5

Realistic fiction

GambleAware

Activity introduction

Quick summary

This is the first in a pair of lessons exploring how realistic and historical fiction can provide insights into the experiences of others. In this lesson students explore these two genres of text and plan for a narrative exploring the experiences of those involved in problem gambling. In the next lesson, students will write their narrative texts.

Learning intention

To understand the role of narratives in developing an understanding of our world.

NSW Syllabus outcomes

- **EN5-1A** responds to and composes increasingly sophisticated and sustained texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure

- **EN5-4B** effectively transfers knowledge, skills and understanding of language concepts into new and different contexts

- **EN5-5C** thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information and increasingly complex ideas and arguments to respond to and compose texts in a range of contexts

- **EN5-6C** investigates the relationships between and among texts

- **EN5-7D** understands and evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds

General capabilities

Critical and creative thinking

Literacy

Ethical understanding

Personal and social capability

Relevant parts of Year 9 and 10 achievement standards

NSW Stage 5 English Syllabus Statement

By the end of Stage 5 students respond to and compose a comprehensive range of imaginative, factual and critical texts using different modes and technologies. They enjoy, reflect on, critically assess and articulate processes of response and composition. They respond to and compose a wide range of simple and complex texts for pleasure, critical analysis and information-gathering, varying their approach according to a text's purpose, audience and context. They focus on details of texts to analyse meaning, perspective, cultural assumptions, ideologies and language.

Students respond to texts from different cultures that offer a range of perspectives. In considering possible meanings, they develop sustained interpretations supported by evidence and think creatively beyond the text. They infer

Activity introduction

and interpret, and investigate the similarities and differences between and among texts. Through close and wide engagement with texts students extend their imaginations and engage with images of their real and imagined worlds. They respond imaginatively and critically to verbal and visual imagery and iconography, considering how these and other features reflect the cultural context of the text. By critically evaluating texts, students identify strengths and weaknesses and are able to articulate coherent responses. From their responses to individual texts they generalise about views of the world and strategies that are used to communicate and sustain such views.

Australian Curriculum Year 9 Level Description

Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They interpret, create, evaluate, discuss and perform a wide range of literary texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These include various types of media texts, including newspapers, film and digital texts, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, dramatic performances and multimodal texts, with themes and issues involving levels of abstraction, higher order reasoning and intertextual references. Students develop a critical understanding of the contemporary media and the differences between media texts.

Literary texts that support and extend students in Years 9 and 10 as independent readers are drawn from a range of genres and involve complex, challenging and unpredictable plot sequences and hybrid structures that may serve multiple purposes. These texts explore themes of human experience and cultural significance, interpersonal relationships, and ethical and global dilemmas within real-world and fictional settings and represent a variety of perspectives. Informative texts represent a synthesis of technical and abstract information (from credible/verifiable sources) about a wide range of specialised topics. Text structures are more complex and include chapters, headings and subheadings, tables of contents, indexes and

glossaries. Language features include successive complex sentences with embedded clauses, a high proportion of unfamiliar and technical vocabulary, figurative and rhetorical language, and dense information supported by various types of graphics presented in visual form.

Australian Curriculum Year 10 Level Description

Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They interpret, create, evaluate, discuss and perform a wide range of literary texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These include various types of media texts, including newspapers, film and digital texts, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, dramatic performances and multimodal texts, with themes and issues involving levels of abstraction, higher order reasoning and intertextual references. Students develop critical understanding of the contemporary media and the differences between media texts.

Literary texts that support and extend students in Years 9 and 10 as independent readers are drawn from a range of genres and involve complex, challenging and unpredictable plot sequences and hybrid structures that may serve multiple purposes. These texts explore themes of human experience and cultural significance, interpersonal relationships, and ethical and global dilemmas within real-world and fictional settings and represent a variety of perspectives. Informative texts represent a synthesis of technical and abstract information (from credible/verifiable sources) about a wide range of specialised topics. Text structures are more complex and include chapters, headings and subheadings, tables of contents, indexes and glossaries. Language features include successive complex sentences with embedded clauses, a high proportion of unfamiliar and technical vocabulary, figurative and rhetorical language, and dense information supported by various types of graphics and images.

