

# COMPETENCY 1

## READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

### SKILL **Phonemic awareness** 1.1

**PHONEMIC AWARENESS** is the acknowledgement of sounds and words, for example, a child’s realization that some words rhyme. Onset and rhyme, for example, are skills that might help students learn that the sound of the first letter “b” in the word “bad” can be changed with the sound “d” to make it “dad.” The key in phonemic awareness is that when you teach it to children, it can be taught with the students’ eyes closed. In other words, it’s all about sounds, not about ascribing written letters to sounds.

To be phonemically aware, means that the reader and listener can recognize and manipulate specific sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness deals with sounds in words that are spoken. The majority of phonemic awareness tasks, activities, and exercises are **oral**.

### Teaching Phonemic Awareness

Since the ability to distinguish between individual sounds, or phonemes, within words is a prerequisite to association of sounds with letters and manipulating sounds to blend words—a fancy way of saying “reading”—the teaching of phonemic awareness is crucial to emergent literacy (early childhood K-2 reading instruction). Children need a strong background in phonemic awareness in order for phonics instruction (sound –spelling relationship-printed materials) to be effective.

**PHONEMIC AWARENESS:** the acknowledgement of sounds and words, for example, a child’s realization that some words rhyme

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### Sample Test Questions and Rationale

For sample test questions and rationales requiring a reading passage, see page 87.

**SKILL Phonics**  
**1.2**

**PHONICS:** the connection between the sounds and letters on a page

As opposed to phonemic awareness, the study of **PHONICS** must be done with the eyes open. It is the connection between the sounds and letters on a page. In other words, students learning phonics might see the word “bad” and sound each letter out slowly until they recognize that they just said the word.

**PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS:** the ability of the reader to recognize the sounds of spoken language

**Phonological Awareness**

**PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS** means the ability of the reader to recognize the sounds of spoken language. This recognition includes how these sounds can be blended together, segmented (divided up), and manipulated (switched around). This type of awareness then leads to phonics, which is a method for teaching children to read. It helps them to “sound out words.”

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Development of phonological skills may begin during the pre-K years. Indeed, by the age of five, a child who has been exposed to rhyme can typically recognize another rhyme. Such a child can demonstrate phonological awareness by filling in the missing rhyming word in a familiar rhyme or rhymed picture book. It isn’t unheard of for children to surprise their parents by filling in missing rhymes in a familiar nursery rhyme book at the age of four or even earlier.

Children are taught phonological awareness when they are taught the sounds made by the letters, the sounds made by various combinations of letters, and the ability to recognize individual sounds in words.

**Skills and Strategies with Phonological Awareness**

Phonological awareness skills include:

- Rhyming and syllabification
- Blending sounds into words (such as pic-tur-bo-k)
- Identifying the beginning or starting sounds of words and the ending or closing sounds of words
- Breaking words down into sounds (also called “segmenting” words)
- Recognizing small words contained in bigger words by removing starting sounds (hear to ear)

Phonics also involves the spelling of words. Effective spelling strategies should emphasize these principles:

- Knowledge of patterns, sounds, letter-sound association, and syllables
- Memorizing sight words
- Writing those words correctly many times
- Writing the words in personal writing

## SKILL **Fluency** 1.3

When students work on **fluency**, they practice reading connected pieces of text. In other words, instead of looking at a word as just a word, they might read a sentence straight through. The point of this is that in order for the student to comprehend what she is reading, she would need to be able to “fluently” piece words in a sentence together quickly. If a student is NOT fluent in reading, he or she would sound each letter or word out slowly and pay more attention to the phonics of each word. A fluent reader, on the other hand, might read a sentence out loud using appropriate intonations.

### **Challenges to Fluency**

Fluency in reading is dependent on automatic word identification, which assists the student in achieving comprehension of the material. Even slight difficulties in word identification can significantly increase the time it takes a student to read material, may require rereading parts or passages of the material and reduces the level of comprehension expected. If the student experiences reading as a constant struggle or an arduous chore then he or she will avoid reading whenever possible and consider it a negative experience when necessary. Obviously, the ability to read for comprehension, and learning in general, will suffer if all aspects of reading fluency are not presented to the student as acquirable skills which will be readily accomplished with the appropriate effort.

