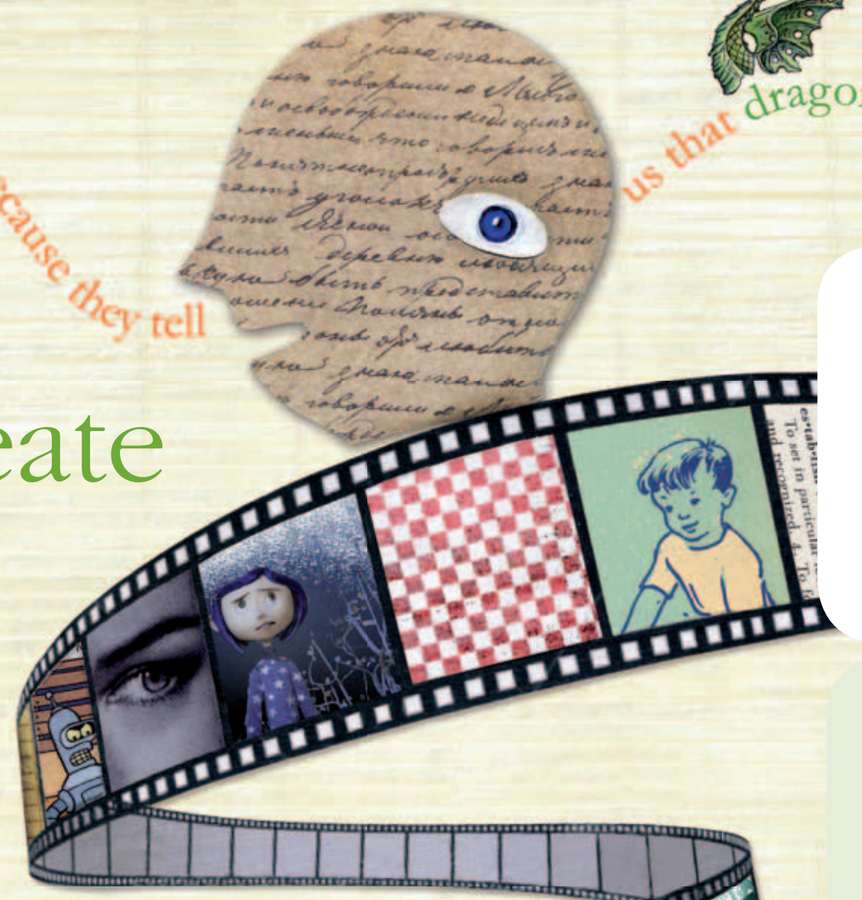
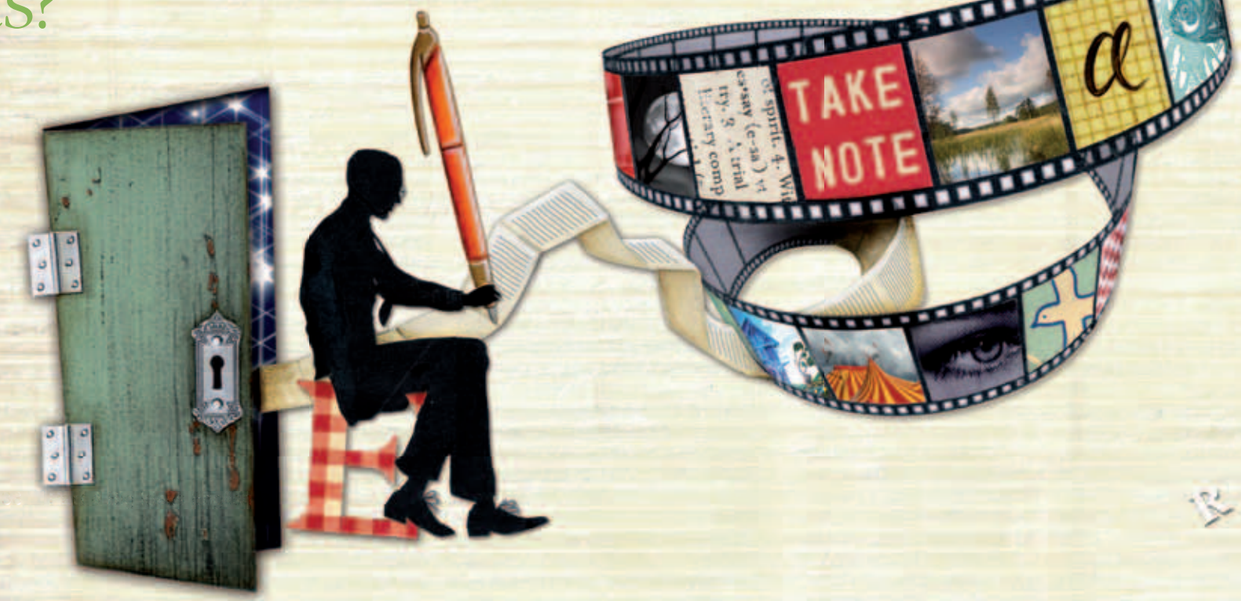
Fairy Tales are more than true because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.

4

Literacy Language Literature

How do we create imaginative worlds in print and multimodal texts?





Text list

In this Part you will read or view and discuss extracts from:

WRITTEN

Australian texts

Natalie Babbitt *Tuck Everlasting* (novel)
Gary Crew *Strange Objects* (novel)
Kate Holden 'The Magic Lives On in Places Strange and Sacred' (news article)
Kirsty Murray *Market Blues* (novel)
Morris Gleitzman *Two Weeks with the Queen* (novel)

World texts

Neil Gaiman *Coraline* (novel)
Charlie Higson interview (news article)
Anthony Horowitz *Eagle Strike* (novel)
Louis Sachar *Holes* (novel)

MULTIMODAL

Australian texts

Phillip Noyce (director) *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (film)

World texts

Neil Gaiman and P Craig Russell *Coraline* (graphic novel)
Henry Selick (director) *Coraline* (film)

4.1 What are the features of fiction texts?

In fiction, we tell stories about imagined worlds with made-up people, events and places. We tell these stories in spoken texts or texts such as novels, films or picture books. We try to make our stories seem real. We want to make our audience feel as if they know and care about our imaginary characters and what happens to them. We want them to understand and picture for themselves *who* is doing *what*, *where*, *when*, *how* and *why*. We want to create a world that others can visualise and believe in.

Poems sometimes tell stories as well, and they will be explored in Part 6.

Most stories include:

- a narrator: who tells the story from a particular point of view
- a setting or settings: which tell us *where* and *when* the story takes place
- characters: *who* the story is about
- a plot: *what* happens, *when*, *how* and *why*
- themes or ideas about people and events (for example, a novel or film might explore themes such as growing up, bravery or relationships, or ideas about how the world began).

To revise points of view, go to page 28.

Authors of different types of fiction draw on these features differently. Writers usually include more characters in a novel than they do in a short story, for example, and they won't write a horror story in the same way they write a historical novel. It also makes a difference if a story is presented in a print, multimodal or spoken text.

Coraline, a novel that has been adapted as both a graphic novel and an animated film, is a good example of how authors of texts use language features differently in print and multimodal texts.

Language focus

An **adaptation** is a work presented in a new form or medium. For example, when a novel is made into a film, the film is called an adaptation.

Novel by Neil Gaiman 2002

Graphic novel by P Craig Russell 2008

Animated film by Henry Selick 2009

The novel *Coraline* has been adapted as a graphic novel and an animated film.

Some key differences between print, multimodal and spoken texts		
Print	**Multimodal**	**Spoken**
• In a novel, the author usually tells us what their main characters are thinking and feeling. From the author's words we create pictures in our imagination, based on what the author tells us.	• Film makers sometimes use voiceovers to tell us what a character is thinking. • In a graphic novel or a film, we can see what characters and places look like.	• When someone tells a story orally, they can change things about the story with each telling.

