

Section 1: Teaching Writing

Introduction

This publication is designed as a practical guide; a resource book for classroom practitioners. It is intended to support teachers of Key Stage 2 classes and early Key Stage 3 classes in improving the quality of their pupils' written outcomes. It offers a practical, realistic response to the ongoing concerns outlined by Ofsted regarding how to extend pupils' vocabulary and how to assist them to develop the proficiency to write high-quality extended pieces. The theoretical approach outlined has, in the main, been shaped, over time, through active 'hands-on' work in the classroom. Recent literature on this subject has also been digested and considered. The proof of the impact of the model presented can be seen in the twenty-five high-quality examples of pupils' writing that populate this book.

The publication is divided into three sections.

The first focuses on pedagogy. How do teachers set about teaching pupils to write well? What kinds of teaching approaches do they use? What methods and strategies have the greatest impact and result in the highest rates of pupil progression? How do they enable children to view writing as something enjoyable – an activity they actually want to do, rather than one they feel compelled to do? What are the cultural features of a successful writing classroom? The book draws upon, develops and extends teaching techniques advocated by the Primary Strategy, such as the shared writing model. In addition, reference is made to recent theoretical writing, especially that concerning the ethos of the collaborative writing classroom. Reference is also made to practical strategies contributed by other writers. Some new, original thinking is included and this relates to proven pedagogic strategies that have been tried and tested in the classroom. The intention is to synthesize the best existing ideas, present some fresh perspectives and, above all, offer a range of practical resources and exemplar materials that teachers can utilize 'at the chalkface' in their day-to-day practice. There is a systematic explanation of how a range of related approaches can be combined to create a powerful teaching dynamic that is capable of nurturing even the most underconfident, struggling, reluctant writer.

Section 2 is made up of exemplar units of learning. These represent the planning and the resources that resulted in the outcomes produced by pupils and are offered as guidance models for practitioners. They illustrate, clarify and reinforce the ideas that have been put forward in the opening chapter. Practitioners may wish to adopt them as they are, adapt them to their intended purposes, or use them as guidance when creating their own units of learning relating to these, or other, texts. My deeply held belief is that delivering someone else's planning is always significantly harder than delivering what one has planned and thought through oneself. Hence my message to all colleagues: try to plan your own units of learning, based on the methodology outlined, from a text that you like – one that you believe will inspire and excite the children you teach. One of the features of these units is a series of examples of the literary devices used either by the authors of the texts they are based upon, or those used in the original model texts included in this publication. Corden¹ makes the point that raising children's awareness of the

1 Reading-Writing Connections: the importance of interactive discourse in English in Education 34 (2), 2000

literary techniques used by authors moves them beyond the secretarial aspects of writing to the compositional features.

The third part of the book is intended as a resource-rich guide for the busy practitioner. It will prove a valuable companion, either at the outset, when planning a whole unit of learning containing writing outcomes, or at the day-to-day level, the afternoon or evening before, when preparing for tomorrow's lesson. It contains succinct guidance on the essential characteristics of different styles of writing. The intended purpose for the piece of writing, its distinct stylistic features and the associated conventions of the style under consideration are all clearly outlined. It must be emphasized that it is the job of the teacher to explain, using a range of examples, these characteristic features and facilitate active opportunities for pupils to make sense of them prior to asking for inclusion in their subsequent writing.

For each style a comprehensive range of vocabulary is provided. It is my contention that primary-aged pupils and students in the early stages of secondary school benefit enormously from using different types of 'word mats' – sheets containing a range of vocabulary options that pupils can use at the point of composition. Wouldn't it be easy if all pupils aged seven and over could use a thesaurus correctly and in a time-efficient way? Whilst I am an ardent proponent of thesaurus usage, I believe that for most this will prove a more valuable resource at secondary school. Word mats are a simplistic, basic, 'stripped-down' thesaurus. They work precisely because they are simplified: the pupil's mind is not overwhelmed with too many words on a page and the problem of too many different options from which to choose. There are already sufficient processing demands and issues children need to attend to when they are writing. I am interested by the fact that most Key Stage 2 classrooms have vocabulary displays on walls. Frequently a series of connectives that help to bind a text together are included in this display. Whilst this is helpful to young writers, wouldn't more be achieved if pupils had words closer to hand, right in front of them, as they look down at the page on which they are writing? After all, for the majority of time when one is writing, one looks down, not up!