**AUTOMATIC READING** (or automaticity) involves the development of strong orthographic representations, which allows fast and accurate identification of whole words made up of specific letter patterns. Most young students move easily from the use of alphabetic strategies to the use of orthographic representations, which can be accessed automatically. Initially word identification is based on the application of phonic word-accessibility strategies (letter-sound associations). These strategies are in turn based on the development of phonemic awareness, which is necessary to learn how to relate speech to print.

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**PROSODY** concerns versification of text and involves such matters as which syllable of a word is accented. As regards fluency, it is that aspect which translates reading into the same experience as listening, within the reader’s mind. It involves intonation and rhythm through such devices as syllable accent and punctuation.

The student’s development of the elements necessary to automaticity continually moves through stages. Another important stage involves the automatic recognition of single graphemes as a critical first step to the development of the letter patterns that make up words or word parts. English orthography is made up of four basic word types:

1. Regular, for reading and spelling (e.g., cat, print)
2. Regular, for reading but not for spelling (e.g., float, brain—could be spelled “flote” or “brane,” respectively)
3. Rule based (e.g., canning—doubling rule; faking—drop e rule)
4. Irregular (e.g., beauty)

*Students must be taught to recognize all four types of words automatically in order to be effective readers. Repeated practice in pattern recognition is often necessary.*

Students must be taught to recognize all four types of words automatically in order to be effective readers. Repeated practice in pattern recognition is often necessary. True automaticity should be linked with prosody and anticipation to acquire full fluency. Such things as which syllable is accented and how word structure can be predictive are necessary to true automaticity and essential to complete fluency.

A student whose reading rate is slow, or halting and inconsistent, is exhibiting a lack of reading fluency. Some students develop accurate word pronunciation skills but read at a slow rate. They have not moved to the phase where decoding is automatic, and their limited fluency may affect performance in the following ways:

- They read less text than peers and have less time to remember, review, or comprehend the text
- They expend more cognitive energy than peers trying to identify individual words
- They may be less able to retain text in their memories and less likely to integrate those segments with other parts of the text

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### Cueing Methods

Reading fluency and comprehension involve three cueing methods: orthographic awareness, semantic cueing and syntactic cueing. Also, sight words and high frequency word skills contribute to reading fluency. Teachers need to be aware of how to assess and teach those skills to enhance reading fluency.

**ORTHOGRAPHIC AWARENESS** is the ability to perceive and recall letter strings and word forms, as well as the retrieval of letters and words. Sight word vocabulary for both reading and spelling depends on this skill.

A weakness in orthographic awareness results in slow reading rates and problems with spelling. This, in turn, affects reading comprehension and writing fluency.

**SYNTACTIC CUEING** involves evaluating a word for its part of speech and its place in the sentence. For example, the reader determines if it is a noun, verb, adjective, etc. If it is an adjective, the reader determines which word it modifies. If it is a pronoun, the reader must decide which noun it takes the place of. Syntactic cueing directly affects reading comprehension.

**SEMANTIC CUEING** requires determining the meaning of the word, phrase or sentence. It involves determining what the passage is about.

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*Learn more about these cueing systems:*  
<http://www.sedl.org/reading/topics/cueing.html>

### Sample Test Question and Rationale

*(Average)*

1. When students understand how sentences are built and the words needed for the sentences to “sound” right, they have developed a sense of:
- A. Morphology
  - B. Syntax
  - C. Semantics
  - D. Fluency

**Answer: B. Syntax**

Syntax refers to the rules or patterned relationships that correctly create phrases and sentences from words. When readers develop an understanding of syntax, they begin to understand the structure of how sentences are built.

**ROOT WORD:** the primary base of a word

**PREFIX:** the affix (a morpheme that attaches to a base word) that is placed at the start of a root word, but can't make a word on its own

**SUFFIX:** follows the root word to which it attaches and appears at the end of the word

## SKILL Vocabulary 1.4

### How Words Are Built

Knowledge of how words are built can help students with basic and more advanced decoding. A **ROOT WORD** is the primary base of a word. A **PREFIX** is the affix (a morpheme that attaches to a base word) that is placed at the start of a root word, but can't make a word on its own. Examples of prefixes include re-, pre-, and un-. A **SUFFIX** follows the root word to which it attaches and appears at the

end of the word. Examples of suffixes include *-s*, *-es*, *-ed*, *-ly*, and *-tion*. In the word *unlikely*, “*un*” is a prefix, “*like*” is the root word, and “*ly*” is a suffix.