Activity introduction

Topic
Realistic fiction

Unit of work
Stage 5 English

Time required
90 minutes

Level of teacher scaffolding
This lesson requires a medium level of teacher scaffolding. Students are supported to understand the context and task expectations through explicit class conversation, but some require additional support to consolidate and/or apply their understandings.

Resources required
- 'What are these stories about' prompt sheet
- 'Realistic fiction and historical fiction' handout
- 'Realistic shorts' worksheet

Narrative example videos:

In a Heartbeat – animated short film

The Present – OFFICIAL

DIFFERENT | Award winning short film by Tahneek Rahman

- 'Gambler's experience – notes' worksheet

Gambling videos:

10 signs of gambling addiction

Gamblers help: personal stories

- 'Gambling narrative plan' worksheet
- Learning Intentions display (optional)

Keywords
Narrative, fiction, realistic, historical, theme, impact, empathy, audience, plot, character.

Teacher worksheet

Teacher preparation

This lesson is the first in a pair of lessons exploring the way in which fiction texts can serve to develop understanding of the experience of others within our world or society. In this lesson, students explore examples of texts in which the story could be real and consider their impact on individual perspective and the development of empathy. They then explore the context of youth gambling and begin to develop ideas for a character and plot which could reflect themes central to this issue. In the second session, students will spend time refining their ideas and crafting their narrative.

Given that gambling can be a high-risk activity and is a priority concern for young people it is recommended that teachers and parents read the Facilitator pack before implementing the lesson. The pack provides teachers and parents with essential information about gambling harm amongst young people and clarifies the nature of gambling-related behaviours as well as how to approach sensitive topics.

Learning intention

To understand the role of narratives in developing empathy.

Success criteria

Students can:

- explain what realistic fiction is.

- identify examples of texts that can be classified as realistic fiction.

- describe the impact of realistic fiction on our understanding of ourselves and the world.

Teaching sequence

5 minutes - Lesson introduction

30 minutes - Part A: Stories that could be real

45 minutes - Part B: Planning for writing

10 minutes - Reflection

Lesson introduction

Display the learning intention and success criteria for the lesson. This can be written onto the board, or the included resource can be displayed. Invite students to read and discuss the learning intention and success criteria to ensure understanding before beginning the lesson.

Part A: Stories that could be real

Step 1

Show the resource 'What are these stories about' and invite students to respond to the following questions:

1. *Has anyone read any of these texts?*

2. *What are they about?*

3. *What is their purpose?*

4. *What is the specific genre of these texts?*

Through the discussion, identify with the class that although these texts are fiction, they are all set in contexts which could be real with characters that could really have existed. The impact is that the audience develops an understanding of an array of contexts and experiences and forms a broader understanding of the world and those in different contexts.

Step 2

Explain to students that the texts in these examples come from two different genres: realistic fiction and historical fiction. Provide students with the handout 'Realistic fiction and historical fiction' and discuss the similarities and differences between each.

Emphasise that in historical fiction, the story takes place in a particular context of the past. Through the sharing of a story based within a particular timeframe and location, the author is able to build a picture for the reader of that period was like. This genre allows the reader to build understanding of particular historical events as well experiencing the journey of a particular characters.

In realistic fiction, the setting is a familiar and believable context that is not associated with any specific point in time. The text is set in the present or recent past. The characters are presented as ordinary people and events as completely plausible or realistic. Realistic fiction is often about characters coming to understand themself or others.

Step 3

Return focus to the example texts shown and invite students to identify which (if any) of the texts would fit into the category of historical fiction and which would fit into the category of realistic fiction.

