Narrative Writing and the CCSS

Narrative Writing Defined
Narrative writing aims to convey real or imaginary experiences structured through the medium of time versus the logical rigor of argument or the explanatory techniques used in informative writing. As such, writers who employ narrative are explicitly aware of narrative techniques to control pace and intentionally manipulate them to highlight particular events or individuals and create a sense of anticipation. Narrative writing is also characterized by a strong sense of detail, depicting scenes, objects, or people, and including sensory clues and/or vivid character development to convey experience and meaning. Techniques range from depicting the thoughts, motives, and personalities of narrators and characters through their gestures, expressions, and movements as well as through dialogue and interior monologue. Anchor Writing Standard 3 captures these expectations by explicitly calling for “effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences” when crafting narratives.

Writing Narratives and the CCSS
The techniques used to develop, organize, and convey narrative writing are not only used in many different writing contexts (including explanation and argumentation) based on the “task, purpose, and audience” (Anchor Writing Standard 4), but also are found in a wide range of disciplinary settings. In history/social studies, students can be called upon to craft narrative accounts of events and individuals, while students in science classes could be asked to write narrative descriptions of step-by-step procedures or processes so others can grasp how they went about investigating a particular issue and even attempt to replicate their results. And of course in English language arts (ELA) settings, narrative writing can be found in texts ranging from anecdotes and memoirs to fictional stories, plays, and film scripts. (It is important to note that the narrative standard does not—and was not intended—to address all types of creative writing. The standards encourage teachers to augment the kinds writing found in the standards—for example by having students compose poetry).

The CCSS follows the lead of the 2011 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) Writing Framework with respect to the volume of the types of writing it recommends students generate during their K-12 years in school. The CCSS explicitly define the amount of each kind of writing a student should produce across the curriculum at each grade level—with the percentage of narrative writing shrinking from 35% in the elementary grades to 20% by high school to meet the increased demand for informative and argumentative writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Informative</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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Key Elements of Narratives
- a narrative or plotline that shares real or imagined experiences or events
- an organization that sequences events or processes in a coherent fashion
- a sense of closure that points to a resolution or conclusion
- a progression of experiences or events that develops the opening problem, situation, or observation
- narrative techniques that deepen the reader’s appreciation of experiences, events, and/or characters