FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF teach PRIMARY

Teach Reading & Writing

BRILLIANT IDEAS FOR LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Words and pictures

TERRY DEARY
JILL MURPHY
HARRY HILL
ANNE FINE
BRIAN MOSES

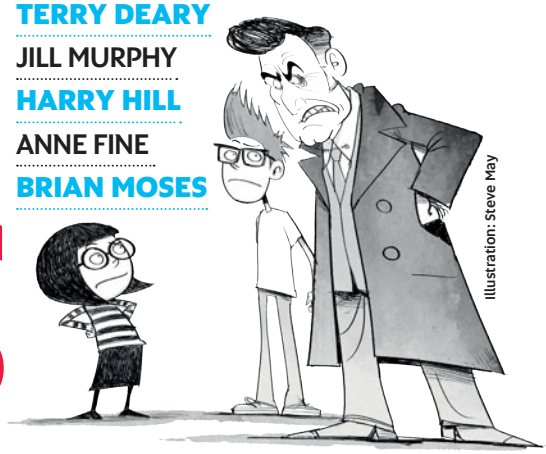

Illustration: Steve May

SPELLING TIPS THAT WORK

What to do when kids don't 'get it'

CHRIS RIDDELL

"We need libraries more than ever"

Michael Rosen
FANTASTIC FREE POETRY RESOURCES!

How to reach greater depth in non-fiction

TEACH PIE CORBETT'S LUNAR ADVENTURE

Main illustration © Chris Riddell, MacMillan Children's Books

teach PRIMARY BOOK AWARDS

REVEALED: OUR 27 WINNING BOOKS OF 2019

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FirstNews EDUCATION

Welcome...

...to another issue of *Teach Reading & Writing* magazine; packed with ideas and strategies to help you and your pupils navigate the wonderful world of literacy with confidence, enthusiasm, and a real spirit of adventure.

Whether you're a newly qualified teacher or a seasoned pedagogue who still remembers focusing on phonics from the first time around, we hope you'll find fresh inspiration within these pages; from Felicity Ferguson's advice on encouraging greater depth writing (p.45) to Rachel Clarke's guidance on teaching grammar through pictures (p.34), we've got the curriculum covered... and much more, besides.

As usual, we've invited some of the nation's favourite authors to share their thoughts about reading, writing, stories and books with us (don't miss Jill Murphy's fascinating reminiscences on p.26, nor Chris Riddell's passionate plea for us to value libraries, p.17) – and as an extra treat, by way of building up a bit of a buzz for this year's National Poetry Day on October 3rd, we've also got some exclusive videos of much-loved poets, including Michael Rosen and Joseph Coelho, reading their own work and talking about it, which we'd love you to share in your classroom – find out more, including how to download free teaching suggestions for all the poems, on pages 62-63.

Finally, we are delighted once again to be able to use these pages to announce the winners of our annual Teach Primary Book Awards, celebrating the very best children's books of 2019 – and featuring our brand-new non-fiction category, judged by the marvellous, ever-curious, Robin Ince. Discover the full list of winners on pages 68-73; every one of which would be a worthy addition to any reading corner.

Happy exploring!
Joe Carter & Helen Mulley

"Words, and pictures"

TERRY DEARY
was never told at school that he had talent.

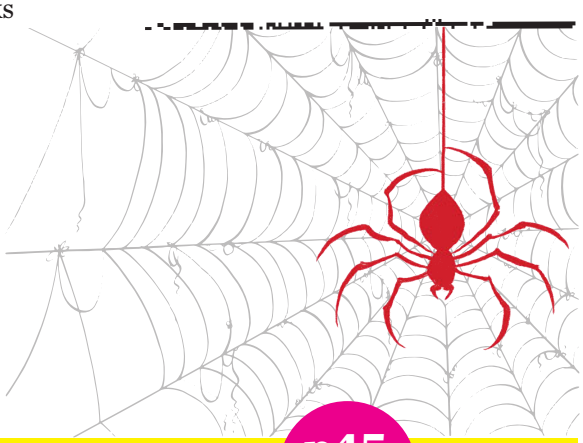
"I don't write for literary children" p6

JILL MURPHY
thinks we need to teach the importance of practice.

"I could always draw myself out of trouble" p26

HARRY HILL
has been writing stories since he was at primary school.

"Making people laugh put me in charge" p38



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WHY WE NEED TO LOVE OUR LIBRARIES

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TEACH GREATER DEPTH WRITING

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"Dylan, Cohen and Jim Morrison were my poets" p42

ANNE FINE started reading at three years old, and hasn't stopped...

"I was very much a library child" p64

Find more literacy resources at teachwire.net!

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New

Read in to Writing

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"I don't write for literary children"

You won't get kids reading by giving them books that say nothing about the life they're actually living, says **Terry Deary**...

I don't remember learning to read, but my parents tell me that I started by decoding the back of a ketchup bottle at breakfast. I'd certainly got the hang of reading by the time began school; most kids did back then, because, honestly, you were stuck if you didn't. This was the early '50s, and there were 52 of us in my class – what were the teachers supposed to do?

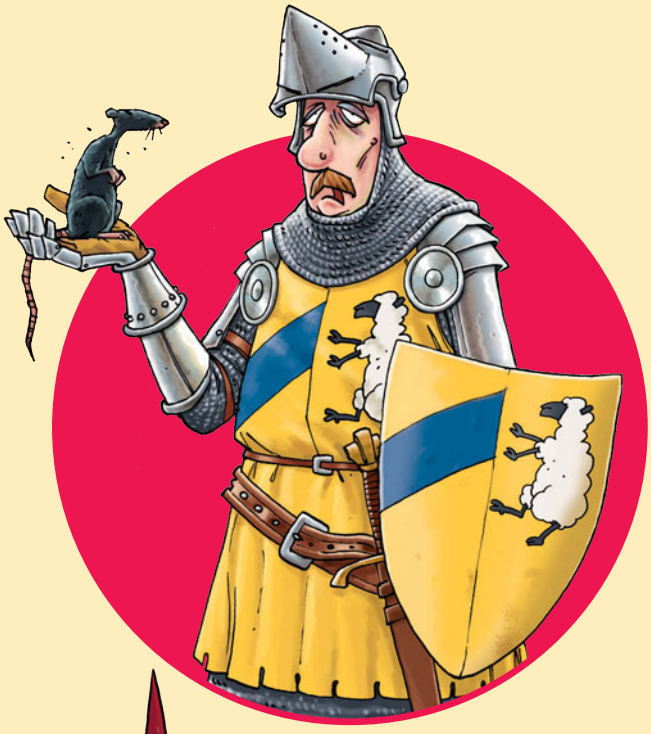
School was workmanlike. We were drilled in handwriting, reading, mental arithmetic and arithmetic. We did times tables. And comprehension tests – one of the most evil inventions in history. They're utterly mindless; either you know the answer or you don't, and if you do, the most it shows is that you've been paying attention. Absolute idiocy. Comprehension tests should be burnt.

By the time we got to juniors, school was all about getting through the 11+. You learnt nothing, except how to succeed at tests; 50 out of the 52 of us passed the year I took it. I remember the envelope dropping through the letterbox, and how pleased my parents were when they opened it, but at the same time, I knew that passing had been expected of me. We had a system at school, whereby at the end of every term you had an exam and a report. You were graded in order, from one to 52. One year I came third, and the comment on the report was, "Terry can do better". That was typical of the schools round our way at that time. Talk about tough love.

I was born in a brutal slum area of Sunderland, and I'd work every Saturday in my dad's butcher's shop from a very young age, but then my parents moved to a better area of the city, primarily for my education. It meant I was having this 'middle class' experience of school, but there was poverty all around me in the evenings and at weekends. We had no books in the house, so I didn't graduate from reading condiments for a long time. I found a couple of titles on a dusty old shelf at primary school that I liked – *The Ladybird Book of British Birds,* and Enid Blyton's *Island of Adventure* – but that was about it. And at the grammar school, we were given books for the sole purpose of being examined on them; texts that were just completely inappropriate for a working class teenager in the north of England. I read *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* at 13, and it meant nothing to me.

And now, by accident, I've ended up in the world of books, of literature. It's not where I belong, and in terms of my life's ambition, I'm a total failure; I wanted to be a country and western singer. But here I am – and actually, coming from a family that's a mixture of Irish and Scottish, I absolutely believe I have a storytelling gene. The first time we were asked to write an essay, at secondary school, the topic was, 'my hobby'. Everyone else wrote something like, "My hobby is stamp collecting. I have 250 stamps and my favourite is..." I loved trainspotting, and I wrote my piece of work as a story. I can still remember how it started, after 60 years: "The train stopped on the bridge, and I looked down into the murky waters of the river Tyne..." I got 17.5 out of 20 for that essay.

And yet the greatest sin, almost unforgivable, was that no one – *no one* – at school said to me, "You have a talent; use it." Because boys in the north don't



"It's not sexist to say that boys, generally, like non-fiction..."

like books. And they definitely don't write them. So that's my audience now. I don't write for literary children; I write for non-readers, for the child on the street. For dyslexic children, who will struggle and struggle to read something if they have the motivation; if it's something they really want or need to know about. It's not sexist to say that boys, generally, like non-fiction – there's research that confirms it. And then schools try and teach reading through fiction, and sigh, and say, "but boys don't like reading"! I've written about 315 books, and about half are fiction; I do get pleasure from writing stories. But the most important person is the reader, always. Which is why I would always say to teachers – you won't get children accessing the curriculum through books they don't enjoy. Let every child read what interests them. And burn any reading schemes; I'll provide the matches.

Terry Deary's Horrible Histories celebrated 25 Horrible Years in 2018 and his spooky new fiction for readers aged 9-12, Wiggott's Wonderful Waxworld: Terror Train, is out now (published by Scholastic).

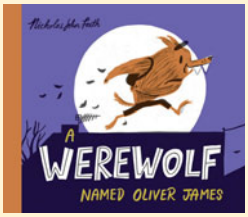
10 BOOKS TO TEACH ON *magical creatures*

From taking care of unicorns to serenading ogres, these fantastical stories will leave you fizzing with lesson ideas

1 FOUNDATION STAGE

A Werewolf Named Oliver James

BY NICHOLAS JOHN FRITH (ALISON GREEN BOOKS)



What's the story?

Suddenly, Oliver James can run faster than a train and leap higher than a building! Could it be something magical is going on? Frith's retro-inspired illustrations create the mood for this good humoured tale that will set imaginations whirring.

Thinking and talking

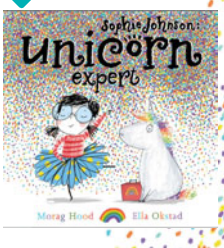
How and when does Oliver realise he's a werewolf? How do other people react to him? What can Oliver do as a werewolf that he couldn't as a boy? Are werewolves real? Why do people make up scary stories, do you think?

Try this...

- Which superpowers would you choose and why? Imagine you're using your powers. What does it feel like? What do you do? Draw a picture of yourself and tell the story of what happens.
- Find out about wolves. Where do they live? How do they behave? What do they eat? Make a class display.
- Put on a furry coat and move like a wolf. Can you howl and make wolf noises? As a class, copy the actions of a pack leader and do some whole-pack howling. When should we do as we're told and be good pack members, and when should we be lone wolves and think for ourselves?

Illustrations: Nicholas Frith

FOUNDATION STAGE



2 Sophie Johnson, Unicorn Expert

BY MORAG HOOD AND ELLA OKSTAD (SIMON AND SCHUSTER)

What's the story?

Sophie knows all about unicorns and likes to tell her toys exactly how to deal with them. So when a real, live unicorn appears and Sophie doesn't notice, the humour is all the more enjoyable.

Thinking and talking

What does Sophie tell us? What do we learn by looking at the pictures? What makes this story funny, do you think?

What could the unicorn be thinking in each picture? What would he like to say to Sophie and the toys? What do you know a lot about? Share something interesting!

Try this...

- What does a unicorn sound like? What does magic sound like? Use instruments and voices to create unicorn-themed sound effects for this book.
- Make horns like the ones Sophie's toys are wearing by colouring and assembling cone-shaped templates. Now that you're unicorns for the day, what will you do? Practise moving like unicorns, then work some magic.
- Play Hunt the Unicorn by hiding a toy and inviting somebody to find it. Pass the unicorn round and talk about pet care. What does this unicorn need? Design and make a bed, exercise pen, food bowl and other items to help you look after your new pet. Can you write instructions so that everyone knows what to do?

Illustrations: Ella Okstad

"Find out about wolves. Where do they live? How do they behave?"

Illustrations: Deborah Allwright

KEY STAGE 1

3 There is No Dragon in This Story

BY LOU CARTER AND DEBORAH ALLWRIGHT (BLOOMSBURY)

What's the story?

The dragon doesn't like fighting and has gone off in a huff, looking for a better story. The trouble is that nobody wants a dragon in their tale – until the sun goes out and they find his fiery skills are just what they require! This cheerful picturebook plays games with familiar fairy tales and brings readers on board to share the joke.

Thinking and talking

Why is the dragon trying to find a new story? What difficulties does he encounter? What are story-dragons usually like? How does this dragon differ from the stereotype?

Try this...

- How many references to fairy tales can you spot? Make a list and talk about the main events in each. Draw one of the stories as a strip cartoon – like the one at the end of this book. What happens if you mix events and characters from different stories? Draw the result!
- Collect patterned and plain fabrics and papers in sun colours and use to make an enormous sun-ray collage – similar to the one in the book. Talk about sun safety and add informative notes to your display.
- Look at the darkened silhouettes. Investigate using a sheet, a table lamp and a collection of toy characters, then explore their shadows outside on a sunny day.

Illustrations: Hannah Tolson

KEY STAGE 1

4 Ossiri and the Bala Mengro

BY RICHARD O'NEILL AND KATHARINE QUARMBY, ILLUSTRATED BY HANNAH TOLSON (CHILD'S PLAY)

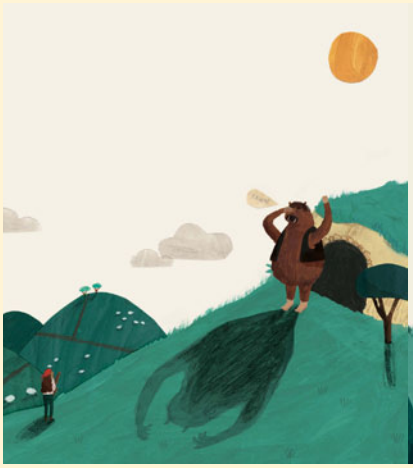
What's the story?

Ossiri wants to be a musician but her Traveller family can't afford an instrument. Ossiri makes one out of scraps, but trouble arrives in ogre form... Luckily for Ossiri, the Bala Mengro loves her music. But what will happen to the greedy stranger?

Co-written by a Romani storyteller, this longer-text picturebook has the flavour of a traditional tale.

Thinking and talking

Can you play an instrument? What does it sound like? What does Ossiri's Tattin Django sound like? Who likes it and who doesn't? Why doesn't Ossiri's family want her to be a musician?



Try this...

- How many different noises can you make using household objects and scrap? Which materials make the loudest noises? The quietest? The most interesting? Write a report about your discoveries.
- Are your noises music? Explore rhythm and pitch using scrap objects, percussion instruments and Tattin Djangos made from shoeboxes, elastic bands and other materials.
- Can you create noises that sound like an angry Bala Mengro? Can you compose a song he'd like to dance to? Or music to send him to sleep? How would a Bala Mengro move? Add some angry / toe-tapping / sleepy movements to your musical soundscapes to create a performance fit for an ogre!

Illustrations: Ana Sender

5 The Cottingley Fairies

KEY STAGE 1

BY ANA SENDER, (NORTHSOUTH BOOKS)

What's the story?

It's 1917 and Elsie and Frances are taking photos of themselves playing with fairies in the woods. Is it a hoax, or are they telling the truth? The world can't decide...

This beautifully-illustrated picturebook recounts historical events in an understated narrative, leaving plenty of room for children to question, interpret, imagine and discuss.

Thinking and talking

Spend time exploring the illustrations as well as talking about the story – there are gaps between text and images for your thoughts and feelings, so encourage reflection and questioning.

Did Elsie and Frances really see fairies? Do you think magical creatures exist?

"The adults lived in a very different world... and they were not able to see ours." What can you say about the adult world depicted in this story?

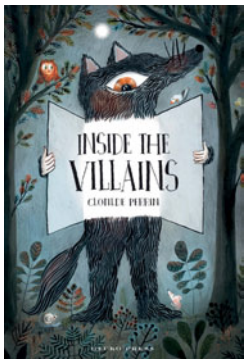
Try this...

- **Go on a woodland expedition, using your senses to explore your surroundings. Record your discoveries on sketchmaps. Create tiny fairy homes using natural found materials together with card and thread. Photograph and use these as starting points for different kinds of writing (reports, descriptions, instructions, stories ...).**
- **"*Taking photos is like opening windows...*" Collect narrative photos from magazines. Examine and discuss, imagining they're windows into other worlds and other lives. Choose a photo to describe and write about.**
- **Research the historical background to this book – *early photography, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the First World War...***

Illustrations: Clotilde Perrin

6 Inside the Villains

BY CLOTILDE PERRIN (GECKO PRESS)



What's the story?

Three gloriously-outsized cutaways (*Wolf, Giant and Witch*) invite readers to lift the flaps and see what makes each villain tick. The spreads open gatefold-style to create an 80x40cm canvas featuring a full-length story and first-person 'factsheet' alongside each cutaway. A list of archetypal stories is provided for each character and children with a working knowledge of fairy tales will enjoy spotting the many references.

Thinking and talking

What other fairy tale / traditional villains do you know? What did they think, say and do to make us think of them as villains?

Which characters would you include in a book about heroes? Why?

Try this...

- **Create your own lift-the-flap characters inspired by Perrin and drawing on other fairy tales. Or ask children to make lift-the-flap 'look inside' figures of themselves – see tinyurl.com/trwperrin for ideas.**
- **Invent quizzes based on the *More About Me* pages and answer from the point of view of characters from other traditional stories.**
- **Collect fabric offcuts, dressing-up clothes, props and craft materials. Pair children and ask them to assemble outfits for fairy tale characters, including props and accessories made from card and other materials. Design informative lift-the-flap cards and attach to each outfit. Ask pairs to model their outfits and introduce them (and their characters) to the class.**

Illustrations: Cressida Cowell

KEY STAGE 2

7 The Wizards of Once

BY CRESSIDA COWELL (HODDER)

What's the story?

Wizards and warriors have always been enemies, so when the reckless Xar (son of the King Enchanter) meets Wish (determined daughter of the Warrior Queen Sychorax) things are bound to get complicated. This richly imagined storyworld is illustrated throughout with line drawings by the author.

Thinking and talking

Who is disobedient in this book, and how, and when? What happens as a result? Is it good or bad to disobey? Give reasons for your answers.

Who's narrating this story? List the candidates and make a case for and against each of them.

Try this...

- What does this book tell us about witches? What do you know about witches in traditional stories (Hansel and Gretel, Baba Yaga...) and how do the witches in this book differ from them? Draw a picture of the Kingwitch and label using quotes from the text.
- How is magic described in this book? Imagine your magic has just come in – write a description of what happens and how it feels, or tell the story of how you cast your first spell.
- As a class, write and illustrate a non-fiction-style book about the magical objects, customs, companion creatures and history of the wizards.

"As a class, write and illustrate a non-fiction-style book about the magical objects"

KEY STAGE 2

8 The Boy Who Grew Dragons

BY ANDY SHEPHERD, ILLUSTRATED BY SARA OGILVIE (PICCADILLY)

Illustrations: Sara Ogilvie

What's the story?

There's a strange plant in Grandad's garden. Tomas can't believe his eyes when a tiny dragon hatches out of it – but things really hot up when he takes his new pet to school! This warm-hearted story is illustrated throughout with line drawings by Sara Ogilvie.

Thinking and talking

Have you cared for a pet? What do pets need? What would you do if you had a pet dragon?

Do you think Tomas handles the situations in this story well? Would you have advised him to act differently? Discuss.

Try this...

- Do some library-based research like Tomas, then write and illustrate your own *World Guide to Dragons*.
- Investigate a selection of fruit, including lesser-known varieties. What do they feel and smell like? What can you hear when you tap or shake them? How heavy are they? Do they remind you of anything? Use pencils, pastels and other media to draw them. Cut and taste them, then draw their cross-sections. Write about what you've observed and discovered.
- Imagine a magical creature is hatching from one of these fruits. What does it look like? Draw and name your creature. Tell the story of what happens when you take it to school.

KEY STAGE 2

9 Arthur and the Golden Rope

BY JOE TODD-STANTON (FLYING EYE)

What's the story?

To defeat Fenrir the giant wolf, Arthur Brownstone must sail to the land of the Norse Gods to collect the footfall of a cat and the roots of mountain – and to do that he's going to need the help of all the magical objects he can find!

Framed by a story about the Brownstone vault and its collection of ancient artefacts, this is the first in a series of mythical adventures told graphic-novel-style.

Thinking and talking

What non-magical skills does Arthur have (*imagination, determination, resourcefulness...*) and how do they help him succeed?

What did you already know about the Norse myths? What has this book taught you?

From Thor's accounts of Fenrir's past attacks to the Professor's references to other Brownstones, this book is bursting with stories waiting to be told. How many can you find? Which would you like to hear next, and why? Tell them!

Try this...

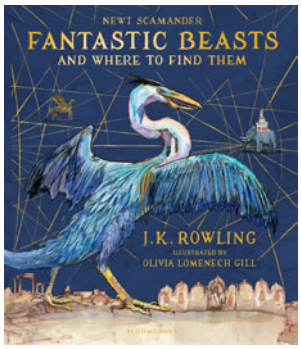
- Make a collection of unusual objects and handle them. Imagine they're magical: what are they called and what can they do? Create a museum featuring your artefacts, complete with labels identifying each item and a catalogue containing further information.
- The rope Arthur uses to capture Fenrir is made from two rare (and poetic-sounding) ingredients. As a class, list similarly intriguing ingredients, then make a lucky dip by writing them on cards. What magical item could be created by throwing two randomly-drawn ingredients into a cauldron? Write about how you collected your ingredients and what happened when you cast your spell.

Illustrations: Joe Todd-Stanton

10 Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

BY J.K. ROWLING AND OLIVIA LOMENECH GILL (BLOOMSBURY)

KEY STAGE 2



What's the story?

This large-format edition of Newt Scamander's guide to the magical beasts of the Harry Potter universe features a host of realistically illustrated creatures from the spidery Acromantula to the shaggy Yeti, via ten breeds of dragon. Olivia Lomenech Gill is known for her sensitive, painterly depictions of natural history and landscapes, and her beautiful illustrations give this book a gravitas and authenticity that play well alongside J.K. Rowling's imaginative text.

Thinking and talking

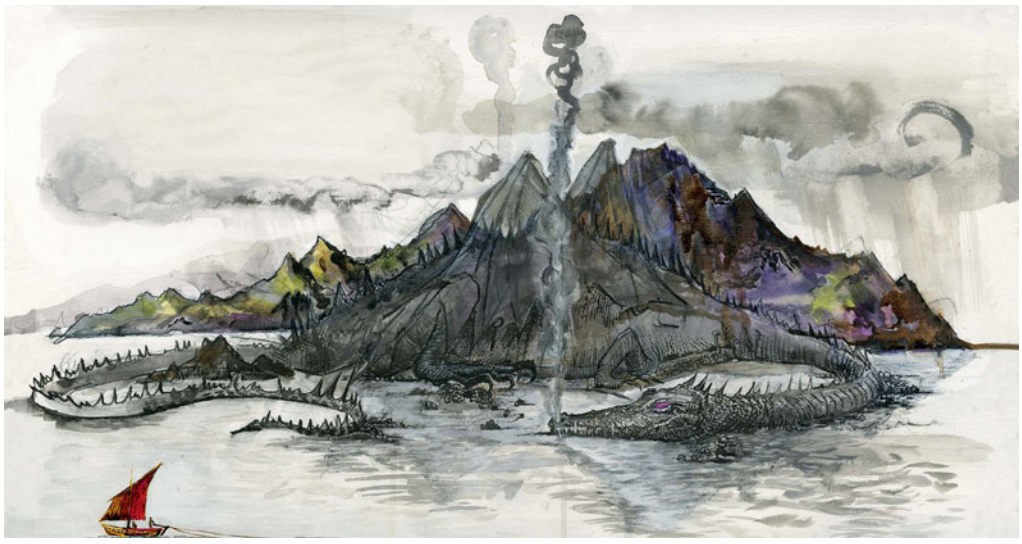
Which of these creatures had you heard of before reading this book and which were new to you?

If you could spend a day as a Fantastic Beast, which would you be and why?

Try this...

- Can you link any of these creatures to events that happen in the Harry Potter books? What about other stories featuring these creatures, such as myths and folktales? As a class, create a mind map showing the creatures, the stories in which they feature and the relationships you notice between them.
- Invent a new magical creature. Write a Newt-Scamander-style account of it, illustrate your report and bind to form a class reference book. Model your creatures from plasticine or modroc and display inside a magic-proof case.
- These creatures don't exist, but Gill's beasts look as though she's drawn them from life. How has she achieved this? Can you identify the elements each magical creature owes to the real world? (*bat-style wings, birds legs...*) Look closely at Gill's artwork and try out techniques she's used, such as watercolour washes. Observe animals or birds and discuss what you can see and how to capture it. Sketch using pencils, graphite and charcoal together with dip pens, brushes, inks and watercolours.

Illustrations: Olivia Lomenech Gill



Carey Fluker Hunt is a freelance writer, children's book ambassador and creative consultant. She is a founder member of Seven Stories.

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"IT'S A PLACE OF QUIET SANCTUARY"

We will be a poorer society if future generations never know the intoxicating calm of the library, says **Chris Riddell**

I got to the Millennium Library in Norwich early as for some inexplicable reason, the trains from Liverpool Street were running on time – no points failure at Bishops Stortford, slow running stopping service in front, or even leaves on the line. So I arrived at this magnificent public library with several hours to spare before my scheduled talk. I took the escalator to the first floor and found a chair at a wonderfully empty table. As I sat down, that familiar feeling enveloped me. It is a special library feeling – contemplative, quiet, and inexpressibly intoxicating. It reminds me of all the libraries I have known. The first library in Bristol where I experienced the joy of choosing six books with impunity on a weekly basis, and triumphantly carried them home. Of my school library, a place of quiet sanctuary where admittance was a privilege to be prized. Of my art school library with its archived supplements from *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* – treasure houses of contemporary culture from the exciting and exotic sixties.

