

# Language Features of Seven Writing Genres ©Rojas, 2010

## I. Overview of DESCRIPTION Text Features & Instructional Tools

### Purpose:

Description is used in all forms of writing to create a vivid impression of a person, place, object, or event (e.g. describes a special place and explains why it is special, describe the most important person in your life, describe the animal's habitat).

### Features:

- ☐ to engage a reader's attention
- ☐ to create characters
- ☐ to set a mood or create an atmosphere
- ☐ to bring writing to life

### Text Features of Description

Adapted from [www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/teach\\_strats](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/teach_strats)

- Description aims to **show rather than tell** the reader what something/ someone is like.
- Description relies on precisely chosen vocabulary with carefully chosen **adjectives and adverbs**.
- Sensory description - what is seen, heard, smelled, felt, tasted - is used.
- Precise use of **adjectives, similes, metaphors** to create images/ pictures in the mind.
- Description focuses on **key details, powerful verbs, and precise nouns** in order to 'put the reader' into the experience.
- Description uses **action verbs** (e.g. *bites, squirts*).
- If it is a technical/ scientific description it will use **technical/ scientific language and the present tense**.

## **Suggested Instructional Tools for Description**

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### **Cooperative Learning Tools**

# 7 Find Someone Who  
# 17 Draw What I Say  
#50 Team Mind Map

### **Vocabulary Tools**

Analogies  
Character Trait Maps  
Concept Definition Map  
Frayer Model  
Semantic Gradient Scale  
Semantic Feature Analysis  
Simon Says, Science Says  
Vocabulary Writing in Math

### **K-2 Reading & Writing Tools**

Character Home Page  
Content-Related Picture Books  
Do You Hear What I Hear?  
Sketch to Stretch

### **3-12 Reading Tools**

Inductive Learning Strategy  
Key Concept (Math)  
Kindling (Language Arts)  
Narrow Reading  
Scintillating Sentences & Quotes  
Visual Reading Guide

### **3-12 Writing**

Brainwriting  
Examples as prewriting  
Divorce the Draft  
Looping  
Writer's Notebook

### **Graphic Organizers**

concept development organizers

### **Differentiation Tools**

Alternative Assignments  
Centers  
TIC TAC TOE  
Writer's Workshop

### **\* ELL Scaffolding & Extending Tools**

Interpretation Charts  
Meaning Maps  
Mentor Text  
Minilessons  
Supported Note Taking  
Semantic Grids

## II. Overview of EXPLANATIONS Text Features & Instructional Tools

### Purpose:

The writer's purpose is to explain how something works or states reasons for some phenomenon.

### Types of Explanations:

- ☐ "How" (How does a computer work? How are mountains formed? How do we solve this problem?)
- ☐ "Why" (Why do some things float and sink? Why is the ozone layer getting thinner? Why do we need food?)

### Text Features of Explanations

Adapted from [www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/)

- Explanations often begin with a **brief description** of the activity or process.
- Explanations often have a **logical sequence of events**.
- How something works is explained **OR** reasons for a phenomenon are stated.
- Explanations use **cause/ effect relationships**: *then, as a consequence, so, if*.
- Conjunctions are used to show **time relationships**: *first, then, following, finally*
- Explanations are written in the **timeless present tense** (*are, happens, turns*).
- **Action verbs** are used (*falls, rises, changes*).
- **Passives** are used sometimes (*is saturated, are changed*).
- The **nouns** tend to be general rather than specific (*cars, boats, insects*).
- **Pronouns** are used (*their, they, them*).
- **Non-human participants** are used (*the sea, the engine*).

