



Narrative Writing

VARP Mini-Unit · Day 1

Voice and Audience

Welcome to Day 1 of our VARP Mini-Unit! Today we begin exploring two of the most powerful tools in a writer's toolkit — Voice and Audience. By the end of this lesson, you'll start seeing every piece of writing in a whole new way.



Bell Ringer

Think About It

Telling Your Best Friend

Imagine you're describing something funny that happened yesterday. What words do you use? What details do you include? How does it feel?

Telling the Principal

Now imagine telling the exact same story to your principal. Would you use the same words? The same tone? The same details?



Discussion prompt: Would you tell the story the same way? Why or why not? Share your thoughts with a partner.

Day 1 Goals

Learning Objectives

By the end of today's lesson, you will be able to meet all of the following goals. Keep these in mind as we work through each activity together.

1

Define Voice

Explain what **Voice** means in the context of writing.

2

Define Audience

Explain who an **Audience** is and why it matters.

3

Explain Voice's Impact

Describe how **Voice** changes and shapes a piece of writing.

4

Identify Audience

Read a text and identify who the intended audience is.

5

Adapt Your Writing

Adjust your own writing style for different audiences.

The Framework

What Is VARP?

Every writer makes four important decisions *before* putting a single word on the page. Together, these decisions form the VARP framework — a powerful tool used in Cambridge English assessments and real-world writing alike. Today, we focus on the first two.

1

V — Voice

The personality and tone of the writing. Who is speaking?

2

A — Audience

The person or group the writing is meant for. Who is reading?

3

R — Register

The level of formality used. (Coming tomorrow!)

4

P — Purpose

The reason for writing. (Coming tomorrow!)

📌 Today's focus: Voice and Audience — the two elements that shape *how* we sound and *who* we're speaking to.

VARP Element 1

What Is Voice?

Voice is the personality of the writing — it's the feeling that someone specific wrote this piece and no one else could have. Voice is what makes writing come alive and feel authentic. It reflects all of the following elements working together:



The Narrator

The person or character through whose perspective the story is told.



The Speaker

The distinct individual "speaking" through the words on the page.