### High Frequency and Sight Words

**High frequency words** are the words most often used in the English language. Depending on the list used, these range from 100 to 300 words. It has been estimated that 100 words make up 50 percent of all words used in reading. Other lists, such as Dolch and Fry, use the most frequently encountered words in early childhood reading texts.

**Sight words** are words that the reader learns to read spontaneously either because of frequency or lack of conformity to orthographic rules. For example, words like ‘*the*’, ‘*what*’, and ‘*there*’ are sight words because they don’t conform to rules, and words like ‘*boy*’, ‘*girl*,’ and ‘*book*’ are sight words because they are seen very frequently in reading texts.

### Sample Test Questions and Rationale

*(Rigorous)*

1. If you have had a cough for a long time, it is said to be:
  - A. Chronic
  - B. Prescriptive
  - C. Contagious
  - D. Malicious

Answer: A. Chronic

The root *-chron-* means time. Chronic therefore means “a long time.”

Answer: C. It now means “to not continue”

The prefix *dis-* means *not*. Therefore, the meaning of the word *discontinue* means to “not continue.”

*(Rigorous)*

3. Besides teaching scientific methods and information, what might be a good lesson to teach along with a book about photosynthesis?
  - A. The first photograph taken
  - B. The root *-photo-* means light
  - C. The food chain
  - D. The letters */ph/* make the “f” sound

Answer: B. The root *—photo-* means light

Although all lessons would be good to teach along with photosynthesis, the best answer is B. Teaching students Latin and Greek roots when it is connected with meaning and prior knowledge is an effective way to enhance learning.

*(Average)*

2. How does adding the prefix *dis-* to the word *continue*, change its meaning?
  - A. It now means “to continue later”
  - B. It now means “to do again”
  - C. It now means “to not continue”
  - D. It doesn’t change the meaning

## SKILL **Comprehension** 1.5

Beginning readers must learn to recognize the conventions that create meaning and expectations in the text. For beginning readers, these literal skills include deciphering the words, punctuation, and grammar in a text. When readers ascertain comprehension, they create meaning from a text. **COMPREHENSION** occurs when readers are able to make predictions, select main ideas, and establish significant and supporting details of the story.

A successful program of comprehension instruction should include:

- Large amounts of time for actual text reading
- Teacher-directed instruction in comprehension strategies
- Opportunities for peer and collaborative learning
- Occasions for students to talk to a teacher and one another about their responses to reading

Teachers can improve comprehension skills by providing children with opportunities and guidance in making text selections. Student choice is related to interest and motivation, both of which are related directly to learning. Teachers can:

- Encourage rereading of texts, which research suggests leads to greater fluency and comprehension
- Allow time for students to read in pairs, including students of different abilities, which provides regular opportunities for readers to discuss their reading with the teacher and with one another
- Employ guided practice strategies in which feedback is given back to the students' attempts, gradually giving students more and more responsibility for evaluating their own performances

### **Bloom's Taxonomy as It Relates to Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension skills such as generating and answering literal, inferential, and interpretive questions to demonstrate understanding about what is read in complex text are often found in the differing levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. These levels, in ascending order of sophistication, are:

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. Knowledge     | 4. Analysis   |
| 2. Comprehension | 5. Synthesis  |
| 3. Application   | 6. Evaluation |

#### **COMPREHENSION:**

occurs when readers are able to make predictions, select main ideas, and establish significant and supporting details of the story

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*Learn more about Bloom's Taxonomy:*

<http://faculty.washington.edu/krumme/guides/bloom1.html>

These higher cognitive questions are defined as those which ask the student to mentally manipulate bits of information previously learned to support an answer with logically reasoned evidence. **Higher cognitive questions** are also called open-ended, interpretive, evaluative, and inferential questions. **Lower cognitive questions** are those that ask the student merely to recall verbatim or literally the material previously read or taught by the teacher.

### Sample Test Questions and Rationale

*(Rigorous)*

1. **What are the two basic types of questions?**

- A. Easy and hard questions
- B. Verbal and written questions
- C. In the book and in the reader's head
- D. Teacher made and student made

**Answer: C. In the book and in the reader's head**

Although all choices are two types of questions, in reading there are questions that can be answered by looking in the book and questions that can be answered with thinking.

