

10 Creative Narrative Writing Templates

for the Selective Test Exam

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Introduction

Narrative writing is a crucial component of the Selective Test Examination in Australia. Students are expected to craft engaging stories that demonstrate creativity, understanding of narrative structure, and effective use of language. This collection of templates provides students with frameworks to develop compelling narratives under exam conditions.

Each template in this guide includes:

- A clear structure and framework
- Situations where the template is most effective
- Example prompts similar to those found in the Selective Test
- Sample responses or excerpts demonstrating the template
- Practical tips for implementation

Remember that these templates should be adapted to your personal writing style and the specific requirements of the prompt. Practise each template regularly to build familiarity and confidence.

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Template 1: The Hero's Journey

Based on Joseph Campbell's monomyth structure, this template guides the protagonist through a transformative adventure with clear stages. It works particularly well for adventure prompts or challenges to overcome.

Structure:

1. **Ordinary World:** Introduce the protagonist in their everyday environment
2. **Call to Adventure:** Present a challenge, problem, or opportunity
3. **Refusal/Acceptance:** Show initial reluctance followed by commitment
4. **Trials and Challenges:** Create obstacles that test the protagonist
5. **Transformation:** Show how the protagonist changes through their experience
6. **Return:** Bring the protagonist back to their world, but changed

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative that begins with: "The strange light in the sky wasn't like anything I had ever seen before..."

Sample Response Excerpt:

The strange light in the sky wasn't like anything I had ever seen before. It pulsed with an eerie blue glow against the twilight, hovering just above Mrs. Fletcher's weathered farmhouse at the edge of our village. I pulled my jumper tighter around my shoulders and glanced back at the warm lights of home. Mum would be calling me for dinner soon.

As I turned to leave, a thin beam of light shot downward from the strange object, illuminating a perfect circle on the field below. Something inside me—curiosity, perhaps, or the recklessness that Mum always warned would be my downfall—compelled me forward.

"Don't be daft, Ellie," I muttered to myself, even as my feet carried me towards the light. "This is how people disappear in those films Dad watches."

Yet I couldn't help myself. This could be the extraordinary thing I'd been waiting for in my otherwise ordinary life...

Tips for Implementation:

- Clearly establish your protagonist's ordinary world with sensory details
- Make the call to adventure compelling and directly related to the prompt
- Include a moment of hesitation to add realism
- Plan three distinct challenges of increasing difficulty
- Ensure the transformation feels earned through the trials faced

Template 2: Twist in the Tale

This template builds towards an unexpected revelation or twist that reframes the entire narrative. It's effective for mystery prompts or situations involving deception or misunderstanding.

Structure:

1. **Setup:** Establish a seemingly straightforward situation
2. **Plant clues:** Subtly include details that will make sense after the twist
3. **False direction:** Lead readers towards an expected outcome
4. **Building tension:** Increase stakes as the story progresses
5. **The twist:** Reveal information that changes everything
6. **Resolution:** Briefly show the aftermath of the revelation

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative about a character who finds something unexpected.

Sample Response Excerpt:

The old trunk creaked as I lifted its heavy lid, dust particles dancing in the shaft of afternoon sunlight streaming through the attic window. Grandma's passing last month had left me with the task of sorting through decades of her possessions. Beneath layers of yellowed newspapers and moth-eaten fabric lay a small wooden box, its brass clasp tarnished with age. My heart quickened as I carefully opened it to reveal a collection of letters tied with faded blue ribbon, and a black and white photograph of a young man in military uniform—a man who wasn't my grandfather. The first letter, dated 15th March 1942, began: "My darling Eleanor, Not a day passes that I don't think of our last night together before deployment..."

I thumbed through more letters, each more passionate than the last, documenting a love affair I'd never known about. The final letter, however, was different—written in my grandmother's handwriting, never sent. "My dearest Thomas, They told us yesterday that your plane was shot down over the channel. I am writing this letter you will never read with news I can scarcely bear to share—I am carrying your child..."

Tips for Implementation:

- Don't telegraph your twist—it should surprise but still feel plausible
- Plant at least three subtle clues earlier in the narrative
- Consider using first-person perspective to limit reader information
- The twist should recontextualize previous events, not simply add new information
- Keep the resolution brief—the impact comes from the twist itself

Template 3: Parallel Narratives

This template weaves together two connected storylines that may be separated by time, perspective, or circumstance. It's ideal for prompts involving connections, relationships, or cause and effect scenarios.

