

**SAMPLE UNIT**

# Successful Writing


UPPER-INTERMEDIATE

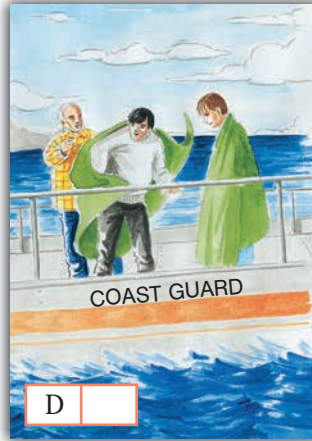
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**Express Publishing**

# UNIT 6 Narratives - Stories

-  **1** The pictures below are from a story entitled “Rescued!” Try to put them in the correct order, then listen to the cassette and check your answers. Finally, retell the story in your own words.



- A narrative can be written in the first or the third person and describes a series of events, either imaginary or based on your own experience. A good narrative should consist of:
  - a) an **introduction** in which you set the scene (people involved, time, place) in an interesting way to catch the reader’s attention and make him/her want to continue reading your story;
  - b) a **main body** consisting of two or more paragraphs in which you develop your story; and
  - c) a **conclusion** in which you can refer to people’s feelings, comments and reactions or consequences. The more unpredictable your conclusion is, the longer-lasting the impression it will make on the reader.

This type of writing can be found in novels, articles, witness statements, etc.

## Points to consider

- You should never start writing your story before you have decided on a plot.
- Sequence of events is very important. Use time words such as: **at first, before, until, while, during, then, after, finally**, etc.
- Use of various adjectives (disgusted, exhilarating, etc.) and adverbs (fearlessly, surprisingly, etc.) to describe feelings and actions, as well as use of direct speech and a variety of verbs, will make your story more exciting to read.
- Be careful with the tenses you choose. You can use **Past Continuous** to set the scene (e.g. *It **was raining hard** and the wind **was blowing** as Jonathan drove towards the small cottage.*), **Past Simple** to describe the main events of the story. (e.g. *Jonathan **opened** the garden gate and **went through** the garden towards the front door. He **knocked** on the door but there **was no answer.***) or **Past Perfect** to give the background of the story (e.g. *Jonathan **had been planning** to visit the old cottage for months before he was able to do so).* **Present** and **past participles** can also be used. e.g. ***Startled**, he went round the house towards the back door.*
- Descriptions of people, places, objects or events and descriptive techniques can be used in a narrative when you want to emphasise specific parts of your narration.

## Introduction

### Paragraph 1

Set the scene (who – where – when – what)

## Main Body

### Paragraphs 2 - 4

### Development

(describe incidents leading up to the main event and the event itself in detail)

## Conclusion

### Final Paragraph

### End the story

(refer to moods, consequences, people’s reactions, feelings, comments)

**2** Read the model below, which begins with the words “Sleep tight, Scottie,”... and write down the topic of each paragraph. In which person is the story written? Underline the parts of the story where descriptive techniques are employed. Underline the time words, adjectives, adverbs and direct speech. Has the writer used a variety of adjectives and adverbs, or are the same words used several times?