Neil Gaiman's novel, and each adaptation of it, tell the same story:

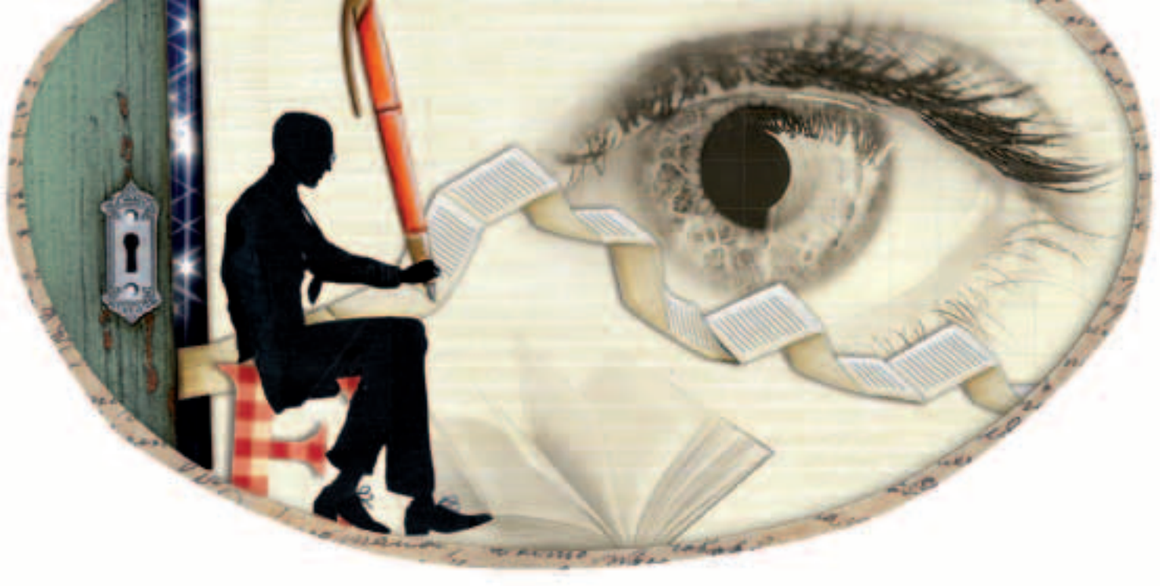
> Eleven-year-old Coraline has just moved into an apartment in an old house. She is bored and feels neglected by her parents, who don't have much time for her. While exploring, she finds a door leading into an apartment that looks very like her own. There, she meets her 'other mother' and 'other father', who seem kind and attentive and look very like her real parents, except that they have spooky black buttons for eyes. Coraline visits them in this other world several times, but begins to discover that the other mother is wicked, and far from the perfect mother figure she seemed to be. The horror mounts as the other mother tries to bribe Coraline to exchange her eyes for buttons. Coraline manages to escape, and rescues her real parents and some other children who have been caught in the other mother's evil clutches.

Although each version of the *Coraline* text tells the same story and has the same narrator, setting, characters, plot and themes, the writer or creator of each text draws on these features in very different ways, as we will explore over the following chapters.

Over to you

1 As a class, list as many differences as you can between stories told in spoken, print and multimodal texts.

2 Working in pairs, describe the front covers for the novel and graphic novel versions of *Coraline* and the poster for the animated film version to each other. How does each differ? What sort of story does each lead you to expect and why?



4.2 *Who* tells a story and *how* do they tell it?

Stories are always presented by a narrator from someone's point of view. Most commonly, we use the first person or the third person:

To revise the first, second and third person, go to page 28.

- When the story is told in the first person, the narrator is one of the characters and they use the pronoun 'I'.
- When a story is told in the third person, a narrator tells the story. They refer to the characters by name or by the pronouns 'he', 'she' or 'they'.

Some fiction writers use the second person and refer to the main character as 'you', but this is much more common in non-fiction texts such as guide books or instruction manuals, for example: 'January and February are the best months to visit if you want to experience an Australian heat wave.'

Whoever the narrator is, the *way* that they tell the story will vary depending on whether they are doing so in print (eg novel), multimodal (eg graphic novel) or digital media (eg a film on YouTube).

Over to you

1 Think of some examples of novels you have read where the writers have used first- or third-person narrators and discuss the reasons why you think each writer made the choice they did.

Who tells a story – and how – in novels?

In a novel, a third-person narrator can tell us what any of their characters are thinking and doing. In *Coraline*, for example, when Coraline's other mother says 'You know that I love you', the third-person narrator tells us how Coraline felt:

> It was true: the other mother loved her. But she loved Coraline as a miser loves money, or a dragon loves its gold. In the other mother's button eyes, Coraline knew that she was a possession, nothing more. (p. 114)

To revise similes, go to page 63.

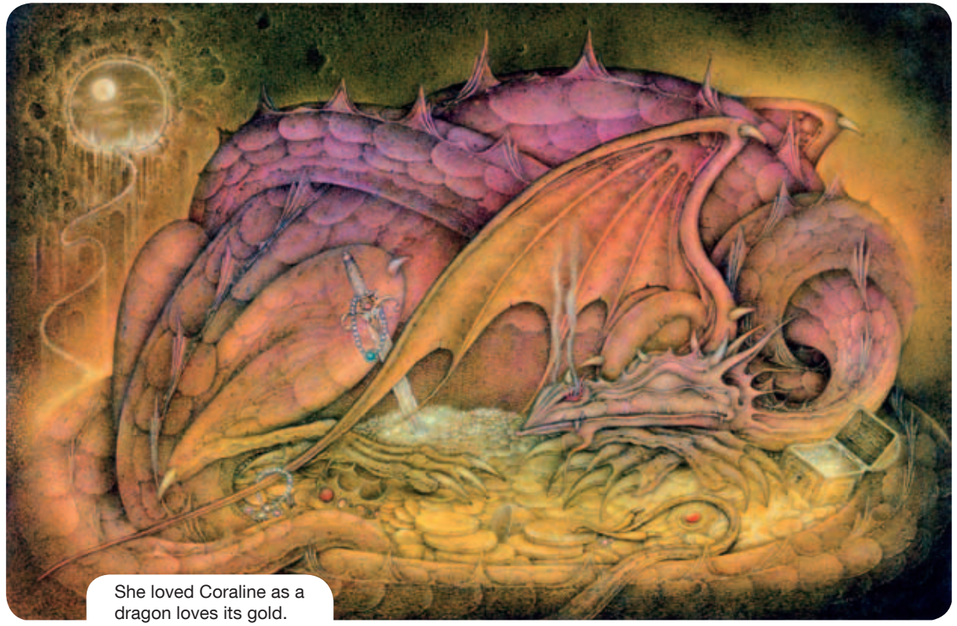
Over to you

1 a What is a miser? How does a miser love money?

b What simile does the narrator use to describe the other mother's love?

2 a Now rewrite the extract using a first-person narrator instead of a third-person narrator.

b Working in groups, discuss whether you think an 11-year-old would use language in this way to describe their feelings. Give reasons for your answer.



She loved Coraline as a dragon loves its gold.

In Kirsty Murray's novel *Market Blues*, the third-person narrator describes how the main character, Sam, feels when he finds himself in another time and place:

> Here he was, lost in the past, with no money, no trumpet, no shoes, eating bruised plums with a strange raggedy girl, but he felt light-headed with happiness, as if something had opened up inside him and sunshine was pouring in. (pp. 70–1)

To revise direct speech, go to page 27.

A first-person narrator, on the other hand, can only show what one character is thinking, so we see everything from one point of view. We only see as much as they see or understand.

Narrators use direct speech to tell us more about their characters. For example, after Coraline's real parents have disappeared, her other mother tells her she has been abandoned (and note the use of an ellipsis in this extract to indicate that words have been left out):

> 'If they have left you, Coraline, it must be because they became bored with you, or tired. Now I will never become bored with you, and I will never abandon you. You will always be safe here with me.' …
>
> 'They weren't bored of me,' said Coraline. 'You're lying. You stole them.' (p. 69)

Language focus

When we're quoting from a person or text and we leave words out, we show this with points of **ellipsis** (…) which may also indicate that something surprising is going to happen.

Over to you

1 **a** Use the extract from *Market Blues* as a model for a sentence, written in the third person, that describes how someone feels. Try to include the phrase 'as if'.

2 In the above extract from *Coraline*:

- **a** How is the other mother trying to make Coraline feel?
- **b** What does the conversation tell us about Coraline and the other mother's personalities?
- **c** The other mother says 'bored with' and Coraline says 'bored of':
  - What parts of speech are 'with' and 'of'?
  - Which one is Standard Australian English?
  - Why does Gaiman use the two different words?

To revise Standard Australian English, go to page 37.

3 Write a paragraph using a third-person narrator describing a scene where a child is trying to make a parent feel bad. Include direct speech, using quotation marks correctly.

To revise quotation marks, go to page 27.

To revise tone, go to page 29.

Whether a first- or third-person narrator tells a story, the *tone* they use is important. How tone is indicated varies depending on whether the text is in written or spoken mode.

In written texts, where we cannot hear the speaker's voice, writers sometimes *tell* us about the tone. They may use adjectives such as 'sad' to describe a voice, or an adverb such as 'sadly' to describe how something was said. Sometimes, however, we have to work out for ourselves what the tone of voice may be. In the novel *Coraline*, for example, when Coraline tells her neighbour, Miss Forcible, that she is an explorer, Miss Forcible replies:

> 'Of course you are, lovey … Don't get lost, now.' (p. 21)

The last sentence suggests that Miss Forcible isn't taking Coraline's claim seriously and that she isn't really concentrating.

