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## Compare and contrast story elements to determine how they contribute to meaning and style

### Language Objectives

- Identify story elements.
- Discuss author's word choice.
- Evaluate how authors present information.
- Compare and contrast story elements to determine style.

### Building Literacy

Comparing and contrasting texts will help students move beyond what is stated by an author by:

- analyzing how word choice contributes to author's style.
- examining the author's choices about what information to include.
- considering alternate versions of the text.
- making connections to personal experiences and other texts.

### Focus on Language

Display the following verbs that students will encounter in these texts. Have students list words with similar meanings. Then, have them use a graphic organizer to put the verbs in order from weakest to strongest. (Spanish cognates are in parentheses.)

- beckoned
- accessed (access: *accesar*)
- anticipated (anticipate: *anticipar*)
- blared
- sprinted
- proclaimed (proclaim: *proclamar*)



#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

When speaking or reading aloud to English learners, use gestures and pantomime to demonstrate meaning. Have students perform the same motions as they repeat the words. By connecting vocabulary to movement, English learners are more likely to understand and remember the meanings of English words.



## show me

In this lesson, students will compare and contrast two fictional texts—a mystery about a hero sleepwalker and a realistic story about a girl trying out for a boys’ basketball team—to analyze the authors’ styles.

Say: Today, you are going to read two fictional texts in order to compare and contrast the authors’ styles. **Style** is the way in which an author uses words to create mood, tone, images, and meaning in a text. Story elements such as word choice, dialogue, figurative language, sentence structure, and sentence arrangement all work together to contribute to an author’s style.

Have partners turn and talk about their favorite author. Encourage them to cite examples of what they like about the author’s writing style by answering questions such as: How does the author’s word choice set the tone of a story? How do descriptions and figure language contribute to the mood? Is the writing informal and friendly or more formal and informative? Ask volunteers to share their ideas with the class.



## guide me

Use the story in **guide me** to help students identify elements that contribute to style. Read aloud the directions, then have a student volunteer read aloud the story. Ask another volunteer to identify the sentences that tell what happened to Finn. (“Finn was belly up when I found him. Sleeping with the fishes as they say.”)

Discuss how the author’s use of the idioms “belly up” and “sleeping with the fishes” contribute to the author’s style. (Possible response: Using fish-related idioms to say that Finn, a pet fish, is dead adds a humorous tone.)

Then have students identify the sentence that creates a sense of urgency. (“I put Finn in a plastic sandwich bag, high-tailed it to Pet City, and grabbed the first sales clerk I saw.”) Ask students to compare this sentence to the others in the story. (The other sentences are short and direct. This long sentence picks up the pace by describing a series of specific actions, one right after another.)

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show me

How does one author’s style differ from another?


guide me

example

The way an author uses words makes up the author’s style. Read the story below. Then follow the directions.

Finn was belly up when I found him. Sleeping with the fishes as they say. I didn’t know what to do. Or, what I would I tell his six-year-old owner? Then, I had a flash of brilliance. I put Finn in a plastic sandwich bag, high-tailed it to Pet City, and grabbed the first sales clerk I saw. “I need a fish just like this one,” I pleaded.

Underline the sentences tell what happened to Finn. Draw two lines under the sentence that creates a sense of urgency.



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### VISUAL LITERACY

Have students draw a phrase or sentence from the story that they think best contributes to the author’s style. Then, have them share their drawings with their classmates. Drawing activities engage visual learners while providing evidence of reading comprehension.



## work time

**Introduce Vocabulary** Write the following vocabulary words on the board: **beckoned, accessed, anticipated, blared.** Point out the Spanish cognates for the present-tense verbs *access* and *anticipate*. Then have students discuss why the author chose to use *beckoned* instead of *called*, *accessed* instead of *entered*, *anticipated* instead of *planned*, and *blared* instead of *read*.

**Read—Pause—Retell** Use the following interactive strategy to promote a strategic reading of the text.

Have student pairs take turns reading “Spiderman Saves the Day” aloud. After each student reads two paragraphs, pause and have the partner retell the events in that section. Continue the process until the end of the text.