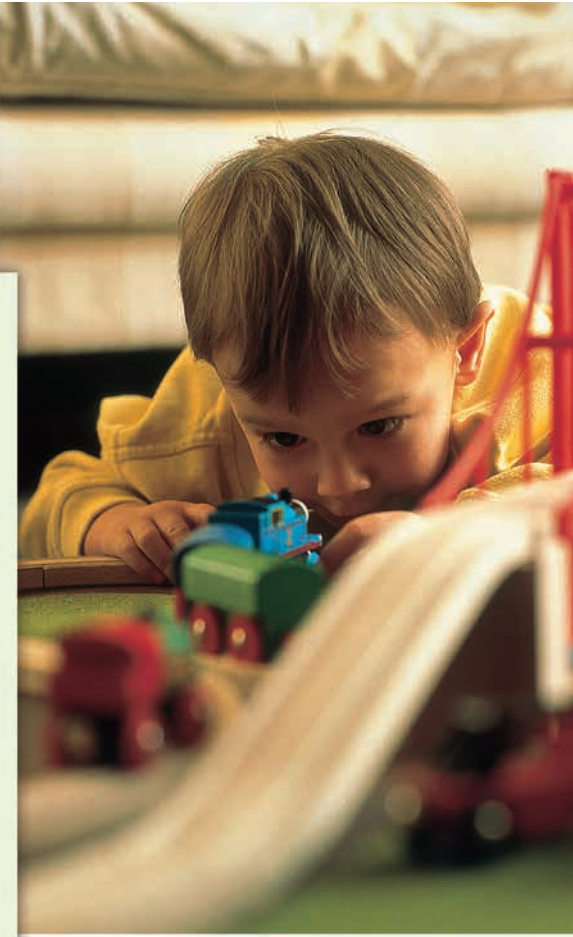
set the scene  
(Scottie in bed -  
ball of light enters  
his room)

“Sleep tight, Scottie,” his mother said as she kissed him goodnight and turned off the light. As soon as she had closed the door behind her, Scott was fast asleep. He was completely exhausted after spending the whole afternoon assembling his new train set and then watching it go around the tracks and through the tunnels. Suddenly, a ball of brilliant yellow light shot past the window. Scott woke with a start when the ball entered his room. The light was so bright that he had to shut his eyes.

When he opened them, he saw a strange, little man, about a foot tall, with orange skin and huge blue eyes. Scott, not the least bit frightened, said in a friendly voice, “Hello, I’m Scott. Who are you?” The miniature man said nothing, but picked up a battery from the untidy heap of toys on the floor. He started running around the room, pointing urgently at the rest of Scott’s toys. “What do you want?” asked Scott, who was puzzled.

The man began shaking the battery frantically, and Scott realised that that was what he wanted. Scott opened all his toys, took out the batteries and piled them on the floor. Immediately gathering up all the batteries, the little man leapt onto the window sill, smiled warmly at Scott and disappeared.

When Scott woke up the next morning, he thought about his unusual dream. He stared at his train set before jumping out of bed and trying to switch it on. Nothing happened. Then Scott realised that it had no batteries ... and there were no batteries in any of his other toys, either.



**3** Which of the following beginnings and endings are more interesting? Why?

**BEGINNINGS...**

**A** I woke up and got out of bed. I had a shower, ate breakfast and left.

**B** Bright morning sunlight shone through my bedroom window when I woke. I lay there lazily for a few minutes, then jumped out of bed and stepped under the hot water of the shower. The smell of coffee drifted through from the kitchen.

**...ENDINGS**

**A** Exhausted and soaked to the skin, I slammed the front door behind me. I threw myself onto my bed, stared into the darkness and thought bitterly, “Why me?”

**B** At last I was home again, and soon went to bed. It had been a tiring day.

Techniques to begin or end a story

A good beginning is as important as a good ending. A good beginning should make your reader want to go on with your story. A good ending will make your reader feel satisfied.

- You can start your story by:
- a. describing weather, surroundings, people, etc. using the senses
  - b. using direct speech
  - c. asking a rhetorical question (a question which expects no answer)
  - d. creating mystery or suspense
  - e. referring to your feelings or moods
  - f. addressing the reader directly

- You can end your story by:
- a. using direct speech
  - b. referring to your feelings or moods
  - c. describing people’s reactions to the events developed in the main body
  - d. creating mystery or suspense
  - e. asking a rhetorical question

Note that more than one technique can be used in the beginning or ending of your story.

**4** Read the main body of the story below, as well as the different beginnings and endings. Refer back to the theory box on page 28 and decide which techniques have been used in each of the beginnings and endings.