I sat in the library in Norwich and took out my sketchbook and started to draw. Around me, the life of the library ebbed and flowed. Young mothers with toddlers made their way to the children's library, elderly men consulted computer screens in the atrium below, and, around me, people with backpacks and rolled sleeping bags read the papers in comfortable chairs, sipped coffee from the machine, then moved on. I drew, lost in a world of my own for the next two hours, undisturbed by shop assistants or salespeople or the nagging need to buy something to justify being there. It was idyllic and it was free. It was that library feeling.

I then gave my talk about a picture book I had written and illustrated, *Once Upon A Wild Wood*. The artwork was hanging in the atrium, organised and curated by the librarians. The same librarians who organised the parents and toddlers storytime sessions, the poetry readings and the historical society talks I had seen on posters by the front desk. This was part of that library feeling too – the sense of the library as a cultural hub, where the arts and those who practice them can find an audience. Every writer and illustrator I have met has a formative library experience and is happy to talk about it. But not everybody wants to listen.

This is the other library feeling that I have. It is the opposite of the contemplative, quiet, intoxicating feeling. This is an angry, despairing and alienating feeling that comes from the pit of my stomach when I hear of library closures. It is the feeling of rage when politicians talk about cost without any understanding of value. In this age of austerity and self-inflicted Brexit, we can no longer afford the luxury of public libraries. As school budgets are squeezed and SATs test extolled, school librarians are the first to be let go. After all, we have glowing screens we can gaze at, with all the unmediated knowledge they give us access to. Who needs libraries or librarians in this digital age?

I would argue that we need libraries and librarians more than ever. Our schools need places where children can discover the joy of reading for pleasure, places of quiet sanctuary and places where they can acquire the skills of guided research. These places are called school libraries and they teach children the value of libraries in the wider community. Public libraries are where the creative arts can be nurtured before taking root in the marketplace. Without them, the arts are weakened and we are all diminished.

So when this feeling threatens to overwhelm me, I visit a library. A library in the form of an enchanted wood in a village school in Wiltshire, a converted classroom which brought the whole community together to create a special space in memory of a much loved pupil. Or Hove library, saved from closure by local protest, where I spent a joyful day drawing on a newly painted wall. Or the library at the University of Sussex, the busiest place on campus with the funkiest librarians I've ever met... or Birmingham, Manchester, Preston, Glasgow central libraries and many more.

They are all places with that special library feeling. Places where everyone is welcome, nothing is bought and sold, creativity is nurtured and we are all enriched.

Chris Riddell is former Children's Laureate and three time Kate Greenaway medal winner. His new series The Cloud Horse Chronicles: Guardians of Magic is out 19th September 2019.

Main illustration © Chris Riddell. MacMillan Children's Books

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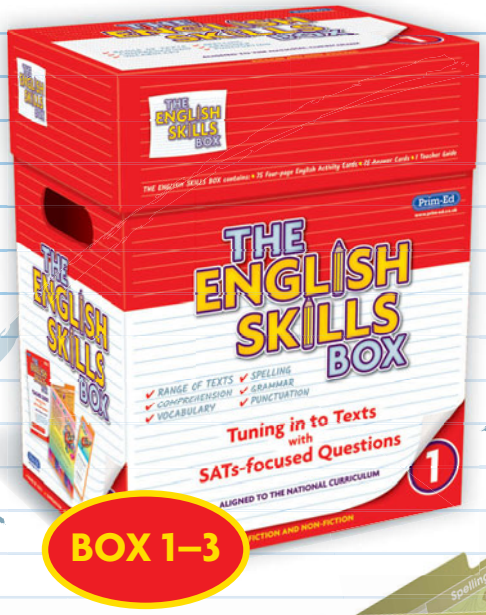

BOX 1–3

THE ENGLISH SKILLS BOX FEATURES:

- 75 graded question and answer cards
- Teacher Guide
- Progression tests
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✔ RANGE OF TEXTS ✔ SPELLING
✔ COMPREHENSION ✔ GRAMMAR
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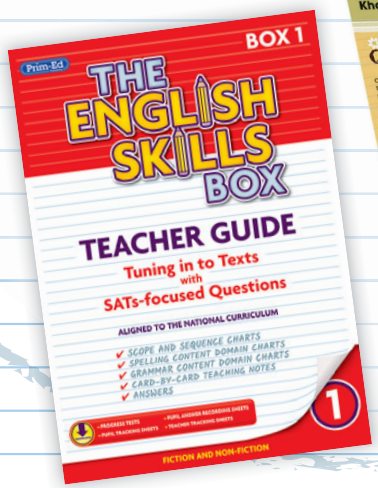

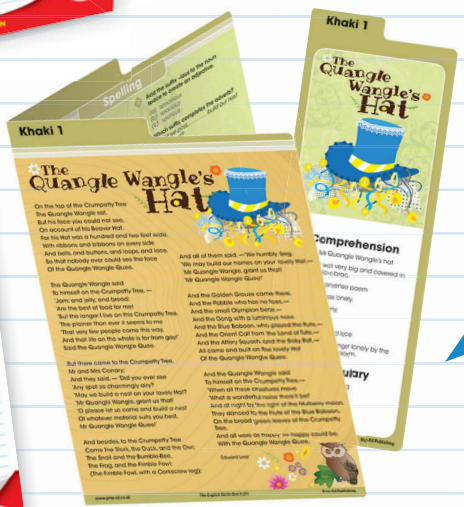

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DO CHILDREN GET TO WRITE FROM THE HEART?

The winning goal, a holiday disaster, grandma's silver earrings – our life experiences are a rich source of writing inspiration, says Teresa Cremin

We are all storytellers and story makers. We make sense of our lives by telling ourselves stories of our past and possible futures, of who we are and might become. Writing too can be a form of identity exploration, an opportunity to reflect on life experience, to look forwards and back and make sense of the world.

In the Teachers as Writers research which Debra Myhill (Exeter University) and I undertook with Arvon (a creative writing foundation) we were reminded of the highly personal nature of much writing. Threaded through our data from the Arvon residential, where teachers had time and space to write alongside professional writers, we saw a strong sense of 'writing from the heart'. The 16 teachers were frequently invited to look back and remember and to lean on their lives as a rich resource for writing. In the daily workshops they often shared tales and wrote about incidents from childhood, old schoolfriends, significant pieces of clothing and rich descriptions of settings based on their parents' or grandparents' homes.

I wonder though, do we offer our young writers enough opportunities to 'write from the heart'? Do we grant them explicit permission to draw on their lives, or do we imply that each and every character, setting and plot needs to be invented anew? Perhaps we also let literature drive their writing too often?

In free writing workshops, prompted perhaps by an opening line, a visual or an object, children and teachers can explore their thinking on paper, building from and linking to both lived and vicarious experience. Whilst a space for free writing, or 'Just Writing' as the teachers called it, is not an end in itself, it is a rich space for writing from the heart. Memories and ideas triggered in this time can be revisited and serve as a resource for later compositions; clay that can be remoulded and reshaped according to the author's emerging intentions.

Given choice, children often use writing to reflect upon people and events that are important to them. Such writing may be semi-autobiographical, but as Berlie Doherty observed many years ago "fiction is a combination of I remember and let's pretend". Children can also fictionalise their life experiences, using observation and memory for instance to create vivid characters reminiscent of family members; evoke scenes set in places they know; or capture the emotional temperature of a fictional event by drawing on remembered feelings.

Professional writers frequently draw on their reservoirs of life experience to enrich their writing; many draw very directly on their childhood memories and a sense of place (David Almond and Michael Morpurgo both come to mind). Others draw on their personal fascinations and interests, for example in insects (MG Leonard), history (Emma Carroll) or nature (Nicola Davies). Younger authors can do likewise and be apprenticed to this club. If you want to nurture more 'writing from the heart' in your class and foster increased choice in content and form, you may want to explore some of the following prompts that lean on life.

- **Personal tales** – commencing with a teacher anecdote and using story titles, children can swap stories in a Story Buzz.
- **Emotions graphs** – the horizontal axis represents a period of time, the vertical axis the emotions (low to high). Children plot significant memories and create a key.
- **Objects / treasured possessions** – children bring in and discuss objects which remind them of someone / some event.
- **Views and interests** – children share their views, concerns and passions and explore possible ways to weave these into their writing.
- **Free writing starters** – offer openers such as 'I remember the holiday when...'; 'I hate it when I'm called names...'; 'It makes me angry when I think about...' 'The last time I saw her / him...'Or you could use opening lines from books or poems.

In all such writing, the young author's choice is key. Encouraging children to lean on life directly in their writing is energising and motivating; life events offer a natural writing frame which frees them to write with voice and verve. Using their experiences indirectly to connect to what they know and care about also enriches writing. Both supports help children come to realise that their lives, interests and concerns count, and that they can explore these through 'writing from the heart'.

Teresa Cremin is Professor of Education (Literacy) at The Open University. To read more about the Teachers as Writers research and the current project The Craft of Writing see teachersaswriters.org

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Getting children reading

Dive into NON-FICTION

Though tricky to grasp, with the right models children can master more formal registers, say **Christine Chen** and **Lindsay Pickton**

"Dwarfed by the vast expanse of the open ocean, the biggest animal that has ever lived on our planet: a blue whale. Thirty metres long and weighing over 200 tonnes, it's far bigger than even the biggest dinosaur. Its tongue weighs as much as an elephant, its heart is the size of a car and some of its blood vessels are so wide you could swim down them..."

The unmistakable voice of Sir David Attenborough – a voice that grabs us unawares and plunges us deep into a hitherto unknown world. He fills our minds with cinematic images, and that's before we've even opened our eyes to absorb the visual feast on screen.

We often find non-fiction is met with groans of tedium, especially after teaching a particularly compelling narrative (and here we are talking about teachers, not children!), but teaching factual writing doesn't have to be about wading through pedestrian prose. After all, Attenborough's visceral delivery comes closes to poetry.

In fact, a closer look at Attenborough's description of the blue whale – which uses comparison, repetition for emphases and a close-up view – shows it to be reminiscent of the way Ted Hughes introduces us to the Iron Man. Contrasting these two pieces would certainly make for an interesting study into the differences between fiction and non-fiction. Is there always a clear distinction between writing to inform and writing to entertain? What makes Attenborough's work recognisable as non-fiction despite its dramatic, poetic style? It is vividly descriptive, but perhaps not what you would expect to find in a story.

And then, of course, there are the non-fiction forms that require a sparser style: police / accident reports, experimental write-ups and the like. This stripped-back register is often the hardest of all to master, reliant as it is on disciplined vocabulary and non-emotive detail.

Reaching greater depths

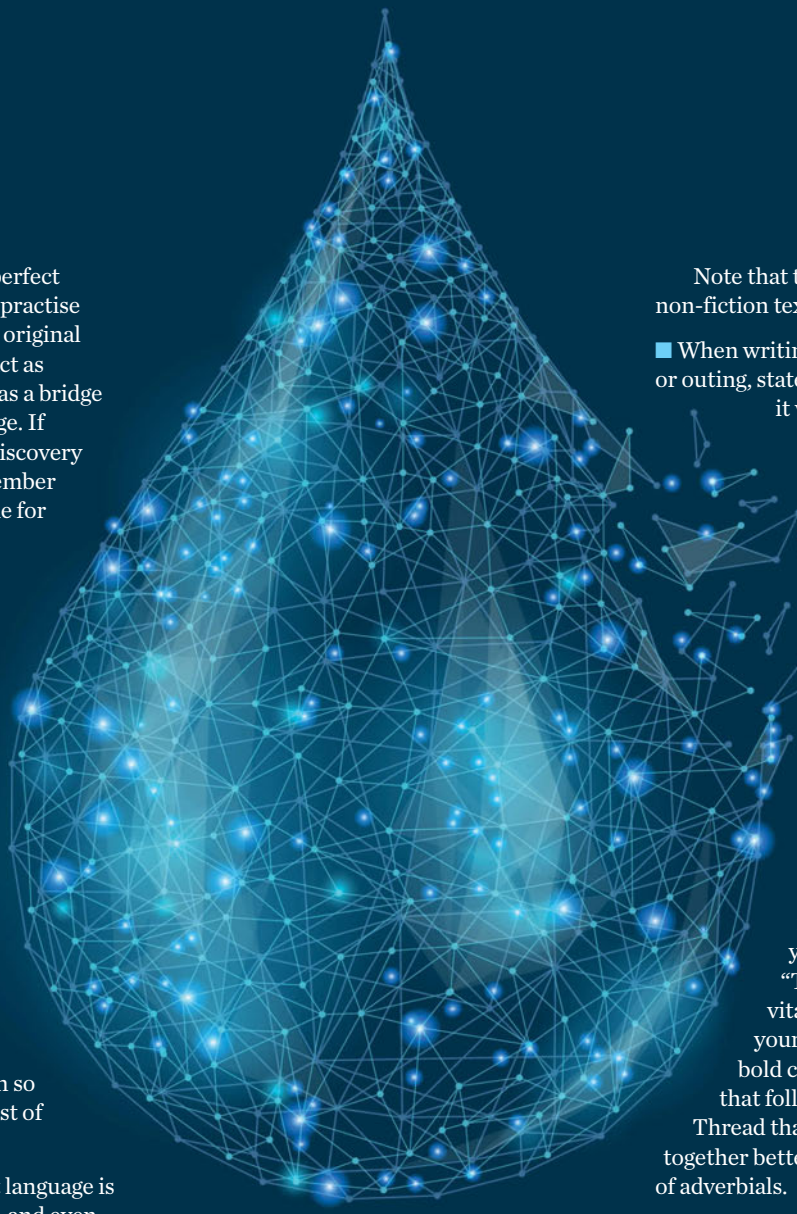
Getting to grips with the 'voice' (the appropriate vocabulary and grammar choices) of non-fiction presents a challenge to children of all writing abilities. We've written previously in these pages that the best writers are the avid readers; that we can help children towards Greater Depth writing by putting amazing models of fiction before them and showing how to synthesise these with the desired subject matter. Non-fiction writing, however, is often more demanding because even the most obsessive readers seldom bury themselves in information texts to the extent that appropriate models of language are at their fingertips.

There is a range of non-fiction registers, but the hardest are those that skew toward the more formal and more impersonal. We speak informally and personally in almost all circumstances; the fiction we read is largely personal and, increasingly, towards the informal end of the spectrum; even some popular informative and journalistic writing is informal in style. This is why an impersonal style that conveys academic seriousness in the science and humanities is the most difficult hurdle to overcome.

Our solution is, again, marvellous models to internalise and use in synthesis.

- Choral reading of high-quality, appropriate non-fiction can be a part of any non-fiction English sequence of work. The repeated reading aloud of a text seems to put vocabulary and sentence structures into the memory in a way that reading-to-self does not.
- Top-quality non-fiction models may be found in many in-school topic texts, but also be aware that there are transcripts available online for BBC documentaries, such as Attenborough's *Blue Planet*.

"Sticking to formulaic choices hinders the acquisition of a secure non-fiction voice"



■ Transcripts provide the perfect opportunity for children to practise reading aloud, adopting the original narrator's voice. They can act as models for writing, serving as a bridge from oral to written language. If your school subscribes to Discovery Education's Espresso, remember that the transcripts available for their topic videos and news pieces also provide a range of wonderful models of non-fiction language.

■ Select an extended piece of age-appropriate non-fiction and rewrite one paragraph / section in an inappropriate style (e.g making it informal and / or personal) ahead of your lesson. Present the text as if all is well, and wait for children to spot the shift in register. Once this has been identified, they can collaborate in trying to rewrite the doctored section so it matches the stye of the rest of the piece.

■ Always keep in mind that language is acquired through imitation, and even your most avid readers are unlikely to be reading enough non-chronological reports in their spare time to give them access to appropriate models for their own information pieces!

Following the Golden Thread

In addition, furthermore, moreover, however, consequently, in conclusion – adverbials such as these have been offered to, modelled for and pressed upon children (sometimes in the form of checklists) for a long time now, but too often we see them being used inappropriately by young writers who don't fully grasp their function. And even amongst those outstanding writers whose prose fiction is heading towards Greater Depth territory, adherence to these formulaic choices hinders the acquisition of a secure non-fiction voice.

We believe this is because grammar and vocabulary is being used to drive the text structure, whereas it should be completely the other way around.

One route into coherent text structure is what we have called the Golden Thread – which is basically a fun way of saying 'theme'. Whatever you call it, the process is as follows: decide on a viewpoint, state it at the outset, and refer to it repeatedly throughout the piece.

■ If you're writing about the Blue Whale, your viewpoint might be that the creature is astonishingly huge, yet tiny in comparison to the ocean. As you compose, everything refers back to this, providing a Golden Thread that runs through the piece.

■ If you are writing about Roman soldiers as part of a topic, you might state that the Roman army was extraordinarily successful and the main reason for the spread of the Roman Empire; then, when you detail their weapons, their armour, their training and professional status, each point can refer back to – and serve to illustrate – the stated viewpoint. This way, coherence is achieved.

Note that this works with other non-fiction text-types, too.

■ When writing a recount of an event or outing, state from the outset that it was brilliant / exciting / disappointing (etc) and then refer back to this so that each element of the recount illustrates the point.

■ You might even experiment with this in instructions: "This recipe is going to show you how to make the most delicious milkshake you have ever tasted"; "These instructions are vital – they may well save your life." Illustrating these bold claims within the steps that follow will produce a Golden Thread that holds the whole piece together better than any list of adverbials.

Just as with great fiction, the best information writing arises not from formulae, but rather, from thorough knowledge of content synthesised with appropriate models of language. Immersion in wonderful models of story-language runs throughout any good primary school experience, of course – and for some lucky children, this begins (and continues) at home. Internalising the range of non-fiction styles may lack the immediate appeal of storytime, but if we select the best examples to share, we will find there a different kind of artistry, and provide for children a source of language that will serve them well through secondary education and beyond.

Christine Chen and Lindsay Pickton are primary education advisers (primaryeducationadvisers.co.uk) supporting English development nationally.

Why no one is using your LIBRARY

If the books are left unloved, maybe it's time to create a sanctuary at the heart of school life

Congratulations! You're one of the lucky schools that actually has a dedicated library space. But wait a minute... no one's using it? Or, at least, no one is making the best use of it. Then it's time to consider making your library not just user-friendly but, well, friendly.

It's a shocking fact that while prisons, for example, must have a library, this is not a mandatory requirement in UK schools. According to the School Library Association no one actually knows how many school libraries exist, whether or not they are staffed, or how they are funded. Considering schools are places of learning, it seems an incredible situation.

So, if you have the rare luxury of a library, but it is left unloved - what can you do about it?

Value what you have

I recall one school 'library' that was really just an unused space. It had old books in dead-insect-filled cubbies, and a ceiling crawling with damp and mould. Unsurprisingly, no one used it. Why would they? Would you go to such a neglected area just because it had some old books? No one looked after it, cleaned it, made it look inviting or even hygienic. It felt like it existed purely so the school could say it had a library; an empty gesture, nothing more.

Then, one year, the school had the walls painted with wonderful murals. The mould and insects were removed and they installed a sweet little reading area with cushions. It was ready and waiting for a surge in enthusiastic little borrowers.

Unfortunately, the library is still as empty and unloved as before because, despite all the superficial adjustments, nothing changed in the way the school treated the space. There was never any library time allocated to classes and there was no adult on hand to make it work. And if a school doesn't value its library, why should the children?

Thankfully, this situation is unimaginable in my school. When I first arrived over four years ago, I inherited a gorgeous library with bookcases lining the walls, plenty of books to shelve, and attractive floor cushions for the children to sit on - as well as a beautiful outdoor courtyard for summer reading. In what can be seen as a rare move nowadays, the headteacher at the time decided that, with the advent of portable laptops and iPads, it was more important to have a lovely room dedicated to books than a space devoted to computers. And it has paid off massively. Woe betide any teacher who skips their class's weekly library lesson – the children are up in arms!

Make it more than a library

Granted, this sounds peculiar, but I can't stress enough how essential it is for libraries to be more than a stereotypical collection of dusty books and a librarian invoking silence. To make the space work best for staff and children, you need to move beyond the mantra of 'reading is good for you'. So are branflakes and cabbage, yet you don't see people queueing up to devour them. There has to be some interest, excitement and perhaps a touch of magic to lure even the most dedicated reader through your doors.

Think about what's above or around your bookcases. At school, I'm also known as the Ladder Lady because I'm always struggling to staple swathes of paper onto display boards. While it may not be my favourite part of the job, the end result is usually worth it – colour and a few cheap fairy lights can make even the dullest room come to life. For example, I've just finished prepping a display dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the lunar landings. The children helped me by drawing little astronauts based on themselves, which are now 'walking' on the moon. Not only do we have a topical display in the library, linked to science and history, we also have something colourful to look at that the children helped create. If you involve them, children will own the library space and give you plenty of materials to Blu-tack to the wall.

Keep it topical

Book-related arts and crafts sessions are very popular with the children. Not only does this stimulate their artistic skills, it helps them to explore, understand and enjoy books on a deeper level. Every summer term I also run a school-wide competition based on books. For example, we've had superhero and supervillain fruit and veg based on Sue Hendra's and Paul Linnet's Supertato series; and 'Cakespeare' – a baking or decorating challenge to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. The children

look forward to this and start nagging me in May for the year's theme.

I make sure that I keep up to date with literacy-based challenges for children, such as the 500 Words writing competition and the Betjeman Poetry Prize. We celebrate those children who have the determination and creativity to even enter a story, plus we display their work in special books in the library for others to enjoy.

Create a sanctuary

Our headteacher often refers to the library as a 'safe haven' and I could not be more proud of this description. I want children to love reading within a safe, creative and welcoming atmosphere and to feel there is always somewhere they can go when the playground feels too much, or when they feel overwhelmed and need some quiet time.

I love how children in Year 2 feel happy talking to pupils in Year 6; the closeness and respect this fosters is central to our school values. Sometimes even the adults come in for a chat, or for five minutes' peace!

As well as all the books there are cuddly toys for the children to hold (or read aloud to - a wonderful incentive for reluctant readers) and literacy games for the children to play: mixed-up fairy tales and storytelling cubes are both favourites.

If you make a place welcoming, comfortable and attractive, people will want to spend time there - for the tranquility, the creative inspiration and, of course, the books.

Now, where's that ladder?

IS YOUR LIBRARY UP TO SCRATCH?

Five questions to ask yourself...

1. Is it a place where you would like to spend time reading and relaxing?
2. Do the materials support the curriculum?
3. Are the opening hours long enough - e.g. before / after school or at lunchtimes?
4. How can I keep on improving what the library offers pupils, parents and staff?
5. How can we fully integrate what the library is and what it does into the day-to-day life of the school?

Sam Pope is a writer, editor and part-time school librarian.

The REAL WORLD

Share these fascinating stories from *The Week Junior* with your pupils and turn your class into a buzzing newsroom

If children can learn to tailor their writing to match a specific purpose, crafting their words for their intended audience, they'll be well on their way to becoming successful writers – which is why the National Curriculum places so much emphasis on both skills.

There are few more motivating activities than journalistic writing: covering real events happening in the real world for a real audience. And if you're planning to explore this genre with your class, *The Week Junior* – with its fascinating and accessible overview of current events – is the perfect starting point. In addition to letting children practise writing as a journalist, the engaging articles can act as a catalyst for other types of writing.

Here's a pick of some of my favourite recent articles from *The Week Junior* and a look at how they can be the starting point for writing lessons. If you'd like to give them a go, all the articles mentioned can be downloaded for free from **teachwire.net/news-writing**.

1 Become junior reporters

Read the story 'MPs demand new fake news law' aloud and discuss how the article shares key information, explains unfamiliar ideas (a code of ethics) and tricky words (fake news) in clear language, and uses quotes from sources.

Ask the children to choose a topic that interests them for their own *The Week Junior* story, using the same techniques you have discussed to help the reader understand what has happened. It could be a story from the local area (a favourite shop closing), a news story they've been following (plastic in the seas), or a personal story (their local football team winning or a performance by their dance club). Children can then share their piece with a classmate who doesn't know as much about their topic to check it is written clearly.

2 Do your research

As a class, read 'Mammals make a comeback', stopping to ensure everyone understands the message of the article and the technical vocabulary (markedly improved, toxic, habitat, extinction).

Working individually or in pairs, ask children to choose one of the eight British carnivores featured in the article: badgers, otters, pine martins, polecats, stoats, weasels, foxes and wildcats. They can then research their chosen animal, either using books or by looking online.

Encourage children to jot down notes about their creature (perhaps using a special 'reporter's notebook') before writing an in-depth piece. This could be written as a fact file, a page of a non-fiction book or an online encyclopaedia. Their work could then be shared so everyone learns about the different creatures.

3 Persuade your readers

Show the class the article 'Orkney crowned the best place to live in the UK'. Once everyone has read the piece, discuss why Orkney won. Ask the children to list the positive factors in the article about Orkney (good health, low crime rates, good schools and plenty of jobs).

Tell the children they are going to write a piece persuading people to move to Orkney. They can use the facts in the article to help them, as well as their own imagination about what would be good about living on the secluded islands. Once they have finished, they can share their pieces with one another, comparing the arguments they have made.

As an extension task, remind children that Orkney is one of the remotest places in the UK. Ask the children if there is anything about the place in which they live that they would miss if they lived on Orkney (family, something they love doing locally, their football team, etc.). Now children can produce their own piece of persuasive writing, arguing why their home is the best place to live.

FREE RESOURCES!

Download all five *The Week Junior* articles to share with your class at teachwire.net/news-writing

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT TEACHWIRE.NET


The big debate
Do historical films need to be accurate?

4 Run a big debate

A regular feature of *The Week Junior* is 'the big debate', where an issue is discussed from two opposing sides. As a class, read the opening paragraph of 'Do historical films need to be accurate?' and then take a vote to see what everyone thinks. When you've done this, read aloud the arguments for 'yes' and 'no'. Now vote again: has anyone changed their mind?

Tell the children they are going to write their own big debate page. Share the question, 'Should breakdancing be an Olympic sport?' and brainstorm some arguments for and against. Then divide the class into two teams to debate the issue.

Now it's time for children to write their own version of the page with an introduction to the debate, two sections for 'yes' and 'no', and two fact boxes to summarise the arguments. They can use the ideas raised in the spoken debate to help them.

Finally, compare the class's ideas to the real page from *The Week Junior*. How do the two versions stack up?

Quiz of the week
How much of this week's news can you remember?