When novels are written in a humorous tone, it is the narrator who shows the funny side of the person or event being described. In Morris Gleitzman's novel *Two Weeks with the Queen*, the narrator describes Colin's family watching the Queen's Christmas Message on Christmas Day. The humour lies in the contrast between the Queen's situation and Colin's:

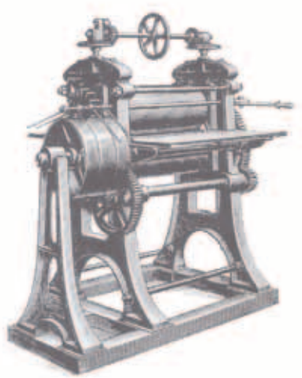
> The Queen looked out across the Mudfords' living room and wished everyone a happy Christmas.
>
> Colin scowled.
>
> Easy for you, he thought, bet you got what you wanted. Bet if you wanted a microscope you got a microscope. Bet your tree was covered with microscopes. Bet nobody gave you daggy school shoes for Christmas. (p. 1)

Over to you

1 In the description of Colin's thoughts in the above extract from *Two Weeks with the Queen*, which words do you think the Queen would be *unlikely* to use herself?

2 What does the name 'Mudford' suggest about Colin's family?

3 Find examples in other novels where the author has used a narrator to show that a situation or person has a funny side, and suggest how the author has used language to do this.



Who tells a story – and how – in graphic novels?

Language focus

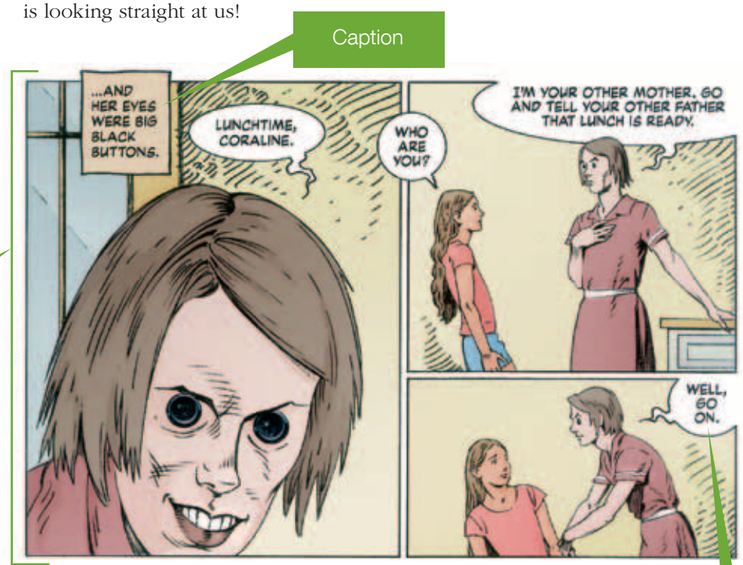
A **panel** is a distinct section of a graphic novel framed by borders.

A **caption** is a box containing print text that tells parts of the story, especially those that cannot be included in dialogue or shown in illustrations.

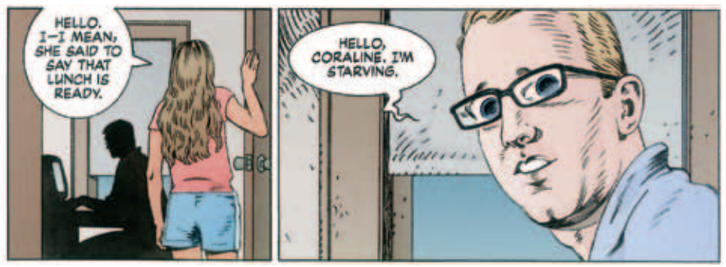
A **speech** or **thought balloon** shows a character's words or thoughts.

In graphic novels, illustrations and text are presented in a series of panels framed by borders. Captions, often at the top of the panel, tell parts of the story from the point of view of a first- or third-person narrator. Dialogue is shown in speech balloons and a character's thoughts are shown in thought balloons.

Multimodal texts with illustrations sometimes use visual language to show tone, for example facial expression can indicate whether something is being said in a frightening, happy or cross tone. In this panel (from p. 31), Coraline's other mother says: 'Lunchtime, Coraline.' Her words seem pleasant enough, but her expression does not. We follow the direction of her button eyes and feel she is looking straight at us!



The way dialogue is presented in speech balloons can also convey tone. Here, Coraline is stammering ('I-I'), indicating that she is speaking in a nervous tone (p. 31).



Language focus

Menacing is an adjective meaning *threatening*.

Over to you

1. In pairs, discuss how pictures and words are combined in the panels from *Coraline* to show the horror of what is happening.
2. Repeat the line 'Lunchtime, Coraline' to each other using different tones, such as caring, menacing and bored. Which do you think most fits the illustration?

Who tells a story – and how – in films?

Films use spoken language. What a character says can tell us how they want to be seen and how they relate to other people. As characters speak to each other we can usually identify their tone of voice. For example, we can tell the difference between a bored or an interested tone. Even so, people sometimes interpret tone in different ways.

Filmmakers occasionally use voiceover to allow a character to express their thoughts. If they don't use voiceover, however, a filmmaker can't tell us directly what's going on inside a character's head.

In the film version of *Coraline*, Henry Selick added a new character called Wyborne, or Wybie (the grandson of Coraline's landlady) so that Coraline could say some of the things she was thinking. Neil Gaiman commented:

> I like Wybie. I understood from the very first script why Wybie was there. Wybie is there so you don't have a girl walking around occasionally talking to herself.


The character of Wybie was added to the film version of *Coraline*.

In a way, however, the camera can act as a narrator. For example, scenes can be shot in ways that show how particular characters are feeling or reacting, so we are more likely to identify with them. Close-up shots focusing on a character's expression and body language may show that they are afraid or joyful.

Over to you

1. As a class, create a list of as many adjectives and adverbs as you can that suggest different tones.
2. In groups, look at this still from the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, directed by Phillip Noyce. Discuss and make notes on your responses to the following:
   - **a** How has Noyce used this close-up to show how the characters are feeling? What can we tell from their body language and expressions?
   - **b** Do you identify with the children, or with the (unseen) person they are looking at? Give reasons for your answer.

4·3 How do we present *setting*?

We learn about where and when things happen in all texts that tell a story. Many novels begin with a description of time and place, and this may be anywhere from ancient Egypt to the planet Mars in the twenty-second century. There are, however, differences in the way settings are presented in different types of texts.

Each version of *Coraline* has the same setting. The novel, graphic novel and film are all set during the school holidays in a large pink house. The house is divided into apartments and each apartment has a door that leads to the other mother's world. In each version, however, the different features of print, multimodal and digital texts influence the way the setting is presented.

Each version of *Coraline* has a door leading to the other mother's world.

Language focus

Note that there is a convention for how we refer to an author of a text. We usually refer to them the first time by their full name and from then on by their surname. For example, we refer first to 'Neil Gaiman', and from then on to 'Gaiman'. We don't refer to him as 'Neil' as if we know him personally.

How do we present setting in novels?

A novelist needs to choose language in ways that will help their reader visualise a setting. In *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman's third-person narrator describes settings in ways that help us imagine them. We learn what places look like, their smells and their colours as he paints pictures with words. For example, the 'crazy old man' upstairs has a flat that:

> smelled of strange foods and pipe tobacco and odd, sharp, cheesy-smelling things which Coraline could not name. (p. 124)

Gaiman's descriptions of setting also show how Coraline is feeling. The colours in Coraline's bedroom at her other mother's are different from those in her bedroom at home:

> For a start it was painted in an off-putting shade of green and a peculiar shade of pink. (p. 37)

'Off-putting' and 'peculiar' are adjectives that could also describe the other mother's world more generally.

Novelists sometimes establish when and where their story is set in the opening sentence. In *Eagle Strike*, Anthony Horowitz begins his book with:

> The Amazon jungle. Fifteen years ago. (p. 7)

Although he provides little description to begin with, these two short, sharp sentences make us want to read on and find out what happened, to whom, in the jungle 15 years ago.

Over to you

1. Sentences usually have verbs. Rewrite the opening sentences from *Eagle Strike* so that they have verbs. Why do you think Anthony Horowitz chose not to use verbs?
2. Find other examples of novels where the writer has set the time and place of their story in the opening lines. Share them with the rest of the class.
3. In groups, create two or three opening sentences describing the setting for a story in ways that would make a reader want to read on.

To revise similes, go to page 63.

Often, novelists write sentences in ways that create strong visual images of a setting. In *Tuck Everlasting*, Natalie Babbitt uses a simile to show it was so hot that time seemed to stand still. Her long, flowing sentence also conveys something of a long, hot day during a northern hemisphere summer:

> The first week of August hangs at the very top of summer, the top of the live-long year, like the highest seat of a Ferris wheel when it pauses in its turning. (p. 3)

Where a text is published makes a difference to the way English is used, and this also conveys a sense of place. For example, Babbitt uses American expressions, such as 'live-long year' and 'pauses in its turning'. Neil Gaiman's novel *Coraline* was first published in the United Kingdom for a British audience. It is set in England and English spellings are used. The graphic novel adaptation, on the other hand, was published in the United States, and American spellings and expressions convey an American setting. For example:

English novel	American graphic novel
Ageing	Aging
Moustache	Mustache
Realised	Realized
The summer was almost over.	The summer was almost done.

Over to you

Re-read the extract from *Tuck Everlasting*.

