Practitioner Guide

This guide is about using the Accelerated Literacy methodology to teach students to read, comprehend and write text genres other than narratives.

The genres discussed are:
- recount
- explanation
- procedure (also called instructions)
- report (also called factual description)
- argument and discussion.

The guide discusses how the different genres may be integrated into the Accelerated Literacy Program, discusses the purpose and nature of each and provides advice, with examples, on using each of the relevant Accelerated Literacy strategies with the genre.

Guides

- The guides have been written for teachers who have attended professional development in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers' handouts from the professional development sessions. Additionally, you could refer to http://www.nalp.edu.au

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Integrating text types
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Introduction
The Accelerated Literacy teaching sequence can be used to teach texts other than narratives.

For most teachers of Accelerated Literacy, narrative texts have been a starting point for gaining control of the teaching strategies. Narrative texts have proved to be highly effective for engaging students in literacy learning and have enabled students to make accelerated progress in their reading levels. Not only do narratives entertain, they open a window on people’s lives, dealing with problems and cultural issues. Indigenous students are often able to gain understandings of non-Indigenous cultures through reading narratives appropriate for their ages.

Many other types of text, however, are used in schools. Factual texts feature more and more as students progress through their education. In secondary schools, these become the main types of texts students must read. This is why some teachers have been keen to learn how to use the Accelerated Literacy methodology with factual and other non-narrative texts.

This booklet is about using the Accelerated Literacy methodology to teach students to read, comprehend and write text genres other than narratives.

The genres other than narratives most commonly taught in Australian schools are discussed in this booklet, along with some suggestions for using them. These are:

- recount
- explanation
- procedure (also called instructions)
- report (also called factual description)
- argument and discussion.
Using this guide
This booklet may be read in tandem with Beverly Derewianka’s book, *Exploring How Texts Work*, which describes how different texts work to achieve a social purpose. This is a very helpful book that gives information about functional grammar and how this can help a teacher in the classroom. Derewianka gives examples of six different genres and how students can be taught to write their own texts using the appropriate genre for a particular task. The genres discussed by Derewianka are:

- recount
- instruction
- narrative
- information report
- explanation
- argument.

The series of practitioner guides includes a booklet called *Text analysis*. This will assist teachers to recognise the language features that make each genre what it is. It still remains for teachers to apply the AL teaching sequence to the subject matter to be taught.

There are two main sections in this book with purposes as explained in the diagram below.

**Integrating text types**

- Explains

  How genres other than Narratives may be integrated into the Accelerated Literacy Program.

**Teaching using other genres**

- Provides

  - Examples of each of the genres
  - Advice on teaching points to consider when using the genre within Accelerated Literacy teaching.
The National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP)
The National Accelerated Literacy Program consists of a cycle of interrelated activities based on a sequence beginning with literate orientation and focused on one selected text. The text may vary from a short, illustrated story written for early childhood students to several carefully selected passages from a longer book intended for older students.

Teachers spend, on average, an hour and a half a day teaching Accelerated Literacy. The total number of weeks spent on a text across a sequence of consecutive lessons will vary according to the age of the students and the complexity of the text.

Low and high order literate orientation are carried out before reading. The other strategies use the students’ fluent reading of and common knowledge about a text as teaching resources for extending their literacy competence. Further information on the teaching sequence can be found at http://www.nalp.edu.au.
Integrating text types
Narrative structure revisited

Each genre has a structure and specific language that help it fulfil its social purpose. Accelerated Literacy teachers have already been using a particular genre sub-type, as Derewianka labels it – the narrative – in their lessons. Here is the purpose and structure of a narrative.

Narrative

Purpose: To entertain and to teach and inform about life and its experiences. To explore the human condition through its stories.

Structure

- Orientation
- Complication
- Resolution
- Coda (sometimes)

Longer stories and novels will have more than one orientation, complication and resolution as the plot and sub-plots unfold, but the basic structure remains and can be traced.

In Exploring How Texts Work, Beverly Derewianka writes:

The selection of the genre usually arises naturally out of the focus of the unit. A unit on ‘How a camera works’ would automatically lead to the writing of an Explanation; a unit on ‘Should woodchipping be banned?’ would most likely end up as an Argument or Discussion; a unit on ‘Making kites’ could logically include the writing of Instructions; and so on. By working within a context, which calls for the use of a particular genre, the children are able to relate the genre to its purpose.

