

Learning Progression for Narrative Writing, Grades 3–9

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
STRUCTURE				
Overall	The writer told the story bit by bit.	The writer wrote the important part of an event bit by bit and took out unimportant parts.	The writer wrote a story of an important moment. It reads like a story, even though it might be a true account.	The writer wrote a story that has tension, resolution, and realistic characters, and also conveys an idea, lesson, or theme.
Lead	The writer wrote a beginning in which he helped readers know who the characters were and what the setting was in his story.	The writer wrote a beginning in which she showed what was happening and where, getting readers into the world of the story.	The writer wrote a beginning in which she not only showed what was happening and where, but also gave some clues to what would later become a problem for the main character.	The writer wrote a beginning that not only set the plot/story in motion, but also hinted at the larger meaning the story would convey. It introduced the problem, set the stage for the lesson that would be learned, or showed how the character relates to the setting in a way that matters in the story.
Transitions	The writer told her story in order by using phrases such as <i>a little later</i> and <i>after that</i> .	The writer showed how much time went by with words and phrases that mark time such as <i>just then</i> and <i>suddenly</i> (to show when things happened quickly) or <i>after a while</i> and <i>a little later</i> (to show when a little time passed).	The writer used transitional phrases to show the passage of time in complicated ways, perhaps by showing things happening at the same time (<i>meanwhile, at the same time</i>) or flashback and flash-forward (<i>early that morning, three hours later</i>).	The writer not only used transitional phrases and clauses to signal complicated changes in time, she also used them to alert her readers to changes in the setting, tone, mood, point of view, or time in the story (such as <i>suddenly, unlike before, if only she had known</i>).
Ending	The writer chose the action, talk, or feeling that would make a good ending and worked to write it well.	The writer wrote an ending that connected to the beginning or the middle of the story. The writer used action, dialogue, or feeling to bring her story to a close.	The writer wrote an ending that connected to the main part of the story. The character said, did, or realized something at the end that came from what happened previously in the story. The writer gave readers a sense of closure.	The writer wrote an ending that connected to what the story is really about. She gave the reader a sense of closure by showing a new realization or insight or a change in the character/narrator. The writer showed this through dialogue, action, inner thinking, or small actions the character takes.
Organization	The writer used paragraphs and skipped lines to separate what happened first from what happened later (and finally) in her story.	The writer used paragraphs to separate the different parts or times of the story or to show when a new character was speaking.	The writer used paragraphs to separate different parts or times in the story and to show when a new character was speaking. Some parts of the story are longer and more developed than others.	The writer used paragraphs purposefully, perhaps to show time and setting changes, new parts of the story, or to create suspense for readers. She created a logical, clear sequence of events.

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Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
STRUCTURE		
The writer created a narrative that has realistic characters, tension, and change, and that not only conveys, but also develops an idea, lesson, or theme.	The writer not only created a narrative with well-developed characters who change, he used the story to comment on a social issue, teach a lesson, and/or develop a point of view.	The writer created a narrative with well-developed characters whose interactions build tension and change over time. The writer used that story to comment on a social issue, teach a lesson, and/or develop a particular point of view.
The writer wrote a beginning that not only sets the story in motion, it also grounds it in a place or situation. It includes details that will later be important to the story. These details might point to the central issue or conflict, show how story elements connect, or hint at key character traits.	The writer wrote a beginning that establishes the situation and place, hinting at a bigger context for the story (revealing issues that have been brewing, showing how the setting affects the character, contextualizing a time in history, developing one out of many points of view).	The writer wrote a beginning establishing a situation, place, and/or atmosphere; foreshadowing the problem(s); and hinting at questions, issues, ideas, or themes. The writer introduced a particular narrative voice and point of view.
The writer used transitional phrases and clauses to connect what happened to why it happened (<i>if he hadn't . . . he might not have, because of, although, little did she know that</i>).	The writer used transitional phrases and clauses, grammatical structures (paragraphing, descriptive phrases, and clauses), and text structures (chapter divisions, extended italics) to alert his reader to changes in the setting, the mood, the point of view, or the time in the story.	The writer used transitional phrases and clauses, grammatical structures to demonstrate the passage of time, to connect parts of the story, to imply cause and effect, to raise questions, and/or to make allusions (<i>long before, as when, just as, without realizing, ever afterward</i>).
The writer gave the reader a sense of closure by showing clearly how the character or place changed or the problem was resolved. If there was no resolution, he gave details to leave the reader thinking about a central idea or theme.	The writer gave the reader a sense of closure by revealing character change(s) that followed from events in the story, or a resolution. If there was no resolution, she wrote to convey how the events of the story affected the characters, and to circle back to a central idea, issue, or theme.	The writer gave the reader a sense of closure by returning to a theme, and/or revealing how characters changes or make a change. If there wasn't resolution, the writer made a connection to a larger issue or mood that added to the meaning of the whole story or suggested social commentary.
The writer used a traditional—or slightly modified—story structure (rising action, conflict, falling action) to best bring out the meaning of his story and reach his audience.	The writer modified a traditional story structure, dealing with time in purposeful ways, to best suit her genre, bring out the meaning of her story, and reach her audience.	The writer used or adapted story structures and literary traditions (quest structure, coming of age story, cautionary tale, and so on) to fit the story, meaning, genre, and audience. The writer dealt with time purposefully (such as introducing multiple plot lines, flash-forwards, or flashbacks).

Learning Progression for Narrative Writing, Grades 3–9 (cont.)

