# 11.4.1 Lesson 11

## Introduction

In this lesson, narrative writing instruction continues with the introduction of a new substandard: W.11-12.3.b, which requires students to incorporate narrative techniques into their writing to develop events, experiences, and characters. Students review the two texts in this unit, "On the Rainy River" from *The Things They Carried* and "The Red Convertible" from *The Red Convertible*, to identify and analyze the authors' use of narrative techniques. Student learning is assessed via an Exit Slip. Students write 2-3 sentences in response to the following prompt: Describe one idea for retelling a scene from "The Red Convertible" using one of the following narrative techniques: dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, or multiple plot lines to further develop an experience, event, or character.

For homework, students draft their text-based narrative writing pieces, incorporating the skills of W.11-12.3.b, in preparation for peer review and revision in the following lesson.



## Standards

Assessed Sta	essed Standard(s)		
W.11-12.4	12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.		
Addressed S	ressed Standard(s)		
W. 11-12.3.a, b	<ul> <li>Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</li> <li>a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.</li> <li>b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.</li> </ul>		



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## Assessment



#### Assessment(s)

Student learning is assessed via an Exit Slip. Students write 2-3 sentences in response to the following prompt:

• Describe one idea for retelling a scene from "The Red Convertible" using one of the following narrative techniques: dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, or multiple plot lines to further develop an experience, event, or character.

#### High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Incorporate a narrative technique such as dialogue, pacing, description, etc. into a scene from "The Red Convertible" (e.g., a conversation between Marty and Stephan after Stephan returns home from the Vietnam War).
- Explain how this technique develops experiences, events, and/or characters from "The Red Convertible" (e.g., The scene on pages 4-5 could benefit from dialogue. Marty says that Stephan was "so quiet" (p. 4) and also "jumpy and mean" (p. 5). When Marty and Stephan have a fight about the condition of the convertible, Marty also mentions that Stephan had hardly said "more than six words at once" since coming home (p. 6). Therefore, adding dialogue to this scene would likely involve Marty speaking and Stephan listening or pretending to listen while watching TV. This addition of dialogue would further develop the characters of Marty and Stephan after Stephan returns from the war.).
- Consider using the W.11-12.3.b portion of the 11.4 Narrative Writing Rubric and Checklist to guide the assessment.

## Vocabulary

Vocabulary to	provide directly (wil	Il not include extended instruction)

None.\*

Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)

• None.\*

Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)

None.\*

\*Because this is not a close reading lesson, there is no specified vocabulary. However, in the process of returning to the text, students may uncover unfamiliar words. Teachers can guide students to make meaning of these words by



following the protocols described in 1e of this document: <u>http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/</u> <u>attachments/9-12\_ela\_prefatory\_material.pdf</u>

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson	
Standards & Text:		
• Standards: W.11-12.4, W.11-12.3.a, b		
• Texts: "On the Rainy River" from <i>The Things They Carried</i> by Tim O'Brien; "The Red Convertible" from <i>The Red Convertible</i> by Louise Erdrich		
Learning Sequence:		
1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda	1. 10%	
2. Homework Accountability	2. 10%	
3. Writing Instruction: Narrative Techniques	3. 30%	
4. Identifying Narrative Techniques	4. 20%	
5. Narrative Writing: Brainstorming and Prewriting	5. 15%	
6. Lesson Assessment: Exit Slip	6. 10%	
7. Closing	7. 5%	

## Materials

- Student copies of the 11.4 Common Core Learning Standards Tool (refer to 11.4.1 Lesson 6)
- Student copies of the 11.4 Narrative Writing Rubric and Checklist (refer to 11.4.1 Lesson 6)



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Learning Sequence



10%

How to	How to Use the Learning Sequence		
Symbo l	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol		
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.		
	Plain text indicates teacher action.		
No symbol	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.		
	Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.		
•	Indicates student action(s).		
•	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.		
1	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.		

## Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: W.11-12.4. In this lesson, students begin to incorporate narrative techniques into their writing to develop events, experiences, and characters.

• Students look at the agenda.

Instruct students to take out their copies of the 11.4 Common Core Learning Standards Tool. Inform students that in this lesson they begin to work with a new substandard of W.11-12.3: W.11-12.3.b. Instruct students to individually read this standard on their tools and assess their familiarity with and mastery of it.

• Students read and assess their familiarity with standard W.11-12.3.b.