## **Suggested Instructional Tools for Explanations**

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### **Cooperative Learning Tools**

#2 Blind Sequencing

#7 Find Someone Who

### **Vocabulary Tools**

4-Square

Knowledge Rating Scale

Magnet Summaries

Missing Words or Clozes

Open Word Sort

Stephens Elaboration Strategy

Verb Walls

Vocabulary Concept Chain

Vocabulary Notebook

### **K-2 Reading & Writing Tools**

Comprehension Game

Experience-Text Relationship

Literacy Work Centers

PREP

Talking Drawings

### **Differentiation Tools**

Activity Guides

Group Investigations

Multiple Materials

Socratic Seminar

Web Quests

### **Cooperative Learning Tools**

#3 Circle the Sage

#14 Jigsaw Problem Solving

### **Graphic Organizers**

event chains

flow charts

fishbone organizer

### **3-12 Reading Tools**

Anticipation Guides

Check those Facts

Concept Collection

DRTA

Elaborative Interrogation

Investigative Teams

Pen in Hand

Q-Space

ROW

### **3-12 Writing**

Cubing for Prewriting

Discussion Continuum

4-2-1

Journals

Task-Based Writing Rubric

### **\*Scaffolding & Extending**

Ask, Answer, Record

Sentence Scaffolds

Know, Do, Write

Text Frameworks

Vocabulary Cohesion Keys

### III. Overview of PROCEDURAL Text Features & Instructional Tools

#### Purpose:

The purpose is to tell the reader how to do or make something.

#### Types of Procedural Texts:

There are different procedural texts for different purposes:

- ☐ Texts that explain how something works or how to use the instruction manuals (e.g. how to use the video).
- ☐ Texts that instruct how to do a particular activity (e.g. recipes rules of a game, science experiments).
- ☐ Texts that deal with human behavior (e.g. how to live happily).

- The purpose is **clearly stated** at the beginning.
- The materials/ steps are listed in **chronological order**.
- Each type of procedural text has a **format** (e.g. recipe = ingredients and method; scientific experiments = purpose, equipment, procedure, observations, conclusions).
- Imperatives are used **directly** (*You should turn off the computer*) or **indirectly** (*Turn the printer off before shutting down the computer*).
- **Verbs** are active, simple present (*you cut and fold*).
- Conjunctions that **show time** are used (*first ..... then ... when*).
- **Detailed information** is given on how (*carefully, with the scissors*); where (*from the top*), when (*after it has set*).
- **Detailed factual description** is given (e.g. shape, size, color, amount).
- **Modality** may be used to show the degree of obligation (e.g. should, must).

## **Suggested Instructional Tools for Procedural**

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### **Vocabulary Tools**

Magnet Summaries  
Vocabulary Notebook  
Vocabulary Concept Chain

### **K-2 Reading & Writing Tools**

Choral Reading  
Echo Reading  
Pattern Reading  
Talking Drawings

### **3-12 Writing Tools**

Examples for Prewriting  
Guided Writing  
Hennings Sequence  
Rewording for Revising

### **Cooperative Learning Tools**

#2 Blind Sequencing  
#17 Match Mine  
#25 Paraphrase Passport

### **Graphic Organizers**

sequence organizers

### **3-12 Reading Tools**

Group Summarizing  
K-N-W-S (math)  
Math Notes  
Math Reading Keys  
Read Three Times  
SMART  
SQR3  
X Marks The Spot

### **Differentiation Tools**

Centers  
Projects  
Schedule Chart

### **\*Scaffolding & Extending**

Language Experience Approach  
4 X 4 Jigsaw  
Interactive Clozes  
Know, Do, Write  
3-Step Extensions

#### IV. Overview of NARRATIVE Text Features & Instructional Tools

##### Purpose:

The basic purpose is to entertain, to gain and hold a reader's interest. However, narratives can also be written to teach or inform, to change attitudes or social opinions. Narratives sequence people/ characters in time and place and set up one or more problems which must eventually be resolved.

##### Types of Narratives:

There are many types of narratives. They can be imaginary, factual, or a combination of both. They may include fairy stories, mysteries, science fiction, romances, horror stories, adventure stories, fables, myths, legends, historical narratives, ballads, personal experience, slice of life.