Structure:

1. **Establish Narrative A:** Introduce the first storyline and character
2. **Shift to Narrative B:** Present the second storyline and character
3. **Develop Narrative A:** Progress the first story, hinting at connections
4. **Develop Narrative B:** Progress the second story, reinforcing connections
5. **Convergence:** Bring the narratives together through a key event or revelation
6. **Unified Resolution:** Conclude with both narratives integrated

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative based on the theme: "The decisions we make today shape our tomorrow."

Sample Response Excerpt:

Sydney, 2023

Maya's fingers hovered over the keyboard, the email draft staring back at her. The job offer in London was everything she'd worked towards—prestigious gallery, impressive salary, international recognition. All she had to do was click "Accept" and pack her life

into suitcases. She glanced at the framed photograph on her desk—her grandmother as a young woman, standing before the Sydney Opera House, eyes bright with possibility. The text from her mother flashed on her phone: "Found more of Gran's journals. Coming over to drop them off."

Maya sighed, minimised the email, and went to put the kettle on.

Sydney, 1963

Elizabeth sealed the envelope with trembling hands. The letter inside would change everything—her acceptance of the arts scholarship in Paris. A world away from dusty Sydney suburbs and her family's expectations. Freedom, at last.

The telephone rang, startling her. Her sister's voice came through, tearful and breaking: "Mum's had an accident. They don't know if she'll—" The rest dissolved into sobs.

Elizabeth stared at the envelope, her heart splitting in two as she reached for her coat.

Tips for Implementation:

- Clearly distinguish between the narratives with time markers or character names
- Use visual cues like section breaks or italics to signal narrative shifts
- Create meaningful parallels between the storylines (similar situations or themes)
- Plant elements in each narrative that will gain significance when connected
- The convergence should feel inevitable in retrospect, not forced

Template 4: Flashback Framework

This template structures a narrative around significant memories that inform the present situation. It works well for prompts involving reflection, regret, or personal growth.

Structure:

1. **Present Moment Anchor:** Establish the current situation
2. **Trigger:** Introduce something that sparks the protagonist's memory
3. **First Flashback:** Reveal a past event that provides context
4. **Return to Present:** Show how the memory affects current actions
5. **Second Flashback:** Reveal a deeper layer of the past
6. **Resolution:** Conclude with insight gained from reconciling past and present

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative that includes the line: "Some mistakes can never be undone."

Sample Response Excerpt:

The playground stood empty in the afternoon sun, swings moving gently in the breeze. I gripped the wrought-iron fence, knuckles white, as the familiar knot of anxiety tightened in my chest. Fifteen years, and I still couldn't bring myself to step inside. "Dad, can we go to the park?" Mia tugged at my hand, her seven-year-old eyes wide with anticipation.

The rusted gate squeaked as another family pushed through, a boy about Mia's age racing towards the climbing frame. His laughter triggered something within me—
* * *

"Race you to the top!" Jamie's voice echoed across the playground as he sprinted ahead of me, all gangly limbs and determination. I was twelve, him eleven, inseparable since preschool.

"Not fair! You got a head start!" I shouted, chasing after him. The afternoon stretched before us, endless and golden. We were invincible, immortal—until we weren't.
* * *

"Dad?" Mia's voice pulled me back to the present. "Are you okay?" I forced a smile. "Fine, sweetheart. Just remembering something." Some mistakes can never be undone. The words had haunted me since the funeral. If I'd never suggested we climb the old oak tree at the park's edge...

Tips for Implementation:

- Create a clear sensory trigger for each flashback (sound, smell, sight)
- Use distinct formatting or transition markers for flashback sections
- Ensure flashbacks reveal important information not just background
- Show how the past directly influences the protagonist's present choices
- Include emotional reactions in both timeframes to build connection

Template 5: The Moral Dilemma

This template centres on a protagonist facing a difficult ethical choice. It's perfect for prompts involving decisions, values, or character testing situations.

Structure:

1. **Setup:** Introduce the protagonist and their core values
2. **Dilemma Introduction:** Present a situation with no clear right answer
3. **Exploration of Options:** Show the character considering different choices
4. **Increasing Pressure:** Add time constraints or stakes

5. **Decision and Action:** Show the character making their choice
6. **Consequences:** Explore the immediate aftermath and internal reflection

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative about a character who discovers a friend's secret.