Provide students with the following definitions: *dialogue* refers to the "lines spoken by characters in drama or fiction; conversation between two or more characters," *pacing* refers to the "how the author handles the passage of time in a narrative, moving through events either more quickly or slowly to serve the purpose of the text," *reflection* refers to the "consideration of a subject, idea, or past event," and *multiple plot lines* refers to the "different plots of a literary text."

- Students write the definitions of *dialogue*, *pacing*, *reflection*, and *multiple plot lines* on their copies of the 11.4 Common Core Learning Standards Tool.
- Students were previously introduced to *reflection* in 11.4.1 Lesson 4.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the following definition: *description* refers to "a statement that tells you how something or someone looks or sounds."



• Students write the definition of *description* on their copies of the 11.4 Common Core Learning Standards Tool.

Instruct students to talk in pairs about what they think the substandard means. Lead a brief discussion about the standard.

- Student responses should include:
  - The standard asks students to use different approaches to describe characters and explain experiences or events in a narrative.
  - The standard asks students to use approaches or techniques such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines.

### **Activity 2: Homework Accountability**

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Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Review your 11.4 Narrative Writing Rubric and Checklist for the skills outlined in W.11-12.3.a, and the work you did with that standard in 11.4.1 Lessons 6 and 7. Respond in writing to the following prompt: How does Erdrich use components of W.11-12.3.a in the opening of "The Red Convertible?"). Remind students to use the language of W.11-12.3.a and refer to the 11.4 Narrative Writing Rubric and Checklist to guide their discussion.

- Student responses should include:
  - Erdrich engages and orients the reader to the story by providing a setting "on my reservation" (p. 1). The author also provides characters, "my brother Stephan" and "his younger brother Marty," and a situation in which the brothers owned a red convertible together until Stephan "bought out [Marty's] share" (p. 1).
  - Erdrich also establishes point of view by beginning the story in first person and having the narrator say who he is, "Marty (that's myself)" (p. 1).
  - Erdrich also sets out the problem or situation of the text and its significance through Marty's statements about what happens to Stephan at the end of the text: "his boots filled with water on a windy night and he bought out my share" (p. 1). However, the meaning of these statements is not entirely clear until the end of the story when the reader finds out that Stephan "jumps in" to the river (p. 10).
  - After reading the introduction, the reader quickly engages with the story and is left with questions such as: What happened on that windy night? Why does Marty "walk[] everywhere" instead of getting a new car? (p. 1). What happened between the brothers?

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.



Additionally, instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied a focus standard to their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR) texts. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied a focus standard to their AIR texts.

• Students (or student pairs) discuss and share how they applied a focus standard to their AIR texts from the previous lesson's homework.

### Activity 3: Writing Instruction: Narrative Techniques 30%

Instruct students to stay in their pairs from the previous activity. Explain to students that narrative writing instruction continues in this lesson. Remind students they were introduced to narrative writing in 11.4.1 Lesson 6.

Explain to students that in narrative writing, an author uses a variety of narrative techniques to develop the content of their story and create an engaging and nuanced experience for the reader. Remind students of the narrative techniques previously introduced in this lesson: dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines. An exemplary work of narrative writing may use these techniques to develop experiences, events, and the characters in a story.

• Students follow along.

Instruct students to take out the first text in this unit, "On the Rainy River" by Tim O'Brien. Explain that "On the Rainy River" serves as an exemplar to illustrate some of the narrative techniques defined in this lesson.

• **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider using a different model text to serve as an exemplar for these narrative techniques, depending on student needs.

Instruct students to form pairs. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss.

Instruct student pairs to reread pages 50-51 of "On The Rainy River" (from "'Well, the basic rate,' he said, 'is fifty bucks'" to "and a two-word note that said EMERGENCY FUND. The man knew") and answer the following question before sharing out with the class.

## How does O'Brien use the narrative technique of dialogue in this portion of text to develop experiences, events, or characters?

