

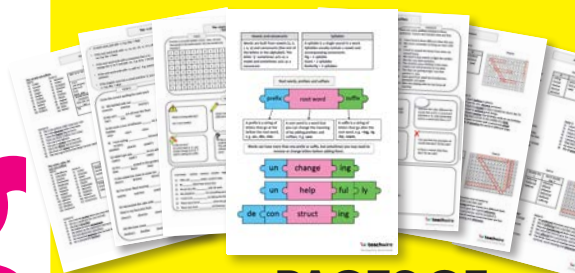
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Welcome...



...friends, to another issue of *Teach Reading & Writing*.

As I'm sure you'll agree, although books are perfect companions for every day of the year, there is something particularly lovely about curling up with a beloved story in the cold winter months. Luckily for us, Carey Fluker Hunt has put together a list of her 10 best winter reads for your class – divided by age group – so you can grab a hot chocolate and set about finding your pupils their new favourite seasonal story. If that's not enough to get your teacher senses a-tinglin', Carey has also suggested a wealth of activity and discussion ideas for each title for you to get stuck into. Check out her finds from page 12.

On the topic of excellent books, I'm also delighted to announce the winners of this year's Teach Primary Book Awards. Following a phenomenal number of entries, our panel of expert judges managed to whittle down to a shortlist of 32 titles – a very tricky job indeed. Handily categorised into non-fiction, Reception, KS1 and KS2 books, you can pick and choose the section to best suit your class, or if – like me – you're keen to peruse them all, you can dive in and see which books you'll soon be adding to your wishlist, from page 64.

Elsewhere, Adam Levick lays out everything you need to know about writing moderation (page 18); Sarah Farrell shares her top tips for making teaching spelling easier and more comprehensive, as well as over 100 pages of resources (page 40); and Emma Spiers digs into the whats, whys and wherefores of phase 4 phonics (page 58).

We also are very lucky to have another exclusive model text from Pie Corbett. This time, Pie has written a magical poem, and provides his sage advice on how you can help pupils play with structure and get writing their own verse. See what he has to say on page 46.

If you're on the lookout for alternative formats to help your children along with their writing, break out the popcorn and take a look at James Clements' ideas on how to include multimedia in your literacy lessons on page 56. If, however, you're more interested in a simple, quick solution for retrieval practice, check out Jess Darby's doorway phonics game on page 49 – you can use it for much more than just letter sounds.

Many of this issue's brilliant ideas come from teachers on the front line of primary education, and we're always keen to hear about what's going on in schools. So, if you have an idea you'd like to share, please do feel free to contact me at charley.rogers@theteachco.com

I hope you all have a wonderful break, and look forward to catching up with you again next time.

With best wishes,

Charley Rogers
(editor)

Author in Your Classroom

Play the podcast, share the teaching sequence – and inspire amazing writing from every pupil!



LOUIE STOWELL

*Take a journey with the author of **Loki: A Bad God's Guide to Being Good** and explore what might happen if mythical gods were placed on Earth as children. p10*



DARA O'BRIAIN

Help your class bring information and humour together so each complements the other, taking inspiration from one of the masters of the field, Dara O'Briain. p38



CATHERINE DOYLE

Give kids the opportunity to write their own Christmas story of redemption, where a character can learn a lesson and embrace the spirit of the festive season. p62



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Spelling rules can often seem like a bit of a jumble, but this eight-step resource from Sarah Farrell helps pupils know their vowels from their consonants

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‘Constraint can liberate creativity’

Poet and Talk for Writing founder **Pie Corbett** on his new book of poetry for teaching, and why he never gets tired of children’s creative output

TR&W Your new book, *Catalysts*, explores the teaching of poetry. Do you have a favourite approach?

PC The first list poem I did was an ‘I wish’ poem. When reading what children wrote in response to this, I discovered that, sometimes, adding in constraint to a writing exercise can actually liberate creativity. Because I had made the ‘I wish’ session easy – all the pupils had to do was write ‘I wish’, then add something they wanted to wish for and add a full stop – it seemed to open up their thinking. So, for the book, these kinds of constraints became rather like coat hangers, which you can then dress up in your own ideas. The key to it is to make the constraint, or the pattern, you’re introducing nice and simple. So, for instance, Charles Causley is a great poet to read to children, but he wrote mostly ballads, and that pattern is just too difficult to copy – even for most adults. Something like a list, or an animal poem, is better suited for writing exercises.

What activities would you suggest to teachers who aren’t very confident teaching poetry?

I really like Poem of the Week: so, each week, the teacher picks a special poem, and at a certain point, say after lunchtime,

they read the poem to the class, and then throughout the week the children get to know the poem. It doesn’t take very long – usually only a few minutes. But over a Key Stage, pupils will hear a vast number of different poems. If the children can respond – get their notebooks out, and jot down thoughts and ideas – then over time they build up a tremendous vocabulary, as well as ideas, approaches, turns of phrase, and other elements. And of course everyone is unique, so each child will make something slightly different depending on their experiences, even if they start from the same point. They’ll soon have a repertoire of poems and techniques at their disposal.

What role does creativity play in classroom writing?

For many pupils, coming to school and making things helps them cope

with what’s going on in the world. And it’s a great experience for the teacher, too. I just love it when I go and see children’s artwork, or a performance, and the kids are engaged in creativity. I know they’re taking steps out of the darkness, into the light, and it makes me feel so happy. It’s why I enjoy teaching art, and dance, and music, and writing; because it becomes an extension of your own creativity – their responses are the end result of what you create with them in the classroom. I always found it exciting, when marking a piece of creative writing, to see how pupils had responded to the lesson, and thinking about how I had helped trigger or liberate that.

How would you like teachers to use your book?

I really hope it creates excitement for teachers, and helps bring back some of the joy of writing, which I know can end up missing in some places, due to the testing regime that schools have to go through. As well as the model poems, there are loads of different activity ideas that teachers can dip into and try out with their classes – they can explore them together, perhaps.

Pie Corbett’s latest book, Catalysts: poems for writing (£14.99) is available now





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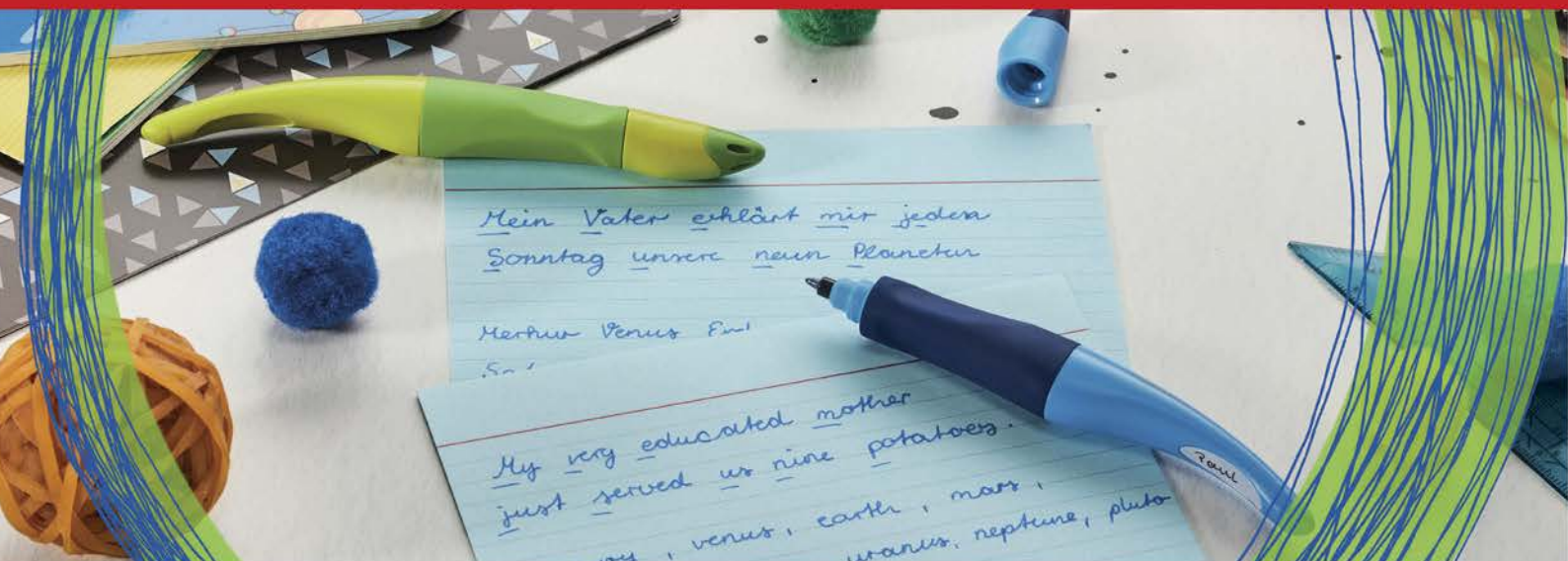
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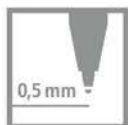
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Bringing mythology into the modern world

with Louie Stowell



Play the podcast, share the teaching sequence – and inspire amazing writing from every pupil...

In what is the first book of a new series, *Loki: A Bad God's Guide to Being Good*, Louie Stowell places Loki in the mortal world as an 11-year-old child, sent there by Odin, to learn how to be good. Thor has also been sent to keep an eye on Loki, and is his brother on Earth. Other Norse gods have come, too, to form Loki's unconventional 'human' family. While on Earth, Loki must keep a diary, which is programmed with Odin's personality and knowledge, and corrects him if he lies. The book includes comic-style pictures – all created by Louie herself –

which give information and add humour.

In this teaching sequence, pupils will have the chance to explore what might happen if gods from other mythical worlds were placed on Earth as children, and discuss how the author describes aspects of the human world through the eyes of a visiting god. Extracts from the *Author in Your Classroom* podcast (bit.ly/AIYCLouieStowell) are suggested to introduce each section of the teaching sequence, providing an excellent way to connect the things children are learning with the work of a professional author.

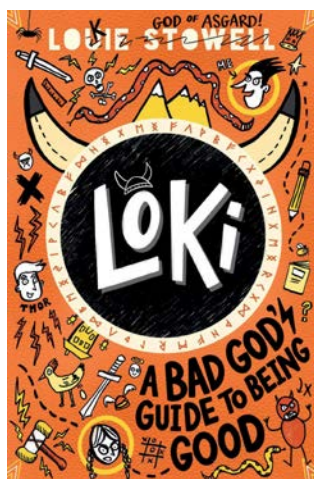
“Until the book is read, it doesn't mean anything”

SESSION 1

A STRANGE MORTAL WORLD

1 | Play the podcast from 6:58 to 21:50, where Louie talks about where she got the idea for her story about Loki, and reads an extract from the book.

2 | Discuss some of the following words: Norse – People from Norway or Scandinavia in ancient and medieval times; Mythology – a series of stories or beliefs (myths) belonging to a particular religion or people; Loki – Norse god of mischief and lies; Thor – Norse god of thunder; Asgard – the place where Norse gods live; Hyrrokkin – a Norse goddess who rode a giant wolf and moved funeral ships; Mortal – a living human being; Immortal – something that



lives forever and will never die. Gods are considered to be immortal.

3 | Listen to the extract again and identify things that Loki finds strange about the mortal world (cereal, dogs, the playground). How do these things compare to what Loki is used to in Asgard? What words does he use to describe them?

SESSION 2

BRINGING MYTHOLOGY INTO THE MODERN WORLD

1 | Discuss again the gods that have been included in the book *Loki: A Bad God's Guide to Being Good*. Which area of mythology did Louie Stowell get these characters from? (Norse)

2 | Explain to pupils that they will be writing a diary from the point of view of a god who is sent to live on Earth as a child. Which gods could they use? Explore pupils' knowledge of gods from various mythologies such as those of Ancient Egypt, Greece or Rome.

3 | Ask pupils to begin to think about their own writing. Which god or

goddess would they like to write about?

4 | Explain that they will need to choose a god to be sent to Earth as a child (pupils who would benefit from more support could use Loki, and information from the extract) and think about things on Earth that will seem strange to them. They will describe these things in the form of a diary, similar to the extract from Louie Stowell's book.

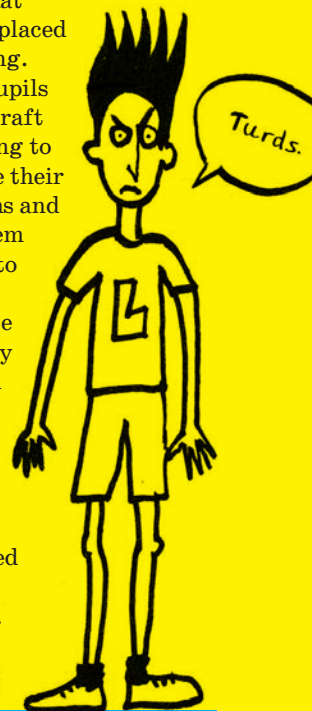
5 | Once pupils have recorded ideas for their god/child, allow them time to discuss their characters and what they might find strange about Earth and the things that are important to a child.



SESSION 5

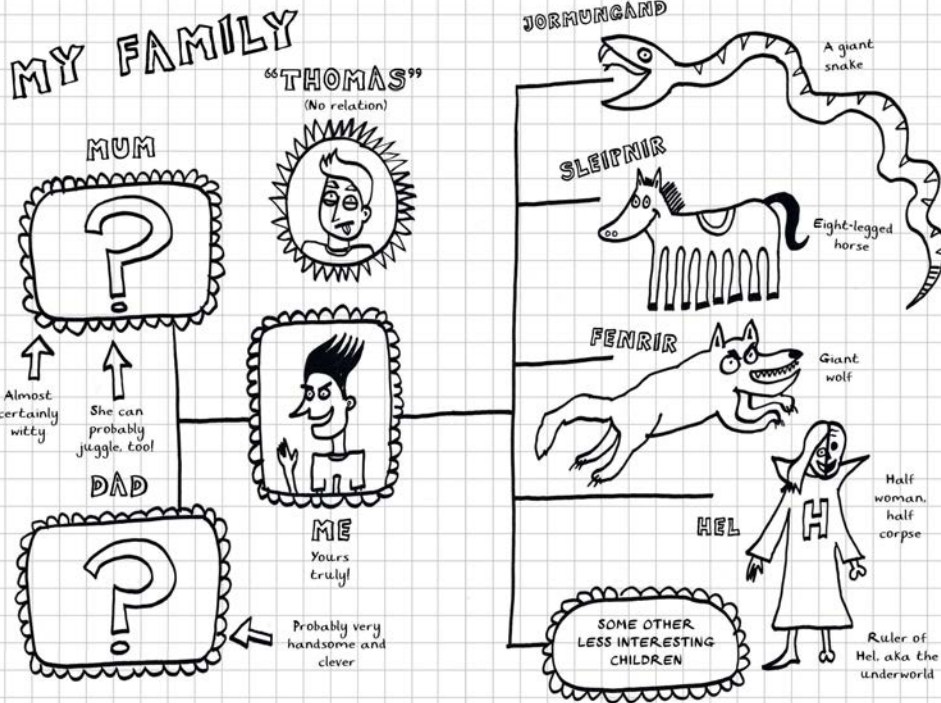
ADDING DOODLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 | Listen to the podcast from 24:21 to 26:40 where Louie talks about her illustrations in the book.
- 2 | Discuss how images can help tell the story. If possible, look at the images that Louie uses in *Loki: A Bad God's Guide to Being Good*.
- 3 | Pupils can reread and edit their writing and think about cartoon illustrations that they could incorporate, removing any text that could be replaced by a drawing.
- 4 | Allow pupils time to redraft their writing to incorporate their illustrations and present them for others to read. Give children the opportunity to read and enjoy each other's writing, discussing what they have learned about the characters.



AFTER THE UNIT...

- Pupils could continue their diary as a god who has been sent to Earth, giving more information about why they are here.
- If you haven't already, read *Loki: A Bad God's Guide to Being Good* to the class. Explore how Loki changes throughout the book and whether he does indeed learn to 'be good'



SESSION 3

GETTING GOING

- 1 | Listen to the podcast from 34:01 to the end of section 3, where Louie gives a variety of suggestions for getting started with

- 2 | Which of Louie's ideas to get going with writing might the children try? Explore options that they

- 3 | Pupils can begin to discuss, doodle, or write ideas for their diary, describing something from Earth from a god's point of view. Encourage pupils to add further ideas as they arise.

SESSION 4

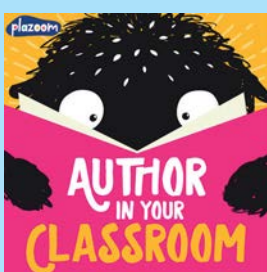
A GOD IN THE MORTAL WORLD

- 1 | Remind pupils that they are all writers!
- 2 | Using the ideas they have gathered earlier in the teaching sequence, ask children to write their diary as their chosen god. Remind pupils to think about how they could show how their

god is feeling about being on Earth and also what they see or experience.



DOWNLOAD NOW!



To download a full set of FREE resources for this teaching sequence – including planning sheets, teaching slides, themed writing paper and more – visit bit.ly/LStowellpack. To subscribe for free, just search for 'Author in Your Classroom' wherever you get your podcasts!



10

BOOKS FOR COLD DAYS & *long nights*

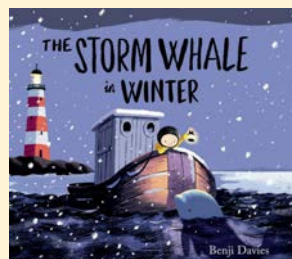
Strap on a pair of ice skates, create your very own snowy map, or simply grab a cup of hot chocolate and snuggle up in your very own Winter Wonderland, with these seasonal titles...

1

FOUNDATION STAGE

The Storm Whale in Winter

BY BENJI DAVIES (SIMON AND SCHUSTER, 2016)



About this book

When Noi's father doesn't return from his fishing trip, Noi sets off across the frozen sea to help him. But all he finds is an abandoned boat, and there are scary noises coming from the sea below. Noi is lost and frightened, and there's nobody to help. But long ago, Noi saved a whale caught in a storm, and now it's the whale's turn to save Noi.

This atmospheric picturebook sequel to *The Storm Whale* tells a well-rounded story, building to a moment of gentle winter peril that is speedily (and satisfyingly) resolved.

Thinking and talking

Is Noi brave to go out in the snowstorm?
Or should he have stayed at home?

Why does the Storm Whale decide to help? What do you think he can see and hear below the ice?

What do you know about whales? Pool



your knowledge, then visit a library to discover more.

Try this...

■ Imagine stepping into the picture of your choice. What can you see, hear, smell and touch? How do you feel? Use exciting words to bring your experience to life, then write

illustrations by Benji Davies

2

FOUNDATION STAGE

A Dot in the SnowBY CORRINNE AVERISS AND
FIONA WOODCOCK, OUP 2017**About this book**

When Miki the polar bear cub meets a girl in a red coat, fun and games ensue. A lost mitten leads to a daring underwater dive, and breaking ice tests their connection in a different way – but both their mothers are waiting with loving hugs to keep them safe and warm.

In this heartwarming picturebook about curiosity, kindness and courage, Fiona

Woodcock's luminous Arctic landscapes put Miki and his new friend centre-stage in a series of visually exciting page layouts.

Thinking and talking

What do you wear to play in the snow? What does it feel like? What would happen if you lost your glove?

Are you friends with an animal? What do you play? Talk about respecting animals and staying safe!

Why do you think the girl and her mum are wearing red coats? Why is Miki's fur white?

Try this...

■ Draw fractured ice patterns on the playground with chalk and practise

jumping safely to the shore. "Paw after paw, slow through the snow, Miki marched back to the ice...." Can you march like Miki? Find more verbs in the text, then have a go at paddling, swimming and climbing like Miki, too.

