

CHAPTER 2

Listening to texts

In this chapter you will listen to a range of texts to

- identify features of language used by the texts
- discuss the effects of using various language features
- identify the purpose of different texts and the audience for which they were written
- identify attitudes and beliefs displayed in spoken texts
- relate spoken texts to your own experience.

Story time

Small children love to listen to stories that are read to them: places are visited, people are introduced, and worlds created. When you sit to listen to a story, it is a time set aside – there is no skimming through pages, no reading back over that last sentence and no flicking to the end just to check. You can close your eyes and let your mind take you on a journey.

A particular feature of listening to a text is that it can bring out the rhythms of the words, and the patterns in the sounds. Imagery and description can have an enhanced effect as we imagine the world being presented to us.

Activity: Listening to a fiction narrative

Go to [▶ ESA Online](#)

Follow the links from the Year 10 English Study Guide to *The Whale Rider*. Listen to the beginning of Jay Laga'aia's reading of *The Whale Rider* by Witi Ihimaera. You, or your teacher, can stop the audio at the end of each track to complete the following tasks.

1. Relax into the scene setting. At the end of Track 2, note down details that you remember from the description.
2. Track 3 introduces the character of Kahutia Te Rangi, the Whale Rider.
 - a. How is he described?
 - b. What impression do you get of the character of Kahutia?

3. The introduction establishes the background to the story.
 - a. What do you understand about what is happening?
 - b. Are there parts of this story of the whales that you think might be symbolic?
4. Tracks 5 and 6 introduce the characters of Nanny Flowers and Koro Apirana. After each track, complete a spider diagram of details you remember about each character.
5. Track 5 begins, "I suppose if this story has a beginning, it begins with Kahu ...". This casual statement indicates that the narrator, or storyteller, is giving his own interpretation of events in telling the story. What impression do you have of Rawiri, the narrator?

Mad Myths, by Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore, takes quite a different approach to presenting a somewhat unexpected reality. Listen to the first part of the story *Mind the Door!*, read by Nigel Lambert. Nigel Lambert uses many techniques in his reading to bring the story to life for his listeners. As you keep listening, notice his use of **pause** and **pace**, heightening the sense of drama.

Activity: Listening to a humorous story

Go to [▶ ESA Online](#)

Follow the links from the Year 10 English Study Guide to *Mad Myths: Mind the Door*. You, or your teacher, can stop the audio at the end of each track to answer the following questions.

1. Listen to Track 1. Vivid imagery is used to set the scene in the cellar.
 - a. What details have stuck in your mind?
 - b. Can you identify any language techniques used here?
2. Listen to Track 2. A section of **dialogue** introduces us to the characters Perce and Andy. What impression of them do you get in this first scene?
3. Listen to Track 3. In this section a feeling of mystery and suspense is built up. How is this established?
4. Listen to Track 4. Enjoy the introduction of Mr "Slimey" Grimes, the old caretaker. What are some of the voice techniques used by Lambert in his reading?
5. What happens from here? Brainstorm ideas for the rest of the plot. Write up your outline. Choose one setting or character for your own continuation of the story. Write a description of the setting or character, using some of the techniques used in the original.

CHAPTER 8

Descriptive writing

In this chapter you will learn about

- the elements of descriptive prose
- the elements of descriptive poetry
- how tension is used in descriptive writing
- how conflict is used in descriptive writing.

Prose writing

Descriptive prose writing is used in texts such as novels, short stories and short, descriptive articles about people and places. The same aspects of writing are utilised whether the text uses 200 or 2000 words; those aspects are language and structure, and elements such as setting, character and theme. These are used to create a text that is appropriate to the story the writer wants to tell, the particular readers the writer wants to appeal to and the **themes** the writer wants those readers to think about.

There are two other elements that may be present in a piece of descriptive writing that can make a big difference to the overall effect of the text on the reader. They are tension and **conflict**.

Tension

Tension, or suspense, is a feeling of dread or fear. In descriptive prose the writer creates tension for the characters in the text, and that tension is experienced by the reader. In the following passage from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens the setting is the chateau (country estate) of the Marquis St. Evremonde, a cruel, arrogant French aristocrat.