5 Play quiz master

Each edition of *The Week Junior* features a 'quiz of the week' to see how much children can remember about current affairs. This can be a terrific writing task for children, helping them to practise writing interrogative sentences and expressing information in a short, focused way.

As a class, look at one of the quizzes together and analyse the types of questions it asks: multiple choice, true or false, short written answers, etc.

The children can then work individually or in pairs to write their own questions based on the latest edition of the magazine. Once they have a bank of suitable questions, they can work together as a small group to create a quiz. These quizzes can then be swapped around, so children try to answer another group's quiz. They could even go home to test parents or be put to teachers in assembly - a high pressure activity in front of a packed school hall!

Get creative with non-fiction

As well as following the writing prompts for non-fiction genres and journalistic writing, the articles in *The Week Junior* could be used to inspire creative writing too. Using the articles featured here, children could:

- **Write an interview with one of the British mammals, asking them questions about their life and the issues they face surviving in their habitat.**
- **Create the script for a scene from an historical film, based on a story or character from history that they know well. It's up to them if they stick to accurate facts or not!**
- **Write the story of the first competitors in the Olympic breakdancing event. How did they feel when they stepped into the arena? How did the crowd react?**
- **Compose a poem based on one of the stories from their quiz of the week. An acrostic poem about Hippocamp, the newly-discovered moon of Neptune, perhaps?**
- **Invent and write their own fake news story. Have aliens been sighted in the local area? Is the school built on a volcano? Probably best not to publish their stories online, though. Someone is bound to believe them!**

James Clements is an education writer and the author of Teaching English by the Book. You can find him on Twitter at @MrJClements

"I could always draw myself out of trouble"

Jill Murphy started writing books before leaving primary school – but it took luck and perseverance to get her work published...

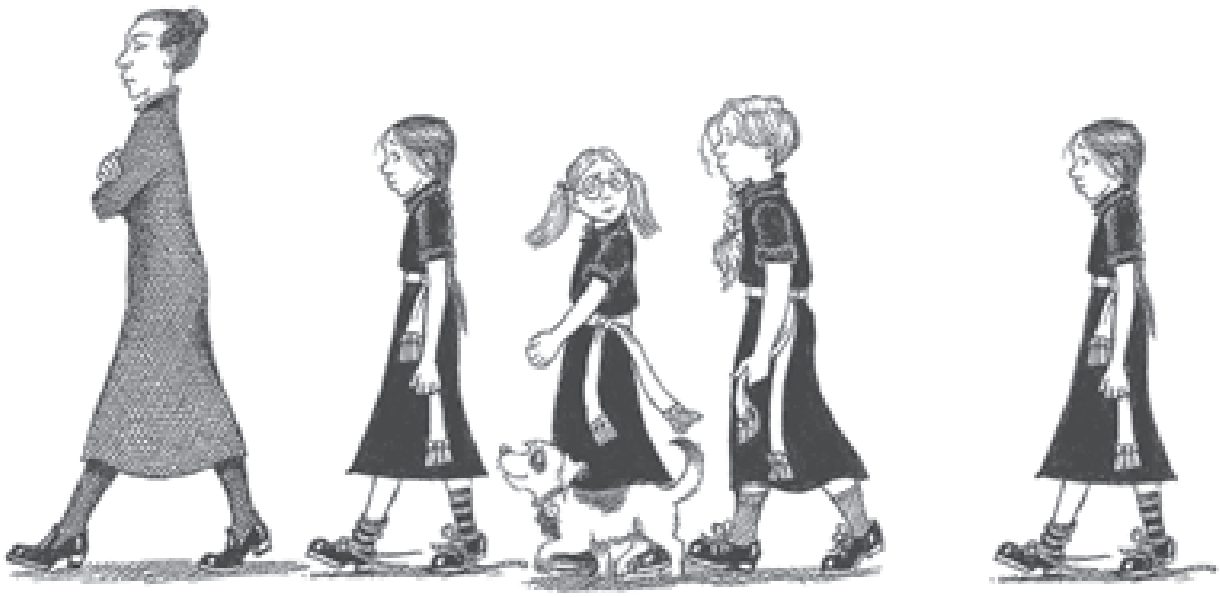
I was definitely an early starter when it came to literacy. We weren't a well-off family by any means, but my mum – who had worked in a library, and given up her job when she married, as one did in those days – was mad about books, and passed that passion on to me. In fact, she wanted to be a writer herself (something I only found out later), so when she discovered that I was interested in stories, she encouraged me in every way she could, as if I was her raw material. She would iron the brown paper bags in which we got our fruit and veg so that I could draw on them; my earliest memory is of sitting on the floor, aged about two, surrounded by sheets of artwork.

As I got older, sketch-pads of best quality were special treats, received with huge excitement at birthdays or for Christmas, and reserved for the creation of little storybooks, which I would write and illustrate myself. Thanks to the dual blessings of an older brother who liked comics, and an excellent visual memory, I was reading easily at three years old – and by the time I left primary school, I'd completed and carefully stapled together 92 small books from my own imagination; if the technology that's available to children today had been invented back then, I doubt I'd have achieved half of that. In fact, I worry that the perfection delivered by computers is getting in the way of children's ability to express themselves with their own ideas. The process for getting better at writing and drawing by hand, is much like learning to play an instrument – spending time doing it, over and over again; but no one really practises in this way any more, because everything is there on screen at the touch of a button. It must be quite a challenge for teachers.

I did enjoy learning things at primary school, although corporal punishment was still permitted at the time, and we had some teachers who seemed to enjoy making the most of that option, which was rather frightening. Luckily, they weren't all like that, though; Miss Trainer for example, who taught me for the first year, was very nice. My early reading ability, good memory and precocious art skills definitely came in handy, too – as my headmistress once drily observed, I could always "draw myself out of trouble".

I didn't pass the 11+, but I got an interview for the grammar school and was offered a place on the strength of that, much to my headmistress' anxiety on my behalf. She called my parents in to see her, and told them, in my presence, that she really didn't think this would be a good idea, because although I was a "sort of genius" when it came to writing and drawing, in all other subjects – including common sense – I

Illustrations: Jill Murphy



"The process for getting better at writing and drawing by hand, is much like learning to play an instrument..."

was essentially hopeless. I remember sitting and listening while the adults discussed me as though I wasn't there; and although at the time I thought it was rather rude to describe me in that way, as an adult I can see that my headmistress had a point. Much as she had predicted, I "bumped along at the bottom" of the grammar school for the next five years in everything except English and art – but I had good friends, and of course, the whole experience gave me the character of Mildred Hubble!

I started writing the story of Mildred when I was 14. Originally, the reason she didn't fit in at a school for witches was because she was, in fact, a fairy. I drew her with pointed ears, and described her as wearing a tight vest, to hold in her growing wings (a psychoanalyst could have a field day with that, I'm sure!) However, when I wrote the version that finally got published, I realised that the fun of the story came from the fact that it was a jokey satire about an institution that took itself very seriously. It was turned down by three publishers, who insisted that children would find a book about a school for witches too "scary".

The Worst Witch was eventually taken on by Alison & Busby, thanks to a series of coincidences involving me spending time in Ghana, and a friend meeting Margaret Busby (Ghanaian herself, and considering starting a children's list for her imprint) at a publishers' party in London. *Peace at Last* was published nearly a decade later, and almost by accident, I found I had a career.

When I was growing up, my favourite books were *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and *The Secret Garden*. On the bookshelf in my living room, I have a copy of *The Worst Witch* sandwiched proudly between those very titles, and seeing it there gives me immense satisfaction: I did it, I was resilient, I stuck at it, and I didn't give up when faced with barriers; those are important things, I think, to teach all our children.

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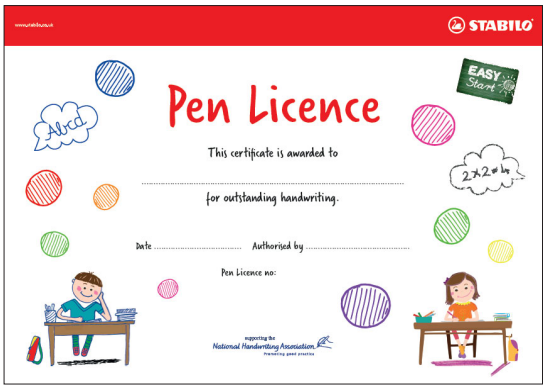

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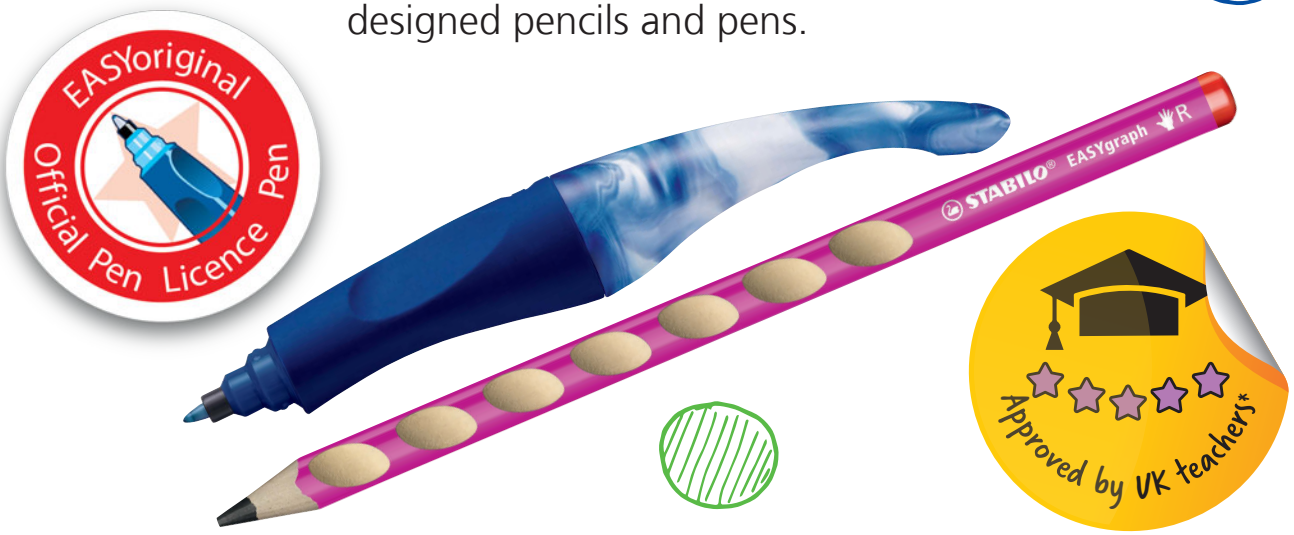


*In UK user trials 95% of teachers approved the use of EASYgraph pencils and EASYoriginal pens in their schools.

The place of MOON AND STARS

Use **Pie Corbett's** dreamlike lunar setting to inspire your own stories rich in language and detail

Jo had always wanted to travel to the moon. When she was younger, she had shifted her bed so that at night she could see its ever changing shape through her window. As she slept, the silvery light fell on her sleeping form. She imagined that it protected her and made her life just a little bit special, magical even, with a silver edge to everything she touched. She was like Midas, though in a good way. Didn't her mum often say that every cloud had a silver lining?

That night she went to bed as usual, bathed moon-bright, and soon drifted off to sleep, dreaming of the project they were doing at school. It was fifty years since the lunar landing and Jo's mind was full of rockets, those first tentative, dancing steps on the moon's surface and the magic of floating without gravity.

Then she woke and, to her surprise, found herself inside an enormous factory of polished machines that gleamed in the lights. A bell tinkled and metallic fingertips tapped a rhythm as the factory buzzed with energy. Jo stared round, eyes wide as saucers. Alarm bells rang inside her as pistons pumped, wheels spun, cogs clicked and steam hissed. Engines glittered as brass spindles rhythmically spluttered and massive bellows billowed; a cacophony of clattering and battering assaulted her ears.

As the factory pulsed and pounded, a flight of what looked like tiny winged stars fluttered down from an enormous cage that hung on the ceiling. Light glinted off their golden wings. Shimmering and quivering in the light, with their tiny engines whirring, the star-birds swarmed over the thudding machinery: pressing buttons, pulling levers, swooping high and low, checking dials and spinning handles.

Then, as if by some hidden signal, a series of tiny doors opened up on the sides of the smaller machines and Jo could see what they were making. Thousands of toys of all shapes and sizes appeared, one by one: packages, packets, balloons, train sets, miniature planes, dolls, soft toys, and tiny cars. Toys of bright colours with gleaming crimson, deep blues, flickering yellows and rich purples mingled with sea green and brilliant orange. It was as if the factory was making children's dreams.

In the centre of the room stood the largest machine. Star-birds shimmered round, tending to its needs. Out of a thin opening, slivers of silver rolling like waves drifted up to the ceiling and escaped through an opening into the darkness beyond. Jo realized that the machine was making moonlight.

It was then that Jo noticed the person in charge. He was dressed like a ringmaster from a circus. His huge, red, round face glistened with sweat as his arms whirled in a series of gestures and she realised that, as he moved, some of the star-birds would swoop and dive as if he was conducting their movements. Jo stood and stared.

At that moment, Jo noticed a silver

DOWNLOAD PIE'S STORY FOR FREE AT www.teachwire.net/moonandstars

Let's get started

I wrote this story while listening to Fantasia, especially the Nutcracker Suite and Mussorgsky's Night on a Bare Mountain. The energy of the music made me imagine I was standing in an enormous and magical factory. As the music played, it helped me to picture different machines.

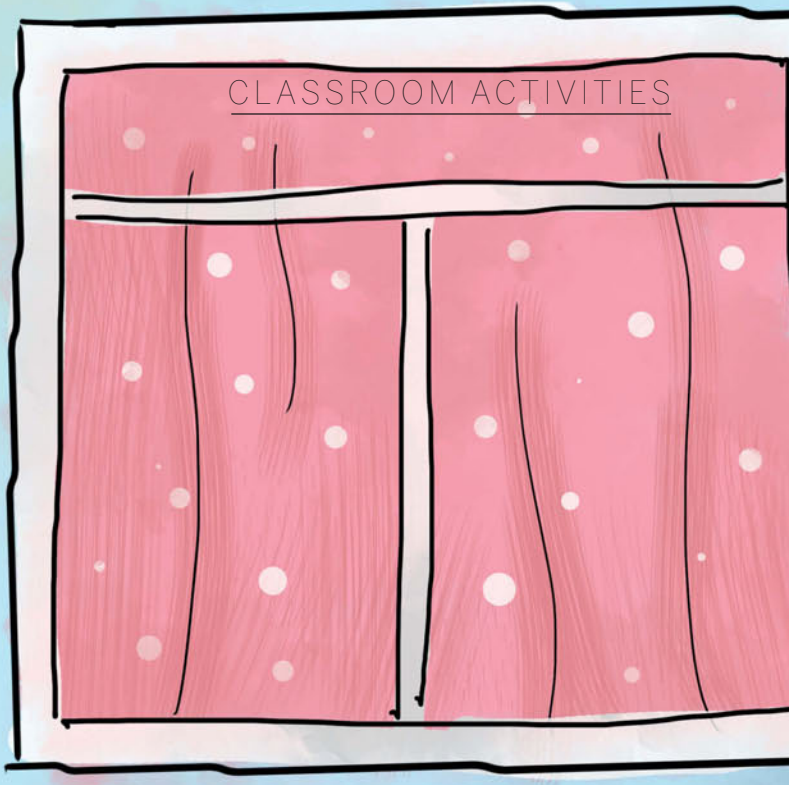
Experiment with playing music in class. Ask children to jot down any ideas the music suggests: where are they and what is happening? They could take notes or sketch ideas and images that might be used to support their writing.

My model text is a simple portal story that takes the main character into another world through a dream to find something they have desired. It ends leaving the reader wanting more; an invitation into writing the next event that happens.

door that led into another room. She edged forwards, slipped through and stepped quietly into something quite different. She was standing in what she imagined was surely the King's room in a fairytale palace. Silk curtains cut out the daylight, candles flickered and the carpet was a thick, soft scarlet. In a corner stood a suit of shiny armour, labelled, 'Will do as it's told – works on command'. Jo was tempted to ask it to get up and walk but felt that she had better not.

The walls were covered with wooden shelves that bowed under the weight of crowns, piles of coins, golden keys and bracelets. Strings of pearls and necklaces of gleaming jewels hung from thousands of hooks. Sitting on the top shelf was a snowy owl. Suddenly, it blinked at her and muttered, "Don't stare. It's rude!"

There was a huge table in the centre of the room, cluttered with jars in which swam all sorts of strange creatures. Scarlet eels writhed; golden lizards and emerald frogs blinked back at her. A pile of tiny boxes caught her eye. Jo picked up a small, red package and read the inscription that had been written on the label in spidery writing: to travel to any destination, put on the ring and twist once. Only use when you really mean it, as there is no escape clause. Immediately, she opened the box.



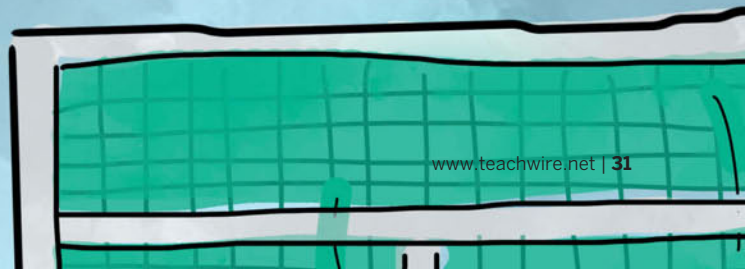


Fig.1

What did you visualise?	What interested or surprised you most?
What questions could we discuss?	What did you enjoy / not enjoy?

Reading for response

Read the story through with the children and gather their initial responses. This could be done using a simple grid (see Fig.1). Get the children to discuss their thoughts in pairs or small groups and complete the grids with their ideas. Come together for a class discussion with children sharing their ideas and developing their lines of thinking. Remind them to justify what they say by referring back to the text. Teach them how to put forward new ideas, build on other people's suggestions or challenge them. Provide useful sentence stems:

- *I would like to suggest that...*
- *I would like to build on x's idea because...*
- *I would like to challenge x's idea because...*

Let children discuss ideas in pairs so that they can use 'exploratory' talk, but when they reply, challenge them to frame their answers in sentences as this prepares them for writing.

Creative activities

- Draw a part of the factory or the star-birds
- In groups, create a machine with your bodies and use percussive sounds to start, work and stop
- Write Jo's diary when she wakes up
- List your own big dreams – what would happen if one came true?
- What other magical items might be in the fairytale palace besides the suit of armour and the talking owl?
- Make more tiny boxes and write on them magical instructions

Children love the idea of a magical factory. Use this to write a simple list poem in which anything can be made out of any ingredient. Begin by making a list of things that the children would like to make, e.g. bicycle, go-kart, tennis ball, etc. Then make a separate list of impossible ingredients, e.g. stars, snowflakes, secrets, etc. Put the ideas together randomly:

In the magical factory,
I would make -
A bicycle out of stars,
A go-kart out of snowflakes,
A tennis ball out of secrets...

Build vocabulary

Most vocabulary that might be challenging becomes reasonably obvious through the context of the story. However, there are some key words or phrases that may need explaining or teaching more deeply.

Get the class to read through with you and mark any words or phrases that need discussion. This might be torture if you did every word in one session, so stage this over a number of readings.

There are a few words for which you could prepare child-friendly definitions or use images to explain. For instance, 'tempted' means that 'you really want to do something that you shouldn't do'. Then give some examples to deepen understanding. For instance, I am often tempted to eat chocolate but it isn't good for me! Once the children have discussed things which have tempted them, use the word in sentences, add it to their magpie books or display for future use to deepen characterisation. What is your character 'tempted' by?

"List your own big dreams – what could happen if one came true?"

Experiment with this routine for teaching vocabulary:

1 Identify with the children words or phrases that need discussing.
2 Provide a child-friendly definition.
3 Children repeat the word aloud and the definition.
4 Use an activity to deepen understanding, e.g. looking at images, listing synonyms, miming, using the prefix, other related words, etc.
5 Use the word in sentences.
6 Save for future use.

Oral comprehension - inference

Use line-by-line, close reading to slow down the text and discuss what is happening, linking ideas together. Model this first, but then get the children working in pairs or threes to discuss their ideas and feed back. We have to infer from what we know of life, what happens in books and what the text says. We need to infer when something isn't explicitly stated.

For instance, when Jo is in the factory, it says that she 'stared round, eyes wide as saucers'. It doesn't explicitly tell us that she was likely amazed at what she was seeing and probably afraid as well, but we have enough clues from how she reacts, and knowing how we might feel, to realise what she might be thinking and feeling – what am I doing here, what is happening in this amazing place?

Explore these core inference questions:

- *In paragraph one, why do you think Jo liked the moonlight?*
- *What impression do you get of Jo's character from the first two paragraphs?*
- *Explain why the steps taken on the moon are described as 'dancing' and why they were taken 'tentatively'.*
- *Explain Jo's reactions in these sentences, 'Jo stared round, eyes wide as saucers. Alarm bells rang inside her as pistons pumped, wheels spun, cogs clicked and steam hissed.'*
- *What evidence is there in the third paragraph that Jo did not like the factory? How does the writer create the impression of the factory?*
- *In the 8th paragraph, what evidence suggests that Jo knew she should not go through the door?*
- *Why do you think Jo opened the box immediately?*

Grammar for writing

The story is rich with descriptive language and lends itself to developing description and teaching settings. Look at how I used both: 'what can be seen' and also, 'what can be heard' to bring the scene alive for the reader's imagination. Look at the use of alliteration and onomatopoeia to create sounds within the text.

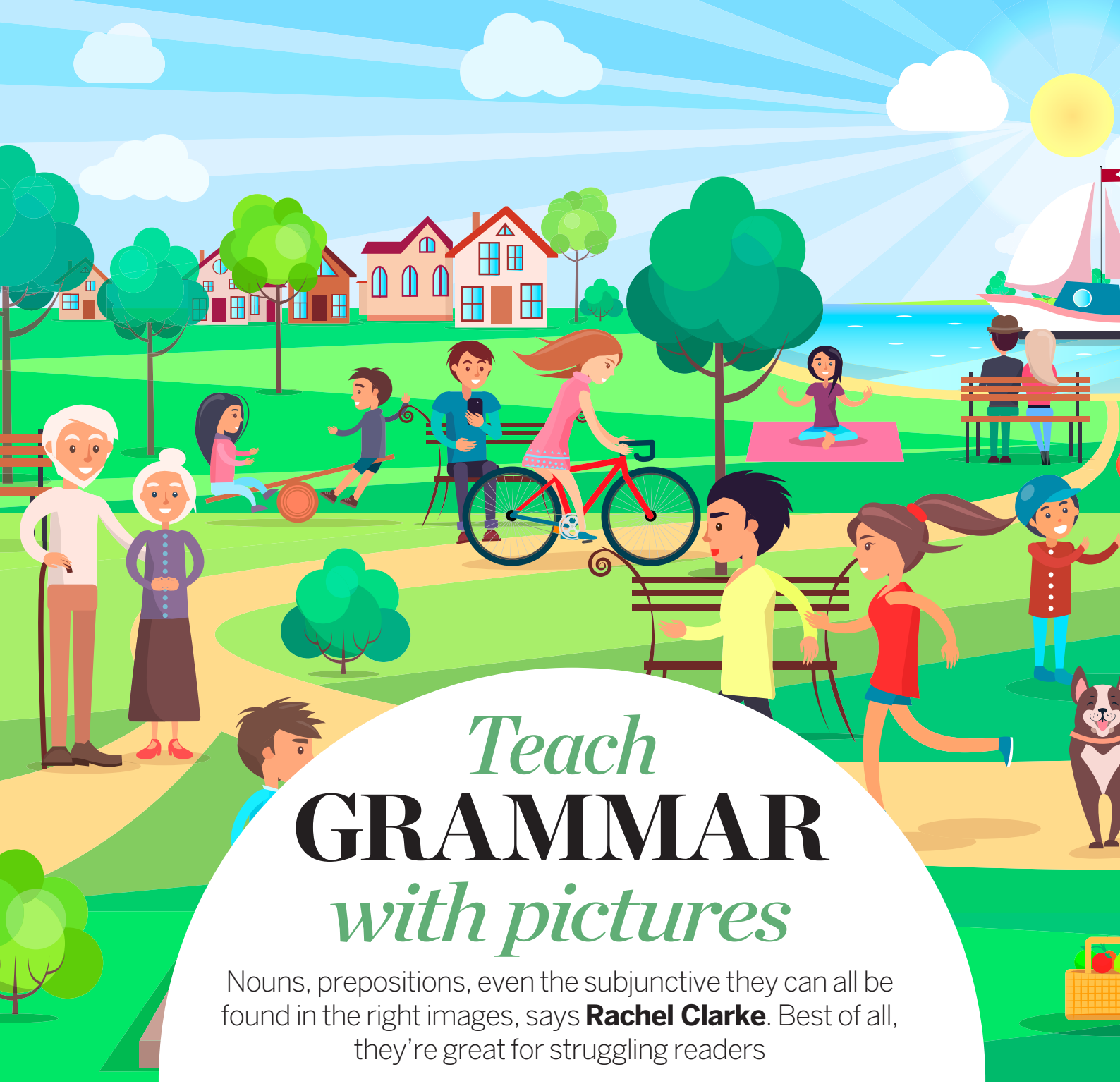
Make sure that the children understand the basic tactic of using a rhetorical question to reveal what a character is thinking and to make use of an idiom. Innovate on the pattern and use other idioms:

- *Didn't her mum often say that every cloud had a silver lining?*
- *Didn't her teacher often say that she had her head in the clouds?*
- *Didn't her father often say that she should let sleeping dogs lie?*

Explore the use of the semicolon to place two closely related sentences. 'Engines glittered as brass spindles rhythmically spluttered and massive bellows billowed; a cacophony of clattering and battering assaulted her ears.'

Experiment with using a colon to introduce a list. Thousands of toys, of all shapes and sizes appeared one by one: packages, packets, balloons, train sets, miniature planes, dolls, soft toys, and tiny cars.

***PIE CORBETT** is an author, poet and former headteacher.*



Teach GRAMMAR *with pictures*

Nouns, prepositions, even the subjunctive they can all be found in the right images, says **Rachel Clarke**. Best of all, they're great for struggling readers

Many of us use pictures to stimulate creative writing. They're great for helping pupils to visualise a scene; they don't exclude children who lack confidence with reading and frequently the same picture can be used with children across the age and ability range – something that is much harder to achieve with written texts. But have you ever thought of using pictures to teach grammar?