Sample Response Excerpt:

The test paper slipped from between Rahul's maths textbook as I borrowed it, fluttering to the floor like an autumn leaf. A bold red "98%" marked the top corner—impressive, but not surprising for Rahul, our class's undisputed maths genius. Then I saw the name: "Sebastian Wilson." Not Rahul Sharma. My stomach clenched as I picked it up, recognising Mr. Thompson's distinctive handwriting. Sebastian had been devastated last week when his test went missing before marks were recorded. His scholarship depended on maintaining a 90% average. I stared at the evidence in my hand. Rahul, my best friend since Year 7, had stolen Sebastian's test and passed it off as his own work. The same Rahul who had helped me through my parents' divorce, who volunteered weekends at the local animal shelter, who I trusted completely. The scholarship interview panel was meeting tomorrow. Sebastian was inconsolable, certain he'd lose everything. Rahul's early acceptance to Cambridge hinged on his perfect academic record. I slipped the test into my pocket, my thoughts racing. Tell Sebastian? Confront Rahul? Go to Mr. Thompson? Pretend I never saw it? Each option seemed to betray someone—including myself.

Tips for Implementation:

- Establish sympathetic motivations for all sides of the dilemma
- Create a situation where all choices have significant drawbacks
- Show the protagonist's internal thought process through internal monologue
- Include a moment where the character nearly chooses differently
- Focus on emotional and relationship consequences, not just practical ones

Template 6: Object as Catalyst

This template uses a significant object to drive the narrative forward. It's effective for prompts involving discoveries, heirlooms, or mysterious items.

Structure:

1. **Introduce the Object:** Present the significant item in an intriguing way
2. **Establish Connection:** Show the protagonist's initial reaction to the object
3. **Object's Influence:** Demonstrate how the object begins to affect events
4. **Complication:** Introduce a problem or challenge related to the object
5. **Climax:** Reveal the object's true significance or power
6. **Resolution:** Show how the protagonist's relationship with the object changes

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative beginning with: "The old watch had stopped working years ago, but today..."

Sample Response Excerpt:

The old watch had stopped working years ago, but today, as I cleared out Grandad's cottage, it began to tick. The sound was so unexpected that I nearly dropped the tarnished timepiece, its worn leather strap crumbling in my palm.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

I held it to my ear, certain I was imagining things. Grandad had worn this watch every day until his passing last month. "Hasn't worked since the war," he'd always said when I asked why he bothered with a broken watch. "Some things you keep for reasons other than utility, Sophie."

The second hand jerked forward, the mechanism whirring with surprising strength. As I studied its weathered face, the room around me seemed to blur at the edges. The temperature dropped suddenly, and the scent of cigarettes and boot polish—Grandad's scent—filled the air.

"You found it then," said a voice I'd thought I'd never hear again.

I spun around. A young man in an RAF uniform stood by the fireplace, his face achingly familiar yet decades younger than I'd ever known it. He smiled—Grandad's smile—and nodded at the watch in my trembling hand.

"Time works differently when you've seen what that watch has seen," he said softly.

Tips for Implementation:

- Describe the object in vivid sensory detail to establish its importance
- Give the object a history or backstory that unfolds gradually
- Use the object as a symbol for a larger theme in your narrative
- Show how the object changes hands or appearance throughout the story
- The object should transform the protagonist in some meaningful way

Template 7: Setting as Character

This template elevates the story's location to the importance of a character, making the setting an active force in the narrative. It's ideal for prompts involving places, environments, or atmospheric conditions.

Structure:

1. **Vivid Introduction:** Present the setting with sensory detail and personality
2. **Character Interaction:** Show how the protagonist initially relates to the place
3. **Setting's Influence:** Demonstrate how the environment affects events
4. **Setting's Challenge:** Present obstacles or tests created by the location
5. **Character Adaptation:** Show the protagonist changing to survive/thrive in this place
6. **Mutual Transformation:** Reveal how character and place have changed each other

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative based on the theme: "Places shape who we become."

Sample Response Excerpt:

The old library breathed around me, exhaling the scent of vanilla and dust from between aged pages. Morning light filtered through stained glass windows, casting kaleidoscope patterns across worn wooden floors that creaked secrets with every step. This building had stood for a hundred and fifty years, outlasting wars, floods, and the digital revolution that had rendered so many of its kind obsolete.