■ Sponge and splatter different shades of white paint onto wallpaper to create a snowy background. Paint differently-coloured circles and cut them out. Which colour looks best against the snow? Why? Which colour is easiest to see from a distance?

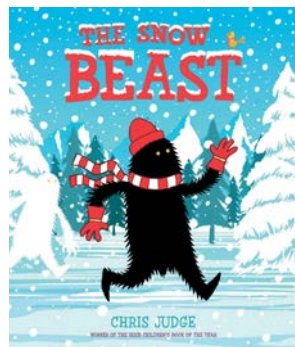
■ What are the girl and her mum wearing to keep them safe and warm? Dress up in winter clothing to go on a journey in a frozen landscape. Roleplay, create mini-stories and share.

KEY STAGE 1

3

The Snow BeastBY CHRIS JUDGE
(ANDERSEN PRESS,
2016)

*"This sequel to
The Lonely Beast
features snowy
landscapes and
activities"*

**About this book**

The Beast is always excited by the first snowfall of winter, but this year, the villagers can't hold their Snow Festival because an abominable monster has stolen their tools. An exciting chase ensues as the Beast sets off to confront the thief, only

to discover that the Snow Beast needs the tools to mend his mobile home. Perhaps the Beast can help?

This picturebook sequel to *The Lonely Beast* features snowy landscapes and activities, plus a fabulous cross-section through the Snow Beast's iceberg home!

Thinking and talking

Do you remember the last time it snowed? What would you do if it started snowing tomorrow?

Did the Snow Beast mean to steal the tools? What could he have done instead?

What do you know about icebergs? Float chunks of ice in water and observe what's happening.

Try this...

■ Set up an outdoor trail of Snow Beast footprints, with story quotes to read along the way – and perhaps a surprise at the end for everyone to share?

■ Use the pictures to tell the story of the Beast's accident-prone trip. Can you draw a picture map of his snowy journey?

■ Prepare a Beast-shaped template and stencil by drawing him on card and cutting him out with a craft knife. Invite children to explore printing and stenciling, then use your Beast template and stencil with black and white paint to create pictures of the friends.



about it.

■ Using voices and/or instruments, compose a soundtrack to accompany the snowstorm picture.

■ Look at the picture of Noi running across the frozen sea, then paint snowstorms and add a yellow-coated figure to each one.

4

KEY STAGE 1

Winter Sleep: A Hibernation Story

BY SEAN TAYLOR, ALEX MORSS, AND CINYEE CHIU (WORDS & PICTURES, 2019)



illustrations by Cinyee Chiu

About this book

On a winter visit with Granny to their special woodland glade, a child is dismayed to find that so much has changed since summer. But disappointment is replaced by wonder as Granny demonstrates that the glade is full of life.

Weaving wildlife facts into a fictional story about seasonal visits to a much-loved garden, this calm and engaging picturebook includes four informative spreads

which take a traditional non-fiction approach to the same material.

Thinking and talking

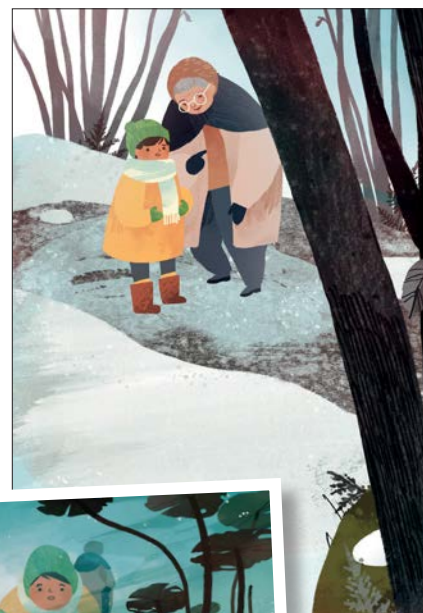
Talk about a garden or outdoor space that you know well. What's it like now, as autumn turns to winter? What will it be like next summer?

Talk about spending time with grandparents or older family friends.

Would you like to hibernate and wake up in the spring, or do you prefer the winter? Why?

Try this...

■ Explore an outdoor area in winter. Draw from life, take photos and make notes. Repeat in spring and discuss the differences.

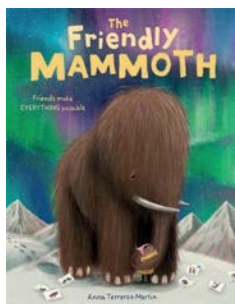


KEY STAGE 1

5

The Friendly Mammoth

BY ANNA TERREROS-MARTIN (DAVID FICKLING BOOKS, 2022)



About this book

When lonely Mansi meets a woolly mammoth at the museum, the pair find themselves swept back in time for an exciting Ice Age adventure. Together they meet a cave-girl, watch the Northern Lights and discover the mammoth's family grazing on the plain. On her return, Mansi decides to use her artistic skills to protect the environment, which brings her a real-world friend.

The pastel illustrations create soft, inviting textures, and an informative spread about five extinct Ice-Age animals is included.

“Mansi and a woolly mammoth are swept back in time for an Ice Age adventure”

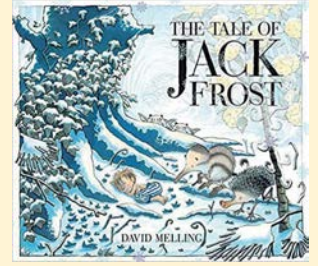
illustrations by Anna Terreros-Martin



KEY STAGE 1

6

The Tale of Jack Frost

BY DAVID MELLING
(HODDER, 2003)

■ Draw hibernating creatures from this book. Paint backgrounds with cutaway burrows and a pond, then stick your creatures in the right habitats.

■ Talk about the 'cosy magic' of going to sleep on a winter's night. What could Granny and the child be thinking, feeling and saying in the bedtime picture? Explore possibilities and roleplay their discussion.



Thinking and talking

What does this book tell us about the last Ice Age?

Compare the cave paintings of animals with the wildlife Mansi sees on the plain. What do *conservation* and *extinction* mean?

How does Mansi try to help wildlife when she gets home?

What helps Mansi make friends in this story?

Try this...

■ Find out about mammoths, cave paintings, the last Ice Age and other topics in this story. Write about your discoveries and illustrate your work for a display or class book.

■ Write or tell this story from the mammoth's point of view.

■ Use pastels to draw icy landscapes and the Northern Lights (or colour round your hands to create cave-painting-style prints!)



illustrations by David Melling, 2003

About this book

When a boy wanders into a magical forest, its strange inhabitants care for him, and name him Jack Frost because of his ability to freeze things with just one touch. But Jack's arrival has left the door open for troublesome goblins to follow. They kidnap Jack to steal his magic, and he must use all his imagination and cunning to trick his way out.

This picturebook classic bursts with imagination, kindness and humour, and reads well aloud. There is also an animated film version of the story.

Thinking and talking

How do the creatures in the forest care for Jack?

If you discovered that you could fly, where would you go and what would you do?

What does frost look like? Feel like? Why does it form?

Try this...

■ Investigate freezing and thawing by making your own 'frozen suns' and watching them

melt under varying conditions.

■ Make frosty artwork using blue and white paint to create abstract pictures. Before the paint dries, squeeze patterns of PVA glue over it, then add a sprinkling of glittering Epsom Salts (*inedible*).

■ Explore the goblins' movements as they stomp into the snail-glue puddles and get stuck. Play icy music while you're moving, then freeze when it stops. Invent an unruly goblin chant to shout!





KEY STAGE 2

7

Frostheart

BY JAMIE LITTLER (PUFFIN, 2019)



About this book

In the coldest part of the monster-infested Snow Sea, settlements must be fortified against attack, and journeys of any kind across the frozen water are perilous. When an accident reveals Ash's special powers, he and his Yeti guardian are forced to join the *Frostheart*, an explorer sleigh with a daring crew that needs Ash's help. Rollercoaster action ensues in this wildly imaginative

middle-grade adventure, with black and white line drawings throughout.

Thinking and talking

Would you rather be safe in a fortified village, or out on the *Frostheart* with Ash and the crew? Debate the pros and cons.

How does Jamie Littler describe the frozen setting for this story? Find the words and phrases that bring it to life.

The creatures in this book have adapted to living in a frozen world. Can you invent another well-adapted creature for Ash and his companions to encounter?

Try this...

- Design a new sleigh for the *Frostheart*'s crew. What are its key features, and why have you included them?
- Write and illustrate a

guidebook to the monsters in this book.

- Work together to summarise the main events in this story. Where do they happen, and what are we told about these locations? Use this information to help you draw and annotate a picture-map.

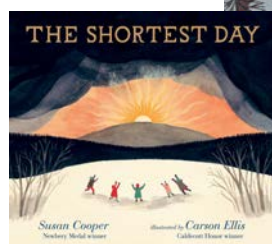


KEY STAGE 2

8

The Shortest Day

BY SUSAN COOPER AND CARSON ELLIS (WALKER BOOKS, 2019)



About this book

With illustrations evoking the harshness and subdued light of a midwinter landscape, this lyrical picturebook about the age-old customs and beliefs around the Winter Solstice also captures the warmth of human interaction and the promise of new growth.

Celebrating the cycle of life and the patterns created by light and darkness in our lives, Susan Cooper's atmospheric poem was originally written for theatrical performance. As a picturebook for older readers, it makes an intriguing starting

point for further research about winter customs and beliefs, and will inspire children's own creative seasonal responses.

Thinking and talking

How do you and your family celebrate at midwinter? What other traditions, customs and festivals are you aware of around this time of year?

What is the Winter

Solstice, and why did people in history care about it? Why do we care, now?

While the sun is absent, what other sources of light are visible? Why do you think Carson Ellis depicted the sun in this way? What do these images make you think about and feel?

Try this...

- Find out about seasonal customs and traditions, then work together to present an assembly or create a class display.
- Compare Carson Ellis's illustration of people collecting firewood with Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 'Hunters in the Snow', then paint your own snowy landscapes with bare winter trees.
- Learn this poem and perform it, choral speaking-style. Add masks, mime and music to your performance for even greater impact.



KEY STAGE 2

9

Frindleswylde

BY NATALIA AND
LAUREN O'HARA
(WALKER BOOKS, 2021)



illustrations by Natalia and Lauren O'Hara

picturebook for older readers draws inspiration from traditional northern folktales (*three impossible tasks, a deep dark forest, icy spells...*) and is evocatively illustrated in a cold palette throughout.

Thinking and talking

What would you do as King or Queen of Winter?

Frindleswylde wants everything to stay the same, but Cora knows she must grow up. What does this story tell us about change? What is changing in your world?

Why do you think people like telling stories on long, dark nights?

Try this...

■ "In the living room, hailstones pounded

the floor and cracked the windows..." Write creatively about *winter coming indoors*.

■ Investigate electrical circuits, then use components to make your own working lanterns. Decorate, then read folktales together by their light on a dark day.

■ Inspired by the illustration of Cora in the frozen garden, use icy colours to create watercolour pictures of Frindleswylde's kingdom.



About this book

When Frindleswylde tricks his way into their log cabin and steals the attic lamp, Granny can't find her way home. Cora follows the mysterious thief into a world where summer lies frozen to retrieve the light, but Frindleswylde tricks Cora into becoming his

Winter Queen instead.

Frindleswylde doesn't want anything to change, but deep down, Cora knows that nothing stays the same forever. When she acts on this knowledge, Spring follows her out of Frindleswylde's kingdom and his spell is broken.

This lyrical, longer-form

KEY STAGE 2

10

Lines

BY SUZY LEE
(CHRONICLE
KIDS, 2017)



illustrations by Suzy Lee

About this book

As a girl skates across an icy pond, she leaves an increasingly complex line behind her on the pure white page. Her movements are captured using drawing techniques that children can explore themselves, and as the pages turn, we become

increasingly aware of the artist's role. Ignoring a ball of crumpled paper, the girl skates over it to the final page, where she is joined by others, and the illusion of happy skaters on a winter pond is (almost?) complete.

Drawn entirely in pencil, this sophisticated wordless picturebook rewards close

looking and will prompt questions about the artist's role and drawing techniques.

Thinking and talking

Share knowledge and experiences of skating and other winter sports. How does it feel to be active in cold weather? Does *Lines* communicate these feelings? How?

What's happening in this book? Tell the story from the girl's point of view. Does she know that she's a character in a picturebook?

Discuss Suzy Lee's artwork and the way she

chose to construct this book. What do you think she was trying to say by working like this?

Try this...

■ Copy the girl's postures and explore the movements they suggest. Join to create sequences, then add icy music for a performance.

■ Skate a pencil line across a blank page to create Suzy Lee-style patterns, then explore the different effects you can create. Draw a frozen landscape with a big pond and populate it with lots of busy skaters.

■ Write a commentary on the action from the girl's perspective. Repeat from the artist's point of view. Can you make each voice sound different?



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Are you ready for writing moderation?

Grab your sticky notes and take a deep breath: here's how to make the process work for you

ADAM LEVICK

Writing moderation is something on which we all have an opinion. Some of us relish the opportunity to be able to show off our pupils' amazing work, while others dread the experience of having to 'prove' that a child has managed to cross the threshold of the expected standard.

After going through the process, I can confidently say that it was useful and (dare I say) enjoyable. It was a great form of CPD, and allowed for meaningful professional discussion and advice on the next steps to improve my teaching.

The key message is simple: know your class' writing, and know it well. Have the confidence in your ability as a teacher to know where each child is, and know what evidence is available to justify that. This knowledge of the work is the springboard for

checklists colour-coordinated with sticky labels across a class set of writing books. However, any system that showcases where the evidence is and how children have met the standards is a winner. Find what works for you.

On top of this, your preparation truly begins at the point of your medium- and long-term plans. Having a broad range of genres, audiences and purposes for writing is essential, making a note of what knowledge you expect the children to gain where you can.

Let's take a closer look at some of these tips, to help you feel ready should you get that writing moderation call.

Don't panic

Getting the selection email can be daunting. I remember the sense of dread I initially experienced when my

there to catch you out. Most are teachers and just want to ensure that pupils are getting the grades they deserve.

Take a breath, and pause. If you're prepared and armed with a strong knowledge of your class' writing, you will be fine!

Actually teach the children

Being prepared for writing moderation begins on day one. Your teaching sequences will have a huge impact on the children's work across the year. The final pieces you'll take to moderation all stem from your lessons.

Independent writing is a skill that is honed through explicit teaching. I have made the mistake of letting the children write independently far too early, only to be met with blank stares and a chorus of 'ummmm'.

To be prepared for moderation, you need to put the groundwork in first. Let your class see the writing

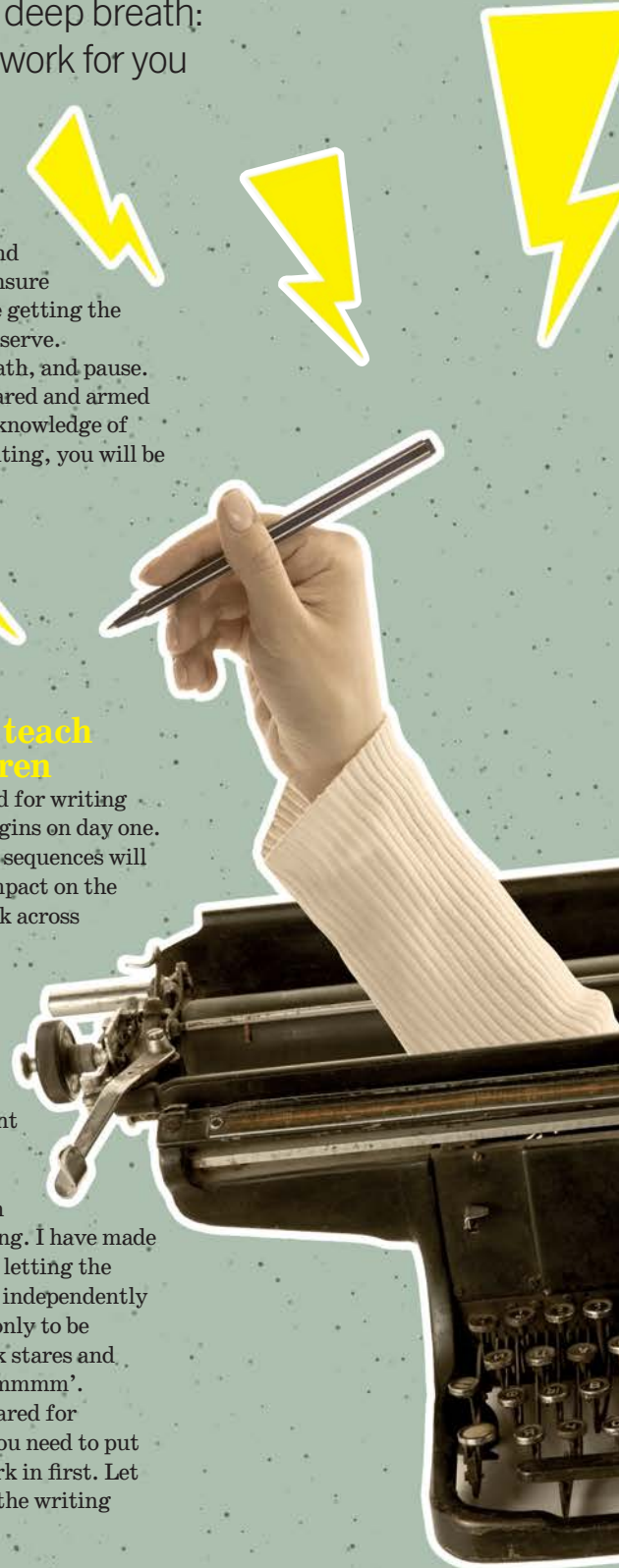
"The key message is simple: know your class' writing, and know it well"

everything else when it comes to preparing for moderation.

To make the process as painless as possible, make sure you have done the organisational prep work needed. For me, that meant

headteacher came and told me, "It's a yes to moderation".

However, there is nobody in the world better suited to talking through your children's work than you. Moderators aren't



process and the way a writer thinks. Model writing in front of them, explaining your reasons behind your language or grammatical choices.

Shared writes allow you to collate your class' ideas with you as a guiding voice. Take their suggestions on board and tweak where necessary to show them how they can turn ideas into great sentences.

Actually teaching the children how to think like a writer is the best way to ensure their independent writing will be ready for moderation. If you're not sure where to start, try free podcasts like *Author In Your Classroom* to bring real-life writers directly to your pupils.

Presenting evidence

Writing will be moderated against the teacher assessment framework (TAF), so make sure this is the basis for your prep. Your best tool to help present evidence is a checklist of the TAF statements, mapped onto different examples of the children's writing.

Finding the right checklist is key. Although the moderator will use a list filled with broad and generalised statements, using one that breaks each statement down will make your life easier. For example, instead of ticking off 'I can build cohesion within and across paragraphs', use a list that gives each cohesive device its own tickable box ('for example', 'in conclusion', 'and', 'but', etc). This allows you to pinpoint individual or whole-class weaknesses.

dictionary to spell uncommon or more ambitious words'. Having these visual prompts sticking out of the top of the books meant I could turn to that piece of work immediately and give the moderator the evidence they needed.

Moderate before moderation

Moderation can feel like a lonely process, especially if you teach in a small school. However, a crucial part of feeling prepared is collaboration. To feel at ease,

moderate some writing with others before the big day looms.

If you're part of a MAT, ask about cross-school moderation. That way, people who have taught different writing units will be able to look over your work and give you advice and reassurance where necessary.

Sitting down with your headteacher to go through your judgements and evidence is also a great help. Chances are, they will have seen the children's work in previous years and will be able to give you a positive narrative about how much progress they've made.