### BEGINNINGS...

**b**

**1** "Oh gosh, look at the time!" gasped my flatmate Caroline as she nudged me awake. We gathered up our books and sleepily made our way to the library car park.

**2** It was a damp, chilly night when Caroline and I eventually left the library. As soon as I stepped outside I shivered, feeling that something strange was about to happen.

**3** You know those spring nights that are still really cold and damp? Well, I'll tell you what happened to my friend Caroline and me, on a night just like that.

We had been studying in the library for hours and we just wanted to get home and go to sleep. Normally, I would take the long way home, to avoid driving past the old Bradford estate. However, that night I was so exhausted that I forgot all about it. Before I knew it, we found ourselves driving down the long, winding road which goes past the estate. Since it was pitch dark and my headlights could barely cut through the thick fog, I was driving fairly slowly. The silence was broken as we heard a tapping sound coming from the darkness ahead.

Suddenly, an elderly man dressed in a black suit appeared at the side of the road, limping along with a wooden cane. He turned and faced us, and began to approach the car. His wrinkled face, piercing dark eyes and toothless grin gave him a horrifying appearance. We quickly locked all the doors and kept driving. The old man tried to block our path by stepping out in front of the car, but I swerved and sped off.

### ...ENDINGS

**b**    **1** Safe at home, we decided we had probably imagined the whole thing. The next morning, however, as we opened the front door to leave for the college, we both froze with shock. There, propped up against the wall, was a long wooden cane.

**2** The next day in class, our professor showed us some slides of the town's early founders. He clicked his slide machine to the next picture — and guess whose face flashed onto the screen?

**3** The next day I told my professor what had happened, and to my surprise his eyes filled with tears. "The man you've described was my father," he mumbled. "He died at that place twenty years ago."

**5** Match the beginnings with the endings. Which techniques have been applied? Which pair is not very successful? Rewrite this pair, applying the techniques mentioned before.

### BEGINNINGS...

**1** It was very late. John couldn't see because it was dark. He was afraid.

**2** The snow lay like frosty icing on a Christmas cake, its crisp, new whiteness covering the garden like a soft fluffy blanket. It was still snowing, frozen crystals falling gently from the heavy grey sky.

**3** Why is it that the most important changes in our lives happen when we least expect them to? My life had settled into a comfortable, satisfying routine when suddenly everything changed.

### ...ENDINGS

**A** Looking back at what happened I always feel a sense of wonder and awe. But then again, life's like that, isn't it?

**B** John ran out of the house. There was a policeman outside. John felt safe.

**C** We all felt a deep sense of loss when the last traces of the snow had melted away, realising what a special gift we'd been given and how much fun and laughter it had brought us. It had been such a fleeting visit, but one we weren't likely to forget for a very long time.

## Unit 6 Narratives - Stories

Before you start writing your story it is absolutely necessary to plan it. This means that you should decide on a plot line and then start developing it. You can link the events with time words such as: **first, until, when, before, after, eventually, at once, finally**, etc.

### 6 Read the following short texts and fill the gaps with linking words or phrases from the lists below.

**A** *as soon as, at last, immediately, meanwhile, then, when, while*

The aeroplane had only been in the air for about twenty minutes  
 1) ..... suddenly it began to dive towards the ground. 2) ..... the passengers began to panic. 3) ..... the flight attendants realised what was happening, they did their best to calm everyone down, 4) ..... the plane continued to lose altitude.  
 5) ....., in the cockpit, the pilot was struggling to control the plane. 6) ..... it righted itself and he sighed with relief. The flight 7) ..... continued without any further problems.

**B** *after, before, finally, since, then, when*

There had never been a storm like it 1) ..... – at least not 2) ..... the great flood in 1962. Kevin was trying to steer his car through the pouring rain 3) ..... all of a sudden his car stopped. The engine continued to run for a few seconds, 4) ..... coughed twice and fell silent.  
 Reluctantly, Kevin got out of his car and watched it sink slowly into the mud at the side of the road. 5) ..... staring at his useless car for a few minutes, he 6) ..... stuck his hands into his pockets, bent his head and began the long walk home.

