

## How can you develop the skill of classifying texts?

Classifying means putting things into categories. As you read a variety of texts, it is helpful to classify them according to type, or genre. Understanding the genre will help you anticipate common literary devices the writer will use. Then you will be able to better comprehend what you are reading. Use the following strategies to help you classify a text.

**Step 1:** Classify the text as a work of literature or informational text.

**Step 2:** Classify the text as a genre of literature or informational text.

## **Step 1:** Classify the text as a work of literature or informational text.

Literature or literary texts are works of fiction. They include short stories, poetry, drama, and novels. Literary texts often

- focus on narrative, or a series of events
- describe characters
- use emotionally-charged language and figurative language primarily to convey emotions
- have creative structures

## **Step 1:** Classify the text as a work of literature or informational text.

Informational text is nonfiction. This includes essays, biographies and autobiographies, historical accounts, and articles. Informational text often

- focuses on facts or events
- uses logical organizational patterns (comparison/contrast, cause/effect, steps in a process)
- uses figurative language primarily to communicate ideas
- presents an argument

Informational types of texts are sometimes referred to as literary nonfiction.

## Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

**Directions:** Classify the following passage as a work of literature or informational text.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
They that had fought so well  
Came thro' the jaws of Death  
Back from the mouth of Hell,  
All that was left of them,  
Left of six hundred.

# Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

Response: This is a work of literature.

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Cannon behind them  
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Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
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## Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

**Directions:** Classify the following passage as a work of fiction or nonfiction.

Owens returned to the U.S. a hero, but after the commotion died down, he was still a black man in 1930s America. Less than a year after the Olympics, unable to find a job with both dignity and a paycheck big enough to pay his college tuition, he had to lower himself to racing exhibitions against horses three times a week.

## Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

Response: This is a work of informational text.

Owens returned to the U.S. a hero, but after the commotion died down, he was still a black man in 1930s America. Less than a year after the Olympics, unable to find a job with both dignity and a paycheck big enough to pay his college tuition, he had to lower himself to racing exhibitions against horses three times a week.

# Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

**Step 2:** Classify the text as a genre of literature or informational text.

Once you have identified a text as literature or informational text, you can then more specifically categorize the work. The chart on the following screens show common genres of literature and informational text.



# Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

Literary Genres	Characteristics
Myth	Legends that explain human behavior and natural phenomena; often contain gods and goddesses
Historical fiction	Imaginative stories with fictional characters and events in a historical setting; may be based upon real events
Poetry	Brief, intense, and patterned; communicates intense emotion; uses imagery
Drama	Stories meant to be read orally or performed for an audience

# Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

**Directions:** Fill in the chart with other examples of literary genres.

Literary Genres	Characteristics

# Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

Informational/ Literary Nonfiction Genres	Characteristics
Autobiography	Story of a person's life written by that person
Biography	Story of a person's life written by another person
Articles	Published work that communicates information about a topic; may contain narrative along with facts
Essays	Short composition that reflects the author's outlook or point of view; often of a persuasive nature

# Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

**Directions:** Fill in the chart with other examples of informational genres.

Informational/ Literary Nonfiction Genres	Characteristics

Informational text (literary nonfiction) can be further classified as a primary or secondary source.

A **primary source** provides a first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation. They are created by witnesses of historical events or people directly involved in the issues they are writing about.

A **secondary source** is a record about a topic or event written by someone who did not witness or experience the events first-hand.

**Directions:** Classify the following as a primary or secondary source.

1. A journal kept by a soldier during World War II
2. An essay about Oscar Schindler, who saved hundreds of Jews from the Holocaust
3. A newspaper article about Medal of Honor recipients
4. Letters written by Abigail Adams to her husband

# Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

**Directions:** Classify the following as a primary or secondary source.

1. A journal kept by a soldier during World War II **primary source**
2. An essay about Oscar Schindler, who saved hundreds of Jews from the Holocaust **secondary source**
3. A newspaper article about Medal of Honor recipients **secondary source**
4. Letters written by Abigail Adams to her husband **primary source**

**Directions:** Read the following excerpt and classify it as literature or literary nonfiction. Then identify the genre. Be prepared to explain your answer.

I had never been in such an untenable, completely bizarre situation.

The night had started easy, ridiculously easy, and I should have taken warning from the ease. Generally, when running dogs and sleds, a good moment or two will be followed by eight or nine hours of panic and disaster. It was early on in training Cookie's pups. They were already trained, knew how to run, where to run, when to run and were having a ball.

*Gary Paulsen describing a night of dog sledding*



Response: This is literary nonfiction. Because it is written in first-person, it is autobiography.

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*Gary Paulsen describing a night of dog sledding*

## Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

**Directions:** Read the following excerpt and classify it as literature or literary nonfiction. Then identify the genre. Be prepared to explain your answer.

For three days after parting from his companions of the Round Table, Sir Bors rode through the forest ways alone. And at evening on the third day he came to a tall, strong-built tower rising dark against the sunset, in the midst of a clearing. He beat upon the deep arched gate, to ask for a night's lodging, and was welcomed in.

## Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

Response: This is literature. It is a traditional adventure story.

For three days after parting from his companions of the Round Table, Sir Bors rode through the forest ways alone. And at evening on the third day he came to a tall, strong-built tower rising dark against the sunset, in the midst of a clearing. He beat upon the deep arched gate, to ask for a night's lodging, and was welcomed in.

## Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

**Directions:** Read the following excerpt and classify it as literature or literary nonfiction. Then identify the genre. Be prepared to explain your answer.

ELIZABETH: The first lady surgeon in the United States.  
No. I want to be the first—in the entire world!

NARRATOR ONE: The first—

NARRATOR TWO: In the world.

NARRATOR THREE: (*turns*) CRAZY! (NARRATORS  
*confer.*)

NARRATOR ONE: Not practical.

NARRATOR TWO: (*authoritatively*) A well brought up lady  
cannot be a doctor.

## Classifying Texts

Cluster 1 page 14

Response: This is literature. It is a drama because characters speak lines of dialogue.

ELIZABETH: The first lady surgeon in the United States.  
No. I want to be the first—in the entire world!

NARRATOR ONE: The first—

NARRATOR TWO: In the world.

NARRATOR THREE: (*turns*). CRAZY! (NARRATORS  
*confer.*)

NARRATOR ONE: Not practical.

NARRATOR TWO: (*authoritatively*). A well brought up lady  
cannot be a doctor.

**Directions:** Read the following excerpt and classify it as literature or literary nonfiction. Then identify the genre. Be prepared to explain your answer.

In this solemn hour it is a consolation to recall and to dwell upon our repeated efforts for peace. All have been ill-starred, but all have been faithful and sincere. This is of the highest moral value—and not only moral value, but practical value—at the present time, . . . Outside, the storms of war may blow and the lands may be lashed with the fury of its gales, but in our own hearts this Sunday morning there is peace. Our hands may be active, but our consciences are at rest.

*War Speech, by Winston Churchill, September 3, 1939*

Response: This is literary nonfiction. It is a speech and is also considered a primary source about World War II.

In this solemn hour it is a consolation to recall and to dwell upon our repeated efforts for peace. All have been ill-starred, but all have been faithful and sincere. This is of the highest moral value—and not only moral value, but practical value—at the present time, . . . Outside, the storms of war may blow and the lands may be lashed with the fury of its gales, but in our own hearts this Sunday morning there is peace. Our hands may be active, but our consciences are at rest.

*War Speech, by Winston Churchill, September 3, 1939*