# Sample Unit – English Advanced – Year 11

# Narratives that Shape Our World

| **Unit title: *How narrative shapes the way we see the world*** | | **Duration:** 40 hours |
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| **Unit description** | Narrative is central to being human. We think, dream and remember in narrative. Through vicarious experience with texts and, often, robust debate about texts, we test our perceptions of the world against those represented in texts. In this unit, students learn that point of view is central to narrative and manifests itself through the points of view of characters, narrators, composers and audiences. In examining the processes of characterisation and point of view, students evaluate how narratives shape texts and influence response. Through studying narrative in a range of diverse textual forms including poetry, drama and documentary, students come to appreciate that our understanding of the world is organised by how composers draw on narrative.  This unit demonstrates an approach to the Year 11 *Narratives that Shape our World* module for Advanced students. Teachers may need to differentiate activities and include extra lessons explicitly teaching higher order reading and writing skills according to the particular learning needs of students.  **Note:** There is more material in this unit than a teacher could typically deliver in 40 indicative hours. It is expected that teachers will choose texts and learning activities that are appropriate to the student’s needs and the school context. | |
| **Outcomes**  EA11-1, EA11-2, EA11-3, EA11-4, EA11-5, EA11-6, EA11-7, EA11-8, EA11-9 | | **Learning across the curriculum opportunities:**   * Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures * Sustainability * Ethical understanding * Information and communication technology capability * Intercultural understanding |
| **Essential questions**   1. How does narrative shape our understanding of the world? 2. In what ways are the characters in texts imaginative rehearsals for ways of living? 3. Can an unreliable character be a reliable narrator? 4. How is narrative point of view used to create authority in documentary texts? | | |
| **Texts requirements**  Prose Fiction: *The Eye of the Sheep* by Sofie Laguna  Poetry: ‘My Last Duchess’byRobert Browning*; ‘*Autobiography*’* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Are You Beautiful Today?* byRomaine Moreton.  Drama: *Othello* by William Shakespeare  *Bran Nue Dae*, by Jimmy Chi  Documentary films:  *Atomic Café* dir. Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty and Pierce Rafferty (1982)  *Cane Toads: An Unnatural History* dir. Mark Lewis (1988)  *Paul Kelly: Stories of Me* dir. Ian Darling (2012)  *Sherpa* dir. Jennifer Peedom (2015)  *Forgotten Silver* dir. Peter Jackson (1995) | | **Assessment overview**  **Assessment for learning**   * Paragraph responses to ‘Autobiography’ * Imaginative response to Browning’s ‘My Last Duchess’ * Character analyses and synthesising statements in *Othello* * Student experimentation with narrative point of view in composing texts that feature gossip * Class blog on the character of Jimmy Flick   **Assessment as learning**   * Student reflection activities such as the dialogue or blog entry on Frost’s ‘Home Burial’ * Shakespeare performance activity and evaluation * Reflection on group processes   **Assessment of learning**   * Composition of a prologue for *Othello* * Critical response: Can an unreliable character be a reliable narrator? * Assessment Task 2: Documentary: Multimedia group presentation |

| **Content** | **Teaching, learning and assessment** | **Resources** |
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| **EA11-1** responds to, composes and evaluates complex texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure   * explain the relationship between responder, composer, text and context * analyse the ways language features, text structures and stylistic choices shape ideas and perspectives and influence audiences (ACEEN024) * develop independent interpretations of texts supported by informed observation and close textual analysis (ACELR045)   **EA11-3** analyses and uses language forms, features and structures of texts considering appropriateness for specific purposes, audiences and contexts and evaluates their effects on meaning   * explain how argument and narrative may be represented in critical and creative texts   **EA11-4** strategically uses knowledge, skills and understanding of language concepts and literary devices in new and different contexts   * explain how composers (authors, poets, playwrights, directors, designers and so on) adapt language forms, features and structures of texts from other genres, periods and cultures in new texts, for example appropriations in popular culture and the use of literary allusion (ACELR025) | **1: How does narrative shape our understanding of the world?**  In this learning sequence students explore how overarching narratives order our perceptions of human experience. Students engage personally and critically with the ways the assumptions in these texts offer insights on social and cultural narratives that are evident in society.  **(a) ‘**[**Autobiography**](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/42870))***’* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti**   * Teacher hands out fragments drawn from throughout the poem (without the title) and invites students to write a sketch of the persona. Discuss these first impressions. Show students the title and discuss whether the title alters these impressions. * Students read and discuss the poem, as a whole, and have students explore and interpret the assumptions that underpin the specific contextual references in the poem. The teacher models for students how these assumptions represent the persona’s response to narratives presented as prevalent in this society. * The teacher assists students to find Ferlinghetti’s intertextual references, for example lines drawn from Wordsworth’s *Daffodils*, Eliot’s *The Lovesong of J Alfred Prufrock* and Yeats’s *Under Ben Bulben* * Prompts for discussion could include:   + What is Ferlinghetti trying to accomplish through these intertextual references? * Ferlinghetti was a *beat poet.* Students conduct research into this poetic tradition and consider why the poet might draw on poets from the literary canon.   + How might the poet use these references to establish his own literary authority?   + Is it ironic that Ferlinghetti’s resistance to dominant cultural narratives is expressed intertextually in this way? * Assessment for learning: To what extent is the poem actually autobiographical? Students reflect on these prompts in paragraph answers:   + How does the reader know who is speaking in this poem?   + Is the voice of the poem actually the voice of the poet or is it a persona adopted by the poet (in which case is the poem more about the cultural narratives that shape an individual’s relationship with that society than an autobiography?).   + If we are to accept that the poem is autobiographical, how do you account for, at times, the detached voice? Is the persona an outsider? | Poem: *‘*Autobiography*’* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/42870>) |
| **EA11-6** investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts   * compare how composers (authors, poets, playwrights, directors, designers and so on) draw on aspects of other texts, for example through theme, genre, intertextuality, style, event and character * reflect on the ways in which particular texts are influenced by other texts and contexts (ACELR019)   **EA11-7** evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued   * compose creative and critical texts that reflect particular values and perspectives, including their own   **EA11-8** explains and evaluates cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning   * explain and evaluate whether their own perspectives and values align with the perspectives and values expressed in texts (ACELR039) | **(b) ‘My Last Duchess’by Robert Browning**   * The teacher displays this provocation for students:   *Not only do we tell stories, but stories tell us*   * Students work in pairs to rewrite the statement in their own words and to list some of the social and cultural narratives that influence their world and their world view. * The teacher or students read the poem aloud and ask students to apply the provocation to the Duke. Questions for discussion could include:   + What story does the Duke tell?   + In what ways does the Duke’s story ‘tell’ the Duke? How does Browning’s use of language create the Duke’s story (attitude to the subject matter, argument and rationalisation, conversational and threatening tone, enjambment, symbolism of artworks) * What role does social hierarchy play in the relationship between the speaker and the listener? * What impact does the fact that there is a silent listener have on the response? Students role-play a response to the Duke using some of the ploys he uses to establish authority such as rationalisation and innuendo. * Assessment for learning: Students consider fringe characters that are of interest in this narrative. Choose one of these characters and work in pairs to create a text that has that character at the centre of her/his own world. Students might:   + write a diary from the viewpoint of Fra Pandolf on the experience of painting the portrait   + elaborate upon the episode on the terrace   + write a dramatic monologue where the envoy demonstrates confusion about his role in the process. * Students reflect on how prepared they are to accept the dominant social and cultural narratives at play in the text. Students could investigate contextual aspects of Browning’s world * How might males and females respond differently to this dramatic monologue? * How does the form of the dramatic monologue influence narrative?   **(c) ‘Home Burial’by Robert Frost**  The previous two poems, both monologues, offer the reader a different relationship with narrative than texts that have multiple voices. Robert Frost’s ‘Home Burial’ is a dramatic narrative.  The poem is, in many senses, the end of an *untold* narrative as it portrays only the final scenes in the relationship between the husband and the wife.   * Students read the poem several times and hypothesise what the untold story might be. This could be a time line of events. * Discuss with students some of the storytelling techniques used by Frost, for example:   + the conflicting viewpoints developed through the rapid exchanges of dialogue   + the different focus points – the mother focuses on the father’s actions during the burial ceremony and the father focuses on the dead child   + its non-chronological order and how the reader pieces together the pathway of the relationship as they read   + the narrative effect that results from the poem’s backward time frame   + the effect of many unanswered questions   + the metaphorical layering of meaning in the title of the poem. * Students consider the effects of the role of the third-person narrator. Narration, subjugated to dialogue, is used almost as stage directions that create a dramatic narrative.[[1]](#footnote-1) * Students discuss which character’s view orients or focalises the narrative and how this draws on particular cultural narratives. Students present their discussion in the form of a dialogue or blog entry. | ‘My Last Duchess’ by Robert Browning  ‘Home Burial’ by Robert Frost  *Robert Frost and the Modern Narrative Poem* by Dana Goia (2014) |