The key takeaway is always to ask for the help and support you need. I was lucky enough to moderate with colleagues in school and across the MAT, with my headteacher, and with friends and colleagues through Twitter. Not only did it help me understand where to ensure I had extra evidence, but it also boosted my confidence hugely.

You got this!



Adam Levick is a mixed Year 5/6 teacher in a small school in York.

He is also the subject leader for English, PSHE and computing.

Twitter: @_MrLevick

9 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WRITING MODERATION:

1 First, moderation isn't as scary or daunting as it seems. It's actually a useful process that is meant to benefit you as CPD and to give next steps to influence your teaching the following year.

2 Keep calm and take it as an opportunity to benefit your own practice as a teacher.

3 Make sure you tune into a positive mindset to make the process work for you.

4 Organisation is key to feeling prepared; using a system to collate evidence without inducing a huge workload. Find a way to showcase evidence that works for you.

5 Ask for what you need; whether that's time, people to moderate with, or just someone to listen.

6 Reach out to others going through the same. A support network is really helpful for ensuring that you feel prepared and positive going through the process. Twitter is great for this!

7 Make sure you have a strong knowledge of the children's writing, including their strengths and roughly which level they are working at.

8 Put the groundwork in from day one. A well-planned writing curriculum with a good range of genres, audiences and purposes will ensure a solid evidence base.

9 Make sure you've explicitly taught your children the how and why behind writing, providing models and scaffolds at the beginning of the year.



I'm a firm believer that overpreparation is the key to success. I also swear allegiance to anything colour-coded. For me, that meant developing my own system of sticky notes to mark each piece of work for different evidence markers. For instance, I could easily spot that pink meant 'using a

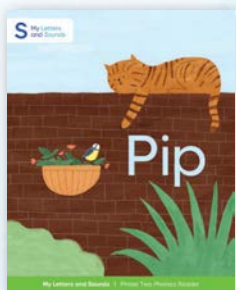


My Letters and Sounds

The new SSP programme for Letters and Sounds schools

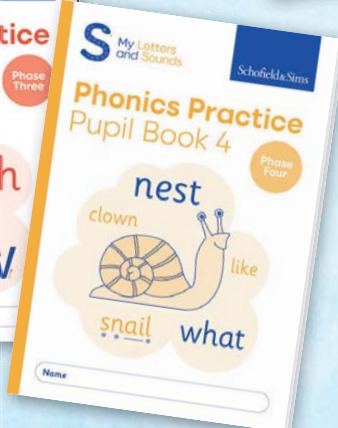
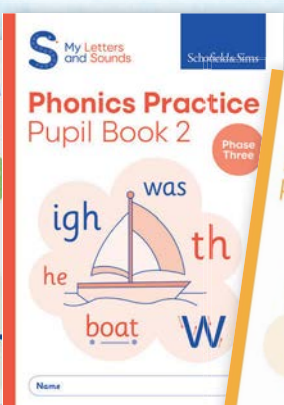
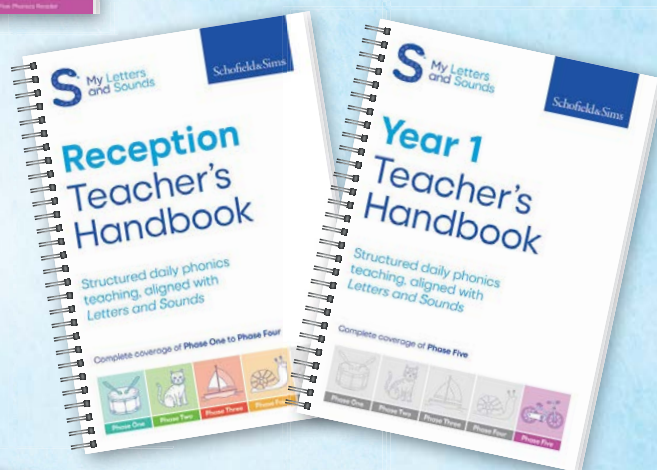
My Letters and Sounds is a complete phonics teaching programme that builds upon the original 2007 *Letters and Sounds*. It has been carefully designed to provide schools that wish to continue using the Letters and Sounds framework with an up-to-date and comprehensive set of resources that meet the DfE's revised core criteria for effective phonics teaching.





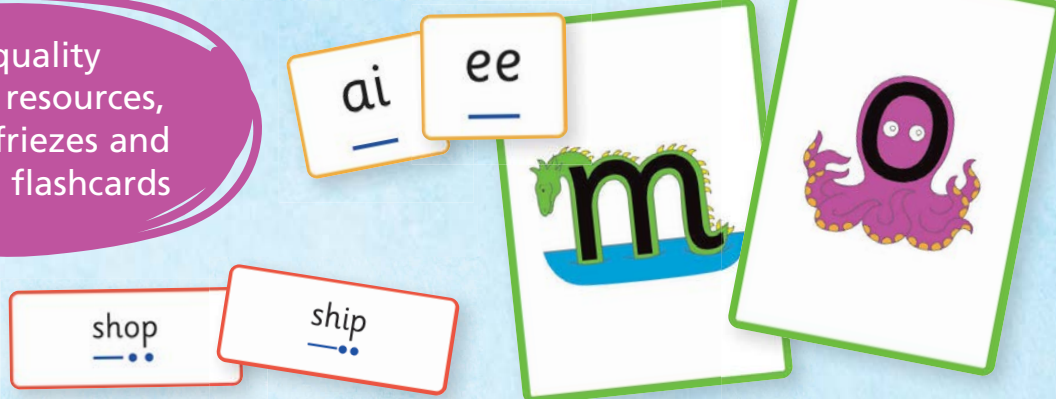
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Gathering evidence

Make sure the KS1 Teacher Assessment Framework is working for you and your pupils – as well as for the ‘Powers That Be’, says **Sue Drury**

Let’s be honest, it can often seem that there are two types of assessment: the kind that helps you teach and the sort that keeps the ‘Powers That Be’ happy. The former – often classed as formative assessment – lets you know how your pupils are doing and allows you to adjust your practice as you go along. Traditionally, however, the latter is the mark by which they and you will be judged. It is high-stakes and, arguably, artificial, dependent on how each child performs in narrow tests on a specific day.

The Teacher Assessment Framework (TAF) provides something of a bridge between those extremes. It is still statutory assessment, but it also provides real opportunities to help your pupils demonstrate what you know in your heart is their true ability.

What’s it all about?

Essentially, the TAF is a tool for supporting teacher assessment at the end of a Key Stage by focusing on certain critical aspects of core subjects such as English. It

consists of a number of ‘I can ...’ statements to be ticked off using evidence from pupils’ work, which together will show whether each child is working towards or at the expected standard, or at greater depth.

There are various provisos defining what counts as evidence, so you will need to look up the official guidance. The main point, however, is that the evidence must be harvested from independent work, so there is no chance of manufacturing better-than-deserved outcomes.

Just keep teaching

As the ‘Powers That Be’ are at pains to point out, this statutory framework does not cover all the requirements of the National Curriculum, so you can continue to enjoy giving your pupils a broad education. Nor should it replace your school’s existing assessment policy and the way you communicate pupil progress across the full curriculum to their parents and carers.

The TAF plays a key role in moderation, too. If your school is one of the 25 per cent earmarked for moderation each year, you will be expected to be able to produce evidence against the TAF standards on demand, so it is well worth keeping tabs on how well your pupils are progressing against each of them, with some kind of tracking system.

Put learning to the test

Part of your tracking system should record where the best evidence is for each statement,

especially if you recognise the following scenario: you know that Pupil A understands how to use punctuation mark B. She has explained it to you and she has shown understanding through class discussions. However, when you come to scan her books for examples in independent writing activities, it’s just not there. It’s not that it’s been missed when she had the chance. For some reason, the way she has worded every single text has simply bypassed the need for that punctuation mark, entirely legitimately. These are the situations in which you need to nudge the fates in your favour, by planning an independent writing task that is likely to yield the evidence you need. Short of command sentences? Get your pupils to write a set of instructions. Need to see some exclamation sentences? An informal letter or personal recount might do the trick. Self-assessment can also help in these situations. If you provide grids of success criteria for specific pieces of work and give them a chance to rate their own, you can bet that your pupils will try extra hard to include examples of all the goals and targets.

Ultimately, the guiding principle here must be to think ahead and be prepared. Gearing your planning to take account of the TAF can make your job so much easier.



Sue Drury is literacy lead at Plazoom, the expert literacy resources

website. Find more advice at plazoom.com/blog

4 RESOURCES TO GENERATE TAF EVIDENCE



bit.ly/PlazoomTAF1
‘Great Fire of London’ - instruction writing pack with TAF checklists



bit.ly/PlazoomTAF2
‘The Wrong Habitat’ - narrative writing pack with TAF checklists



bit.ly/PlazoomTAF3
‘Letter to Neil Armstrong’ - formal writing pack with TAF checklists



bit.ly/PlazoomTAF4
‘Discovering my Home Town’ - recount writing pack with TAF checklists

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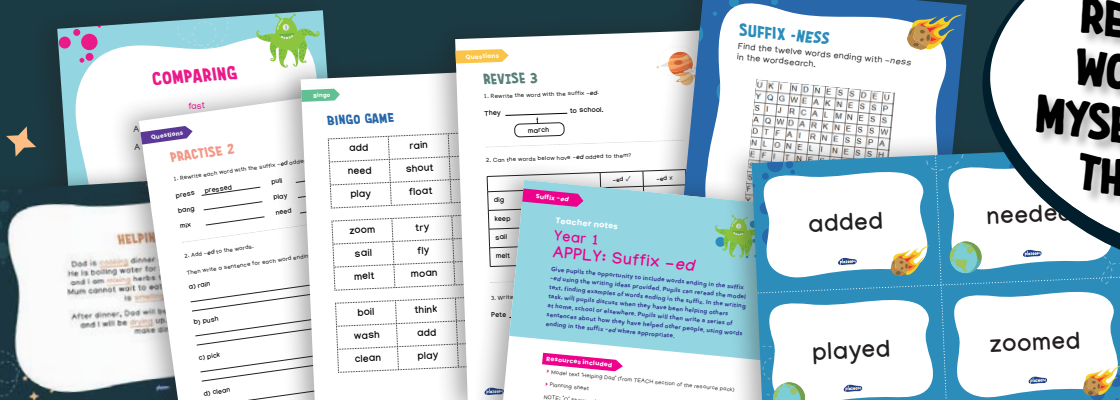
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Can be used flexibly to suit the needs of your class

1

TEACH

Comprehensive teaching sequences ensure your pupils grasp every concept and can apply their learning in context



2

PRACTISE

3 differentiated practise activities that can be used flexibly to consolidate learning and identify any gaps or misconceptions



3

REVISIT

A range of games and activities that will ensure your pupils embed their learning



4

APPLY

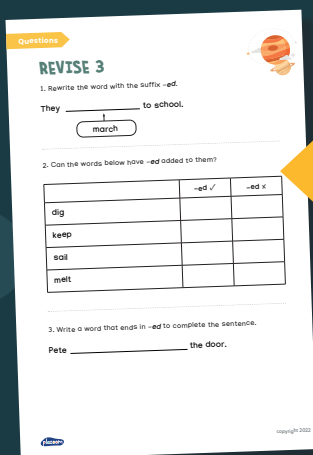
Extended writing tasks are used to encourage children to identify and apply the skill in context



5

REVISE

3 differentiated revision exercises to prepare your pupils for their end of year assessments



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GRAMMAR RULES THAT STICK

Rote learning and drills may help (some) children pass SPaG tests – but real progress only happens when we put the content in context, argues **Rachel Clarke**

Teaching grammar without context is a little like sharing a meme of a literary quote without having read the book from which it has been taken. Yes, we can drill our pupils to spot grammatical features and name them; but without seeing those features used in the context of real texts, children can't really understand how they work as tools of communication.

The view that grammar is best taught in context is not a new one. It's an approach supported by research, including that of Professor Debra Myhill at Exeter University, and is something that most teachers aspire to do. However, despite this, many still find themselves drilling grammatical terminology in stand-alone lessons in preparation for the spelling, punctuation and grammar test at the end of Key Stage 2.

So how can we set about teaching grammar in context so that children remember it?

1 TEACH

In the first instance, we need to map out the objectives required in our year group; ensuring



that every objective is included.

Think about the model texts you want to use with children. Recognising that certain text types lend themselves to specific grammar objectives can be particularly useful when you do this. For example, if you need to teach command sentences, using an instructions model text, such

as a recipe, makes sense.

It's important to include direct teacher instruction in your grammar planning. You'll not want to take a directive approach in all lessons, but when introducing objectives, direct instruction means you can be sure that the mental models children create are accurate. Using the relevant grammatical terminology as you explore

your model text ensures that children see the grammar in a meaningful context.

Quick Tip:

After teaching children about a target objective through the model text, set them a treasure hunt task. Can they find examples of the objective in their reading books? This could be a homework activity or something you ask them to do in pairs or small groups. You could extend this activity, for example, by challenging them to note whether specific text types use the feature. Equally, you could support pupils by providing accessible texts that you know contain the features you want them to locate.

“Without seeing grammatical features used in the context of real texts, children can't really understand how they work as tools of communication”



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2 PRACTISE

Once you've pointed out the target objective in your model text, children need opportunities to practise using it. This type of low-stakes activity means they can develop their mental models without feeling overwhelmed. Activities such as labelling, filling in cloze procedures and completing sentence starters are perfect for this kind of learning.

Quick Tip:

Think about progression and what children already know. For example, if teaching pupils in upper Key Stage 2 to use dialogue to develop character and action, you may need to track back to earlier work on adding speech marks, using the range of speech punctuation, and using synonyms for 'said' in reporting clauses. Revisit these previous objectives if it will help children access their existing mental models. And don't be afraid to use pre-prepared resources!

3 REVISIT

Teaching a concept or rule once only is unlikely to ensure deep learning, so looking at how to space repetition so that children encounter each objective several times over the year is a good approach. It's beneficial to use different text types, too – so the command sentences I mentioned earlier, for example, could also be explored in a persuasive article, such as a tourism leaflet ('Visit Yorkshire!')

With each successive encounter with the objective, pupils modify their mental model and come to deepen their

understanding of how an aspect of grammar can be used in real texts.

Quick Tip:

Create a set of grammar instruction cards. Children could answer these individually, in pairs, groups or as a whole class. Prompts could include: write me a sentence using the past progressive form of verbs; write me a sentence including an expanded noun phrase; write a sentence with a fronted adverbial. Once you've made the cards you can swap them in and out based on assessment for learning (AfL) and the ongoing grammar objectives you cover with the class.

4 APPLY

When children understand the grammar we've taught them, they can use it to write their own texts, communicating for different purposes and audiences. Model texts play an important role in this process, as they give children an example to base their own texts upon, exemplifying the target grammar objectives.

Quick Tip:

Knowing how to use a grammatical feature to improve a piece of writing is a good way for children to apply their knowledge. Giving them a basic sentence such as 'The dog walked.', and asking them to improve it using the target objective (e.g. add an expanded noun phrase, or use a fronted adverbial) is a quick and easy way to check pupils' understanding.

5 REVISE

Giving pupils opportunities to practise using their stored knowledge helps them to draw on it when they need it. This is why it's worth planning opportunities for children to revisit and revise their understanding as part of any grammar teaching sequence.

Quick Tips:

Low-stakes testing is a good way to help children retrieve and recall their grammatical knowledge. Testing doesn't need to be formal – for example, you

could ask the class to write three examples of a question, or to circle all the verbs on a grid of words containing a variety of word families. This will give you the vital assessment knowledge that you need to plan well-pitched and progressive learning, and it will enable the children to recall and revise existing knowledge.

Using tests that replicate the question types from the SATs means that pupils become accustomed to the question formats of the tests. It's worth remembering that 3–5 questions planned into a teaching sequence is plenty.



Rachel Clarke is director of the Primary English literacy

consultancy, and has over 20 years' experience in primary education, in which time she has been a SENCO, English subject lead and deputy headteacher.

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Where there's A WILL...

Are your KS2 pupils still struggling to read? Use these six suggestions to help them catch up, says **Charlotte Raby**

This year, more than 25 per cent of children in Year 6 left primary school reading at below the expected level. The impact of this, as we all know, is that secondary school will be much harder for these children than for their peers. The secondary curriculum is reliant on pupils reading with fluency and understanding, and when they enter KS3 not being able to read well, they can quickly lose confidence.

In our primary schools we have children in KS2 who have really missed out; those who didn't get the teaching and attention they needed to become confident readers, especially during the pandemic. We need to do something now.

So how do we help all our children learn to read?

1. Make your class a reading class

Professor Teresa Cremin (president of the UK Literacy Association) often speaks about how we need to address both 'the will and skill' when it comes to reading. For any child that is a wobbly reader, being read to and experiencing a rich diet of all types of literature, poetry and non-fiction is crucial to igniting that will to read. We know that teachers who read to children every day are doing just that. And when you create a reading classroom where pupils can explore all sort of texts, comics, graphic novels, magazines and catalogues, and where reading is a shared, out-loud experience, every child can see themselves as a reader and find themselves in books.

We also know that reading time has benefits beyond the enjoyment it fosters. When teachers read aloud and chat with children about a book, they are creating understanding, connection and memory which of course underpins comprehension. Curious conversations about books that have been shared are powerful in themselves, too; they

lay the foundations for meaningful comprehension in an enjoyable, inclusive fashion. Make this part of your daily practice and you will be ensuring not only that the children you teach experience lots of quality literature, but you will be showing them that reading is important to you – that it matters.

2. Quickly identify children who have not secured the alphabetic code

There are many reasons why children may need to be taught reading in KS2:

- they have missed chunks of schooling and so have gaps in their phonic knowledge;
- they have not been taught with consistency and so have not secured adequate phonic knowledge to read fluently;
- they need more practice and time to secure each stage of the phonic code and so have fallen behind their peers;
- they are new to the country and reading or speaking English.

Whatever the reason, you need a robust assessment to work out exactly what these children need and what the gaps are. Your SSP should have an assessment that can benchmark pupils' phonic knowledge, and you may also want to do a fluency assessment which will help you work out if reading speed and accuracy are issues, too. But make sure the fluency assessment is at



the right level and is fully decodable. Again, your SSP should have one available.

3. Make a plan: timetable lessons and get teaching every day

It's pretty clear that children who are not reading in KS2 need urgent support and that it should be as quick and effective as possible. There is no time to waste so let's make every minute count!

Your assessments will help you work out if you need to teach small groups of children or if they need one-to-one teaching. Consider timetabling reading lessons before school, and providing breakfast. It seems so unfair that children who need more help miss out on the wider curriculum, so even if before school doesn't work, think creatively about how to timetable lessons so children don't miss out. We all know that a child who is missing their favourite class is going to find it harder to give these lessons their all.

To stop catch-up feeling like a chore, make one lesson a week into a celebration: whip out the hot chocolate and read to the children at the end. They are working hard, and we need to acknowledge that!

4. Find a place that is calm and private

Children who have not learned to read at the same time as their peers will have lost confidence and may show this through their behaviour. It is vital that we make them feel safe and ready to learn in their catch-up lessons. Pupils may feel that they cannot learn to read, that it is too difficult or not for them, so it is up to you to help them believe that they can do this by showing

them that it is possible and celebrating their successes. Older children in particular need to feel that they are not being patronised or considered 'not intelligent' because they have not yet learned to read. Keep your tone warm and encouraging and the pace of the lesson brisk so that every moment is used to learn. Try to see these lessons as a team effort with you and the children working together.

To keep the cognitive load low:

- keep distractions to a minimum; only put out the resources that you need for the lesson;
- don't talk too much – use the minimum talk needed to teach. Too much talk is overwhelming for some children;
- use the same teaching resources as your SSP – the same grapheme cards and grapheme charts will ensure consistency;
- use the same routines and activities; this will help pupils to focus on learning to read rather than learning a new activity.

