

Assignment guide

Give yourself a head start

When you are required to write a creative narrative piece, you will be expected to demonstrate mastery of the skills you've observed in the work of other composers. Many students can write imaginatively for take-home assessment tasks, but not for time-limited exams. Students can struggle when the question, topic or prompt is unknown to them beforehand. But with a little preparation, it is possible to prepare for a writing task on an unknown topic. You can do some thinking before you even know the topic or see the test paper. Follow these simple steps to ensure that you will be able to approach an unfamiliar creative writing task with confidence.

Nominate a narrator

If you're given the freedom to choose, you will need to decide which type of narrator you'll use and whether they will use *past*, *present* or *future* tense. The most common forms of narrative are *first-person narrative* and *third-person narrative*. A narrator may be obvious in the story or unobtrusive. They may be omniscient (all-knowing) and outside the world of the text, or within the text as an unseen observer. They may also be one of the characters.

Look at these definitions:

First-person narrative the main character is the storyteller,
use the pronouns *I, we, me, us, my, mine, our* and *ours*.

Second-person narrative the storyteller addresses the reader directly,
use the pronouns *you, your*, and *yours*.

Third-person narrative an observing storyteller who is not involved in the action,
use the pronouns *he, she, him, her, his, hers, it, its, they, them, their* and *theirs*.

Circle the mode you've chosen:

first-person second-person third-person

Circle the tense you've decided to use:

past present future

Plan the plot

When devising the plot of your narrative, have a clear point in mind as you write. What outcome are you aiming to achieve in your storytelling? In which direction are you trying to point the reader? Make sure there's a reason behind everything you include. To powerfully convey this particular theme, you might want to consider giving up that happy ending you had in mind for the main character.

If the whole point of your piece is about sensory perception, then the setting should really come to the fore in your writing. Perhaps your point is to criticise some aspect of society. If so, you'll need to have some conflict or other negative plot incidents that lead to suffering and sad consequences. Your plot may become more complicated before the conflict is resolved. This enables your reader to agree with you as you drive home the message that this is not the way things ought to be.

Decide quickly whether your creative piece will have a chronological sequence, or whether you'll include fancy devices like flashbacks or foreshadowing. Generally speaking, stories that unfold in natural order are easier to write. However, it's not too difficult to use other models provided you keep the endpoint in view throughout the process.

Choose your preferred elements of plot by circling one from each pair of options:

- ★ one main conflict / many conflicts
- ★ suspense / predictability
- ★ flashbacks / foreshadowing
- ★ no complications / complications
- ★ action-packed / slow paced
- ★ happy ending / sad ending

Create a character

If you go into a timed creative writing task without a well-formed character in mind you'll stall before you begin writing. Think about the voice of the character you'll create. To develop characters, we draw from real life experience, then we mix qualities of different people together and amplify certain nuances about them to create life-like or larger-than-life figures.

Select the gender and age of your main character by circling your choices.

Male / Female

Child / Young Adult / Adult / Senior

Write three dot points to describe the 'voice' of the main character.

- ★ _____ (think about their attitude)
- ★ _____ (think about their moods)
- ★ _____ (think about their habits)

Target the theme

In an exam situation it's not always possible to plan a theme for your writing before you see the demands of the task. Exactly when you should decide upon a theme for your creative writing depends on how limited you are by time. Unless the assessment task specifies a theme — which is often the case — you will need to judge whether to begin writing immediately and see where it takes you, or make a plan in advance. In our case, you will be assigned a theme (see the box below). You'll find that the theme will become clearer as you go through the early stages of the writing process. Try thinking about a point of view or idea that you strongly believe in, and how you could illustrate it in the storytelling process.

Your assigned theme in the writing task to come is:

- ★ The dynamic relationship between language, personal identity and belonging.

Manage mood

We can use the plot, characters and setting to develop the mood of a narrative. The mood is the emotional atmosphere of the story. Be sure to include details that appeal to the emotions of the reader. The physical and the emotional are often inextricably linked in storytelling, a feature of narrative writing that provides good fodder for developing strong themes. You can use sensory imagery to build mood — descriptions that involve the five physical senses as well as the thoughts and emotions of the reader. Symbols are another important tool in creating a particular mood.

Circle two or more of these mood effects to create in your narrative.

uplifting	depressing	light-hearted	mundane	suspenseful	monotonous
intriguing	boring	surprising	predictable	humorous	bitter
tense	anti-climactic	magical	dull	empathetic	detached

Strive for some style

In order to develop a particular style, you must learn how to employ language techniques to create certain features and effects. In narrative fiction, common features are plot, characters, setting and theme. Features are created through the use of techniques. Imagery is a feature that results from using techniques such as similes, metaphors, personification and diction. So to summarise, techniques are used to create features. Some of the most common language techniques and their effects are shown here.

Circle five of these commonly used techniques to work into your narrative.

★ TO DESCRIBE:	Simile	Metaphor	Adjectival phrases
★ TO SHOW CONTRAST:	Oxymoron	Juxtaposition	Irony
★ TO CHARACTERISE:	Slang	Colloquialism	Symbolism
★ TO CREATE SOUNDS:	Assonance	Alliteration	Onomatopoeia
★ TO BUILD MOOD:	Puns	Personification	Emotive language
★ TO SPECIFY:	Diction	Jargon	Euphemism
★ TO INTENSIFY:	Modality	Repetition	Hyperbole
★ TO INFLUENCE:	Humour	Allusion	Persuasive language