| **EA11-3** analyses and uses language forms, features and structures of texts considering appropriateness for specific purposes, audiences and contexts and evaluates their effects on meaning   * understand and respect that Aboriginal language dialects and Aboriginal English are expressions of cultural heritage and identity   **EA11-6** investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts   * reflect on the ways in which particular texts are influenced by other texts and contexts (ACELR019)   **EA11-7** evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued   * investigate and explain how composers (authors, poets, playwrights, directors, designers and so on) draw on cultural, textual and linguistic resources to represent particular perspectives in texts   **EA11-8** explains and evaluates cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning   * understand the contemporary application of Aboriginal cultural protocols in the production of texts in order to protect Indigenous cultural and intellectual property * compare cultural perspectives in texts from different personal, social, historical and cultural contexts, including texts by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People(s), other Australians and people with Asian heritage. | In this learning sequence students continue to explore how overarching narratives order our perceptions of human experience through texts that offer Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Students engage personally and critically with the ways the assumptions in these texts offer insights on social and cultural narratives that are evident in society.  **(d) Narratives by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander authors**  In pairs students research Jimmy Chi and Romaine Moreton in order to gain contextual understanding.  Students read Chi’s *Bran Nue Dae* or Moreton’s ‘[Are You Beautiful Today](https://www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/archive/online_archive/v1_5_2001/current/special-feature/moreton.html)?’   1. What was the main textual and cultural influence for Chi and Moreton? 2. How is this represented in their writing? 3. In comparing Chi’s and Moreton’s writing, how do their narratives represent a voice that often is under-represented in mainstream narratives? Include text form and language selection.   Students read the Information Sheet on the website [Artists in the Black](http://www.aitb.com.au/information-sheets/entry/indigenous-cultural-and-intellectual-property-icip) about Indigenous cultural and intellectual property and discuss the notion of collective and individual ‘ownership’ or ‘custodianship’ of cultural narratives or stories. Explain how protocols would be applied if the texts were required to be re-interpreted in another context or form.  Students read an excerpt from [*Indigenous Cultural Protocols and the Arts*](http://media.wix.com/ugd/7bf9b4_9be09e2471b44893919b8127cd18e3b8.pdf)  (pp 26–29) by Terri Janke and Co. about *Calypso Summer* by Jared Thomas [Nukunu] and discuss the approach taken by Thomas to observe cultural protocols in the development of his text.  Students identify the cultural protocols they would observe if they were proposing to represent a local Aboriginal cultural narrative or story in a publication. | Jimmy Chi, *Bran Nue Dae,* in *Postcolonial Plays: An Anthology,* ed Helen Gilbert. Routledge, 2001  Romaine Moreton, *Are You Beautiful Today?* <https://www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/archive/online_archive/v1_5_2001/current/special-feature/moreton.html>  Artists in the Black  <http://www.aitb.com.au/information-sheets/entry/indigenous-cultural-and-intellectual-property-icip>  *Indigenous Cultural Protocols and the Arts* (2016) by Terri Janke and Co.  <http://media.wix.com/ugd/7bf9b4_9be09e2471b44893919b8127cd18e3b8.pdf> |
|  | **2. In what ways are the characters in texts imaginative rehearsals for ways of living? (Focus text *Othello*)**  In this learning sequence, students come to understand, through close study of *Othello*, that a key theme in Shakespeare’s plays was how human beings rely on stories to give meaning to, and make sense of, their lives.  Storytelling in *Othello* is particularly evident through the depiction of characters who recount events, remember experiences, spread rumours, tell lies, report news, give evidence, express feelings, relate dreams.[[2]](#footnote-2)  *For teachers:*  The fact that the play is a performance means that the audience is omniscient: they see Othello’s grandiloquence with the Duke and Senators, Desdemona’s embrace of Othello’s story, Iago’s lies at play, and Othello’s desire to frame the narrative of his death. Through dramatic techniques such as dramatic irony, counterpointing, juxtaposition, the art of rhetoric, the audience knows the whole story and makes judgements about the characters and connections with their own experience. | *Othello* by William Shakespeare  *Reading Shakespeare’s Dramatic Language* by Sylvia Adamson, Lynette Hunter, Lyne Magnusson, Ann Thompson and Katie Wales (2001) |
