
VARP Mini-Unit

Teacher's Implementation Guide

Introduction

The **VARP Mini-Unit** is a two-day instructional module that introduces students to one of the most important pre-writing frameworks used throughout the Narrative Writing unit and, ultimately, across the Cambridge IGCSE English curriculum.

Rather than beginning narrative writing with plot or story structure, students first learn to ask four essential questions before writing:

- **Voice** – Who is speaking?
- **Audience** – Who am I writing for?
- **Register** – How formal should I sound?
- **Purpose** – Why am I writing?

Together these four decisions form the **VARP Framework**, providing students with a practical planning strategy they can apply to virtually every writing task they encounter throughout the year.

Why Teach VARP First?

Many students begin writing immediately after reading a prompt.

Experienced writers do not.

Before composing a single sentence, skilled writers make deliberate decisions about their narrator, intended reader, level of formality, and writing purpose.

Teaching VARP before introducing narrative writing encourages students to become intentional writers rather than reactive writers.

The framework also provides a common vocabulary that teachers can revisit throughout the year during:

- Narrative Writing
- Descriptive Composition
- Summary Writing
- Directed Writing
- Articles
- Reports
- Speeches
- Letters

Rather than introducing these concepts repeatedly, the mini-unit establishes a shared language that supports every subsequent writing task.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of the mini-unit, students should be able to:

- Define Voice, Audience, Register, and Purpose.
- Explain how each element influences writing.
- Analyze texts using the VARP framework.
- Adapt writing for different audiences and purposes.
- Complete a simple VARP planning chart before beginning a writing task.

The goal is not memorization.

The goal is developing deliberate writing habits.

Instructional Design

The mini-unit follows the same instructional architecture used throughout the Carter English Curriculum.

Each lesson progresses through five predictable stages:

1. Bell Ringer

Students immediately encounter an authentic communication scenario.

These opening questions activate prior knowledge while illustrating that effective communication changes according to context.

2. Explicit Instruction

Concepts are introduced directly using concise explanations supported by authentic examples.

Instruction intentionally avoids excessive terminology.

Students first understand the concept before analyzing it.

3. Guided Practice

Students analyze short examples with teacher support.

Discussion emphasizes evidence rather than intuition.

Teachers should continually ask:

"What evidence helped you decide?"

This question becomes increasingly important throughout Cambridge assessment tasks.

4. Independent Application

Students apply the concept immediately by rewriting or creating short pieces of writing.

Activities intentionally require students to make decisions rather than recall definitions.

5. Reflection

Each lesson concludes with written reflection.

Reflection helps students articulate not only what they learned, but how they can apply the framework to future writing.

Teacher Notes

Encourage discussion.

Most activities have multiple acceptable answers.

Students should justify their thinking rather than search for a single correct response.

Avoid telling students the "correct" Voice or Audience immediately.

Instead ask:

- What clues support your interpretation?
- Which words influenced your decision?
- Could another interpretation also be valid?

This mirrors the analytical thinking required in Cambridge literature and language courses.

Classroom Suggestions

This unit works particularly well when students discuss examples before writing independently.

Recommended structures include:

- Think–Pair–Share
- Small-group discussion
- Whole-class debrief
- Guided questioning

Students should complete notebook activities individually before discussing answers with partners.

Technology Integration

The module was intentionally designed to function with or without technology.

Teachers may choose to:

- annotate slides during instruction;
- collect written responses in Google Classroom;
- create a short Google Forms quiz after Day 2;
- use Kahoot as a formative review before beginning *The Necklace*.

Technology should enhance discussion rather than replace it.

Connection to Narrative Writing

The VARP Mini-Unit is not an isolated grammar lesson.

It serves as the conceptual foundation for the Narrative Writing unit.

Students immediately apply the framework while reading Guy de Maupassant's *The Necklace*, identifying how the author's choices of Voice, Audience, Register, and Purpose shape characterization, conflict, and narrative structure.

Throughout the remainder of the unit, teachers should continue referring to VARP whenever students analyze texts or plan their own compositions.

Cambridge Connection

Although VARP is not a formal Cambridge acronym, it closely mirrors the decisions students must make during **Cambridge IGCSE English Language (0500)** writing tasks.

Successful responses require students to:

- adopt an appropriate voice;
- write for a clearly defined audience;
- maintain an appropriate register;
- fulfill the task's communicative purpose.

Teaching these concepts explicitly gives students a repeatable planning strategy that supports success across narrative, descriptive, and directed writing tasks.

Assessment

The VARP Mini-Unit is intentionally low stakes.

Suggested formative assessments include:

- Exit tickets
- Notebook checks
- Partner discussion
- Guided practice responses
- A short Google Forms or Kahoot review after Day 2

Because this module serves as preparation for the Narrative Writing unit, emphasis should remain on feedback and discussion rather than formal grading.

Teaching Philosophy

The purpose of the VARP Mini-Unit is not simply to teach four vocabulary terms. It is to cultivate a habit of mind. Strong writers pause before they write. They consider who is speaking, who will read their work, how formal their language should be, and what they hope to accomplish. By helping students internalize these questions at the beginning of the Narrative Writing unit, teachers establish a decision-making framework that can be revisited throughout the year. When students eventually ask these four questions automatically before every major writing task, the unit has achieved its purpose.