

Audience Overview

A narrative is a time-ordered text that is used to narrate events and to inform, entertain and emotionally move an audience.

To be effective, writers must understand what knowledge they share with the audience and what they do not. Achieving this understanding is made difficult by *the knowledge effect* (a tendency for individuals to assume that their own knowledge is shared by others).

Understanding how writers address and invoke the audience may simultaneously enhance children's growth as readers and writers. Despite arguments that young children don't have the sociocognitive capacity to imagine or anticipate readers' beliefs and expectations, findings show that first graders can demonstrate a sense of audience when writing for familiar readers, to get something they want, when prompted by their teacher to attend to audience needs while writing.

Wollman-Bonilla, J.E. (2001). *Can First-Grade Writers Demonstrate Audience Awareness?* *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(2), 184–201. doi: 10.1598/RRQ.36.2.4

Engaging an audience requires the writer to select and use devices that:

- lead a reader through the story
- engage a reader's interest or emotion
- directly appeal to a reader
- match or subvert the reader's expectations.

Professional Connections

Vygotsky (1978) argues that through interaction, with proficient guidance, children can develop advanced mental processes such as audience awareness and gradually internalise the ability to anticipate audience needs.

- Young children can learn audience awareness when objectives are placed in a genuine, meaningful context. When the purpose is realistic and specifically defines a familiar audience, they can keep that audience in mind while writing.
- The explicit teaching of writing provides teachers an opportunity to model how to think about audience, while at the same time allowing their students to interact or try their hand with the text.

McCarrier, A., Pinnell, G.S., & Fountas, I.C. (2000). *Interactive writing: How language & literacy come together, K-2*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Skill Focus: Orients and engages the reader

STAGES 2–3

Strategies

Setting the context

Understanding the importance of the orientation and the affect it has on the audience

Specific focus: How do narrative opening sentences/paragraphs hook in the reader?

How do narratives begin?

Narrative orientations attempt to engage the reader by making connections, or associations, with the reader's expectations and thoughts. The reader may be familiar with the formulaic opening sentence, *Once upon a time*, and therefore they have expectations about the rest of the story. These expectations may include the presence of fairy tale characters, fairytale setting or good versus evil theme.

Orientations to narratives appeal to audiences on other levels. They create aural pictures of settings or characters; visual pictures of settings or characters; portray the emotions felt by a characters; demonstrate the interrelatedness of characters; or challenge the reader's perceptions of themselves or of their environment.

Some examples of these are:

Aural: *Chug! Chug! Chug!*

Physical-Emotional/Character portrayal: *My knees trembled, my legs couldn't move and my heart wanted to explode ...*

Setting/Visual Image: *Age old trees, their boughs bent to the ground, wrestled to stay in the sun-baked, water-deprived earth.*

Character/Visual Image: *It was her wearied face, her dreadfully drawn face, her narrow lips, her vacant eyes, her scrawny body and such badly-coloured hair that ...*

Character interrelationships: *Matthew was my worst nightmare. The worry he had about his nose being too big (mine was bigger) made me want to ...*

Rhetoric/Challenging the reader's thinking:

So you think that is you in the mirror?

The black sky, the broken houses, the upturned roads: why was this happening now? They said we had at least three days.

Orientations can also combine any of the above to engage the reader. The following is a simple example of Setting/Visual Image combined with Rhetoric which has been made effective through the deliberate repetition of *and*.

Over the sea there is an island.

And on that island there is a jungle.

And in that jungle there is a hut.

K-6 Outcome

WS2.9: Drafts, revises, proofreads and publishes well-structured texts that are more demanding in in terms of topic, audience and written language features

Item & Stimulus

Writing task criterion 1
Audience



Item Descriptor

Identifies the audience of a text and adjusts writing accordingly

Statements of Learning for English (p. 17)

Students have the opportunity to understand that stories:

- can entertain, move and teach important things
- are produced for particular audiences.

And in that hut there is a rickety rickety floor.

And under that rickety rickety floor there is a dark hole.

And in that dark hole there is ...

From *The Thingummy* by Danny Danziger.

Activities to support the strategies

Modelled

Learning focus: How do stories/narratives start?

One of the most difficult aspects of writing is keeping audience in mind. Developing lessons that support learning about audience is essential.