5. Make reading central to your teaching

Phonics is only part of teaching reading. Your catch-up programme must include reading practice with fully decodable books, ideally

created with older readers in mind. Teach reading fluency, prosody and comprehension in these sessions. Make sure that the children take these books home to practise or that they read them to another adult during the week.

6. Don't stop until they are reading fluently! (And don't forget about spelling.)

Children who have secured all of the phase five grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and can read them with ease, and have a reading accuracy speed of 90+ words per minute, are ready to exit the phonics instruction part of a catch-up programme. They will, however, need to continue reading sessions, which will ensure that they are practising their phonic knowledge in context and will provide challenge in terms of vocabulary and comprehension. Continue to use grapheme charts in class to aid spelling and ensure that the children are given time to use their phonic knowledge to decode new words when they are reading. **TP**



Charlotte Raby is programme developer at Little Wandle.

She is a champion of reading for pleasure at home and at school

and never leaves the house without a book in her bag!



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Y6 pupils

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Reading Plus**

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How to run a creative WRITING CLUB

Would you rather be able to fly, or be invisible? Maybe both?
Explore endless impossibilities and help pupils get into the scribbling spirit with these ideas for your own group

MEL TAYLOR-BESSENT

If you could wish for one thing, knowing that it would definitely come true, what would you wish for? A million pounds? To fly? To talk to animals? To live in a tree house? To travel the world at the click of a finger? I've asked this question hundreds of times to thousands of pupils, and their answers are always imaginative, normally well thought-out, and quite often, impossible.

I then follow it up with the question, "What if you could experience that thing right here, right now?" Cue eyes widening, ears pricking and backs straightening. "All you need is . . ." I explain, ". . . a pencil."

Before becoming an author, I ran creative writing clubs in 30 schools a week for almost a decade. I hired over 100 tutors, won some awards, teamed up with publishers to arrange author events, and even had requests from teachers in Europe, Dubai and Australia asking to launch a club in their schools. There were long waiting lists in almost every school, and teachers, parents and librarians would ask on a weekly basis, "How have you turned that reluctant reader/writer into someone that actually wants to do more writing after school?"

The secret?

First and foremost, I planned workshops that were FUN. I knew if I enjoyed running them, pupils would enjoy taking part. I was just another writer in the room who talked about the books I was reading, collaborated on ideas, and asked for feedback on stories in the same way they asked me. I wasn't a published author at this point – just someone that loved to invent characters and write about fantastical, magical worlds. I wrote alongside the students, making mistakes, scribbling over anything I didn't like, and asking for help

whenever I got stuck. Everyone knew this was just 'rough' work. There was no pressure. No marking. No tests. And we didn't have to share our ideas if we didn't want to. I genuinely looked forward to every single workshop I ran, and I know the students felt the same when they came racing into the classroom and didn't want to leave at the end (yes, even the ones who 'hated' writing to begin with!).

Of course, I couldn't rely on pupils simply coming up with new ideas each week for enjoyment. I had to provide them with inspiration, jumping-off points, and exciting writing hooks, too. For this, I turned to the experts – children's authors. I chose five 'Authors of the Term' that I knew would enthuse and inspire the students, and designed workshops around their books. This was always a really fun part of the process – I looked for books that had wide appeal, simple concepts, and a fun, excitable element that made my inner child say 'oooooh!'.
Illustration of a purple book with a smiling face and a girl reading inside it.

Here are a few examples

I used Abi Elphinstone's Rumblestar to write fast-paced adventure stories. We plotted our adventures on maps, planned the main action in 'cloud planners', and focused on exciting 'world-crossing moments' to

start our stories. At Halloween, I chose books like Guy Bass' *Stitch Head* and Joseph Coelho's *Zombierella*, and ended each workshop with a spooky storytelling session where we turned off the lights, closed the blinds, and sat on the floor as if we were gathered around a campfire!

The most successful workshops were the simplest. I used L.D. Lapinski's *Strangeworlds* series and copied what happened to the protagonist when she jumped inside a suitcase and travelled to another world. Pupils planned their new setting, focused on the five senses, and described the first thing they noticed when they arrived. Their stories were thrilling, fast-paced, hugely descriptive, and completely individual because they had the freedom to take their ideas in any direction they chose.

I normally planned two sessions around each book – the first session involved planning and starting stories (or poems / diary entries / letters, etc), and the second session involved extending, improving, or continuing them. I also added one

'paint a picture' session (using images for inspiration) and a 'free writing' session at the end of each term to give pupils a chance to finish their favourite piece of work.

Remember, if you want to boost writing for pleasure, pupils should know that they can write about anything. Nothing is off limits. Nothing is impossible. Nothing is 'wrong'. And if you're not sure how to start your first session, why not ask your pupils if there's one thing they could wish for, knowing that it would definitely come true, what would it be?

Happy writing!



*Mel Taylor-Bessent is the author of **The Christmas Carrolls** and the director of the award-winning educational website, **Authorfy**.*



FIVE GAMES TO BOOST WRITING FOR PLEASURE

1. DISTRACTION!

Beware: pupils love this game so much, they might ask to play it every week! The idea is simple. Children write for 10 minutes, in silence, and if they speak / laugh / stop writing for an extended period of time, they get a 'strike'. If a table gets three strikes, they risk not being allowed to read their work out. The twist? It's your job to distract them! Shake tables and shout 'EARTHQUAAAAAKE!', steal their pens, use rulers as drumsticks on the tables, play songs they'll want to sing along to, bust out the YMCA and get caught by a bemused head teacher (err, guilty!). Between the giggling and dancing in their seats, pupils write so much in these 10 minutes, and it's a great way to get them writing without overthinking.

2. WHERE AM I?

Give students a setting (e.g. a library / the moon / horse stables / a rocket ship launch) and challenge them to describe it without saying where it is. They should

focus on the five senses. They must give at least three clues before the class can guess where it is, and the person who guesses correctly gets the next go. The winner is the person who gets the most correct answers or the person that comes up with your favourite description.

3. FIVE-MINUTE CHALLENGE

Tell students that most adults can write two lines in one minute, and then challenge them to write 10 lines in five! Give constant time reminders, walk around the room shouting out ideas or words of encouragement, and watch their competitiveness soar. This is a great game to play if, like me, you spend most of the lesson talking about books and story ideas, and realise there's not much writing time left!

4. ONE-WORD GAME

This game is a great way to warm up imaginations at the start of a workshop. Ask pupils to stand behind their chairs and

give them an opening line such as, 'I was walking through the haunted castle when . . .'. Walk (actually it's more of a run!) around the room, pointing at each pupil in turn, and asking them to add one word to the story. It must make sense and they have three seconds to answer. If they can't think of a word, if it doesn't make sense, or if they take too long, they are out and must sit down. The winner is the last person standing. Note: when they get really good, try introducing a one-second hesitation rule – it's hilarious!

5. WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

Remind students that every story needs a problem to make it exciting. Then ask them to stand behind their chairs and each give one problem like, 'aliens invaded Earth' or 'I broke a fingernail'. Problems can be big or small, but they must give an answer in three seconds, and they can't repeat anything that's already been said. The winner is the last person standing.



100 decodable books that pupils can read

“ The Red Squirrel’s series worked! Not only were my pupils strong, confident readers at the end of the year but they LOVED reading. ”

– Kaye Twomey, Presentation Primary School, Limerick City

Red Squirrel Phonics is a series of 100 decodable books that have been written to help children succeed in developing good decoding and comprehension skills from the very start.

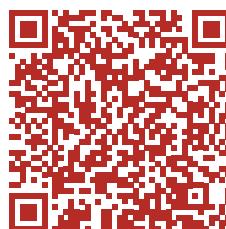
- 100 enjoyable stories and non-fiction texts
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Resource roundup

Eight ideas for exceptional literacy teaching

1



Ready for reading

Reading Plus is an evidence-based adaptive reading development programme, with an extensive research portfolio demonstrating statistically significant effects on improving student outcomes. Aimed at pupils in KS2 and above, Reading Plus has a readability range from Y2 to beyond GCSE. It supports children in developing their skills to read competently and confidently by improving fluency, stamina, vocabulary, and comprehension. Disadvantaged students, boys, and reluctant readers benefit greatly from the structured instruction, the patented Guided Window, and the pupil-led approach. See the impact for yourself and try a free four-week pilot of Reading Plus. Visit readingsolutionsuk.com for more information.

2



Create writing experts with STABILO

STABILO specialises in ergonomic shaped pens and pencils which are specifically designed for left and right handers. Learning to write is an important skill to master and with the EASY Start range of handwriting pens and pencils this can be made EASY. Within the range you'll find something suitable for all school ages and abilities. Also, the EASYgraph and the EASYoriginal are not only loved by kids but they are also approved by UK teachers. stabilo.com/uk

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

3



Ireland leading the way

Did you know that the phonemic awareness of preschool / reception year children is the single best predictor of their future reading ability, better than either SES or IQ? (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003). Jolly Phonics builds solid phonemic awareness and blending skills across 42 sounds. 91 per cent of Ireland's primary schools now follow the Jolly Phonics Programme, with trained teachers. In the latest PIRLS results for 10-year-olds which compares reading and literacy skills across countries, Ireland came fourth out of 50 countries, and first in Europe. CPD College provides certified online training in Jolly Phonics on behalf of Jolly Learning. Visit cpdcollege.com

4

A Passion for Books

Ensure that every early reader will experience success from their very first book with Red Squirrel Phonics! Featuring 100 decodable titles, the programme helps teach children phonics skills in a sequential and systematic way and includes comprehensive teachers' books that provide guided reading lesson plans, activity sheets and assessment. Better yet, the series can be used alongside your school's systematic synthetic phonics programme! Download your samples and find out more at raintree.co.uk/red-squirrel-phonics



5

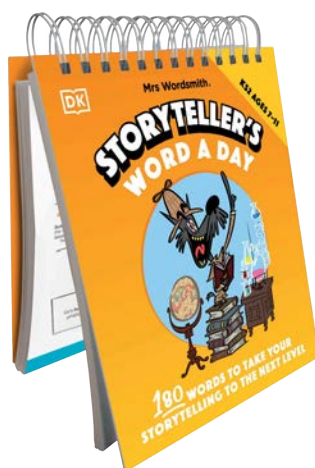
A word a day

Become a master storyteller, one word at a time with Mrs Wordsmith Storyteller's Word A Day, Ages 7-11 (Key Stage 2), which was shortlisted as an ERA 2022 finalist. The Word a Day format makes it easy to do class vocabulary work in bite-sized pieces.

Display the word all day for multiple exposures and better retention.

Get to the core of each word by exploring its pairs, synonyms, history, and usage in classic literature.

With an illustration-based story starter for every word, get creative! Tell a story, or write, sing, or draw something new every day. To find out more, email dklearning@dk.com



6



The Ogress and the Orphans

You know Kelly Barnhill – she's the award-winning author of bestseller *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* – and now she's back with another beautiful fantasy fable for ages nine and up: *The Ogress and the Orphans*. With her story of a small town, a dazzling-but-deceitful mayor, and an unfairly victimised Ogress, Barnhill has penned a modern masterpiece. A wonderfully moving and utterly compelling tale of kindness in the face of lies and the enduring power of love and light when all around is dark, *The Ogress and the Orphans* confirms the author's place at the very top table of young person's fiction. Shop now at Ink.to/OgressOrphans

The Ten Minute Box

Many children master the basics of phonics but struggle to move on to the next stage: digraphs. Confidence is often low in these learners. The Ten Minute Box has expert support in one handy place: assessments, a structured programme of activities and progress trackers. Build self-esteem with individualised sessions that motivate even reluctant learners. Avoid learned helplessness with strategies that transfer across the curriculum. Implement multisensory teaching that identifies potential signs of dyslexia and boosts children with EAL or communication needs. A perfect use of targeted funding. Email for more information or to FREE TRIAL any Five Minute Box intervention. info@fiveminutebox.co.uk

7



Book-based learning

Used by over 40,000 teachers, the Literary Curriculum from Literacy Tree is a comprehensive and cohesive award-winning, book-based approach to primary English. Written by teachers and using expertly chosen, high-quality texts, pupils are immersed in fictional worlds to heighten engagement and provide meaningful contexts for writing. School members have access to over 300 book-based resources for writing, reading comprehension and spelling, as well as resources for catch-up and home-learning. Learn more at literarycurriculum.co.uk

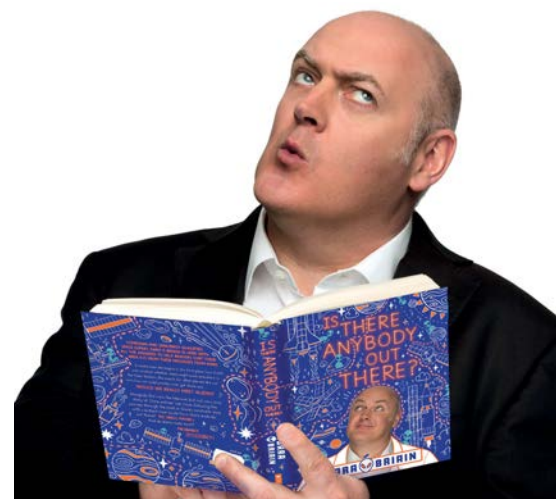
8



Using humour in non-fiction writing

with Dara O'Briain

Play the podcast, share the teaching sequence – and inspire amazing writing from every pupil...



As well as being full of fascinating information, lots of factual books are laugh-out-loud funny, with authors deciding that humour can be a key way of explaining their ideas and keeping their reader interested in some very deep and potentially challenging topics. This type of writing is a wonderful thing for young writers to try to emulate in the classroom, bringing together the interest many children have in facts and information with their natural desire to have fun and laugh. But as every teacher knows, striking the right balance between humour and

information can be a tricky thing to do well.

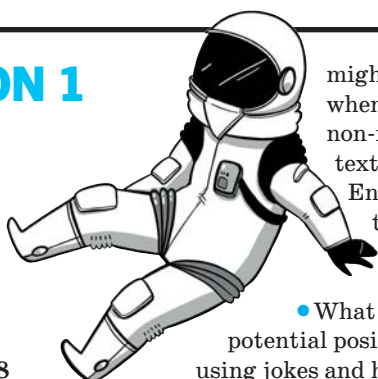
In this teaching sequence, children will have the chance to learn how to bring fascinating information and humour together so each complements the other, taking inspiration from one of the masters of the field, Dara O'Briain. Extracts from the *Author in Your Classroom* podcast (listen at bit.ly/AIYCDaraOB) are suggested to introduce each section of the teaching sequence, providing an excellent way to connect the things children are learning with the work of an accomplished author.

SESSION 1

USING HUMOUR TO ENGAGE

1 | Play the section of the podcast that starts at **00.28** up to **02.45**. Ask children to think about Dara's quotes about the role of humour in non-fiction writing. Ask pupils if they can think of any books they have read, or TV programmes or online clips they have watched, that use this approach. Did they enjoy them? How effective do they think these were at sharing information? Were there any instances where they thought the humour got in the way of the information?

2 | Ask the children to discuss why humour



might be useful when writing non-fiction texts.

Encourage them to think about:

- What are the potential positives in using jokes and humour?
 - Are there any potential disadvantages to using humour?
- 3** | Ask pupils to think about some of the types of humour they could use in their non-fiction writing. Ask them to work in pairs to jot down any other ideas they can think of and to try and think of some examples of each (be prepared, this can be really hard in the abstract!). Finally, suggest why it might be important for them to choose a topic that they are interested in to write about.

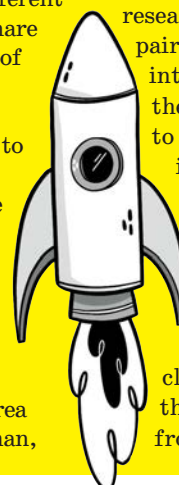
SESSION 2

SELECTING A TOPIC

- 1** | Play the section of the podcast that starts at **06.00** up to **08.16**.
- 2** | Ask the children to work with a partner or small group to jot down some of the things they could choose to write about. Once they have a few different ideas, they could share these with the rest of their group or the whole class.
- 3** | Next, they need to choose one subject that they will write about. Remind the children that they could choose a broad topic (trains, animals, the human body) or a very specific area (The Flying Scotsman,

narwhals, the left toe!).

- 4** | Once they have chosen their subject, they can begin deciding what they will write about. In their books, or on sheets of paper, they can record some information or facts that they know about already and they can conduct some research to find out some new things that they didn't know.
- 5** | When they have done this, they can share their research in small groups or pairs. What are the most interesting things that they are looking forward to writing about? Which ideas might allow them to write something funny and engaging for their readers? Once they have done this, they can share their ideas as a whole class, feeding back on the things they like best from each other's plans.





SESSION 3

ADDING SOME HUMOUR

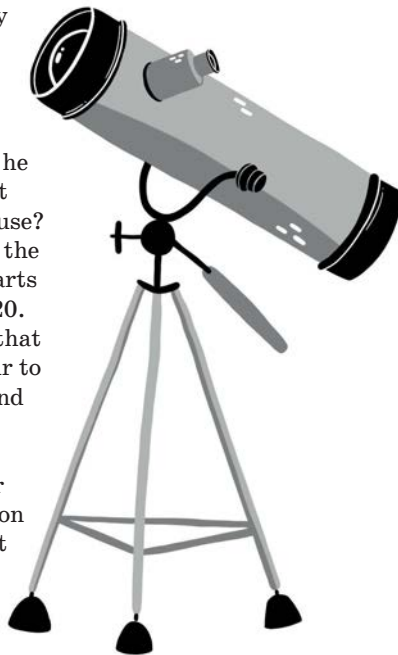
1 | As a whole class, list some types of humour that pupils could use in their writing. They could think of some more ideas to use and then devise some examples of what the different ideas might look like in practice.

2 | Play the section of the podcast again that starts at **08.57** up until **13.28**, where Dara reads from his book. Can they spot Dara using

any humour that is similar to their ideas? Are there any types of humour that he uses that they haven't suggested, but could use?

3 | Play the section of the podcast again that starts at **15.29** up until **17.20**. Remind the children that they are using humour to 'add a bit of colour' and 'soften their writing with some silliness', and that getting their interesting information across is still the most important thing if their writing is to be successful.

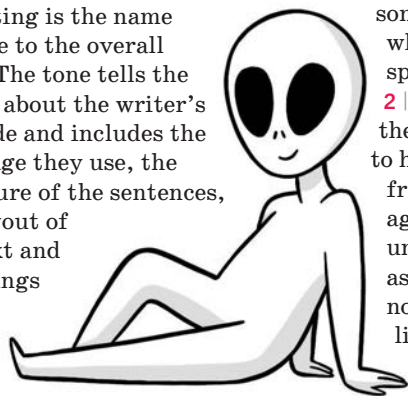
4 | Working independently or in pairs, the children can now start adding some humorous ideas to the facts they have already collected.



SESSION 4

USING A CONVERSATIONAL TONE

1 | Explain to children that the tone of a piece of writing is the name we give to the overall style. The tone tells the reader about the writer's attitude and includes the language they use, the structure of the sentences, the layout of the text and the things



they choose to include in the text: jokes, imagery, and grammatical features like contractions. All of these add up to tell us about how a writer feels about something, their mood,

just like the tone of someone's voice when they're speaking.

2 | Tell children they are about to hear Dara read from his book again (**08.57** up until **13.28**), and ask them to make notes as they listen, identifying where he uses a

conversational tone. They might comment on:

- the structure of the sentences and word choices to sound like speech (That covers it. Oh, and insects as well);
- the repetition (question after question after question);
- the comments directly to the reader that comment on the writing (and where is the question mark, oh thank heavens, here it is: ?);
- rhetorical questions (Animals, right?);
- use of 'we' to show it's the writer and reader together.

