

SECTION

# 4

## WRITING NARRATIVES

# PROSE

## Knowing Your Narrative Elements

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this new section. From your reading of the *Cockcrow* at the Junior High School, you came across several amazing writers. I hope you have started mentioning Ama Ata Aidoo, Lawrence Darmani, Kaakyire Akosomo Nyantakyi, Charles Dickens, Theresah Ennin, A. A. Amoako and many more. Have you been wondering how they wrote those amazing stories and poems?

The good news is that they were once young people like you, and you can be writers like them. How will you feel if some years, your story or poem is studied at the JHS or SHS level? In this section, you are going to be equipped with the creative writing (a form of writing that involves a writer's imagination and invention of real life) skills to help you produce summaries of longer texts and developed critical essays. You will have the chance to produce your own narrative piece.

#### By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- produce brief summaries of longer texts exhibiting different parts and types of plots structure.
- produce a narrative piece with the elements learned (plot and setting).
- dramatise portions of narrative texts such as subplots.
- write a review of other learners' pieces and some novels you have already read.

#### Key Ideas

- Summary is written in your own words and contains key ideas of the original text. Writing a good summary of a long narrative piece goes through key steps.
- Producing a narrative piece goes through steps such as Pre-writing, Drafting, Revising, Editing and Publishing. It also involves elements like plot, setting, theme and characters.
- Dramatisation involves using script with accompanying actions. Dramatising portions of narrative texts has some key guidelines.
- A review of a narrative piece goes through brief description, critical analysis, and evaluation of the meaning and quality of a text.

## Summarising a Narrative Piece

Summary is a brief statement or account of the main points of a text. It usually begins with an introductory sentence that states key elements such as the title, the author, and the main points of the text. A good summary is written in one's own words. It must, however, reflect the ideas of the original text. The picture below gives a clue about how to summarise a narrative piece



Fig. 4.1: A picture illustrating summary writing

## Steps in Summary Writing

The following steps provide a guide to good summary writing:

### Step 1: Read the text in detail.

The first step in summarising a text effectively, is to read thoroughly and understand the original text. Read it a number of times if necessary to grasp the main ideas and supporting details.

### Step 2: Break the text down into sections.

The text to be summarised must be broken into sections, sub-plots, episodes or incidents. These sections give ideas to help you summarise.

### Step 3: Identify the key points in each section.

Determine the primary purpose of the text and the main points that support this purpose. These main ideas are crucial to include in your summary. As you read, mark or highlight key points, important facts, figures, arguments, or examples that support the main ideas.

### Step 4: Put the key points together to make up the summary.

After identifying your key ideas, put the key ideas into writing of the summary. Plan the structure of your summary. Typically, a summary includes an introduction (where you identify the text and its author), the main points (concisely summarised), and a conclusion (where you restate the main ideas or implications).

### Step 5: Check the elements in the summary

After putting your key ideas together to make up the summary, ensure that your summary contains key elements such as character identification, conflict in the text, and what the text seeks to achieve.

### Step 6: Reread your summary to check on logical flow of information

It is easy to overlook the need to communicate clearly in your writing. A concentrated rereading of what you have produced should allow you to make small changes to add to the overall sense.

## Activity 4.1

### Summarising Narratives

1. Let three of your classmates join you to form a group of four (two boys and two girls). Scan the QR code below to access and read Guy de Maupassant's short story, *The Necklace*



2. After reading the story, discuss the subject matter as a group using the following questions to make a journal for writing a summary:
  - i. What is the main subject or central theme of the story?
  - ii. How do the characters' actions reflect the subject matter?
  - iii. What lessons or ideas does the story communicate?
  - iv. How does the subject matter connect to real-life situations?
3. Write a one-paragraph summary of the story, focusing on the key points:
  - i. Introduce the story's title, author, and main theme.
  - ii. Briefly describe the plot and major events.
  - iii. Conclude with the story's message or overall significance.
4. Mention and discuss the types of plots and plot structure you studied in section. After that write on which type and structure has been adopted in *The Necklace*.
5. Share your finding with your class for feedback.
6. In the Junior High School, one of the stories you read in the *Cockcrow* is Merrill Corney's short story, 'Sandy, Debby and Pepe'. Spend about ten minutes to reflect on the story and write a summary of it your journal.
7. You and your group should create a 10 minute sketch from Corney's 'Sandy, Debby and Pepe'. Record the sketch and play it your classmates for feedback.

