

Module 1: Why Is Writing Important?

Topic 3 Content: Characteristics of Effective Narrative Writing


Introduction

Characteristics of Effective Narrative Writing

- An Engaging Introduction
- A Developed Plot
- Descriptive Language
- A Palpable Writer's Voice

Introduction

Whether long or brief, casual or serious, true or invented, most successful narrative writing shares the following characteristics: an engaging introduction, a developed plot, descriptive language, and a palpable writer's voice. In this interactivity, click the tabs to examine each of these characteristics in greater detail.



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An Engaging Introduction

The graphic is titled "Characteristics of Effective Narrative Writing" and is enclosed in a grey border. On the left side, there is a vertical list of four characteristics, each in a brown rounded rectangle: "An Engaging Introduction", "A Developed Plot", "Descriptive Language", and "A Palpable Writer's Voice". On the right side, there is a larger white rounded rectangle with a grey border, titled "An Engaging Introduction". This section contains a paragraph of text explaining the importance of a hook and the need to move forward with the narrative.

Good storytelling captures and sustains the audience's attention. Make sure that your narrative writing has a brief introduction that hooks the reader's interest. However, avoid introducing your narrative with lengthy descriptions or explanations. You want to move forward with the events of your narrative as soon as possible to maintain your reader's interest. The hook of your narrative may very well be the first event of your story if it is interesting and offers action that moves the story forward.

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A Developed Plot

Characteristics of Effective Narrative Writing

- An Engaging Introduction
- A Developed Plot**

Even in nonfiction pieces, narrative writing inherently includes a developed plot, or sequence of events, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Similar to the plot points of literary fiction, your narrative should revolve around a conflict, or problem, and offer a resolution that is related to the purpose of your writing. For example, if writing a college application essay, you might want to describe how you learned a life lesson that helped shape the kind of person you are today. The pacing of events—whether fast or slow—will also depend on the context of the narrative within your composition.
- Descriptive Language
- A Palpable Writer's Voice

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Descriptive Language

Characteristics of Effective Narrative Writing

Descriptive Language

In narrative writing, your goal is to allow the reader to experience the events from a first-hand point of view. A skillful way to accomplish this effect is to incorporate descriptive language. For example, rather than telling the reader where someone was, describe the setting using sensory adjectives that convey sight, smell, sound, touch, or taste. Likewise, instead of explaining what someone did or said, you can opt for strong action verbs or vivid dialogue. Incorporating people's behavior, appearance, and dialogue is an engaging method for portraying characters in your narrative writing.

An Engaging Introduction

A Developed Plot

Descriptive Language

A Palpable Writer's Voice

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A Palpable Writer's Voice

The infographic is titled "Characteristics of Effective Narrative Writing" and is set within a grey border. It features a dark grey header with the title in white. Below the header, there are four brown rectangular boxes stacked vertically on the left side, each containing a characteristic. To the right of these boxes is a larger white box with a grey border containing a detailed explanation of "A Palpable Writer's Voice".

Characteristics of Effective Narrative Writing

- An Engaging Introduction
- A Developed Plot
- Descriptive Language
- A Palpable Writer's Voice

A Palpable Writer's Voice

The most effective narrative writing has an easily discernible writer's voice, one that the reader can readily identify and feel. Compare this to reading an instructions manual for a new electronic device or appliance. Did you ever feel a connection with the author of an instructions manual or have a sense of who the author was? It probably seemed as if the instructions could have been written from some anonymous robot. On the other hand, when reading an anecdote about someone's life, did you feel a concrete sense of who the speaker was, and could you distinguish that person from any other given writer? A writer's voice encompasses the diction, sentence structures, and tone that leave an impression on the reader as to who the writer is as a person. The stronger your writer's voice is, the easier it will be for your reader to connect with your narrative.

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