#### **Text Features of Narrative**

Adapted from [www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/)

Narrative has the following structure:

- ☐ An orientation in which the characters, setting, and time of the story are established (usually answers who, when, where).
- ☐ A complication(s) or problem which involves the main character(s).
- ☐ A resolution(s) to the complication.

The structure of narratives includes **plot, setting, characterization, and theme.**

- **Action verbs** provide interest to the story (*e.g. Instead of she laughed - she cackled*).
- Written in the **first person** (I, we) or the **third person** (he, she, they).
- Usually written in the **past tense**.
- **Conjunctions** - linking words to do with time - are used.

- **Strong nouns** have more specific meaning (e.g. oak rather than tree).
- Careful and judicious use of **adjectives and adverbs** are used (i.e. to bring the story alive, provide description and information for reader).
- **A variety of sentence beginnings** are used; for example, by using:
  - ✓ Participles (*Jumping with joy I ran home to tell everyone*)
  - ✓ Adverbs (*Silently the cat crept toward the bird*)
  - ✓ Adjectives (*Brilliant sunlight shone through the window*)
  - ✓ Nouns (*Thunder claps filled the air*)
  - ✓ Adverbial phrases (*Along the street walked the girl as if she had not a care in the world*)
  - ✓ Conversations/ dialogue (tense may change to the present or the future)
- Narratives often use **figurative language**:
  - ✓ Similes (*The wind wrapped me like a cloak*)
  - ✓ Metaphors (*She has a heart of stone*)
  - ✓ Onomatopoeia (*splat, ooze, squish*)
  - ✓ Personification (*Clouds limped across the sky*)
- **Personal voice** or writing that is honest and convincing is used. Narratives should have an impact on the reader (speaks to us).



## **Suggested Instructional Tools for Narrative**

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### **Cooperative Learning**

#15 Line Ups  
#35 Sages Share  
#47 Team Pair Solo  
#54 3-Step Interview

### **Vocabulary Tools**

Analogies  
Find Someone Who  
Open Word Sort  
Semantic Gradient Scale  
Verb Walls  
Word Boxes/ Journals

### **3-12 Reading Tools**

Collaborative Strategic Reading  
Group Summarizing  
Kindling  
LETS Connect  
Learning Logs  
Narrow Reading  
Opinion Guide  
Question Answer Relationship  
Question the Author  
RAFT  
REAP  
Story Grammar/ Map

### **\*Scaffolding & Extending**

Anticipation Guides  
Circle Shares  
Prediction Starters  
Meaning Maps  
Trash & Treasure

### **Graphic Organizers**

compare/ contrast  
concept development  
relational  
sequence

### **K-2 Reading & Writing Tools**

Character Home Page  
Guided Reading  
Independent Reading  
Language Experience Approach  
Memory Boxes  
Recorded Reading  
Say Something  
Sticky Notes  
Story Hats  
Story Impressions

### **3-12 Writing Tools**

Cubing  
Discussion Continuum  
Story Notebooks  
Looping  
Conferring  
Two-Column Count  
Surprise!

### **Differentiation Tools**

Activity Guides  
Agendas  
Jigsaw  
Literature Circles  
Writer's Workshop

## V. Overview of RECOUNTS Text Features & Instructional Tools

### Purpose:

The purpose of a recount is to list and describe past experiences by retelling events in the order in which they happened (chronological order). Recounts are written to retell events with the purpose of informing or entertaining (or both).

### Types of Recounts:

- ☐ **Personal Recount** - these usually retell an event that the writer was personally involved in.
- ☐ **Factual Recount** - recording an incident, e.g. a science experiment.
- ☐ **Imaginative Recount** - writing an imaginary role and giving details of events, e.g. a day in the life of a pirate.