SESSION 5

WRITING A NON-FICTION PIECE

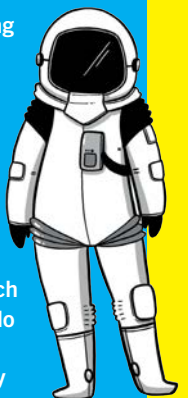
1 | Ask the children to write their own piece of non-fiction, using the information they collected and their ideas for humour. Remind pupils that when they are writing, they might want to consider:

- using a conversational tone, still writing in full sentences and standard English, but not writing too formally;
- asking rhetorical questions to engage their reader;
- explaining the meaning of tricky words or phrases as they go;
- writing in a consistent tense;
- thinking carefully about how they can use the layout of the page or illustrations to add humour or draw the reader's attention to different pieces of information.

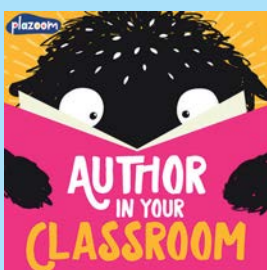
2 | Once the children have finished their writing, ask them to share their work with a partner or look at some examples together as a class, asking them to share the parts that they are especially pleased with. Once they have had some feedback, they can look at their work again and make some changes to improve it. If you have a working wall, extracts from children's work could be displayed for everyone to see.

AFTER THE UNIT...

Ask the class to think about the different ways of telling stories that Dara mentions in the podcast: non-fiction writing about their interests, telling stories and performing jokes, stories in computer games, or writing stories themselves. Which types of writing do they most enjoy? Which might they want to do more of?



DOWNLOAD NOW!



To download a full set of **FREE** resources for this teaching sequence – including planning sheets, teaching slides, themed writing paper and more – visit bit.ly/AIYCDOB resourcepack To subscribe for free, just search for 'Author in Your Classroom' wherever you get your podcasts!



Alphabet soup

Spelling rules can often seem like a bit of a jumble, but this eight-step resource helps pupils know their vowels from their consonants

SARAH FARRELL

Teaching spelling can be a bit of a minefield. There are so many different approaches, all with different advantages. As English takes so many words from other languages (one statistic I've seen suggests this accounts for around 80 per cent of our collective vocabulary.), we end up with many exceptions to the spelling 'rules'. Many people disagree with referring to them as rules for this reason, so perhaps 'generalisations' would be a better term, as it sounds less absolute.

Having a good phonics knowledge plays a huge part in learning to spell: if children can identify the different sounds they can hear, then they can make a phonetically plausible spelling suggestion. There are many excellent resources out there that suggest ways to bring a more phonetic approach into the KS2 curriculum. However, I've always believed that exploring the different rules or generalisations alongside solid phonics-based teaching helps children tackle unfamiliar words. For this reason, I set about making a resource that gives pupils the chance to explore and experiment with different spelling patterns.

Here's what I include:

1. A spelling guide

Start the resource with a guide for using the spelling pattern you're teaching – using a prefix to negate the root word, for example. In this case we might lay out that, for words starting with 'm' or 'p', we usually use the im-prefix (e.g. possible / impossible), rather than in- (impossible).

I deliberately use the words 'usually' and 'often' to reiterate that there are exceptions, and that it is not a hard and fast rule. Having this guide available when children are completing the activities means they can refer back to it, rather than having to try to

commit it to memory while it is still be explored. This also offers a level of scaffolding; more confident children may choose not to use it.

2. Add it

In this section, provide a set of words to which pupils can apply the spelling rule you're working on. E.g., for the *-ing* suffix, you might give them a set of root words such as hope, cry, hint and mop to which they will add *-ing* (potentially involving adding or removing letters from the end of the word).

3. Circle it

Here, provide children with a sentence containing a missing word, and several possible spellings to choose from. Make sure all the spelling alternatives include likely misconceptions, and all refer back to the guide at the top.

How is he _____?
copping copeing coping

With this example, children will have to identify the root word (*cope*) and then apply the correct rule (in this case, remove the 'e' before adding the suffix).

4. Sort it

In this activity, give the class a set of words to sort into the correct groups. For example, if they were given *patient*, *legible* and *regular*, they would then be asked to match each of these to the correct prefix from the list supplied (*im-*, *in-*, *il-*, *ir-*).

5. Find it

In general, I don't think a wordsearch is necessarily a useful tool for spelling. However, what I *have* used the resources I've created is a wordsearch that contains five correctly spelled words that relate to the learning objective, as well as some incorrectly

spelled ones. I don't give pupils a list to find, so they must look for words and decide (with or without the guide's help) whether they are spelled correctly or not.

6. Correct it

Give the children a set of sentences containing spelling mistakes, which they must correct. As with any activity where pupils are correcting mistakes, I think it's important that not EVERY word is wrong, as otherwise they quickly learn to just swap it for an alternative, rather than referring back to their prior knowledge (or the guide!) and judging the spelling for themselves.

7. Investigate it

This is my personal favourite section, as it gives children a chance to discuss and really explore the rule through a few different lenses:

What's wrong with this?

Provide either a sentence containing a spelling mistake (*He is gazeing at the stars*) or an incorrect statement (*You always double the last consonant before adding -ing*). Ask children to decide whether the statement is true or false, and explain why. In this example, they might say the statement is incorrect as the consonant is only doubled when the root word ends in a single vowel then a single consonant.



Write three words that fit each category. Either using vocabulary they have already explored or using their own knowledge, ask children to find words to fit different categories, such as 'Words with the prefix *im-*'. They might write three words that use each of the *im-*, *in-*, *il-* and *ir-* prefixes, for instance.

Explain your reasoning. Give pupils a question or statement to discuss, such as '*How are the rules different for words that end in 'e' and words that don't end in 'e'?*'

Is this correct? Provide either a sentence containing the focus spelling (*Unfortunately, he will be late for school*), or a statement about the rule (*To make any adjective an adverb, just add -ly*) which they must prove or disprove. Like with the 'What's wrong with this?' challenge, the statements refer back to the guide at the beginning of the resource.

If this is the answer, what could the question be? I love this activity in maths, so I HAD to bring it into spelling! As the name suggests, the idea is to give pupils an answer for which they must find a possible question. For example, for the *in-*, *il-*, *im-* and *ir-* prefixes, the answer may be '*To change the meaning of the word to its opposite*', and children may suggest the question '*Why is the in- prefix added to words?*'

Finding exceptions. This is another of my favourite challenges, as it actively encourages children to look for exceptions or words that don't fit with the others. This then opens up discussion about why it doesn't fit. Encourage children to suggest words that are exceptions to the rules they've learned (like the infamous 'I before E except after C'!). Some rules may not have any exceptions, but plurals often do, such as the plural of 'fish' not being 'fishes'!

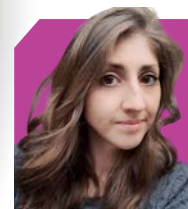
8. Apply it

In spelling lessons, children will often be given a set of words and told to write a sentence for each one. This can be quite difficult, as even

if they know the meaning or find it in a dictionary, it can be tricky to put some words in context without direct instruction on how to do so. Instead, try giving pupils a range of words related to the spelling pattern they've been studying, and get them to select the correct one to fit into different sentences, based on the context.

E.g: *trying climbing hoping*
He is _____ a ladder.

This resource is definitely not a quick fix for spelling and should be used alongside good teaching that refers to phonics and etymology. What it does do, though, is allow children to explore the different rules or generalisations that they'll encounter in the English language.



Sarah Farrell is a KS2 teacher and maths subject lead in Bristol who makes and shares resources online.

@SarahFarrellKS2

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CREATING MAGIC

Cressida Cowell on the joy of writing for children, and the particular enchantment of reading for pleasure

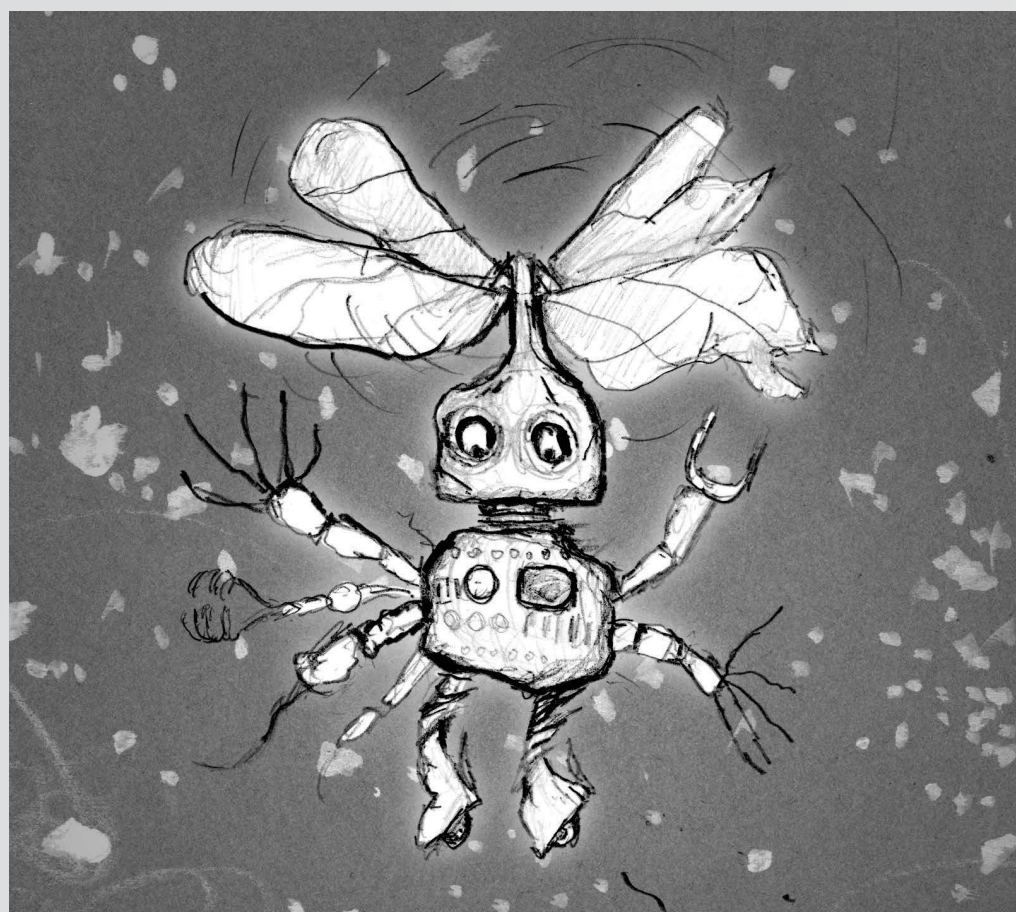
I have spent 20 years writing the *How to Train Your Dragon* and *Wizards of Once* books, and over those two decades I have lost count of the times people have asked me, “Have you ever thought of writing for adults?”

But for me, writing for children is the greatest privilege on earth, and my quest as a writer is to play some small part in trying to get the children of today to read books with the same excitement and wonder that I read them when I was a kid.

Books = happiness

There’s a wealth of research to show that the two key factors in a child’s later economic success (let alone their happiness) are parental involvement in education, and reading for *pleasure*.

However, making a book that a child of today will read with the same amount of pleasure that I read books when I was a kid is rather trickier than it sounds. When I was a child, the telly was terrible, there was no internet, no PlayStation. Now the telly is glorious and incessant, and it is magically ‘beamed’ into children’s heads without them having to do anything, whereas books can only be accessed by a laborious act of de-coding. Even if a child doesn’t have a learning difficulty, books can become associated with school and hard work, but if a child has dyslexia, it can be worse



than that. In that case, books can sometimes come to represent something that actively makes the child feel stupid, and how on earth can you love something that makes you feel stupid?

So I have to work very, very hard to overturn that impression, and make sure that the stories are worth the effort the child has to put in to access them. Children of today are very visual (all that screen time), and they have shorter attention spans than when I was a child (again, all that screen time) and you do

have to bear that in mind when you are writing, and make sure that the story whips along at a cracking pace.

However, that doesn’t mean you have to ‘dumb down’ the content. That would be boring. Children may be more impatient than they were when I was a kid, but they certainly aren’t less intelligent. So as long as the plot is exciting and scary and funny enough, and the child cares about the characters, you can get away with challenging content

and complicated language – indeed, children *want* that. They are natural linguists, natural philosophers, naturally curious, naturally iconoclastic and they are always asking questions. It makes for a fascinating writing challenge.

Reading aloud

I write about the things that interest children, and they tend to be the truly important things in life: heroism, bullying, wilderness, our relationship with the natural world,

death, love, spirituality and adventure.

I write the books to be read aloud, and that is a key factor in getting a child to read for pleasure. Books read to you in your parents' voice live with you all your life. So I think about the books as a performance, and the mouth-feel of the words, the loudness or softness, or bellow-y ness of the characters. It's why I gave Toothless a stammer, and Squeezjoos and the sprites a bit of a his-s-sylis-s-sp, and Horizabel in my new series an accent "so posh it sounded like she was making a radio broadcast from the 1950s," ... so that they make a joyous acting performance. The language varies wildly in tone, which keeps everything lively.

The plots are wildly unexpected, and they rattle along with a roller-coaster energy that is barely in control. This makes things exciting, for the reader does not know what will happen next, and you have to make them feel that they might be in the hands of an author who is prepared to give the story a sad ending if necessary. The changes of direction in emotional mood, the breaking up of the text, the anarchic style and the surprises along the way, all serve a purpose in making the child feel that this is a joyous, modern play-object to be read for pleasure, not a school-y, laborious task that has to be done.

A long time coming

I wrote the first lines of my new series *Which Way to Anywhere* 25 years ago, before I'd even started writing *How to Train Your Dragon*. It's been living and growing with me all that time, for this is a BIG story, set in not just one world but many, not just

about one person, but an entire family, and it needed time to develop. You see, I think that stories have a life of their own. They find YOU, just as much as you find THEM. For 25 years they can lie quiet in your shed, until the story flies up, like a bird, finding you at just the right moment.

This story found me at a very difficult time, just after my father died, and at the start of the pandemic. It came flying towards me on a sort-of rescue mission, at a time when we were all suddenly, in our little family units, facing something larger than all of us. It felt like the right time to be writing a book about

"Children may be more impatient than they were when I was a kid, but they certainly aren't less intelligent"

some children searching for their lost father, and an entire family trying to rebuild itself, the great challenges facing the whole of humanity, and to be celebrating the power of human creativity in facing those challenges.

Which Way to Anywhere started with a very simple idea. As a child I used to draw and re-draw maps of strange places and imaginary worlds – what if those imaginary worlds were real, and what if there was a

child like me who had the gift of showing the crossing points between the worlds, in a sort of Alternative Atlas?

Because a piece of paper has two sides, doesn't it? On one side you draw a map of your imaginary world, an island maybe, or a mountainous country, and on the other you draw a map of somewhere you know well, the airing cupboard in your house, for instance, or the muddy bit at the bottom of your garden. And then you draw a cross where the line between the two worlds is so thin that you can just cut through.

But this isn't just a story about the kid who has that 'Atlas' gift, it's a story about the whole family. And it takes place, in a first for me, not way back in Viking times or in the Bronze Age, but right here and right now. K2 and



Izzabird O'Hero are twins from a magical family who are keeping their magic secret on a planet Earth that does not think that magic exists. Their parents have divorced and their father has disappeared. And now their mother has married the father of Theo and Mabel Smith, and the two sets of children are *really not happy* about it. The only thing the children can agree on is their baby sister Annipeck. But when Annipeck is stolen and taken into an alternative world, the two sets of children are going to have to work together to rescue her.

Every book I write is like Hiccup from *How to Train Your Dragon's* boat, The Hopeful Puffin, setting out into a stormy world, with an optimistic heart and a head full of an equal measure of wisdom and of nonsense, and Hiccup's good sword Endeavour held in one inventive hand, and an invisible Giant beside me, cheering me on.



Cressida Cowell's brand-new series, *Which Way to Anywhere* (Hodder

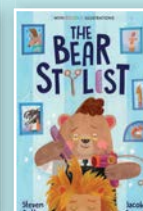
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Empowering children TO SAY 'NO'

Picturebooks are a valuable way to open up discussions around autonomy and consent, says **Emma Davis...**

We know that picturebooks have multiple uses, offering much more than storytelling. They can act as child-friendly conversation starters, through text or illustrations, giving educators a way to introduce key concepts. An example of this is the subject of body autonomy.

We are lucky to be educating and caring for children in a time when so many body-positive books are available. These are a powerful tool in initiating conversation and engaging in talk about our body parts, touch and feelings.

We can use books to help children develop language around their body, perhaps naming body parts, giving them the vocabulary to express themselves, their feelings and preferences.

The educator's role

As with any book we read with young children, we need to be able to bring it to life. This might mean using different voices, sound effects or body language. If we are animated and having fun, children are more likely to engage and focus.

When choosing a book related to body autonomy, remember to ensure that it's relevant and accessible to the children. If it's too in-depth and

wordy, children will disengage. Instead, we want pupils to be tuned in, interested and ready to ask questions.

Similarly, remember to focus on the illustrations as much as the text. These can prompt rich discussion as children begin to make meaning of them.

You can engage in sustained shared thinking, too; a valuable strategy in facilitating thought and talk. This is a method of encouraging your pupils to engage, share ideas and discuss their feelings in a way which is open and without the pressure that comes with questions.

Although books can open up discussions which prompt children to think about their own boundaries, they are also a valuable way of considering how others feel. As we know, all children are unique; we are not always aware of their history, and they will have had different experiences which impact on their holistic learning and development.

In being mindful of this, we can ensure we are taking the feelings of all our pupils into account. Some might be happy with hugs, holding hands, etc. Others might feel uncomfortable with touch, whether that be from an adult or another child, and would prefer to be touched on their own terms.

Through our discussions, we can support children to develop the confidence to make their own decisions about touch – we can enable them to experience control, understanding that it is okay to say 'no'. Books can help us instil in children the message that we need to be respectful

of the boundaries of others, encouraging them to understand that not everyone is the same.

Self-expression

All children deserve respect and to feel in control of their bodies. However, it's important to point out that expression is more than just verbal communication. Some of your pupils may be nonverbal or speak English as an additional language (EAL). These pupils can still be supported to develop autonomy over their body. The first step in this is in accepting that communication can take many forms.

Just standing back and observing will illustrate a myriad of ways in which children make their feelings known. As educators, it's our role to ensure all pupils have a voice. This means tuning in to body language, gestures, facial expressions and changes in behaviour. Young people can tell us so much without even using any words.

You can embed the rights of children in relation to body autonomy in the culture and ethos of your classroom, recognising that children can consent, just as adults do. Sometimes you may need to explicitly teach key concepts such as this.

The value in promoting body autonomy in EYFS and KS1 lies in children feeling respected in relation to their bodies, learning to be respectful to others but also understanding why this is important. In supporting pupils to understand body autonomy, we can facilitate an environment where they feel safe, heard, valued and accepted.



Emma Davis is an early years lecturer, PhD student and forest school leader.

 @EmmaDee77

The magic of poetry

Master alliteration, similes, and personification – and add a dash of extra wizardry – with **Pie Corbett**'s brand-new verse...

This is a sequence of sessions that builds towards writing a magical poem. In my poem opposite, *When I blew the magic dust*, there is a distinct pattern that involves using basic poetry techniques in a playful manner.

- The first verse is a list of animals, using alliteration.
- The second verse is a list of things we can see, using personification.
- The third verse is a list of things found in nature, using 'like' similes.

- The fourth verse is a list of things, using 'as' similes.
- The final verse explains what the writer did once the magic dust had settled.

You could complete a number of short-burst pieces of writing across a week to practise these skills and prepare for the final challenge.