Similarly, although Accelerated Literacy lessons are focused on carefully selected narrative texts, each narrative will offer considerable opportunities for teaching other genres related to the focus text. For example, Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O’Dell could be linked to information texts on a variety of animals such as sea otters, squid, wild dogs and walrus, to name a few. Dunbi the Owl by Daisy Utormarrah (retold by Pamela Lofts) is an Aboriginal tale that could be accompanied by other lessons on owls and, in particular, the Southern Boobook owl. In this way, factual, informational texts about this bird could be taught in a series of science lessons; or its cultural significance for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people could be the focus of SOSE lessons.
Other narrative texts can be linked to procedures, reports, discussions, arguments etc. in the same way, and these other genre texts can be included in appropriate lessons during each day.

A key consideration in the choice of texts as models for teaching students about any genre is that they are as near as possible to age-appropriate. For example, a Year 7 class studying *The Deliverance of Dancing Bears* by Elizabeth Stanley might also study a report about Himalayan Brown Bears. This report, however, would need to be written using language that is of a level of complexity appropriate for Year 7. This complexity would include scientific language and terms, noun groups, grammatical metaphors, etc. The tendency to simplify the language of reports and other genres directed at older students is not helpful. Rather, an AL teacher should choose a well-written, age-appropriate text as a model for each genre and use the teaching sequence to make it accessible.

In *Trends and Issues in Genre-Based Approaches*, Beverly Derewianka argues that students need to be taught to ask what their purpose is in writing or speaking, and then choose the appropriate genre. ‘By focusing first on a text’s social purpose, students are able to understand why the text unfolds in a particular way, instead of simply “following the recipe”.’

Teachers will probably come across texts that do not seem to fit any particular genre or sub-type, or find recounts, reports, procedures and the like in a narrative text. Generally, however, different text types can be recognised fairly easily.
Other genres in Accelerated Literacy lessons

A warning from Beverly Derewianka, page 139 of the article ‘Trends and Issues in Genre-Based Approaches’:

‘...it is often the case that only a small handful of genres are taught across the years of schooling, as if these were the only ones that students would encounter. In addition, the various subtypes are often not recognized, so it might be assumed, for example, that just because a student has learned to write a recount of personal experience, they are therefore capable of writing a historical recount, which calls for the ability to stand back from individual events and synthesize great stretches of time.’

‘...the stages of a genre are often taught prescriptively as if they were ‘given’ structures imposed upon a text rather than moves arising naturally because of their functionality. Students are not always encouraged to identify the stages and reflect on what job they are performing in the text or how effectively they perform that job. The stages are presented rigidly, with little allowance for the possibility of optional stages or reordering of stages.

According to Melrose (1995), contemporary notions of genre emphasize the flexible and rhetorical nature of genres rather than formulaic and static rules or conventions, but when recontextualized into the classroom, genre theory is rendered more digestible by diluting its descriptive richness. While it is understandable that individual teachers do not have a full grasp of the intricacies of the various genres, syllabus designers and textbook writers are in a position to give guidance on how to move from the more predictable towards the more complex.’
Teaching using other genres
Teaching using other genres

Each genre has a structure and specific language that help it fulfil its social purpose. The teaching sequence provides a resource for teaching how these other genres work and how to write other genres appropriately.

**Recount**

**Purpose**
To retell an experience.

**Structure**
- Orientation – gives background information, who, what, where, when
- Series of events
- Personal comment, summary or reorientation
- Coda (optional) – final event or comment.

**Example 1**
This example is from the novel *The Island of Blue Dolphins* by Scott O’Dell (p.46–47). Within every longer narrative the likelihood is that there will be examples of short recounts. This one is most appropriate for middle-school students (upper primary or lower secondary).

**Orientation**
*The beach was empty except for rows of seaweed washed in by the storm. The tide was out and I looked in the place where the chest had lain.*

**Series of events**
*It was just below the ledge Ulape and I had stood on while we watched the battle. The sand was smooth and I dug many small holes with a stick. I dug in a wide circle, thinking that the storm might have covered it with sand.*

*Near the centre of the circle the stick hit something hard, which I was sure was a rock, but as I dug deeper with my hands I saw it was the black lid of the chest.*

*All morning I worked, moving the sand away. The chest lay deep from the washing of the waves and I did not try to dig it out, but only so I could raise the lid.*

*As the sun rose high the tide came rushing up the beach and filled the hole with sand. Each wave covered the chest deeper until it was completely hidden. I stood on the place, bracing myself against the waves, so that I would not have to look for it again. When the tide turned I began to dig with my feet, working them down and down, and then with my hands.*
Teaching using other genres

The chest was filled with beads and bracelets and ear-rings of many colours. I forgot about the spearheads I had come for. I held each of the trinkets to the sun, turning them so that they caught the light. I put on the longest string of beads, which were blue, and a pair of blue bracelets, which exactly fitted my wrists, and walked down the shore, admiring myself.