Collect a number of examples of books using these categories as a guide:

- Fairy tales, narrative picture books and chapter books
- Children's novels
- Teenage novels

Intellectual quality, significance and metacognitive experiences (QTF)

Use questioning to guide students to make generalisations about how front covers of books might give hints about the story inside, teasing out ideas relating to:

- possible characters and their attributes
- what the story/narrative might be about.

Highlight similarities and differences in the opening sentences/paragraphs of authentic texts (teacher selected or student nominated). Depending on the learning stage of students, the use of student nominated texts might need to be controlled. Reinforce the learning focus by frequently referring to examples of opening sentences, frequently questioning students, frequently clarifying student responses and supporting processes for recording student responses and examples.

What is an opening sentence?

What is the opening sentence/s?

How does the beginning (the first sentence/first few sentences or first paragraph) hook the audience into reading the story?

Do you want to read on to find out more about what is written? If yes, why? If not, why?

Are there similar/different ways that stories/narratives start?

Guided

Grab a book student research.

This activity can work as a small group or whole class activity.

The activity can be modified to support different learning stages. The model can be used in Reciprocal Reading arrangements as well.

An assortment of books can be 'grabbed' by one student or a number of books

by a group of students. These are given to the teacher who puts them in the 'grabbed pile' to be read to students but at the same time are available for the teacher's use as possible controlled examples at a later date.

Students answer the question: *What is the opening sentence or paragraph of the book?*

Record the answers in the following template.

Name of book	Author	Illustrator	Opening sentence

Data collection may continue over time.

Intellectual quality, significance and metacognitive experiences (QTF)

Use controlled teacher examples, student recorded examples (the result of research and data gathering) to investigate examples of opening sentences and paragraphs.

Hoop Activity

Equipment:

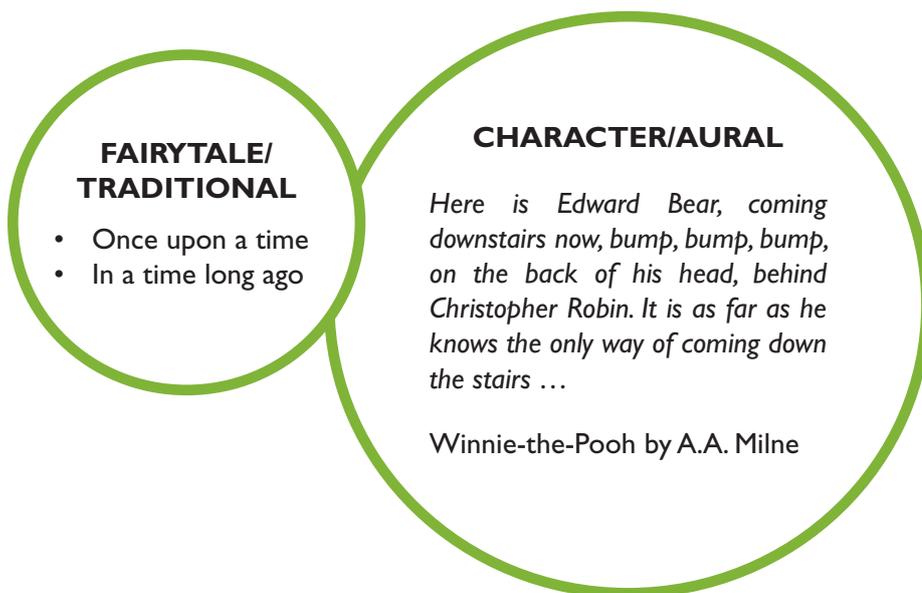
- recorded information
- hula hoops for floor work
- representation on paper for individual or pair work (depending on student developmental levels)

Cut up the examples from the table and sort them into hoops.

The number of hoops and example types should be controlled particularly for Stage 1 and beginning Stage 2 learners.



As the examples of similar story beginnings become classifiable they can begin to attract labels. Some examples may contain a mix of categories.



Independent

Differentiation Activity

In pairs, have students use this matrix to sort the different first sentences. Any other categories can be added in the blank sections at the bottom. Have students identify who the audience for the opening sentence might be.

