

Worksheet 1: The Sphinx and the Riddles Twist Endings

'Control, it's time to come clean. Midas is part of the Federation's training program... Mike and the others are all F100s...Sorry I couldn't tell you. It would have affected the way you handled them.'

A **plot twist** is an unexpected change in the plot of a text. When this occurs near the end of a story, it is known as a **twist ending**. In *The Sphinx and the Riddles*, we learn that the seemingly 'lost' characters are actually expendable robots used as part of a training exercise. This type of twist ending is known as '**Deus ex machina**' (Latin for 'God out of the machine') meaning that characters or events are revealed as artificial or improbable thus enabling a 'happy ending'. Other types of literary devices used to present twist endings include:

- ◆ **Discovery (or Anagnorisis)** is when a main character discovers their own or another character's true identity e.g. in *Shrek*, Princess Fiona discovers that she is actually an ogress once the spell on her is broken.
- ◆ **Flashback (or analepsis)** offers a sudden insight into past events enabling a mystery to be solved or the true reason for a character's actions to be revealed e.g. in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, a supposed 'villain', Severus Snape, protects Harry because he had once been in love with Harry's mother.
- ◆ An **unreliable narrator** twists the ending by revealing that the story has been manipulated in some way e.g. in *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy awakes after her adventure and we realise that the characters she met in Oz are people she actually knows in her real life revealing that it was 'all a dream'.
- ◆ **Peripeteia** is a sudden reversal of a character's fortune stemming naturally from their circumstances e.g. in *Beauty and the Beast*, Belle falls in love with Beast and because of this, breaks the spell on him turning him back into a handsome prince.
- ◆ **Poetic justice** ultimately rewards goodness and punishes evil in a way significant to the plot e.g. the stepsisters in *Cinderella* not fitting the glass slipper.
- ◆ **Chekhov's gun** refers to the significance of a character or plot element not being revealed until the end e.g. in *Scooby Doo* movies, seemingly harmless characters are introduced early in the stories but later revealed as the troublemaker all along.

Task 1: Compose a narrative text that has a twist ending. Remember to plan and draft your text so you have a clear direction of what the 'twist' will be.

Extension Activity:

- '*All that glistens is not gold*' is a proverb used in *The Sphinx and the Riddles*. A proverb is a well-known saying that reflects basic truths about life. Proverbs can be used to support an opinion in an argument text e.g. '*It's better to be safe than sorry*' could be used to support an argument text about putting seatbelts in buses. Locate some other proverbs that could be used to support an argument and try to include them in the argument texts you compose.