Now number the events below in the order in which they happened.

Plot line A	Plot line B
<input type="checkbox"/> The passengers panicked.	<input type="checkbox"/> The car stopped.
<input type="checkbox"/> The pilot managed to control the plane.	<input type="checkbox"/> Kevin walked away.
<input type="checkbox"/> The aeroplane started falling.	<input type="checkbox"/> The car sank in the mud.
<input type="checkbox"/> The flight continued.	<input type="checkbox"/> Kevin got out of the car.
<input type="checkbox"/> The flight attendants calmed the passengers..	<input type="checkbox"/> Kevin was driving in the rain.

### 7 Decide on various plot lines for the following sentences which end stories.

- It was the worst flight I had ever experienced.
- I would never go back there again.
- “You’re fired!” he shouted.

### 8 Read the beginning and ending of the following story, then look at the pictures and decide on the events you will describe in the main body, listing them in chronological order. Then, using this list, write the missing main body.



James couldn't believe his eyes. He checked the figures again, hoping he had made a mistake. £20,000 in debt! What could he do? .....

.....  
 .....  
 .....

Early one morning, three months later, out of work and bankrupt, Joe left his flat carrying a black case. He made his way to the local underground station, found a sheltered spot and laid a hat on the ground. He then took his shiny saxophone out of its case and began to play.

Avoid using simplistic adjectives or adverbs (e.g. *good, bad, nice, well*, etc.) as these will make your composition sound uninteresting. Try to use more sophisticated adjectives or adverbs (e.g. *luxurious, extravagant, threateningly*, etc.) which will make your composition more exciting to read. A variety of verbs (e.g. *murmur, whisper, mutter* instead of "say") will make your story more lively. e.g. "Hide it," he **murmured** and put a small box into my hand. (instead of 'said') She was **wandering** the streets aimlessly, trying to make a decision. (instead of 'walking')

**9** The following adjectives or adverbs can be used instead of other simplistic ones. Put them into the correct box. Can you think of any more words?

*absolutely, delightful, enormous, entirely, horrible, massive, miniature, microscopic, superb, terrific, thoroughly, horrifying, extremely, gigantic, tiny, nasty, disgusting, huge, terrible, wonderful, unpleasant, fabulous*

<b>BIG</b>	
<b>SMALL</b>	
<b>VERY</b>	
<b>BAD</b>	
<b>GOOD/NICE</b>	

Now replace the words in bold in the following paragraphs with suitable words from the boxes above.

**A**  
The **1) big** old castle stood at the top of a(n) **2) big** mountain in the middle of a(n) **3) big** forest. I was **4) very** terrified as I approached and jumped with fright when I heard a(n) **5) bad** scream from the direction of the castle. My heart was in my mouth as I knocked on the **6) big** front door, and the sound of **7) small** scurrying feet behind the door made me imagine **8) big, 9) bad** rats running away to hide. I wanted to run away, too, but I was **10) very** exhausted, and had to find somewhere to sleep for the night.

**B**  
It was a(n) **1) nice** evening, and after a(n) **2) nice** sunset the stars were a million **3) small** points of light in the sky. "A(n) **4) nice** end to a(n) **5) very 6) nice** day," Brian thought to himself; and after the **7) bad** week which had just passed, he was **8) very** pleased to breathe a(n) **9) big** sigh of relief and put the **10) bad** memories behind him.

**10** The adverbs below describe the way a person might speak or act. Explain what each adverb means, then choose suitable words from the list to complete the sentences.