## Producing a Narrative Piece



Fig. 4.2: An illustration of the Writing Process

I hope you remember the elements of prose we learned in Section three. The elements of prose are important in writing your own narrative. As a reminder, elements such as *Plot*, *Setting*, *Theme* and *Character* are needed in writing a narrative. In order to produce a good narrative piece, there are certain key steps you have to consider. Among them are the following:

### 1. Pre-writing

Every writer starts with an idea. Brainstorming ideas for your narrative is the first step before your writing. This could be inspired by personal experiences, imagination, or current events. Consider the theme, setting, characters, and other plot elements you want to explore. Once you have a basic idea, outline or plan your narrative. Decide on the main events that will drive the story forward. Consider the beginning, middle, and end of your narrative. This will help you structure your story - and ensure it flows logically.

### 2. Drafting

Is the first stage of the writing process in which a writer develops a complete first version of a piece of writing. Begin with a strong opening that hooks readers and introduces the main character or conflict. While writing your narrative draft, pay attention to setting, plot, character and characterisation, conflict, point of view and so on.

### 3. Revising

Revising is the stage of the writing process after the writer's first draft is improved with additions, corrections and rephrasing. It is also a stage where mistakes are fixed, and the goals of the paper are checked.

### 4. Editing

This is the stage you review your draft for coherence, clarity, and consistency. Revise sentences and paragraphs for smooth transitions and effective pacing. At this stage, you also check your grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Consider feedback from peers or from those you see as better readers.

### 5. Publishing

Decide on how you want to share your narrative piece. This could involve submitting it for publication, sharing it online, or simply sharing it with friends or a writing group for feedback.

The diagram below illustrates the major steps in writing a narrative piece

As a beginner, all the elements of narrative writing are needed in writing your narrative piece. However, two of the elements you must pay particular attention to as you begin to write your narrative are setting and plot.

## Creating the Setting of Your Narrative Piece

In creating setting for your narrative piece, apply the following to answer the questions “when” and “where”:

1. Use sensory details – remember the five senses and colour.
2. Use description instead of narration.
3. Use concrete and not abstract locations.
4. Indicate the time and moments.
5. Incorporate imagery.
6. Focus on details that matter and not go overboard.

## Creating the Plot of your Narrative Piece

In developing your plot, the following questions must guide you:

1. Who is the story about?
2. What happened to distract the normal line of activities?
3. Where did it happen?
4. When did it happen?
5. Why did it happen?

## Activity 4.2

### Understanding Setting

1. Use your phone to scan the QR codes below to access videos on different cultural settings.



2. Invite your friends to join you watch the videos. As you watch the videos make brief notes on your observation, focusing on visual elements and social interactions.
3. Discuss your observations on each video.

## Activity 4.3

### Drafting a Short Story

1. Let one of your classmates join you to discuss and agree on a theme that reflects an aspect of life (e.g. Friendship or hope). You can use Storybird (digital tool) for this activity.
2. Generate ideas and discuss and outline the story's key elements. This should include:
  - i. Characters: Who are the main characters, and what motivates them?
  - ii. Setting: Where and when does the story take place?
  - iii. Plot: What events drive the story forward?
  - iv. Conflict: What challenges do the characters face?
  - v. Theme: What message or reflection on life will the story convey?
3. Draft the short story in the digital tool (Storybird) to capture the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.
4. Review the draft together and identify areas for improvement. After that, polish the story by checking for grammar, clarity and conciseness (you can use Grammarly for this).
5. Finalise the story and share the completed story to the class, explaining to them how your chosen theme reflect life and what you have learned from this writing process.

## Dramatising Parts of Narrative Text

Are you aware that the narratives you have read and the short story you have written could be dramatised by you and your friends? Do not be surprised; parts of prose narratives could be dramatised to make it more vivid and interesting. In this sub-section, you will be provided with guidelines on how to dramatisise parts of an interesting prose narrative you have read or your own written short story.