If you type 'busy pictures' into Google, you won't break the internet, instead you'll be rewarded with dozens of action-packed images ideal for use in the classroom, many of which can be used to teach an incredible range of grammar skills.

Nouns and noun phrases

In the first instance, busy pictures offer children the opportunity to name nouns. This is particularly useful for the youngest children, but also for those learning to speak English as an additional language. So, if using the picture above, you could ask children to record what can be seen, e.g. kite, sun, children, etc. When asking them to do this, you're almost certainly going to ask them to identify the determiners (e.g. a, the, some, two, etc.) that specify the people, places and things in the picture, and this is the first step in building noun phrases.

By asking children to note the appearance of objects in the picture, their simple noun phrases can be expanded to include descriptive detail e.g. old couple; a purple blanket; a large, brown dog. And should you be looking for children to expand their noun phrases with additional information after the noun, you could even help them to note *the yacht with pink sails*; *the happy man holding a coffee*; and, *the bright yellow sun in the sky* etc.

Sentence types

Talking and writing about what can be seen in a busy picture also enables children to practise sentence writing. By raising their awareness of question words (*who, where, when, why, which, how)* and by encouraging them to ask each other what they can see in the picture, they can practise saying and writing questions e.g. *What colour are the old lady's shoes?*

What is floating in the sky? How many children are playing on the see-saw?
The most natural response to asking a question is to receive an answer and when children do this, they practise saying and writing statements e.g. *The old lady's shoes are red... There is a kite floating in the sky... There are two children on the see-saw.*

Prepositions

Locating what can be seen in a busy picture requires children to understand and use prepositions. If looking at the image above with your class, you or the children could devise clues to help each other find points of interest, e.g. What is the lady *on* the purple rug doing? Who is *behind* the girl on the bike? Who is sitting *next* to the see-saw?

Verbs and verb forms

Because busy pictures are full of action, they are incredibly useful for practising different verb forms. For example, I can give a running commentary of what is taking place in the picture above by using the *present progressive* form of verbs – a girl *is riding* a bike, a man is *walking* his dog, some children *are playing* on the see-saw etc. In the classroom, I could model writing this on the whiteboard for the class to see or ask pairs of children to observe what is taking place in the picture and write their own descriptions. To extend the learning, I could then ask each pair of children to rewrite their present progressive commentary using the past progressive, or, if I wanted, even rewrite it using the simple present or simple past e.g. the children play/ played on the see-saw... the kite flies/ flew in the sky... the lady reads/ read a book, etc.

If I said to my class that the dog is *being taken* for a walk by the man in red trousers; that the kite is *being flown* in the sky; and that the red bike is *being ridden* by a girl wearing a pink dress, they would, I hope, note that I'd used the passive voice. And as I'd made my observations using the present tense form of the passive voice, I could then ask them to rewrite my observations in the past tense form of the passive voice e.g. the kite was *being flown* in the sky... the red bike was *being ridden* by a girl wearing a pink dress.

There is also sufficient detail in the busy picture for me to elicit my class's opinions about what they would do if they were to visit the depicted scene, e.g. I would play on the see-saw *if* I went to this park... *If* I went to this park, I would like to sail on the yacht. By encouraging children to think about what they would do if they visited this park, I am asking for speculative, hypothetical responses and so I've encouraged my class to use conditional *if clauses* (and of course I've achieved the added bonus of their sentences using subordinating conjunctions). By asking my class to speculate and hypothesise, I can also use the busy picture to practise the trickiest of all tricky grammatical forms: the subjunctive. It's not much of a leap from 'I would play on the see-saw if I went to this park' to 'I would play on the see-saw *if I were* to visit this park' or from 'If I went to this park, I would like to sail on the yacht' to '*If I were* to go to this park, I would like to sail on the yacht.'

In summary, busy pictures are an incredible grammatical teaching resource; so go on, type the words 'busy picture' into Google and see what you get.

Try teaching these images

It's not just busy pictures that can be used to teach grammar. Any image that enables detailed description of what can be seen will facilitate learning about noun phrases. Likewise, images portraying action lend themselves well to learning about verb forms.

Take a picture, such as the one shown here, and ask children to explore what may have happened by using modal verbs and adverbs of possibility e.g:

- There could have been an explosion
- There may have been an earthquake
- It's unlikely this was planned.

They should then use their observations to reach a probable conclusion about what has happened.

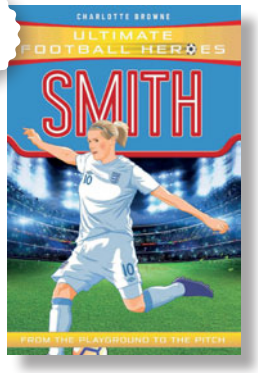
Pictures of famous cities and landmarks provide further ways to learn and apply grammar. First off, there is the opportunity to describe what can be seen, which reinforces that all-important skill of using capital letters to denote proper nouns. This picture also offers another opportunity to use conditional structures such as 'If I went to London, I would like to go on the London Eye', and subjunctive sentences such as 'I would like to travel in a hot air balloon if I were to visit London'.

Rachel Clarke is director of Primary English and a former deputy head and local authority English advisor.

Fresh inspiration

Eight ideas for even better literacy teaching and learning, in every classroom...

1 On the ball

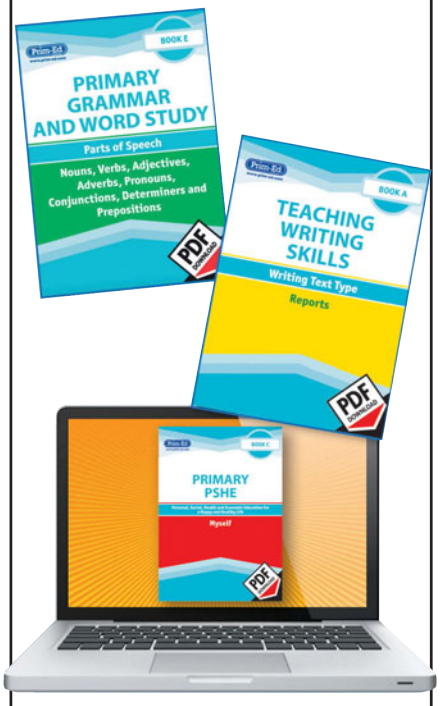


Smith, the latest book in the bestselling *Ultimate Football Heroes* series, is the inspiring story of how a talented young girl from Watford became England Women's national team's top scorer. Kicking stereotypes to the curb, Kelly's journey to the top was riddled with challenges, from there being no available opportunities for girls to play football, to irate parents forbidding her to play with the boys and a series of injuries that would see her miss out on the 2012 London Olympics quarter finals. However, no matter how many times the goalposts moved, with hard work, determination and a love of football, Kelly succeeded in becoming an incredible Ultimate Football Hero.

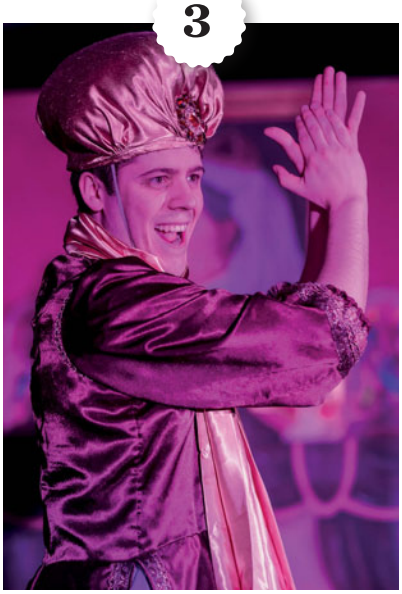
2 Digital resources for brilliant lessons

If you have used Prim-Ed Publishing resources, you will know what to expect. Since 1994, the company has been creating teacher resources, written by teachers and consultants from the education sector. These classroom resources are invaluable for providing educators with the strategies, practical activities and assessments needed to deliver laser-focused lessons, and are available in all subject areas, including English, mathematics, science/STEM and humanities. Based on its popular curriculum-linked photocopiable books, Prim-Ed has released a range of full eBooks and single eBook units – which are ideal for teaching individual class lessons. The advantage of digital format, is instant access to the files via your website account. Visit **www.prim-ed.com** for more information.

Prim-Ed Publishing



3 The magic of theatre



M&M Theatrical Productions' enchanting Classic Literature Adaptations are presented in an easily digestible and interactive format, creating an inspiring way to promote reading for pleasure and to learn about the past, whilst engaging the children in tales involving characters from many different social and cultural backgrounds.

These productions are followed by a Stagecraft Workshop; an exciting way to further enhance the experience of the visit by offering the older children a practical and unique insight behind the scenes of the production they have just enjoyed, broadening their knowledge of the arts, combined with STEM subjects.

Find out more at **www.magicoftheatre.com/productions/classic-literature-adaptations**

4 A confident start

When SEND budgets are tight you need cost-effective, proven interventions. The Five Minute Literacy Box and Number Box are reusable and manageable programmes for giving children a confident start on the road towards literacy and mathematics, particularly for enabling early identification of specific learning difficulties. These multi-sensory programmes build confidence and close learning gaps, perfect for children with EAL or those at risk of educational disadvantage. Each intervention is a little suitcase that contains everything you need for each lesson, and children love organising the resources themselves. Session follow a 'hear it, see it, say it, write it' approach that engages every learner. Children from school entry onwards make progress, preventing deeper difficulties later.

the five minute BOX

the number BOX

Find out more at **www.fiveminutebox.co.uk**

5

A great debate

Do your pupils have trouble communicating their ideas? Do they find it difficult to express how they feel, or struggle to understand the viewpoints of others? If so, Discover Debating can help. Designed for Years 5 and 6 and based on fun, engaging games and activities, this is an innovative two-term debating programme from oracy specialists the English-Speaking Union. Mentor support, CPD and comprehensive lesson plans are all included and the programme delivers demonstrable improvement in critical thinking, listening and speaking skills, as well as boosting students' confidence and teamwork.

For more information and to sign up, visit **esu.org/discover-debating;** email **debate@esu.org**; or call **020 7529 1550,** quoting Teach Primary.

Boost your professional capital

CLPE (Centre for Children's Literacy in Primary Education) is a charity working with all those involved in teaching literacy in primary schools. The organisation's work raises the achievement of children by helping schools to teach literacy more effectively and showing teachers how quality children's literature can be placed at the heart of all learning. Since 2005 CLPE has delivered its flagship Power of Reading project to over 4,000 schools nationally and internationally. CLPE also offers a wide range of professional development training, a Power of Reading whole school subscription,

6

and produces high quality free resources for schools.

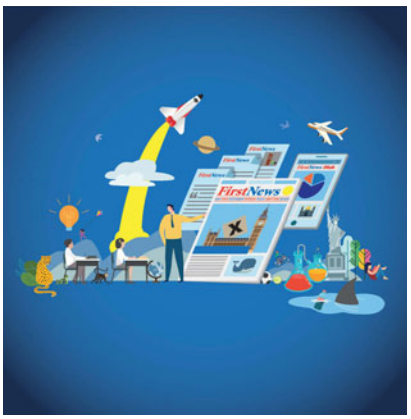
Try out a teaching sequence for FREE at **clpe.org.uk/corebooks/free-resources**

7

Spread the news

First News Education provides more than 9,000 schools with an invaluable platform to advance pupils' core literacy levels through a foundation of news. The weekly First News newspaper gives children an accessible and engaging way to develop their knowledge of the world in which they are growing up and build confidence in understanding and discussing news. Alongside the newspaper, First News Education's learning tools deliver reading activities based on exploring the week's stories, provided in three levels to support teachers to develop pupils' global understanding, comprehension and news literacy skills.

Download your tasters at **schools.firstnews.co.uk/explore**



8

Innovative, imaginative, informative

Booklife is an international publisher, passionately committed to creating the very best educational books for children. The company's simple philosophy is to publish imaginative and informative books that will enrich every child's life. With over 50 years of experience, the team of educational experts work with the best authors, illustrators and designers to ensure they create a product that will inspire curious young minds. The books reflect the changing world around us and encompass key national curriculum areas including science, religion and culture. Each title is devised and sculpted to create a finished product that is both distinctive and innovative.

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"Making people laugh put me in charge"

Comedian and author **Harry Hill's** latest series of children's books has taught him some surprising things about himself...

We didn't have much spare cash when I was young – I'm one of five siblings, and we lived in an end of terrace house on a sprawling, 60s housing estate... so there wasn't a lot of space, either. This meant that when it came to reading, the library was a big thing. I was allowed four tickets, and sometimes I'd borrow my mum's, too (she didn't have much time for picking up books, for obvious reasons). I liked the whodunnits – the Hardy Boys, and Ellery Queen, who I thought was a bit more exotic than Christie – but I didn't just read fiction. I remember a book about horror films, for example, with big photographs; I loved that one.

The library was important, then – ah, but this was the 70s, and so the main source of books was, of course, jumble sales. Now it's all boot fairs and eBay; in those days, there was always a jumble sale, with paperbacks piled high on trestle tables. You could buy all the James Bond books, including *Thunderball*, which had an actual hole in the cover – and this was heaven for me, because I'd been into Ian Fleming's spy stories ever since finding a dog-eared copy of *Doctor No* in the holiday home we stayed at every year in Pevensey, near Eastbourne.

That's the thing about reading. All you need is to find a book you love, and you're off – but it's not always that easy, as I'm sure teachers realise. My older two daughters are dyslexic, and the younger of them was always really resistant to reading, although she enjoys it a bit more now. We tried everything: comics, magazines, all kinds of books, but nothing caught her. Her big sister, on the other hand, is more naturally inquisitive, so she'd seek out things to read. Meanwhile our youngest, who's 14, loves buying books... but doesn't read at all, as far as I can see.

At school, maths was a bit of a black spot for me, but I was always pretty good at English, and creative writing; my stories would often be the ones read out to the whole class. I got a taste for poetry, and wrote my own verses and limericks (I loved Spike Milligan). And I liked history, too, which is basically just English, but about the past. I was also into science – albeit in a very superficial way; I enjoyed playing with matches, and my massive chemistry set was really just a front for my juvenile pyromania. Even so, my enthusiasm led me to study medicine, and become a doctor, and it

"...as soon you draw them into the action, the whole thing changes"

wasn't really until I gave that up, that I realised just how much fun writing is.

As well as writing all my scripts, and my act (although that evolves through performance as well), I've created picture books, joke books and a book for adults. My most recent series of novels, though, about a boy who wants to become a standup comedian, has probably been the easiest for me to produce. Telling Max's story has definitely been at least partly about communicating my own enthusiasm and passion for what I do, and I've found it quite emotional to go back and understand more about why I got into this business in the first place. I've just finished book three, but about halfway through book two, I had a revelation, in that I realised that what I liked from the start about standup was being in control. As a child you are always at the mercy of adults; but making people laugh suddenly put me in charge, and that was a good feeling. It still is.

I've been doing a children's show to promote the Matt Millz books, and one

thing I've learnt is that kids enjoy the performance much more if they're involved. They'll laugh at me doing silly jokes and falling over – but as soon as you draw them into the action, the whole thing changes. I remember that at school, too; I was a member of the Puffin Club, and I used to sit in front of visiting authors, absolutely desperate to tell them my thoughts and become part of the conversation. I realise that young people aren't all the same, but I suspect it's worth bearing in mind that often, encouraging someone to perform, rather than simply read or write, can be a good way of making them think, and remember.

Harry Hill presents Matt Millz Stands Up! as part of the free Programme for Schools at Hay Festival 2019, Thursday 23 May. Book your school's place at hayfestival.org/schools or call 01497 822 629.

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How to make non-fiction MATTER

Does your school encourage children to read Playstation manuals as well as Harry Potter? Perhaps it should, says Emma Hughes-Evans

As a teacher, I've always been passionate about fostering a love of books and reading among my pupils. That exposure to a wealth of quality language and vocabulary is what ultimately allows children to become better writers; but if we're looking to make improvements to non-fiction writing in particular, the reading diet we offer must be sure to include plenty of rich examples from this genre too.

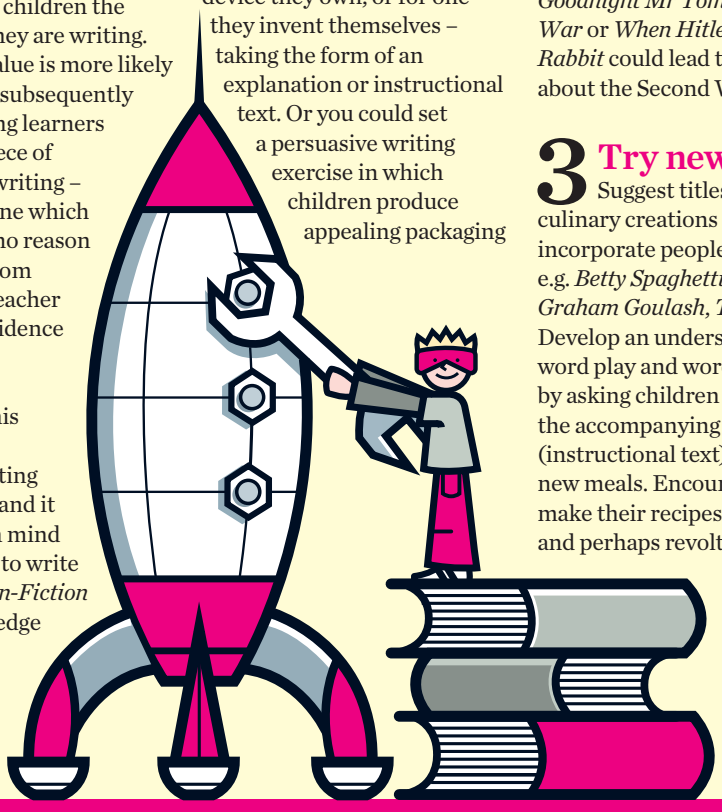
Confined to the realms of English lessons, non-fiction writing can struggle to find room to breathe, which is why it's vital to seize the vast array of opportunities to reinforce non-fiction writing throughout the whole curriculum. Such a cross-curricular approach provides *real* situations that have a sense of purpose and therefore show children the value of what they are writing. This sense of value is more likely to enthuse and subsequently encourage young learners to produce a piece of higher quality writing – as opposed to one which seemingly has no reason to exist apart from satisfying the teacher or providing evidence of genre in an exercise book.

Arousing this enthusiasm for non-fiction writing is no easy task, and it was with this in mind that I sat down to write *Stimulating Non-Fiction Writing* (Routledge 2019), which provides both professional development on the subject and fresh ideas to use in the classroom – a few of which I'd like to share with you now.

1 Go beyond books

It is important to remember that a broad range of texts can be used to inspire non-fiction writing. Atlases, leaflets, gadget handbooks, product packaging and catalogues – many children are exposed to these regularly, but they may not consider them actual 'texts'. For reluctant readers, however, the study of a manual for a games console or even a cereal box can be more accessible and engaging than a more traditional non-fiction book.

You might, for instance, challenge the class to produce an alternative manual for a device they own, or for one they invent themselves – taking the form of an explanation or instructional text. Or you could set a persuasive writing exercise in which children produce appealing packaging for a new cereal or food product, which in turn opens up cross-curricular links to a healthy eating study in science.



2 Use fiction to inspire non-fiction

The use of fictional texts as sources of inspiration for the writing of non-fiction genres should not be ignored. Recount writing in the role of characters is something that can be done for any fiction study. This could be in the form of a diary, letter or newspaper report relating to events experienced by characters within a text.

Children could also be asked to research and subsequently write a non-chronological report based on an historical event that features within a fictional text. For example, a reading of *Goodnight Mr Tom*, *Carrie's War* or *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* could lead to a piece about the Second World War.

3 Try new recipes

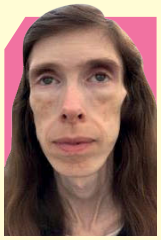
Suggest titles for new culinary creations that incorporate people's names, e.g. *Betty Spaghetti*, *Roast Peter*, *Graham Goulash*, *Tim on Toast*. Develop an understanding of word play and word association by asking children to write the accompanying recipe (instructional text) for these new meals. Encourage them to make their recipes humorous and perhaps revolting in nature.

4 Write a Wonderland guidebook

Following a reading of a fictional text, focus the children's attention on the setting of the story e.g. Alice's Wonderland, Narnia or even Mr Men and Little Miss Land. After a discussion about the different aspects of this fantasy land, challenge children to write a non-chronological report in the form of a guidebook. Possible subheadings could focus on aspects such as weather, food, objects, landscape, inhabitants, and attractions.

5 Tackle key issues

Engage children in an oral debate relating to a troubling issue or concern. This can be within their locality or the wider context of the country / world (e.g. poverty, homelessness, prejudice, crime, Brexit). Following the debate, ask children to reflect on what's been said and then write a discussion text which relates their thoughts and perspectives on the issue. To take this a step further you could actually send pupils' work to well-known figures who are passionate about the issue – a local politician, the prime minister or the queen, for example. Children may even receive a reply!



Emma Hughes-Evans is assistant headteacher at a primary school in the West Midlands and author of* Stimulating Non-Fiction Writing! Inspiring Children Aged 7 - 11, *published by Routledge

"Dylan, Cohen and Jim Morrison were my poets"

For **Brian Moses,** song lyrics opened the door to a world of poetry that he wants every child to visit...

I was lucky when it came to reading, in that my mother did a lot of letters with me from an early age, so by the time I started school I already knew how words fitted together. I raced through all the Janet and John books very swiftly, thinking how desperately dull they were, and keen to get to the privileged position where I would be able to choose my own stories. And when that time came, it was Enid Blyton who established reading habits for me – her *Famous* Five series was just so exciting (even though by the time you get to the fifteenth adventure or so, you can't help realising that they're all essentially the same).

Most of the books I read as a child were borrowed from Ramsgate library; I have a lot to thank that place for. My dad had a well-stocked bookcase, though, and I remember being fascinated by one particular title in his collection called *The Big Book of Ghost Stories*, which had a picture of a hanged man on the spine. I'd stare at it for ages, daring myself to take it off the shelf and read it. I did in the end, when I was seven or eight; the stories were very much written for adults, so it was quite hard going, and something of a disappointment.

I was particularly drawn to series books – like *Jennings, Biggles* and the very non-PC *Billy Bunter*. There's a real pleasure in getting to the end of a story you love and knowing there's a whole load more of them, featuring characters that you've come to know; I still enjoy that. Poetry, on the other hand, I didn't really get into until I was 16 or 17 – and it was song lyrics that led me there. I bought my first Bob Dylan album at 14, and what he did with words was wonderful to me. Meanwhile, at school I was being forced to read Wordsworth and Blake, neither of whom had anything to say that

might concern me, as far as I could tell (I changed my mind eventually, but not until many years later). Dylan, Cohen, Jim Morrison – those were my poets.

The final piece of the puzzle came a couple of years later, when I picked up a paperback called *Penguin Modern Poets 10*. I was vaguely aware of 'the Mersey Sound', but what really sold the book to me was Roger McGough's name on the cover, because he'd been in The Scaffold, of course. Reading those poems was a revelation; they were colloquial, fun, and dealt with issues that I could relate to. That summer, it all fell into place, and I started writing poetry of my own.

After I left school, I tried various career options, before deciding on teacher training college. I spent 13 wonderful years at the chalkface, mostly with Y6 – in those blissful, pre-SATs days when you could spend their last year in primary school opening children up, not closing them down. I have great memories of all the incredible things we did; one year, we built a floor to ceiling dragon in the classroom, out of dustbins, chicken wire and other junk. It was the centrepiece for a huge amount of work – and at the end of term we dismantled it, rebuilt it on the field, then spent an evening chanting Beowulf around it before setting it on fire in front of an invited audience of parents. Imagine trying to do that now!

I do think it's important that children are introduced to poetry at school; there are so many kids who want to write, but struggle with producing a story, so the idea that they can take a structure and fill it with their own imagination, their own words, is really powerful for them. It has to be taught the right way, though – with the emphasis very much on performance: choosing a poem and sharing it out loud, practising it, trying out different voices, actions and so on, maybe even adding a percussion instrument or two. If pupils then decide to learn it by heart, rather than reading it from a book, that's a bonus.

Illustrations: Chris Garbutt

"At school I was being forced to read Wordsworth and Blake, neither of whom had anything to say that might concern me..."

What matters most, though – what will get pupils really excited about poetry – is delving behind the stanzas to reveal all the magical, mystical stories they hold. Finding out about the writer can be inspiring, too; filling in as much background and context as you can, and encouraging children to think about why *that* person, *then*, might have chosen *those* words about *that* topic. There are so many fantastic resources available to teachers nowadays, from clips of poets reading their own work on YouTube, to the National Poetry Archive, to all the brilliant things that are organised around National Poetry Day. I firmly believe that with the right stimulus, and the right person guiding them, anyone can write a poem – and when I visit schools where they teach poetry well, I often see work that is so stunning, I have to share it on my blog. Brilliant.

National Poetry Day is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, and takes place on October 3rd. To find out more about Brian Moses, visit www.brianmoses.co.uk and brian-moses.blogspot.com.

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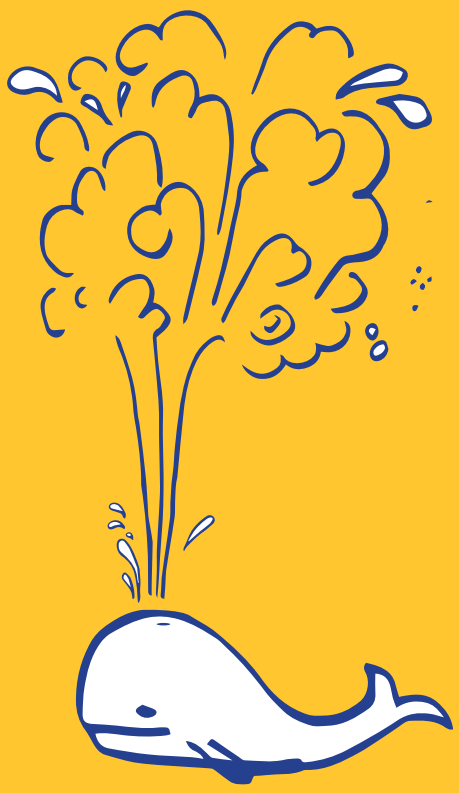
How to teach GREATER DEPTH Writing

It can be easy to forget our most promising writers - but they deserve better, says **Felicity Ferguson**

When I was 10 and new to secondary school, I wrote my first set homework assignment for R.E. - a recount of one of the seven plagues of Egypt. After a few days my book came back with the depressing comment: is this all your own work? Mortified, because it was my own work and I'd written it like a story, with my usual enthusiasm and emotional investment, I approached the teacher on the pretext I hadn't been able to read her comment. "Well," came the reply, "it was so vivid." I said I had written it myself - but I could see she didn't believe me. To this day I still feel the injury to my early strong sense of me as a writer, and the need I had to own and assert my 'talent'.

