up and down a hill. The characters start at the base. All is well. They are doing something. Various events happen. At the top of the hill something goes wrong.

There is a problem. This has to be sorted out - leading to the end.

If we think of the different steps in the story, we may sum them up as follows:

Opening - introduces characters in setting;

Build up - they are doing something;

Problem - something goes wrong;

Events - they try to sort it out;

Resolution - they sort it out;

End - they reflect on what has happened.

This simple pattern can be used for many tales - both simple and elaborate. It acts as a basis for all stories, which are primarily about what happens to characters, how they sort it out and how they change as a result.

How do we lead our students to producing a story?

Young writers begin by imitating the stories that they know, often interweaving events from their own life. The more they read and are read to, the more chances they have to be able to imitate - even to the point of knowing whole stories and being able to retell them. As they build up a repertoire of stories, they can innovate, taking the basic structure but making changes - such as, introducing new characters or events. The larger the background of stories the more they become able to invent, drawing on the structures and texts that they know well.

To make a simple start to thinking about structuring stories, take a well-known tale or rhyme, retell or reread it many times, and then illustrate the sequence of events. This approach helps very young children gain a sense of basic plot, and can also be used with older children to lead into writing.

What students need

There are many reasons why students may not be confident or willing writers. In order to counteract these potential problems we have to identify what our students need. We need to spend some time building the writing habits, that is, making the students feel comfortable as writers in English and so winning their willing participation in more creative or extended activities. This will involve choosing the right kind of activities with appropriate levels of challenge and providing them with enough language and information to allow them to complete writing tasks successfully.

Let's analyse some of the students' needs in more detail:

- a) Information and task information : students need to understand what we want them to do and they also need to be absolutely clear about any of the topic details that we give them;
- b) Language: if students need specific language to complete a writing task we need to give it to them, or help them to find it. This may involve offering them phrases, parts of sentences or words.
- c) Ideas: teachers need to be able to help students when they get stuck. For some, this may be just a word or two. For others, we may need to dictate a half sentence or even something more substantial. To do this we have to be aware of which students need more or less help or stimulation. (See handout on CREATIVE WRITING - SIE - 2003)
- d) Patterns and schemes: one way of helping students to write is to give them a pattern or a scheme to follow. In "worked-on" writing, this will frequently happen when students first study a writing genre and then create their examples of the same genre. (See handout on GUIDED WRITING - SIE -

2003)

_ Tell your students to describe what they know and can see, and add in some invention. Most writers describe people and places they know, They do not have to invent everything. This will help you make your story seem real as you can use details.

Some writers plan a basic framework to guide their writing - some like to work from a basic plot idea (e.g. two children get lost on the moors but find their way home in the end), some use flow charts, storyboards, paragraph grids or begin by jotting down a list of scenes.

Make children aware that knowing where they think they are going may mean that they are less likely to ramble or lose their way. Nevertheless, they should not be afraid of moving away from the plan if something better comes along. Allow them to make discoveries, to be surprised and to have fun as they write along.

Some Basic tips to write a good story

- v Care about your characters. No reader will care about your plot unless they care about your characters.
- v Don't have too many characters or the reader will be confused.
- v Keep it simple.
- v Make sure your story makes sense.
- v Don't make the ending too predictable or your readers may be disappointed.

GLOSSARY

Drama Stories composed in verse or prose, usually for theatrical performance, where conflicts and emotion are expressed through dialogue and action.

Fable Narration demonstrating a useful truth, especially in which animals speak as humans; legendary, supernatural tale.

Fairy Tale Story about fairies or other magical creatures, usually for children.

Fantasy Fiction with strange or other worldly settings or characters; fiction which invites suspension of reality.

Fiction Narrative literary works whose content is produced by the imagination and is not necessarily based on fact.

Fiction in Verse Full-length novels with plot, subplot(s), theme(s), major and minor characters, in which the narrative is presented in (usually blank) verse form

Folklore The songs, stories, myths, and proverbs of a people or "folk" as handed down by word of mouth.

Historical Fiction Story with fictional characters and events in a historical setting.

Horror Fiction in which events evoke a feeling of dread in both the characters and the reader.

Humour Fiction full of fun, fancy, and excitement, meant to entertain; but can be

contained in all genres.

Legend Story, sometimes of a national or folk hero, which has a basis in fact but also includes imaginative material.

Mystery Fiction dealing with the solution of a crime or the unravelling of secrets.

Mythology Legend or traditional narrative, often based in part on historical events, that reveals human behaviour and natural phenomena by its symbolism; often pertaining to the actions of the gods.

Poetry Verse and rhythmic writing with imagery that creates emotional responses.

Realistic Fiction Story that can actually happen and is true to life.

Science Fiction Story based on impact of actual, imagined, or potential science, usually set in the future or on other planets.

Short Story Fiction of such brevity that it supports no subplots.

Tall Tale Humorous story with blatant exaggerations, swaggering heroes who do the impossible with nonchalance.

All Nonfiction

Biography/Autobiography Narrative of a person's life, a true story about a real person

Essay A short literary composition that reflects the author's outlook or point.

Narrative Non-fiction Factual information presented in a format which tells a story.

Non-fiction Informational text dealing with an actual, real-life subject.

Speech Public address or discourse.

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