Charles Dickens, 1812–1870

Learn from the experts

For three heavy hours, the stone faces of the chateau, lion and human, stared blindly at the night. Dead darkness lay on all the landscape, dead darkness added its own hush to the hushing dust on all the roads. The burial-place had got to the pass that its little heaps of poor grass were undistinguishable from one another; the figure on the Cross might have



come down, for anything that could be seen of it. In the village, taxers and taxed were fast asleep. Dreaming, perhaps, of banquets, as the starved usually do, and of ease and rest, as the driven slave and the yoked ox may, its lean inhabitants slept soundly, and were fed and freed. The fountain in the village flowed unseen and unheard, and the fountain at the chateau dropped unseen and unheard – both melting away, like the minutes that were falling from the spring of Time – through three dark hours. Then, the grey water of both began to be ghostly in the light, and the eyes of the stone faces of the chateau were opened.

Lighter and lighter, until at last the sun touched the tops of the still trees, and poured its radiance over the hill. In the glow, the water of the chateau fountain seemed to turn to blood, and the stone faces crimsoned. The carol of the birds was loud and high, and, on the weather-beaten sill of the great window of the bed-chamber of Monsieur the Marquis, one little bird sang its sweetest song with all its might. At this, the nearest stone face seemed to stare amazed, and, with open mouth and dropped under-jaw, looked awe-stricken.

If we look closely at the language Dickens uses in the first paragraph we can see how, in what is apparently just a description of a physical setting, he has created an ominous sense of foreboding. The images Dickens creates foreshadow, or predict, the violent death of the Marquis.

Figure of speech	Example	Effect
Alliteration	dead darkness	Reinforces the dark stillness of the night.
Repetition	dead, dead	Plants the idea of death firmly in the reader's mind.

CHAPTER 14

Presenting live drama

By the end of this chapter you will be able to

- build and develop a character for performance
- understand and employ the techniques of drama
- write a drama script
- demonstrate knowledge of a theatre form.

The ability to speak, listen, communicate, and work as part of an ensemble or team are essential skills for everyday life. Drama and developing the ability to perform before a live audience can enable you to speak confidently in public, and be more persuasive in your oral and written communications. Drama can also give you the tools to show confidence and composure during stressful situations, such as when delivering a speech, at a job interview and during a debate.

History of modern theatre

Russian theatre director Konstantin Stanislavski (1863–1938) has been called the “father of modern theatre”. He rejected the nineteenth century’s “over-the-top” acting style of **Melodrama**, and developed a series of acting techniques, which he called “The System”. Stanislavski’s system was extremely revolutionary at the time, and helped to establish the twentieth century theatre style of **Naturalism**. “The System” involves the actor using their voice, body and mind to create believable and psychologically truthful characters. Stanislavski taught the actor to draw from their own past experiences, emotions and memories to build a three-dimensional, convincing character.

Stanislavski’s theories and techniques were hugely influential and are used by many performers today. American director Lee Strasberg adapted



Konstantin Stanislavski

Johnny Depp draws from his own life experiences and emotions when developing a role, saying that, “with any part you play, there is a certain amount of yourself in it. There has to be, otherwise it’s just not acting. It’s lying.”

Stanislavski’s system and renamed it “The Method”. Famous Method actors include Christian Bale, Cate Blanchett, Edward Norton, Charlize Theron, Daniel Day-Lewis, Russell Crowe, Angelina Jolie, Joaquin Phoenix and Heath Ledger.

Drama techniques

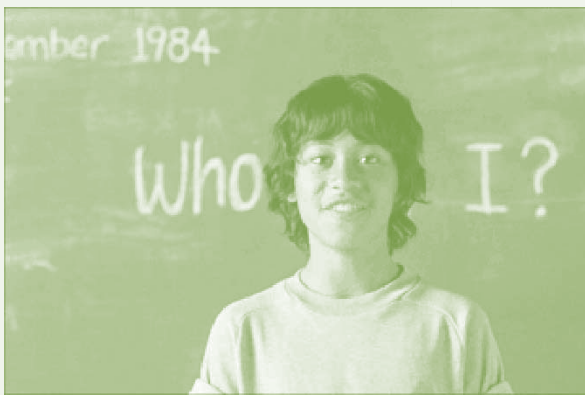
In live performance work, actors alter their use of the four drama techniques of voice, body, movement and space to help develop truthful three-dimensional characters. Members of the audience gain insight into the characters’ attitudes, mental state, and their relationship with others, through responding to the actors’ use of drama techniques.

