

Teacher Directions and Notes

Lesson Objective

Students will read and/or listen to several narrative stories and be able to distinguish elements that often make up narrative writing including structure, topic, and form.

Purpose

- By hearing a wide variety of narratives, students will see how many topics are available for which they might write about when they write their own narratives.
- Students will start to see what keeps a narrative interesting and engaging.
- Essentially, for students to eventually write strong narratives they have to be exposed so several examples of strong narratives.
- Many of these are **short** narratives, which is intentional. By using short narratives, students won't get bogged down with a lot of details; ideally they will enjoy that an engaging story can be told even in a relatively short piece.

Materials Needed

- Written narratives for students to read (see my suggestions and links on the next page)
- A way for students to listen to narratives if you are having them do podcast narratives (this would include ipads, computers, or smart phones and headphones)
- Listening guide (included in this resource)

Prep

- Decide if students will work in small groups, as a large class, or individually to listen to or read the podcasts. If they'll be listening in small groups, then prepare their desks/groups in advance
- Each student should have one listening guide **per narrative**. So, if you are having them read or listen to 3 narratives during the class period, they will need three listening guides (stapled as a packet). Alternatively, they could listen to many narratives, and only fill out a listening guide for the 2-3 that they enjoyed the most.

Step-By-Step Directions

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- You can do this lesson as a full class, or you can have students work individually or in small groups.
- You should choose at least 3-5 narratives for students to either read or listen to. You may also choose to read one of the narratives aloud to your students.
 - See the next page for a list of narratives I recommend you use.
 - Students will use these narratives as mentor texts, and they may come back to them in future lessons.
- For each narrative that the student read or hear, they should fill out the listening guide--taking notes and making observations.
- For the most part, students should be self-directed during this lesson as long as they have access to the narratives that you'd like them to interact with.
 - The more self-directed the better, as students will choose to take notes on the elements of the narratives that stand out to them personally.
 - You can give students a copy of the next page with all the narratives listed and allow them to listen to or read the ones they choose.
- At the end of the class period, you can reconvene as a class and talk through the observations they've made about the narratives. You may also choose to create a class "working definition" of what a narrative is or must include.
 - Note: Personal narratives are stories that are told in first person. They typically have a beginning, middle, and end, and they include a conflict.

Ways To Differentiate This Lesson

If you have emergent learners or ESOL students, try this:

- Choose short, high-interest narratives. I recommend Gary Soto's pieces from the book *A Summer Life*. I've put a few of these on the link sheet ("[The Pie](#)" and "[The Jacket](#)"). I also recommend students listen to at least 2 narratives from StoryCorp or The Moth ([links on this page](#)).
- Read at least one narrative aloud to the full class before breaking them into small groups. Together, as a class, discuss that narrative and go through the handout together.
 - Ask students what elements that narrative included (told in first person, had a conflict, etc).
 - Do this for the entire handout for the first narrative.
- Then, break students into partners or groups of 3.
- Be sure you are circulating to make sure that students are identifying characteristics of each narrative.
- Be sure to leave time at the end of class to reconvene and discuss what they noticed about each narrative.

If you have pre-AP or AP students, do this to challenge them:

- Choose narratives that are more advanced like narratives from the NY Times (I've included one on the clickable sheet), but there are many more on their website (email me for additional suggestions). You can also use narratives from previous AP exams that you find at collegeboard.com.
- Have students work independently to identify characteristics of narratives.
- Then partner students up to create a working definition of what narrative writing is. If they disagree with their partner, they should use evidence from one or more of the narratives to make their case.
- Then, reconvene as a class to make a class working definition of what narrative writing is.
- Spend some time discussing how each narrative made you feel as a reader as well, and how the author achieved that.

Narratives I recommend for this lesson (choose several):

From the internet:

- ◆ [“The Pie” by Gary Soto](#)
- ◆ [“Fish Cheeks” by Amy Tan](#)
- ◆ [“Learning to Love a Stepmother Through the Language of Flowers” by Gabrielle Selz](#)
- ◆ [“The Year I Grew Wildly While Men Looked On” by Ashley Ford](#)
*You may want to copy and paste this article into a word document so students don't have to deal with ads and other distracting links. Copyright law prohibits me from doing this; I can only provide the link.
- ◆ Narratives students can listen to (these are super short):
 - From “StoryCorps”
 - [Thomas Weller – StoryCorps](#)
 - [“A Mother On the Challenges of Becoming a Teenage Parent”](#)
 - [From Fuks to Finn: Reflections on Some Hard Teenage Years – StoryCorps](#) (has 1 curse word)
 - From “The Moth”
 - [“Spotted Denzel” you can reach on this list.](#)
 - [“Outdoor Camp” you can reach on this list.](#)
- ◆ From books you'd have to obtain:
 - **Any** chapter from Gary Soto's *A Summer Life* works great for this lesson.
 - From John Green's *The Anthropocene Reviewed*:
 - “Googling Strangers”