For all sixteen of the styles considered a wide range of possible sentence starters are provided, along with an extensive series of model texts that can be deconstructed, analyzed and discussed in the classroom. These texts have been contributed by the author and by ten- and eleven-year-old children who were taught using the teaching model prescribed. Mindful of persistent concerns about the performance of boys in writing, a conscious decision was taken to ensure that the majority of the pupil models included were written by boys. Teachers will quickly be able to appreciate how young writers are influenced when creating their own texts by the models they have studied. This demonstrates an important point: children benefit from borrowing ideas from others as they develop their own writing craft. As with all learning, success inspires confidence. This in turn enhances self-belief and stimulates motivation. By emulating quality writing models produced by more mature, experienced writers (or by more competent peers), children are able to create something that reads well, sounds good and instills a satisfaction and pride in their personal achievements. This feeling of pride serves as a powerful future motivator. Tasting success is a crucial milestone on a journey that leads to ever-greater independence, self-efficacy and ongoing improvement.

It is recommended that teachers use the examples in this book, including those created by pupils, in their own classrooms. They are all available in electronic form on the accompanying CD-rom, so teachers can print and display them on flipcharts and whiteboards. Reading and discussing the merits of the writing of a peer delivers an uncompromising message to young learners: this writing was composed by someone of my age, therefore I am capable of reaching this standard. It is within the capacity of a child of my age. It is achievable.

It is my view that all books about the art of teaching should contain at least one new big idea. A central thesis proposed here is that the process of deconstructing quality writing examples

in the classroom is equally important as teaching pupils through a process that concentrates on joint construction, with regular opportunities for evaluation of what has been created. Close analysis of a mature, completed quality text, through effective teacher questioning, raises pupils' awareness of the key features implicit within it. Pupils need to see what a really good piece of writing looks like and sounds like early on, as part of a thorough preparatory process that eventually culminates in independent writing. A critical appreciation of the whole, with an emphasis upon highlighting key component parts and being guided to appreciate how the text has been crafted, enables the young, inexperienced writer to understand what will be required when pencil eventually meets paper. So, teaching writing is not simply about generating ideas, facilitating opportunities for pupil talk, planning for writing, using drama techniques and modeling through shared writing. It also involves critical analyses of the end product as part of preparation for writing; considering and reflecting on a completed outcome; knowing what the end of the writing journey might look like. In a nutshell, most children need to be supported to analyze and reflect upon good writing before they can write well themselves. Whilst this is implicitly understood by teachers who bring quality authors to the classroom experience, how many practitioners write for their own classes? What a powerful, collaborative statement is made when the teacher's actions communicate the message: I will never set you a writing task that I haven't already completed myself.

I am conscious of the fact that the approach to teaching writing that is presented is open to a charge of being formulaic. Practitioners may express concern about the prospect of stifling individual creativity and imposing too tightly structured an approach on pupils. They may be concerned about the possibility of pupil dependency on ready-made models. In defence, I would present the evidence of pupil achievement that appear throughout this publication. I would also argue that the overwhelming majority of young learners require a high level of scaffolding that will, over time – as they mature – enable and equip them to make informed creative decisions and experiment according to their own choosing. With few exceptions, most skilled writers are not born; they require nurturing through instruction, guidance and advice. This is not only available from the teacher, but through collaboration with their peers. Put simply, children need to be provided with constant guidance and assistance. This is available through an introduction to the characteristic features of different types of texts from three different origins: those written by a published author, teacher-generated texts and the efforts produced by their peers. The scaffolds provided can gradually be taken away as the foundations become ever more secure. In time personal autonomy as a writer will be enhanced and the need to emulate others will diminish. In the first instance children need help to reach the point where they can make conscious decisions about the vocabulary they use, the sentence structures they choose, the textual organization features they decide upon and the literary techniques they employ.