| **EA11-1** responds to, composes and evaluates complex texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure   * explain the relationship between responder, composer, text and context   **EA11-3** analyses and uses language forms, features and structures of texts considering appropriateness for specific purposes, audiences and contexts and evaluates their effects on meaning   * investigate and explain how mode, medium and form shape responses to texts, for example how spoken language can evoke particular audience reactions (ACELR002) * use appropriate language for making connections, questioning, affirming, challenging and speculating about texts with increasing clarity * use appropriate linguistic, stylistic, critical and creative terminology to compose and respond to texts (ACELR012)   **EA11-4** strategically uses knowledge, skills and understanding of language concepts and literary devices in new and different contexts   * investigate and experiment with combinations of specific language concepts, aspects of style and form to achieve deliberate effects in sustained compositions (ACELR017) * integrate real and imagined experiences by selecting and adapting particular aspects of texts to create new texts (ACELR033)   **EA11-7** evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued   * investigate and explain how composers (authors, poets, playwrights, directors, designers and so on) draw on cultural, textual and linguistic resources to represent particular perspectives in texts * compose creative and critical texts that reflect particular values and perspectives, including their own | **(a) Introducing the play**  As an introductory activity students engage with the characterisation of Othello and Iago through scene analysis.   * Introduce the play by dividing the class into halves, allocating each a soliloquy from the play, either Act I, Scene 3 or Act 4, Scene 1. * Students hypothesise about Shakespeare’s characterisation of Othello in the soliloquy through close reading of aspects of language such as syntax, poetry/prose, patterning, tone. * Students share their findings and speculate about the characterisation of Othello, what may have led to this change and what the play may generally be about? * Students apply this prompt to the opening scene of the play: what draws one into a story? Here, students may explore the positioning of the audience through their overhearing Iago gossiping with Roderigo. * Display for students the exchange between Othello in Act 1 Scene 2 ‘But I pray, sir … shall manifest me rightly’ and allocate pairs to prepare a reading of this exchange. As students prepare a performance of the reading instruct students to:   + experiment with interpretations of the punctuation, for example the differences between statements, interjections and questions   + consider how the use of pronouns, alliteration, assonance and repetition influences meaning   + use their voices to emphasise different verbs and nouns that suggest status   + assess the effects of these variations on characterisation. * Students reflect on the title *Othello: The Moor of Venice*, what it means to be a ‘Moor in Venice’. Students could explore its etymology and appreciate the nuances of its meaning in the early seventeenth century. * Students refine their earlier predictions about the play and share their initial responses to the key characters.   **(b) Considering how human beings rely on stories to give meaning to, and make sense of, their lives.**  In this learning sequence students explore how *Othello* offers insights about the ways human beings rely on stories to give meaning to, and make sense of, their lives. Students discuss whether Shakespeare’s treatment of this theme offers profound insights about the nature of human experience including the relationships between:   * storytelling and identity * the tale and the listener * individuals, language and cultural narratives.   **(i) Storytelling and identity**   * Students conduct character analyses of how storytelling frames identity in Othello’s private and public life. They could use these extracts as a starting point:   + Othello’s narration of his life as a romance tale of danger, capture, slavery, rescue   + Othello’s desire to control the story of his life even at the point of death in Act 5 Scene 2   + Brabantio’s embodiment of cultural narratives that position Othello as an outsider in Acts 1 and 2.   **(ii) The tale and the listener**   * Students develop observations about the interaction between the tale and the listener through:   + analysing the interaction between the listener, Desdemona, and storyteller, Othello, and how this affirms identity through storytelling. Students might consider extracts in Act 1 Scene 3 such as:     - ‘She’d come again and with a greedy ear / Devour up my discourse’ (150–1)     - She swore in faith ’twas strange, ’twas passing strange,’     - ‘Twas pitiful, ’twas wondrous pitiful; She wished she had not heard it, yet …’ (161–3) * Invite students to explain whether the empathy and attraction that Desdemona experiences is also experienced by the audience. * The teacher displays this provocation for students:   *Iago’s manipulation of Othello operates by creating stories through association. Iago operates on a micro (word) level, provoking Othello to ‘fill in the gaps’ in Iago’s narrative.