1 What do you think the top seat of a Ferris wheel and the first week in August have in common?

2 Think of an unusual simile that would describe the weather in the middle of an Australian winter, and find a picture that illustrates your simile.

3 Identify the embedded clause in Natalie Babbitt's sentence and suggest how it adds meaning.

4 Find examples of American expressions relating to settings that are different to those used in Standard Australian English.

5 Imagine you are making a film of *Tuck Everlasting*. Working individually, write a paragraph explaining how you would show the hot August day described in the extract.

To revise embedded clauses, go to page 26.

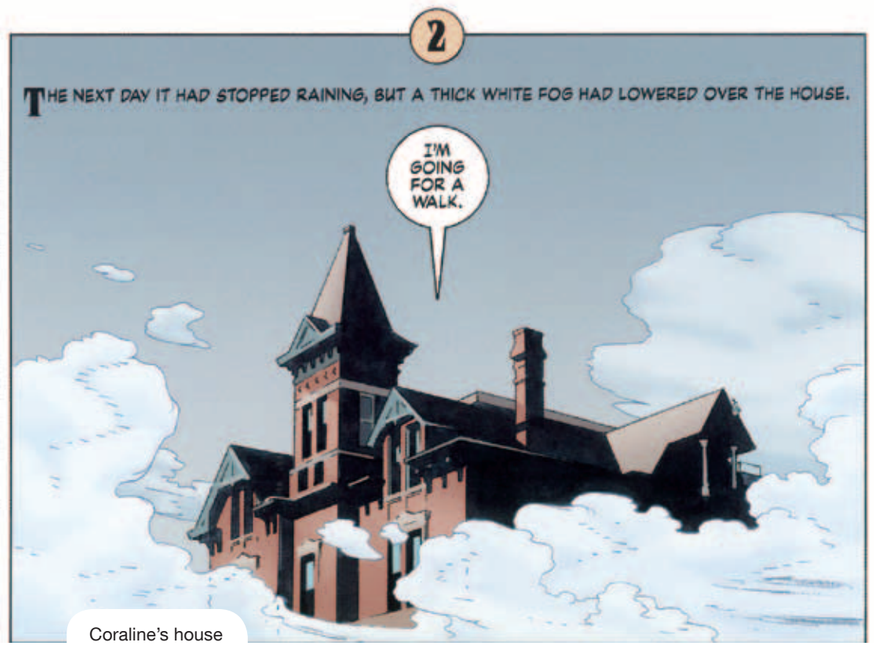
To revise Standard Australian English, go to page 37.

To revise independent and dependent clauses, go to page 22.

How do we present setting in graphic novels?

To revise what 'caption' means in the context of graphic novels, go to page 146.

In graphic novels, illustrations show settings. This often means that fewer written words are needed and these are included in captions. Illustrations bring a setting to life on the page, but they also mean that the illustrator shapes how we see things.



Coraline's house

Over to you

1 Study the picture of Coraline's house and discuss the following:

- **a** Why do you think the verb 'lowered' is used in the caption to describe the fog?
- **b** Does the illustration accurately show this happening?
- **c** Do you think the illustration presents a more or less scary picture than the one you might imagine for yourself? Why?
- **d** How else could you show the fog?
- **e** Why do you think the speech bubble is placed in the sky?

How do we present setting in films?

To revise the different camera shots frequently used by filmmakers – including close-ups, mid shots and distance shots – go to page 97.

Filmmakers either film in real places, or they create film sets that give us a vivid picture of a story's setting. The ways they present settings, using different types of camera shots, shape the way we understand what is happening.

The film still below is from *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, directed by Phillip Noyce. It is a mid shot of three Aboriginal Australian children being taken away from their homes, families and country by a policeman. The tyre tracks lead back to the children's home and show how they are connected to it.

Over to you

1 Study this still from *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and discuss the following:

- **a** What does the body language of the children tell us about what is happening?
- **b** Why do you think the children's clothes are the same colour as their country?
- **c** In a film, music also plays an important part in presenting a setting. What sort of music would you choose to accompany this scene?
- **d** How would you feel if you were in the same situation as the children shown in the film still?

2 Write a paragraph describing where you live and how your setting is important to you. Make careful language choices to create a picture with words. Then draw a diagram or create an image showing how you would present the setting you have described in a distance shot for a film.

When adapting the novel *Coraline* for film, director Henry Selick made a number of changes to the original setting described by Neil Gaiman. Selick explained his reasons for some of these changes in a commentary on the film, including:

Changes in setting:		Reason for change
Novel	**Film**	
The novel is set in England.	The film is set in Oregon in the United States.	Selick is an American director, creating a film for the American market.
The other mother's world is reached by a hallway.	In the film, this becomes a 3D expanding tunnel.	The 3D expanding tunnel makes Coraline's escapes seem more exciting.
Coraline's bedroom in the other mother's world is 'painted in an off-putting shade of green and a peculiar shade of pink' (p. 37).	Selick chose soft, dull colours for the real world and 'pretty wild' colours for the other mother's world, often purples and yellows.	Bright colours for the early shots of the other mother's world show that Coraline thought at first that it was a more interesting world than her own.

Over to you

1 When stories are told in different sorts of texts they often change. As a class, discuss the following and give reasons for your answers:

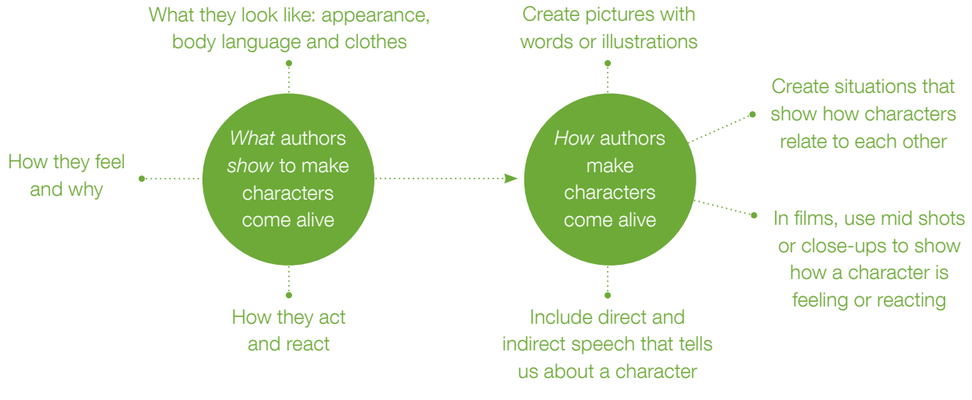
- **a** Do you think it would be possible for a film director to make a film without changing the setting/s described in the novel?
- **b** Do you think Henry Selick needed to make changes to the setting of *Coraline* to make the film more visually appealing?

In the film, Coraline reaches the other mother's world through a 3D expanding tunnel.

4·4 How do we present *characters*?

Most fiction texts have several main characters, such as heroes, people with special powers, ordinary people who deal with a difficult situation, and villains. Main characters may even be animals, such as in *The Lion King* or *Fantastic Mr Fox*. Other characters may play a smaller role in the story and are usually less developed than the main characters. They are called secondary characters because they are not as important to the story as the main characters.

Good authors of texts make characters come alive. Depending on the type of text, authors of texts do this in different ways. They use the narrator, the setting, and – as we shall see – the plot and theme to bring their characters to life and enable us to understand them.



The poster for *Iron Man 2*

In this chapter, we will focus on what authors of texts show us about a character by the way they present their appearance.

Over to you

1 Working in pairs, list some characters from novels and films who you think are memorable. Discuss:

- what you remember about them, and
- how you think the writer or filmmaker made you remember them.

Present your list to the rest of the class.

2 Look closely at the *Iron Man* film poster on the left. Next, read this extract from Gary Crew's novel *Strange Objects*:

> ***I enjoy working with wire very much. The finer the wire the better as I weave and knot quite complex shapes. For instance, I made an Eiffel tower from wire. (p. 67)***

One text creates a picture of a character with words, while the other presents a visual image of a character. Working in pairs:

a List five words to describe the two characters represented in each of the texts.

b Discuss and write a paragraph on each of the following:

- What can a visual image of a character tell you that a written description cannot?
- What can a written description of a character tell you that a visual image cannot?

How do we present characters in novels?

Clothes can tell us a lot about a character and novelists often create a visual snapshot of a character's appearance. In the novel *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman provides detailed descriptions of Coraline's clothes and how, as Coraline moves between worlds, her clothes change. In her real world, she wears a:

> blue coat with a hood, her red scarf and her yellow wellington boots. (p. 20)

Her clothes in the other mother's world, like that world itself, at first seem shiny and bright. But as Coraline discovers its dark side, her clothes become dark and murky. The narrator describes her grey sweater as:

> the colour of thick smoke with faint and tiny stars in the fabric which twinkled. (p. 76)

Language focus

Repetition can have a powerful effect if it is used to emphasise a point. Repeating a word or phrase because we can't think of an alternative, on the other hand, can be boring.

Alliteration is when several words that follow each other all begin with the same consonant sounds. It's used to add emphasis, or to slow the reader down so they focus on particular words.

