

3 Constructing a narrative account

This unit will help you to develop your structure when writing a narrative account. Good answers to this type of question require a particular structural format.

The skills you will build are to:

- select which events to include
- choose what details to add about events
- analyse the links between events.

In the exam, you will be asked to tackle questions such as the one below. This unit will prepare you to write your own response to this type of question.

Exam-style question

Write a narrative account analysing the growth of tension over Cuba in the years 1959–61.

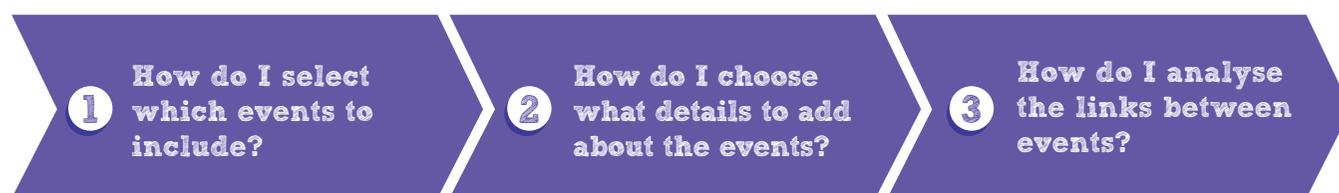
You may use the following in your answer:

- Cuban government seized land owned by foreigners, 1959
- the 'Bay of Pigs' incident.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(8 marks)

The three key questions in the **skills boosts** will help you to decide what information to include in your narrative account answers.



Read this student plan for the exam-style question on page 21.

Beginning:

Batista overthrown by Castro in the Cuban Revolution, 1959.

Batista was seen as corrupt, he kept political prisoners.

Castro seized all foreign-owned land.

Increased tension as USA was heavily economically invested in Cuba – bought sugar, owned oil refineries and railways.

Middle:

Castro started to develop relations with Khrushchev and the Soviet Union – Soviets would buy Cuban sugar.

Kennedy, new American president, was worried about a communist ally so close to the USA.

Kennedy ordered the CIA to train Cuban exiles to launch a revolution to overthrow Castro.

'Bay of Pigs' invasion.

End/Outcome:

Failed – only 1,400 exiles against 20,000 Cuban government soldiers.

People of Cuba did not support the exiles, they backed Castro.

Khrushchev said communism was popular, which USA did not like.

Khrushchev said USA was acting in the way it criticised the Soviets for doing in Eastern Europe, this was embarrassing for the USA.

Khrushchev used Kennedy's failure over the 'Bay of Pigs' at the Vienna Summit when discussing the Berlin Crisis.

Castro had fears the Americans would try to overthrow him again.

Castro asked for help from Khrushchev.

Khrushchev sent missiles to defend Cuba – led to Missile Crisis.

- 1 a Underline A where the student raises points about tension.
 b Cross out ~~eat~~ information that does not address the question of tension.
- 2 Draw  an arrow beneath one of the statements below to show how well you think the student's plan shows a sequence.

<p>The answer does not show a correct sequence of events.</p>	<p>The answer shows some links between events showing some sequence.</p>	<p>Most events are linked together showing a good sequence.</p>	<p>All the events are linked together showing a strong and clear sequence.</p>

The Cuban Missile Crisis

This unit uses the theme of the Cuban Missile Crisis to build your skills in constructing a narrative account. If you need to review your knowledge of this theme, work through these pages.

- 1 Tick which of the following were reasons why the Americans were interested in what happened in Cuba.

A Cuba was only 90 miles from the coast of Florida.

B The Long Telegram was written in Cuba.

C American companies owned many of Cuba's industries like oil refineries and railways.

- 2 Complete  the following sentences.

a The American government would not provide economic aid to Cuba unless it followed guidelines outlined by the

b In February 1960, Castro made an agreement with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev agreed to buy Cuban and provide He agreed secretly that Cuba would receive from the Soviet Union.

c In January 1961, in response to the growing ties between Cuba and the Soviet Union, President broke off

- 3 Tick which of the following were reasons why the 'Bay of Pigs' invasion failed.

A The Cuban exiles were too well-trained.

B The USA could not send support as they wanted the attack to be seen as a Cuban effort to get rid of Castro.

C The Cuban exiles had the support of the people of Cuba.

D Castro's government found out about the invasion and had 20,000 soldiers waiting.

E Khrushchev had sent Warsaw Pact troops to protect Castro.

Remember this?

4 Read the list of consequences of the 'Bay of Pigs' invasion below.

- A It damaged Kennedy's reputation going into the Vienna Summit to try to resolve the Berlin Crisis.
- B Khrushchev could accuse the USA of being hypocritical, as the USA criticised the Soviet Union for meddling in independent countries.
- C The support of the people of Cuba for Castro made communism look popular and embarrassed the West.
- D Khrushchev provided arms to Cuba to defend against any future invasion.
- E The agreement after the invasion to place Soviet weapons on Cuba created a direct threat to the USA.

a Highlight  consequences for relations between the USA and the Soviet Union.

b Underline  consequences for relations between the Soviet Union and Cuba.