*sarcastically, angrily, threateningly, frantically, hurriedly, miserably, confidently, suddenly, urgently, nervously, patiently, calmly*

- The woman on the third-floor balcony of the burning building waved her arms ..... to attract the fireman's attention.
- "Get out of here!" Bill shouted ....., his face turning red.
- "My dog has run away!" the little girl sobbed .....
- ....., without any warning, her guide spun round and held a knife to her throat.
- The detective looked at him in disbelief. "Oh, yes, of course a criminal like you wouldn't want £5 million," he said .....
- She gathered her papers together ..... and rushed off to the meeting, which had already begun.
- "If you tell anyone, you'll be sorry," said the kidnapper .....
- "Don't worry, I'll kill the dragon," the knight said ..... to the king.



## Unit 6 Narratives - Stories

**11** Put the following verbs into the correct boxes. Try to think of further words to add to each box. Now use suitable words from the boxes to complete the following sentences.

*gaze - dash - giggle - hiss - murmur - peer - stroll - wander - yell - sigh - chuckle - mutter - peep - moan - shriek - grin - whisper - exclaim - rush*

Walk/Run .....	Say .....
... <i>dash</i> .....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
Look .....	Smile/Laugh .....
.....	.....
.....	.....

### WALK/RUN

- We ..... lazily along the waterfront, enjoying the warm sunshine as we watched the fishermen mending their nets.
- At the sound of the doorbell she ..... eagerly to the front door, excited to be meeting him again after so many years.

### SAY

- “Stupid old fool!” he ..... angrily to himself, pushing rudely past the elderly man limping down the steps.
- “Oh, well,” Jill ..... “perhaps it doesn’t really matter – but I wish you’d asked me first before telling everyone about it.”
- “Don’t look round now, but I’m sure that man sitting behind us is the escaped prisoner I was reading about in the paper,” I ..... nervously to John.
- “Help!” Karen ..... hysterically. “Somebody help me!”

### LOOK

- The couple ..... lovingly into each other’s eyes, completely unaware of the people hurrying past.
- Kevin ..... through the windscreen, hardly able to see where he was going in the pouring rain.

### SMILE/LAUGH

- David ..... cheerfully as he waved to the crowd, accepting their applause for the magnificent race he had run.
- Sally and Lynne ..... with embarrassment when the two boys crossed the room and asked them to dance.

**12** Rewrite the short paragraphs replacing the words in bold using words from Ex. 11 as in the example.



- “Here he comes!” **said** Carla, **looking** anxiously through the sunlit blinds. “And he’s got a parcel!” The postman was **smiling** as he **walked** up the path.

e.g. “Here he comes!” **shrieked**  
Carla, **peering** anxiously through the sunlit blinds.

- “The plane is going to crash,” **said** Steve. Everyone in the air traffic control room **looked** at him. Steve **ran** back to his monitor and put on his headset. “Why on earth don’t they answer?” he **said**. “I’m afraid there’s nothing we can do to help them now,” he **said**.



Use of the senses (sight, smell, touch, hearing, taste) to set the scene or describe people, places, events or objects involved in your story helps to increase the reader's interest.

**13 Underline the words or phrases which are used to describe senses. What sense does each refer to?**

1 Maitland staggered across the road, hardly aware of the hooting cars and foul-smelling exhaust fumes. The cut on his arm was burning, his head was throbbing with pain, and the salty taste of blood filled his mouth. A police car screeched around the corner, siren wailing and lights flashing, and Maitland dashed into a dark doorway.



2 It was a hot, lazy afternoon and, from where I sat on the shady verandah, I could see the purple mountains in the distance. The fragrant flowers around me blazed with colour as, sipping my sharply sweet lemonade, I listened to the gentle hum of crickets and twittering of birds. A soft, cool breeze brushed my skin while I enjoyed the smell of the rich earth. Suddenly, a familiar, annoying buzz sounded in my ear.