Start with a number poem which uses alliteration. This activity is one of the few occasions where a dictionary might help.

*One white walrus waved at a wonderful washerwoman.
Two trains try to tackle a tremendous tin of tomatoes.
Three thankless thistles threatened a thrilled thief.
Four fantastic fellows found a frantic frog.
Five fast-moving fingers falsified a famous foot.
Six serious sausages selected a silent sunbeam...*

The basic approach for each short-burst piece will be the same:

- Read and discuss any model

- Identify the skill or pattern
- Create a massive class brainstorm of possibilities
- Do a class version together
- Get children to write their own version independently

The second skill involves personification. Create a massive list (which we'll call list A) of 'things' found outside, e.g., *wall, fence, playground, cloud, sun, road, car, pavement, house*, etc. Then make a long list of verbs (list B) which are things that humans do, e.g., *jump, sneeze, yawn, sing, blink, giggle, shout, stoop*, etc.

Take something from list A and pair it up with a verb from list B, e.g. *The wall jumps*. Now think of a way to extend the sentence by adding *in* and *on*, e.g. *The red brick wall jumped over the rickety fence*. Encourage the class to think of objects and verbs not on the class lists.

The next skill is to create a bunch of similes using 'like'. What does something look like? What does it remind you of? For this session, you could provide a list of possible vocabulary. Avoid clichés! (See Table 1 for an example.)

*The moon is like a silver plate on a king's table.
An apple skin is like a thin, red tunic.
A frozen lake is like a giant's mirror.*

The fourth verse uses similes with 'as' to compare. It helps to provide a list of qualities. Show children how to extend

TABLE 1

Round moon	Ring	Night	Cat's eyes	Lightning	Forest
Crescent moon	Tree	Snake	Sunset	Waves	Path
Apple	Rose	Crocodile's teeth	Twigs	Stars	Leaves
Lake	Cloud	Dragon's scales	Snow	Old hands	Bark

TABLE 2

angry	dark	frail	lazy	precious	sleepy	wicked
blue	difficult	gleaming	lively	putrid	sparkling	wild
brave	dull	graceful	lonely	puzzled	stormy	worried
bright	elegant	grumpy	mysterious	quaint	strange	zany
calm	expensive	hungry	nervous	repulsive	tender	
clean	fierce	impossible	obedient	rich	tough	
cruel	foolish	jolly	perfect	shiny	unusual	
curious	fragile	kind	powerful	shy	vast	

their ideas. Use Table 2 for the game, based on the alphabet!

*As angry as a wasp trapped
in a jar.
As bright as the shine from a
glow-worm at night.
As clean as a plate licked by a
starving child.
As dark as the space beneath
the stairs.
As excellent as an ice cream
topped with chocolate
fudge.*

The final verse suggests what the writer would do or what would happen once the magic dust had settled. This idea could be developed in the session where everything is pulled together and the children write their own version of my poem. They could vary the title and idea by changing the nature of the magical dust. Is it: *the dust of destiny, of imagination, of sunsets, of frost, of the wilderness, etc?*

The success of these writing sessions hinges around three key conditions:

- Massive class brainstorms that create banks of ideas;
- Using shared writing time to write class poems together, so that everyone knows how to set about the writing;
- Children writing in silence with a time limit to create a sense of meditative concentration.



Pie's latest collection, Catalysts, has over 130 model poems ('A book full of magic and wonder' – Poetry Roundabout). Get your copy at shop.talk4writing.com/products/catalysts-poems-for-writing

WHEN I BLEW THE MAGIC DUST

When I blew the magic dust,
sly serpents slithered silently,
pink parrots perched on plum trees pecking painfully,
tiny turtles tricked a terrified tarantula,
a lazy lizard lay on a lilo laughing
and a gorgeous gorilla gobbled up Greta in one great gulp.

When I blew the magic dust,
an oak tree sneezed,
a Ferrari giggled as it rushed past,
the school fence cheered at the end of the day,
a dustbin danced the tango
and a lamppost crouched down to tie its laces.

When I blew the magic dust,
winter leaves fell like frail playing cards,
the sun sizzled in the sky like a polished button,
stars glittered like sequins on an ebony ball gown,
a river wound its way round a hill like an anaconda
and clouds drifted by like grey candy-floss.

When I blew the magic dust,
a bee settled on a rose, as quiet as a thief,
a blade of grass grew, as thin as silk,
a car's hubcap spun round, as quick as a tumble dryer,
a cat's claws scratched, as sharp as a lie
and the school clock struck midday, as sure as a teacher's tick.

After the magic dust settled,
I folded up my shadow,
packed my pockets with promises
and left the room
alone, with its cold heart ticking.

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See it, TAP IT, SAY IT

Turn phonics into a game, and improve behaviour while you're at it, with this simple, no-prep classroom hack...

JESS DARBY

Phonics. As a previous KS2 teacher, the word used to send shivers down my spine. I made the transition to Year 1 a year ago and have been on an incredible journey since – I have never looked back. Phonics is nowhere near as scary as people think. Important, imperative even, yes... but certainly no longer scary. I have developed such a huge passion for the subject and its effective teaching since becoming phonics lead at my school in the last academic year. My biggest aim will always be to pass that passion on to my children and give them what they deserve – the ability and tools to read, but above all, to find joy and pleasure in reading.

We already do two daily phonics sessions in my class – a full 45-minute session in the morning and a quick whistle-stop session after lunch. I had been thinking of ways to level this up and give the children consistent opportunities to review previous learning. I had come up with a few ideas, but flashing sound cards while the children were lining up became my go-to because, let's face it, teachers are spinning so many plates as it is – I needed something with

minimal prep but maximum impact. It was okay, but just that, and certainly not giving me the outcome I had envisioned. Children at the back of the line couldn't see the cards properly, and there's always those couple of louder voices drowning out everyone else, so you can never be sure just how engaged each child is.

Then my headteacher suggested popping a sound on the door that the children have to say whenever they enter or exit the room. Initially, the idea was to put a new sound up every day, but it soon occurred to me that this was the perfect opportunity to get some of those previously taught sounds up there to ensure past learning could be reviewed consistently. Now I tend to choose a sound I know the majority haven't nailed. Take 'igh', for example – always that bit trickier as it's a trigraph. The sound stays up for the full day and the beauty of it is, all I need to do is take the flashcard off one side of the door and pop it up on the other, depending on if the kids are coming in or going out. No preparation, no resource making, no marking – just a simple, low-stakes but incredibly effective way of reviewing previously taught sounds.

This review method has slotted straight into our routine. As the children walk past, I say "Tap the sound, say the sound". While the children do this independently, I stand by on the off-chance that someone needs a prompt. If they don't copy the child in front, I'm right there to offer on-the-spot support. Not only that, but it helps behaviour in the line – the children know what they need to do, and are more focused on what sound they are going to be tapping and reading than making any poor behavioural choices.

There are so many adaptations that could be made to this simple activity. I have my KS1 head on and of course the priority is phonics. However, a couple of simple tweaks and this could easily be something that can be transmitted throughout each year group: common exception words or high-frequency words, for example. For KS2 you could try times tables, year group spellings, fractions, literary techniques, or even arithmetic.

As teachers, we know the importance of daily review; it strengthens the neural connections over time that are necessary for developing expertise, supporting retention in short-term and long-term memories. However, I think sometimes we are all guilty of over-complicating things. Who would have known that such a simple activity could lead to so much engagement in some of our youngest children?

The impact has already been immense. Pupils are now able to recall sounds at a faster pace due to the consistent exposure. They are able to better spot digraphs and trigraphs in words, which in turn leads to a more successful and more accurate decoding rate. For assessment purposes, it helps me identify which children may need a little extra support and/or intervention around a particular sound. Not only that, but it engages my children – they view it as a game and they genuinely enjoy the process. In the morning, while hanging their coats up, I hear them say, "Ooh I wonder what sound it is today!". Isn't THAT what we are all here for?



Jess Darby is a Year 1 teacher, and phonics and history lead at a primary school in Yorkshire.

 @missdarby_



TIME TO EXPLAIN

Tackle paragraphs, introductions and summaries while exploring non-fiction writing with **Aidan Severs'** guide to explanation texts...

Although writing explanation texts takes some careful and specific teaching, explanations are a part of children's everyday oral, aural and mental experience: they hear them at home and at school, and they explain things to each other and to adults just as much as they have things explained to them. Even the way we think about how to do everyday tasks is a kind of self-explanation. When it comes to writing explanation texts, then, pupils have a strong starting point that should be explicitly pointed out and capitalised upon.

Paragraphs

The National Curriculum requires that children in Year 3 are introduced to paragraphs as a way to group related material.

The Water Cycle example (see download) has very short paragraphs, making it easier for younger readers to understand. Most non-fiction books aimed at children follow this convention, so any examples you share from real texts will almost certainly have similarly short paragraphs. However it's worth remembering that when pupils hand-write paragraphs of similar length, it will look like a lot more than the word-processed example!

Short paragraphs also demonstrate how specifically related ideas can be grouped. Look at the first paragraph of the Water Cycle text under the

subheading 'What do we mean by 'changing state'?'. It consists of four sentences, which themselves are quite short. The paragraph is very clearly about the three states in which water can exist. The following paragraph is limited to the idea that water can change between

the states. Both could exist within one paragraph, but grouping information like this demonstrates that readers are more likely to comprehend the information better if it is clearly presented and not too complicated.

Activities that focus on grouping information are a necessary precursor to children being able to write in paragraphs. Simply giving the class a set of statements and asking pupils to group them is a good way to begin to do this. For example, you could provide facts about three different animals which need to be sorted according to the species. You could then move onto statements that are more subtly different in their content: facts about one animal, but some which relate to its eating habits, some about its habitat, and others about its risk of extinction, for example. This same activity could be taken further, zeroing in on one

animal's habitat but with facts relating to country, biome and construction.

Heading and subheadings

Writing a main heading should be fairly straightforward – children just need to know that it

activities like multiple choice questions, where pupils select the best heading (the other options could be better suited as subheadings).

You can decide on subheadings as a tool prior to grouping information, or once it has occurred. Either way, the generation of subheadings should be a part of those practice activities so that when children come to writing a full explanation text, they have their subheadings already written.

In the example text, there are subheadings for the three main sections, and one for the summary. The introduction sits under the main heading. This is a simple enough structure

“When it comes to writing explanation texts, pupils have a strong starting point that should be capitalised upon”

should summarise what the whole piece of writing is about. To ensure they are secure with this, try



that you can teach, and ask children to follow. The example text also structures its content around three main questions, which provide further structure for the content of the paragraphs. Pupils can focus on ensuring that their content helps to answer a certain question, and if it does not, they can consider revising and removing that part of their text.

Introductions

These are notoriously difficult for children to write, but can build on prior work on introductions and summaries, as many non-fiction text types feature similar beginnings and endings. Employ extensive modelling, exemplifying writing introductions and summaries multiple times during the unit.

The basic principles of an introduction for children in KS2 are that it should appeal to the reader's curiosity,

and be very clear on what the text is going to be about. You can also consider:

- Go-to stock phrases and sentence structures. These may come in handy, particularly if you are teaching this text type towards the beginning of KS2.
- Including questions that children might have had themselves, making sure the content connects with their natural curiosity: *'Have you ever wondered...?'*
- Facts that the reader will likely already know, coupled with a 'but' and a question, to begin to extend the reader's thinking and to pique their curiosity: *'Rivers flow into the sea but how does the water get into the rivers?'*

Phrases to avoid, particularly for children at the upper end of KS2, are the ones that pupils reach for when they feel stuck. For introductions, these include: *'This piece of writing is about...'*; *'In this text you will find out about...'*; and *'Read on to find out more.'*

Children do not need to write full explanation texts in order to practise writing introductions, either. After studying them in class texts, perhaps linked to their work in other subjects, pupils can begin to write their own three- or four-sentence introductions to texts about almost anything – they don't need to know too much about the content of the rest of the piece of text, as at the practice stage they aren't actually going to write it.

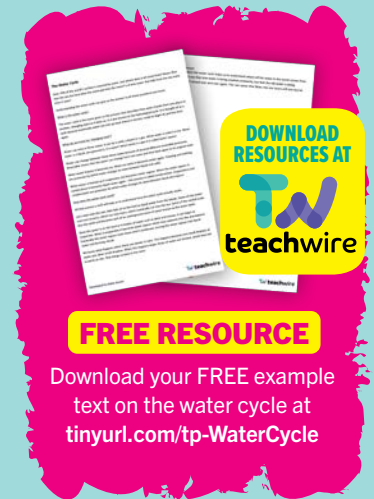
Summaries

Children in KS2 need to understand that a summary should explain in just a few sentences what the main takeaway is. As writers, they should attempt to tell the reader what they have just learned, but in fewer words, with less of the explanation, and focusing on the main points only.

Again, some taught phrases and structures will be useful:

- A sentence or two that points out why it is useful to know the content of the explanation text they have just read: *'Knowing about... helps us to understand...'*; *'It also helps us to see that...'*
- A one-sentence summary, that contains the central point of the text, and which might refer back to the questions asked in the introduction: e.g. *'The rain water that flows into our rivers will one day be rain again!'*

Phrases to avoid in summary writing include: *'I hope you have learned more about...'*; *'This piece of*



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writing was about...'; and *'In summary...'*

In terms of practice activities, once children have studied existing summaries and have seen you modelling how to write one, they could focus on identifying the main points in an explanation text, and then write a summary for it. The identification of main points alone is something that pupils often struggle with, so some shared work and modelling will usually be necessary. When it comes to summarising and identifying main points, and in order to ready the children for writing their own summaries, practise writing a 20-word summary of something they have learned or read; then challenge them to reduce it to 10 words, then five, causing pupils to really think about what the key information is.

For more tips on explanation texts, see tinyurl.com/tp-explanation



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Jenny Merrison Year 2 Teacher
Christian Fellowship School

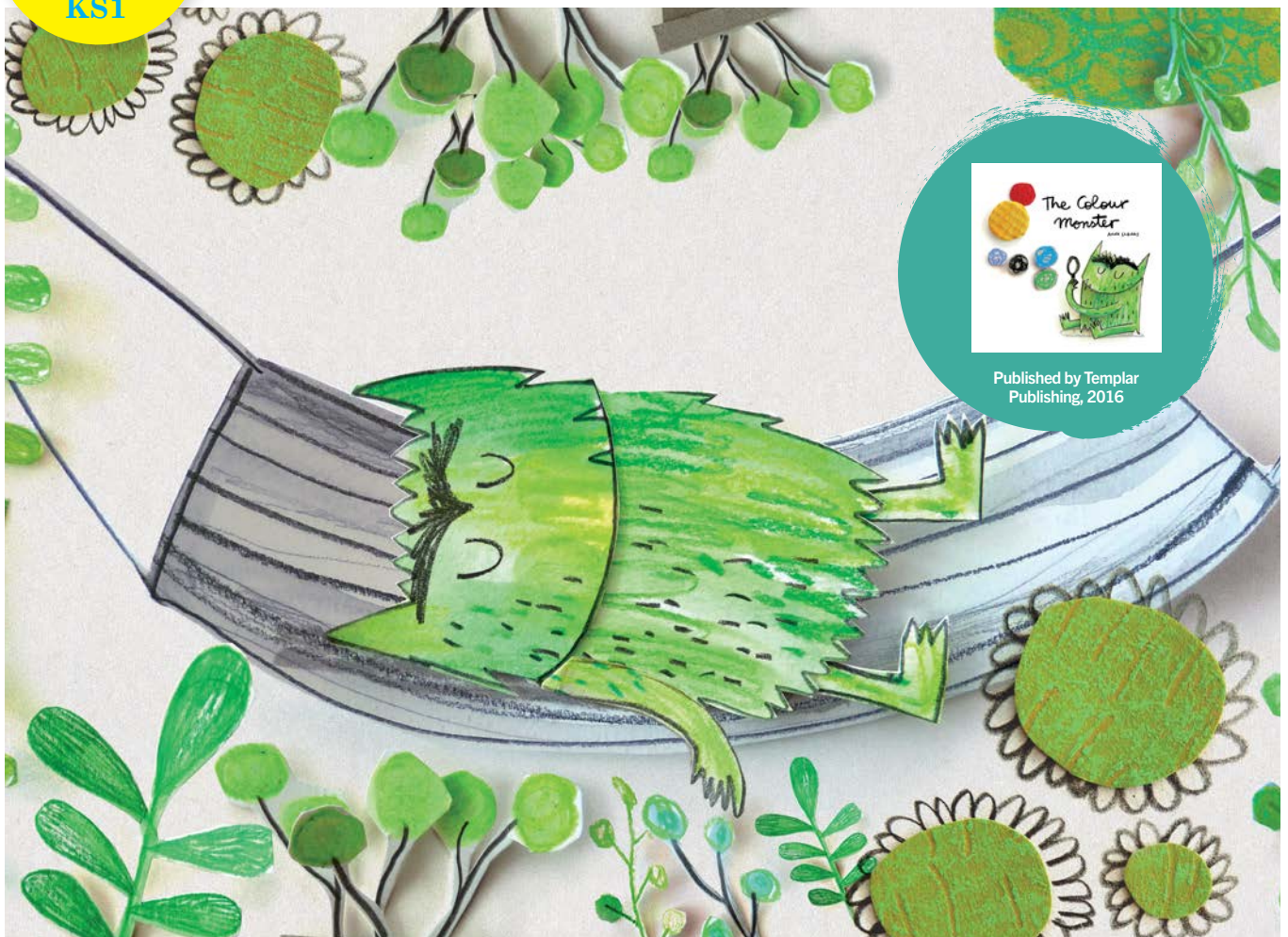
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The Colour Monster

Explore emotions and what they mean with this gentle exploration of feelings by **Anna Llenas**

HANNAH RIX

The *Colour Monster* is a wonderful exploration of difficult feelings. The story begins with a poor monster who feels overwhelmed and confused by his jumbled-up emotions. But fear not, he eventually learns how to make sense of what he's going through. The various feelings are brought to life for readers as the monster takes them through each emotion, one by one, via a series of beautiful collage-like illustrations.

This is a simple story about friendship, which can also help children decipher and identify their own emotions, providing them with important emotional literacy skills. The pop-up version of this book is particularly brilliant for engaging children in this surprisingly powerful and reassuring story. The colourful illustrations make it an excellent choice for a Reception or KS1 class because it's immediately engaging.

At this stage of development most children are still getting to grips with their own emotional literacy skills so this book can act as a wonderful toolkit to get students started. In addition, the work you do around this book can lead to some vibrant, interactive displays that will really bring the story to life and allow children to take ownership of their learning and their own personal interpretation of the story.

Sharing the book

When I've used this book in my lessons, I've found that pupils are fascinated by the idea of emotions coming to life.

This personification opens up their minds to their own feelings and emotions and enables them to understand what they think and feel about certain things. The pop-up version of the book allows students to get the full benefit of the illustrations and better engage with the story.

Picturebooks are a great option for Reception and KS1 as they're not intimidating and allow for lots of creativity from pupils. You undoubtedly have a wide range of needs and abilities in your classroom but this particular story is accessible for all.

The plot is simple, yet more able children can be stretched to think about why the writer has decided to portray a particular emotion in that colour, style or shape. Less confident readers are still able to grasp the story and take away its message, without feeling left behind.

While reading the book for the first time, pause each time a new emotion is revealed to allow for discussions and questions. Alternatively, explain to children that you'll read through once and then again to reflect on each 'character'. This way, pupils can get a feel for the plot and then have the opportunity to share their own thoughts.

Practical activities

Tell the story

The Colour Monster goes on quite a journey through the book. Ask pupils to explore how he feels throughout. What changes inside his head when he encounters the different emotions?