Step 4

Explain to students that the focus will now be on realistic fiction specifically. On texts that could occur within our world and in which characters develop an understanding of themself or others.

Provide students with the handout 'Realistic shorts' and explain that the class will watch three short films which could be considered realistic fiction, and consider the journey of the character and the impact on the viewer. **Note:** while some of the examples are animated or include figurative imagery, students should consider the setting, events and storyline as realistic, rather than the fact that they have been developed using digital technologies.

Play each of the videos below. After each, allow time for students to respond to the prompts on the sheet and then take time to discuss student observations.

In a Heartbeat – animated short film

The Present – OFFICIAL

DIFFERENT | Award winning short film by Tahneek Rahman

Part B: Purposeful writing

Step 1

Explain to students that the class will now consider a context which could be the focus for realistic fiction - youth gambling. In the same way that the short films portrayed the experience of a character with a particular challenge, they will write a story based around young people facing a challenge related to gambling. They may be facing trouble themselves, or it may be a friend or relative who is struggling.

Explain to students that in this session, they will focus on developing a character and planning the plot of their story. To begin with, they will view a range of stories of gamblers to develop an understanding of suitable characteristics and behaviours for the characters in their story.

Provide students with the 'Gambler's Experience - Notes' worksheet and allow time for them to explore the videos below. Emphasise that this is the research so that they can later develop realistic characters and plot.

10 signs of gambling addiction

Gamblers help: personal stories

Step 2

Provide students with the 'Gambling narrative plan' resource. Explain that they will now spend time developing ideas for their story.

Emphasise the following:

- The intended theme for the narrative should be clear before writing. Some example themes are:
  - Problem gambling causes more harm to those close to the gambler than to themself.

- Problem gamblers need the help of those around them.
  - Anyone can become a problem gambler.

- The characters developed for the story should be realistic, based upon observations made when watching the videos. Physical appearance, social interactions and engagements, character feelings and actions should all be considered.

- The plot should be realistic and serve to reflect the intended theme, including a hook, a series of worsening problems or challenges, intervention, recovery and reorientation.

Step 3

Allow time for students to complete their plan.