**14 Look at the following list of verbs, all of which refer to sounds and light, and fill in the correct verbs in the gaps below. Some verbs may be used more than once. Which of these could be used in a story entitled "A Haunted House"?**

*bang, crackle, creak, flash, flicker, hoot, howl, pound, rattle, rumble, roar, rustle, twinkle, wail*

- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 leaves/paper .....           | 8 sirens/cats .....           |
| 2 wind/wolves .....            | 9 staircase/floorboards ..... |
| 3 chains .....                 | 10 flames .....               |
| 4 stars .....                  | 11 doors/guns/explosion ..... |
| 5 lions/crowd/fire .....       | 12 owls/cars .....            |
| 6 thunder/lorries .....        | 13 candles .....              |
| 7 waves/rock music/heart ..... | 14 lightning .....            |

**15 Look at the pictures, and decide on the plot line of the story. Then, using words from Ex. 9 - 14 write a story entitled "The Haunted House."**





**16** Read the story below. The paragraphs are in the wrong order, and the story has no punctuation. Number the paragraphs in their correct order, and punctuate them, then underline the phrases which are used to describe the senses as well as the time words.

# The most exciting experience of my life



**A**  as soon as we had started the long walk back we heard a low growling sound coming from the trees in front of us we stood frozen with fear meanwhile the growls grew louder and then the leaves parted to reveal two very hungry looking lions the lions prepared to spring the moment they leapt into the air we threw ourselves to the ground the lions sailed over our heads and plunged into the narrow valley

**B**  have you ever wished that your holidays were more exciting i certainly had until my experience on the first day of a photo safari holiday i took with my friend howard last june

**C**  as we shakily made our way back to the camp we couldn't believe what a lucky escape we had had howard wiped the sweat from his forehead and said maybe its time to go back to good old fashioned beach holidays

**D**  we had been walking through the undergrowth for some time when our guide suddenly stopped in his tracks directly in front of us was a narrow valley almost hidden by creepers and leaves phew that was close said howard i suppose we'll have to turn back now

**E**  the morning sun was blazing as we set out on our first trip into the jungle a guide led howard and me into what we hoped would be a day of successful photography



## Crime doesn't pay

**A**  They got out of the car and walked towards the cabin.

**B**  Sarah heard someone open the front door of her house.

**C**  The man carried Sarah into the empty cabin.

**D**  Sarah tried to escape through the window.

**E**  The man was caught.

**F**  The man drove Sarah to a wooded mountainside.

**G**  Sarah stole the money and hid it in her wardrobe.

**H**  Sarah collapsed onto the icy snow.

**I**  A man entered Sarah's room and forced her out of the house into his car.

**17** Read the sentences, then listen to the story on the cassette and put the events into the correct order. Finally, retell the story in your own words.

When writing a narrative you can use flashback narration. This means you can start your story at a certain point in time (often a very exciting moment), then go back in time and describe events which happened before this time (usually in Past Perfect), lead the reader up to the specified time, then go on with your story and bring it to a conclusion.

**18** Read the story and put the verbs into the correct tenses.

## A flight to remember



The wheels of the jet screeched briefly as they 1) ..... (hit) the runway, waking me from a long pleasant sleep.

“Well, we’re here,” smiled the woman sitting next to me, “Is this your first visit to Rio de Janeiro?” I 2) .....

(stare) at her in disbelief. “Rio?” I 3) ..... (gasp). “We’re supposed to be in Rome!” But when I 4) ..... (look) out of the window and saw the unmistakable view of Sugar Loaf Mountain and the huge statue of Christ in the distance I 5) ..... (realise) that I 6) ..... (make) a terrible mistake.

Earlier that day, I 7) ..... (arrive) late at Heathrow Airport in London after being delayed in heavy traffic. As soon as I had checked in and grabbed my boarding pass I 8) ..... (rush) frantically to Gate 12 where the flight attendant was just about to close the door to the narrow tunnel. Fortunately she 9) ..... (see) me coming and waved me through quickly as there was no time to check my ticket. Completely exhausted from all the rushing, I fell asleep within seconds of sitting down, relieved that I hadn’t missed my flight to Rome.