I ran my fingers along bookshelves, feeling the library watching me—the newest caretaker, temporary and fleeting compared to its permanence. Three months ago, I'd arrived in this small town with nothing but a suitcase and a broken heart, taking the librarian position as an escape, not a calling.

"Just until I figure things out," I had told the hiring committee.

The library seemed to know better.

That first week, pipes burst during the coldest night in decades. I stayed until dawn, moving precious first editions to safety, water soaking my clothes as the building groaned in distress. By morning, we had saved almost everything, and I collapsed on a reading chair, somehow feeling the library had been testing me.

Each day after, it revealed itself differently—a hidden door behind the reference section, marginalia from readers long dead, the perfect reading nook that caught the afternoon sun. The building was teaching me patience, showing me how to listen again.

Tips for Implementation:

- Use personification to give the setting agency and personality
- Include weather, architecture, and atmosphere as active elements
- Create a setting that changes or reveals new aspects throughout the story
- Show the setting's history and how it affects current events
- Demonstrate how different characters perceive the same setting differently

Template 8: Dialogue-Driven Narrative

This template uses conversation as the primary vehicle for storytelling. It's excellent for prompts involving relationships, conflicts, or revelations between characters.

Structure:

1. **Opening Exchange:** Begin with dialogue that hints at tension or history
2. **Contextual Grounding:** Briefly establish setting and character relationships
3. **Escalating Conversation:** Develop conflict or revelation through dialogue
4. **Subtext Layer:** Include what's not being said explicitly
5. **Climactic Exchange:** Present the key conversation that changes everything
6. **Resolution:** Show the aftermath through brief dialogue and action

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative that takes place during a conversation between two people who haven't seen each other in years.

Sample Response Excerpt:

"You cut your hair," he said, stirring sugar into his tea with mathematical precision—three rotations clockwise, three counterclockwise.

"Ten years, and that's your opening line?" I touched the ends of my bob reflexively.

"It looks nice." Michael smiled, the gesture not quite reaching his eyes. "Professional." The café hummed around us, oblivious to the gulf of unspoken history stretching across our small table. A decade compressed into twenty awkward centimetres of laminate.

"Your email said it was urgent," I said, leaving my own tea untouched. "I assumed someone had died."

"No one died." He looked down. "Though Mum's not well."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Are you?" The question hung sharp between us.

I straightened my spine. "Despite everything, yes. She was kind to me, once."

"Before you testified against my father?"

"Before I told the truth about your father," I corrected, meeting his gaze steadily.

"There's a difference."

Michael's knuckles whitened around his cup. "He's being released next month."

The room tilted slightly. "That's not possible. The sentence—"

"Good behaviour. New evidence. Legal technicalities I don't understand." He pushed a folder across the table. "He's found out where you live."

Tips for Implementation:

- Give each character a distinctive voice and speech pattern
- Use dialogue tags sparingly, but include meaningful actions between lines
- Create tension between what's said and what characters are thinking
- Reveal backstory naturally through conversation, not exposition
- Use silence and interrupted speech for emotional impact

Template 9: Five Senses Storytelling

This template structures the narrative around sensory experiences. It's particularly effective for prompts involving memory, emotional experiences, or unfamiliar environments.

Structure:

1. **Initial Sensory Trigger:** Begin with a powerful sensory experience
2. **Visual Development:** Expand the scene through sight details
3. **Auditory Layer:** Add sounds that enhance the mood or advance the plot
4. **Tactile Elements:** Incorporate touch sensations that connect character to environment
5. **Scent and Taste:** Use these intimate senses for emotional resonance
6. **Sensory Climax:** Bring all senses together at the story's key moment

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative about a character experiencing something for the last time.

Sample Response Excerpt:

The sharp scent of chlorine wrapped around me as I pushed through the heavy glass doors of Westfield Swimming Centre. That smell—antiseptic, nostalgic—had marked every Wednesday of my childhood, but today it carried the weight of an ending. I surveyed the cavernous space that seemed smaller now than in my memories. Sunlight streamed through high windows, casting dappled patterns across the water's shimmering surface. The blue-painted lines on the pool floor wavered with each tiny

ripple, hypnotic and familiar. In the shallow end, a swimming instructor demonstrated arm movements to a semi-circle of wide-eyed five-year-olds—just as Mr. Henderson had shown me twenty years ago.