As a pupil I would have qualified as a 'greater depth' writer. I had a natural drive to write from an early age. I wrote from desire, with pleasure, absorption, satisfaction; it was an act of escapism. I wrote a great deal at home – stories, unfinished novels, programmes for shows put on in a friend's backyard. I even edited my own magazine. My memory is that in those days we were never asked to do any of these different kinds of writing in primary school. Luckily for me, my intrinsic motivation was strong enough to carry me through as a writer into my adult life – but this may not be the case for all children who are capable of writing at greater depth if their motivation and therefore their pleasure are not fostered.

I have recently known several pupils who were clearly outstanding as writers.They were all highly motivated, persistent, committed and self-regulating, and all wrote extensively and with pleasure at home. The small body of research on the subject stresses the importance of the environment



if children are to maintain the desire to write to a high standard – parents, teachers and the home and school ethos. However, it suggests that some classroom strategies could actually have an adverse effect on their motivation. So what kind of teaching would be the most valuable for talented writers? Do we in fact need to do anything to support them or, with the demands of getting other less experienced children to the 'expected standard', is it enough to praise and showcase their writing but then leave them to their own devices, trusting that they will always write something good? My view is that it's not. Like everyone else, they need good teaching and writing that challenges them. Here's how:

Make a classroom community of writers

Here, writing by teachers and pupils alike is shared, discussed and responded to in a safe and positive atmosphere where all are seen as writers. A talented writer, like anyone else, needs to feel part of important social structures such as these, where children learn things of value from each other.

Teach the writing processes

Being explicitly taught the writing processes means that confident, talented writers become free to think about how they can personalise their approach and develop their voice. Many professional writers have reflected on their processes, and these reflections could be shared and discussed.

Create purposeful, authentic writing projects

Children will be engaged and motivated if writing projects are felt by them to be relevant to their lives and existing knowledge – in other words to have personal meaning for them. Putting their own idea into the genre being studied immediately creates an authentic purpose and a personal connection to the writing.

Give time, space and freedom

Writing daily and having agency to write on topics of their own choice, for their own purposes and at their own pace is the key to motivation, efficacy and pleasure. The opportunity to write in this way at school may resemble the experience of writing at home, where often much of talented pupils' most creative, varied and

successful writing takes place. Having time and space on a daily basis allows them to practise and improve their craft. This, and the teacher's interest, contributes to a writer's sense of self as someone engaged in important work, but this won't be maintained if children are constantly forced into writing to someone else's design. A diet of teacher-chosen topics may affect motivation adversely, and will certainly result in the writer losing the feeling that writing is a real-world activity, has a personal point and is purposeful.

Become a writer-teacher

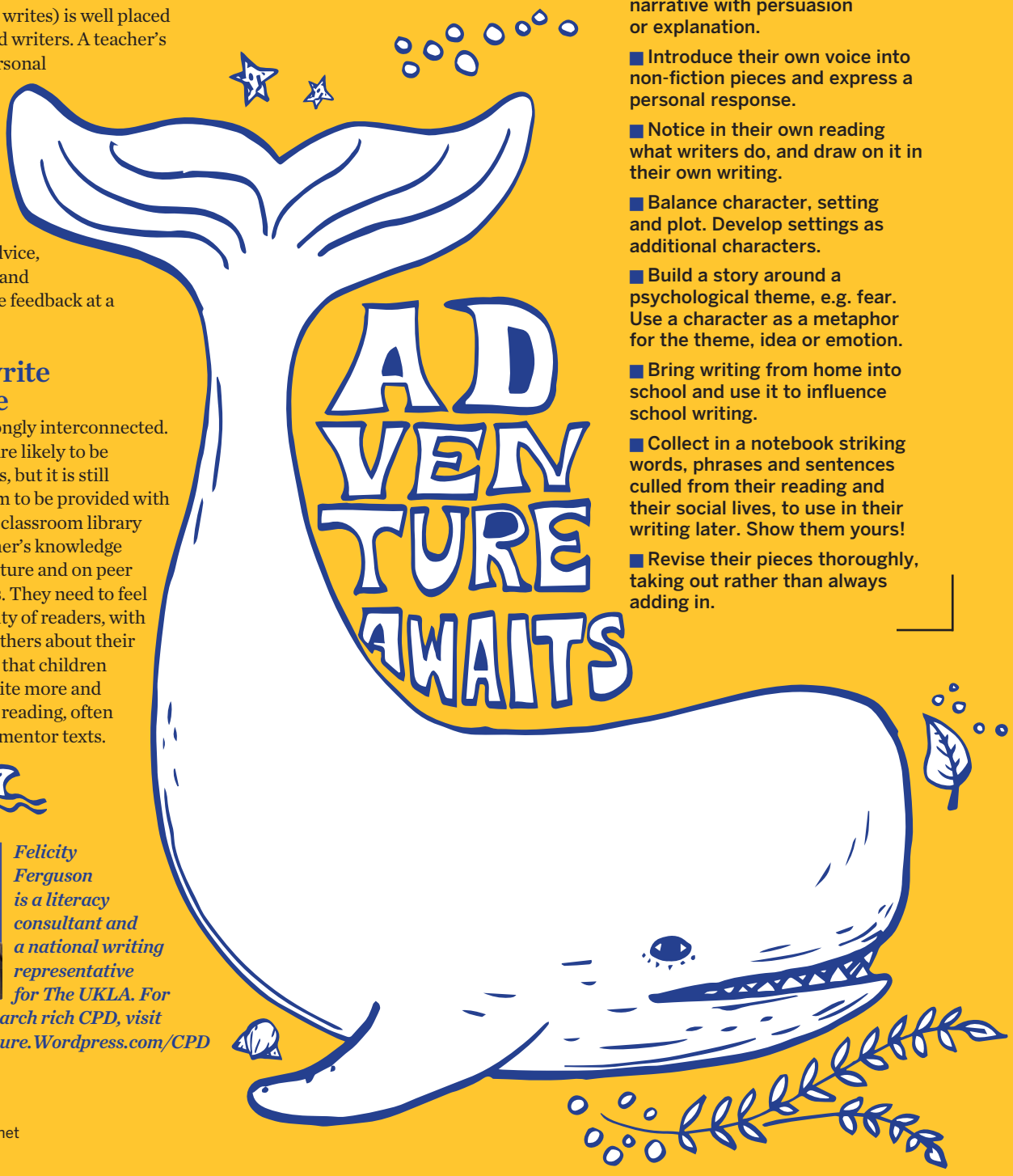
A writer-teacher (a writer who teaches and a teacher who writes) is well placed to nurture talented writers. A teacher's engagement in personal writing works to sustain pleasure, motivation and tenacity in the students, and makes it possible to share difficulties, give advice, suggest strategies and provide immediate feedback at a high level.

Read and write for pleasure

These two are strongly interconnected. Talented writers are likely to be committed readers, but it is still important for them to be provided with a rich and eclectic classroom library based on the teacher's knowledge of children's literature and on peer recommendations. They need to feel part of a community of readers, with time to talk with others about their reading. We know that children who read more write more and better, using their reading, often unconsciously, as mentor texts.

Teachers need to use children's reading experiences and take advantage of the many opportunities for showing them how to link their own writing to the way in which their current favourite book is written. Plant an idea. Say, "You could do something like that..."

Will my talented writers write with the same desire and pleasure as they progress through the education system? I don't know. Maybe they will, if there can be a balance between the demands of the curriculum and assessment practices and the freedom and space to write with ease and engagement on self-chosen topics.



GOING DEEPER

Encourage your greater depth writers to...

- Develop and use their own preferred writing processes.
- Take part in writerly talk about craft and process.
- Experiment with narrative structures, point of view, chronology, flashback, cinematic devices such as 'zooming in', or using a wide-view 'lens' to set a scene.
- Be playful with genre – for example, by combining a narrative with persuasion or explanation.
- Introduce their own voice into non-fiction pieces and express a personal response.
- Notice in their own reading what writers do, and draw on it in their own writing.
- Balance character, setting and plot. Develop settings as additional characters.
- Build a story around a psychological theme, e.g. fear. Use a character as a metaphor for the theme, idea or emotion.
- Bring writing from home into school and use it to influence school writing.
- Collect in a notebook striking words, phrases and sentences culled from their reading and their social lives, to use in their writing later. Show them yours!
- Revise their pieces thoroughly, taking out rather than always adding in.

Felicity Ferguson is a literacy consultant and a national writing representative for The UKLA. For details of her research rich CPD, visit LiteracyForPleasure.Wordpress.com/CPD

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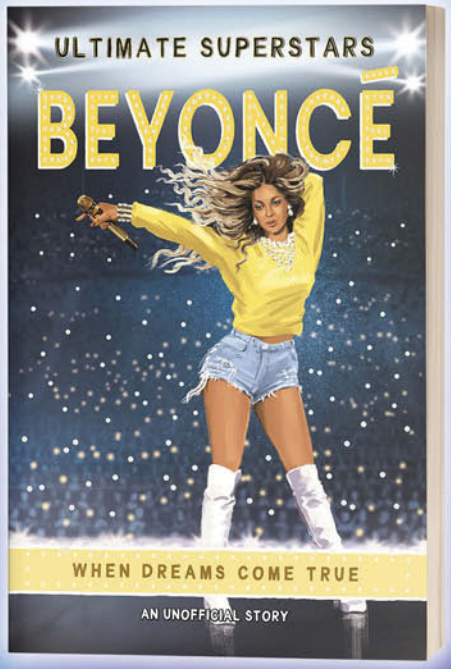

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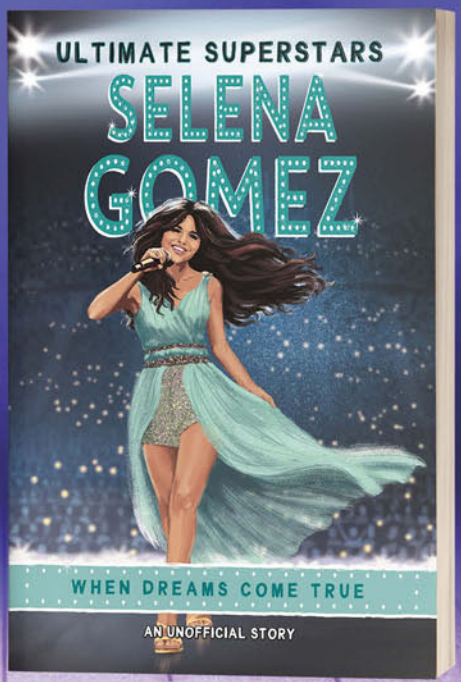

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Confessions of a POOR SPELLER

Look, say, cover, write, check didn't work for Ruth Baker-Leask, but these strategies would have made all the difference

There is a stigma attached to not being able to spell. I become aware of this every time I'm nominated to act as 'scribe' in front of a group of my peers. I instantly feel uneasy, and too proud to decline the invitation, then revert to the spelling tricks of my childhood: writing 'e's that look like 'a's and vice versa (leaving it up to the reader to choose the appropriate unstressed vowel) and writing easy-to-spell alternatives to the tricky words offered.

People judge your level of education and, more personally, level of intelligence, by the words you can't spell. For years I have tried to hide my poor spelling abilities for fear of being judged as intellectually inferior, but now is my moment to step into the light. My name is Ruth, and I find spelling difficult.

A bit of a bad spell

Spelling tests caused me anxiety as a child; no matter how diligently I learned the words I always got a low score. Some people are lucky and have a visual memory that preserves the mental image of a word perfectly. They can LOOK at a word, SAY it, COVER it over, WRITE it and CHECK it and the word is theirs. When I use 'Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check', the moment I close my eyes the word is lost forever. Yes, I am the annoying child who can't copy from the board for the same reason! My memory, both short and long term, needs more than a visual stimulus. It needs something physical, a silly story, an image, rhyme or ditty. My teachers didn't realise this so, to set the record straight, here are some strategies that would have worked.

1 Make sure talk is central

Children need to develop a 'spelling voice' in their heads; a voice that considers alternatives, notices root words, and recalls rules and tricks. Talk is vital to this process. Spellers are linguistic problem solvers; a skill they develop through interactions with other learners. Try paired spelling tests that allow children to discuss how they have spelt a word before deciding on the correct spelling. Children may remember the conversation more efficiently than the strategy they used to learn the word.

2 Help children to recognise and fix errors

The 2014 National Curriculum places a greater emphasis on the importance of spelling than we had been used to. It makes it clear that spelling is an essential part of being a successful writer. Poor spelling hampers the flow of ideas and limits the vocabulary a child uses when they choose easy-to-spell words over the best words. So how can we help?

Forgive a first draft

If children know you are going to mark their first draft for spelling errors, they will be more conscious of their spelling and less aware of the quality of what they are writing (composition). Encourage children to check their spellings as they go along but don't be too hard on them if they make transcriptional mistakes the first time around. If they know they have spelt a word incorrectly, encourage them to draw a line under it; you can help them with the spelling at a more appropriate time, without disturbing the flow of the writing.

Use peer editors

In real life, writers have editors who ensure their published work is accurate and sounds good. Why? Because your brain finds it almost impossible to notice your own errors; it fills in the missing pieces and ignores the mistakes it thought were correct in the first place. If adults need editors, so do children. Pair a great speller with a poor speller and encourage them to discuss why words are misspelt and share their strategies for correcting them.

Give writing a wider audience

As we know, familiarity breeds contempt, and I'm afraid that children don't see the jeopardy in misspelling a word if you're the only person who knows about it. If I'm writing a quick shopping list for my husband and I misspell a word, he may tease me, but there is no real consequence; however, if I write a tweet to advertise some training I'm delivering, and there is a spelling error, then I'm unlikely to get many attendees! The wider the audience, the more important accurate spelling becomes. Post letters, publish writing online, create anthologies for the library and

"Teachers are great at spotting errors but spend less time analysing their cause..."

poems for a display; in other words, give children a reason to care about the accuracy of their spelling.

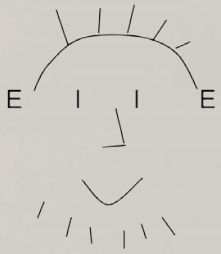
3 Match the spelling strategies to pupils

Teachers are great at spotting errors but spend less time analysing their cause. Error analysis is vital; once you know why children are misspelling words, it is easier to match the appropriate strategy to their need. Making word pyramids, drawing the shape of a word or even highlighting the tricky bits are great visual strategies for some children but not all (they would have been no help to me).

I really struggle when words contain guttural, unstressed sounds called schwas 'ə'. I have to guess the correct letter because I can't see or hear what it is. If we look at the word 'definitely', you can hear the first vowel (phew!), but the next two are schwas, and the final vowel is silent (grrr!). I remember such words using:

Auditory strategies

- Stressing the unstressed vowels so I can hear where and what they are. E.g. d e f 'I' n 'I' t 'E' l y
- Making up a mnemonic e.g. I definitely have two eyes ('i's) and 2 ears ('e's)!



- Saying each part of the word as it is spelt, e.g. 'def-i-ni-tely'.
- Saying every single letter out loud – giving it a rhythm / tune that I can repeat back to myself. Out of interest, this is how I learnt to spell mouse (and house) at primary school due to the catchy theme tune to the 'Mickey Mouse Club', which spelt out the word.

Physical strategies

I once became so fed up with the embarrassment of forgetting to write the silent 'e' at the end of the word 'before' that I drew an 'e', with my finger, on the palm of my hand, over and over again. Now when I write the word 'before' I remember this action and write the final 'e', even if my brain isn't keen on the idea. Some children will need to do something physical to remember silent letters or difficult letter patterns such as:

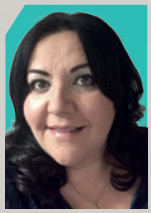
- Writing the word repeatedly in the air
- Writing it on someone's back
- Turning it into a collage, cutting each letter out of sticky paper, using a different colour for the tricky bit.

Knowledge of spelling rules

We usually keep the final 'e' when adding a suffix that begins with a consonant (the exception being words that end in 'le' when we usually drop the 'e'). 'Definitely' fits with this rule. Spelling rules work well for some children who can't see words in their heads. Teach them well and repeat them often!

What next?

Hopefully, I have inspired you to think carefully about why some of your children have developed poor spelling behaviours. Perhaps my story has resonated with you or provided some insight into the causes of your class' spelling muddles and mix-ups. I hope so, because if you can support your children to understand what sort of speller they are and which spelling strategies suit them best, then maybe all children can become confident, successful spellers.



Ruth Baker-Leask (@RuthBakerLeask) is director of Minerva Learning and chair of the National Association for Advisers in English (NAAE).

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Why I Love...

Kathryn Priddey, Head, explains how the Teach Handwriting Scheme is enhancing the curriculum at Launde Primary School

"A clear teaching pathway from Foundation through to Year 6"

Presentation has always been of paramount importance in our school and children take great pride in their work. We wanted children to increase the fluency of their writing. To achieve this aim, we teach the children continuous cursive handwriting progressively from the very beginning of their time at our school as well as ensure that children's fine motor skills and writing posture were developed – a fundamental element to writing that can be overlooked. Teach Handwriting had both these elements entwined through a clear and progressive strategy that caters for all abilities.

"An engaging scheme with children at the heart of it"

In our setting we have been using Teach Handwriting for two years, with very pleasing results. The resources for the pupils are attractive and there are visual, online letter animations that are fun to use. The children will often chant the catchy rhyme used to remind them of correct posture! The scheme is organised in progressive blocks making it easy for staff to deliver both the fine motor control learning elements as well as the teaching of the letter families, organised to be in line with the National Curriculum.

"Bespoke training opportunities for staff and parents"

The programme offers opportunities for staff training, individualised to the school requirements and has supported the staff in delivering parent workshops, an important element to any new approach. In addition, there are free resources on the website to support the parents at home. Parents have been able to see the importance of developing fine and gross motor skills of their children and have been able to help their child practise these at home too. It has enabled parents to engage in their child's learning, leading to improved outcomes for pupils.

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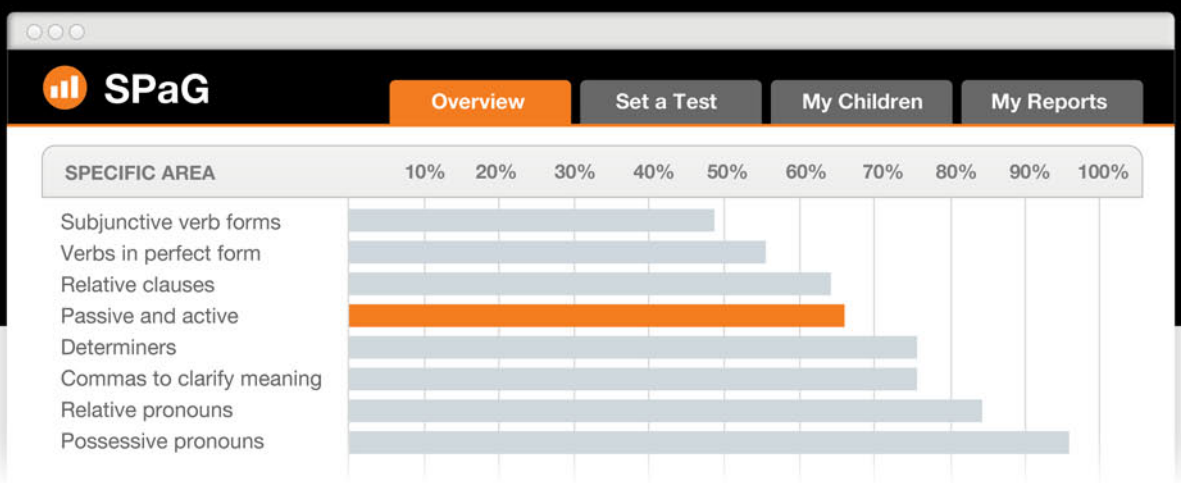

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The Beetle Collector's Handbook

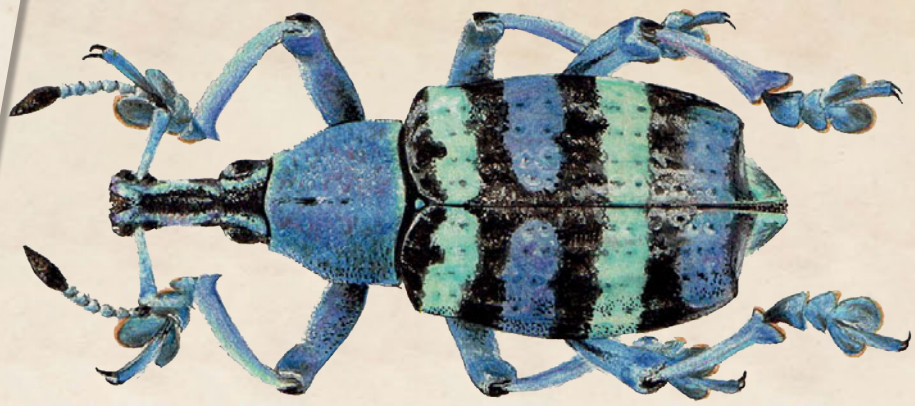
Get your pupils going bonkers for bugs with author M.G.Leonard's creative classroom activities...

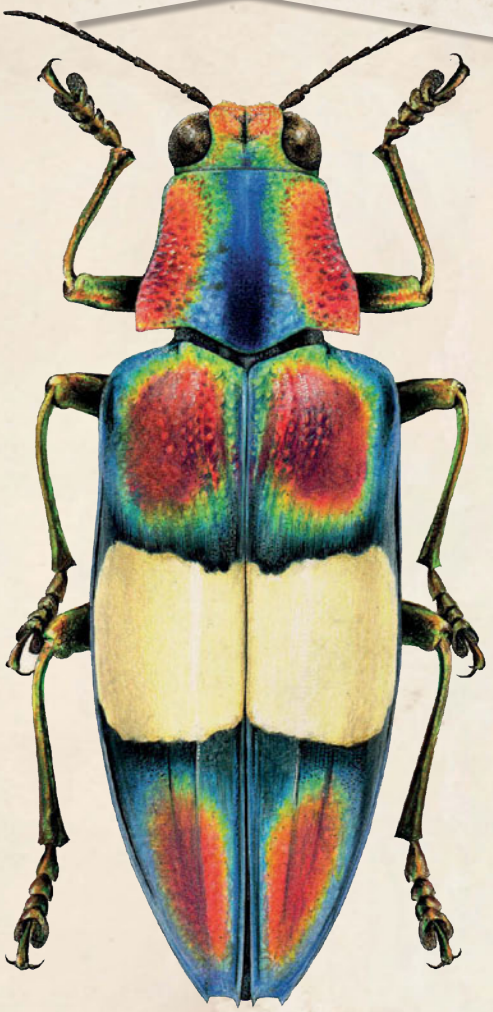
When I go into schools and talk to the children, I ask everyone to put their hand up if they are afraid of any sort of creepy-crawly. Usually, fifty percent of the room raises an arm – including teachers. I can relate. I spent thirty years of my life phobic about bugs. *But*, in our planet's ecosystem, invertebrate life is essential for keeping the machine working. Put simply, without them, we die.

So why don't we like and appreciate mini-beasts? Why do we perpetuate this unhelpful myth that they are frightening? It isn't a universally human thing. In Eastern cultures they celebrate insects. In Japan children have pet beetles like we have pet hamsters. Maybe it is because in the West we characterise bugs as horrid, scary, evil and dirty – in our language, our films, our TV programmes and our stories.

That's why I wrote my insect-filled trilogy, where beetles are the good guys, and why I followed it with a non-fiction guide to the most bonkers and brilliant beetles on the planet. I want beetles to capture children's imagination in a positive way, to awaken their curiosity and perhaps help them on their first steps to having a relationship with the natural world.

Beetles make for a fascinating, creative and rewarding topic for classroom activities; I've put together a raft of activities that might make up a scheme of work, or a small project – why not try some of these in your summer term? If you do, be sure to share the students' work with me on social media. I will reply and celebrate any and all of it!





Introducing the handbook

The Beetle Collector's Handbook is a non-fiction book about beetles, which complements my fictional adventure trilogy: **Beetle Boy**, **Beetle Queen** and **Battle of the Beetles**.

It is humorously narrated by a fictional entomologist, Dr Montgomery George Leonard – see what I did there? **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** sets out its manifesto in the introduction – to inspire a new generation of bug hunters.

The book is divided into three parts. **Preparing for an Expedition** introduces the science of entomology, explains what a beetle is, explains taxonomy, suggests what to take on a bug hunt and where to find beetles. Next, **The Beetles** features information about more than fifty species, accompanied by beautiful and biologically accurate illustrations by Carim Nahaboo. Finally, **The Entomologist's Epilogue** contains a strong message about conservation and protecting the habitats of insects, as well as the stories of two entomologists working today. It also contains an entomologist's dictionary – a glossary of useful insect words along with simple definitions.

The Beetle Collector's Handbook is annotated by the fictional characters from the **Beetle Boy** trilogy; it aimes to serve as a crossover book for those who enjoy non-fiction but resist fiction, and vice versa, and works best in the classroom when twinned with **Beetle Boy**.

Why not try some of the following activities with your pupils?

1 The life cycle of a beetle

Read pages 14–15 of **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** with the class and look at the illustration *Fig 2 The Life Cycle of the Stag Beetle*. Ask pupils to draw their own picture of the four different stages of a beetle's life. Introduce them to the word 'metamorphosis', meaning the transformation or changing of an insect's body. Consider what they know about the life cycle of a butterfly. Compare a butterfly's life cycle to that of a beetle; *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* is a good book for this exercise.

Take it further

1 | SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Compare and contrast the fictional and non-fiction descriptions of a rhinoceros beetle in **Beetle Boy** and **The Beetle Collector's Handbook**.

- Read pages 34-44 in **Beetle Boy**
- Read pages 38-41 in **The Beetle Collector's Handbook**

What are the differences the children notice? How is the beetle brought to life? How does the story affect the way they think and feel about the beetle? Look at the two illustrations. How are they different? Why might this be the case? Do your pupils have a preference? Then move on to the following creative writing exercise...