“How on earth have I ended up in Rio?” I 10) ..... (wonder). I 11) ..... (pull out) my boarding pass and 12) ..... (read) it again, this time carefully. “Heathrow to Rome, Gate 21,” it said – 21 not 12!

Eventually, after I 13) ..... (explain) my embarrassing situation to the airport officials, I was finally put on a flight to my original destination – Rome. Needless to say, I 14) ..... (not/sleep) a wink during that flight!

- A  The plane landed.
- B  I woke up.
- C  A fellow passenger said we were in Rio.
- D  I arrived at the airport.
- E  I checked in.
- F  I rushed to Gate 12.
- G  I took my seat on the plane.
- H  I fell asleep.
- I  I read my boarding pass carefully.
- J  I explained my situation to the airport officials.
- K  I was put on a flight to Rome.



Now look at the list of events as they appeared in the story above and put them into the correct chronological order. Retell the story without using flashback narration.

**19** Read the following story which begins with the words “Someone from the hospital called; it sounded urgent.” and correct the mistakes. Write **S** for spelling, **WO** for word order, **WW** for wrong word, **G** for grammar or **P** for punctuation.

G wait

“Someone from the hospital called; it sounded urgent. It’s your wife. Maybe you should ...” Paul didn’t **waited** for the secretary to finish.

He turned pale and broke into a cold sweat, then **did** his way hurriedly back to the car park, jumped into his car and **drived** crazily through the slow traffic. He **hard** noticed the honking of horns, the screeching of **breaks** or the other drivers yelling furiously at him. “Please, please let her be all right,” he kept saying to himself.

Minutes later, the doors of the emergency department opened and he found **him** in the cold reception lounge. He pushed to the front of the queue and asked for his wife. **the** receptionist patiently scanned the computer screen and then directed him to Room 12. Without **to** thanking her, he dashed for the lift. Heart pounding, Paul **his eyes closed** for a moment, praying. He dreaded what he was about to find.

The door opened onto a dimly **lighted** corridor. Paul walked towards Room 12 and **nervous** pushed the door open. She was **laying** in bed, **exhausting**. She sleepily opened her eyes and murmured, “hello, darling. **Sory** I couldn’t wait. **Its** a boy.”

**20** Read the notes below for a story entitled “The Visitors”, put them into the correct chronological order, then tell the story. Now, change the order of the notes to make use of flashback narration. Which note will you start your story with? Write your story using flashback narration.

- A  Doorbell rang – Ruth ... with 3 children and a dog!
- B  Finally, 2 weeks later, Ruth said they were going.
- C  First night, I slept on sofa; children played loud music on radio all night.
- D  Phone call from friend, Ruth – wanted to stay with me “for a few days”.
- E  Will never invite old friends to stay again – and don’t want to see Ruth again for another fifteen years.
- F  Came home from work next day – garden destroyed, window broken, furniture covered in marmalade.
- G  Waved goodbye, closed door behind me – relieved to be alone again.
- H  Last time I saw Ruth was fifteen years ago; thought how nice it would be to spend a few days together.

**Revision Box**

**21** Mark the statements True or False justifying your answers.

- 1 A story cannot begin with direct speech.
- 2 Time words should be used in stories.
- 3 Stories should not combine description and narration.
- 4 Use of the senses to set the scene should be avoided.
- 5 Punctuation and paragraph planning are essential in stories.
- 6 Sequence of events is not important in stories.
- 7 You can narrate a story by moving back in time.
- 8 When writing a story, past tenses should be used.

**22** Read the following topics, decide on the plot line, then write any of them in 120 - 180 words.

- 1 You have decided to enter a short story competition. You should write a story ending with the words: “It was only then that I realised they had mistaken me for someone else.”
- 2 A magazine is running a competition for the best short story starting with the words: “Who can this man be?” Sheila wondered as she looked at the stranger standing at the front door.”
- 3 A magazine is running a competition for the best short story entitled “A Disastrous Evening”. Write your story.