The chart below describes many of the ways a performer can change and manipulate the drama techniques to help create a powerful performance.

Drama technique	Features	
Voice	Pace Pitch Pause Volume Tone Accent	How quickly or slowly the lines are spoken How high or low the lines are spoken Use of silence, where nothing is spoken How loudly or softly words are spoken The mood and emotion behind the words A distinctive way of talking that reveals the character’s geographical or social background
Body	Gesture Posture Facial expression Eye line and eye contact	A movement of a part of body Stance or how the character stands Facial muscles used to convey emotion/attitude Where the character looks and at whom
Movement	Timing Energy Direction	When you move How you move, and how quickly Where you move. Does the actor wander around in a circle or do they walk towards the audience?
Space	Levels Grouping Personal General	Low, medium, high How people gather on stage Own space All the other space

setting marred only by the heap of rusting, abandoned cars characteristic of such small New Zealand locations. The main character, Boy, lives in a rundown house, with few amenities, in Raukokore. The beach is on the doorstep and the house is surrounded by open farmland. The children in the community all attend the local area school, which is also very basic, with several year levels of students in one classroom. The smallness and relative isolation of the community means that everyone knows everyone. The main character's auntie runs the local shop, the mail delivery and the school bus. When Alamein, Boy's father, and his mates steal dope from the local gang leader they get a hiding, but there is not the same level of violence involved as there might be in a bigger community. Alamein and his friends are simply put in their place.

Character and plot



Mid-shot of Boy giving his class talk at the start of the movie

Boy

Boy is the central character. Eleven years old, he is the elder of two Māori boys who live with their grandmother, Nan, and several cousins.

At the beginning of the movie Boy introduces himself and his world to us by means of a talk in front of the class at school. Soon after, Alamein, Boy's father, returns to Raukokore and the family home. Nan, who looks after Boy,

his brother Rocky and their younger cousins, is away at a funeral (tangihanga), and Boy has been left in charge. Whenever Nan is away, responsibility for the family (whānau) falls to Boy. He accepts that responsibility and carries out his part with a good heart; in his own innocent way he looks after the younger children. He has a passion for Michael Jackson, a crush on Chardonnay, an older girl at the school and loves his goat Leaf,

who is his confidante. Boy has an idealised image of his father; in his class talk he describes him as a carver, heroic war veteran and good sportsman. Reality is different. On his return, Alamein has his two mates, Juju and Chuppa, with him and it becomes clear that they have returned to find the stash of stolen money Alamein buried in the paddock in a botched escape from the police after a robbery. Alamein has been in prison, not busy overseas as Boy insists to his mates. Alamein persuades everyone to dig up the paddock with shovels as he indulges his fantasy about being a feared gang leader.

While Alamein and his mates are away, Boy finds the money and hides it in an old car, which is used as a shelter for his goat, Leaf. Boy spends some of the money on his mates. The goat eats the rest of the money.

We learn that Boy's mother died at the birth of Rocky, Boy's younger brother. At the start of the movie, when he introduces himself, Boy seems to have a positive, well-adjusted, out-going personality. When his father returns, it is clear that Boy wants to please him and to be a part of his *father's* fantasy world, which he accepts without question, mingling his fantasies of his father with those he has of Michael Jackson. Boy becomes more and more immersed in Alamein's world of fantasy, alcohol and drugs, neglecting his friends and the other children.

When Alamein loses hope of finding his own stash, he and his mates steal a significant amount of the marijuana crop. Dynasty's dad and his gang give Alamein and his mates a hiding at the pub. On the way home Alamein drives into Leaf, Boy's goat, fatally wounding it. Later that night Boy and Rocky return to find the dying goat. They take its body home and bury it.