2 | BRING FACTS TO LIFE

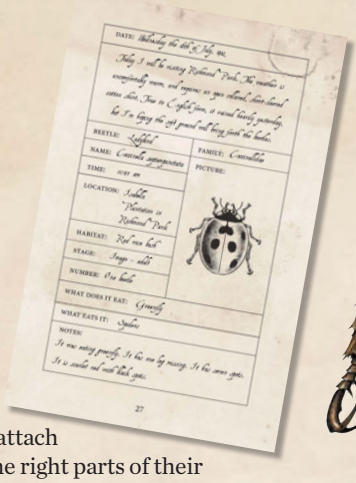
Ask the class to each choose a beetle from **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** that captures their imagination. Get them to note down all the interesting things about their creature. How does it move? Where does it live? What is its enemy (predator)? What does it eat? Then ask them to write a short story with their beetle as the hero, using these facts as inspiration. Of course, they must use their imaginations to make their story as wild and wonderful as possible.

3 | REAL DETAILS

Use **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** to relate **Beetle Boy** to beetles in the real world, and show how facts and fiction can work together in a story.

Choose one of the following extracts:

2 Beetle bodies



On page 13 of **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** there is a labelled diagram of a stag beetle (*Fig 1*). Hand out an unlabelled diagram of a beetle (these can be found freely on the internet) and ask the class to attach the right words to the right parts of their beetle's body. The required vocabulary, with easy to read definitions, can be found in the entomologist's dictionary on pages 154-157.

3 Make your own beetle

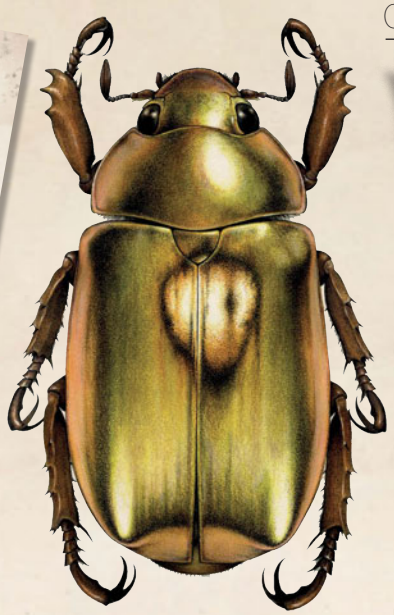
Using recycled things brought in from home, ask the children to create and name their own beetle using **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** for inspiration. Then ask them to talk or write about their beetle's habitat, life-cycle, food... and any super skills it might have.

4 Create a field journal

A naturalist should always have a field journal in which they can record their findings when on adventures. On page 27 of **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** there is an example page; get the children to create their own, then send them out into the playground to find an insect and enter it into their journal (they may need to look up their bug in a book or on the internet to find out its scientific name).

5 Pack an entomologist's backpack

Read pages 19-21 of **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** with your class, then encourage them to write a list of what they think they would put in their own entomologist's backpack.



6 Build a bug hotel

You may want to build a large bug hotel in your playground to encourage beetles to share the school; you can find step by step instructions on page 25 of **The Beetle Collector's Handbook**. If there isn't space, each child could build a small, hanging bug hotel for their own garden, or windowsill – watch my Blue Peter make video at bbc.in/2OT9oVd. All you need are a plastic bottle, sticks and leaves, scissors and string.

7 Careers in entomology

On pages 148-153 of **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** you will find two well-known entomologists – Dr Sarah Beynon of the Bug Farm and Max Barclay, head coleopterist at the Natural History Museum – talking about their lives as entomologists and their passion for beetles. Read these pages with the class, and share these YouTube videos: **bit.ly/2U0PJUt** and **bit.ly/2If6mJA**. Using this pair as case studies, ask the class to write a story about the adventures of a young entomologist.

Loved this? Try these...

- *Life in the Undergrowth by David Attenborough*
- *The Book of Beetles, a life-size guide to 600 of nature's gems, edited by Patrice Bouchard and Yves Bousquet*
- *Bonkers About Beetles by Owen Davey*
- *The Beetle Book by Steve Jenkins*
- *Beetles by Richard Jones*

From fact to fiction

Beetle Boy (suitable for years 4-7) describes the adventures of 13-year-old Darkus Cuttle, as he and a giant rhinoceros beetle called Baxter set out to discover what has happened to his father, who has mysteriously disappeared from inside a locked room at the Natural History Museum. The story is darkly humorous, and has been edited by an entomologist to ensure the details about beetles are accurate. The activities in the panel below use **Beetle Boy**, together with **The Beetle Collector's Handbook**, to explore the differences between fiction and non-fiction writing, and how each can inspire and inform the other...

MG Leonard is the author of the best-selling Beetle Boy series. Her latest book, The Beetle Collector's Handbook, is illustrated by Carim Nahaboo and published by Scholastic (£10.99)
www.mgleonard.com @mglrd

Illustrations: Carim Nahaboo

- When Darkus first discovers Beetle Mountain (pages 87-104).
- Darkus shows Virginia and Bertolt Beetle Mountain (pages 133-139).
- Virginia in the Emporium kitchen with the beetles, preparing for battle (pages 277-280).

Ask the children to read the section, note the species of beetles mentioned and then look it up in **The Beetle Collector's Handbook**. Discuss how this changes the way they imagine the scene in **Beetle Boy**.

4 | MAKE AN ENTRY

There are 400,000 different species of beetle on the planet, but I could only fit sixty into **The Beetle Collector's Handbook**. Challenge the class to find beetles that aren't in the handbook. Ask them to research their undocumented beetle, and then write their own entry for the book and draw the illustration.

5 | ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

On page 145-147 of **The Beetle Collector's Handbook** there is a short essay by me about how I have always been scared of insects, that is, until I wrote **Beetle Boy**. Using my website, YouTube videos and online articles (all can be found on my website), get the class to discover as much as they can about me and together create a wall of 'about the author' facts. What pets does she have? What are they called? Where does she live? How old is she? How many books has she written? This exercise is particularly brilliant for my ego.

If you decide to have a beetle bonanza in your classroom then do reach out to me via my website or social media. It may be possible to arrange a Q&A or a visit to your school; I will do my utmost to big up the bugs, and any child who discovers a passion for the beautiful beasties.

The POWER of pictures

Picturebooks are often perceived as a step into reading for our youngest children, but exploring them with KS1/2 pupils can lead to some powerful literacy learning, says **Charlotte Hacking**

Whom do Year 5 children think picturebooks are for and why do they believe we have them on our shelves? Some know that they are "for anyone, young or old – because it gives us all a message", but others have the impression that "picturebooks are for people that can't really read. That's why the pictures are there, to give them an idea of what the book is about". What can we do to make sure children read a range and breadth of texts, including picturebooks, graphic novels and film? How can we support teachers to show that this reading has a positive impact on the progress and outcomes for pupils? When national organisations only show examples of Y6 children reaching age-related expectations through reading short stories and novels, this becomes even more important.

Why are picturebooks so important?

For the last six years at the CLPE, we have been conducting a research project into the use of picturebooks throughout the primary years. We have collected concrete evidence that shows that teaching children how an author/illustrator conveys meaning through words and pictures supports the development of visual and critical literacy skills.

Our research shows that children need time and opportunities to enjoy and respond to the pictures and to talk together about what the illustrations contribute to their understanding of the text. But what should we look for when reading? Here are just a few things to begin to investigate...

Facial expressions and body position;

Sometimes this can be marked and obvious, as in the representation of the cats' initial suspicion and fear of the dog in Viviane Schwarz's *Is there a dog in this book?* These cats, whose expressions turn from love to loss and back to love are drawn with dramatic, very physical reactions which children can easily relate to. In some texts, such as Benji Davies' *The Storm Whale*, this is more subtle; the tilt of a head, the twist of a foot or the removal of the mouth can say huge amount about the personality, emotions or reactions of a character.

Props and visual links:

The props that an illustrator draws with their characters increases the reader's understanding about them. In *Grandad's Island* by Benji Davies, Grandad is dressed in a smart buttoned up shirt, tie and sleeveless jumper on his top half, with pyjama bottoms on the bottom. What might this suggest about his character? In the first half of the text, we learn most about the character not through the words on the page, but through the objects and items in his home. He carries a walking stick at the start of the story but discards this in the middle of the text as he finds a new freedom on the island he journeys to with his grandson.

Colour

Colour palettes can be specifically chosen for texts. For example, Chris Haughton's books are all defined by their distinct choice of colour from the vibrant orange, red and pink of *Oh No, George!* to the contrast between the cool blues and vibrant greens, pinks and yellows in *Ssh! We Have a Plan*. At other times colours can be used to symbolise, signify a change of mood or period in time, as is beautifully evidenced in The Fan Brothers' *Ocean Meets Sky* where sepia tones are used to represent memories and the text moves into richer colourful spreads when the main character journeys into a fantasy world of his imagination.

The journey

Lines on the page and directionality of characters can tell us a great deal about how a story progresses or the emotional turns a story may take. One of the most famous examples of this is in Maurice Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are*. From the point where Max gets sent to his room, his body faces forward, leading us on to turn the page. He turns back to face the sea creature as he arrives at the place 'where the wild things are', but the boat lurches forward as if to throw him forwards into continuing the journey and the bowsprit of the boat points him forward at each step of the way. In the last scenes of the rumpus, his body turns back, signalling the steps to his return home.

Framing, layout and separation

In texts such as *Croc and Bird* by Alexis Deacon, pages and spreads are used in different ways for different effects on the reader. The use of frames signals the passing of time and sequential series of steps, vignettes are used to focus on characters and their relationship, without background elements distracting. Spreads where there are pictures but no words force us as the reader to make meaning from what we see, those that have words but no pictures force us to visualise and empathise.

Discussions about illustrations include all children and help to make a written text more accessible. Time spent focusing on illustration contributes to children's ability to read for meaning, express their ideas and respond to the texts they encounter. Everybody in the class brings their own ideas and prior knowledge to the discussion and this is an important and engaging way of developing critical thinking, vocabulary and the ability to think from different points of view. Studying pictures in detail helps us to build powerful readers.

Find out more about the Power of Pictures project, including videos of authors working, research summary and free teaching sequences so you can use picture books in Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 at www.clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures

5 to share with older readers...

CROC AND BIRD BY ALEXIS DEACON (RED FOX)

Older readers may discuss themes of nature and nurture, what it means to be a family, being alone, growing and changing and having to make choices, and how an illustrator uses layout and colour as part of the storytelling.

GRANDAD'S ISLAND BY BENJI DAVIES (SIMON AND SCHUSTER)

Older children may pick up on themes of dementia, bereavement, and talk about how an illustrator uses colour, props and visual links as part of the storytelling.

IS THERE A DOG IN THIS BOOK? BY VIVIANE SCHWARZ (WALKER)

Older readers will engage with the graphic style of the text and be able to discuss how illustrators convey emotion through facial expression and body position. They will also be able to challenge perceptions of characters based on appearance.

WILD BY EMILY HUGHES (FLYING EYE)

Older children may discuss themes of nature and nurture, freedom and responsibility, the rights of children and human impact on the environment, and will be able to investigate how an illustrator uses colour, facial expression, body position and page layout as part of the storytelling.

HOW TO BE A LION BY ED VERE (PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE)

Older readers could make links with current day concerns such as toxic masculinity and community cohesion, and investigate how simple shapes, lines and backgrounds can be powerful in focusing our attentions on characters and their story

Charlotte Hacking is the Learning Programmes Leader at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE). Along with author illustrator Ed Vere, she devised CLPE's new project The Power of Pictures, designed to explore how a focus on picturebooks throughout the primary years can develop children's inference, deduction and reader response as well as teaching them about the craft of writing in words and pictures.

Illustration from Ocean Meets Sky, by Terry Fan & Eric Fan

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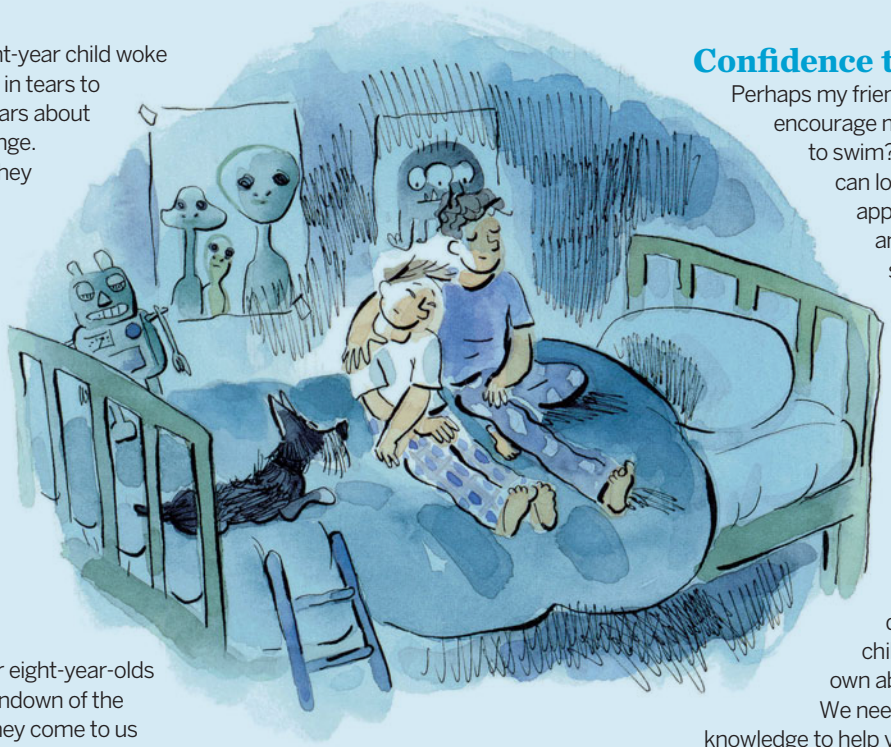
Too much INFORMATION?

Presenting global issues as age-appropriate stories can give children confidence in their ability to make a difference, argues **Sophie Siers**...



A friend's eight-year child woke her recently in tears to share her fears about climate change. She told her mum that they were all going to drown, including their dog; she was inconsolable. She had been told this at school by a friend, who had shown her images on her phone of the tsunami in Japan. A well meaning and intelligent teacher overheard, and took the time to explain a little about earthquakes and the rising CO2 levels in the atmosphere.

Actually, though, our eight-year-olds aren't asking for a full rundown of the Kyoto Protocol. When they come to us upset over something they have seen or heard about the world in which they're living, they need first of all to feel listened to; we know from research that feeling 'heard' or 'understood' is the first part of talking either an adult or child down from the ledge. And then we need to be developmentally aware – in this internet age children can *say* a lot of stuff, but mostly it is 'stuff', not real engagement with the subject matter. What my friend did, was to think about how an eight-year-old really understood drowning, meaning she was able to reassure her that the whole family were very good swimmers. It worked – her daughter confirmed that their dog swam really well too, so they would all be okay.

The right level

My point is that talking about world affairs is only appropriate when we use our pedagogical knowledge in relationship to the child's developmental stage. I've tried to show this in *Dear Mr President* by using the wall issue to highlight what really matters to children. In Sam's case, it's his room, an all-consuming issue for a nine-year-old. But his problem shares all the same issues that are apparent in the real world situation; trespass into his personal space, injustice, his lack of power to be able to change his circumstances. Sam doesn't need to know about human rights abuses on the Mexico border, or see pictures of children in holding cages.

Let's use world events to talk to our children at the right level to grow and develop thoughtful and engaged young people. Discussing overwhelming global issues in terms of an imminent crisis is only likely to grow anxiety and confusion, as they can't do anything about these big problems. Instead, let's try to bring issues back to a practical situation within our child's world, that they can tackle. Through building capacity, and practical engagement, let's help them experience making a contribution to real change.

Confidence to act

Perhaps my friend's daughter might encourage more of her peers to learn to swim? Teachers and librarians can look to educate parents on appropriate stories to share, and in classrooms, make sure they are finding books and creating curriculums that highlight age appropriate problems that pupils can solve; for example, helping to develop a drip irrigation system for the school vegetable garden could teach water conservation, whilst developing skills that give children confidence in their own ability to act.

We need to use our pedagogical knowledge to help young people cope with the mass of information they are receiving. Often parents are unsure of how to approach conversations about world problems with their children. As teachers, we are in a unique position to give families the knowledge to see that adult life skills can be gained by working through the small but important problems of childhood, which can lift a burden not only from the parent but also from the child.

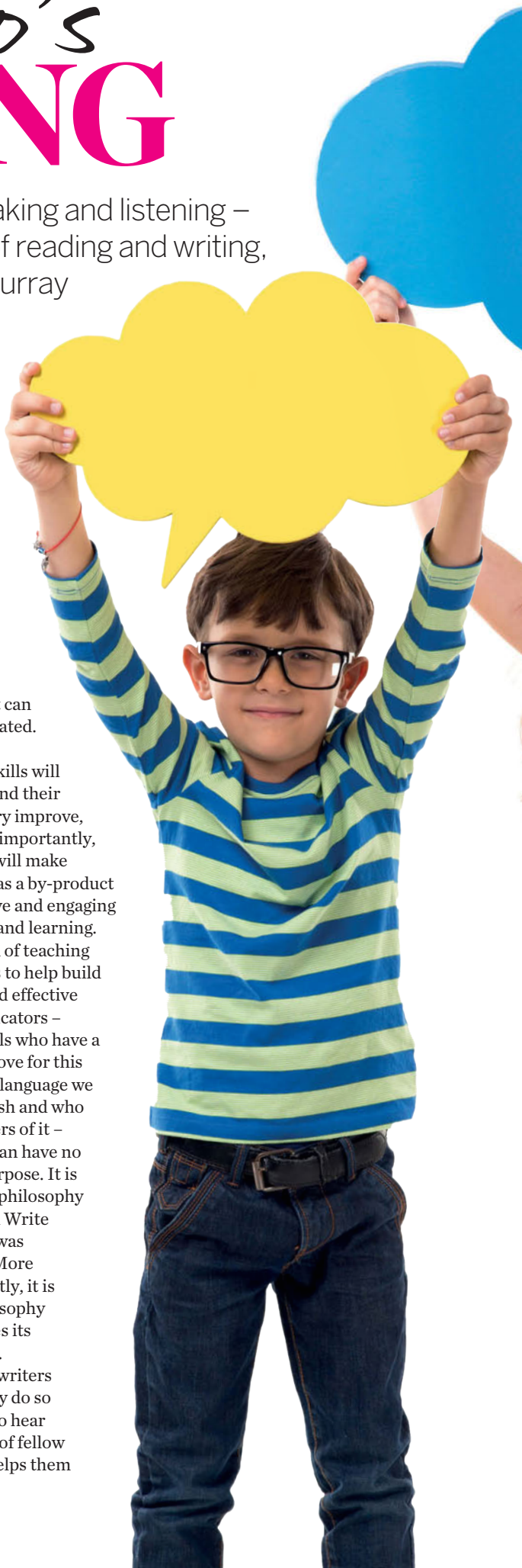
Let's use world events to grow capacity and resilience, not burden our young people with problems they can't solve.

Sophie Siers is an award winning New Zealand author. She studied English and drama before training in early childhood education and currently lives in the Hawkes Bay area of New Zealand with her family.

Illustration: Anne Villeneuve

Look who's TALKING

We need to pay much more attention to speaking and listening – they're so much more than the poor cousins of reading and writing, say Lee Parkinson and John Murray



For a number of years, we've felt that the way we teach English in primary schools has become distorted. Putting the politics of education to one side, it is clear that the present obsession with wanting to measure a child's 'expected' reading and writing progress (whatever that actually means in reality) has led to the written word being put on a pedestal and the spoken word sacrificed altogether. Such are the high stakes of publishing performance data, it is not hard to understand why many have chosen to take this narrow path.

However, in doing so, the teaching and learning of English has become somewhat fragmented, unbalanced. Tick box exercises, the formulaic teaching of 'tricks' to gain extra marks in a reading test and the use of methods that tell children what they 'must write' to ensure the inclusion of a specific grammatical structure in their written work have all become common practice.

Understandable it may be, but it is to the detriment of our learners' appreciation for, and understanding of, our beautiful language. Teaching to a test or for moderation is not an authentic learning experience, nor will it help learners engage with the learning process or help them to remember what they have been told in the longer term.

Quick tricks

It is of no great surprise to English practitioners that Y7 learners continue to be a particular concern in terms of both their progress and overall attainment at the start of KS3. Who wouldn't suffer greatly if all you had been fed was a diet of quick tricks and hollow learning for the past 12 months, all for short term gains?

Such an unbalanced view of the English language fails to recognise the inherent relationship between the written and the spoken word; it fails to provide learners with the broad and balanced approach essential when learning to express our thoughts and emotions effectively.

Good learning lasts. It lasts because it is an authentic experience. It endures because the learner has engaged with it, has understood the 'why' and not just the 'what', and has been given the opportunity to reflect on their overall journey. It carries meaning and is valued.

Real writers read

It is for this reason that we wanted to developed a new child-centred approach to the teaching of English, one that values all aspects of English and bring them together in a cohesive and engaging way, where children understand how these elements work and are able to apply what they have learnt in a creative way. We wanted to create an approach that allowed individuals to grow in confidence and supported them on their journey to find their own voice.

This approach is not driven by assessment. Yes, the children will produce work that can be moderated. Yes, their reading skills will develop and their vocabulary improve, but most importantly, learners will make progress as a by-product of effective and engaging teaching and learning. If the aim of teaching English is to help build strong and effective communicators – individuals who have a genuine love for this beautiful language we call English and who are masters of it – then we can have no better purpose. It is with this philosophy that Read Write Perform was created. More importantly, it is this philosophy that drives its approach.

Real writers read. They do so because to hear the voice of fellow writers helps them

to discover and improve their own. If you want to be a creative, then surround yourself with creativity. This is where our journey begins.

First, the class considers an 'exemplar text', one that exemplifies the final piece that they are aiming to create. The deconstruction of this text affords learners the opportunity to understand the genre itself. It helps them gain a greater understanding of the language choices an author has made. Why has the author selected this word or used that language? What effect does it have on the text? What effect does it have on the reader?

Now that we have considered the exemplar text, it's important to look at how other writers have tackled the same genre and begin to question where similarities and differences lie. The use of comparative texts is essential if we are to move away from simply using a single text or experience as a 'hook' to engage and motivate future writers. Instead, by offering a variety of texts from a range of authors, learners begin to appreciate the limits and freedoms to which all writers are bound and, more importantly, begin to value the writing process itself.

Shallow learning

It is during the deconstruction of these texts at word, sentence and whole text level that core reading skills are developed. This enables children to interrogate the text and authorial choices much more confidently. In this sense, they are applying higher order reading skills that have been taught explicitly during guided reading sessions in an authentic and purposeful way.

'Reading into writing' is the key that unlocks creativity and understanding. It supports and encourages children to develop their own writing style and nurtures their creativity. It gives them ownership of the writing process. To start, the teacher spends a lesson modelling a 'shared write'. This demonstrates how to reconstruct the written work and focuses on why particular sentence structures and features are to be used. Learners are given time to play around with these suggestions, which eventually leads into writing their own independent piece of work. It is important to note that these suggestions are seen as a set of tools, rather than rules. If an individual wants to use ideas and language of their own, they are encouraged to do so. To shackle learners to a series of instructions that begin with 'You must' stifles independence and restricts the creative process. It leads to shallow learning.

"Far too often, children create an amazing piece of work and this is where the journey ends"

Wider audience

Now that the final piece has been written, it is all about the performance. Far too often, children create an amazing piece of work and this is where the journey ends. The teacher marks it, the book is closed and the work is never seen again. But what if you access technology in a way that empowers children to creatively transform their written work into a more engaging form of media, opening it up to a much wider audience? Not only will this improve their digital literacy skills, but it will enhance their overall communication skills and confidence levels too.

Speaking and listening should never be seen as the poor cousin to reading and writing. They are an integral element of English. Adept speakers – those who can emote their work and connect with their audience, who bring their work to life in a meaningful and purposeful way – are the learners who possess greater depth.

The human voice, with its power to engage and empower, should not be taken for granted. It is why a performance element must is included. It allows the shy to step forward and the least confident to stand proud. It is a powerful tool that should be embraced and encouraged.

A well-rounded education is what all teachers aspire to achieve for their learners. It is our sincere belief that child-centred learning is the beating heart of what we do in schools. It is why we became teachers. It is what keeps us in the profession. Such learning is not curriculum driven. It does not pander to the whims of government ministers or the current political party. It has integrity. It endures.

Lee Parkinson is a primary teacher who leads CPD and Inset. He also vlogs under the name 'Mr P'. John Murray is a literacy consultant specialising in reading comprehension. Together they run Read Write Perform, a new cohesive and engaging approach to English.

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In poetry, TRUTH

What better way to get pupils excited about verse, than by letting them hear poets reading and talking about their own work?

National Poetry Day celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2019, with schools very much invited and encouraged to be a part of it! The date for NPD is 3rd October and as usual, there are all kinds of exciting events planned – both on the day itself, and throughout the year – with free resources galore available to download at **bit.ly/2P4FOLG**, including lesson plans, posters and more. And *Teach Reading & Writing* is getting involved, too...

Every NPD has a theme, and this year's is 'truth'; it's a big topic for children to consider, but one that's arguably never been more important. We wanted to know how thinking about 'truth' might inspire a poet – so we filmed five of your pupils' favourites reading a piece of their own work with a connection to the theme, and talking about some of the ideas behind it.

There are some tasters here; and you can find all five videos online at **teachwire.net/NPD19**, along with the full text of the poems, and suggestions for teaching and learning activities related to each one – why not share them with your class today?

MICHAEL ROSEN
Newcomers

Extract:
My father came to England
from another country
My father's mother came to England
from another country
but my father's father
stayed behind

'Newcomers' from the collection Quick, Let's Get Out of Here by Michael Rosen (Puffin Books, 2015). Text copyright © Michael Rosen, 1983. Illustrated by Quentin Blake

Michael says:

Sometimes in poems you don't have to say everything, so the person listening can get the truth by the way you said it.

Why not try:

asking pupils to write about something special to them, in a way that tells the reader how they feel, without saying it directly?

RACHEL ROONEY
Truth or Dare

Extract:
Have you peed in a swimming pool?
Count to fifty without blinking.

What do you secretly wish for most?
Say exactly what you're thinking.

© Rachel Rooney 2019

Rachel says:

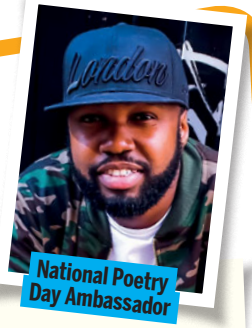
I was thinking about the theme of truth and it reminded me that when I was young, we used to play a game where we would all sit in a circle and there was a bottle in the middle and we used to spin it and whoever the bottle ended up pointing to, had to choose between a truth or a dare.