5 Put the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis in chronological order. 

Event	Order (1–7)
A Soviet ships turned around when they reached the blockade.	
B Kennedy called ExComm to discuss how the USA should react to the crisis.	
C Khrushchev sent a telegram saying he would remove the missiles from Cuba if Kennedy removed missiles from Turkey.	
D Kennedy set up a naval blockade of Cuba.	
E Khrushchev sent a telegram saying he would remove the missiles if the USA promised not to invade Cuba.	
F Kennedy ignored the second telegram but agreed to the terms of the first.	
G Robert Kennedy negotiated a secret deal with the Soviet Union, which meant that the USA would remove missiles from Turkey in secret.	

6 Can you work out the consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis based on the descriptions below? Complete  the table.

Consequence	Description
A	His handling of the crisis was seen as weak and Soviet hardliners felt they had been forced into a humiliating withdrawal.
B	It was signed in 1968 to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.
C	Both sides realised relations had to improve to prevent nuclear war.
D	It was set up in June 1963 to provide easier and better communication between Washington and Moscow.
E	It was signed in August 1963 to prohibit testing of nuclear weapons in space, underwater and in the atmosphere.
F	It was signed in 1967 to prevent space being used for military purposes.

1 How do I select which events to include?

A narrative account requires precisely selected material. Events need to be selected based only on what the question is asking. Some events, even within the correct timeframe, can be irrelevant and so will not be credited.

Read the exam-style question below. To keep your answer relevant, the first step is to identify:

- the timeframe
- the focus/topic of the question.

Exam-style question

Write a narrative account analysing the growth of tension over Cuba in the years 1959–61.

You may use the following in your answer:

- Cuban government seized land owned by foreigners, 1959
- the ‘Bay of Pigs’ incident.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(8 marks)

1 What is the timeframe of the question? 

2 What is the question focus? 

All the points you discuss in an answer need to be within these dates and directly related to the question focus.

3 Look at events A–F in the table below. All are within the timeframe of the question, but not all are relevant.

- a Tick  events that are relevant to the question.
- b For each event, explain  why it is or is not relevant.

Event	Relevant? 	Why is it relevant or not relevant?
A The USA broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba.		
B The Cuban Revolution took place because Batista’s regime was corrupt and unpopular.		
C The ‘Bay of Pigs’ invasion failed as the exiles had little military experience.		
D Castro made a deal with the Soviet Union that said the Soviets would buy Cuban sugar.		
E Castro seized land owned by foreigners.		
F The ‘Bay of Pigs’ incident humiliated Kennedy.		

2 How do I choose what details to add about the events?

Selecting relevant detail is vital to make sure your answers stay focused on the question and do not become narrative for the sake of narrative.

Read the following exam-style question.

Exam-style question

Write a narrative account analysing the growth of tension over Cuba in the years 1959–61.

The detail to support your events must be related to the question focus and show links between them. Don't simply write a collection of events in a sequence!

The following student answer is an example of good supporting detail – it shows links between events and is directly linked to the question focus.

The failure of the 'Bay of Pigs' invasion humiliated the USA as it had criticised the Soviets for building an empire in Eastern Europe and for taking strong action against independent nations, for example Hungary in 1956, and now it was seen as doing the same in Cuba.

1 The plan below was written by a student to answer the exam-style question above. The evidence provided by them is not relevant. For each event:

- a select  replacement evidence from suggestions A–E in the list below
- b explain  why this evidence is better.

Event	Evidence	A, B, C, D or E?	Why is this evidence better?
<i>Castro seized land owned by foreigners.</i>	<i>Castro provided compensation to the previous owners.</i>		
<i>The Cuban exiles in the 'Bay of Pigs' invasion were trained by the CIA.</i>	<i>The volunteers had little military experience and were no match for Castro's revolutionary army.</i>		
<i>Khrushchev announced the Soviets would send arms to Cuba.</i>	<i>Khrushchev said that these weapons were not offensive.</i>		

- A This infuriated the USA as it had so much economically invested in Cuba.
- B The USA and the Soviet Union were both concerned about the Berlin Crisis.
- C Soviet missiles on Cuba would be seen as a threat by the USA.
- D Plans for the CIA to train Cuban exiles were made while Eisenhower was still president.
- E CIA involvement made Castro fear the USA wanted to get rid of him.

3 How do I analyse the links between events?

In your narrative account answers, it is important that you do not treat your events as isolated incidents; you need to show how and why they link together.

You can show links in several ways:

- Explain how events led from one to another – cause and consequence.
- Explain more subtle consequences, for example, impacts on relations.
- Use grammar and sentence starters such as: ‘This meant that ...’, ‘... as a result ...’.

Read the following exam-style question.