To revise similes, go to page 63.

Coraline's other mother has sinister button eyes, which contrast with her very ordinary clothes. When Coraline first sees her other mother, Gaiman uses repetition, a simile ('white as paper') and **alliteration** to create a visual image of just how frightening she is:

> A woman stood in the kitchen with her back to Coraline. She looked a little like Coraline's mother. Only ...
>
> Only her skin was white as paper.
>
> Only she was taller and thinner.
>
> Only her fingers were too long, and they never stopped moving, and her dark-red fingernails were curved and sharp
>
> ... And then she turned round. Her eyes were big black buttons. (p. 34)

Gaiman repeats the word 'only' to build up the differences between Coraline's two mothers. He uses alliteration to describe the other mother's eyes, and the repetition of the 'b' sound forces us to read the sentence slowly as the meaning sinks in. Her eyes were not *like* big black buttons, they *were* big black buttons. Her 'curved and sharp' fingernails become more and more menacing.

Louis Sachar, in his novel *Holes*, creates a similarly sinister picture of the warden of the youth camp as she prepares to scratch her next victim with the venom in her nail polish. She seems all the more creepy because at first, her action seems almost gentle:

> She finished painting her nails, then stood up. She reached over and touched Stanley's face with her fingers. She ran her sharp wet nails very gently down his [Stanley's] cheek. He felt his skin tingle. (p. 90)

Over to you

1 a Take it in turns to read the above extract from *Coraline* in as scary a tone of voice as you can.

b Apart from the colour white, what do you think the other mother's skin and paper have in common?

c Discuss how Neil Gaiman builds suspense in the passage.

2 a Drawing on the extracts above, write a short description of a meeting with someone who is extremely frightening. Try using repetition, alliteration and a simile to build suspense.

b Read your piece aloud to a partner, making it sound as scary as you can.

How do we present characters in graphic novels?

Illustrator P Craig Russell uses much of Gaiman's original novel in his graphic novel adaptation of *Coraline*. He doesn't change Coraline's character and, although he makes some cuts, he usually uses Gaiman's words and dialogue. He also uses a third-person narrator in captions, and combines captions and illustrations to present characters in visually interesting ways.

Russell does make a number of changes, however, especially to Coraline's appearance. For example, he replaces Coraline's colourful hooded coat and wellington boats with jeans and a sweater, or shorts and a T-shirt in muted colours. He gives her the sort of clothes that are more likely to appeal to teenagers who read graphic novels.

Over to you

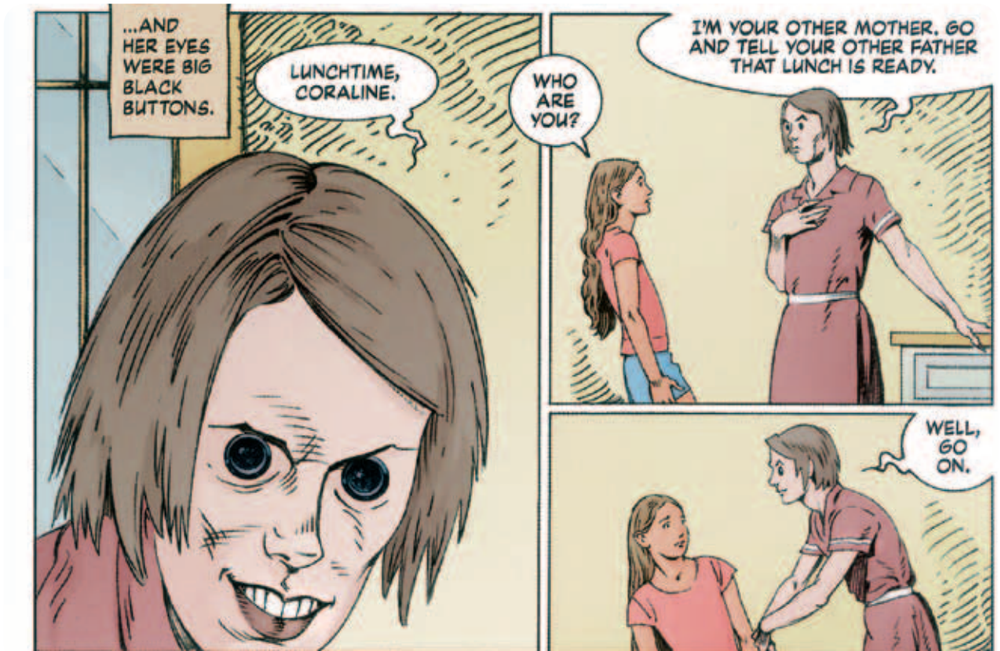
1 Study the following extract from page 31 of the graphic novel *Coraline* (see page 146 of this book for more detail), which shows Coraline meeting her other parents. Then answer the questions that follow.

a Why do you think P Craig Russell included a close-up of the other mother?

b How does Russell show that the other mother can seem ordinary, as well as horrific?

c In the second and third panels, what does Coraline's body language tell us about how she is feeling?

d In the last panel, how does the appearance of the other father compare with that of the other mother? Who do you think is more powerful and why?



How do we present characters in films?

To revise voiceovers, go to page 97.

Filmmakers use dialogue, and sometimes voiceover, to express a character's thoughts or ideas. The choices they make about camera shots also tell us about characters. In the case of the film adaptation of *Coraline*, Henry Selick added new scenes to show how Coraline felt. For example, rather than telling us in words, Selick shows that Coraline misses her parents when she makes copies of them out of cushions and puts them in bed with her. This doesn't happen in the novel or the graphic novel.

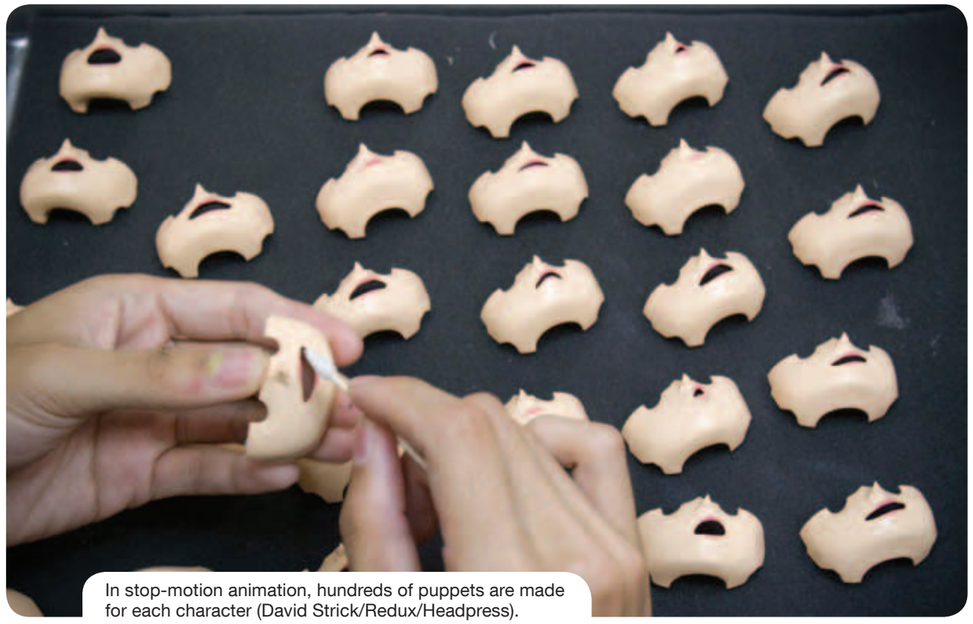
In an interview, Selick commented that Coraline's character was 'very much from the book'. He went on to explain, however, that:

> Books aren't movies. Things change.

What a character wears and their appearance usually tell us what sort of person they are, as well as something about the world they live in. One of the things Selick changes is the appearance of characters. This is partly because he is working with puppets.

Stop-motion animation usually involves animated puppets. Each movement is broken down into small parts, and the puppets are filmed one or two still frames at a time. Computers are used to edit the film.

In **stop-motion animation**, hundreds of puppets are made for each character. Every part of each one has to be fully posable and the heads are made in two parts to allow hundreds of combinations of expressions. A team of people worked on Coraline's hands – she had 'hundreds and hundreds of hands'. Clothes are all hand-sewn or -knitted (Coraline has nine outfits). Colours are sometimes chosen because of what is going on in the surroundings.



In stop-motion animation, hundreds of puppets are made for each character (David Strick/Redux/Headpress).

Below is a list of some of the other ways Selick changed characters in the animated film version of *Coraline*, and why he changed them.

Character changes in the film	Reason for change
Coraline has short, blue hair in the film, while her hair in the novel isn't described (but certainly isn't blue!).	Many trial drawings and models were made of Coraline. Henry Selick said it was important for him to 'hold on to her spirit', even if she looked different to the Coraline of the novel, and that for him, the blue hair helped evoke that spirit.
In the novel, Coraline wants her mother to buy her 'Day-glo green gloves' (p. 29). In the film this is changed to striped gloves.	Sometimes it's necessary to change the original text for practical reasons. The film designers thought striped gloves looked more effective on film.
At first, the film version of the other mother seems prettier and nicer than she does in the novel.	Visual impact is important in a film. When the other mother starts to show what she's really like – outside as well as inside – the contrast is powerful.