Reflection

Provide time for students to share their plan with another class member for feedback, providing them with the 'PIP Peer feedback sheet' for use.
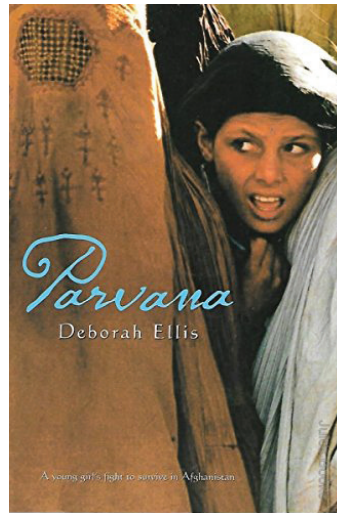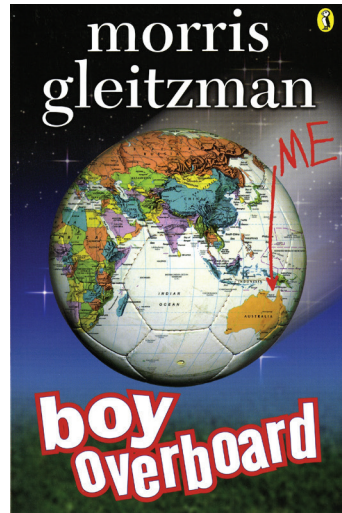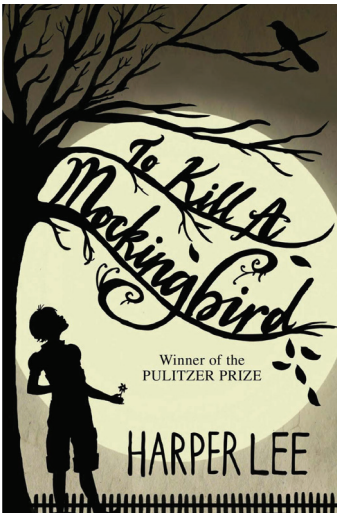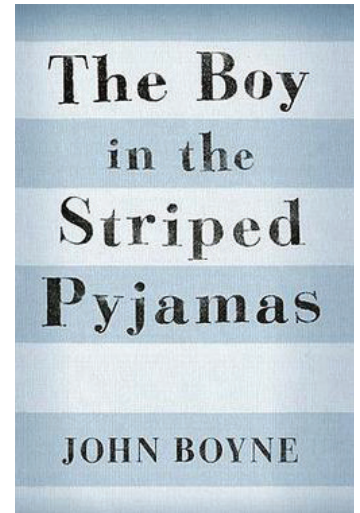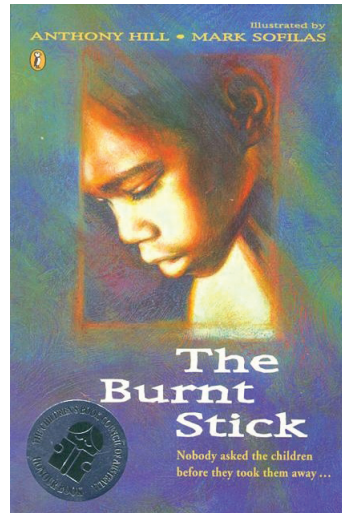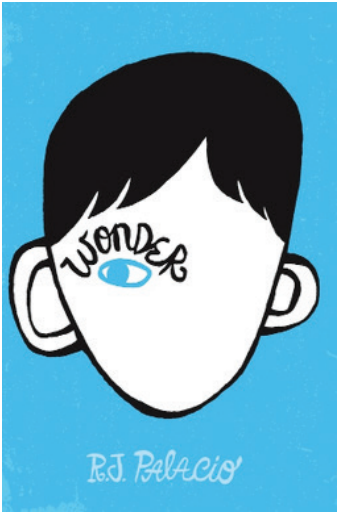
Differentiation

Extension - Encourage more independent students to share their ideas with each other as they develop their narrative plan, drawing on each other's observations and feedback to refine their ideas.

Provisions for Learning Support - Some students may find it challenging to develop and organise ideas. For students in this situation, it is important to conference with them and plan ideas collaboratively. This will then act as a scaffold to independent writing in the subsequent lesson. Alternatively, if there are a number of students facing this challenge, they can work together in a small group with the teacher to complete the task collaboratively.

What are these stories about?

Realistic fiction and historical fiction

	Realistic fiction	Historical fiction
What is it?	Realistic fiction is based in the present or recent past, in realistic or plausible contexts. The focus of realistic fiction is usually on personal or socially based challenges and follows characters as they develop an understanding of themselves or others.	While also set in believable contexts with realistic characters, historical fiction is not set in the present for the reader, but rather in a specific historical context. While reading historical fiction, it is often hard to decipher whether the story is fact or fiction.
What does it portray?	Realistic fiction portrays realistic experiences of individuals in a familiar and believable setting, giving insight into a range of perspectives and experiences within our real world. It often portrays development of understanding of oneself or others.	Historical fiction develops an image for the reader of what life was like for particular individuals or groups of people within specific historical contexts. While the character experience is a significant part of the reader experience, so to are the historical descriptions and references.
What is the impact for the reader?	Realistic fiction allows readers to consider their own experiences and those of others they come into contact with within their world. They can facilitate development of an understanding of self and others.	The reader develops an understanding of a particular historical period and/or event, the impact on groups, individuals and/or the generations that have come after them. The reader develops an understanding of the impact of particular events on people and society.

