

REPRESENTING THE ARTIST

Biography and narrative

A documentary biography has the same intent in trying to explore someone's life objectively and again, it creates a story by selecting parts of someone's life and organising these into a narrative. In a coherent narrative only those parts that develop the story are necessary. There is a sense of causation that is that one thing happens to lead to another and influence the outcome. The main character is the person being studied and the setting is the places he/she has been.



Student activity:

Most biographies tend to adhere to certain conventions. They like to follow a chronological pattern from childhood to fame, often a variation of the hero's journey. They try to suggest that there was always something about that person that distinguished him/her from others. Consider whether *Paul Kelly: Stories of Me* responds to all or any of the biographical elements listed below.

Biography	Narrative	<i>Paul Kelly: Stories of Me</i>
Focuses on a person	Focuses on a character	Focuses on Paul Kelly
We find out about that person from the way others speak about him/her	The other characters are used to illustrate aspects of the protagonist's personality	
Mentors and other influences such as defining events are described and explained		
Different places are seen as influences on the person	The setting and the character's relationship to the setting reflects an aspect of the character.	
The trials faced by the person and the way they are overcome become the focus of an examination of the power of the person	The plot follows a series of complications and resolutions which further illustrate aspects of the character	
Only those events that lead to a change in the person are explored	All the actions lead to a result (cause and effect)	
The significance of the person and importance of contribution is analysed and appraised	Actions build to a climax, a turning point which then resolves into some kind of solution	

Bringing it all together:

- To what extent is *Paul Kelly: Stories of Me* a biography and to what extent is it a narrative?
- What do you think are the differences between stories and real life?