

Text Studies Lectures

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Defining a text

As a college student, much of your time will be spent interacting with texts of all types, shapes, sizes, and delivery methods. Sound interesting? Oh, it is. In the following sections, we'll explore the nature of texts, what they will mean to you, and how to explore and use them effectively.

In academic terms, a text is anything that conveys a set of meanings to the person who examines it. You might have thought that texts were limited to written materials, such as books, magazines, newspapers, and 'zines (an informal term for magazine that refers especially to fanzines and webzines). Those items are indeed texts—but so are movies, paintings, television shows, songs, political cartoons, online materials, advertisements, maps, works of art, and even rooms full of people. If we can look at something, explore it, find layers of meaning in it, and draw information and conclusions from it, we're looking at a text.

types of text and their characteristics

Reading not only improves our knowledge, but can be great entertainment or help increase memory. Surely you have read many texts throughout your life; however, it is not the same as reading a romance novel or an instruction manual.

Types of text and what makes them different

Therefore, there are different types of text. But what are the differences between them? What characterizes them? In the following lines you can find a classification with the different text types.

1. Narrative text

The narrative text is one that tells events, stories, tales, facts or myths , so it can be fictitious or non-fictitious. It is characterized by a sequence of events expressed by dynamic verbs and adverbs and spatial connectors such as: "and then", "first", "second", "third"... For example: "First we filled our bags and then we got in a taxi and went to the airport. After that...

The most commonly used verb form in this type of text is the past tense . Usually past perfect but others are also used: he picked up the salt shaker, he lived in that house, he had walked, he was clear, he said what he thought, etc. However, when dialogues are reproduced in a direct way, that is, transcribing what the characters say to the letter, the most usual verbal form is the present: - Get out of here! -Let me go on my way! -said the man.

2. Descriptive text

This type of text, called descriptive text, is intended to define something , whether an object, a person, an animal, a situation or a description of another type of text. It is also used to express feelings. Text usually revolves around the attributes of a thing and often uses the forms of the third person pronoun.

There are two types of descriptive texts:

Technical description text : is characterized by an emphasis on the accuracy of the data

Literary descriptive text : the descriptions are more personal and it is the author who gives the intentionality.

3. Expository text

The aim of this type of text is to explain . The expository text is oriented to explain a topic but in which the author does not give his personal opinion, that is, he usually provides relevant facts and figures, but does not include his opinions. These types of texts are often found in many textbooks, such as those of a school or university subject. They usually include definitions, explanations, etc.

The structure of these texts is usually very clear, beginning with an introduction to introduce the topic; the development, highlighting objective analysis, examples or data; and the conclusion, summarizing the most important aspects of the topic at hand. Its purpose is to inform.

4. Argumentative text

The argumentative texts start from an assumption, in which a writing style is used that tries to persuade the reader, since the reasons for or against a certain "position" or "thesis" are exposed.

To achieve this, the text usually begins with a statement that helps to understand the arguments being proposed. In other words, it is necessary to put the reader in context before moving on to explain the benefits or characteristics of the topic at hand. To add credibility, this type of text may contain bibliographical references that allow to demonstrate its validity, but also reasoning of cause and effect, authority (i.e. experts in the subject) or popularity (i.e. everyone does it), among others.

5. Directive text

The directive text encourages the reader to do something, so it is an instructive text that explains how to develop an activity or carry out an objective. In this type of text, the order is very important, as well as the logical order, with cause-effect relationships, and the order from more to less importance. An example of this type of text would be an instruction manual.

6. Scientific texts

If you are one of those people who have studied at university, you have surely read a scientific text, which is a type of text that aims to show the progress of research. In it, formal writing stands out, in which technical language is used. The structure is coherent, and the information must always be referenced.

7. Legal texts

These are texts used in the judicial field , which contain numerous technical terms, ancient terms (for example, from Greek or Latin) and a formal and conservative language. They are characterized by the logical and progressive arrangement of the contents, and their content stands out for its objectivity, which aims to avoid erroneous or ambiguous interpretations.

The prayers are third person singular, impersonal and passive reflections. Compared to other types of text, word repetition is common and, in fact, key concepts in the document are often repeated over and over again to avoid ambiguity.