### **Text Features of Recounts**

Adapted from [www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/)

- The recount has a **title** which usually summarized the text.
- The recount has **specific participants** (e.g. *the crab, my mom*).
- The basic recount consists of **three parts**: setting or orientation, events in chronological order, concluding comments expressing a personal opinion regarding the events described.
- Events are described using **past tense of verbs** (*she yelled, she walked*) and **adverbs** to add more detail to the verbs.
- **Frequent use of words or phrases which link events in time**: *next, later, when, then, after, before, first, at the same time, as soon as, late in the afternoon*.
- **Details** are chosen to add interest or humor.
- **Figurative language** may be used (alliteration, onomatopoeia, simile, metaphor, personification).
- The **passive voice** may be used (e.g. *the bottle was filled with ink*) in a factual recount.

## Suggested Instructional Tools for Recounts

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### Cooperative Learning Tools

#3 Circle the Sage

#8 Find the Fib

#25 Paraphrase Passport

#42 Stir the Class

#54 3-Step Interview

### Vocabulary Tools

Character Trait Map

Missing Words

Open Word Sort

Semantic Feature Analysis

Verb Walls

Vocabulary Story Map

Word Boxes/ Journals

3-12 Reading Tools

Collaborative Strategic Reading

Kindling

LETS Connect

Narrow Reading

Paired Guided Reading

Question Answer Relationship

Question the Author

RAFT

REAP

Save the Last Word For Me

Scored Discussion

Story Grammar/ Map

### Differentiation Tools

Alternative Assignments

Choice Boards

Literature Circles

TIC TAC TOE

Writer's Workshop

### Graphic Organizers

sequence organizers

evaluation organizers

### K-2 Reading & Writing Tools

Character Home Page

Choral Reading

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Experience Text Relationship

Language Experience Approach

Memory Box

Say Something

Split Screen

Sketch to Stretch

Story Hats

Story Impressions

Talking Drawings

The Instant Storyteller

### 3-12 Writing Tools

Cubing

Examples

Journals

Writer's Notebooks

Pair Talk

Divorce the Draft

Two Column Count

Peer Editing

### **\* Scaffolding & Extending**

Anticipation Guides  
Focused Brainstorming  
Prediction Starters  
Group Summaries  
4 x 4 Jigsaw  
Meaning Maps  
Mentor Texts  
Minilessons  
Pass Around Writing  
30-30-30 Scaffolding  
Circle Shares  
Cooperative Constructions  
Interpretation Charts  
Language Logs  
Trash & Treasure  
Vocabulary Cohesion Keys  
Bilingual Journals

## VI. Overview of REPORT Text Features & Instructional Tools

### Purpose:

The purpose of a report is to describe and classify information. Reports have a logical sequence of facts that are stated without any personal involvement of the writer.

Informative reports are written about living things like plants and animals and non-living things like cars or oceans. An information report is used when we talk and write about, e.g. *bikes* (description only tells about *My Bike*).

### Text Features of Reports

Adapted from [www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/)

Reports usually consist of the following:

- an **opening statement** (*The Antarctic is a large continent at the South Pole*).
- a **series of facts** about various aspects of the subject (these facts are grouped into paragraphs and each paragraph has a topic sentence).
- **diagrams, photographs, illustrations, maps** may be used to enhance the text.
- reports don't usually have an 'ending' although sometimes the information is rounded off by some **general statement** about the topic.

- Reports have a **logical sequence** of facts.
- **Present tense verbs** are used.
- Some reports use **technical or scientific terms**.
- **Linking verbs** are used; e.g. *is, are, has, have, belong to*, to give coherence.
- Uses some **action verbs** (*climb, eat*).
- **Descriptive language** that is factual rather than imaginative is used; e.g. *color, shape, size, body parts, habitats, behaviors, functions, uses*.
- **Nouns and noun phrases** are used rather than personal pronouns.