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
DEVELOPMENT				
Elaboration	The writer worked to show what was happening to (and in) his characters.	The writer added more to the heart of her story, including not only actions and dialogue but also thoughts and feelings.	The writer developed characters, setting, and plot throughout this story, especially the heart of the story. To do this, she used a blend of description, action, dialogue, and thinking.	The writer developed realistic characters, and developed the details, action, dialogue, and internal thinking that contribute to the deeper meaning of the story.
Craft	The writer not only told her story, but also wrote it in ways that got readers to picture what was happening and that brought her story to life.	<p>The writer showed <i>why</i> characters did what they did by including their thinking.</p> <p>The writer made some parts of the story go quickly, some slowly.</p> <p>The writer included precise and sometimes sensory details and used figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification) to bring his story to life.</p> <p>The writer used a storytelling voice and conveyed the emotion or tone of his story through description, phrases, dialogue, and thoughts.</p>	<p>The writer showed why characters act and speak as they do by including their thinking and their responses to what happened.</p> <p>The writer slowed down the heart of the story. She made less important parts shorter and less detailed and blended storytelling and summary as needed.</p> <p>The writer included precise details and used figurative language so that readers could picture the setting, characters, and events. She used some objects or actions as symbols to bring forth her meaning.</p> <p>The writer varied her sentences to create the pace and tone of her narrative.</p>	<p>The writer developed some relationship between characters to show <i>why</i> they act and speak as they do. He told the internal, as well as the external story.</p> <p>The writer wove together precise descriptions, figurative language, and some symbolism to help readers picture the setting, actions, and events and to bring forth meaning.</p> <p>The writer used language that fit his story's meaning and context (e.g., different characters use different kinds of language).</p>
LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS				
Spelling	<p>The writer used what he knew about spelling patterns to help him spell and edit before he wrote his final draft.</p> <p>The writer got help from others to check his spelling and punctuation before he wrote his final draft.</p>	The writer used what she knew about word families and spelling rules to help her spell and edit. She used the word wall and dictionaries when needed.	The writer used what he knows about word families and spelling rules to help him spell and edit. He used the word wall and dictionaries when needed.	The writer used resources to be sure the words in her writing are spelled correctly.
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	<p>The writer punctuated dialogue correctly with commas and quotation marks.</p> <p>While writing, the writer put punctuation at the end of every sentence.</p> <p>The writer wrote in ways that helped readers read with expression, reading some parts quickly, some slowly, some parts in one sort of voice and others in another.</p>	When writing long, complex sentences, the writer used commas to make them clear and correct.	The writer used commas to set off introductory parts of a sentence (<i>one day at the park</i>). She also used commas to show when a character is talking directly to someone, such as "Are you mad, Mom?"	<p>The writer used punctuation such as dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons to help him include extra detail and explanation in some of his sentences.</p> <p>The writer used commas and quotation marks or italics or some other way to make clear when characters are speaking.</p>

Learning Progression for Narrative Writing, Grades 3–9 (cont.)

Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
DEVELOPMENT		
<p>The writer developed the action, dialogue, details, and inner thinking to convey an issue, idea, or lesson. He showed what is specific about the central character. The writer developed the setting and the characters' relationship to the setting.</p>	<p>The writer developed complicated story elements: she may have contrasted the character's thinking with his or her actions or dialogue.</p> <p>The writer developed the central character's relationship to other characters. She showed character flaws as well as strengths to add complexity.</p> <p>The writer used details that related to and conveyed meaning or developed a lesson or theme.</p>	<p>The writer developed complicated story elements through key details—using them to add to tension or meaning.</p> <p>The writer showed character flaws, strengths, and aspects that make them unique or worthy of being written about.</p> <p>The writer used details to convey meaning or develop a lesson or theme.</p>
<p>The writer developed contradictions and change in characters and situations.</p> <p>The writer used specific details and figurative language to help the reader understand the place and the mood (making an object or place symbolic, using the weather, using repetition).</p> <p>The writer varied her tone to match the variety of emotions experienced by the characters across the story.</p>	<p>The writer conveyed the pressures characters feel and the dreams they hold. He related those to their actions. The writer developed complicated characters who change and/or who change others.</p> <p>The writer created a mood as well as a physical setting, and showed how the place changed, or its relationships to the characters changed. The writer used symbolism to connect with a theme.</p> <p>The writer varied his tone to bring out different perspectives within the story, or to show a gap between the narrator's point of view and that of other characters.</p>	<p>The writer developed characters across scenes, offering insight into their troubles, hopes, relationships, and giving clues about how they change.</p> <p>The writer used setting to create mood and add to meaning.</p> <p>The writer used symbolism or metaphor for subtle as well as obvious connections to a theme.</p> <p>The writer varied the pace and tone to develop tension and/or develop different perspectives across the text.</p>
LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS		
<p>The writer used the Internet and other sources at hand to check spelling of literary and high-frequency words.</p>	<p>The writer used the Internet and other sources to check the spelling of literary, historical, and geographical words.</p>	<p>The writer checked spelling for accuracy, double-checking for misused homonyms or technologically created misspellings.</p>
<p>The writer varied her sentence structure, sometimes using simple and sometimes using complex sentence structure.</p> <p>The writer punctuated dialogue sections accurately.</p>	<p>The writer used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout his piece.</p> <p>The writer used verb tenses that shift when needed (as in when moving from a flashback back into the present tense of the story), deciding between active and passive voice where appropriate.</p>	<p>The writer was accurate and purposeful with conventions, using them to enhance the pace and tone of the text. If the writer broke conventions, it was purposefully (for example, using fragments or dialect) when appropriate to the genre and purpose.</p>

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