An overview of a teaching methodology

The approach outlined below has modeling, through the contrasting – but complementary – processes of joint construction and analytical deconstruction, at its core. Reflective, focused talk, facilitated through the creation of a variety of opportunities for pupils to consider the merits of their own writing and that of others, is also central to this process approach. A further important element involves the incorporation of drama techniques into lessons. The different aspects of the methodology are deliberately not presented in any kind of chronological order as their use, or otherwise, is dependent upon the teacher's purpose. They are instead offered as either statements of principle, or strategies and approaches from which teachers can choose.

D) Narrative Unit 4 – *The Wedding Ghost* by Leon Garfield

Duration

Three to four weeks (fifteen to twenty lessons) unit of learning

Outcomes

There will be three written outcomes for this unit:

- **A scripted interview with Jack** – based upon the first half of the story, up to the point that he arrives at the gates of the mansion. (pages 4–38)
- **A descriptive piece of narrative writing designed to create suspense, tension and menace** – based upon the section of the story from when Jack goes through the gates, up until when he kisses the Sleeping Beauty. (pages 38–51)
- **Diary writing** – The diary of the wedding ghost on the day that she is kissed and gets married. (pages 54–64)

The second and third pieces of writing should include examples of the narrative techniques used in the exemplar model texts that appear below. These techniques also appear in Leon Garfield's text. These should be analyzed as the text is read, with the purpose of developing pupils' reading skills, as well as providing them with techniques that can subsequently be used in their own writing.

Characters in the story

Uncle Goodman	An eccentric uncle who drinks rather too much
Mr Goodman	The father of Gillian Goodman, the bride
Mrs Goodman	The mother of Gillian Goodman, the bride
Gillian (Jill) Goodman	The lady who is about to be married (the bride) to Jack Best
Jack Best	The main character in the story. He is about to be married (the groom) to Gillian Goodman as the story opens
A policeman	An officer Jack Best talks to on his way to Holborn and the city
An old sailor man	A cheeky, humorous, but slightly sinister sailor who transports Jack to the destination shown on his map
Charlie	The sailor's grandson
A series of dead bodies	These are everywhere in the Sleeping Beauty's mansion
The Sleeping Beauty	A mysterious, yet beautiful and alluring ghost who casts a spell on Jack

Summary of the plot

- The story begins with the preparations for a wedding.
- Gillian Goodman and Jack Best are about to get married.
- They will get married on a Sunday, at half past twelve in the afternoon.

do this – the story dictated it. There was no room for free will ... and besides, he wanted to! He closed his eyes and prepared his lips. He smiled as he moved even closer. He was just about to ... but then he stopped and pulled away.

If she saw the unkempt ragamuffin who stood before her she would close her eyes and never open them again. Nobody looked less like a prince. Disheveled and filthy, he tortured the mirror. He was a wretch of the very worst kind: physically disgusting and morally degenerate. He delayed. As the doubts, fear and guilt overwhelmed him, he froze.

Task 3 – Write the diary of *The Wedding Ghost* on the day that she is kissed and gets married

Learning intention

We are learning to write a diary entry that includes some of the narrative techniques we have learnt.

Success criteria

Remember to:

- express your feeling of joy at being released from the spell
- include some rhetorical questions
- include at least one example of ellipsis
- include at least one example of either humour or hyperbole
- include another of the narrative techniques we have studied.

What to include

- how happy you are to be released from the spell
- what your existence was like in your endless sleep
- how you felt when you heard Jack inside the palace
- what happened to the others who ventured to the palace
- how you got the map to Jack
- what happened at the wedding service
- your thoughts about Jack's other wife, Jill
- your view of the future.

Model text 3

Today I awoke. At last – my life is renewed. Words cannot express the joy and delight of this, my wedding day. I know it may have appeared a rather shadowy, insubstantial affair, but to me it was everything. Trapped in the land of endless dreams, I waited impatiently for my future husband. When would he discover me? How long would I be waiting for him? Tortured by grief and frustration, my heart sent messages to him: find me; awaken me; be with me; love me! Longing for release, I waited as the cruel centuries passed. Imagine my elation now – released from the enduring spell of slumber. At last I have been set free.