8. Administrative texts

The administrative texts are similar to the legal ones . In fact, they are often referred to as legal-administrative texts. However, they tend to be less rigid than legal texts. Certificates are an example of this.

9. Literary texts

They are texts with a great literary aesthetic, so they are considered works of art . The metaphorical language stands out, rich in expressiveness and emotion. The poems, stories, tales and some essays are examples of literary texts.

10. Humanistic texts

Humanistic texts are those that deal with the theme of human relations (for example, philosophy or sociology), but that are not formal, as is the case with scientific texts.

11. Advertising texts

As its name indicates, the content of these texts is advertising , and aims to persuade the reader to contract a service or make a purchase of a product. Copys and slogans are examples of this type of text.

12. Journalistic texts

Journalistic texts are those that pretend to inform, although they can also provide an opinion . Their objective is journalistic communication, and they can be found both in paper journals and on websites.

13. Digital texts

New technologies have allowed our way of relating and communicating to change. This change has also affected texts, which have a lot of power in the digital world.

This type of text, for example, is what we can find on blogs or in digital magazines . The immediacy of the information that characterises this medium and the ease of access to the content that can be found, means that the reader does not read many of these texts in their entirety, but rather usually scans them to go directly to the information that interests him.

Strategies for Reading Textbooks

Reading textbooks may not be fun, but being able to is important. Throughout middle school, high school and college, textbooks will be a big part of your reading. Understanding how to read and use them effectively is key to academic success.

Before You Read

Textbooks can be boring, tedious, and full of detail. Jumping right into a textbook without having a general idea of the central themes and topics can make textbook reading that much more challenging. We learn best when we move from general to specific. Previewing and developing a big picture of a text before reading will enable you to better identify what's important as you read and make it possible for you to retain the detail.

Preview. The steps below will help you preview a text and enhance your comprehension and retention.

Review all chapter headings and subheadings.

Glance over any pictures, charts or graphs in the section you'll be reading.

Read any bold or italicized words and make sure you understand them.

Read the chapter summary.

Review any end of chapter questions.

Question. Developing a set of questions you want to answer before you start reading a text provides direction and focus as you read the text. Once you've previewed the text, make a list of questions you want to find answers to as you read. How do you do this? Easy. While you're previewing the text, turn each heading and subheading into a question. For example, if the heading is "Root causes of the American civil war," then your question may be "What were the root causes that lead to the American civil war?"

While You Read

The following strategies will help you maximize your comprehension and retain information while reading textbooks.

Reflect. From reviewing chapter headings, subheadings, bold or italicized words, ask yourself what you've already learned. Now as you read:

Answer the questions you developed while previewing the text.

Try and predict the answers to the questions and find out if your predictions are correct.

Read aloud. Reading aloud improves comprehension and retention of information.

Develop a picture in your mind of the concepts presented. Visualizing information, concepts or material presented makes it much easier to remember.

Highlight. As you read through your text, highlight important passages that support central themes and concepts. Be selective. If you're highlighting more than 20% of a passage you're not being selective enough.

As you read, try and identify important concepts and facts that could be likely test questions. Underline and identify these concepts with a "Q" in the margin.

Circle with a pencil key terms and vocabulary. Write a short definition for each in your notes or in the margin of the textbook.

Take well organized notes on the backside of your corresponding class lecture notes. This way your lecture notes and textbook notes for the same topic will be easy to access and review in preparation for the test.

Make visual aids, including, picture, graphs, diagrams, or tables, to help visualize what you're reading. Visualization is a great way to take information that is complex or difficult and make it easy to understand and remember.

Write a brief summary of the central themes and ideas in your notes. Being able to develop a summary of what you learned will help you master the material and retain the information.

After You Read

What you do after you read a text, can be almost as beneficial to learning and retention, as reading the text itself.

Recount. Once you've finished reading a text or passage, sit down with someone else and tell them what you read and what you learned from the text. Explaining aloud what you've learned from reading is arguably the most effective way to promote mastery of material and improve retention. Joining a study group is a great way to have the opportunity to share with others what you've learned from your reading.