I walked the whole length of the cove. The beads and the bracelets made tinkling sounds. I felt like the bride of a chief as I walked there by the waves.

Personal comment

I came to the foot of the trail where the battle had been fought. Suddenly I remembered those who had died there and the men who had brought the jewels I was wearing. I went back to the chest. For a long time I stood beside it, looking at the bracelets and the beads hanging from my neck, so beautiful and bright in the sun. ‘They do not belong to the Aleuts,’ I said, ‘they belong to me.’ But even as I said this I knew that I never could wear them.

Coda

One by one I took them off. I also took the rest of the beads from the chest. Then I walked through the waves and flung them all far away, out into the deep water.

Example 2

This is from a book suitable for younger students: Are We There Yet? by Alison Lester. (The whole story is a recount.) It has the same structure, however, as the longer, more complex recount above.

Orientation

At Alice Springs we stayed with Mum’s friend, Ruth. The days were hot, but the nights were freezing.

Series of events

Ruth took us to her school and a teacher showed Mum and me how to dig for witchetty grubs. They tasted like egg yolk, runny and delicious, with a crunchy head and wriggly legs. Mum wouldn’t try one.

‘No, thank you,’ she said. ‘I’m still full from breakfast.’

Luke and Billy played footy with some of the local boys.

That afternoon we drove out to see Uluru.

Dad spotted it first, when we were still thirty-five kilometres away. ‘Wow,’ he said. ‘That’s a BIG rock.’

At sunset we watched its colour fade to purple.

We hiked between the round red domes of Kata Tjuta. The trees whispered to us as we walked through the Valley of the Winds.
Personal comment and coda

*Uluru is the heart of Australia.*

*A huge red heart, right in the middle of the country. One day we got up early in the cool of the morning, and walked around the rock. I felt as tiny as an ant.*

**Students' Recounts**

Recounts are commonly written by students to tell of an experience such as a school trip to Crocfest, or what they did on the weekend or in the holidays. The following example is one such recount.

**Orientation**

On Monday, the bus took grades 5, 6, 7 and the high school to Kununurra for our excursion.

**Series of events**

We went to the Kununurra swimming pool and it was fun. Afterwards we went to the motel. We had Chicken Treat for dinner then went back to the motel. We got on the bus and drove to the disco and it was fun. We went back to the motel.

**Final comment**

and we went to sleep.

While this recount provides details of the student's experience it does not provide any of the descriptive language that allows readers to imagine what it was like to be a participant. Accelerated Literacy teaching strategies can help students learn how to write recounts that engage readers.
Accelerated Literacy teaching points

Teaching a recount requires exactly the same teaching sequence as when teaching narrative. Low order literate orientation, high order literate orientation, transformations, spelling and writing would be carried out in the same way. Teachers may have already recognised that a narrative is basically a recount that has a complication or complications interrupting its smooth progress.

When we ask students to ‘write about what happened on the weekend’ or ‘write about something that happened in the holidays’, we are expecting them to write recounts. One of the features we expect from students’ recount writing is ‘interest’ and teachers often exhort their students to make their work ‘interesting’. In Accelerated Literacy lessons on writing recount we teach students how to make recounts come to life for the reader as though he/she were there. We want vivid, evocative description and we want the reader’s emotions to be involved.

In examples 1 and 2 above, the writers have included how the narrator felt using simile to enhance the feeling and involve readers’ emotions. In the first example the narrator, Karana, recounts, *I felt like the bride of a chief as I walked there by the waves*. In the second example the narrator recounts, *I felt as tiny as an ant*.

Both these examples also feature descriptive techniques designed to appeal to the readers’ senses. They relate how things looked, sounded, felt and tasted.

In the first example, where Karana is involved in describing her solitary experience, the author includes what she thought so readers can identify with her experience. In the second example, the author includes what characters said (‘Wow...That’s a BIG rock.’) to do the same job.