There were countless times when I thought that Lady Hope had turned her back on me and skulked away. I could only cling to the uncertainty of a story that had to be completed. In my heart I knew he would come – eventually. It was only a matter of time ... but such a long, long time.

I heard him coming up the stairs. My excitement was tempered with caution: so many others have arrived, but none have completed the task. They all hesitated, uncertain, guilty and fearful.

Slinking away, they condemned themselves to a dusty death. Unknowingly, they perished, unaware of the terms of the spell and the necessity of following the story exactly as it was written. My boyfriends have been numerous, you see. They have travelled all this way to court me, but failed to show me proper respect. Leaving without a tiny kiss would have dishonoured my reputation, so I made sure that they were unable to find the path back. It vanished into the vegetation. They were trapped here – forever! How did they die? Most starved; some went mad. The dust of death covers them now, like a shroud at a human funeral.

I expect you're wondering about the map. I posted that, along with all the other maps (the ones that reached my previous suitors), before the spell was cast. The dwarves delivered them all. Those immortal little friends really have been so helpful. I must invite them over again ... it's some time since we last shared supper.

Having all my friends at the cathedral for the wedding was so wonderful. Yes, I know that they were rather noisy with all their shrieking and screaming, but that's just how spirits celebrate. They always destroy cathedrals at weddings – that's their way! Every spirit I've spoken to has said that they had a whale of a time! It was a cracking setting and they had a scream.

I am not jealous of his other bride ... what's her name? Jane? Jenny? Jill, that's it. After all, she is his wife in the human world. As I do not exist in that dimension, she poses no threat to me. In the spirit world, the world of shadows, Jack and I are inseparable. The taste of toast and honey will never leave his lips. Our love is as eternal as the stars above us. My pleasure fills the entire universe. It is as if death has started all over again.

Narrative techniques used in the exemplar texts

1) *Opening a story, a chapter or a paragraph with a short, dramatic sentence*

Examples: interview

- I can't explain that really.
- I couldn't!
- It was foggy.

Examples: descriptive narrative

- Momentarily he paused.
- Someone was there.

Examples: diary

- Today I awoke.

2) *Using a short sentence elsewhere in the text*

Examples: interview

- All was going well.
- It was for Jack alone.
- What a strange thing to do!
- I was a little lost.

Examples: descriptive narrative

- It shifted easily.
- It was quiet everywhere.

Persuasive/Opinionative writing (expressing a point of view) – word mat

Phrases using 'that'

- I am convinced that
- I believe that
- I think that
- It appears that
- It can be clearly stated that
- It has been argued that
- It is obvious that
- It seems to me that
- It is clear that
- It strikes me that
- Some say that
- There are those who argue that
- There is no doubt that (There can be no doubt that)
- This shows that
- This view is supported by the fact that

Rhetorical questions

- Does anyone really believe that ...?
- Don't you think ...?
- How can anyone believe this to be true?
- Is it any wonder that ...?
- Isn't it clear that ...?



- Isn't it the case that ...?

Other phrases with which to start a sentence

- As everyone knows
- As I see it
- Clearly
- In my opinion
- Inevitably
- Let's look at the facts
- My own view is
- Obviously

Initial phrases often followed by a comma

- Firstly/Secondly/Thirdly
- For example,
- Furthermore,
- In addition,
- In fact,
- Moreover,
- Surely

Phrases to use when providing evidence

- For example
- I cite, as an example
- I would draw your attention to
- I would refer to
- My evidence to support this is



- The evidence clearly supports

Phrases with which to finish

- Finally,
- In conclusion,
- In summary,
- It is my sincere belief that
- My last point is
- My final point is
- On the basis of the evidence presented
- On balance
- Overall
- Some will disagree because
- The evidence presented supports the view that
- To conclude I would like to say