Dramatisation involves using a script with accompanying actions as in a play or a movie in class. It is to engage students in literature by reading, discussing and presenting a poem, story or play.

### Guidelines on how to Dramatise Portions of Narrative Texts

The following points act as a guide to dramatising parts of narrative text:

1. **Select the type of narrative:** To dramatisise parts of a narrative text, you must first select the narrative type you want to dramatisise. The narrative selected could be a short story, novel, biography or autobiography.
2. **Briefly summarise and pick out the main plot of the narrative:** Selecting your narrative type, briefly summarise the main plot of the story. This will help you to agree on the characters to select and the duration of the dramatisation.
3. **List the key characters in the narrative:** Once you have finished summarising and identifying the main plot of the narrative, list the key characters in the narrative. Observe the roles being played by the key characters in the narrative. Knowing this will help you to assign roles to your characters in the dramatisation.
4. **Divide into acts and scenes by grouping the major events and incidents:** When you are finished listing your key characters in the narrative, divide the summary of the narrative into acts and scenes by grouping the major events and incidents. As you divide the parts of the narrative into major events and incidents, ensure that the dramatisation follows a pattern that will be clearly understood.
5. **Focus on actions instead of descriptions and introduce dialogue:** What makes dramatisation real and interesting is action. Do not just describe the incidents in the narrative, instead, focus on introducing dialogue. A dialogue is a conversation or an interaction between or among characters.
6. **Add dramatic devices such as musical interludes, prologue and epilogue among others:** To make your dramatisation more interesting, add dramatic devices. Dramatic devices are the elements that bring reality and interest to the dramatisation. Use musical interludes to develop interest and stimulate memory. Use a prologue (a short speech or dialogue before the dramatisation) to give a clue about the dramatisation and use epilogue (a short speech or dialogue after the dramatisation) to focus your watchers once more on the main elements of the drama. You should aim to leave them with a clear idea of further thinking to be done in the aftermath of viewing the drama.
7. **Dramatise portions of narrative texts focusing on setting:** After you have gone through all the steps above, you can now ensure portions of your narrative are dramatised. As you dramatisise parts of your narrative, pay considerable attention to your setting. Ensure that your setting makes the dramatisation real and interesting.



## Activity 4.4

### Dramatising Narrative text

1. Reviews with your four of your classmates Mau de Paussant's *The Necklace*, focusing on its key characters, themes, and events. You can access the text in activity 9.1a.
2. Discuss the story's central ideas, such as appearance vs. reality, pride, and the consequences of choices.
3. Choose two or three important scenes from the story to dramatised. You can consider the following:
  - a. Madame Loisel's reaction to the invitation and her husband's attempt to appease her.
  - b. Madame Loisel borrowing the necklace from Madame Forestier.
  - c. Madame Loisel's dazzling evening at the ball.
  - d. The moment they discover the necklace is missing.
  - e. Madame Loisel's confrontation with Madame Forestier at the end of the story.
4. **Discuss and share the roles amongst yourselves. Consider the following:**
  - a. **Madame Loisel:** The protagonist, characterized by her vanity and later, her despair.
  - b. **Monsieur Loisel:** Supportive yet pragmatic, her husband.
  - c. **Madame Forestier:** A wealthy and composed friend.
  - d. **Narrator/Additional Roles:** Provides context, introduces scenes, or plays minor characters like guests or shopkeepers.
5. **As a group, discuss develop your chosen scenes into a script.** Include dialogue and stage direction to emphasize the emotions and interactions of the characters.
6. **Rehearse** your roles by practicing delivering lines with appropriate tone and emotion. Work on body language, gestures and facial expressions to convey the characters' personalities. Experiment with basic props or costumes (e.g., a necklace, fancy attire for the ball) to enhance the performance.
7. Presents your dramatisation to the class. Your performances should last 5–10 minutes. Ensure that you introduce the context of their scenes before performing.
8. After your performance, invite your classmates to provide constructive feedback on:
  - a. How well the performance captured the story's key themes and emotions.
  - b. The creativity and effectiveness of the dramatisation.

Let us now turn our focus on to the last part of this section. This will be on how to review narrative pieces written by your peers. Your friends will also have the opportunity to review your stories and provide you with constructive feedback that will enable you write even better stories in the near future.