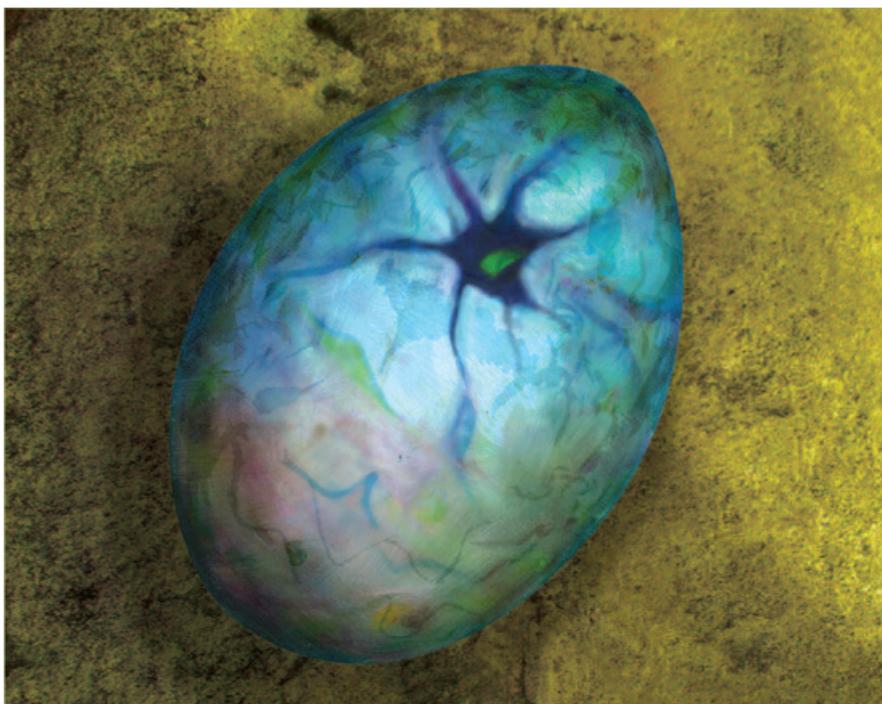
TYPE	SENTENCE	PREDICTED Audience	WERE WE RIGHT?
Traditional: ‘Once upon a time ...’			
Aural: ‘Chug! Chug! Chug!’			
Physical-Emotional/ Character portrayal: ‘My knees trembled, my legs couldn’t move and my heart wanted to explode ...’	<i>What a day, Dicey thought. What a summer, for that matter, but especially What a day.</i> <i>Dicey’s Song by Cynthia Voight.</i>		
Setting/Description: ‘Age old trees, their boughs bent to the ground, wrestled to stay in the sun-baked, water-deprived earth.’			
Character/ Description: ‘It was her wearied face -her drawn face: her narrow lips, her vacant eyes, her scrawny body, her badly-coloured hair that ...’			
Character interrelationships: ‘Matthew was my worst nightmare. The worry he had about his nose being too big (mine was bigger) made me want to ...’	<i>“Go on Andrew, have a go!” Ben was tired of playing by himself. ...</i> <i>“Can’t be bothered,” Andrew Hayford said.</i> <i>Space Demons by Gillian Rubenstein</i>		
Rhetoric/Challenging the reader’s thinking: “So you think that is you in the mirror ...”			

Have a class discussion, after the text has been read as a class or by individuals, about whether the prediction of the audience based on the first sentence and cover was correct.

Guided

Jointly construct and record examples of opening sentences for these stimulus prompts.

The original openings are provided as examples and could be discussed with students first if needed.



When I found the egg it was rocking and making strange noises.

As I squatted down for a closer look a little dark hole appeared, with cracks running in all directions.

The egg was hatching!

Whatever was coming out of it was finding it hard. It wriggled and pushed and suddenly the egg split in half and out came the oddest little creature I had ever seen.



Walking into Grandfather's shed was like stepping back in time.

It contained old furniture and books that were yellow with age.

*I loved exploring in the shed, as every time I did I found something different.
Last Sunday I discovered an ancient box.*

It was carved on the front and sides with unusual markings.

Slowly I undid the clasp and opened it.

My grandmother often used to tell me about a mysterious pair of boots that would one day be mine. She said unexpected things happened whenever anyone wore them.

So now I could hardly believe that they were finally mine. Slowly I pulled the boots on ...



These examples may be presented in a variety of ways to support the purpose of the activities and depending on the cognitive appropriate level of students. For example:

- a class book of opening sentences
- a slide show of opening sentences
- a matrix of opening sentences
- a performance of orientations (digitally recorded on video).

Independent

Provide students with stimulus prompts (for example book covers or other images) for independent work.

Ask students to write an engaging opening sentence or orientation to a narrative, based on the prompt.

Discuss the results as a class.