**Analyze Author’s Craft and Style: Point of View** Remind students that when the narrator is one of the characters in the story, he or she can reveal to readers personal thoughts and feelings that the other characters do not know.

Have a volunteer read aloud paragraph 1. Discuss how the narrator describes the scene (“sirens woke me,” “the sting of broken glass on my bare feet,” “rubbed the sleep from my eyes”). Point out that while Sam, the narrator, relates what happens, the author chooses not to have him share his thoughts or feelings. This contributes to the air of mystery around the events and adds to the suspense of the story. The narrator and the readers learn of the events at the same time.

Then, have students look for phrases in the story that signal how Sam becomes aware of events. (Paragraph 3: “it appeared that”; paragraph 4: “It turns out”; paragraph 6: *Apparently*)

**check for understanding** by having students explain how the author chooses to narrate the story. (The story is told by a first-person narrator. Sam, the main character, describes the events as he becomes aware of them.)

### work time

#### Spiderman Saves the Day

by R. Davies

- 1 The police sirens woke me up as I stood in front of the jewelry store, in my pajamas, feeling the sting of broken glass on my bare feet! As I rubbed the sleep from my eyes, I heard the squeal of tires and saw a white van screeching away from the scene.
- 2 My name is Sam Weller, and I’m a sleepwalker, which is not an unusual thing to be except that when I sleepwalk, I don’t just walk around the house but wander about town!
- 3 When the police arrived, they were surprised to find a thirteen-year-old boy in his pajamas. The store’s front window was shattered, and it appeared that I had set off the alarm when I threw a brick through it. Sergeant Webber had just begun lecturing me when a policewoman pulled him aside. As they talked, they kept glancing at me until finally Sergeant Webber beckoned me closer and asked, “Did you see anything unusual when you woke up?”
- 4 It turns out that thieves had accessed the jewelry store via the roof to avoid the alarm, but they hadn’t anticipated that a sleepwalker would trigger it.
- 5 “Sleepwalker Foils Heist!” blared the headline in our local newspaper, and though I was embarrassed by the accompanying photo, which showed that I was wearing Spiderman pajamas, I enjoyed the fame.
- 6 Two nights later, I woke up to flashing red lights and Sergeant Webber standing over me, scowling. Apparently, I was reciting Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address at the top of my lungs on the front steps of the Riverside Library.
- 7 I was about to get into the squad car so Sergeant Webber could escort me home when he noticed smoke curling up from the library’s roof! The fire department arrived so quickly, they were able to save the books and the building. Once again, I was a hero. Sergeant Webber looked at me suspiciously, but I shrugged and thought, *This is getting weird.*

➤ **check for understanding** How does the author choose to narrate the story?

## CRITICAL LITERACY

One way to help students think critically is to construct alternatives to the text. For example, have students imagine how the story might be different if Sam revealed more of his thoughts and feelings. Or, have them consider what it would be like if Sergeant Webber were the narrator. These lines of inquiry will help open new ways of thinking for students.



## work time

**Introduce Vocabulary** Write the following vocabulary words on the board: **sprinted**, **proclaimed**. Point out the Spanish cognate for the present-tense verb *proclaim*. Then, have students identify antonyms for each word.

**Read—Pause—Make Connections** Use the following interactive strategy to promote a strategic reading of the text.

Have student pairs take turns reading “Try, Try Again” aloud. After each student reads two paragraphs, have him or her pause and share a personal or text connection.

On the board, write a few sentence frames to help guide the conversation, such as:

- This reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_.
- I remember reading about a girl who \_\_\_\_\_.
- I know that in our school, tryouts for sports are \_\_\_\_\_.
- I feel that allowing girls to play on a boys’ team is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

### Analyze Author’s Craft and Style: Characterization

Read aloud paragraphs 1 and 2, asking students to listen for details that reveal traits about Sasha. Call on volunteers to share what they learn about Sasha. (She is passionate about basketball and determined to make the team in spite of having been cut the previous year.)