Leaf the goat standing in front of his shelter, a wrecked car

Part One: Speaking and Listening

Chapter 2

Activity: Listening to a fiction narrative (page 15)

2. Track 3 introduces the character of Kahutia Te Rangi, the Whale Rider.
 - a. He is described as riding the gigantic humpback whale or paikea; “wondrous to look upon”; “eyes shining with splendour, his body dazzled with diamond spray”; he “looked like a small figurine, dark born, glistening and erect”; “long-sought and now found”; “the gift long-awaited for, tangata, man”.
 - b. Strong – seemed to be “pulling the whale into the sky”; not all-powerful – the last spear “refused to leave his hand”; brave – was “astride the head” of the monster; full of life – flinging spears that then came alive.
3. a. The whales were waiting for the migration; an orphan whale was mourning; a person was playing the flute, and became the orphan’s master; the orphan whale stayed with his master, rather than going with the herd. Time passed, and the whale aged. The song of the flute signalled the turning of his thoughts to the dangerous isles of the southwest.
4. Koro Apirana: he “said, disgusted, ‘I will have nothing to do with her. She has broken the male line of descent in our tribe’ ”; “stomped out of the house”; “when angry, would row out to the middle of the ocean to sulk”; “pretended he didn’t hear” his wife; “couldn’t reconcile traditional beliefs with her birth”. Nanny Flowers: she was “used to Koro Apirana’s growly ways”; “threatened to divorce him every second day”; “it didn’t bother her if the baby was a girl or a boy”; her eyes went “sort of cross-eyed as they did whenever she was overcome with love”; disliked telephones, and was “shaken to hear the voice coming out of the handpiece”; to deal with Koro she made her face grim, hands on hips; called out, “Hey, you old bugger”, the affectionate name she called him when she wanted him to know that she loved him”; took out Rawiri’s dinghy, and “chased after him all afternoon to growl”; she “tied his boat to hers and pulled him back to the beach”.
5. Casual – “when Kahu arrived, well, we were looking the other way really”; one of the lads – “me and the boys, having a few drinks and a party”; light-hearted – “Hey, old lady, you’re supposed to put the phone to your ear, so you can hear”; caring – “I went up to her and put the handpiece next to her head”.

Activity: Listening to a humorous story (page 16)

1. b. foreshadowing – door that “no-one had given a second thought”; metaphor and allusion – in the days of solid fuel the cellar was “a terrible underworld ... a demon king and imps bent on mischief”; personification

– “timid little boxes”; listing – “shelves of buckets, mops, disinfectant, scratchy toilet paper – special schools issue, paper towels”; personification – “the cellar door waited”.

3. The scene is set: a crowded playground full of action – footballs, stickers, skipping ropes, first years being dropped off by protective parents. We are warned that adults never believe anything, with a reminder of “the supply teacher from hell”. A simple, strong statement is made: “It was then that the man appeared.”

The characters’ quiet, still and awe-struck reactions are described: they variously “gaped”, “whistled softly”, “stared open-mouthed”, “stood still, then they quickly parted”. Biblical imagery is used to heighten the situation – “Moses-like, the man moved through them”. The tension is maintained as “dozens of eyes followed him, until he disappeared around the corner of the school towards the kitchen”. With the kids in the scene we share “a collective sigh of relief”.

4. pause, expression, variation in pace, variation in tone, accents for different characters, rolled “r”s.

Activity: A process for listening (page 17)

2. **repeated structures and stanza patterns** – stanzas follow pattern of command, question, answer. This emphasises the repetitive and tedious nature of Mary’s domestic life, and the numerous chores that she has to do. In the final stanza, the repetition in “comes in each night and / goes out each morning” reflects the unchanging rhythm of Mary’s lonely life.

use of speech – the conversation that runs inside her head highlights Mary’s isolation and loneliness.

detailed images – “Rock and Pillar” places Mary Lawry in sparsely populated Maniototo hills; “a rose a young appletree” are images of romance and youth, perhaps hinting at Mary’s hopes.

personification – “rough wind scraping his boots” even the wind is harsh, not bothering with her, except to scrape dirt off the bottom of his feet; “cocky sun ... off up the valley” giving a token recognition then leaving; her crowd of company being only “thick cloud / a rose a young appletree”; these all show Mary’s sense of being deserted and alone.

sound techniques – variation in pace: brisk pace to the commands that begin each stanza, relating to the no-nonsense orders given to a domestic servant, and the sense of necessity to prepare for guests; pace slows for the question of who might be expected; and ends with a slow resignation to the fact of nobody else coming; **half-rhyme** of Mary, valley, company, appletree – there is almost hope that it will amount to some kind of pattern, but the rhyme dissolves by the last stanza, to the statement of “a quiet man ...”; **assonance** of crowd, cloud – similar sound accentuates the absence of people.

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