*(Easy)*

2. **Engineers thought it would be difficult to *construct* the Golden Gate Bridge because of the weather conditions and the ocean currents that exist in California.**

What does the word *construct* mean in the sentence above?

- A. Drive across
- B. Close down
- C. Make longer
- D. Build or create

**Answer: D. Build or create**

Engineers are people that build or create things. They thought it would be hard to do that because the weather and the water currents in San Francisco made the job challenging.

### SKILL Features and types of literature 1.6

The major genres in literature include allegory, ballad, drama, epic, epistle, essay, fable, novel, poem, romance, and the short story. At times, even books written for adults are appropriate for children. These major genres are detailed below.

**Allegory:** A story in verse or prose with characters that represent virtues and vices. There are two meanings: symbolic and literal. John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is the most renowned of this genre.



**Ballad:** An *in medias res* story that is told or sung—usually in verse—and accompanied by music. Literary devices found in ballads include the refrain (repeated section) and incremental repetition (anaphora) for effect. Earliest forms were anonymous folk ballads. Later forms include Coleridge’s Romantic masterpiece, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.”

**Drama:** Plays (comedy, modern, or tragedy) that are typically performed in five acts. Traditionalists and neoclassicists adhere to Aristotle’s unities of time, place, and action. Plot development is advanced through dialogue. Literary devices include asides, soliloquies, and the chorus, which represents public opinion. Considered by many to be the greatest of all dramatists/playwrights is William Shakespeare. Other dramaturges include Ibsen, Williams, Miller, Shaw, Stoppard, Racine, Molière, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, and Aristophanes.

**Epic:** A long poem usually of book length that reflects values inherent in the generative society. Epic devices include an invocation to a Muse for inspiration, an overall purpose for writing, universal setting, a protagonist and antagonist who possess supernatural strength and acumen, and interventions of a God or the gods. Comparatively, there are few epics in literature: Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Spenser’s *The Fairie Queene*, Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh*, and Pope’s mock-epic, *The Rape of the Lock*.

**Epistle:** A letter that is not always originally intended for public distribution, but due to the fame of the sender and/or recipient, one that becomes public domain. For example, Paul wrote epistles that were later placed in the Bible.

**Essay:** Typically, a limited length prose work focusing on a topic and propounding a definite point-of-view and authoritative tone. Great essayists include Carlyle, Lamb, DeQuincy, Emerson, and Montaigne (who is credited with defining this genre).

**Fable:** A terse tale offering up a moral or exemplum. Chaucer’s “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” is a fine example of a *bete fabliau* (or beast fable) in which animals speak and act characteristically human, illustrating human foibles.

**Legend:** A traditional narrative or collection of related narratives, popularly regarded as historically factual but actually a mixture of fact and fiction.

**Myth:** Stories that are more or less universally shared within a culture to explain its history and traditions.

**Novel:** The longest form of fictional prose containing a variety of characterizations, settings, local color, and regionalism. Most have complex plots, expanded description, and attention to detail. Some of the great novelists include Austen, the Brontës, Twain, Tolstoy, Hugo, Hardy, Dickens, Hawthorne, Forster, and Flaubert.

**Poem:** The only requirement for a poem is rhythm. Subgenres include fixed types of literature such as the sonnet, elegy, ode, pastoral, and villanelle. Unfixed types of literature include blank verse and dramatic monologue.

**Romance:** A highly imaginative tale set in a fantastical realm that deals with the conflicts between heroes, villains, and/or monsters. “The Knight’s Tale” from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Keats’ “The Eve of St. Agnes” are prime representatives.

**Short Story:** A concise narrative that has less background than a novel, but that typically includes many of the same plot developments and techniques. Some of the most notable short story writers include Hemingway, Faulkner, Twain, Joyce, Jackson, O’Connor, de Maupassant, Saki, Poe, and Pushkin.

## Children’s Literature

Children’s literature is a genre of its own. Although it can share some of the same characteristics of adult literature, it emerged as a distinct and independent form in the second half of the seventeenth century. *The Visible World in Pictures* by John Amos Comenius, a Czech educator, was one of the first printed works in existence as well as the first picture book. After its publication, educators acknowledged that children are different from adults in many respects for the first time.