When teaching how to write recounts, include writing workshops on writing descriptions, including thoughts, feelings and reactions and involving readers’ emotions, as well as telling readers what happened.

School trips and excursions are often set as topics for producing recounts. Help students plan their recounts of such events by rehearsing how they could add to the recounting of events in their sequence by including colourful physical descriptions as well as how the participants were feeling at the time.
Explanations are a key genre for scientific writing (where phenomena such as the water cycle, how a torch works, how a volcano erupts etc. are explained). These scientific explanations require the specialised use of technical language and are often accompanied by diagrams or illustrations.

**Purpose**
To give an account of how something works or of reasons for some phenomenon.

**Structure**
- Statement about the phenomenon or the scope of the explanation
- Description of events or phenomenon
- Coda (optional).

**Example**

Statement about the scope of the explanation

The water cycle

Description of events

When water is heated it forms a gas called water vapour. In nature, water vapour forms as a result of evaporation (from the heat of the sun) of moisture from wet surfaces such as the oceans (more than two thirds of the Earth’s surface), rivers, lakes and falling rain and snow.

When the water vapour rises, it cools and forms small droplets of water that gather together to form clouds. As clouds cool further the droplets of water may be released as precipitation – rain, snow, hail, dew, frost. This water flows back into rivers, the sea and lakes and the cycle starts again.
Accelerated Literacy teaching points

The ability to write explanations is highly valued in education but is sometimes difficult for students because it so often requires an understanding of specialist terms such as ‘evaporation’ and ‘precipitation’. Teaching both the structure of an explanation and the meaning and purpose of specialised or scientific terms is an important part of teaching students to write explanations and other scientific texts.

To teach students how to write an explanation requires the same teaching strategies as used in all Accelerated Literacy lessons.

Low order literate orientation provides a context for exploring the subject matter (or field) of the explanation. To teach the water cycle, for example, the teacher may pour some water on hot asphalt and watch it evaporate. Note that the water seems to disappear when it has actually turned into water vapour and entered the atmosphere. This is the process called ‘evaporation’.

Next, in high order literate orientation, relate the practical exercise to the wording of the study text (eg relate the heat of the asphalt and the way the water ‘dried up’ to ‘When water is heated it forms a gas, called water vapour’). Explain to students that ‘dried up’ is a common sense description of what appears to happen to the water, while the scientific explanation is that the water has formed a gas called water vapour.

Transformations provides a context for further deconstruction of the language choices that shape the text. For example, the text can be clearly separated into the structure that makes it an explanation. The scientific words can be turned over, identified and discussed. The ordering of the event sequence in time by words such as ‘when’ can be identified and discussed. The word ‘because’ allows writers to provide the reason (or explanation) for a phenomenon.

Spelling then allows teachers to discuss the spelling, the origin and the meaning of scientific words, eg the ‘ion’ in transpiration, evaporation, precipitation can be used to explain that ‘ion’ in words means ‘state of’.

Joint reconstructed writing allows readers to use the language of an explanation effectively as they reconstruct it.

The writing strategy joint construction allows students and teachers to work together to write explanations of other phenomena.
Procedure

Procedures (also called instructions) describe how to do something and are widely used in workplace settings. For example, first aid procedures, safety procedures, procedures for operating machinery are all important in the workplace.

Purpose

To tell how to do or make something.

Structure

- Goal – often this is in the main heading or the diagram
- Materials – may be listed in the order they are used
- Method – the steps taken to achieve the goal.

Example 1

This example of a procedure is from the Teachers’ Handouts in *Text analysis*.

Goal

Microwave chocolate cake

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup plain flour
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 pinch salt
Method

Spray a medium microwave-safe bowl with non-stick spray and set aside. In a mixing bowl, combine the butter, sugar, egg, vanilla extract, and milk, blend together. Combine the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt, blend into the mixture until smooth. Pour into greased bowl.

Cover and cook in the microwave on high for 2 to 2 1/2 minutes, or until cake springs back when touched. Since all microwaves cook differently, adjust the cooking time to accommodate your machine. To serve, let the cake cool for five minutes, then cover the bowl with a plate and turn both bowl and plate upside down so the cake falls onto the plate.

Example 2

The following procedure is from the *Aboriginal Schools Curriculum Materials Project: How to Cook Bush Tomatoes*. This is part of the collection *Getting Going with Genres* produced by the Northern Territory Department of Education in 1993.

Goal

How to cook bush tomatoes.