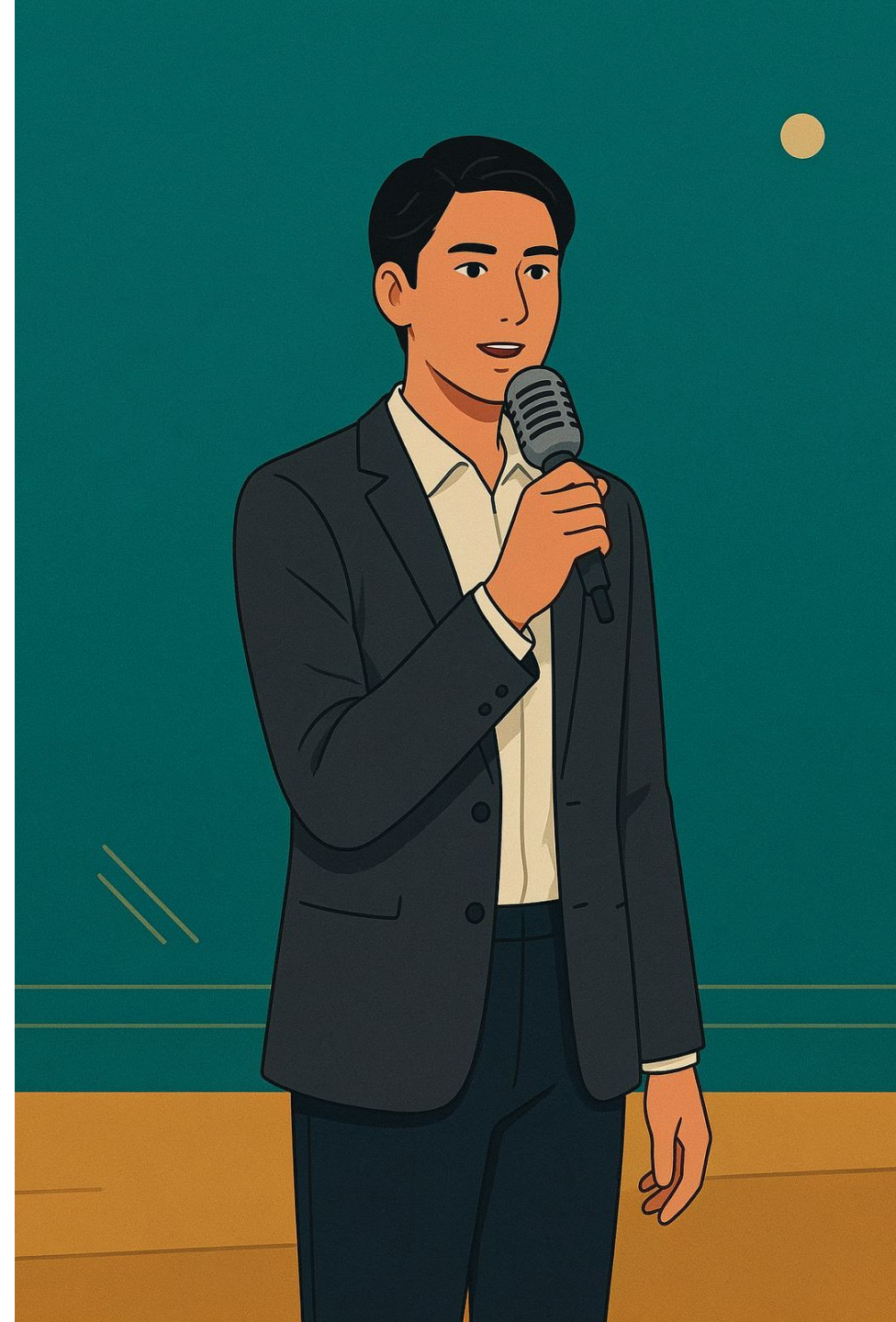
The Attitude

The emotional tone — is the writing playful, serious, sarcastic, warm?



The Perspective

The unique point of view that colors every detail and word choice.



Voice in Action

Examples of Voice

The same event can sound completely different depending on who is speaking. Read each opening line below and notice how the word choice, tone, and personality shift dramatically — even though each could be describing the same moment.

“

"I couldn't believe my luck!"

Excited, personal, informal. Sounds like a real person reacting in the moment. First-person, enthusiastic voice.

”

“

"The incident occurred at approximately 3:15 p.m."

Formal, detached, precise. Sounds official and clinical — like a police report or news article. No emotion shown.

”

“

"Once upon a time..."

Timeless, storytelling, fairy-tale. Immediately signals a traditional narrative for a young or imaginative audience.

”

□ **Discussion: How are these voices different? What clues tell you who is speaking and who the intended reader might be?**

VARP Element 2

What Is Audience?

The Core Idea

Audience is the person or group that the writing is created for. Every writing decision — word choice, tone, detail, length — should be made with the audience in mind.

Before you write a single word, ask yourself: Who will read this?

Why It Matters

Different audiences bring different expectations. A reader's age, background, relationship to the writer, and purpose for reading all influence what they need from the text.

A piece of writing that works perfectly for one audience may confuse or bore another. Knowing your audience is half the battle.



Audience in Action

Different Audiences, Different Writing

Imagine you witnessed a minor car accident on your way to school. How would you describe the same event to each of these audiences? Think about the words, level of detail, and tone you would use for each one.



Best Friend

Casual, funny, full of slang. You'd exaggerate for effect and skip formal details.



Parents

More serious, reassuring. You'd focus on your safety and leave out anything that might worry them.



Teacher

Respectful, clear, organized. You'd use complete sentences and appropriate vocabulary.



Five-Year-Old

Simple words, short sentences, relatable comparisons. You'd make it easy and non-scary.



The Police

Precise, factual, formal. You'd focus on times, locations, and observable facts only.

The event is identical — but your writing changes completely based on who is reading.

Guided Practice

Who Is Speaking? Who Is Reading?