The characteristic symphony filled my ears: water splashing against tiles, the hollow echo of voices bouncing off high ceilings, the occasional shrill whistle from a lifeguard, and beneath it all, the muffled underwater silence that comes between strokes when your head is submerged.

In the changing room, I traced my fingers along the rough concrete bench, feeling the slight depression in the middle from thousands of swimmers before me. The metal locker doors were cool against my palm as I changed, the laminated wristband digging slightly into my skin as it had done countless times before.

At the pool's edge, I dipped one foot in—the water was perfect, neither shocking nor tepid. As I slid in completely, the liquid embraced me like an old friend, simultaneously supporting and surrounding. I took my first stroke, tasting the familiar bitterness that always managed to find its way past my lips despite years of practice.

Tips for Implementation:

- Include all five senses, but emphasize those most relevant to your scene
- Use specific sensory details rather than general descriptions
- Connect sensory experiences to character emotions or memories
- Create sensory contrasts to highlight changes or transitions
- Use sensory details to subtly convey information about setting or character

Template 10: Circular Narrative

This template creates a story that ends where it begins, but with transformed understanding. It's ideal for prompts involving realization, perspective shifts, or life cycles.

Structure:

1. **Opening Scene:** Begin with a specific moment, image, or situation
2. **Movement Away:** Take the narrative in a new direction
3. **Development:** Explore events, challenges, or changes
4. **Turning Point:** Include a moment that shifts perspective or understanding
5. **Return Journey:** Begin bringing elements back to the opening situation
6. **Transformed Return:** End with the same scene/image but with new meaning

Example Prompt:

Write a narrative based on the theme: "Everything changes, everything stays the same."

Sample Response Excerpt:

The red front door needed painting. I stood on the path, key in hand, staring at the peeling paint and brass knocker that had announced visitors for nearly forty years. Behind me, the taxi drove away, carrying the last sounds of the city I'd called home for the past two decades.

I hadn't planned to return. After Mum's funeral, I'd sorted the house, listed it with an agent, and boarded a plane to my carefully constructed life overseas. "No point holding onto the past," I'd told my sister on the phone last Christmas. "We should sell it."

The house had other ideas. Three failed sales, a collapsed property market, and finally, my own redundancy had conspired to bring me full circle.

The key turned stiffly in the lock—fitting, after so much time. Inside, dust motes danced in the shaft of afternoon light that fell across the entryway, illuminating the height chart pencilled on the wall. I traced my finger over the marks: Ellie, age 7. Ellie, age 10. Ellie, age 14.

The house exhaled around me, releasing scents of beeswax polish and old books that no amount of vacancy could erase. I moved through rooms that seemed smaller than memory had painted them, touching surfaces that had once been the solid geography of my childhood...

[Story continues with the character exploring the house and memories, making peace with the past, and finding a new purpose]

...Six months later, I stood on the path again, keys in hand. The red front door gleamed with fresh paint, the brass knocker polished to a warm glow. Behind me, the sound of children playing drifted from the neighbour's garden. I'd never planned to return, but sometimes life insists on its own circular pattern.

The key turned smoothly in the lock, welcoming me home.

Tips for Implementation:

- Use similar language in the opening and closing scenes, but with subtle differences
- Include a repeated object, location, or action that gains new significance
- Create contrast between the protagonist's initial and final understanding
- Plant elements in the opening that will gain significance by the end
- The circular structure should feel meaningful, not merely repetitive

Conclusion: Mastering Narrative Writing for the Selective Test

These ten templates provide structured approaches to narrative writing that can help you respond effectively to a variety of prompts in the Selective Test Examination. Remember that

these frameworks are starting points—you should adapt and combine elements from different templates to suit specific prompts and your personal writing style.

As you practise with these templates, focus on developing:

- **Distinctive Voice:** Create a consistent narrative voice that engages readers
- **Precise Vocabulary:** Use specific, varied word choices to create vivid images
- **Structural Control:** Manage pacing and tension throughout your narrative
- **Character Development:** Show characters changing through their experiences
- **Thematic Depth:** Include layers of meaning beyond surface events

Successful narrative writing balances creativity with control. While imagination is essential, the ability to structure your ideas coherently under time pressure is equally important in the Selective Test environment. Regular practice with these templates will help you develop the confidence and skills needed to craft compelling narratives that showcase your writing abilities.

Remember that every great story begins with a single sentence. Keep writing, keep refining, and trust in your creative voice.

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