Materials (what we need)

- Bush tomatoes
- Knife
- Emu bone scraper
- Coolamon
- Long thin green stick
- Firewood
- Matches

Method (what to do)

1. Pick ripe yellow bush tomatoes.
2. Cut the top off each one.
3. Use the emu bone scraper to take out the seeds.
4. Put the bush tomatoes in a coolamon.
5. Push the bush tomatoes onto the long thin green stick.
6. Cook over hot coals.
7. Remove from coals and eat.
Accelerated Literacy teaching points

Again, the AL teaching sequence is an excellent resource for teaching students how to read, interpret and write procedures. It allows for their deconstruction and comprehension, and for writing new procedures with understanding.

As procedures describe how to do something, when teaching them it is necessary to carry out the steps of the procedure as part of the low order literate orientation and then relate the activity to the wording of the text in high order literate orientation. Where a procedure is complex, diagrams, photographs or videos can be used to help remind students of the steps that need to be described.

The language of a procedure can be deconstructed and discussed further in transformations, with the position of the verb in each step being important. How and why an action is carried out is important and technical names of equipment and actions may also need to be described.

While procedures are often considered to be one of the most straightforward genres to teach, we also need to remember to make them appropriate for each year level. A Year 1 procedure is not adequate for teaching adults in the workplace, or even Year 6 in primary school.
Reports may also be referred to as factual descriptions. The ability to write factual reports is also highly valued in education and the workplace. Reports use language specific to the field that is being reported and this language is often specialised and different from commonsense or everyday language.

**Purpose**

To describe a particular thing or a class of things.

**Structure**

- Classification – a definition or a general statement
- Description – organised in a logical order.

**Example 1**

This report is taken from *Sound* by Liam Collins, in the *National Geographic Window on Literacy* series.

**Classification (What is sound?)**

*Sound is a form of energy.*

**Description**

*Sounds are made when an object vibrates, or moves back and forth very quickly. The moving object makes the air around it vibrate too. These vibrations travel through the air as sound waves. When the vibrations reach our ears, we hear the sound. Sound waves travel through the air. They can move through solids and liquids, too. Each material carries sound differently. A material that carries sound well is a good conductor of sound.*
Not all sounds are the same. Some sounds are louder than others. A police siren and a school bell both make loud sounds. A whisper is a soft sound. A kitten crying is a soft sound, too. What makes a sound loud or soft? How loud or soft a sound is depends on how much energy is in the sound wave. A loud sound contains more energy than a soft sound.

Sounds can also be high or low. This is called the pitch of a sound. A song bird makes a high-pitched sound. A whistle makes a high-pitched sound, too. When a bullfrog croaks, it makes a low-pitched sound. What makes a sound’s pitch high or low? A sound’s pitch depends on how quickly the sound wave is vibrating. High-pitched sounds come from sound waves that vibrate very quickly. Low-pitched sounds come from sound waves that vibrate slowly. The quicker the vibration, the higher the pitch.

Example 2
This is a short report or factual description in The Cay by Theodore Taylor (p.3).

Classification

Instead we went down to the Koningin Emma Brug, the famous Queen Emma pontoon bridge, which spans the channel that leads to the huge harbour, the Schottegat.

Description
The bridge is built on floats so that it can swing open as ships pass in or out, and it connects Punda with Otrabanda, which means ‘other side’, the other part of the city.
Example 3

This is a description early in *The Burnt Stick* by Anthony Hill (p.2).

**Classification**

*The Mission had been built many years ago by the Fathers. Mostly they were good men.*

**Description**

*They built a stone church with a bell tower and narrow windows with yellow glass that they remembered from their own country on the other side of the world. They read from the Bible of a loving God, and sang the Latin Mass every Sunday, the Aboriginal altar boys in white surplices.*

*The Fathers built a school of corrugated iron painted grey, with sleeping huts (four boys or girls to a room) and outhouses – the dairy, bakery, and machinery shed. They planted a vegetable garden that grew almost anything – beans and peanuts and ripe crimson watermelons – and an orchard heavy with fruit – mangoes and pawpaws and sweet bananas.*

Example 4

This is an example of a short scientific report, suitable for Year 1–2, that could accompany a narrative about an owl (eg. *Dunbi the Owl* by Daisy Etemorrah).