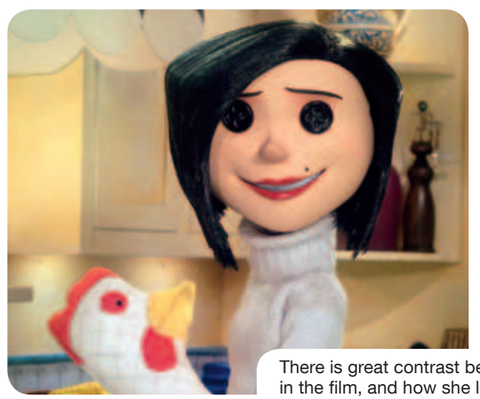
Over to you

1 Suggest as many reasons as you can think of why film directors change characters in film adaptations of novels.

2 In your own words, list some of the reasons Selick gives for changing (or adding) characters or their appearance in the film adaptation of *Coraline*.

3 Using a table like the one below, describe the main characters in a book you have read recently and list some of the changes you would make if you were asked to adapt the text to *either* a graphic novel *or* an animated film. Give reasons for your suggestions.

Character in the book	Suggested changes	Reasons for changes

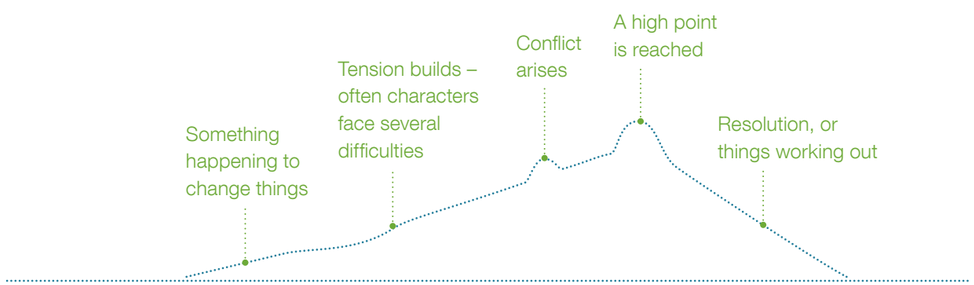


There is great contrast between how the other mother looks early in the film, and how she looks after she shows her true self.

4·5 How do we develop *plot*?

In a narrative text, things happen to characters that move the story along. Of course, this doesn't mean that there is a formula that authors of texts stick to like a recipe. As a result of centuries of storytelling, however, we often expect a story to develop in a certain way.

The sequence in which stories unfold is called the **plot**, and this often includes the following.



The stages of a plot

Each of the three versions of *Coraline* more or less follows the same plot. A more detailed look shows that each text also includes the plot stages outlined above.

Language focus

In **portal stories**, a main character goes through a door, or 'portal' – literal or metaphorical – into a different world.

To revise metaphors, go to page 126.

Something happens to change things

Coraline is a portal story. Coraline moves to a new apartment in an old house. She is bored, and her parents work at home and don't have much time for her.

Coraline's world is changed when she finds a doorway, or portal, that leads to the other mother's world, which at first looks much like her real world. She makes several visits and finds that she has an other mother and other father. They look very like her real parents, except that they have black buttons for eyes. At first, Coraline is impressed by how interested they are in her compared with her own parents, and by the exciting food they offer her.

Over to you

1 As a class, brainstorm the following:

- **a** What other portal stories can you think of?
- **b** Why do you think audiences like to read stories where characters move between parallel worlds?

Portal stories: Harry Potter travels to the magical world of Hogwarts on the Hogwarts Express from Platform 9¾, while Alice enters Wonderland through a small door.

Tension builds

Each time Coraline returns to the other mother's world, however, she finds disturbing things. Tension builds as she realises that this world is becoming less and less like her real world, and more and more threatening.

Conflict arises

When Coraline refuses to have her eyes replaced with black buttons, she and her other mother clash and Coraline faces several difficulties. The other mother becomes increasingly horrifying and locks Coraline in a space behind a mirror. She tells Coraline she can only come out when she is 'ready to be a loving daughter' (p. 88). There, Coraline meets the ghosts of three children whose hearts and souls have been stolen by the wicked other mother.

A high point is reached

A high point in the tension is reached when, after the other mother kidnaps Coraline's parents, Coraline makes a final visit to the other mother's world, confronting her in 'the moment of truth. The unravelling time' (p. 137). She manages to rescue her real parents, find the souls of the ghost children and return to the real world, but the other mother is not quite finished. Her severed hand – all that's left of her – pursues Coraline into her world.

Resolution, or things working out

Coraline tricks the other mother and casts her hand down a bottomless well. Everything works out, and Coraline realises that she has faced danger and shown courage. She knows she need not be afraid of anything in the future, including going to a new school. She also realises how much she loves her real parents.

Tension builds as Coraline finds disturbing things in the other mother's world.

Over to you

1 Plan the plot for an adventure story of your own that includes each of the stages in the graph on page 160. To help you do this, create a table like the one below. List the plot stages in the left-hand column. In the right, list the most important events in your story in the order in which they happen. (You may use the example given for the first important event, or you may prefer to come up with your own.)

Stage of plot	What happens?
Something happens to change things	Everything changes at school when a class member discovers that their locker has a doorway into an 'other classroom'.
Tension builds – often characters face several difficulties	
Conflict arises	
A high point is reached	
Resolution, or things working out	

2 **a** Outline the plot of a novel that you have read, and link it to the features described in this chapter.

b Try to find an example of a novel or film that has a different plot pattern to the one described in this chapter, and illustrate it by creating a graph similar to the one on page 160.

The novel, the graphic novel and the film versions of *Coraline* all tell the same story and follow a similar plot. *How* the story is told, however, is influenced by the different features of novels, graphic novels and stop-motion animated films.

How do we develop plot in novels?

Generally, novelists use words and only words to tell their story. A novelist may seek to hold the reader's interest by:

- beginning each chapter in a way that 'hooks' the reader and makes them want to find out what happens next
- varying the pace of what's happening
- ending each chapter with a cliffhanger that makes us want to read on.

Neil Gaiman holds the reader's interest in *Coraline* by beginning each of the 13 chapters with sentences that make us want to read on. He begins the novel with the words: 'Coraline discovered the door a little while after they moved into the house' (p. 9).

Language focus

A **cliffhanger** refers to when a chapter in a book – or an episode of a television show – ends at a tense moment. This makes us keen to begin the next chapter (or watch the next episode) and find out what happens next.

A cliffhanger

He also ends each chapter with a cliffhanger, for example:

> Coraline went back up the steps, her fist closed tightly around her new stone. (Chapter 2, p. 28)
>
> Then she swung the mirror-door closed and left Coraline in darkness. (Chapter 6, p. 88)
>
> It was the other mother's right hand.
>
> It wanted the black key. (Chapter 12, p. 156)

The following passage illustrates how Gaiman uses pace, writing in a way that makes the reader experience the excitement of Coraline's final escape from the other mother's world and share her fear as she runs through the tunnel:

> It was an uphill run, and it seemed to her that it went for a longer distance than anything could possibly go. The wall she was touching seemed warm and yielding now, and, she realised, it felt as if it was covered in a fine downy fur. It moved, as if it were taking a breath. She snatched her hand away from it.
>
> Winds howled in the dark. (p. 144)

Over to you

1 **a** Find some examples in other novels of chapters that:

- begin in ways that grab your attention, and/or
- end with a cliffhanger.

2 Re-read the above passage from the novel *Coraline* and answer the following:

a What makes it seem as if the tunnel is a living thing?

b The words 'warm and yielding' and 'fine downy fur' sound like nice things. What makes them seem creepy in this passage?

c Why does Neil Gaiman refer to 'winds' rather than wind?

d Rewrite the underlined sentence, first without the commas and then as two sentences.

- Why do you think Gaiman has used a single sentence?
- Why has he placed commas where he has?

e How does Gaiman's description of the tunnel compare with the film shot of Coraline in the tunnel (see page 153)?

3 What makes you scared in books or films? Give reasons for your response.

How do we develop plot in graphic novels?