Read each short paragraph your teacher provides. For each one, work through the two key questions below. Be ready to share your answers with the class and justify your thinking using specific words or phrases from the text as evidence.

1

Question 1: Who Is Speaking?

What clues tell you about the narrator or speaker? Look at word choice, tone, and attitude. Is the voice formal or informal? Young or experienced? Emotional or detached?

2

Question 2: Who Is the Audience?

Who does this text seem written for? Think about the vocabulary level, the details included, and the assumptions the writer makes about what the reader already knows.

 **Tip: Always point to specific words or phrases in the text to support your answer. Evidence makes your analysis stronger.**

Writing Activity

Same Story, Three Voices

The scenario: *You just won one million dollars.*

Write one sentence sharing the news with each of the three audiences below. Focus on how your voice, word choice, and tone shift naturally depending on who you are writing for. There are no wrong answers — just notice the differences!

To Your Best Friend

Be yourself. Use the language you'd normally use in a text message or conversation. Have fun with it!

To Your Grandmother

Consider your relationship. What tone would feel respectful, warm, and easy for her to understand?

To the School Principal

Think formal. What language and tone would be appropriate in a school, professional context?

Reflection: After writing all three, look back. How did your voice change? What specific word choices are different?

Voice and Audience Work Together

Two Questions Every Writer Asks

Who am I? — This shapes your Voice. Your identity, personality, attitude, and relationship to the topic all come through in how you write.

Who am I writing for? — This shapes your awareness of Audience. Their expectations, background, and needs guide every decision you make.

How They Connect

Voice and Audience are not separate choices — they are deeply connected. A playful, informal voice works perfectly for a friend but would seem disrespectful in a formal letter. A clinical, detached voice suits a report but feels cold in a personal narrative.

Your answers to these two questions shape every sentence you write.



Real-World Application

The Cambridge Connection

In Cambridge English writing assessments, students are always given information about the context of their writing task. Understanding Voice and Audience is what allows you to respond to that context with skill and confidence.

Who is speaking?

Before you write, establish your Voice. Are you a student writing a letter? A traveler writing a review? Your role shapes your tone and word choices.

Who is reading?

Identify your Audience before you begin. A school magazine and a formal report demand completely different approaches — even if the topic is the same.

Understanding Voice and Audience helps you make better writing choices in every genre — narrative, discursive, descriptive, and more.



Key Strategies

The Writer's Toolbox

Strong writers don't just start writing — they plan first. Before you put pen to paper on any task, run through these four essential questions. They will help you make confident, purposeful choices about every word you write.

01

Who is telling this story?

Identify the narrator or speaker. What is their role, relationship to events, and identity?

03

Who will read this?

Define your Audience clearly. Age, relationship to the writer, and purpose for reading all matter.

02

How should this narrator sound?

Decide on the Voice. Should it be warm, formal, humorous, serious, young, authoritative?

04

What will that audience expect?

Consider vocabulary level, tone, level of detail, and the assumptions you can safely make.

End of Lesson

Exit Ticket

Answer the following three questions in complete sentences on your exit slip. Your responses should demonstrate your understanding of today's key concepts. Write clearly and use examples where possible.

Question 1

What is Voice? Define Voice in your own words. What does it mean for a piece of writing to have a distinct voice?

Question 2

What is Audience? Define Audience in your own words. Why does knowing your audience matter before you begin writing?

Question 3

Make a connection. Explain *one specific way* your writing would change when writing to a friend instead of writing to a teacher. Give a concrete example if you can.

Coming Up Next

Looking Ahead — Day 2

Great work today! You've taken your first steps into the VARP framework by mastering Voice and Audience. Tomorrow, we complete the picture.

Register

What level of formality does your writing need? We'll explore the spectrum from casual to formal and learn when to use each.

Purpose

Why are you writing? To inform? To persuade? To entertain? Purpose drives every writing decision you make.

VARP Complete

Once all four elements come together, we'll begin applying the full framework to our Narrative Writing unit tasks.

 Homework reminder: Notice Voice and Audience in something you read tonight — a text message, a book, a website. Come ready to share what you noticed!