- Student responses should include:
  - O'Brien uses dialogue to develop the characters in this portion of text. This is the only time in the story where Elroy voices his inner thoughts about the narrator's circumstances: "'I wondered about all that. The aroma, I mean'" (p. 51). This



dialogue also demonstrates that Elroy is thoughtful and aware that the narrator is in trouble. When Elroy offers to pay the narrator for his work around the lodge and offers him "four fifties" to "'[c]all it even,'" this dialogue demonstrates that Elroy is a caring person who wants to help the narrator (p. 51).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student pairs to reread pages 40-41 of "On The Rainy River" (from "I spent the summer of 1968 working" to "And there was also that draft notice tucked away in my wallet"). Explain to students that in this portion of text, O'Brien uses description to provide a clear picture about what it was like for the narrator to work at a hog plant on the "disassembly line" to develop the narrator's experience of considering whether or not to go to the war (p. 40). Instruct student pairs to review this portion of text and highlight any descriptive words they find particularly effective, and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

#### What are examples of effective use of description in this portion of text?

- Student responses may include:
  - O'Brien's description of the clotting machine is effective because he writes about its weight, "eighty pounds" (p. 40), and what it felt like to use the machine: "there was some bounce to it, an elastic up-and-down give" (pp. 40-41).
  - The description of the smell on the narrator, "the stink was always there—like old bacon, or sausage, a greasy pig-stink that soaked deep into my skin," effectively develops the experience of working at the hog plant (p. 41).

# How does O'Brien's effective use of description develop the experiences, events, or characters in the narrative?

- Student responses may include:
  - O'Brien describes the hog plant, a place where animals are killed every day, as a gross and brutal place. The narrator would stand for eight hours "under a lukewarm blood-shower" and at night he would bathe, only to find the "stink was always there" (p. 41). This description further develops the narrator's conflicted feelings about war and his inability to come to terms with the ever present "draft notice" by showing that the narrator cannot even escape the "pig-stink that soaked deep into [his] skin" (p. 41).
  - O'Brien's description develops the experience of the narrator who "spent a lot of time alone" because of his inner conflict and the "greasy pig-stink" from the hog factory (p. 41). This description further develops the fear and loneliness the

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narrator felt that summer and adds to the struggle of his decision to run away from the draft notice. Additionally, the narrator faces this decision on his own, and the entire "meat-packing plant" description adds to the narrator's pain and isolation (p. 40).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Explain to students that description can also be a way of controlling the pacing in a narrative. Depending on the scene, as well as the arc and action of the story as a whole, the author may choose to go into detail or summarize actions, events, and dialogue. It is important to keep writing engaging for the reader, so authors must assess the appropriate time to implement fast or slow pacing for the development of experiences, events, and characters.

Direct student pairs back to the previous example of dialogue on pages 50-51 of "On The Rainy River" (from "'Well, the basic rate,' he said, 'is fifty bucks'" to "and a two-word note that said EMERGENCY FUND. The man knew"). Instruct student pairs to answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

#### What does O'Brien choose to describe in this scene?

• O'Brien chooses to describe the conversation between Elroy and the narrator. O'Brien uses specific details about the scene, such as "Elroy kept his eyes on the tablecloth" (p. 50) and "he took four fifties out of his shirt pocket and laid them on the table," to give the reader a sense of what it was like to be in the room with the two characters (p. 51).

#### What does O'Brien choose to summarize in this scene?

• O'Brien chooses to summarize the history of the narrator: "I told him about my days at the pig plant" (p. 50). Though O'Brien does provide details about the pig plant such as "sounds of butchery, slaughterhouse sounds," he does not write this as a dialogue like the rest of the scene (p. 51).

#### What is the effect of these pacing choices?

• O'Brien's pacing choice to limit the history of the narrator to a summary in this portion of text keeps the reader engaged in the dialogue between the narrator and Elroy, which contributes to character development. The choice to omit details about the meatpacking plant with which the reader is already familiar, and to focus on the exchange between Elroy and the narrator, maintains the pace of the story.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.



File: 11.4.1 Lesson 11 Date: 10/31/14 Classroom Use: Starting 11/2014

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Direct students' attention to the following quote on page 52 of "On the Rainy River": "Looking back after twenty years, I sometimes wonder if the events of that summer didn't happen in some other dimension, a place where your life exists before you've lived it, and where it goes afterward. None of it ever seemed real."

Explain to students that in "On the Rainy River," the entire story could be considered a reflection because the narrator considers and explains events that happened in his past and often pauses to describe his feelings in the present regarding what happened in the past. In this particular quote, the narrator grapples with his own understanding of his sense of self in the past and present.

Instruct student pairs to answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

#### What other portion of "On the Rainy River" illustrates reflection?

- Student responses may include:
  - At the beginning of the story the narrator starts by reflecting on the story he is about to tell, and says: "the story makes me squirm" (p. 37). The narrator also considers his own thoughts and opinions from the perspective of the present: "that was my conviction back in the summer of 1968" (p. 37).
  - On page 52, the narrator describes the surreal feeling he still has about his experience at the Tip Top Lodge: "I sometimes wonder if the events of that summer didn't happen in some other dimension" (p. 52). The narrator goes on to say, "even now I can see myself as I was then," explaining and reflecting on his own sense of self (p. 52).