*   * + Students make a list of Iago’s words that are triggers for Othello’s vulnerabilities.   + Students comment on the ways Othello fills in the gaps in Iago’s narrative.   + Based on this analysis, students develop a series of synthesising statements that capture the narratives that guide Iago’s actions.   + A modelled example for students could be based on Iago’s dialogue in Act 3 Scene 3 from ‘I do beseech you … take no notice.’ Particular attention could be paid to the ways that Iago plants, then cancels, suggestions.   **(iii) Language and cultural narratives**  Proverbs can be described as expressions of common knowledge that embody familiar truths and in this way they may persuade us to adopt particular narratives.   * Students recall some proverbs in earlier and current usage that embody common knowledge and familiar truths. These could include proverbs from different cultures. Students identify how these suggest particular cultural narratives and whether these narratives may be affirmed or challenged. * In *Othello* characters frequently speak in aphorisms and proverbs commonly used in seventeenth-century England. Iago relies on invented proverbs that make his language sound proverbial and naturalise the advice he offers. It makes the advice he offers sound like accepted truths. Display for students a series of instances from the play where proverbs are used to draw people into particular cultural narratives. These could include:   + The Duke’s advice to Brabantio in Act 1 Sc 3 and Brabantio’s response   + Students compare this to the ways Iago uses words throughout the play, for example in Act 2 when he establishes his authority over Roderigo with a series of aphorisms. * Invite students to reflect on how the use of aphorisms positions the audience in their response to the characters.   **(iv) Assessment for learning: Synthesising activity**  Throughout this sequence, students have explored how Shakespeare illustrates the way humans may interpret their lives through their own stories and the stories of others. In this activity students will develop a prologue for *Othello* that offers audiences some advice on what the characterisation in the play has to offer as an imaginative rehearsal for ways of living.  Students:   * Discuss the different contemporary contexts in which a prologue might operate, for example its function at a ceremony * Discuss how the prologue shapes the expectations of the audience, to control the interaction between event and audience. * Review some of the Shakespearean prologues that students may have encountered, for example *Romeo and Juliet*. * Suggest to students that   + prologues foreground shared interests and experiences and they may be imaginative rehearsals of ways of living   + the speaker is positioned apart from the action   + the speaker has a claim on authority   + the style of the prologue could range from grandiloquent to conversational. * Students compose a prologue to the play that frames what they believe audiences should take away about the role of storytelling in human experience.   Students:   * + deliver dramatic readings of these prologues to the class   + compose a reflection on whether *Othello* offers imaginative rehearsals for ways of living. |  |
| **EA11-1** responds to, composes and evaluates complex texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure   * explain the relationship between responder, composer, text and context * appreciate the aesthetic qualities of texts and the power of language to express personal ideas and experiences   **EA11-4** strategically uses knowledge, skills and understanding of language concepts and literary devices in new and different contexts   * draw on knowledge and experience of literary devices, for example genre and hybridity, in creating new texts (ACELR050)   **EA11-5** thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically to respond to, evaluate and compose texts that synthesise complex information, ideas and arguments   * investigate, reflect on and explain differences between initial personal responses and more studied and complex responses (ACELR003) * examine different points of view expressed in texts, for example those of characters, narrators and the implied author, and the ways in which these points of view are created (ACELR006) * select and use particular aspects of language, style and convention, for example narrative point of view, syntax, modality and nominalisation   **EA11-6** investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts   * analyse the relationships between conventions of genre, audience expectations and interpretations of texts, and the ways texts may conform or subvert these conventions (ACELR020)   **EA11-7** evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued   * understand that texts offer vicarious experiences of the wider world for critical reflection and pleasure (ACELR015) * understand and analyse the effect of language and structural choices on shaping own and others’ perspectives, for example figurative language or narrative point of view   **EA11-9** reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and adjusts individual and collaborative processes to develop as an independent learner   * identify and articulate how their own processes of response and composition are the same or different to others   **EA11-1** responds to, composes and evaluates complex texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure   * explain the relationship between responder, composer, text and context * appreciate the aesthetic qualities of texts and the power of language to express personal ideas and experiences | **(c) Can an unreliable character be a reliable narrator?