## Reviewing Narrative Pieces of Others

Think of all the novels and short stories you have read. There have been times that you have read a story and wished something about the story should have been changed. Sometimes, you wish there is an opportunity to respond to the story. Responding to the story is a form of reviewing. This part of the section offers you the skill to review narrative pieces written by your peers. Your friends will also have the opportunity to review your stories and provide you with constructive feedback that will enable you write even better stories in future.

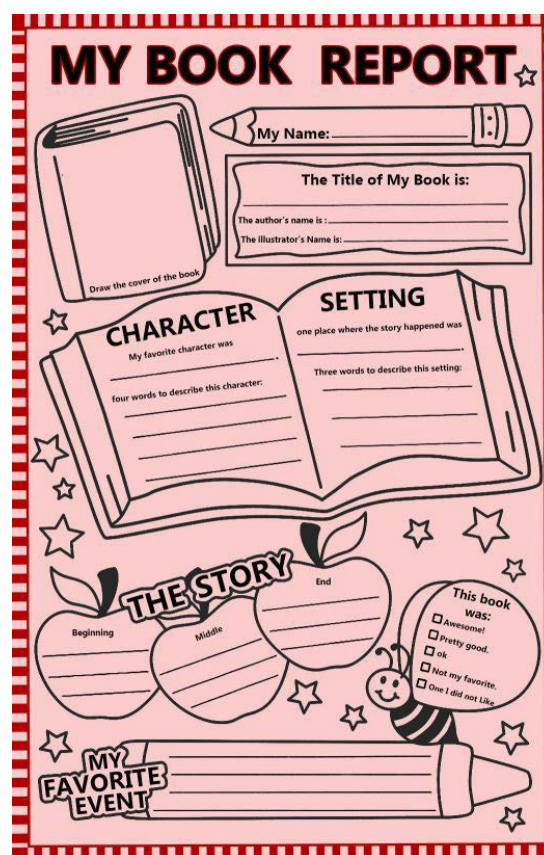


Fig 4.3: A picture showing a book review

## Meaning of Text Review

A review of a literary work involves a critical assessment, analysis and evaluation of the importance, quality and the meaning the text offers. The main focus of reviewing a text is to find out the impact of a text, its key moments and the memory it offers.

Reviewing a piece of literary work is a systematic process. You do not just say a piece of work is good or bad. Neither do you just say the text is about this and means this. You have

to go through some important steps to make these judgements. Now let us dive into the steps in reviewing a text.

## 1. Steps to Write a Review

The following steps provide a guide on how to prepare to write a review.

- a. **Background of the Author:** Some texts are the result of the experiences, beliefs and ideas of the writer. Knowing the historical and creative background of the writer is important in helping you review the text. Briefly talk about the writer and what he or she stands for.
- b. **Subject Matter:** To effectively review a piece of literary work, you must read the text to know what it is about. Briefly describing what the text is about is important step in reviewing the text.
- c. **Likeness:** What moves you as you read or interact with the story. It is important to discuss what you like about the text. Point out the aspects of the text that interest you. Is it about characterisation, plot, title, style, language or the storyline?
- d. **Dislike:** As you review the literary text, comment on what you dislike about the text. Remember not to show your dislike for the writer in your review. It is your dislike for the text you are reviewing not the personality of the writer. Mention what you dislike about the text. Your dislike could be how the story started, how it ended or the style and language of the text.
- e. **The goal of the writer:** Every writer who writes a literary piece is moved by a goal. It is this goal that push the writer to write. It is therefore important to review what the writer intends to achieve with the piece. Outline what the writer seeks to achieve with the text.
- f. **Your voice:** After reading and analysing the text, think of your own voice, perception or candid opinion about the text. What is your general view about the text? What is your opinion about the text? Is your opinion in line with the goal of the writer or it differs?