Then, ask what students might infer about the coach based on last year’s tryouts. (He may have a bias against girls playing on boys’ teams because he chose a less talented player over Sasha.)

Finally, have partners read through the rest of the text and identify other details that give clues about what the characters of the story are like. Invite volunteers to explain how these details affect the reader’s understanding of the characters in the story.

**check for understanding** by having students explain why the author likely included details about last year’s tryouts. (The details about last year’s tryouts support the idea that Sasha is a determined athlete. They also help create tension and suspense for this year’s tryouts.)

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**work time**

**Try, Try Again**  
*by Angela Baez*

- 1 It was late at night, and Sasha was still in her driveway shooting baskets. Finally, her dad opened a window to remind her of the time. “Sorry, Dad,” Sasha replied, making a basket, “but tryouts are tomorrow!”
- 2 Her dad shook his head and shut the window, concerned about Sasha trying out for the boys’ basketball team again. She had tried out the previous year but was cut in the final round when the coach chose Ben Davis, who couldn’t make a basket even if he’d had a six-foot ladder!
- 3 Some boys, including Ben Davis, felt Sasha should play on the girls’ team, but her friends disagreed and planned to attend the tryouts to show their support. “I don’t ever recall Lincoln School being so excited about basketball tryouts,” Principal Smith commented to Coach Bill, who didn’t reply.
- 4 On the big day, Sasha kept glancing at the clock, where the second hand crept at a snail’s pace. When the dismissal bell finally rang, Sasha sprinted to her locker to grab her shoes and shorts, only to find her locker door wide open and her basketball shoes missing.
- 5 In the gym, the boys shot baskets under the appraising eye of Coach Bill, and crowds of students held up signs that proclaimed, “Let Sasha Play!” When Sasha entered, the students cheered, and the boys stopped shooting as she marched onto court, wondering why she looked so angry and determined.
- 6 Sasha was about to start dribbling when Coach Bill blew his whistle and shouted, “Time out! Sasha, you can’t try out wearing street shoes.” Sasha froze, her face reddening, and was about to leave when Ben Davis tapped her on the shoulder, handed her his shoes, and said, “Use mine.”
- 7 Ben gave Sasha a high-five before shuffling off the court in his white tube socks. The shoes were a little big, but Sasha didn’t miss a single shot.

➡ **check for understanding** Why do you think the author included details about last year’s tryouts?

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### VISUAL LITERACY

After students have finished reading, monitor their understanding by having them draw an event from the text. Then, have them work with classmates to put their drawings in plot order. Ask for volunteers to retell the most important events of the story using the drawings as a reference.



## check for understanding

**Analyze Author's Craft and Style** Have students work with a partner to answer the **check for understanding** questions.

If students struggle to contrast the styles of the two texts, use a Think Aloud to model how a critical thinker would approach the texts.

**Think Aloud** Both authors use language to create a mood of suspense, but they do it in different ways. In "Try, Try Again," the author includes details about last year's tryouts, the conflicting opinions of Sasha's classmates, and the disappearance of her basketball shoes to create a suspenseful mood. In "Spiderman Saves the Day," the author tells the story from Sam's first-person point of view. This creates suspense by revealing details to the reader as Sam learns them.

**Plot Structure** To help students complete the diagram, review the elements of the plot structure:

- The **introduction** tells readers what they need to know about the main character and situation.
- The **conflict** is the main problem in the story that sets the story events in motion.
- The **climax** is the turning point of the story when the main character faces the conflict.
- The **resolution** is the point where the conflict, or problem, is resolved.



## reflect

Have partners discuss how the plot structure of each story contributes to the author's style. Make sure students cite specific text evidence to support their opinions.

### check for understanding

- 1 Do you think Sam Weller of "Spiderman Saves the Day" is a believable character? Why or why not?

Possible response: Sam's Spiderman pajamas made him believable because we all have something we don't want to be caught wearing.

- 2 What contemporary issue does the author of "Try, Try Again" address? What do you think her viewpoint of this issue is?

Possible response: Girls playing boys' sports is the issue, which the author endorses with the support of Sasha's friends and Ben's change of heart.