**Classification**

*The Southern Boobook Owl, *Ninox novaeseelandiae*, is also known as a Mopoke, and is the most common owl in Australia.*

**Description**

*Appearance: this owl is dark brown with spots of white, and a mottled brown to white belly and breast. It has dark spectacles around the eyes.*

*Habitat: the smallest of Australia’s owls, the Southern Boobook is found all over the country from dense forests to semi-desert areas.*

*Behaviour: it hides by day in tree hollows or thick foliage, and comes out at night to feed on insects, small birds, rodents and reptiles.*
Example 5

This is an example of a scientific report for early secondary students that could accompany a narrative about bears (eg *The Deliverance of Dancing Bears* by Elizabeth Stanley). Notice the more complex language choices that make up this text compared with the previous owls text.

**Classification**

The Himalayan brown bear (*Ursus arctos isabellinus*) is a species of brown bear, related to brown bears found in North America, Europe and Asia.

**Distribution**

The Himalayan brown bear is generally restricted to the foothills of the Himalaya and Northern Pakistan. The bear is uncommon in India and is considered rare.

**Appearance**

Adult males vary from 1.5m up to 2.2m in body length. Females are smaller and lighter in build and vary from 1.37m to 1.83m in length.

In colour, they vary from dark reddish brown to light sandy shades of brown. The bears have long fur which is typically matted with heavy underwool to retain body heat in winter.

The ears are relatively small and round. They have long claws on their front paws.

**Behaviour**

Food: The bears feed on a variety of food that includes insects, roots of plants, shoots of young grasses and sometimes domestic goats and sheep. The bears usually feed from 1-2 hours before sunrise, for several hours in the late afternoon and again in the evening. They are nocturnal, and they have an acute sense of smell that helps them find food.

Habits: Adult bears normally go into hibernation for about six months during winter. They hibernate in a cave or excavate their own den under a large boulder or between the roots of trees. During hibernation they may wake occasionally and become active.

Breeding: The bears breed in the spring and early summer, and the females deliver up to two cubs that are blind and weigh about 500 grams. They are covered with short, silky hair that changes colour as they grow. The cubs stay in the den with their mother until she first emerges from hibernation. They then stay with their mother for another two to three years.
This report is based on information from:


Other information about dancing bears from:

http://www.wspa.org.uk/

Analysis and planning for teaching about the following can be found in the booklet in this series of practitioner guides called *Text analysis*:

- the reports on the Southern Boobook Owl and Himalayan brown bears
- the argument and discussion article called *An argument for banning the exploitation of dancing bears*.

**Accelerated Literacy teaching points for report**

Whether writing about owls, bears or bridges, teachers need to consider the language that is specific to each field and teach students what this language is, what it means and how to use it.

Using the teaching sequence to teach students about how to read and write reports requires the subject matter to be taught in low order literate orientation. If the report is about ‘the Koningin Emma Brug, the famous Queen Emma pontoon bridge, which spans the channel that leads to the huge harbour, the Schotegat,’ then it would be necessary to investigate where this bridge is and what it looks like. Illustrations, maps and diagrams may be necessary. In high order literate orientation, the information discussed needs to be linked to the wording. Scientific terms like ‘pontoon bridge’ and ‘spanned the harbour’ need to be highlighted and explained.

Similarly, in transformations, the language choices and structures appropriate to this genre can be deconstructed more thoroughly following high order literate orientation.
Argument and discussion

Arguments and discussions are highly valued in education and are part of the English curriculum of every state and territory. The ability to make a cogent argument is also part of every adult’s competency as a citizen.

Purpose

To present or discuss a position on an issue and to justify the position taken.

Structure

- Statement of position or issue
- Argument – supported by evidence for any points put forward
- Second or opposing point of view
- Summing up the position or making a recommendation – reaffirm the general issues and provide logically derived conclusion.

Example 1

The example given next is from the *Aboriginal Schools Curriculum Materials Project: Why I want to be a police officer when I grow up*. This is part of the collection *Getting Going with Genres* produced by the Northern Territory Department of Education, 1993 (p.17–18).

Statement of position

I would like to be a police officer because police issue drivers' licences.

Argument

Police issue licences when they are sure that people know the road rules and know how to drive.

Second or opposing point of view

Some people say being a police officer is a dangerous job. I don’t care.

Summing up

I still want to be a police officer when I grow up.
Example 2: An argument for banning the exploitation of dancing bears

The following argument is more appropriate for older students.