Modern educators acknowledge that introducing elementary students to a wide range of reading experiences plays an important role in their mental, social, and psychological development. Some of the most common forms of literature written specifically for children include:

### Traditional literature

**TRADITIONAL LITERATURE** opens up a world where right wins out over wrong, where hard work and perseverance are rewarded, and where helpless victims find vindication. These worthwhile values are ones that children identify with even as early as kindergarten.

In traditional literature, children are introduced to fanciful beings, humans with exaggerated powers, talking animals, and heroes that will inspire them. For younger elementary children, these stories in Big Book format are ideal for providing predictable and repetitive elements that are easily grasped.

**Folktales/Fairy Tales:** Adventures of animals or humans and the supernatural typically characterize these stories. The hero is usually on a quest aided by other-worldly helpers. More often than not, the story focuses on good and evil and reward and punishment. Some examples of folktales and fairy tales include:

*Modern educators acknowledge that introducing elementary students to a wide range of reading experiences plays an important role in their mental, social, and psychological development.*

**TRADITIONAL LITERATURE:** works where right wins out over wrong, where hard work and perseverance are rewarded, and where helpless victims find vindication

*The Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Puss-in-Boots, Rapunzel, and Rumpelstiltskin.*

**Fables:** Animals that act like humans are featured in these stories; the animals usually reveal human foibles or teach a lesson. Example: *Aesop's Fables*.

**Myths:** These stories about events from the earliest times, such as the origin of the world, are often considered true among various societies.

**Legends:** These are similar to myths except that they tend to deal with events that happened more recently. Example: Arthurian legends.

**Tall Tales:** These are purposely exaggerated accounts of individuals with super-human strength. Examples: Paul Bunyan, John Henry, and Pecos Bill.

**Modern Fantasy:** Many of the themes found in these stories are similar to those in traditional literature. The stories start out based in reality, which makes it easier for the reader to suspend disbelief and enter into worlds of unreality. Little people live in the walls in *The Borrowers*, and time travel is possible in *The Trolley to Yesterday*.

Including some fantasy tales in the curriculum often helps elementary-grade children to develop their imagination. The stories typically appeal to ideals of justice and issues having to do with good and evil; because children tend to identify with the characters, the message is more likely to be retained.

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**Science Fiction:** Robots, spacecraft, mystery, and civilizations from other ages often appear in these stories. Most presume advances in science on other planets or in a future time. Most children like these stories because of their interest in space and the “what if” aspect of the stories. Examples: *Outer Space and All That Junk* and *A Wrinkle in Time*.

**Modern Realistic Fiction:** These stories are about real problems that real children face. By finding that their hopes and fears are shared by others, young children can find insight into their own problems. Young readers also tend to experience a broadening of interests as the result of this kind of reading. It is good for them to know that a child can be brave and intelligent and can solve difficult problems.

**Historical Fiction:** This type of literature provides the opportunity to introduce younger children to history in a beneficial way. *Rifles for Watie* is an example of this kind of story. Presented in a historically accurate setting, it's about a sixteen-year-old boy who serves in the Union army. He experiences great hardships but discovers that his enemy is an admirable human being.

**Biography:** Reading about inventors, explorers, scientists, political and religious leaders, social reformers, artists, sports figures, doctors, teachers, writers, and war

heroes helps children to see that one person can make a difference. They also open new vistas for children to think about when they choose a future occupation.

**Informational Books:** These are ways to learn more about something that children are interested in or something that they know little about. Encyclopedias are good resources, of course, but a book like *Polar Wildlife* by Kamini Khanduri also shows pictures and facts that will capture the imaginations of young children.

## SKILL 1.7 Types and traits of writing

### Different Types of Writing

Most nonfiction writing falls into one of four different forms:

1. Narrative
2. Descriptive
3. Expository
4. Persuasive

### Persuasive writing

**PERSUASIVE WRITING** is a piece of writing, a poem, a play, or a speech whose purpose is to change the minds of the audience members or to get them to do something. This is achieved in a variety of ways:

1. The credibility of the writer/speaker might lead the listeners/readers to a change of mind or a recommended action.
2. Reasoning is important in persuasive discourse. No one wants to believe that he or she accepts a new viewpoint or goes out and takes action just because he or she likes and trusts the person who recommended it. Logic comes into play in reasoning that is persuasive.
3. The third and most powerful force that leads to acceptance or action is emotional appeal. Even if audience members have been persuaded logically and reasonably that they should believe in a different way, they are unlikely to act on it unless moved emotionally. A person with resources might be convinced that people suffered in New Orleans after Katrina, but he or she will not be likely to do anything about it until he or she feels a deeper emotional connection to the disaster. Sermons are good examples of persuasive discourse.