Exam-style question

Write a narrative account analysing the key events leading to the placement of Soviet missiles on Cuba.

You may use the following in your answer:

- the Cuban Revolution
- the ‘Bay of Pigs’ incident.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(8 marks)

Look at the student answer below. The highlighted text shows how events could effectively be linked together. This answer leaves the student in a good place to discuss the deal made between Khrushchev and Castro and then build up to the ‘Bay of Pigs’ incident.

The Cuban Revolution was the first event that led to the placement of Soviet missiles on Cuba; Castro took power and seized land owned by foreign nationals. This increased tension with the USA, which had heavily invested in Cuban industry, and Eisenhower responded with economic sanctions such as reducing the amount of Cuban sugar purchased by the USA. In the face of this diplomatic isolation, Castro developed good working relations with Khrushchev and the Soviet Union. Kennedy was worried about having a communist neighbour on the doorstep of the USA as a result of this.

- 1 The following student answer to the same exam-style question contains two points that could be linked in an answer.

Castro began appointing communists in his government and made an agreement with the Soviet Union. The CIA trained Cuban exiles to remove Castro.

Write  a sentence to link the two events together.

- 2 This extract from a student answer is a linking sentence between two events. Work out  the two events based on the link.

... This pushed Cuba even more closely to the Soviet Union as they feared another US attack. To show his support for his new communist ally, Khrushchev ...

Event 1:

Event 2:

Sample response

This page will test your ability to identify the skills covered in this unit to construct a narrative account.

Read the following exam-style question and the student answer.

Exam-style question

Write a narrative account analysing the growth of tension over Cuba in the years 1959–61.

You may use the following in your answer:

- Cuban government seized land owned by foreigners, 1959
- the 'Bay of Pigs' incident.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(8 marks)

Tension over Cuba grew in the years 1959–61, initially because of the Cuban Revolution. Castro seized land owned by foreigners shortly after taking power. This increased tension as the USA was a big investor in the Cuban economy, owning industries such as railways. Castro then increased tensions further by appointing communists to his government and then accepting economic aid from the Soviet Union, which at this time was in dispute with the USA over the refugee crisis in Berlin. This tension led to the USA reducing the amount of sugar it purchased from Cuba, before breaking off diplomatic relations altogether in January 1961.

Furious at having a communist ally just 90 miles away from the US coast, the new US president, Kennedy, gave his support to a plan written by Eisenhower and the CIA to overthrow Castro, which when carried out became known as the 'Bay of Pigs' incident. However, tensions were raised massively when the attempted revolution failed. Kennedy was humiliated because it looked like communism was popular, as the Cubans supported Castro. Kennedy was also made to look like an aggressor and hypocrite as he criticised Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe. Castro feared that the USA would attack again and asked Khrushchev for help. Khrushchev then increased tensions further by announcing he would send arms to Cuba in September 1961. The Cuban Missile Crisis then took place, which was the closest the world had come to nuclear war during the Cold War. It was eventually won by the USA as the Soviets backed down and removed their missiles from Cuba.

- Circle  each relevant event identified in the student answer.
 - Underline  each piece of relevant evidence used about each event.
 - Highlight  the links made between points.
 - Cross out  the sentences that go off in another direction and are not relevant to the question.

Your turn!

Using the skills you have developed over the course of this unit, answer the following exam-style question.

Exam-style question

Write a narrative account analysing the key events of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

You may use the following in your answer:

- the discovery of Soviet missiles on Cuba
- Kennedy's blockade of Cuba.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(8 marks)

- 1 Complete  the table to plan your answer to this exam-style question. Use the list of events (A–F below) to help – you will need to decide which of the events are relevant and which are not.

Remember: In order to be relevant, events must be:

- within the timeframe of the question
- linked to the question focus.

A The decision to blockade Cuba

D The discovery of missiles on Cuba

B The 'Bay of Pigs' invasion

E Soviet ships turned around

C Khrushchev's telegrams

F The Cuban Revolution

Event	Evidence	Link to the next event or outcome

- 2 Write  a complete answer on a separate piece of paper.

Review your skills

Check up

Review your response to the exam-style question on page 29. Tick ✓ the column to show how well you think you have done each of the following.

	Had a go ✓	Nearly there ✓	Got it! ✓
selected relevant events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
chosen relevant details to support my events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
analysed the linkage between events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Look over all of your work in this unit. Note down ✎ the three most important things to remember about constructing a narrative account.

- 1
- 2
- 3

Need more practice?

On separate paper, plan and write ✎ your response to the exam-style question below.

Exam-style question

Write a narrative account analysing the main events in 1989 leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

You may use the following in your answer:

- revolution in Poland
- Hungary opening the border with Austria.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(8 marks)

How confident do you feel about each of these **skills**? Colour ✎ in the bars.

1 How do I select which events to include?

2 How do I choose what details to add about the events?

3 How do I analyse the links between events?