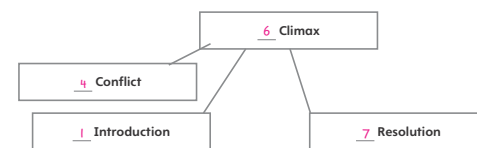
- 3 In "Try, Try Again," what does the author imply happened to Sasha's basketball shoes? Why do you think this?

Possible response: The author implies that someone who doesn't want Sasha to play took the shoes because the locker door was wide open.

- 4 Which author had a more direct style, the author of "Spiderman Saves the Day" or "Try, Try Again."

Possible response: The first-person narration of "Spiderman Saves the Day" was more direct, with sequential events and descriptive thoughts.

- 5 Complete the Plot Structure diagram for "Try, Try Again." Label the parts of the plot with the appropriate paragraph number.



### reflect

With a partner, discuss how the traditional plot structure of "Try, Try Again" contributes to the author's style. Then compare this with the episodic structure of "Spiderman Saves the Day" and how it contributes to style.

## CRITICAL LITERACY

To encourage critical thinking, have students question which details are missing from the text. For example, the author of "Spiderman Saves the Day" does not explain how Sam manages to be at the right place at the right time, and the author of "Try, Try Again" never reveals what happened to Sasha's basketball shoes.

Ask students to discuss why the authors may have left out this information and how the readers' view of the characters or opinion about author's style might change if it were included.

## Compare and contrast story elements to determine how they contribute to meaning and style

➤ show me

How does one author's style differ from another?

➤ guide me

example

The way an author uses words makes up the author's style. Read the story below. Then follow the directions.

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Underline the sentences tell what happened to Finn. Draw two lines under the sentence that creates a sense of urgency.





## work time

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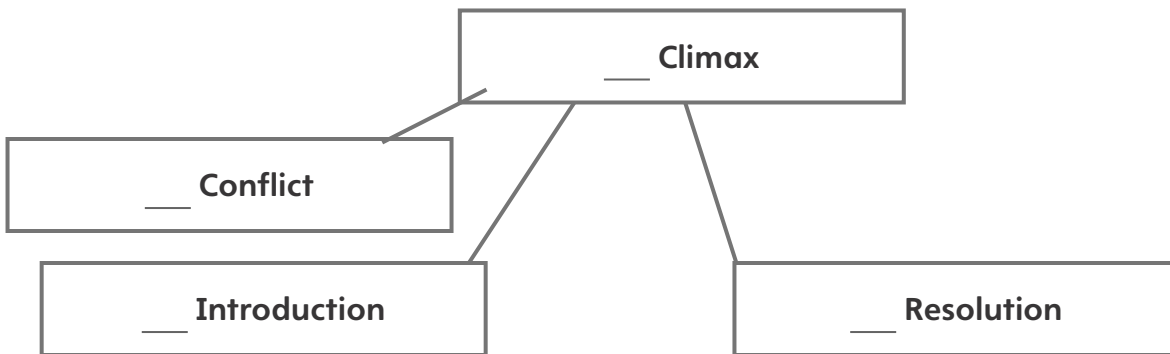
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➤ **check for understanding** Why do you think the author included details about last year’s tryouts?



### ➤ check for understanding

- 1 Do you think Sam Weller of “Spiderman Saves the Day” is a believable character? Why or why not?
- 2 What contemporary issue does the author of “Try, Try Again” address? What do you think her viewpoint of this issue is?
- 3 In “Try, Try Again,” what does the author imply happened to Sasha’s basketball shoes? Why do you think this?
- 4 Which author had a more direct style, the author of “Spiderman Saves the Day” or “Try, Try Again.”
- 5 Complete the Plot Structure diagram for “Try, Try Again.” Label the parts of the plot with the appropriate paragraph number.



### ➤ reflect

With a partner, discuss how the traditional plot structure of “Try, Try Again” contributes to the author’s style. Then compare this with the episodic structure of “Spiderman Saves the Day” and how it contributes to style.