Review. Review. And then review again! Within a day of your initial reading, spend 20 to 30 minutes—depending on the amount of material covered—reviewing your notes and the information you learned, reciting the main points and topics. This will move the information from short-term to long-term memory. Each week spend about 10 minutes reviewing your notes and the highlighted parts of your text. Reviewing will make sure you're prepared when test time arrives.

When Textbook Reading is Challenging

Textbook reading is typically more difficult than other forms of reading, but sometimes it's downright challenging. If you're faced with reading a challenging textbook, we recommend the following:

Read aloud. Reading aloud improves reading comprehension and retention of information. Reading aloud allows you to hear what you're reading which enables the brain to process the information more effectively and remember what it heard.

Change positions. Reading passages from textbooks gets tedious and boring really fast. Being stuck in the same position the entire time you read only adds to the monotony. Try reading standing up for a while, or change positions every once in the while.

Read the text again. Each time you read a text again you'll pick up something new, retain more information and find it easier to understand. It's not uncommon to read the same passage from a textbook several times before you're able to fully understand and retain the information.

Search for keywords. Read sentences removing the adjectives and adverbs. This will cut to the meat of the sentence and help you identify what's being said and what's really important for you to know.

Jump around in the text. Sometimes it's beneficial to skip around and read different parts of a chapter or section in a textbook. For example, jumping to the end of the chapter and reading the chapter summary, before reading the chapter, can greatly enhance focus, direction and understanding as you go back and read the actual chapter.

Mark it. If you come across a passage or section of the text that you just don't understand, underline it and put a mark next to it in the margin of your book. When you're done reading your text, you'll have several marks throughout the chapter. Once you get back to class, you'll know what questions to ask your teacher or professor.

Take a break. If you're just not making headway with the text you're reading, take a break, regroup and come back to tackle it later with a fresh pair of eyes.

Turn to the web. When all else fails, "Google" it. The web is a plethora of information. And these days there are websites that address, and lend understanding, to just about every topic or subject.

Things to Consider...

Here are a few more things to consider when reading textbooks.

What to Read

Every teacher and professor is different. Some weigh their tests and quizzes heavily on what's found in the textbook, while others rely almost entirely on their lectures. At the beginning of the semester try and find out if exams will be based primarily on information obtained through in-class lectures or from reading the textbook. This will help you know where to focus your time.

Where to Study

Finding a peaceful, comfortable location, away from distractions, where you can focus, is essential to reading textbooks effectively. Learn more about finding a good study location.

When to Read

When you read is just as important, if not more important, than where you read. Reading textbooks can be tedious and boring. The last thing you want to do is read when you're fatigued, tired or it's late at night. Reading textbooks requires

that you're alert and attentive. We recommend reading for about 30 to 45 minutes at a time then taking a short break to reinvigorate your mind and body.

How to Retain It

The best way to retain information from textbooks is to (1) read aloud and (2) discuss what you've read with other people. Reciting text information moves it from your short-term to long-term memory and ensures subject mastery

Narrative texts

Introduction

Narrative text includes any type of writing that relates a series of events and includes both fiction (novels, short stories, poems) and nonfiction (memoirs, biographies, news stories). Both forms tell stories that use imaginative language and express emotion, often through the use of imagery, metaphors, and symbols. Students need to know how narrative texts work and how to read them, because stories are used for many important purposes. The purpose of narrative text is to entertain, to gain and hold a reader's interest; however, writers of memoirs and novels often relate complex stories that examine universal ideas, events, and issues. In addition, speakers, advertisers, and politicians use stories to persuade us to accept or reject an idea.

Purpose: Essentially, the purpose of narrative texts is to tell a story. That said, there can be many reasons for storytelling in the first place, for example, myths can be told to explain natural phenomena and legends can be used to pass on cultural beliefs. Storytelling itself is a means to entertain and inform readers and allows for the writer to express themselves creatively and imaginatively. There are many types of narrative text, including myths, fables, traditional tales, novels, short stories, etc, to name but a few.

Structure: There are many types of narrative text, but broadly speaking they all begin by establishing the setting and introducing characters. A problem or complication is then introduced which serves as the driving force behind the ensuing events. After the rising action reaches a dramatic high point or climax, a resolution is achieved and the story ends.