## 2. Structure of a text Review

- a. **Introduction**
  - i. Write a brief summary of the story.
  - ii. Introduce the main characters and setting
- b. **Plot Summary:** Write a concise overview of the plot
- c. **Character Analysis:** Discuss the roles of the main and supporting characters
- d. **Themes and Messages:** Explore the central theme/themes
- e. **Writing Style:** Evaluate the language, tone, and narrative style of the writer.
- f. **Personal Response:** Include your personal reaction and favourite parts of the piece.
- g. **Conclusion:** Give your overall impression and recommendation

## Activity 4.5

### Guiding learners to review scripts

Using your tablet or phone to watch the review of *So the Path Does Not Die* by Pedo Hollist using the link <https://youtu.be/IhYF3v3zTeo?si=1ftul4uXWWwXgBjn>.

- a. From your knowledge of the steps above and the video on reviewing literary piece, read the five chapters of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Part*.
- b. After reading the five chapters of *Things Fall Apart*, use the template below to write your review of the text.

<b>BOOK REVIEW TEMPLATE</b>	
Title of the Book:	
Number of Pages:	
Background of the Author	
What the text is about	
Your likeness for the text	
Your dislike for the text	
The goal of the writer	
Personal opinion	
Conclusion	

- c. Share your review with members of your class.

## Activity 4.6

### Peer script review using review template

During a story review writing session in your class, your friends downloaded some interesting stories. Some of the scripts from your friends are shown below. Use the review template above to review the stories.

#### The Greedy Dog

There was a dog that was very hungry. He searched for food everywhere and at last he found a bone. He picked the bone with his mouth and started going back to his home. There was a bridge on the way to his home. When he started crossing it he saw his reflection in the water.

The dog thought that there was another dog with a bone in water. He wanted to get that other bone too. So, he started barking at his own reflection. His bone fell in water as soon as he opened his mouth. The greedy dog lost his bone

**Moral of the Story: Don't be greedy**



**Fig. 4.4:** An image illustrating an event in a story

### One Eye, Two Eyes and Three Eyes

Once there were three sisters named One Eye, Two Eyes and Three Eyes. They were named according to the number of eyes they had. Two Eyes was teased and hated by her sisters and mother as they thought that she was a strange child with two eyes. They made her do all the work if she did not obey, they would beat her. They gave her their patched old clothes to wear and left over food to eat. Thus, Two Eyes lived a life of misery.

She had a pet goat. One day, she took her goat out to the meadows and started sobbing. The goat looked at the girl with pity as if she was saying, "What good would weeping and sobbing bring?"

Suddenly, a rose grew in the meadow that brought joy to her.



**Fig. 4.5:** An image illustrating an event in a story

#### Activity 4.7

##### Discussing key review elements

1. Read the story below carefully with your close friend or seating partner in your literature class. Write a review of the story using the elements below.
  - a. Characters
  - b. Plot
  - c. Themes

## The Lion and the Cows

Once upon a time there lived four cows in the forest. Every day, they used to graze together in a particular spot. They were all friends. One day a lion saw the cows grazing together. The lion wanted to eat them so he went to catch them. When the cows saw the lion, all of them fought with him. The lion had to run away.

A few days passed and the cows quarreled between themselves and started grazing separately. One by one the lion killed all of them.

**Moral of the Story: Unity is strength**



**Fig. 4.6:** An image illustration an event in a story

2. Organise your review into an essay and publish it on any social media platform. Alternatively, you could type, print and paste it in your classroom.

# Review Questions

1. What is a summary?
2. List the six steps involved in writing a good summary.
3. What is the first step in the writing process?
4. Why is it important to read the text multiple times before writing a summary?
5. Explain the purpose of identifying key points in each section of the text.
6. Why is it important to create an outline during the pre-writing stage?
7. Why is it important to divide a narrative into acts and scenes during dramatisation?
8. How can breaking the text into sections make summarising more effective?
9. Suppose you are summarising a narrative. How would you ensure your summary captures the main conflict and the purpose of the text?
10. During the editing stage, how can peer feedback improve your narrative?
11. Develop a checklist for evaluating a summary to ensure it includes all essential elements.
12. With your tablet, download the short story, *Africa Kills Her Sun* by Ken Saro Wiwa and write a review of the text.
13. Write a short narrative piece using the steps learnt?
14. Use your tablet or phone to download the pdf version of Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* and write a review of the text.
15. Write a short narrative piece using the steps learnt?



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# Acknowledgements



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