## Suggested Instructional Tools for Reports

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### Cooperative Learning Tools

#32 Roundtable Review  
#35 Sages Share  
#47 Team Pair Solo  
#50 Mind Map

### Vocabulary Tools

Analogies  
Concept Definition Mapping  
Knowledge Rating Scale  
Frayer Model  
Magnet Summaries  
Missing Words  
Semantic Feature Analysis  
Verb Walls  
Visual Structures  
Vocabulary Graphics  
Vocabulary Elaboration Strategy

### 3-12 Reading Tools

Check Those Facts  
Cornell Notes  
DRTA  
4-Way Reporting  
Interactive Reading Guide  
Infofiction  
Key Concepts  
Learning Logs  
Pen-in-Hand  
Proposition Support  
Question Menu  
ReQuest  
Skim & Scan  
SQR3  
T Notes

### Graphic Organizers

compare/ contrast organizers  
classification organizers  
relational organizers  
sequence organizers  
evaluation organizers

### K-2 Reading & Writing Tools

Comprehension Game  
Content Related Picture Books  
Do You Hear What I Hear?  
Literacy Work Centers  
PREP  
Reader-Generated Questions  
Split Screen

### 3-12 Writing Tools

Brain Writing  
Cubing  
Examples  
4-2-1  
Task-Based Rubric  
Guided Writing  
Hennings Sequence  
Writer's Workshop  
Conferring  
Two Column Count  
*Don't to Do*

## **Differentiation Tools**

Centers or Stations  
Jigsaw  
Group Investigations  
Independent Studies  
Multiple Materials & References  
Web Quests

## **\*Scaffolding & Extension**

Ask, Answer, Record  
Information Grids  
Learning Logs  
4 x 4 Jigsaw  
Mentor Texts  
Reading Guides  
Sentence Scaffolds  
Supported Note Taking  
Think Aloud Interpretations  
Academic Sentence Frames  
Cooperative Constructions  
Know, Do, Write  
Language Function Walls  
Language Logs  
Question Ladder  
Rate Statements  
Semantic Grids  
Sentence Transformations  
Text Frameworks  
Vocabulary Cohesion Keys  
Bilingual Journals  
Google Translations  
Wide Reading

## VII. Overview of ARGUMENT Text Features & Instructional Tools

### Purpose:

To support ideas presented in sequence to justify a particular stand or viewpoint that a writer is taking.

The writer's purpose is to take a position on some issue and justify it.

An argument consists of the following:

- ☐ a statement of position at the beginning
- ☐ a logical sequence
- ☐ the argument is put forward in a series of points with back up evidence
- ☐ a good argument shows cause and effect
- ☐ this is the connection between an action and what leads to it
- ☐ a summing up or restating of position at the end

### Types of Arguments:

- ☐ To plead a case
- ☐ To promote/ sell goods and services
- ☐ To put forward an argument

### **Text Features of Argument**

Adapted from [www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esolonline/)

- ✓ Words for introducing another point to **support** the argument:

*additionally    further    more*  
*in addition    moreover    besides*

*not only    also*  
*as well    likewise*

- ✓ Words for showing **cause and effect** - connectives:



<i>so</i>	<i>consequently</i>
<i>creates results in</i>	<i>stems from</i>
<i>generates</i>	<i>gives rise to</i>

<i>because</i>	<i>causes</i>
<i>brings about</i>	<i>leads to</i>
<i>an upshot of</i>	

- ✓ Arguments are written in the **timeless present tense**.
- ✓ Passive verbs are used (*e.g. The oceans are over-fished*).
- ✓ The writer uses **repetition** of words, phrases, and concepts deliberate, for effect.
  - **Strong effective adjectives** are used.
  - **Figurative language** is used to add beauty, force, etc.
  - **Sound devices** are used for impact and effect (*e.g. alliteration*).
  - **Thought provoking questions** are used. These may be asked as rhetorical questions (*i.e. effect, not information*).
  - **Generalized participants** are used which are sometimes human but often abstract (ideas, issues, opinions) unless the issue centers on a particular event or incident (*e.g. we all know that smoking causes cancer*).
  - **Inclusive and exclusive pronouns** (*I, we, us*) are used to manipulate the reader to agree with the position argued.
  - The writer uses **emotive language** (*i.e. words that appeal to the reader's feelings, e.g. concern, unreasonable, should*).
  - The writer uses **passive voices** to help structure the text (*e.g. we would like to suggest that an investigation be conducted*).

