

NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Stages from: Shanks, B (2008) derived from Applebees (1978)

Chart adapted from: Ripley, K (2012), Talking Together (2021)

Name of Stage	Age	Narrative Development	Example
Heaps	2 years	Lots of words but no structure e.g., unrelated ideas and frequent topic switches.	"There's a dog. That man is on a ladder. The flower is red."
Sequences	2-3 years	Children tell a story where the structure comes from arbitrary links between a main character, setting or topic. Occasional links between elements of the story. No cause-effect relationships	"The boy has a ball. The ball is red. I like to play ball."
Primitive narratives	3-4 years	The story will contain information on main character, setting or topic. The events follow a central theme. Cause and effect relationships emerge. May use inference.	"I went to school. I saw the teachers. In the playground I fell over and I started to cry because it hurt. The nurse gave me a plaster."
Focussed chain narratives	4-5 years	The story contains a main character, setting and topic. There is a logical sequence of events but the story lacks plot. The lack of plot is a result of the child not understanding character motivation and goals. This means the listener might need additional information to correctly interpret the end of the story.	"Once upon a time there was a little girl called Jenny, she went to the park and met her friend Jane. They played on the swings. Then there was a dog that was barking at them. Jenny didn't like the dog."

True Narratives.	5-7 years	The story contains plot and character development and/ or a problem that is resolved at the end. There is a logical sequence of connected events. The plot results from the motivations and goals of the main character	<p>“One day when Jack and Mary were out on a walk they saw a little old lady who looked sad. The lady was carrying lots of paper. Mary asked her what was wrong. The little old lady said that she had lost her cat. She showed them the paper, there was a picture of a black cat with white paws on it. Mary and Jack promised to help the old lady look. They searched all day until suddenly Mary heard a cat crying. She had found it but the cat was stuck in tree. Fortunately, Jack was very good at climbing trees and was able to get the cat down. Jack and Mary took the cat back to the old lady who was very happy to see her cat and gave Jack and Mary a very tasty cake as a prize.”</p>
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