**  In this learning sequence students explore the role of point of view in narrative and how it positions the reader to respond in particular ways.  *For the teacher:*  Robert Scholes in *The Nature of Narrative* states that in any narrative art there are three points of view: those of the characters, the narrator and the audience. After some initial activities on the concept of point of view, students focus on Sofie Laguna’s novel, *The Eye of the Sheep*, exploring the role of the narrator in storytelling and the relationships that the character of Jimmy forges with readers. Students will explore, and experiment with:   * how point of view shapes interpretations of narrative * how composers experiment with stylistic effects to create point of view * how we may determine whether a narrator is reliable.   **(i) How point of view shapes interpretations of narrative**  Point of view determines how the story will be presented to the reader. Composers experiment with different linguistic and generic codes and conventions to create a particular narrative point of view.  Assessment for learning: Introduce this concept through a creative writing activity[[3]](#footnote-3):   * Ask students to recall a piece of gossip they have recently heard and have them write a recount of what happened in plain, unadorned declarative sentences. The gossip should be something that could be contested. * Remind students that gossip:   + is imbued with conflict   + often requires the reader to pass judgement on the character of the people involved. * Display for students the artwork [*A Fallen Idol*](http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artwork/9668/a-fallen-idol). This painting is regarded as a ‘problem’ painting’ because of the ambiguities in its point of view. On its display in art galleries in 1913, this artwork attracted many spectators as they tried to determine who the fallen idol was, and indeed it generated a newspaper competition where people vied with one another in developing scenarios for the situation. Discussion prompts with students could include:   + What is the significance of the indefinite article in the title? How does this position the viewer?   + Who is the fallen idol and why do you think this is the case?   + What gossip could be associated with this situation?   + In what way is the point of view in the painting ambiguous?   + How much class agreement about the meaning of the painting? * Students work in pairs to experiment with point of view in their gossip recounts. * Students could rewrite their original recount   + from the point of view of the person who is the object of the gossip, or   + from a more nuanced or ambiguous point of view such as in the painting. * Students reflect on which narrator is (un)reliable.   **(ii) How composers experiment with stylistic effects to create point of view**  In this sequence of activities students engage in close study of Sofie Laguna’s novel, *The Eye of the Sheep,* focusing particularly on how Laguna creates the child narrator, Jimmy Flick.   * Prior to students reading the novel in its entirety, read its opening pages from *It was Saturday morning* to … *I closed my eyes and made a picture of my Dad’s hands.* Here students meet three of the main characters in the novel, including Jimmy and his parents. Prompts for exploration might include:   + What are your initial impressions of Jimmy and his parents?   + Where in time and place would you situate this story? * Students make a list of any experimental aspects of Laguna’s writing and then have them respond to discussion questions such as:   + What is distinctive about the narrative voice of Jimmy? Students might consider the rhythm of sentences, speech patterns such as repetition of words and phrases, expressions such as *hose-snake*, the symbolism of the word *network.*   + Is Jimmy unusual in anyway? If so, how?   + Are you engaged by this narrative voice? Why? Why not? * Assessment for learning: As a concluding activity students determine whether they trust Jimmy. Students contribute their conclusions to a class blog.   **(iii) The characterisation of Jimmy**   * In an interview with [The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/17/stella-prize-2015-six-australian-authors-on-the-stories-behind-their-books) newspaper Sofie Laguna said that she knew Jimmy was going to be a manic character. Students explore how Laguna achieves this. * Laguna also states that she knew Jimmy’s understanding of the world would be ‘naïve … also empathetic, often profound, intuitive and poetic’. Discuss with the class the differences between these aspects of understanding. * Divide the class into groups and have students identify and analyse occasions drawn from the narrative where Jimmy is seen as naïve, profound, intuitive or poetic. What stylistic elements does Laguna draw on to create this? What does this add to the narrative style of the novel? Does this engage the students? * Throughout the novel Laguna portrays the inner life of Jimmy as he responds to the troubled world he encounters. Students can analyse Jimmy’s perception of the troubles he encounters in his life such as the impact of:   + uncertainty of employment and poverty on his family   + his father’s inner demons and eventual abandonment of the family   + Robbie’s escape from the family   + his mother’s failing health. * How does Laguna’s portrayal of the inner life of Jimmy direct the reader to the values in the text? In what ways does this influence the perspective of the text on the world? How does this come into play particularly in the final chapter of the novel?   **(iv) Can an unreliable character be a reliable narrator?**  In this activity students consider how and whether their view of Jimmy has shifted as they have engaged with the text. In the opening discussion of the narrative viewpoint, students have considered whether they trust Jimmy as a narrator. Jimmy is an idiosyncratic, perhaps unreliable, character, but is he an unreliable or reliable narrator?   * To consider whether Jimmy is a reliable narrator, students might consider whether he is: * too self-interested? * too inexperienced? * sufficiently knowledgeable? * sufficiently moral? * too emotional? * too inconsistent? * Based on these questions students: * use evidence drawn from the text as a basis to determine whether they see Jimmy as a reliable or unreliable narrator * consider how effectively Laguna has experimented with the conventions of narrative point of view * reflect on their own engagement and empathy with Jimmy as an (un)reliable character and narrator. * present their response to this question in an essay. | *The Nature of Narrative* by Robert Scholes, James Phelan and Robert Kellogg (2006)  *Naming the World* by Bret Anthony Johnston (2008)  *The Eye of the Sheep* by Sofie Laguna  <http://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/sofie-laguna-interview/>  Artwork: [*A Fallen Idol*](http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artwork/9668/a-fallen-idol) by John Collier <http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artwork/9668/a-fallen-idol>  Newspaper review from [*The Guardian*](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/17/stella-prize-2015-six-australian-authors-on-the-stories-behind-their-books)  <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/17/stella-prize-2015-six-australian-authors-on-the-stories-behind-their-books> |
| **EA11-2** uses and evaluates processes, skills and knowledge required to effectively respond to and compose texts in different modes, media and technologies   * examine the ways composers (authors, poets, playwrights, directors, designers and so on) apply textual conventions to shape meaning in different modes, media and technologies * explore the ways different media and technologies influence the relationships between texts and responders (readers. listeners, viewers or audiences and so on), for example flexible reading pathways in digital texts * explain how the reliability of texts is shaped and influenced by choices of medium * examine the effects of combining linguistic and multimedial conventions in texts   **EA11-4** strategically uses knowledge, skills and understanding of language concepts and literary devices in new and different contexts   * understand that significant language concepts may operate across different textual forms, for example narrative and point of view in speeches, documentaries and poems     **EA11-5** thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically to respond to, evaluate and compose texts that synthesise complex information, ideas and arguments   * compare the ways texts may be composed and responded to in different contexts and how this influences meaning * investigate complex ideas and information through sustained argument and imaginative compositions   **EA11-6** investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts   * compare how composers (authors, poets, playwrights, directors, designers and so on) draw on aspects of other texts, for example through theme, genre, intertextuality, style, event and character * investigate similarities and differences between and among texts that may be linked by form, perspective or genre   **EA11-7** evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued   * analyse how and why perspectives are represented differently in a range of complex texts   **EA11-9** reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and adjusts individual and collaborative processes to develop as an independent learner   * apply knowledge and communication skills gained in collaborative and independent learning environments to new learning contexts | **4. How is narrative point of view used to create authority in documentary texts?**  In this learning sequence students reflect on the relationship they, as readers, develop with the narrator and narrative perspective in non-fiction texts. Students come to understand that while a documentary text may be premised on its authority over an area of investigation, the responder also exerts authority over the text by comparing the text to their understanding of the world.  **(i) Introducing an inquiry project**  Students will research and analyse how documentary films, including the film, [The Atomic Café](http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-atomic-cafe/) , establish authority through narrative point of view. Students undertake research into the following inquiry question:  *In what ways do documentary texts establish authority by being unavoidably ‘first person’?*  They will report their findings in a multimodal presentation.   * Discuss with students what they expect the role of the narrator to be in documentary. As a class, develop a list of characteristics and expectations. * Divide students into groups and allocate them a documentary to view as a focus text for this investigation. Documentaries could include *Cane Toads* (a humorous documentary), Paul Kelly *Stories of Me* (a paean), *Sherpa* or *Forgotten Silver* (a fake documentary).Students could also explore a range of autobiographical documentaries. * Display the questions below for students and invite them to use these as guiding questions to frame some wide reading and independent research of documentary films.   + Who is the narrator?   + Is the story told from single or multiple points of view?   + Is there an authoritative position from which events are viewed?   + Does the narrator draw attention to her/himself?   + Can you determine the narrator’s personal characteristics? What does this tell you about how authority shapes point of view?   + Is the premise of the documentary non-contradictory?   + How does the point of view establish the authority of the text through the approaches suggested in these questions?   + How is your response affected by the establishment of the narrative point of view?   **(ii) Exploring *The Atomic Café***  *The Atomic Café* is an historical documentary composed entirely of archival footage. There is no voice-over narration. After viewing the film, discuss with students features of the documentary. Focus activities could include:   * What critique of government response to the threat of nuclear war does this film offer? * In what ways do the people speaking in extracts speak with the trappings of authority? Students analyse two or three extracts commenting on how the personas establish their authority through tone, diction and emphasis. * Students determine whether they believe that the speakers in the historical extracts are telling the truth. If not, where is truth found in this documentary? * Students:   + analyse the cinematic use of editing and juxtaposition   + comment on how the rapid montage, for example *The* *Troop Test Smoky* sequence, creates meaning that undermines the authority of the original footage   + hypothesise about why the documentary-makers did not include any more recent footage on the marines and how they have been affected. * Students may consider:   + whether the film has a unified narrative point of view and whether this point of view is omniscient   + the ways the composers have adapted the documentary genre for their own political purposes (protest)   + how the documentary undermines the authority of the original footage in order to establish its own authoritative point of view   + how the documentary challenges the documentary genre.   **(iii) Delivering findings on the inquiry**   * After the groups have investigated their allocated documentary and considered the documentary style of *The Atomic Café*, re-form groups so each group has a representative from each documentary. * Students report their findings on the inquiry question in a four-minute multimodal presentation that:   + compares the role of narrative viewpoints in establishing the authority of the documentary in *The Atomic Café* and four other documentaries   + addresses whether the viewpoints established in the documentary challenge or affirm their own view on the subject matter.   Students complete a reflection on the successes and challenges in group work. | *The* [*Atomic Café*](http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-atomic-cafe/) dir. by Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty and Pierce Rafferty  *http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-atomic-cafe/*  *Cane Toads* dir. by Mark Lewis  *Paul Kelly: Stories of Me* dir. Ian Darling  *Sherpa* dir. by Jennifer Peedom  *Forgotten Silver* dir. Peter Jackson |
| **EA11-9** reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and adjusts individual and collaborative processes to develop as an independent learner   * reflect on and discuss personal preferences and insights gained from engagement with an increasingly widening repertoire of complex texts | **Reflection and evaluation**  Students reflect on what they have learned from the texts they have studied about the power of narrative to shape our perceptions of our world and our human experiences.  Students submit a written evaluation of the unit, focusing on the following:   * What was the best part of the unit? * Which teaching and learning strategies were the most effective? * How would you improve the course for students in the future? | |

1. Dana Goia *Robert Frost and the Modern Narrative* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. David Scott Kastan, *Reading Shakespeare’s Dramatic Techniques*, Chapter 7 ‘Narrative’ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Naming the World* by Bret Anthony Johnston (p 149) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)