- **Actions are nominalized** to allow the writer to condense the information and deal with abstract issues. Actions become things (e.g. *Toxic waste discharged from factories causes pollution*).
- **Modality** is used in arguing to position the writer and the reader (e.g. *should, must, ought*).
- **Verbs** are used when expressing opinions (e.g. *we believe students should not have to*).
- **Imperatives** are used to express a command, request, warning (e.g. *act now!*).
- The writer uses **connectives** (linking words - conjunctions) associated with reason:
  - Temporal conjunctions** - *firstly, secondly*
  - Causal, conditional conjunctions** - *because*
  - Comparative conjunctions** - *however, on the other hand*
- **Appeals to authority** may be done in a variety of ways to give weight to an argument:
  - Using research, facts, statistics
  - Using expert opinions
  - Using testimony
- **Concluding phrases** are used ( *We would like to persuade you that ..... Therefore I think that I have shown that ..... In summary .....*  )

## **Suggested Instructional Tools for Arguments**

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### **Cooperative Learning Tools**

#2 Blind Sequencing  
#3 Circle the Sage  
#14 Jigsaw Problem Solving  
#23 Pairs Check  
#24 Pairs Compare  
#25 Paraphrase Passport  
#28 Question Spinner  
#30 Rally Table  
#38 Showdown  
#45 Team Interview  
#47 Team Pair Solo  
#49 Team Statements  
#50 Team Mind Map

### **K-2 Reading & Writing Tools**

Content-Related Books  
Do You Hear What I Hear?  
PREP  
Reader-Generated Questions  
Talking Drawings

### **3-12 Writing Tools**

Discussion Continuum  
Examples for Prewriting  
4-2-1  
Looping  
Pair Talking  
Divorcing the Draft  
Two-Column Count  
Rewording  
Surprise!  
Don't to Do

### **Graphic Organizers**

compare contrast organizers  
concept development organizers  
classification organizers  
relational organizers  
evaluation organizers

### **Vocabulary Tools**

Analogies  
Click and Clunk  
Concept Definition Mapping  
Four Dimensional Word Study  
Magnet Summaries  
Missing Words  
Vocab Marks  
Vocab Graphics  
Vocabulary Journals & Logs

### **Differentiation Tools**

Agendas  
Centers  
Flexible groupings  
Group Investigations  
Jigsaw  
Multiple Texts & References  
Projects  
Socratic Seminar  
Web Quests  
Writer's Workshop

### **3-12 Reading Tools**

Anticipation Guides  
Check Those Facts!  
Coding  
Cornell Note Taking  
Elaborative Interrogation  
Ethical Choice  
Four Way Reporting  
Interactive Reading Guide  
Investigative Teams  
Listservs & Message Boards  
Learning Logs  
Narrow Reading  
Opinion Guide  
Pen-in-Hand  
Proposition Support  
Questioning the Author  
REAP  
Reciprocal Reading  
ROW  
Save The Last Word For Me  
Scintillating Sentences & Quizzical Quotes  
Scored Discussion  
Skimming & Scanning  
SMART  
SPAWN  
T-Notes  
Two Minute Preview  
X Marks the Spot

### **\*Scaffolding & Extending**

Ask, Answer, Record  
Focused Brainstorming  
Question Consensus  
4 x 4 Jigsaw  
Mentor Texts  
Minilessons  
Pass Around Writing  
Scaffolded Note Taking  
Academic Sentence Frames  
Circle Shares  
Interactive Clozes  
Know, Do, Write  
Language Function Walls  
Rate the Statements  
Semantic Grids  
Trash & Treasure  
Vocabulary Cohesion Keys  
Point of View Discussion  
Quotes of the Day