Statement of position

Despite the capture and trade of bears being illegal in most parts of the world, the practice of exploiting dancing bears for public entertainment still continues in some parts of the Indian subcontinent. This illegal capture of bears is seriously threatening populations in the wild. Such a cruel and damaging practice should be stopped.

Argument

From the time cubs are stolen from their dens by poachers, they endure constant suffering. Many cubs die from neglect or dehydration before they are sold for training.

All dancing bears have a hole pierced through their lips, nose or palate and a chain or rope forced through. No anaesthetic is used for this highly painful operation and, to make matters worse, teeth are often removed or broken to prevent injury to the handlers. Tugging on the rope prevents these wounds healing and the bears find no relief from raw, painful infections. The agony goes on and the bears learn to dance in an attempt to avoid the pain.

In addition, poor diet has a disastrous effect on the health of the dancing bears. Many suffer from cataracts and go blind due to lack of nutrition. The trauma of this unnatural life drives many bears mad and they display the repetitive, pacing movements characteristic of mental damage.
Second or opposing point of view
While people in some communities depend on bear dancing for their livelihood this is still not reason enough to allow such a cruel practice to persist. Training of people who depend on bear dancing could teach them new skills for new livelihoods. Education of local communities on bear welfare, as well as added protection for bear cubs in the wild, could help stop the illegal trade in bears.

Recommendation
All people who care about the conservation of bears should do what they can to stop these animals being exploited and harmed.

Information for this argument was taken from http://www.wspa.org.uk/

Example 3
The following example of a discussion is taken from the Aboriginal Schools Curriculum Materials Project: Water Safety. This is part of the collection Getting Going with Genres, produced by the Northern Territory Department of Education, 1993 (p.17–18).

Issue
Little kids should play with water from the hose for these reasons.

Argument
1. Little kids should play with water from the hose because it is safer. It is safer for little kids to play with water from the hose so that they can jump and play around without fear of drowning.

2. Little kids should play with water from the hose because it is healthier. Hose water is clean and has no germs to cause ear infections. Sometimes, little kids get sore ears after swimming in the deep school pool.

3. Little kids should play with water from the hose because it can be poured down a slippery slide or along a sheet of plastic. Sliding down a wet slide or along a sheet of plastic is lots of fun for little kids.

4. Little kids should play with water from the hose as it can be put in a sand tray. In hot weather, little kids can play games and cool off safely in this shallow water.
Second or opposing point of view

On the other hand, there are reasons why little kids should swim in the deep school pool.

1. *Little kids should swim in the deep school pool so that they learn to swim.*
   Little kids will never learn to swim if they only play with water from a hose.

2. *Little kids should swim in the deep pool so that they learn to swim when they are young.* Little kids have little fear and are very adventurous. This is the best age to teach them to swim and dive.

3. *Little kids should swim in the deep school pool so that they learn different strokes.* Little kids cannot do backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle with water from the hose.

**Accelerated Literacy teaching points**

Unlike some other genres, argument and discussion allow the use of emotional language to move the reader. Like other genres, the structure and specific language used to construct the genre need to be taught.

Low order literate orientation provides the context for discussing the field of the argument. For example, it would be impossible to discuss an argument for banning the exploitation of dancing bears if there had not been work on the countries that allow this practice, what it involves, why it is viewed as admissible and what can be done about it. People who write arguments often have deep feelings about them but will not sway public opinion if they do not have evidence that supports their position. These elements of arguments have to be taught.

Transformations, as mentioned in relation to all genre teaching, allow structure to be identified and particular appropriate language choices to be identified. Scientific language is appropriate for some arguments but has to be explained in order to move the opinions of people who do not necessarily have detailed knowledge of the field of argument.
References

Black, P, 1995, *The Dance of Language*, Northern Territory University, Darwin


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Practitioner Guide

This guide is about using the Accelerated Literacy methodology to teach students to read, comprehend and write text genres other than narratives.

The genres discussed are:
- recount
- explanation
- procedure (also called instructions)
- report (also called factual description)
- argument and discussion.

The guide discusses how the different genres may be integrated into the Accelerated Literacy Program, discusses the purpose and nature of each and provides advice, with examples, on using each of the relevant Accelerated Literacy strategies with the genre.

Guides

- The guides have been written for teachers who have attended professional development in teaching Accelerated Literacy. The notes presume some understanding about how to teach the program.
- For a detailed explanation of how to implement the teaching sequence, please refer to the teachers’ handouts from the professional development sessions. Additionally, you could refer to http://www.nalp.edu.au

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