# How does O'Brien's use of reflection develop the experiences, events, or characters in the narrative?

• O'Brien uses reflection to develop the character of the narrator. Through reflection, the reader learns the narrator still "feel[s] the shame" he describes later in the story (p. 37). The technique of reflection demonstrates the story's importance for the narrator in the present, even though it happened when the narrator was much younger.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Explain to students that not all exemplary stories include all of the narrative techniques discussed. The goal of effective and engaging narrative writing is to decide which techniques benefit the story. For example, "On the Rainy River" and "The Red Convertible" do not include multiple plot lines. "On the Rainy River" could have had additional plot lines if Tim O'Brien had chosen to write also about the reaction of the narrator's parents, the situation



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from Elroy's perspective, or perhaps a Canadian border patrolman who saw the boat close to the Canadian shore. Multiple plot lines often include different character's perspectives.

• Students listen.

## Activity 4: Identifying Narrative Techniques

Instruct students to form small groups. Instruct student groups to take out their copies of "The Red Convertible." Explain to students that in addition to identifying the technique used in the story, it is necessary to analyze how the technique develops experiences, events, and/ or characters in the story.

• Students form small groups and take out their copies of "The Red Convertible."

Assign each student group a different narrative technique (dialog, pacing, description, and reflection) to identify and analyze.

Post or project the prompt below for students to discuss. Instruct student groups to discuss the prompt before sharing out with the class.

Identify examples of your assigned narrative technique in "The Red Convertible." Analyze how the narrative technique develops experiences, events, and/or characters in the story.

- Student responses may include:
  - Dialogue: Erdrich uses dialogue to develop the relationship between Marty and Stephan on page 6, and specifically reinforces the red convertible as a symbol of the bond between the two brothers. When Stephan says, "'I kept that car in A-1 shape'" before he went to Vietnam and now he is unsure if he can "'get it anywhere near its old condition,'" he is recalling the close and positive relationship Stephan and Marty had before Stephan left for war (p. 6). Marty uses the car as bait in order to help Stephan get better. After their conversation, Marty realizes it was the first time Stephan had said "more than six words at once," which means that Marty has begun to accomplish his goal of aiding his brother (p. 6). Erdrich uses the dialogue about the car to demonstrate this reconnection between the brothers and further develop their relationship after Stephan's return from the Vietnam War.
  - Pacing: Erdrich uses pacing to develop the experience of the summer trip. Erdrich chooses to provide very little detail or description about the trip. Marty provides locations "Little Knife River and Mandaree in Fort Berthold," but he does not say what they did at these places (p. 2). This technique allows a quick passage of time in the story while still demonstrating the close bond between the brothers. Marty and Stephan were not interested in where they were or where they were going.



Rather, they enjoyed being with each other and living carefree or "here to there," and the pacing of the car trip reflects this carefree sense of life.

- Description: Erdrich uses description to develop the relationship between the brothers when Marty describes Stephan's appearance. Before Stephan goes to Vietnam, Marty says that Stephan had a "nose big and sharp as a hatchet" and that Stephan was "built like a brick outhouse" (p. 4). When Stephan returns, Marty describes him as "jumpy and mean" and compares Stephan to a rabbit "before it will bolt" (p. 5). The difference between Marty's descriptions demonstrates the change in the relationship that took place between the brothers before and after the war. Marty feels comfortable with pre-war Stephan and could tease him. In contrast, Marty feels tense with post-war Stephan, and this description of Stephan reflects the change in Stephan and their relationship.
- Reflection: Erdrich uses reflection on pages 7-8 to further develop Marty's character and experience in the story. The scene in which Marty recalls the photograph of Stephan takes place after Stephan jumps into the river and dies. At the time the photo was taken, Marty says he "felt ... close to [Stephan]," which was after Stephan returned from Vietnam (p. 7). Yet Marty soon finds the picture oppressive, saying that Stephan's "smile had changed" or that "it was gone" (p. 7). Marty needed someone else to help him take down the picture and put it "way back in a closet," which demonstrates that Marty has not dealt with Stephan's death and cannot let go of his sadness and guilt (p. 7). The effect of this reflection is that it shows Marty still cannot forgive himself for Stephan's death and his inability to help his brother.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

### Activity 5: Narrative Writing: Brainstorming and Prewriting 15%

Instruct students to stay in small groups for this activity. Explain to students that the assessment in this lesson is an Exit Slip, which will be based on this brainstorming and prewriting activity. In this activity, student groups brainstorm ideas for narrative writing pieces based on "The Red Convertible."