Main Features:

Most often written in the past or present tense

Most often uses the third or first person perspective

Characters are often recognisably human in their motivations and actions

Language is used creatively to paint a picture in the reader's mind

Storytelling may be supplemented by the use of images

DRAMA

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White theatrical masks of a comedy and tragedy

Purpose: As with narrative texts, the purpose of drama is largely to entertain through storytelling. Drama can also be used to provide social commentary, communicate culture, amuse, and inform too. While there are similarities between narrative storytelling and dramatic storytelling, drama endeavors to tell

a story through enacting it on the stage, usually requiring the use of dialogue as a primary means of moving the story on.

Structure: As drama is largely concerned with storytelling, it often follows the same types of plot structures as other narrative forms, along with various conventions particular to this form itself. For example, where a novel might have chapters and parts, a drama has scenes and acts. Drama has written conventions too that make it distinct from prose forms of storytelling, such as its extensive use of dialogue and occasional stage directions, for example.

Main Features:

Story related largely through the use of dialogue with page showing name of character and the words they speak

Organisational information included such as set descriptions and stage directions

Story structures common in narrative texts also used here

All in all, the narrative form is unique, because authors relate ideas they want to express about how people behave and what they believe. These ideas, or themes, generally relate to universal truths and make connections to the reader's experiences.

Scaffolding strategies for narrative text

to introduce the narrative form.

Focus Strategy

1. Focus: Themes

2. Focus: Conflict

3. Focus: Features

4. Focus: Characterization

5. Focus: Setting

Example of Narrative Text

A little girl in a village

Amelia's house was in a quiet place. It was a hilly village; the garden of her house was very beautiful. Flowers with various colors grew there. Amelia grew some roses. She's a nature lover. One day Amelia closed her book. She felt tired after studying hard. She stood by the window. She could see the mountain from there. It was a beautiful bluish green. "How wonderful it would be if I could reach the top of that mountain without climbing."

"If you want to fly up there, follow me," said a soft voice. Amelia was surprised. "Who are you? Why did you come in without permission?"

"My name is Yuli. My home is a bit far from here. I want to be your friend, Amelia," said the girl.

"You know my name," said Amelia.

"I often hear your mother calling you," Yuli answered. She reached out her hand to Amelia. Amelia shook Yuli's hand.

"Why is your hand so cold? Are you ill?" asked Amelia, worried.

"I haven't been to school for few days," said Yuli.

"If you were sick, why aren't you in bed now?" asked Amelia.

"The fresh air will make me better, Amelia," said Yuli pulled Amelia's hand. She wanted Amelia to follow her.

"Oh, no. I cannot go now. I must do my homework."

"Okay. How about tomorrow? My mother will make some delicious cakes for me. You must taste some, Yuli," said Amelia.

"Thanks Amelia. You are so kind." Yuli waved to Amelia and then she was gone. Amelia's mother was puzzled to see her daughter talking alone

Example of Narrative Text

A Man and a Parrot

A man had a parrot. It was a very beautiful bird and every day the man talked to it.

"Pretty Polly," he said. "You are a pretty Polly."

"Pretty Polly," the parrot said. "You are Pretty Polly."

Every day the man spoke new words to the parrot "Hallo" he said, and "Goodbye."

One day the parrot was not in its cage. It was flying about the room. The man came into the room and saw the parrot. "What are you doing?" he said.

"What are you doing?" the parrot said.

The man laughed. Then he went out to visit his friends.

That evening a thief came to the house. He walked round the house and looked into the windows. There was no one at home. The thief broke open the door and entered the house. First he went into the sitting room. In the sitting room he found some bowls and vases. He put them into a sack. Then he went into the bedroom. In the bedroom he found a gold watch and some money. He put these into the sack, too. He stole many things from the house and put them into his sack.

The sack was soon full. The thief put it over his shoulder and walked to the door. He opened the door and looked out. There was no one there.

"What are you doing?" a voice said.

The thief jumped high into the air and dropped his sack. Then he ran out of the house and down the road.

"What are you doing?" the voice said again: "Pretty Polly. Hallo, Goodbye. What are you doing?"