How does he feel at the beginning compared to the end? Use a visual flow chart or an emotion thermometer to help pupils understand. For example, draw a large timeline or thermometer on your board, with extreme emotions at either end. While reading, ask children to volunteer what the character is feeling at certain points. This is an excellent way for students to explore each of the emotions individually, while empathising with the monster and reflecting on their own feelings.

Before and after

Where did the monster come from? How did he get to be so confused? What was his life like before he was able to understand these emotions? Are there other monsters like him out there? Encourage pupils to be creative with the origins of the monster, thinking about what his family, friends and home might be like.

Ask children to write a short series of diary entries from the

monster or create an 'all about me' profile. Alternatively, as a class, collect ideas together before asking children to independently write a short introduction to the monster's life in the form of a biography. For students that struggle with writing, try a more visual activity: label a drawing of the monster with ideas about his origins. Give students a word bank to choose from to support their work.

An alternative idea is to focus on what happens to the monster after the book. What is life like for him now he understands his emotions? Is it easier? Is it harder? What can he do now that he couldn't do before? This activity can be done in the form of a storyboard or comic book strip. Limiting children to shortened formats like these means their ideas are concise and they don't get too carried away. Create a comic book or storyboard for the monster's life the week following the events of the story, adding speech bubbles with captions.

Take it further



Explore outdoors

Now pupils have identified colours and shapes for each emotion, try exploring objects outside that you think match each individual feeling. Alternatively, recap the colours in the story then go outside and see if you can spot some of the same colours. Can children find any colours that weren't in the book? Take a

piece of card outside, along with double-sided tape, and stick different coloured objects to it, focusing on senses as you explore.

Using old pots or flower beds, collect all of your favourite things from the outdoors to make your monsters a garden. Each monster can have a pot with objects and textures that reflect their emotions. Children can then use





Colour synonym wheels

Help pupils to develop their vocabulary and

stretch their imaginations by creating a colour synonym wheel. Make a wheel for each colour and task children with labelling it with alternative shades (for example, for red you could also include crimson, maroon, cherry and ruby). This is a more creative way of developing a word bank. Allocate one colour per group then use children's finished wheels as display materials.

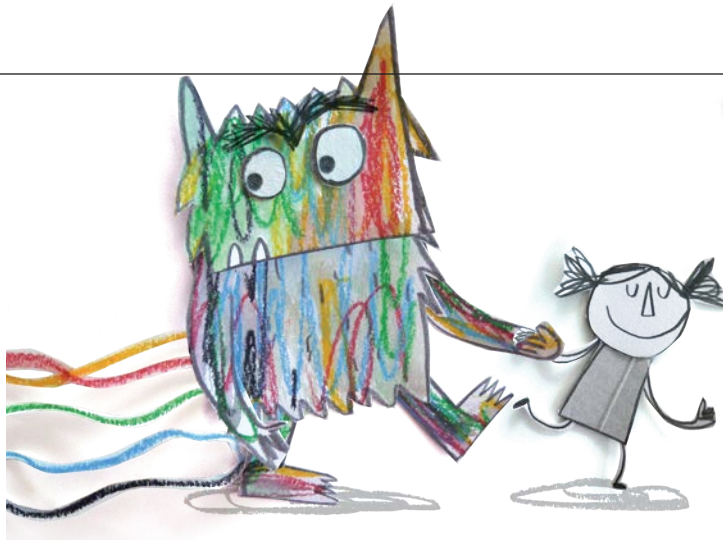
Add speech bubbles

The illustrations in this book are very vivid and expressive. Ask children to add a supporting speech bubble for each of the monsters. What are they thinking? Why have pupils chosen that word? How is it different to what another character is thinking?

Pupils will need to engage with their own emotional literacy to come up with ideas for each of the monsters inside the book.

Colour connotations

As a class, get students to close their eyes. Say a colour and ask pupils to think of what comes to mind when



they think of it. Next, create a class collage of illustrations to go with each word. For example, your yellow collage may contain sunflowers, daffodils and ice cream, whereas blue may feature the sky, ocean and so on.

Feelings jars

Label up several jars with different emotions, such as happy, sad, angry, fearful, calm and loved. Hand out slips of paper and ask children to write or draw what makes them feel each individual emotion, before popping them in the different jars. This is a lovely chance for pupils to self-reflect. It's also a helpful resource for students who struggle to identify their own emotions and what to do with them.

Are there any overlaps between pupils' suggestions? Have any of their emotions changed as they've got older? Are pupils' ideas similar or different to their friends? As an extension, discuss what things help when we're feeling sad, afraid or angry. Working in pairs, ask one pupil to write an emotion in a speech bubble, then their partner can write their own speech bubble with a suggestion for what the first child could do. For example, if the first child writes 'sad', the second can write, 'read my favourite story'.

Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *The Invisible String* – Patrice Karst
- ❖ *The Colour Monster Goes to School* – Anna Llenas
- ❖ *The Mixed-Up Chameleon* – Eric Carle
- ❖ *Where the Wild Things Are* – Maurice Sendak
- ❖ *Two Monsters* – David McKee

Emotion monsters

Each of the monsters in the book are given their own colour and identity. Ask children to design a new monster for each emotion and justify their choices. How does that colour show that emotion? Why is it that shape?

Messy play

Let students explore mixing paints or water and food dye to see what new colours they can make. What feelings can they link with each? Why do they think that colour matches that emotion?

Make your own monster

You can do this through junk modelling, salt dough or drawing. Ask students to justify shape, size and remind them to show how their monster is feeling through the colours chosen.



Hannah Rix has taught English in secondary schools for eight years and currently teaches English in a SEND school in Norwich. Alongside her husband James, she co-founded

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this garden as a 'small world' to create their own narratives in. Which monsters will be neighbours? Will they visit each other?

Emotional dictionary

Can pupils think of any other emotions that are missing from the book? What would these monsters look like? What colours would they be? What makes pupils feel these emotions? Create a display featuring

emotions with matching images and colours. Make it interactive by allowing children to add strategies on how to cope with each feeling too.

Slime monsters

Make a basic slime recipe, adding food colouring of your choice.

Ask pupils to apply googly eyes, glitter, buttons and sequins for decoration. Allow time for children to explore the textures created. How do the

monsters feel? What would happen if you added another colour?

Puppet show

Now children know the story, get them to recreate the story using monsters created from old socks or lollipop sticks. This is a great chance for pupils to develop their speech and language skills. Pause the puppet show to ask questions or 'hot seat' the monsters. Why did they feel like that during that time?

Lights, camera... writing!

For today's children, composition should be about more than pen and paper. So break out your storyboard, pop some corn, and turn your pupils into producers...

JAMES CLEMENTS

In the modern world, writing is no longer confined to words on a page. Many of the texts that pupils read and write now exist on a screen; they are interactive with a very different structure to that of a traditional book. Learning to write texts like these and using them to develop their skill and motivation as writers can be an integral part of children's writing experience at school.

So, how can we include multimedia in our lessons?

Let's look at two case studies that show how different teachers have made use of technology to motivate pupils to create modern texts, all the time supporting the development of children's traditional writing skills.

Writing for the web

As part of a unit of history work on the Victorian era, one Year 6 class researched and then wrote biographies of historical figures from this period. These were then word-processed and published in a class book. The teacher decided that the biographies would provide a good opportunity to explore the idea of tailoring writing for different purposes.

First, the teacher showed the class some pages from the DK Find Out website, covering a range of different topics. They then asked pupils to

work in pairs to make notes about how the information was displayed, concentrating on:

- page layout;
- length of paragraphs and sentences;
- vocabulary;
- use of images;
- use of links to further information.

The children noted that the pages tended to be dominated by images, with short blocks of text, each introducing a key idea. Links to further information or boxes that expanded to provide more detail were common. Each page usually had a short introduction, but then information could be accessed in any order, with readers free to follow the strands that interested them.

Once they were familiar with these features, the children used a laptop to return to the text of their biography. They edited their work, breaking it into smaller paragraphs of only a few sentences and finding images to illustrate each. They ensured that key vocabulary was picked out in bold and that each paragraph made sense when read alone and wasn't dependent on other text being read first. Because they already had the text to work from, and they were concerned with simplifying, rather than adding, the children enjoyed

this task immensely.

Then pupils worked with a partner using Weebly to copy and paste their text into a webpage, adding in images and interactive features such as links and expanding text boxes. These pages were added together to make one class website, which they then published this online. Finally, the children were asked to compare the original biography they had written and the text of their new webpage, comparing the language and structure. The teacher reiterated the point that one style of writing isn't better than the other; the language choices we make need to reflect the purpose and format of our writing, as well as our audience.

Making films

A small village school with three classes decided to run a 'Film Fortnight' where children would work in

groups to create a short film based on the school's termly curriculum theme: 'Animals and Conservation'. On the final Friday, children, staff and parents would gather in the hall for a viewing of the completed films (with popcorn, of course).

Acorn Class (Reception and Year 1) decided to make a documentary, with each child talking to the camera about a different endangered animal. The teacher helped the children to choose an animal and rehearse what they were going to say, prompting them to explain why they had chosen the animal and why



it was important to try and save it. In a shared writing session, the class wrote an introduction, explaining why some animals were in danger of extinction, and a closing section where they explained what people could do to help. Next, the teacher filmed each of the children in turn (with different pupils acting as ‘assistant directors’ and pressing start and stop on the tablet). Children also drew and annotated pictures of their chosen animals and these were edited into the finished film, too.

Oak Class (Year 2 and Year 3) chose to make stop-motion animations. Working in small groups, they devised a story involving animals and then created storyboards of the action, focusing on how this

kind of writing differed from a traditional story (shorter sections, key moments, etc). Then they wrote a script for a narrator, which again introduced a new medium – such as how speech differs from written work (is it less formal? Is the length of each section different? Etc). This writing followed a process, with the chance to plan, draft, evaluate and then edit and redraft. They then used model animals (borrowed from Acorn Class) to film. They created backdrops and then used the app Stop Motion Studio on tablets to create their films.

Forest Class (Years 4, 5 and 6) chose to create improvised narrative films about animals using iMovie. Working in small groups, they planned their story and thought carefully about the roles they would each play, the shots they needed to film and other aspects such as costumes, sound effects and editing. Over

two afternoons, the children filmed their scenes (the second day being for re-filming after they had watched their footage back and realised some parts weren’t quite right). The children then worked (with an adult ‘assistant’ on hand) to edit their footage into a narrative, choosing shots and talking about the implications of different ways if combining their footage. This led to lots of interesting conversations about how the editing stage could make changes to the meaning of the story, something the teacher was keen to draw upon when children were writing in a more traditional way.

On film night, the children entered the hall via a red carpet and enjoyed sharing their films with parents and carers. The final products were shared on the school’s website too, so children could go back and watch them again – which they did. Many times.

Visual, multimedia texts play an important part in children’s lives, so they can and should play an important part in a classroom. If we want to help children become confident, enthusiastic, skilful writers, then technology is a powerful tool we can harness to facilitate this kind of development.

THREE TYPES OF TEXT:

- **Visual** – texts where an image plays a significant role in conveying meaning. This might be a still picture – a painting or photograph; a moving image on film; a picturebook; poster; or a cartoon.
- **Multimedia** – texts where meaning is conveyed through audio, film and animation as well as texts and images. Websites that contain links between different items or pages might also be considered as multimedia.
- **Multimodal** – texts that combine more than one system of making meaning, featuring a mix of words, images, film, and audio, as well as design features (and even gestures in a presentation, film or drama). Picturebooks, posters, websites, films and graphic novels can all be multimodal.

Don’t worry, as so often with the relationship between academic theory and classroom practice, using the correct terminology matters a lot less than making use of the feature in the classroom!

“In the modern world, writing is no longer confined to words on a page”



James Clements is an education researcher and writer. This article

is adapted from *On the Write Track: A Practical Guide to Teaching Writing in Primary Schools* by James Clements, published by Routledge in October 2022.

@MrJClements

How to teach phase 4 phonics

Conquer blending, segmenting, tricky words and planning
with this guide to building on previous learning

EMMA SPIERS

Phase 4 phonics can feel trickier to teach than phonics phases 2 and 3, because there are no new letter-sound correspondences (grapheme-phoneme correspondences) to learn. This is a teaching phase designed to consolidate and build on all previous learning, challenging children to read longer words, and a larger bank of tricky words, 'at a glance'.

Put simply, phase 4 phonics is all about building children's confidence and capacity to read more words. They will be applying these in slightly longer sentences, using the letter-sound correspondences that they already know.

Sounds

Children should be able to blend-to-read – and segment-to-spell – CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words using the correspondences taught in phases 2 and 3. We also want them to be able to independently read and write captions and simple sentences including these words. The phase 2 and 3 common exception words that children beginning phase 4 phonics should already be able to read will include:

I, the, no, go, to, he, be, we, me, she, was, my, you, they, her, all, are

Activities

All phase 4 phonics activities should include lots of opportunities to blend-to-read, and segment-to-spell words including adjacent consonants, and words of more than one syllable, including:

• CVCC words

consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant
For example: *milk, desk, went, last, soft, chest, shelf, toast*

• CCVC words

Consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant
For example: *from, stop, plan, frog, flag, grab, green, brush, sport, crash*

• CCVCC words

Consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant
For example: *stand, spend, trust, twist, blink, crunch, shrink*

• CCCVC words

Consonant-consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant
For example: *splash, spring, street, string*

It's important to remember that the vowel digraphs and consonant digraphs taught in phase 3 are included in these words as a whole unit. For example: **b-r-u-sh** is a CCVC word. The digraph **sh** is made of consonants and is considered as a single consonant unit in this word. **G-r-ee-n** is also a CCVC word. The digraph **ee** is made of vowels and is considered as a single vowel unit in this word.

Planning

All phase 4 phonics planning should follow the same routine and simple

teaching sequence. This reduces the cognitive load in the working memory, enabling children to engage fully with improving the processes of blending and segmenting with more complex words. With cognitive load in mind, a systematic and simplified approach is recommended, blending and segmenting with one particular combination of adjacent consonants in each lesson. For example:

Day 1: words with the adjacent consonants **b-r**; *brush, bright, bring, broomstick*

Day 2: words with the adjacent consonants **s-t**; *step, stop, stand, stamp, stink*

Day 3: words with the adjacent consonants **f-l**; *flap, flop, flash, flight, flicker*



Blending and segmenting with adjacent consonants

We also need to show children how to hear the adjacent consonants in words. They often find these tricky to determine as some phonemes (sounds) are more dominant in words. For example: hearing *went* as *wet*; missing out the 'n', as it is the most subtle phoneme (sound).

We also need to show pupils how to say the adjacent consonants in words. This can be tricky, depending on clarity of speech. For example: saying *jum* rather than *drum*; *chain* rather than *train*; or *vat* rather than *that*. To achieve success in this area, begin by orally blending and segmenting the chosen words as a class. Use strategies consistent with those already introduced in phases 2 and 3 phonics lessons, and don't initially read or write anything.

Teach children to blend the chosen words together, following the 'I do, we do, you do' method:

- the adult models the blending;
- process first (I do);
- children and adult blend aloud together (we do);
- children blend independently as a class (you do).

Keep the number of words limited to no more than eight, using the focus consonants for the session. Repeat this process by segmenting to spell the same words, using the same methodology.

Applying phase 4 phonics

It's important that children learn to apply phase 4 phonics beyond the isolated word level, because the aim is for them to use this knowledge as they read and write. Every phase 4 phonics lesson should therefore include explicit teaching of how to read or write a sentence, including some of the focus words explored during the lesson. This could consist of shared sentence-reading, or dictated sentence-writing, using the 'I do, we do, you do' strategy previously mentioned.

Another useful strategy is to read or write all together as a

class, blending or segmenting one word at a time. As each word is read aloud or written, the group should be guided back to the beginning of the sentence to reread previous words. This will significantly improve memory, training the children to check that what they are reading or writing makes sense.

Things to avoid:

- asking the children to think of their own sentences to write

The objective is for the children to apply the words taught in a sentence, with a high degree of accuracy in spelling. Thinking of a sentence requires the children to think of much more than just that, stepping beyond

the purpose of the lesson;

- expecting the children to read or write without a model

This part of the teaching sequence is not an opportunity to assess the success of the lesson.

It's a chance to over-model and clearly

demonstrate how learning can be applied in reading and writing beyond the phonics session.

Top tips for teaching tricky words

There are many new tricky words to introduce in phase 4 phonics. These include: *said*, *so*, *have*, *like*, *some*, *come*, *were*, *there*, *little*, *one*, *do*, *when*, *out*, *what*.

Using flashcards is a great strategy for some children with good visual memory, as is teaching mnemonics (for example, *silly ants in dresses*), but neither are universally successful.

If you're having trouble, why not try:

- unpicking each word explicitly in a lesson

Explain that there are parts of the tricky word which aren't so tricky. This reduces the overwhelm required in simply 'just learning' a word. For example, *s* and *d* in *said* are fully decodable; nothing tricky there;

- explicitly teaching the tricky part
- Explain that the children only need to remember the tricky part in the word. For example, that *ai* in *said* looks like *ai* in *rain*, but in this word, it's making an *e* sound instead.

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tinyurl.com/tp-P4P

What's the impact?

By the end of phase 4 phonics teaching, children will be able to:

- blend to read words including adjacent consonants taught in phase 2 and phase 3;
- segment to spell words including adjacent consonants taught in phase 2 and phase 3;
- read two-syllable words including letter-sound correspondences taught in phase 2 and phase 3;
- read all phase 4 tricky words;
- apply phase 4 learning when reading and writing sentences.

Children secure at phase 4 phonics will have a good foundational knowledge of the basic alphabetic code. This means that they will have a solid basis for successfully exploring the complexities of the alphabetic code taught in phonics



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How to teach literacy IN EVERY LESSON

Subject-specific reading and writing is about more than knowing the right words, argues **Shareen Wilkinson**...

Over the past few years, I have heard several discussions of and references to disciplinary literacy in secondary schools, but what is it, exactly, and how can we embed it in primary schools?

Professor Timothy Shanahan (University of Illinois at Chicago) defines it as *'the specialised ways reading, writing, and oral language are used in academic disciplines such as science, history, or literature'* ('Disciplinary literacy in the primary school,' 2019).

Disciplinary literacy goes beyond producing a diary from the point of view of an historical character, and focuses on what writing might look like in a particular subject. For example, in history, you might be teaching about primary and secondary sources. This is different to generic reading comprehension strategies in English (e.g. making predictions, asking questions, and clarifying the meaning of unknown words), which might be a requirement for reading in general but is not specific to history. In other words: *'Each field of study has its own special ways of using text to create, communicate, and evaluate knowledge.'* (Shanahan, 2019).

For those of you wanting to develop pupils' disciplinary literacy across the curriculum, here are five key approaches to try.

1. Start with the basics for writing and reading

In many ways, especially for primary schools, there are basic grammar and punctuation aspects needed for all types of writing; for example, capital letters and full stops. Ensure pupils are competent at these, before embarking on detailed aspects of the purpose and audience for writing. As Shanahan (2019) explains, subject-specific (or disciplinary) literacy requires more than the

2. Ensure any approaches are age- and stage-appropriate

This is particularly pertinent for younger pupils. Of course, we are not expecting our littlest children to be knowledgeable and competent in writing and reading like an historian, but we can ask them disciplinary questions and expose them to disciplinary texts. For example, perhaps during reading time, try asking: *'What do you think is going to happen next in the story?'; 'Have you read a book like this before?';* or when they're playing: *'How are these toys similar or different to your toys?'* etc. This will introduce them to historical approaches without requiring them

"Disciplinary literacy focuses on what writing might look like in a particular subject"

'general literacy skills that can be applied in all subjects,' but also includes the ability to 'apply both these general and specialised skills in sophisticated ways' within various disciplinary contexts. Thus, we need to emphasise the importance of general literacy skills, including decoding for reading, first and foremost.