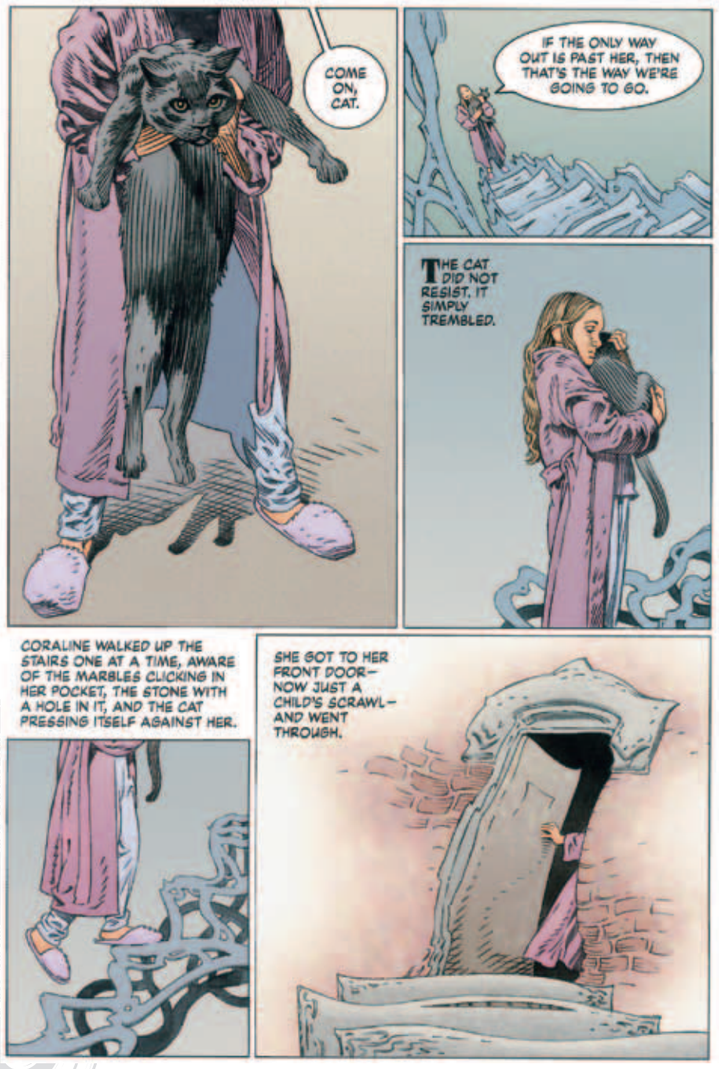
To revise the elements of graphic novels, go to page 146.

Language focus

The words **fewer** and **less** are often confused. *Fewer* means 'not as many' (eg 'fewer words'). *Less* means 'not as much' (eg 'the words take up less space').

In graphic novels the different stages of the story are told in a combination of illustrations and words. Dialogue and thoughts are shown in speech or thought balloons, and parts of the story are told in captions.

Like the novel *Coraline*, the graphic novel adaptation is structured in 13 chapters. Each follows a similar plot and usually begins and ends with the same – or nearly the same – words as the novel. These are usually shortened though: because the illustrations also tell the story, fewer words are needed.



Over to you

1 a Look carefully at the extract from the graphic novel *Coraline* on the previous page. Based on the illustrations in the panels, write a narrative that includes a description of:

- the setting, including colour and smell
- how Coraline and the cat look and feel, and
- what they are doing.

Remember, you need to paint a picture with words to replace the illustrations.

b Draw or create a plan for two new panels, showing what might happen next.

How do we develop plot in films?

Filmmakers have to think about how to present a plot visually and aurally, and how to keep viewers' attention.

Music is used by filmmakers to create mood and build tension (this is added after the film has been shot). In the animated film adaptation of *Coraline*, Selick accompanies tense scenes with eerie-sounding stringed instruments, to suggest danger. Near the end of the film, just when we think it's all over, children sing in a fast rhythm to suggest anxiety. We realises the story isn't over at all – the other mother has taken on a new form and is coming back.

Filmmakers also vary colour, lighting and other effects to reflect mood or feelings. Selick often uses dark colours and blue filters in the other mother's world to create a sense of fear. In addition, the film sets in the other world are in 3D, while the sets in the real world are two-dimensional – making the real world seem more flat and boring.

Dark colours and blue filters in the other mother's world create a sense of fear.

Many changes had to be made to details of the plot of *Coraline* when adapting the novel as a film. Selick found that some parts of the book would not have worked in a film, and although he expressed his wish to 'respect the flavour and tone of the book' he made many changes. Gaiman agreed that changes had to be made. He said:

> If you actually filmed *Coraline* the book faithfully, you would probably have a 47-minute movie. And a lot of what Henry's done is just fill in detail.

However, not all Selick's changes were to fill in detail. Take the following example:

Novel	Film	Reason for change
In the novel, Coraline tells the black cat that lives in her house about the time her father showed real courage in rescuing her from a swarm of wasps – allowing himself to be stung so she could escape. Later, her father tells Coraline that this wasn't brave of him, because 'he wasn't scared: it was the only thing to do' (p. 65).	This story does not appear in the film.	Selick explained in an interview that they had tried to keep this 'beautiful tale' about bravery, but had to lose it as 'it was slowing the movie down too much'.

Over to you

1 What do you think Henry Selick meant when he said that the wasp tale would slow the movie down too much?

2 a What other examples can you think of where music adds to the excitement or emotion of a film?

b What music would you use to accompany a sad scene?

c What music would you use to accompany a scene where someone is feeling joyful?

3 In an interview, Selick commented that some people say music and sound contributes up to one-third of the movie-going experience. Do you agree? Why or why not?

4 When adapting a novel, why do you think filmmakers change the way people, places and events are shown?

4.6 How do we explore *themes*?

Most authors of texts do not actually *set out* to explore a theme. They don't tend to think: 'I'm going to write a book about jealousy', or 'I will make a film about revenge'. Most of them do, however, end up exploring a theme – a theme that emerges as the story unfolds.

Nor do authors of texts usually tell us directly what the theme or themes are (although sometimes it is suggested on book or DVD covers). Instead, the way characters develop and the situations that arise *show* us – rather than tell us – about certain ideas.

It can in fact be off-putting if a writer or filmmaker makes a theme too obvious and we feel we are being told what to think. We usually like to be free to decide what we think a text is telling us. We may be reading a novel that tells the story of a journey, and find that it is also a metaphorical journey, where a character learns along the way what it is to be brave, or about relationships. At first, a story may seem to be just a story – however, as we read or view it more carefully, we can see that it is exploring certain themes.

To revise metaphors, go to page 126.

Sometimes, when we read or view something more than once, we see more and more ideas in it! When we go back to a text a few years after first reading it, we may also uncover new ideas or themes. Different readers and viewers often see different things in the same text, and some things stand out more for some than for others.

We have seen that different text types present the same characters and stories in different ways. The same is true of themes. In all three versions of *Coraline*, important themes include:

- What is the nature of bravery?
- What makes people happy?

Over to you

1 Look at the diagram above:

a What other examples can you come up with of ideas or themes explored in texts?

b Try and match these examples to texts you have read or viewed.

Coraline beats her own version of a dragon.

What is the nature of bravery?

In the novel, Neil Gaiman indicates this theme by quoting the writer GK Chesterton at the front of the book:

> Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.

Remember that Coraline has compared the other mother's love for her to the love a dragon has for gold. For Coraline, the dragon is a metaphor for everything she fears. So Coraline is beating her own version of a dragon when she goes back to the other mother's world to rescue her parents. She was scared, and what she did was brave. She realises that facing her fears has made her less afraid in other areas of her life:

> Normally, on the night before the first day of term, Coraline was apprehensive and nervous. But, she realised, there was nothing left about school that could scare her any more. (pp. 170–1)

What makes people happy?

Coraline thinks her parents don't give her enough time and at first thinks her other parents will be more attentive. However, she comes to realise that this isn't the case and learns to value what she has. She tells her other parents:

> I don't want whatever I want. Nobody does. Not really. What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I ever wanted? Just like that, and it didn't mean anything. What then? (p. 128)

The poster for the film adaptation of *Coraline*, shown on the next page, makes the theme 'what makes people happy?' clear with its use of the words: 'Be careful what you wish for'.

Over to you

1 In the second extract from *Coraline*, above, Coraline asks an important question:

> ***'What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I ever wanted?'***

a Working individually, how would you answer this question?

b Then as a class, draw up a table like the one below listing as many reasons as you can why life would or would not be more fun if we got everything we wanted.

Opinion	Reasons
Life would be more fun if we got everything we wanted.	
Life would not be more fun if we got everything we wanted.	

4·7 Is one form of storytelling more effective than another?

Often, we only read or view one version of a story, but when we do see different versions of the same story, such as *Coraline*, we naturally compare them.

When we really like a book we may not want to have our ideas upset by someone else's interpretations of it. This is especially so if they've made changes we don't like. We mightn't be too happy to see Coraline as a blue-haired puppet rather than the girl we'd imagined, for example. Journalist Kate Holden described in an *Age* article how much she hated it when a character she had visualised in her head was changed in a film:

> How dare they? I don't want some actor playing my secret companion, with the wrong-coloured hair and an American accent.

We may, like Holden, find that a film seems to spoil a book; or we may find it improves upon it. In fact stories presented in different forms and different media may be good (or bad) in different ways.

Of course, not everyone responds to different versions of a text in the same way. In the case of *Coraline*, for example, some of us may imagine something far creepier than what we see in the graphic novel or film adaptations. For others, it could be the other way round. Some of us may prefer one version; others another.