Post or project the following prompt for students:

Choose a scene from "The Red Convertible" and retell it using one of the following narrative techniques: dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, or multiple plot lines to further develop an experience, event, or character.

• Students read the prompt and follow along.



Instruct student groups to come up with 3-4 different ideas for a narrative writing piece. These ideas should reflect at least two different narrative techniques—for example, ideas of how to incorporate dialogue in a scene and adding description to another. Remind students to write notes during their discussion, as their discussion will contribute to the assessment. Remind students that taking notes on the prewriting and discussion will also help them draft their narrative writing pieces.

- Student groups discuss and brainstorm ideas for a narrative writing piece, using the prompt above.
- Student responses may include:
  - An idea for a writing piece is a conversation between Marty and Stephan after Stephan returns home from Vietnam. The scene on pages 4-5 could benefit from dialogue. Marty says that Stephan was "so quiet" (p. 4) and also "jumpy and mean" (p. 5). When Marty and Stephan have a fight about the condition of the convertible, Marty also mentions that Stephan had hardly said "more than six words at once" since coming home (p. 6). Therefore, adding dialogue to this scene would likely involve mostly Marty speaking and Stephan listening or pretending to listen while watching TV. This addition of dialogue would further develop the characters of Marty and Stephan after Stephan returns from the war.
  - Going into further detail about the red convertible and the sale of the car using description is another idea for a writing piece. Marty says that the car was a "red Olds" (p. 1) and that it was "gleaming" and seemed "as if it was alive," but those are the only concrete details Marty provides about the car (p. 2). Providing more description about the car and maybe the sale of the car would be an interesting addition to this scene and develop an event in the story.
  - Adding a plot line from the mother's perspective could be an interesting writing piece. The mother makes dinner during the scene when Stephan has blood running down his face and it is mixing with the food. There is more information about the mother when Marty says she is also worried that a regular hospital "would keep him" if they tried to take Stephan (p. 6). This would further develop the character of Stephan by providing another character's perspective of his post-war condition.
  - Providing more reflection at the end of the story is another idea for a writing piece. After Stephan jumps into the river, Marty goes after him but Stephan is too far away (p. 10). Since this event happened in the past it would be possible to add Marty's reflections as he puts the convertible in the river. In the story there are statements concerning Marty's actions, such as "put it in first gear," "get out, close the door," "watch it plow," but there is no explanation of Marty's thoughts when he performs this action (p. 10). This added reflection would further develop the character of Marty in the story.

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Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.



## Activity 6: Lesson Assessment: Exit Slip

Instruct students to write 2-3 sentences in response to the following prompt:

Describe one idea for retelling a scene from "The Red Convertible" using one of the following narrative techniques: dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, or multiple plot lines to further develop an experience, event, or character.

Explain to students that this Exit Slip will serve as the foundation for the narrative writing piece they begin to draft for homework.

- Students listen and read the Exit Slip prompt.
- Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the independent Exit Slip activity.

- Students independently answer the prompt.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

## Activity 7: Closing

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to draft a text-based narrative writing piece in response to the following prompt:

Choose a scene from "The Red Convertible" and retell it using one of the following narrative techniques: dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, or multiple plot lines to further develop an experience, event, or character.

Instruct students to incorporate one of the narrative techniques of W.11-12.3.b introduced in this lesson. Remind students to refer to W.11-12.3.b on the 11.4 Narrative Writing Rubric and Checklist and their notes from the prewriting and brainstorming activity as they draft their narrative writing pieces. Instruct students to come to class prepared for peer review and revision in the following lesson.

• Students follow along.

## Homework

Draft a text-based narrative writing piece in response to the following prompt:

Choose a scene from "The Red Convertible" and retell it using one of the following narrative techniques: dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, or multiple plot lines to further develop an experience, event, or character.

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Remember to refer to the W.11-12.3.b portions of the 11.4 Narrative Writing Rubric and Checklist and your notes from the prewriting and brainstorming activity. Come to class prepared to participate in peer review and revision of your narrative writing piece.