#### **PERSUASIVE WRITING:**

a piece of writing, a poem, a play, or a speech whose purpose is to change the minds of the audience members or to get them to do something

## Expository writing

In contrast to persuasion, the only purpose of **exposition** is to inform.

**EXPOSITORY WRITING** is not interested in changing anyone’s mind or getting anyone to take a certain action. It exists to give information. Some examples include directions to a particular place or the directions for putting together a toy that arrives unassembled. The writer doesn’t care whether you do or don’t follow the directions. He or she only wants to be sure you have the information in case you do decide to use it.

**EXPOSITORY WRITING:**  
a form of writing where the only purpose is to inform

## Narrative writing

**NARRATION** is discourse that is arranged chronologically—something happened, and then something else happened, and then something else happened. It is also called a story. News reports are often narrative in nature, as are records of trips or experiences.

**NARRATION:** discourse that is arranged chronologically

## Descriptive writing

**DESCRIPTIVE WRITING** has the purpose of making an experience available through one of the five senses—seeing, smelling, hearing, feeling (as with the fingers), and tasting. Descriptive words are used to make it possible for readers to “see” with their own mind’s eye, “hear” through their own mind’s ear, “smell” through their own mind’s nose, “taste” with their own mind’s tongue, and “feel” with their own mind’s fingers. This is how language moves people. Only by experiencing an event can the emotions become involved. Poets are experts in descriptive language. Descriptive writing is typically used to make sure the point is established emotionally.

**DESCRIPTIVE WRITING:**  
making an experience available through one of the five senses—seeing, smelling, hearing, feeling (as with the fingers), and tasting

## Understanding Nonfiction

Students often misrepresent the differences between fiction and nonfiction. They mistakenly believe that stories are always examples of fiction. The simple truth is that stories are both fiction and nonfiction. The primary difference is that fiction is imaginary, and nonfiction is generally true (or an opinion). It is harder for students to understand that non-fiction entails an enormous range of material from textbooks to true stories and newspaper articles to speeches. Fiction, on the other hand, is fairly simple—imaginary stories, novels, etc. But it is also important for students to understand that most of fiction throughout history has been based on true events. In other words, authors use their own life experiences to help them to create works of fiction.

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### Opinion versus truth

The artistry in telling a story to convey a point is important in understanding nonfiction. Realizing what is truth and what is perspective is important in understanding nonfiction. Often, a nonfiction writer will present an **opinion**, and that opinion is very different from a **truth**. Knowing the difference between the two is very crucial.

### Comparing fiction and nonfiction

In comparing fiction to nonfiction, students need to learn about the conventions of each. In fiction, students can generally expect to find plot, characters, setting, and themes. In nonfiction, students may find a plot, characters, settings, and themes, but they will also experience interpretations, opinions, theories, research, and other elements.

Overall, students can begin to see patterns that identify fiction from nonfiction. Often, the more fanciful or unrealistic a text or story is, the more likely it is fiction, or contains facts that have been “fictionalized.”

Nonfiction comes in a variety of styles. While many students simplify nonfiction as being true (as opposed to fiction, which is make-believe), nonfiction is much deeper than that. The following are various types of nonfiction; students should be exposed to all of these.

| TYPES OF NONFICTION        |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Informational Texts</b> | These types of books explain concepts or phenomena. An informational text might explain the history of a state or the idea of photosynthesis. These types of text are usually based on research.                                |
| <b>Newspaper Articles</b>  | These short texts rely completely on factual information and are presented in a very straightforward, sometimes choppy manner. The purpose of these texts is to present information to readers in a quick and efficient manner. |
| <b>Essays</b>              | Usually, essays take an opinion (whether it is about a concept, a work of literature, a person, or an event) and describe how the opinion was arrived at or why the opinion is a good one.                                      |
| <b>Biographies</b>         | These texts explain the lives of individuals. They are usually based on extensive research.   |
| <b>Memoirs</b>             | In a way, a memoir is like an autobiography, but memoirs tend to be based on a specific idea, concept, issue, or event in life. For example, most presidents of the United States write memoirs about their time in office.     |

