

12.1.3

Lesson 3 – Narrative Techniques

Narrative techniques such as dialogue or pacing are an integral part of building effective narrative. Effective use of these techniques helps to develop experiences, events, and/or characters within the narrative.

In this activity, review two paragraphs with similar content: one effective and one less effective paragraph. Examine the two paragraphs comparing the use of narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, and description within each.

Effective:

Studying and collecting athletic shoes has taught me the value of a hard-earned dollar. When I was fourteen, my mom gave me an ultimatum: “Dad and I have been looking at the bills, and we have decided that unless you would like to eat shoes, you will have to get a job.”

I looked at the meticulously stacked shoeboxes towering over the rest of my room and made some quick calculations. “I see your point,” I replied.

Less effective:

Studying and collecting athletic shoes has taught me how much a dollar was. When I was fourteen, my mom gave me a warning. She said that if I wanted to continue buying shoes, I would need to get my own work. We talked about it for a while. All the tall stacked shoeboxes all over the rest of my room let me know that she was correct.

1. How does the first paragraph develop experiences, events, and/or characters?
2. Contrast the first paragraph with the second paragraph. What makes the second paragraph less effective at developing experiences, events, and/or characters?

Two more to compare on the next page.

In this activity they review two paragraphs with similar content: one effective and one less effective paragraph. Instruct students to examine the two paragraphs, comparing the use of narrative techniques such as description and reflection within each.

Effective:

A shared passion for shoes creates an instant connection with people I meet, whether in a suburban shopping mall or a trendy neon-lit Los Angeles sneaker store. I have learned that in some places, shoes are not a fashion statement or a status symbol. Rather, shoes enable a child to make an arduous trek to school and surmount a potential education barrier. When I first learned about the nonprofit organization, In Ian's Boots, I knew I found a way to unite my shoe passion with my mission to contribute positively to the world around me. Founded by the grieving parents of a fellow soccer goalie killed in a sledding accident, In Ian's Boots collects used shoes for people in need around the world. Doctors found a biblical message in his boots urging "perseverance," and this story and message spoke to me. Last year, I hosted a drive and collected over 600 pairs of shoes, some of which have been distributed to Honduras, Ghana, and Haiti.

Less effective:

Liking shoes creates an instant connection with people I meet. In some places, shoes are not a fashion statement or a status symbol. Shoes enable a child to travel to school and avoid a barrier to an education. In Ian's Boots collects used shoes around the world and was founded by the parents of a fellow soccer goalie killed in a sledding accident. Doctors found a Bible message in his boots urging "perseverance." Last year, I hosted a drive and collected shoes, some of which have been distributed to places around the world. Instruct students to briefly discuss the two paragraphs, focusing on what makes the first one effective and the second one less effective.

1. How does the first paragraph develop experiences, events, and/or characters?
2. Contrast the first paragraph with the second paragraph; what makes the second paragraph less effective at developing experiences, events, and/or characters?