Why not try:

discussing why the poet chose to arrange the stanzas in the way she has done?

KARL NOVA

The Misinformation Age



Extract:
We're in a time when everyone thinks their opinion is truth
They think every thought they spew is absolute
everyone seems to be an expert and a critic
that seeks to speak for everyone
I don't get it

Karl says:

Truth in poetry is important in thoughts and emotion.

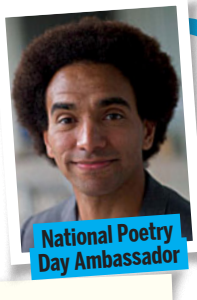
Why not try:

encouraging children to write about an issue they feel passionately about in the current climate?

JOSEPH COELHO

January

(inspired by the legend of two murmurations of starlings warring above the City of Cork in Ireland in the 1600s)



Extract:
They were the Rorschach of the winter months,
the folding of sky-shadows,
of air-shoals pirouetting into the January nip,
swarms riding frosted winds,
silently testing the sky with their ink-magic.

'January' from the collection A Year of Nature Poems by Joseph Coelho, illustrated by Kelly Louise Judd (Wide Eyed Editions, 2019). Text copyright Joseph Coelho, 2019

Joseph says:

As we know of legends, they are not always true, and I find that fascinating.

Why not try:

getting pupils to draw on some of the poetic devices used by Joseph Coelho to write their own poems about the natural world?

VICTORIA ADUKWEI BULLEY

This Poem is Not About Parakeets

Extract:
On the bus back, two men make noise and all else falls silent, or leans away. One woman gets off altogether. I pull my headphones out. The air thickens. The men are angry. Words leave their mouths and hit the windows like flies. They're *everywhere, everywhere* you look. I've got seven stops left. *What we want is our country back.*

Victoria says:

People's beliefs differ quite strongly and there are some truths that don't get the kind of amplification or voice that they deserve.

Why not try:

talking about how it's possible to challenge people's views in a constructive way?

'This Poem is Not About Parakeets' by Victoria Adukwei Bulley. Taken from: Rising Stars: New Young Voices in Poetry. Poems by Ruth Awolola, Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Abigail Cook, Jay Hulme and Amina Jama. Illustrations by Riya Chowdhury, Elanor Chuah and Joe Manners. October 2017 Published by Otter-Barry Books in association with Pop-Up Projects and Arts Council England

"I was very much a library child"

Anne Fine started reading when she was three years old – and hasn't stopped since...

I learned to read very, very early, for the most practical of reasons. When my sister was five and I was three, my dad fancied 'trying one more time for a boy', and as a result my mother had triplet girls. We had no washing machine. Disposable nappies hadn't yet been invented. So the district nurse suggested I should go with my elder sister to the nearby infant school to ease the chaos. (Not so many rules and 'guidelines' in those days.) No one thought to explain to me that I was considerably younger than my classmates, and there only for babysitting purposes. So I learned to read alongside the others.

We were taught through phonics. There were about 35 of us in the class. We'd sit in front of the alphabet, pointing to the thick, black letters and making the appropriate sounds: 'guh-guh-guh', huh-huh-huh'. I dreaded 'vuh-vuh-vuh', which made my bottom lip buzz uncomfortably, but before long I was reading happily and I've never stopped since.

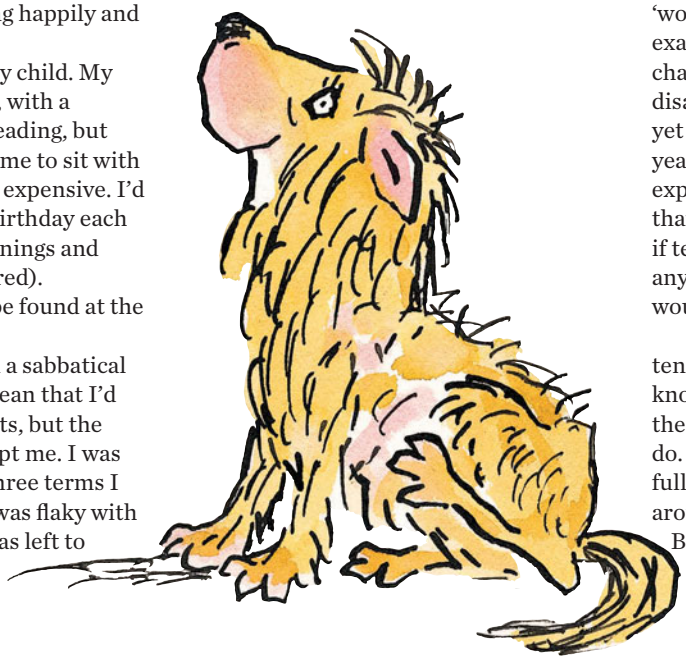
I was very much a library child. My parents were well educated, with a perfectly good respect for reading, but clearly my mother had no time to sit with novels. Besides, books were expensive. I'd get one for Christmas and birthday each year (Enid Blyton, then Jennings and William books, which I adored). Otherwise, stories were to be found at the library and in school.

When I was seven, I had a sabbatical reading year – by which I mean that I'd reached the top of the infants, but the junior school wouldn't accept me. I was too young. So for the next three terms I had to redo arithmetic as I was flaky with numbers, but otherwise I was left to read, allowed into the headteacher Miss Alexander's office to choose books from her glass-fronted book case. My enjoyment of the privilege was very much dampened by constant terror that the glass doors, which juddered horribly as I slid them open, would shatter on the carpet. I don't think the range of reading was inspiring – *The King of the Golden River* was memorable, but nothing else much stood out.

By junior school age I had the run of the local library: more Blyton, Henry Treece, Geoffrey Trease, Lucy Fitch Perkins' Twins series, set in different countries and Willard Price's Adventure series.

In school, for one glorious term, Mr Simpson read us *The Hobbit* on Friday afternoons. We all loved the calm of it. We had to fold our arms and shut up, and we did, and not just for fear of the consequences of not doing so.

We did vast amounts of writing in school. Teachers would say, 'I've lots of marking, so you sit quietly and write an essay'. We'd get a choice of typically 1950s titles: 'A Day at the Seaside', 'A Description of Grandma', 'The Ghost in the Castle'. I adored it, and think that's how I learned to arch my stories. We always had the same length of time in which to write, so I got really good at knowing how long to spend unravelling a tale, then wrapping it up properly.



And the stories would *always* be marked. I hear so many children now complain because their work isn't marked, or takes an age to come back to them, or there's almost no feedback. We'd get a stark score out of 20. Spelling mistakes were ringed in red to be written out ten times underneath ('doing corrections'). But often we'd be called up to the teacher's desk, and he or she would talk in detail about our work, explaining how we could improve it. Not by adding more 'fronted adverbials', or 'wow words' (oh, misery!) but, for example, by not mentioning some character in the first paragraph who'd disappeared for the rest of the story. I've yet to meet the teacher in the last few years who truly believes the way they're expected to teach English (or maths, for that matter) is the best way to do it. And if teachers are close to striking about anything, I don't understand why it wouldn't be about that.

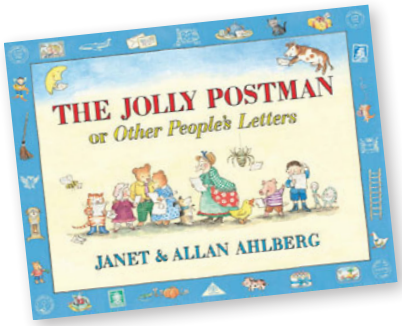
That said, I do realise that authors tend to flatter themselves that they know a lot more about classrooms and the education system than they actually do. When I go into schools, I understand full well that the whole day is built around me, me and a side order of me. But I'm not a teacher, so I don't have a clue as to what goes on, really.

Illustration: Tony Ross

"In school, for one glorious term, Mr Simpson read us The Hobbit on Friday afternoons..."

Illustration: Claire Douglass

The Postal Museum



The Jolly Postman learning programme

FDN
KS1

Book The Jolly Postman learning programme at The Postal Museum.

Take inspiration from the much-loved children's book to bring literacy learning to life today.

Collect, sort and deliver post for fairy tale characters and learn new words and rhymes along the way.

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MUSEUMS +HERITAGE AWARDS
SHORTLIST 2019
EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR

*The Jolly Postman programme is available in The Postal Museum Monday - Wednesday in term time. London schools can also book Outreach workshops in school. Schools more than 10km from The Postal Museum may be charged a travel fee.

The Postal Museum · 15-20 Phoenix Place · London · WC1X 0DA

Discover 27 exceptional children's titles, chosen by our judges for their potential to take young readers on some incredible journeys...

Revealing the results of our annual Teach Primary Book Awards is always a delight – and this year brings an additional pleasure, thanks to the introduction of a brand-new, non-fiction prize, judged by none other than comedian, writer and author Robin Ince. Added to our usual three, age-related categories (Reception, KS1 and KS2) – and not forgetting the First News Funny award, decided upon by readers of the newspaper that gets young people talking – this enables us to share no fewer than 27 quality assured titles with you; so you can in turn share them with your pupils, and in your classroom.

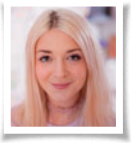
How can you be sure that these are books you can recommend with confidence? Well, in order to help our judges come to a final decision, we ask them to assess each shortlisted entry according to six very clearly defined criteria, asking questions about learning opportunities as well as beautiful writing and powerful illustration. This means that as well as being a joy to read, every title listed on the following pages has something extra to offer young people – perhaps through a particularly original use of language, or by encouraging them to think differently about issues that really matter to them. As always, the standard of entries for this year's awards was incredibly high; we can't wait to hear what you and your pupils think of our judges' final selection!

"What a broad range of brilliance. From formats, to stories, to moods and subjects, these books are windows into our world."
Dan Freedman, judge

Meet the judges

ROBIN INCE is a comedian, actor and writer. He is best known for presenting the BBC radio show *The Infinite Monkey Cage* with physicist Brian Cox, and his latest book, *I'm a Joke and So Are You: A Comedian's Take on What Makes Us Human* blends memoir, wit, and popular science to examine the human condition. He's also a father who loves adventuring with his young son – we can't think of anyone more suited to pick out the best books for curious kids!

DAN FREEDMAN is a former sports journalist, and author of the hugely popular *Jamie Johnson* football books series, as well as a young adult novel, *Unstoppable*.



CONNIE GLYNN is a vlogger and children's writer, whose debut novel *Undercover Princess* saw her become the UK's number one debut YA author of 2017. Her online persona – formerly known as Noodlerella – has amassed over a million followers across her platforms.

SINEAD NAIDOO is programme manager for the Young Readers Programme at the National Literacy Trust, a charity dedicated to raising literacy levels in the UK.

BROUGH GIRLING is co-founder of the Readathon charity. A qualified teacher, he has written over 30 children's books, broadcast widely and lectured in children's reading from Canada to Cairo. He was head of the Children's Book Foundation in London and founding editor of the Young Telegraph.

TAMARA MACFARLANE is a children's author and the owner of Tales on Moon Lane Children's Bookshop, Moon Lane Education Ltd, and Moon Lane Ink, which runs Pop-Up Bookshop Enterprise Days in secondary schools.

RECEPTION

KEY CRITERIA

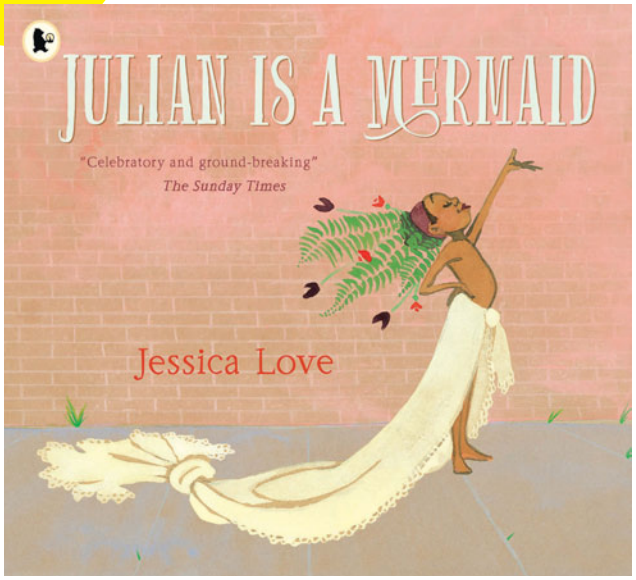
- Memorable illustration
- 'Read-aloud-ability'
- Opportunities for discussion
- Encourages language play and development

WINNER

Julian is a Mermaid

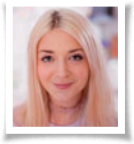
(Jessica Love, Walker)

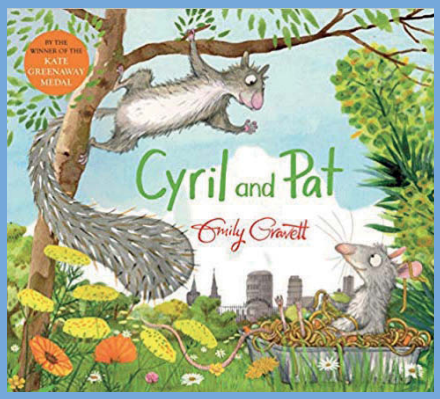
While riding the subway home with his Nana one day, Julian notices three women spectacularly dressed up. Their hair billows in brilliant hues, their dresses end in fishtails, and their joy fills the train carriage. When Julian gets home, daydreaming of the magic he's seen, all he can think about is dressing up just like the ladies and making his own fabulous mermaid costume. But what will Nana think about the mess he makes – and even more importantly – what will she think about how Julian sees himself? Mesmerising and full of heart, this is a picture book about self-confidence and love, and a radiant celebration of individuality.



"The story and the illustrations are full of colour and kindness, a perfect antidote to all worries and fears in the world..."

Connie Glynn





Runner up

Cyril and Pat

(Emily Gravett, Two Hoots Publishing)

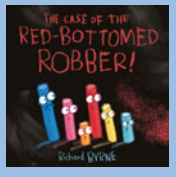
Cyril is the only squirrel in Lake Park, and he's very lonely. Until one day he meets Pat – a big, grey . . . other squirrel? Cyril and Pat have lots of adventures and fun together, but everyone is adamant that they simply cannot be friends, and they eventually reveal why: Pat, as the reader has known all along, is actually a rat! In the end, however, the two chums learn that some things are more important than being the same, or listening to others.

Also shortlisted

RUBY'S WORRY
(Tom Percival, Bloomsbury)
Ruby really loves being Ruby. Until, one day, she finds a worry, which grows and grows... but how can she get rid of it and feel like herself again? A reassuring read for any young person.

THE STEVES
(Morag Hood, Two Hoots)
When Steve meets Steve, neither can believe it. And thus begins a series of splendidly silly and increasingly competitive arguments, which kids will find as familiar as they are hilarious...

THE SECRET SKY GARDEN
(Linda Sarah, illustrated by Fiona Lumbers, Simon and Schuster)
When a little girl decides to create a garden in a neglected rooftop carpark, she finds herself nurturing a special friendship, too.



THE CASE OF THE RED-BOTTOMED ROBBER!
(Richard Byrne, Oxford University Press)
This lively whodunnit, encourages children to consider that solutions to mysteries are rarely as simple as they may first appear.

KEY STAGE 1

KEY CRITERIA

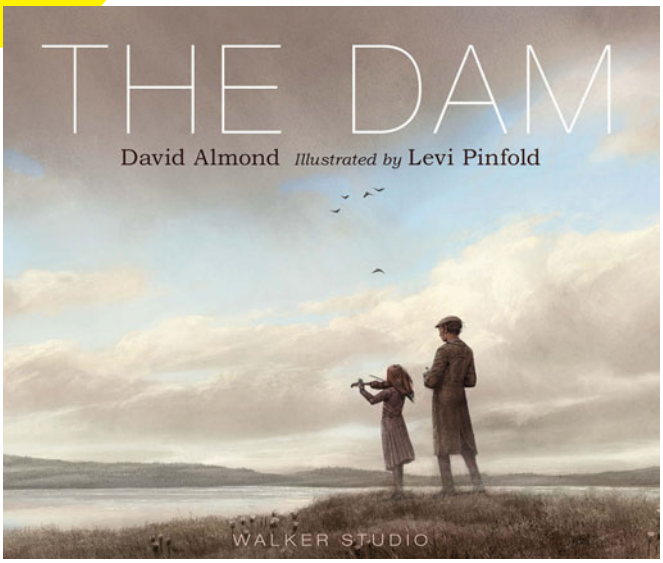
- Breadth of appeal
- Use of illustration
- Pacy, engaging story
- Learning opportunities

WINNER

The Dam

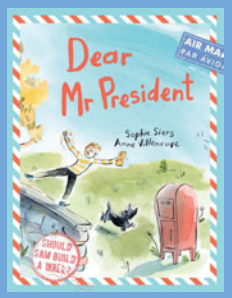
(David Almond, illustrated by Levi Pinfold, Walker)

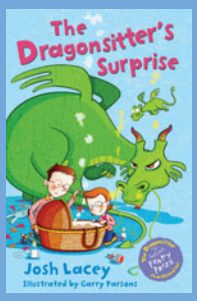
When a great dam was built by the Kielder Water in Northumberland, the valley below slowly filled with water. But just before this, when the villagers had been moved out, two musicians went back to the abandoned valley. They tore down the boards over the houses, stepped inside and started to play – for this would be the last time that a tune would be heard in this place. In this astonishing picture book that combines themes of loss, hope and music, David Almond and Levi Pinfold pay homage to all artists, showing the ancient and unstoppable power of creativity.



"Sebastian Walker used to say that children's books should be like jewellery. This is a gem. Wow."
Brough Girling

Joint runners up





Dear Mr President

(Sophie Siers, illustrated by Anne Villeneuve, templar books)

Sam has a problem. He has to share a room with his older brother and things aren't easy. But what if, like the president, he could build a wall...? Told through Sam's letters to the president, this funny, insightful story invites discussion about living with others in times of conflict.

The Dragonsitter's Surprise

(Josh Lacey, illustrated by Garry Parsons, Andersen Press)

Eddie was given a dragon's egg for his last birthday, from which a very unusual creature has now emerged. Then, just as Eddie and his sister Emily are trying to cope with this new arrival, their mum announces that she has a surprise of her own...

Also shortlisted

SMUGGLER'S DAUGHTER
(Philip Ardagh, illustrated by Jamie Littler, nosy crow)
Fact meets fiction in this thrilling story of 18th century smuggling and intrigue from master storyteller Philip Ardagh – full of excitement, humour, wit, and footnotes of endless interest...

THE TWITCHES MEET A PUPPY
(Hayley Scott, illustrated by Pippa Curnick, Usborne)
In this charming, and easily inclusive story, four tiny rabbits who live in a teacup house find ingenious ways to navigate a human-sized world, overcoming challenges along the way.

LUBNA AND PEBBLE
(Wendy Meddour, illustrated by Daniel Egnéus, Oxford University Press)
Set in a 'world of tents', this is a poignant and powerful story about the importance of friendship, especially in troubling times.

KEY STAGE 2

KEY CRITERIA

- Originality
- Compelling plot
- Emotional depth
- Something to think about?

WINNER

The Lost Magician

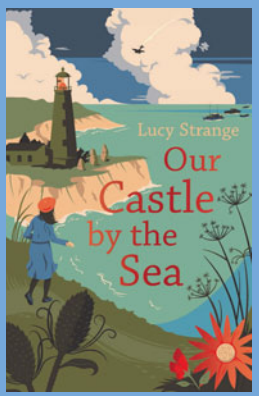
(Piers Torday, Quercus)

"If you can imagine it, it exists ... somewhere."

It's 1945. They have survived the Blitz, but when Simon, Patricia, Evelyn and Larry step through a mysterious library door, it is the beginning of their most dangerous adventure yet, as they discover the magical world of Folio, where an enchanted kingdom of fairy knights, bears and tree gods is under threat from a sinister robot army. The many stories of the Library are locked in eternal war, and the children's only hope is to find their creator – a magician who has been lost for centuries. What they find will change not just their own lives, but the fate of the world, for ever... Young readers will be captivated by this extraordinary fantasy adventure from the author of the brilliant *The Last Wild* trilogy.

"'An exhilarating read with all the essential ingredients of a timeless adventure. I loved the way Torday included familiar themes which he reworked in fresh and current ways."

Sinead Naidoo



Runner up

Our Castle by the Sea

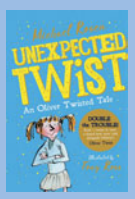
(Lucy Strange, Chicken House)

England is at war. Growing up in a lighthouse, Pet's world has been one of storms, secret tunnels and stories about sea monsters. But now the clifftops are a terrifying battleground, and her family is torn apart. This is the story of a girl who is small, afraid and unnoticed. A girl who freezes with fear at the enemy planes ripping through the skies overhead. A girl who is somehow destined to become part of the strange, ancient legend of the Daughters of Stone ...

"'I loved this book! Really couldn't stop reading it. Twists, turns, secrets and surprises..."

Brough Girling

Also shortlisted



UNEXPECTED TWIST
(Michael Rosen, illustrated by Tony Ross, Scholastic)
Mixing the original text of *Oliver Twist* with a contemporary reframing of the story, this is a typical slice of brilliance from Michael Rosen that young readers will love.

THE WHISPERS
(Greg Howard, Puffin)
A stunning book that tackles complex issues, through a story layered with magical elements and set in the most beautifully lush forest. Heartbreaking, uplifting and unforgettable.

3 THE TRAIN TO IMPOSSIBLE PLACES
(PG Bell, Usborne)
When Suzy hears a strange noise in the middle of the night, she creeps downstairs to find a train roaring through her house. And that's just the start...

1 BOY 87
(Ele Fountain, Pushkin)
Shif is just an ordinary boy who likes chess, maths and racing his best friend home. But one day, soldiers with guns come to his door... A gripping, uplifting tale of survival.

NON-FICTION

KEY CRITERIA

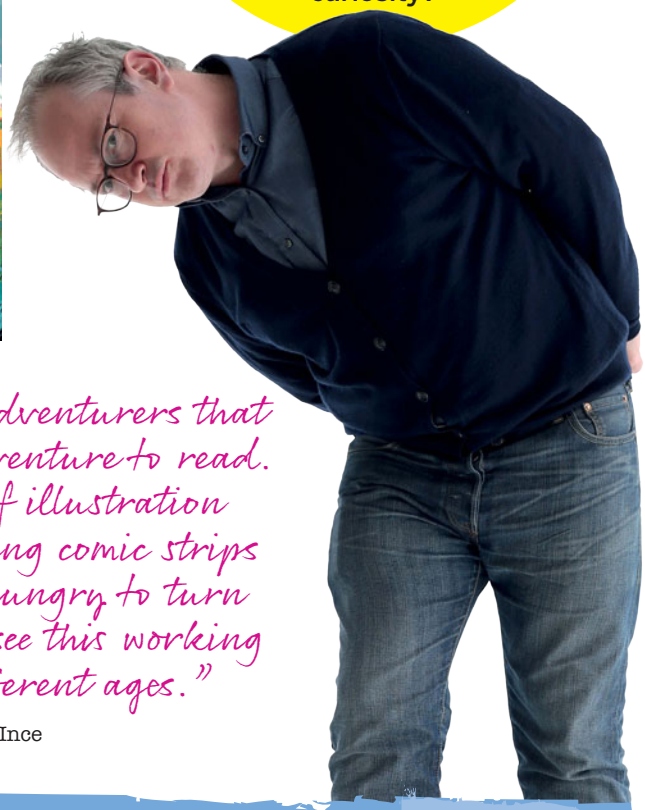
- Quality of information
- Presentation
- Is the writing entertaining and age-appropriate?
- Will it provoke further curiosity?

WINNER

Alastair Humphreys' Great Adventurers

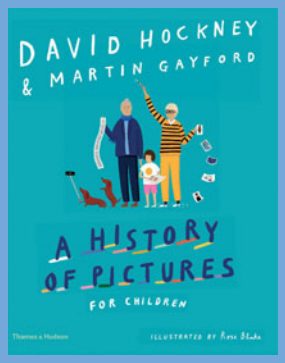
(Alastair Humphreys, illustrated by Kevin Ward, Templar Publishing)

Selected by adventurer Alastair Humphreys, this is a collection of incredible journeys undertaken by twenty of the most heroic and impressive explorers who ever lived, including Ibn Battuta (14th-century explorer); Apsley Cherry-Garrard (a member of Scott's Antarctic expedition); Michael Collins (Apollo Moon mission astronaut) and Nellie Bly (who travelled round the world in less than 80 days). Young and old, male and female and with a wide range of abilities, these intrepid individuals crossed land, sea and sky in the name of adventure – and may just inspire readers to do the same.



"A book about adventurers that seems like an adventure to read. A lovely mix of illustration styles and exciting comic strips that made me hungry to turn the page. I can see this working for lots of different ages."

Robin Ince



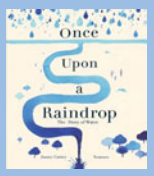
Runner up

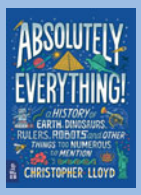
A History of Pictures for Children

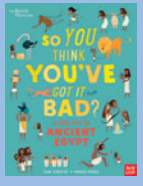
(David Hockney & Martin Gayford, Thames & Hudson)

This beautiful book takes readers on a journey through art history, from early pictures drawn on cave walls to the images we make today on our computers and phone cameras. Based on the bestselling version for adults, this children's edition of A History of Pictures is told through conversations between the artist David Hockney and the author Martin Gayford, who talk with inspiring simplicity and clarity, as Rose Blake's illustrations bring the history of art alive for a young audience

Also shortlisted







ONCE UPON A RAINDROP
(James Carter, illustrated by Nomoco, Caterpillar Books)
Discover the story of H20 from its very beginning. Engaging, informative poetry flows over the pages and stunning illustrations bring this story to rushing, gushing life.

THE EVERYDAY JOURNEYS OF ORDINARY THINGS
(Libby Deutsch, ill. by Valpuri Kerttula, Ivy Kids)
Young children are full of questions about how the world works. Here, with brilliantly detailed illustrations and clear prose, everyday processes are explained from start to finish.

ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING
(Christopher Lloyd, What on Earth Books Ltd)
Embark on an entertaining journey across millennia and continents, and learn about absolutely everything from the creation of planet Earth to the technology that's changing it today.