We may agree that something is well written or produced and that it makes us think. We may think a character is interesting or boring. But even if we can see that a text is good, whether we like it or not depends on a number of things, such as our age, gender or cultural background. We also like some people better than others, we enjoy some sports more than others, and the same is true of what we like to read or view. Charlie Higson, author of the *Young Bond* series of novels, explained in an interview how:

To find out more about myths and legends, go to Part 5.

> [I] used to read myths and legends – the King Arthur stories, Robin Hood and a lot of historical fiction. If the main character didn't have a sword, I wasn't interested. I hated books about kids leading ordinary lives. I thought, 'Why would I want to read about that? I could be doing that!'

Over to you

1. Is there a book you would not like to see adapted as a film? Or a book you think would make a great film? Give reasons for your answers.
2. Working in pairs, discuss the following:
   - **a** Why does Charlie Higson like myths and legends?
   - **b** What sort of things do you like to read about or watch?
   - **c** Are there any genres or types of novel or film that you don't enjoy? Give reasons for your response.

King Arthur and Excalibur: what is the appeal of myths and legends?

4.8 How do we present a book or film report?

Language focus

Evaluating something means assessing how well something has been done. We may use words such as 'intriguing', 'effective' or 'boring' to evaluate a text.

One form in which we may be asked to evaluate a text is a book or film report. As with any text response in English, we need to be able to give reasons for what we think, and why we think it. It isn't enough to say: 'I enjoyed the book' or 'such and such a film was rubbish'. We need to read or view a text carefully and give reasons and examples from the text to support our point of view. We may, for example, refer to the way the author or creator of the text uses some language features – for example, how Neil Gaiman uses language to make *Coraline* scary.

Different people will have different reasons and examples to support their point of view, and that's fine. The important thing is to make an honest and thoughtful response and to give reasons for it that are based on the text. How we do this will partly depend on whether the report is to be presented as a speech, a written report or as a multimodal text, such as a PowerPoint presentation.

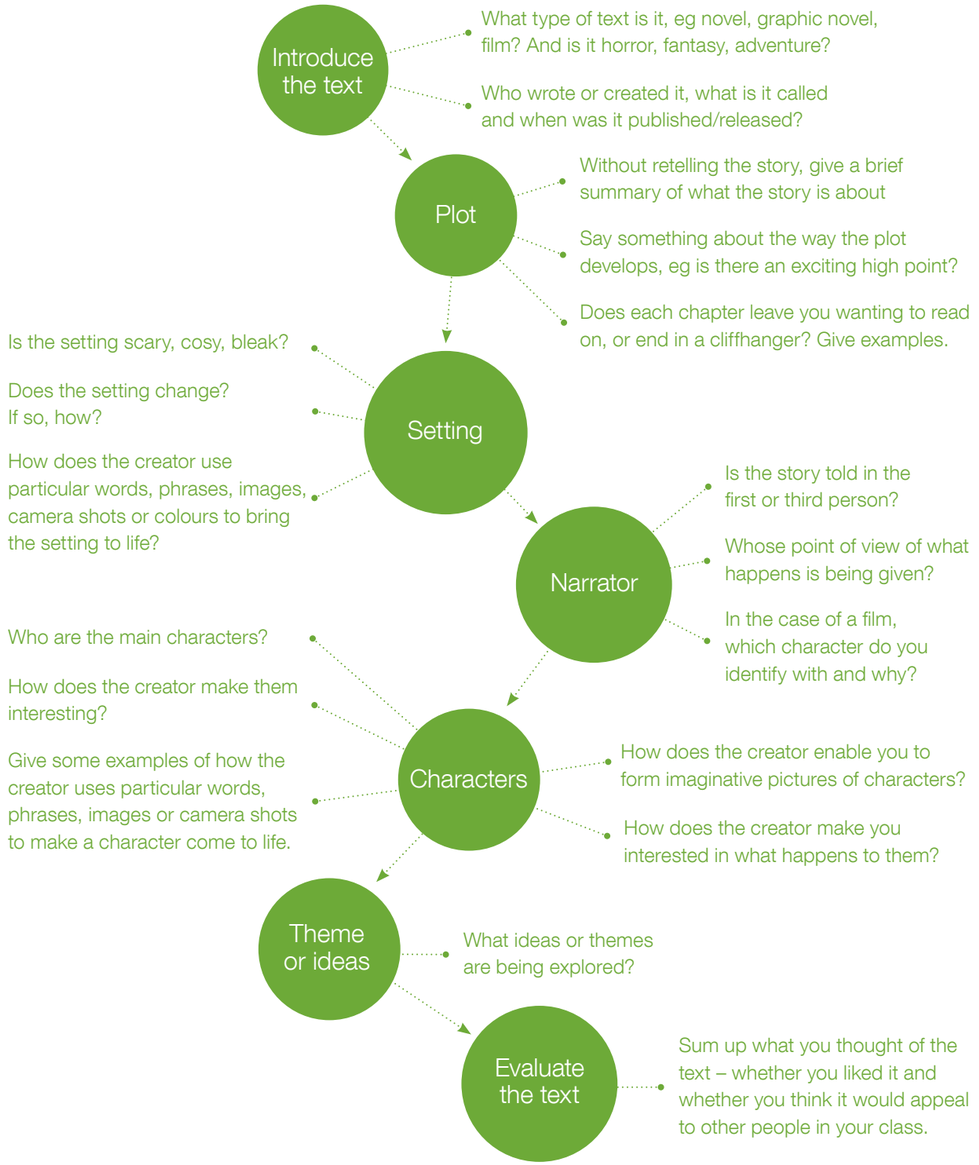
As with most reports, we usually:

- use Standard Australian English (although an oral report may be less formal)
- include examples from the text illustrating what we liked (or didn't like) about features of the text, such as a character, setting or the way the story was told
- organise some ideas in bullet-point form or under headings.

However you present your book or film report, it's not a good idea to re-tell the whole story. It's always boring to hear someone recount everything that happens in a book (or a film, or a dream!) from beginning to end. The idea is to present what you thought and why, not to give a blow-by-blow account of what happens.

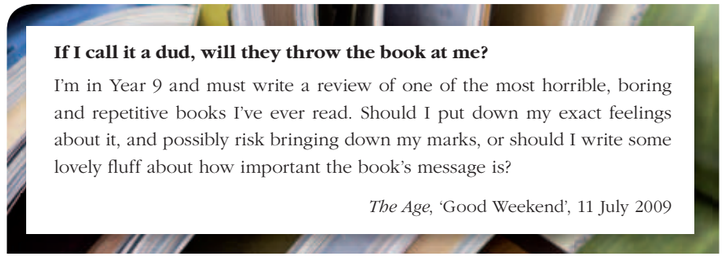
There are many different ways of doing this and they all require preparation. One way is to start with research, by taking notes on different aspects of a text, and then giving a point of view on each one of them.

The diagram that follows shows one possible way of organising your response.



Here are some hints to help you evaluate your texts:

- Think carefully about the adjectives you will use, for example describing a text as 'enthralling' is much stronger than describing it as 'interesting'.
- If you have read a text and then seen a film adaptation of it (or watched a film and then read the novel), you could compare the way plot, setting and characters are presented and suggest reasons why they differ.
- A review should be honest. The following quandary, faced by a Year 9 student, was set out in a letter to Danny Katz which was published in the 'Modern Guru' column in *The Age Good Weekend* magazine:



If I call it a dud, will they throw the book at me?

I'm in Year 9 and must write a review of one of the most horrible, boring and repetitive books I've ever read. Should I put down my exact feelings about it, and possibly risk bringing down my marks, or should I write some lovely fluff about how important the book's message is?

The Age, 'Good Weekend', 11 July 2009

- The answer is: if you find a book 'horrible, boring and repetitive', then it's fine to say so – as long as you suggest reasons showing why you think this, and give evidence to support those reasons, for example:
  - Perhaps the author doesn't create convincing characters, or writes in such a dull way that your imagination isn't captured.
  - Perhaps you viewed a film adaptation and were disappointed with the way characters were presented.
- Try to give examples of what you think are poor language choices if you didn't like the book, just as you would give examples of good language choices if you did.
- Finally, try to avoid finishing up with a cliché, such as 'I would give this book 7 out of 10' or 'I would definitely recommend this book'.

To revise clichés, go to page 126.

Over to you

1 As a class, discuss your responses to a book or film that you have all read or viewed, trying to touch on each point listed in the diagram on page 175. Consider why you have different responses to the same text.

2 Use the internet to find some reviews of a book you have read or a film you have seen recently.

a Check how many of the points in the diagram on page 175 are covered in the review. List the points that the reviewer did *not* discuss.

b Write a brief report on the review, considering whether or not you agree with the reviewer's opinion, giving reasons.

c Now write your own review of the same book or film, making sure you cover all the points in the diagram on page 175.

big ideas

For suggestions on how to plan, draft, edit and proofread your texts, refer to 'Writing, editing and proofreading' on page 229.

How do we create imaginative worlds in print and multimodal texts?