Similarities	Differences
- Believable, despite fictional characters and experiences. - Develop understanding of society and/or others.	- Realistic fiction is written as 'ever present' or in the recent past, while historical fiction is based in a particular point in time. - Characters in realistic fiction texts are familiar and relatable (true to the current period) while characters in historical fiction resemble people from that specific time period. - In historical fiction, key events and occurrences within the text are usually true to life, while experiences of the individual characters may be fictional. In realistic fiction, the events are believable but fictional.

Realistic shorts

	Context	Journey of the character	Impact on the viewer
The Present			
Different			
In a Heartbeat			

Gamblers' experiences – Notes

Character

Use this table to take notes about characteristics the problem gambler in your story might have. Consider behaviours, thoughts and feelings, appearance and relationships.

Common behaviours of a problem gambler	Thoughts and feelings a problem gambler may have	Outward appearance	Relationships of a problem gambler

Plot

Use the space below to record notes on what kinds of challenges may be faced by a problem gambler. Consider a range of smaller and larger problems or challenges.

Gambling narrative – Plan

Theme of the story

Character

Use the space below to develop a description of the central character in your narrative. This character could be the gambler, or they could be someone related to the gambler that is impacted by their choices and actions.

Portrait of the character	Characteristics
	Behaviours –
	Social interactions –
	Personal thoughts and feelings –
	Appearance –

Gambling narrative – Plan

Plot

Develop a plot, using the story arc image below to guide you.
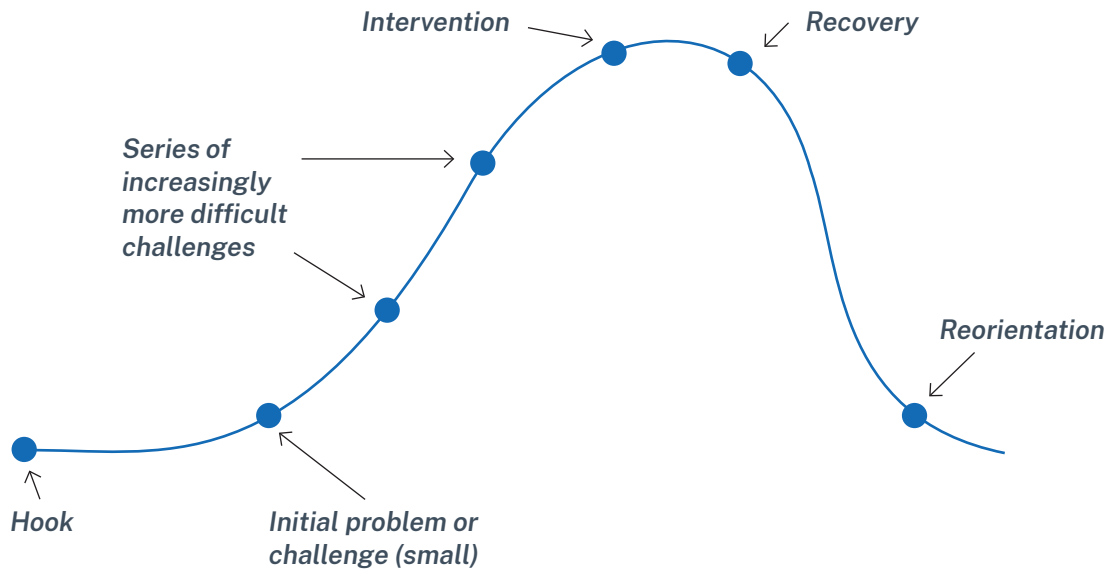
Hook
Series of problems/challenges
Intervention
Recovery
Reorientation

PIP Peer feedback sheet

Students work:

Students providing feedback:

Task expectation	Positive	Improvement idea	Positive
Theme			
Character			
Plot			

PIP Peer feedback sheet

Students work:

Students providing feedback:

Task expectation	Positive	Improvement idea	Positive
Theme			
Character			
Plot			

Learning intentions

I understand the role of narratives in developing empathy.

Success criteria

I can:

- Explain what realistic fiction is.

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