SO YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT IT BAD? A KID'S LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT
(Chae Strathie, ill. by Marisa Morea, Nosy Crow)
In this hilarious and hugely informative book, children learn exactly how difficult life in Ancient Egypt really was, especially for the kids...

FirstNews
NEWS TO GET YOUNG PEOPLE TALKING

FUNNY CATEGORY

KEY CRITERIA

How much did I want to find out what happened next at the end of every chapter?

Did the characters come to life for me while I was reading?

Was there the right amount of description to help me understand the story?

Did the dialogue seem 'real'?

How much of the book could I remember once I'd finished it?

Would I recommend this book to my friends?

Greta Zargo and the Amoeba Monsters from the Middle of the Earth

WINNER

(by A.F. Harrold, illustrated by Joe Todd-Stanton, Bloomsbury)

Intrepid young schoolgirl-turned-reporter Greta Zargo is always in search of a Big Scoop – and suddenly there are plenty of strange goings-on in the usually quiet little town of Upper Lowerbridge. Greta doesn't know it, but once again she is about to unwittingly save the world... This is a sophisticated, laugh-out-loud funny story from the hugely talented – and magnificently bearded – poet/author A.F Harrold, skillfully illustrated by Joe Todd-Stanton.

"What I liked the most about *Greta Zargo* is that it is the kind of book that no matter how many times you read it you will still be intrigued, but I also loved that it had pictures to help you create images in your head. Even though I know it is a story I still believe that it could possibly be real. I also love the outside of the book, since it has a warning."

Miah S. (10)

Shortlisted titles in this category were judged by a panel of young *First News* readers in Y6 at Springfield Junior School in Swadlincote, Derbyshire. Find out more about how *First News* can support literacy and learning in your school, at schools.firstnews.co.uk!

Also shortlisted

King Flashypants and the Snowball of Doom

(Andy Riley, Hodder)

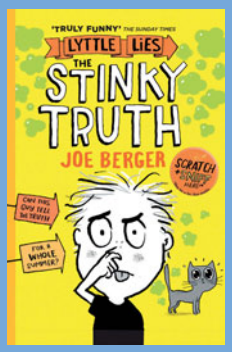
After evil Emperor Nurbison steals all his peasants' firewood and woolly hats just because he can, they go to live with nine-year-old King Edwin in Edwinland instead. But Edwin has an extra problem to deal with. How can he beat Emperor Nurbison and Wendy Worry at the same time?

"This book was my favourite because I wanted to turn the page more than I did in any of the others, and the pictures helped to tell the story."

Grace, (11)

Lyttle Lies – the Stinky Truth

(Joe Berger, Simon and Schuster)



It's the school holidays and Sam Lyttle and his best friend can't wait to see the first movie starring their favourite crime-fighting hero. But Sam's mum has set him a challenge. He can go and see the movie *if*, and only if, he can make it through the entire holiday without telling a single fib...

"I liked this book because the layout was unique and the humour was hilarious! If you were to ask me to tell you the story I would able to recite it in detail."

Freya, (11)

THE TEACHERS' CHOICE AWARDS:

Most influential children's author

Shortlist

- ❑ Malorie Blackman
- ❑ Enid Blyton
- ❑ Lewis Carroll
- ❑ Roald Dahl
- ❑ Julia Donaldson
- ❑ Jeff Kinney
- ❑ C.S Lewis
- ❑ J K Rowling
- ❑ Dr Seuss
- ❑ Jacqueline Wilson

What would the world of children's literature look like without the imposing turrets of Hogwarts looming over it? How many hilarious and empowering, brilliantly illustrated stories that kids love today simply wouldn't exist if the authors hadn't themselves been raised on a diet of Dahl and Blake? And does Enid Blyton still have something relevant to say to young people?

Books for junior readers have certainly come a long way since John Newbury published *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (widely believed to be the first title specifically aimed at giving enjoyment to children) in 1744; and many amazing writers have had an important part to play in that journey.

But who do teachers think has made the most significant contribution to the 'golden age'?

This is the question we put to you for 2019 – asking you to choose the 'most influential children's author' from the shortlist (above), or make your own suggestion.

The results...

Overwhelmingly in first place was **Roald Dahl** - and perhaps we should have expected that, given the dominance of his titles in any list we compile of children's and/or teachers' favourite books.

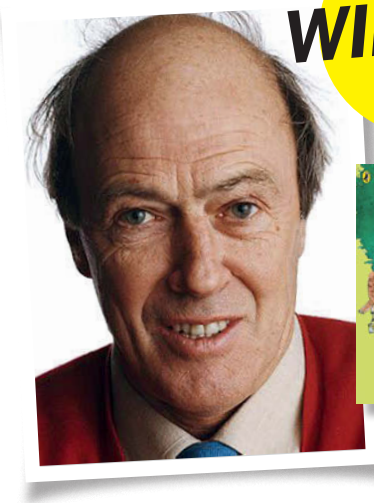
Rather pleasingly, given the time distance between them, two formidable female authors shared the second place spot: **Enid Blyton**, and **J.K. Rowling** – both writers who have brought magic and adventure into young readers' own worlds.

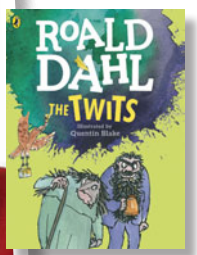
In fourth place, we were thrilled to see the wonderful **Julia Donaldson**, whose stories have been captivating children (and their parents) since 1993 – and continue to do so with every addition to her oeuvre!

Amongst teachers' own additions to the list of authors, by far the most popular suggestion was **Michael Morpurgo** – whose classic, *Kensuke's Kingdom* was in fact the winner of last year's Teachers' Choice Award, which asked for 'your favourite book to teach'.

We also asked some of our favourite novelists and educationalists for their suggestions – and here's what they told us...

WINNER

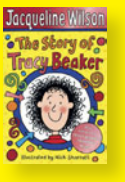




Jon Mayhew

(author)

"I'd vote for Jacqueline Wilson. Her books are so widely read and cover such a wide range of genres. Whenever I visit schools, almost all of the children have heard of or read a book by her. *Vicky Angel* is such a clever study of grief and guilt, as is *The Cat Mummy*. She's devoted to her audience."



Alex Quigley

(senior associate, EEF)

"Reading Katherine Rundell's exciting, complex and emotionally charged stories with my daughter has been thrilling. From the bleak, breakneck drama of *Wolf Wilder*, to the dramatic journey and return of *The Explorer*, Rundell has never yet failed to inspire my eldest – and it's been a delight to accompany her on the ride."

Cressida Cowell

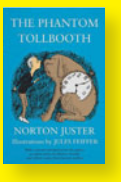
(author)

"I grew up loving fantasy books – Tolkien, Diana Wynne Jones and Lloyd Alexander were favourites. If I had to choose just one author though, I'd go for Ursula Le Guin, who created the most glorious, immersive fantasy worlds – packed with so much detail it felt completely believable."

Ade Edmondson

(actor, comedian, author)

"I remember reading *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster as a nine-year-old and being simply agog that words could be so funny. He more or less explained how jokes were written. That was the book that made me understand how language works and how enjoyable it can be."



Building BLOCKS

The methods for teaching English set out in *The Writing Revolution* can make a real breakthrough in the understanding of sentence construction, says Sophie Bartlett

Teaching writing in Y6, I have learned many things about children: they have brilliant imaginations; they are capable of understanding complex concepts; once they learn about that semi-colon, they love using it just about anywhere; and many of them have no idea what a sentence is.

This can present itself in many forms, from the struggling writer who has no understanding of where to use a full stop, to the more competent writer who, despite writing proficiently (for the most part) at length, still unknowingly uses fragments and run-on sentences.

There are many things we could blame for this – for starters, the curriculum, which is so rammed with content that it puts the pressure on teachers to just steamroller through, no matter how hard the party line of 'they must not move on to new learning until they've mastered the old stuff' is drilled into us. We've all tried desperately to teach that child, who still doesn't understand nouns, about the subjunctive ("If I WERE, if I WERE!"). We could blame Ofsted (it's always easy to blame Ofsted) for apparently (according to some school leaders) creating a certain expectation of the ever-increasing quantity of writing that should be in children's books through their primary school years (just to be clear, I've never seen evidence of this apparent expectation in any sort of official documentation).

But rather than working out who to blame, it's far more productive – and satisfying – to find a solution. I just want my class to stop writing how they speak! Look no further than *The Writing Revolution (TWR)* by Judith C Hochman and Natalie Wexler (Josey-Bass, £24.99), a book which "provides a clear method of instruction that you can use no matter what subject or grade level you teach... by focusing on specific techniques that match [the children's] needs" (as per the book's blurb).

> *"In order to write proficiently, children must understand the concept of a sentence. To achieve this, they are introduced to fragments"*

Despite being published in the US and being seemingly more applicable to secondary school teachers, *TWR*'s explicit method of teaching has proved invaluable in my primary school English lessons. Each activity in the book is pitched for both "Level 1" (primary age equivalent) and "Level 2" (secondary age equivalent) students. While the first half of the text is relevant for the primary phase, the first chapter in particular has now become the basis of all my writing lessons – Sentences: The Basic Building Blocks of Writing.

As many of you will know from experience, in children's English books, quantity is often valued over quality. *TWR* looks to challenge this by focusing regularly on sentence work. It advocates practising the skills embedded in content, so any examples I use in English lessons will be based around a topic in another area of the curriculum.

In order to write proficiently, children must understand the concept of a sentence. To achieve this, they are introduced to fragments – a group of words which are not a grammatically correct sentence. *TWR* suggests the following activities, which have now, on rotation, become my English 'starters' every day:

1 Identifying fragments orally

Children can often instinctively hear fragments: for example, "built a wooden horse". When asked what's missing, they will be able to tell you that we don't know who built a wooden horse (the Greeks: our topic is the Trojan horse – note that every activity benefits from being embedded in content with which the children are familiar).

With Y6, we can tell them that the subject of the sentence is missing – here, we only have the verb and the object. They can then verbally add to the fragment to make it a grammatically complete sentence.

2 Identifying standalone fragments

Once the children are familiar with this concept, they can then be given fragments on the board to turn into correctly punctuated sentences on their whiteboard. For example: "a fraction is" and "the onions because he was hungry"

might be turned into "A fraction is part of a whole" and "Zero ate the onions because he was hungry". (Note the inclusion of our current maths and reading topics!)

3 Identifying fragments in text

Slowly removing the 'scaffold', children can now be presented with a paragraph (which, once again, would benefit from being linked to a current curriculum topic), inside which some of the sentences have been altered to become fragments. They can identify the fragments and convert them to sentences.

4 Unscrambling words

Show the children a group of words that they must order to make a complete sentence, for example "number more factors a two has composite than" becomes "A composite number has more than two factors".

5 Run-on sentences

A run-on sentence is one with two or more main clauses that are forced together instead of being properly connected. The most common way children do this is through a comma splice, for example "He put on suncream, it was so hot". Ask children to identify the main clauses (if they can distinguish between fragments and sentences – this shouldn't be too difficult) and separate them with either punctuation or a conjunction.

For example, this run-on sentence...

My sister was taller than me when we were young now I am the tallest it is fun!

...could be corrected in a variety of ways, such as:

My sister was taller than me when we were young – now I am the tallest. It is fun!

My sister was taller than me when we were young. Now I am the tallest – it is fun!

My sister was taller than me when we were young, but now I am the tallest; it is fun!

My sister was taller than me when we were young. Now I am the tallest and it is fun!

This is only one example of the many techniques promoted in *TWR*.

For example, another important element in improving writing quality is sentence expansion and combination – how to create successful complex and compound sentences using activities such as "kernel sentences", the "because, but, so" method, and the use of appositives (essentially relative clauses with an omitted relative pronoun).

I only implemented the *TWR* strategies in January but am already starting to see results. My feedback alone has become more effective: before, children's work would have sentences, or even paragraphs, that didn't make sense, and when asked to edit, it was never as successful as I would have liked; compare that to now, where I can write "fragment" or "run-on sentence" next to their writing and they will know exactly how to correct it. The hope is that soon, those kinds of comments won't be needed at all!

Sophie Bartlett is a Y5/6 teacher in an English primary school.

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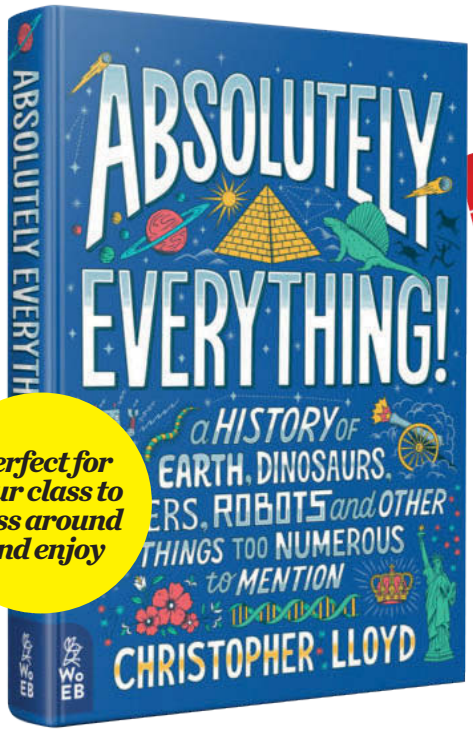

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READING & WRITING

The Literary Curriculum

A whole-school book-based approach for teaching the English curriculum

AT A GLANCE

- A complete, thematic approach to English
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- 100 planning sequences with in-built progression from Reception to Y6
- Whole-school overviews, coverage maps, thematic maps and literacy policy statement
- Includes interactive Reporting and Assessment Tool for reading and writing

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

Although learning how to read is too complex a task to be taught using only one particular method, a predominantly literature-based approach can inspire and motivate children to become both successful readers and writers. This is what the Literary Curriculum actively sets out to do through its online subscription service.

Embedding a holistic book-based approach and using high quality texts, teachers can support children across the English curriculum.

The Literary Curriculum provides an intelligent planning sequence which leads teachers through a text from two to four weeks for teaching specific key skills. This really is wide-ranging and addresses writing, SPaG, phonics and reading comprehension. It's easy to set up too, with each year group selecting their own key texts for their literacy lessons.

A detailed set of daily plans with a medium term overview are provided, which can be used flexibly for adding your own personal touch. These offer delicious depth, teeming with grab-and-go ideas that will help you nudge children's thinking and enable them to use language more artistically.

Each year group has six cross-curricular rich themes including a minimum of 12 literary texts, and these stretch from 'Outside inside' and 'Journeys & Exploration' to 'Utopia vs dystopia' and 'Migration & movement'.

The plans put a high value on engagement and variety so children aren't just locked in one genre but enjoy distinct shorter and longer writing opportunities.

A book-based approach is far more than just giving children quality literature and so what the Literary Curriculum does is get children doing exciting and authentic activities in context.

If you want a whole-school strategy that understands individual differences in reading abilities and recognises different skills while focusing on meaning, interest and enjoyment, then the Literary Curriculum is for you.

These are tried and tested resources and a number of flagship schools have used the Literary Curriculum creatively within their own contexts for supporting engagement and raising attainment in English.

Placing children's literature at the core of your primary English provision by teaching through texts can help children become stronger and enthusiastic learners, and the Literary Curriculum offers a thrilling variety of literature to motivate and excite children to read and write.

Teachers committed to using quality texts find that the standard of teaching and learning is enhanced especially when supported by the expertise, sterling structure and creative content of the Literary Curriculum. This is a programme for training literary giants of the future.

Teach Reading & Writing

VERDICT

- ✔ A brilliant and innovative way to inspire children to read and write
- ✔ Simple to implement across the school
- ✔ Great for getting children geeky about words
- ✔ Easy to adopt and adapt
- ✔ Plenty of quality opportunities for modelled and shared writing

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to cover all the bases of the English curriculum, get children in a bookish mindset and emphasise and enforce positive learning experiences.

"The Literary Curriculum offers a thrilling variety of literature to motivate and excite children"

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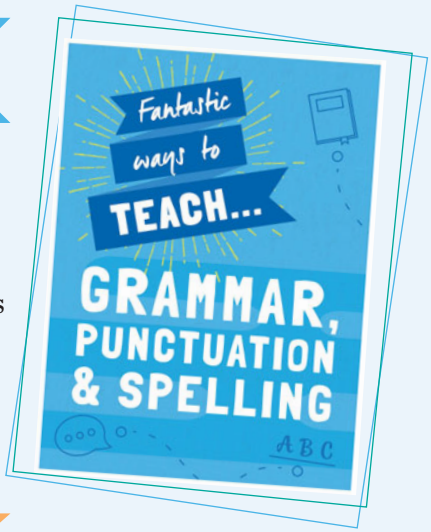

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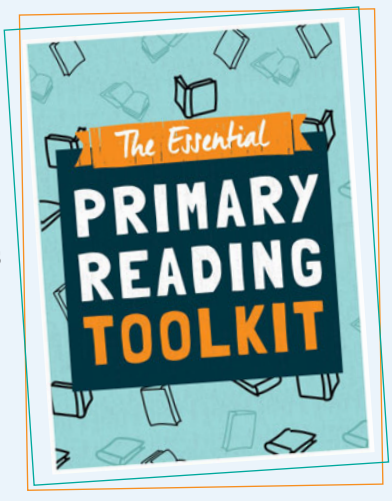

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MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

BOOKLIFE PUBLISHING

A healthy minds book series for KS1 and KS2+

BookLife PUBLISHING

AT A GLANCE

- Dedicated books that focus on mental health issues affecting young people
- Creative and factual titles that tackle mental health head-on
- Helps children learn about causes, symptoms and practical coping strategies
- A richly layered sophisticated approach to mental health
- Produced in collaboration with clinical psychologists at leading mental health charity Place2Be

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

Age-appropriate resources that sensitively and practically address children's mental health and wellbeing can be very thin on the ground, especially those written for young people themselves. Yet getting the correct information is crucial, because it can help to dispel common misconceptions and stigma, providing kids with the knowledge and resources they need to understand specific issues.

To help, BookLife has produced a truly innovative series of titles for discussing emotions and mental health with children across a range of age groups.

For a younger audience, there are eight story-rich character-based books - four each for Early Years KS1. They are written in easy to understand terms and use friendly, heart-warming and likeable characters to illustrate common mental illnesses (e.g. Sam the Sloth feels sad; Anita the Alligator feels angry). The children in the stories are put right at the centre of the action and are there to help their friends as well as themselves. Topics covered include anger management, anxiety, feeling frightened - as well as being happy. With questions and scenarios to provoke thinking throughout, these books tread carefully but purposefully through some tricky terrain.

They are superbly illustrated, too, with delightful pictures adding atmosphere, personality and context that children will identify with and find appealing.

The titles aimed at KS2 and KS3 come as a series of four books that focus on depression, anxiety, ADHD and OCD. These are quite simply brilliant. Each title takes a very considered approach to particular conditions and explains them honestly and transparently, without ducking the big issues; they go into just the right amount of detail and have been made very accessible through excellent explanations and engaging case studies. Children will learn a lot from the books, because they have been written with real care, understanding and insight, and they are supported by thought-provoking photos and illustrations - plus a useful glossary.

The stand-out feature of the whole series is that all the titles contain actionable advice for what to do and how to manage by suggesting various positive change strategies. They will help children realise that they don't have to hide their feelings and they don't have to make a secret of any conditions or treatments. They make mental health a normal part of who we are.

Teach Reading & Writing

VERDICT

- ✔ Hugely informative and very supportive
- ✔ Helps children talk openly about their emotions without fear or embarrassment
- ✔ Teaches children how to look after their own mental health and those around them
- ✔ Normalises mental health as being part of the human condition
- ✔ Matter-of-fact, empathetic and full of real-world advice

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for informative, accurate and practical books that remove stigma around mental health issues and teach children the value of wellbeing and how to manage tough personal issues.

Find out more - www.booklife.co.uk

No one should be INVISIBLE

If children never see themselves in books, how can they feel fully included in the world of literature, asks **Joanna De Guia**

I was the child in the class who consumed books greedily, as if they might run out. I always had several on the go and especially enjoyed fantasy series like *The Lord of the Rings*. As a bookish teenager looking for my place in the world, the opportunity to escape the harshness of school existence was priceless.

However there was something else that I looked for which I never found (except perhaps in Judy Blume), and that was something which showed me myself. I didn't exist anywhere in any fiction for young people. I *appeared* to exist, because to anyone looking in from the outside I was a white British middle-class girl and there were heaps of books about me. But as a white Jewish British middle-class girl there was nothing I recognised at all. The only mention of me was in relation to the Holocaust. Jews only existed when someone was trying to kill them. Just like my gay friends, with whom I hung out at break, if you judged by what you could see, we were apparently catered for – but when you scratched below the surface we weren't as like these characters as we seemed.

Working for change

So, when I learnt about Inclusive Minds, I was delighted that something was being done and determined to get involved. As a bookseller with an interest in diverse children's literature, I was keen to attend their regular discussion workshop, A Place At The Table – and after I'd closed my bookshop and started working as a school librarian at Hackney New School, I finally managed this. Better still, since the 2018 event included a 'forum session' with young Ambassadors, I was able to involve two students from my school.

Suddenly I was in a room with people who were solely focusing on ensuring that all children's stories were going to be told. Even more excitingly, people in positions of power within the industry were going to ensure the authenticity of these stories, and involve young people in doing so. The two female students I brought were 14 and 15. One was mixed-race and gay, and the other was black. One was bookish and one was not. They said they had never talked for that long and in that much depth to adults they didn't already know. They felt that the adults genuinely wanted to know about them as young people and they were quite surprised at how important that was. They felt seen. Completely.

More to do

Last year the CLPE Report, *Reflecting Realities*, came out, confirming the shocking fact that a mere 4% of children's books published in 2017 featured a BAME or disabled child. And when looked at in conjunction with Dr Ramdarshan Bold's report, *The Eight Percent Problem: Authors of Colour in the British Young Adult Market* (2006–2016), which drilled down into statistics to uncover the even smaller number of UK Authors of Colour published in this country, it is very clear that many UK young readers are still missing themselves in stories; still, 37 years after I failed to discover myself in my local library and bookshop.

These kids are invisible. This tells them that their stories are not worth sharing, that they have no stake in literary culture, that they don't count.

Inclusive Minds and their Young Inclusion Ambassadors are at the frontline of the battle to change all of this. We can all help by spreading the word about this important initiative and encouraging more young people to join. And we need to do this, so that nobody ever has to be invisible ever again.

More information can be found at www.inclusiveminds com/inclusion-ambassadors

Joanna De Guia is a part-time secondary school librarian in Hackney, and a part-time publishing professional. She had her own children's bookshop in Hackney for 12 years.

Schools

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Watch Tuesday 11 June

See stories come to life and help pupils understand the importance of empathy – and how they can put it into action – with the help of awesome authors and illustrators. **Join in the fun on Empathy Day 2019!** All you need to watch is an internet connection, a screen and a classroom of budding writers!

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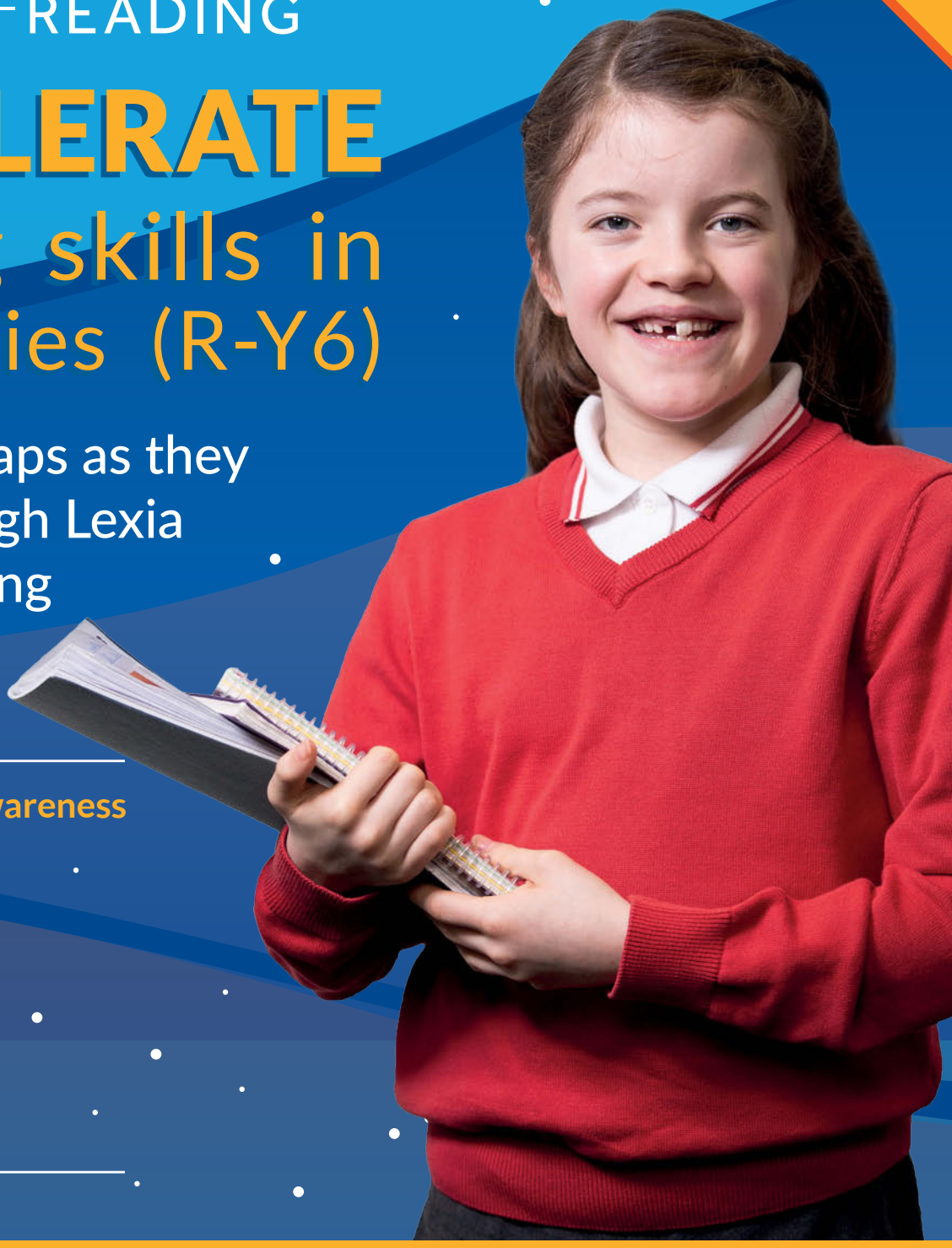

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