*Table continued on next page*

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Letters</b>  | When letters are read and analyzed in the classroom, students are generally studying the writer’s style or the writer’s true opinions and feelings about certain events. Often, students will find letters of famous individuals in history reprinted in textbooks. |
| <b>Journals</b> | Similar to letters, journals present very personal ideas. When available (as most people rarely want their journals published), they give students the opportunity to see peoples’ thought processes about various events or issues.                                |

### Traits or Elements of Writing

**STYLE** is the artful adaptation of language to meet various purposes. Authors can modify their word choice, sentence structure, and organization in order to convey certain ideas. For example, an author may write on a topic (such as the environment) in many different styles. In an academic style, the author uses long, complex sentences, advanced vocabulary, and very structured paragraphing. However, in an informal explanation in a popular magazine, the author may use a conversational tone in which simple words and simple sentence structures are utilized.

**STYLE:** the artful adaptation of language to meet various purposes

**TONE** is the attitude an author takes toward his or her subject. That tone is exemplified in the language of the text. For example, consider the topic of the environment. One author may dismiss the idea of global warming; the tone may be one of derision against environmentalists. A reader might notice this through the style (such as word choice), the details the author decides to present, and the order in which the details are presented. Another author may be angry about global warming and therefore use harsh words and other tones that indicate anger. Finally, yet another author may not care one bit about the issue of the environment either in a positive or negative light. Let’s say this author is a comedian who likes to poke fun at political activists. His or her tone may be humorous; therefore, he or she will adjust the language used accordingly. In this example, all types of tones are about the same subject—they simply reveal, through language, different opinions and attitudes about the subject.

**TONE:** the attitude an author takes toward his or her subject

Finally, **POINT-OF-VIEW** is perspective. While most of us think of point-of-view in terms of first or third person in fiction (or even the points-of-view of various characters in stories), point-of-view also helps to explain much of language and the presentation of ideas in nonfiction texts. The above environmentalism example proves this. Three points-of-view are represented, and each creates a different style of language.

**POINT-OF-VIEW:** the perspective of the text

*Students need to learn that language and text are changed dramatically by tone, style, and point-of-view.*

### Putting it all together

Students need to learn that language and text are changed dramatically by tone, style, and point-of-view. They can practice identifying these concepts in everything they read. Doing so takes little time for each text students read in class, and it goes a long way in helping them to comprehend text at a more advanced level.

## Sample Test Questions and Rationale

*(Easy)*

1. A student writes an essay that shows the similarities and differences between a book and a movie of the same title. What type of essay is it?

- A. Classification
- B. Compare and contrast
- C. Cause and effect
- D. Statement support

**Answer: B. Compare and contrast**

The student's essay compares and contrasts the book and the movie of the same title.

*(Average)*

2. In Writer's Workshop students are asked to write a personal narrative. How should their writing be organized?

- A. Statement support
- B. Compare and contrast
- C. Sequence of events
- D. Classification

**Answer: C. Sequence of events**

A narrative is a retelling of events in order.

*(Rigorous)*

3. Ants have three main parts to their bodies. The first part is the head which contains the jaw, eyes, and antennae. The second part of an ant's body is the trunk. The trunk has six legs attached to it. The third part of an ant's body is the rear. I was surprised to learn that the rear contains a poison sac. This is one way the ant defends itself.

What type of writing is demonstrated in the passage above?

- A. Descriptive
- B. Narrative
- C. Expository
- D. Persuasive

**Answer: C. Expository**

The passage was written to inform the reader about the parts of an ant's body therefore, it is expository. Had the author described what they saw when they looked at an ant's body under a microscope, it would be a descriptive passage.

*(Average)*

4. What type of writing includes headings, subheadings, and titles?

- A. Persuasive
- B. Descriptive
- C. Narrative
- D. Informative

**Answer: D. Informative**

Informative writing is usually nonfiction and nonfiction writing normally has headings, subheadings, and titles.