WHAT DISCIPLINARY LITERACY LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

English

Although we want to develop reading, writing, and thinking across the curriculum, it is pertinent to start with English because it has its own unique discipline that pupils need to master before they can tackle other subjects. Perhaps one of the most researched ways to improve reading is to embed reading comprehension strategies.

How to read for comprehension:

- Make predictions (based on text content and context), e.g. *I predict that...*
- Ask questions. E.g., *I wonder why...*
- Clarify the meaning of unknown words. E.g., *I am not sure about...*
- Summarise the text
- Activate prior knowledge. E.g., *This reminds me of...*

Key aspects for writing in English:

- Prewriting activities that support oracy
- Vocabulary development

- Identifying key text features (e.g. genre and specific vocabulary, figurative language, punctuation and grammatical devices)
- Writing for a particular audience and purpose
- Drafting, revising and editing
- Sharing, reading, and editing each other's work

Sources:

EEF Improving literacy at KS1 and EEF Improving literacy at KS2
Chambers, A, Tell Me (Children, Reading and Talk) with the Reading Environment: How Adults Help Children Enjoy Books (Thimble Press, 2011)

History

Reading, writing, and thinking like an historian

- Ask and answer questions
- Use historical vocabulary (e.g. *monarchy, migration, century, invasion*)
- Note connections, contrasts, and trends over time
- Identify change and cause
- Explore similarity and difference

- Define historical significance
- Use sources and evidence

Source:

History National Curriculum and the Ofsted research review (2021)

Geography

Reading, writing and thinking like a geographer

- Recognise the interconnectedness of different geographical content
- Think about alternative futures
- Consider personal influence on future climate decisions
- Make connections, such as: 'Where is this place?'; 'Why is it here and not there?'; 'What is the place like?'; and 'How did this place change to get to how it is now?'
- Read a range of non-fiction and fiction that broadens pupils' knowledge of the world

Source:

Ofsted geography review (2021) and the geography National Curriculum

to have knowledge they won't engage with until later in their school journey.

3. Make time for CPD

We all know that primary teachers are not always experts in every subject they teach. I still draw like a six-year-old – although learning how to observe like an artist has helped in recent years! I would have benefitted from this approach in the past. Many of us must juggle and/or lead more than one subject at a time. One of the best ways you can tackle this is to carry out an audit of current knowledge and understanding and to ensure all staff have access to high-quality networks, such as being a member of the subject associations. This will, inevitably, help with the development and understanding of disciplinary literacy.

4. Ensure that all teachers are aware of Tier 3 vocab*

There are certain words across the curriculum that are pertinent to a

particular subject. For example, to 'take away' means something very different in maths, to a 'cheeky takeaway' on a Friday night! Provide opportunities for pupils to understand what key terms are across the disciplines you teach. They should understand any synonyms or antonyms, the definition (through multiple exposure to the word) and the etymology (or word origin) of important terms.

5. Ensure teachers have sufficient subject knowledge

A key step to embedding disciplinary literacy across the school is to know and understand what reading, writing, and thinking looks like in different subjects. This is challenging, and so curriculum leaders should be given the opportunity – and time – to explore this within their own subjects. Many elements have been outlined in the National Curriculum and Ofsted research reviews already, so it's just a case of finding them. I've also included some examples in this

article (see the panel to the right). Once subject leaders are clear on what literacy looks like in their area, it is helpful to produce posters and resources, so they can begin to embed what they've learned in their lessons. Again, you can find ideas to include within the panel to the right.

Hopefully, these five ways will support you with making a start with disciplinary literacy. Remember, it is not about changing everything, but exploring where opportunities can be embedded within your existing provision.

* (Beck et al, *Bringing Words to Life*, 2013)



Shareen Wilkinson is an education adviser and primary teaching and learning director for a multi-academy trust. She is also an established educational author and writer.

@ShareenAdvice

Writing a Christmas story

with Catherine Doyle



Play the podcast, share the teaching sequence – and inspire amazing writing from every pupil...

Who doesn't love a good Christmas story? Whether it's a tale that's been retold time and again or a brand-new narrative; whether it's a fable told to us by a relative, a book read being aloud or a favourite festive film on TV, we know what we're getting with a good Christmas story: someone, somehow will mend their ways and learn the true meaning of Christmas. What could be more reassuring, enjoyable and fun to write?

This teaching sequence will give children the opportunity to write their own Christmas story of redemption, where a character can learn a lesson and embrace the spirit of the festive season. Your young writers will have the chance to learn from Catherine Doyle, award-winning author of the *Storm Keeper* series and her wonderful Christmas book *The Miracle on Ebenezer Street*, a delightful reimagining of *A Christmas Carol*. For each section of the teaching sequence, there are extracts from the *Author in Your Classroom* podcast (bit.ly/AIYCCatDoyle) to support your teaching, providing inspiration and linking the process that children will follow with the work of a hugely talented and popular author.



SESSION 1

REIMAGINING A CHRISTMAS STORY

- 1 | Play the section of the podcast from 15.43 up until 18.11. Ask children why they think Catherine chose to create a reimagining of *A Christmas Carol*, rather than a retelling.
- 2 | As a class, discuss the difference between these two ideas: that rather than simply telling the same story in a different

“Write down all your ideas the second you have them”

- way, when reimagining, the writer can take any elements that they like from the story – characters, setting, themes, ideas – and use them in a completely different way.
- 3 | Working in pairs, ask the children to think of as many Christmas stories as they can. They can start with books and poems, but remind them that

films and songs can also be good sources.

- 4 | As a class, ask the children to look at the tales they have collected and list some of the elements that the stories have in common. They might suggest themes, settings, characters, objects or background features. Explain they're going to use these to write their own stories.



SESSION 2

PLANNING A STORY

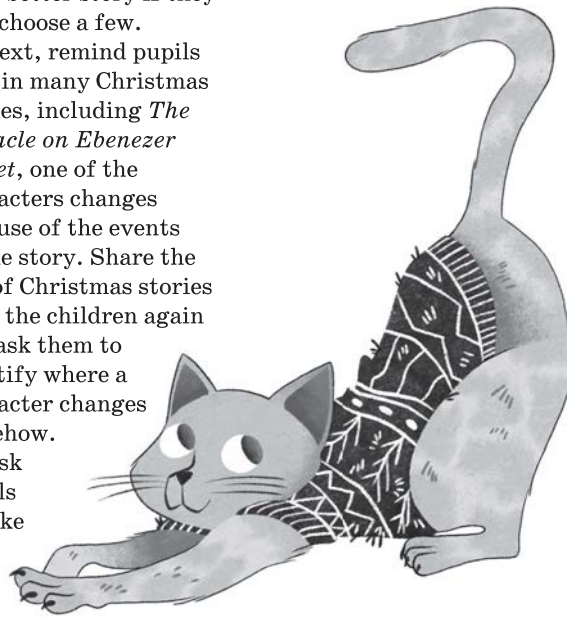
1 | Play the podcast from **01.49** up until **05.22**.
2 | Remind pupils of the list of Christmas stories they made in the previous session and ask them to think about if there are any that they think could form the basis of their own story. If so, ask them to jot down the elements that they might use (characters, settings, parts of the plot, themes, etc.) If there aren't elements they wish to use or they are finding this difficult, tell them not to worry because they will have the chance to plan a story from scratch, using their own Christmas

ideas. You might need to remind pupils that although they might be tempted to include lots of different Christmas elements, it might make for a better story if they just choose a few.

3 | Next, remind pupils that in many Christmas stories, including *The Miracle on Ebenezer Street*, one of the characters changes because of the events in the story. Share the list of Christmas stories with the children again and ask them to identify where a character changes somehow.

4 | Ask pupils to take

their initial ideas and turn them into a story plan where one of their characters changes or learns a lesson because of events in the story.



SESSION 3

ADDING SOME MAGIC

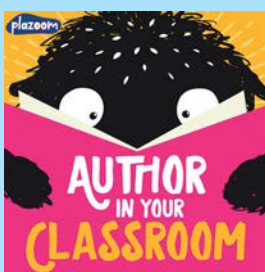
1 | Play the section of the podcast from **10.05** up until **13.11**. Ask the children if they can think of any other stories that employ 'magic realism', adding magical

events or objects into the real world. Ask the children to think about why this type of writing might suit Christmas stories particularly.

2 | Ask the children to return to their plans and see if there is any opportunity to include something magical in their story. Of course, it might be that they have done this already, but if not, this gives them an opportunity to include another element of a good Christmas story: some festive magic!



DOWNLOAD NOW!



To download a full set of FREE resources for this teaching sequence – including planning sheets, teaching slides, themed writing paper and more – visit bit.ly/AIYCCatDresourcepack To subscribe for free, just search for 'Author in Your Classroom' wherever you get your podcasts!



SESSION 4

WRITING THE STORY

1 | Play the podcast again from **05.58** up to **09.55**. Tell the children that what a character says and how they say it can be a great way of revealing things about a character and how they are feeling in a particular scene. Working in pairs, ask pupils to think about the conversation between George and Mr Marley and discuss the following questions: What do we learn about the two characters from the scene? How does Catherine Doyle suggest that Mr Marley is a magical, mysterious and mischievous character without telling us?

2 | Ask the children to write their own Christmas stories, drawing on their plans. Challenge them to use dialogue to show the reader how their characters feel or what they are like, using some of the ideas above.
3 | Once pupils have written their story, ask them to share their work with a partner or look at some examples together as a class. Then they can make improvements.

AFTER THE UNIT...

- Play the podcast from **21.19** until the end.
- Discuss Catherine's advice for young writers: 'Read, read, read. Read as many books as you can as often as you can.' 'Write down all your ideas the second you have them.' 'Before you start writing your own story, try and do a little bit of a plan... the better your structure is before you start, the easier it will be to write the story.' 'If you're struggling to come up with characters... just look around you at your gran or your brother or your dog or your cat and just steal them!'
- Ask the class if they can think of times when this advice would come in useful for their own writing.



teach
PRIMARY

BOOK AWARDS 2022



32

AMAZING BOOKS SURE TO INSPIRE YOUR CLASS

"These awards do a fantastic job of informing teachers and pupils about the latest and greatest children's books"

David Solomons, author and judge



Discover the titles that no classroom should be without this year...

If there's one thing the publishing world – and the children's sector in particular – is not short of, it's prizes. However, the Teach Primary Book Awards is the only competition that takes into consideration the unique way that original works of fiction and non-fiction can enhance a classroom – opening doors to new worlds; modelling powerful language; awakening curiosity; and inspiring pupils to produce wonderful writing of their own.

2022 marks the eighth year of the Teach Primary Book Awards; and my first involvement, as editor of *Teach Primary* and *Teach Reading & Writing* magazines. I'm hugely proud to have been a part of the process, which saw a phenomenal number of entries, somehow whittled down to a shortlist of 32 titles, before being sent out to our brilliant panel of judges.

Armed with a set of criteria including such things as learning opportunities, emotional depth, and language play – not forgetting, of course, exceptional writing and beautiful illustration – these intrepid adjudicators were charged with picking a winner and a runner up in each of four categories: non-fiction, Reception, KS1 and KS2. It was an incredibly tough task, but they tackled it with both diligence and delight; these are books with something special to offer above and beyond the sheer joy of the reading experience, and I am thrilled to be able to share them here.

Charley Rogers, editor, *Teach Primary* and *Teach Reading & Writing*

"What an honour – and a treat! – to be judging for the Teach Primary Book Awards, championing new and sparkling stories for young people."

Joan Haig, author and judge

Meet the judges



BEN GARROD is professor of evolutionary biology and science engagement at the University of East Anglia. *EXTINCT: THE STORY OF LIFE ON EARTH* (Zephyr), is his eight-book series for young readers.
@Ben_garrod



JOAN HAIG was born and grew up in Zambia – and lived in Vanuatu, India and Nigeria before settling in Scotland. Her debut novel, *Tiger Skin Rug*, was nominated for the CILIP Carnegie Medal.
@joanhaigbooks



DAVID SOLOMONS' first novel, *My Brother is a Superhero!*, won the British Book Award for Children's Book of the Year in 2016. *A Beginner's Guide to Ruling the Galaxy* is his sixth novel for children.
@DavidSolomons2



STEPH ELLIOTT is a Year 6 class teacher in Newcastle, and a book blogger. She has a passion for reading and believes every child is a reader, too – they just need the right book!
@eenalol



LUCY STARBUCK BRAIDLEY is senior programme manager – reading for enjoyment at The National Literacy Trust. She is also a former primary school teacher, English subject lead and moderator.
@Lucy_Braidley



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.
@ReadforGoodUK

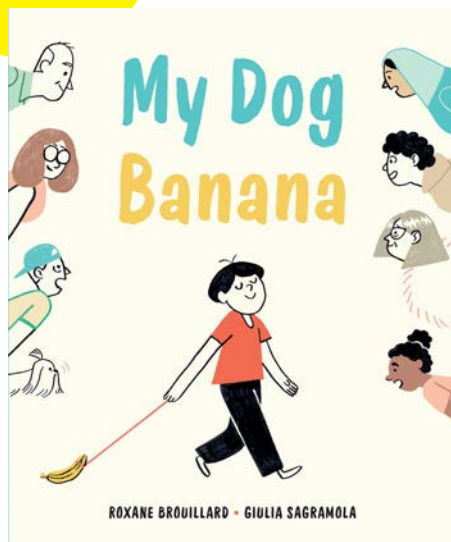
RECEPTION

WINNER

My Dog Banana

Roxane Brouillard, ill. Giulia Sagramola (Greystone Kids)

Described as “surreal and witty with a distinctive style” by judge and author David Solomons, this book blends silliness and sophistication to perfection. Why is the protagonist taking a walk with a banana on a lead? Does he really think that it’s a dog? Children will love the way that all the adults are so baffled by his claim – and discussing whether, in fact, there’s a chance that he could actually be right...



KEY CRITERIA

Memorable illustration

Read-aloud-ability

Opportunities for discussion

Encourages language play and development

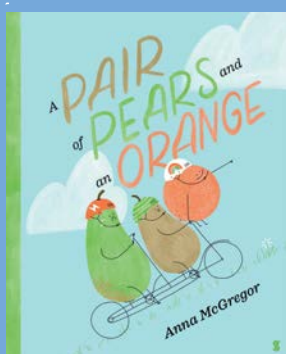


“Surreal and witty with a distinctive style”

David Solomons



Runner up



A Pair of Pears and an Orange

Anna McGregor (Scribble)

When teacher, blogger and Book Awards judge Steph Elliott shared this story with her class, it became an instant favourite. “It’s so, so original,” explained Steph, “with lots of funny puns and word play.” There’s a lovely message, too, about how to navigate the shifting boundaries of friendships – especially when someone new appears on the horizon; making this an ideal book for kickstarting discussions about kindness and inclusivity.

“So, so original”

Steph Elliott

Also shortlisted

CINDERGORILLA
Gareth P Jones, illustrated by Loretta Schauer (Farshore)



THE BOY WHO SAILED THE WORLD
Julia Green & Alex Latimer (David Fickling Books)



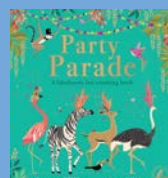
GRUMPY HAT
Nicola Kent (Andersen Press)



BLOOM
Julia Seal (Sunbird Books)



PARTY PARADE
Leanne Miller & Sara Miller (Scholastic)



PUFFLING AND THE EGG
Erika McGann & Gerry Daly (The O'Brien Press)





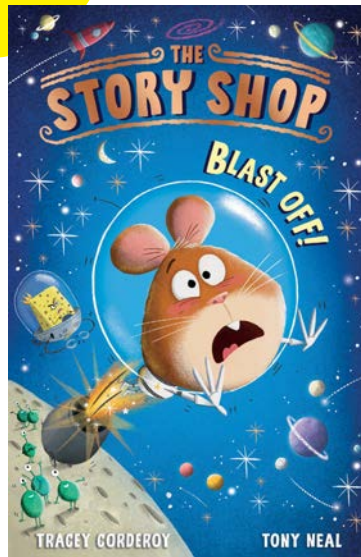
KEY STAGE 1

WINNER

The Story Shop: Blast Off!

Tracey Corderoy, ill. Tony Neal
(Little Tiger)

Our judges loved the concept at the heart of this book: a shop where you can walk in and pick all the ingredients for a story adventure of your own. "You could do so much with this idea, and let children's imaginations go wild!" said Lucy Starbuck Braidley, of the National Literacy Trust; while author Joan Haig praised the "fantastic integration of pictures and words," calling it an "original, fun idea, with likeable characters."



KEY CRITERIA

Breadth of appeal

Use of illustration

Pacy, engaging story

Learning opportunities



"You could do so much with this idea, and let children's imaginations go wild!"

Lucy Starbuck Braidley



Runner up

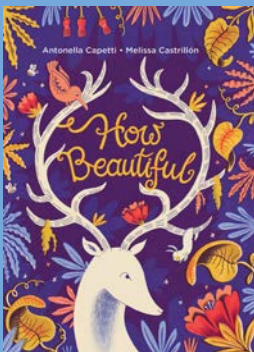
How Beautiful

Antonella Capetti, ill. Melissa Castrillon
(Greystone Kids)

The author of this gorgeous story about a curious caterpillar searching for the true meaning of the word 'beautiful', is a primary teacher herself, in Italy; and her dreamy prose has a gently pedagogical quality, nudging readers to ask questions of themselves, and perhaps look at the world around them rather differently as a result. Judge Joan Haig called it "a fabulous lesson in the philosophy of language for young children," and "a book for everyone."

"A book for everyone"

Joan Haig



Also shortlisted

THE BOY WHO GREW A TREE
Polly Ho-Yen
(Knights Of)



BUMBLE & SNUG AND THE ANGRY PIRATES
Mark Bradley (Hachette Children's Group — Hodder Children's Books)



VELDA THE AWESOMEST VIKING AND THE GINORMOUS FROST GIANTS
David MacPhail
(Floris Books)



YAPPING AWAY
Joshua Seigal, illustrated by Sarah Horne
(Bloomsbury Education)



ANISHA ACCIDENTAL DETECTIVE: HOLIDAY ADVENTURE
Serena Patel, illustrated by Emma McCann (Usborne Publishing)



PRINCESS MINNA: THE ENCHANTED FOREST
Kirsty Applebaum, illustrated by Sahar Haghighoo (Nosy Crow)





KEY STAGE 2

KEY CRITERIA

Originality

Compelling plot

Emotional depth

Something to think about?

WINNER



When the Sky Falls

Phil Earle (Andersen Press)

This exceptional piece of storytelling has already picked up a handful of awards, and rightly so. As judge David Solomon says, it's "original, heartfelt and superbly readable. You know you're in safe hands with Phil Earle from the first page."

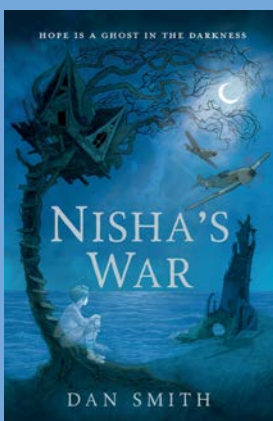
Inspired by a true story, it describes what happens when a lonely, angry boy, sent to live with a stranger during WWII, starts to build a bond with the mighty silverback gorilla who is also in her care.

"Original, heartfelt and superbly readable"

David Solomons



Runner up



Nisha's War

Dan Smith (Chicken House)

"Spirited and spiritual and quite thrilling to read," according to judge Joan Haig, the runner up in this category is another tale of WWII; but from a very different perspective. Nisha has arrived at her grandmother's house in the North of England, having escaped the Japanese invasion of Singapore. It's cold and grey, and the local villagers treat her with suspicion – so when a boy beckons one night from the treehouse she's been forbidden to play in, it seems she has nothing to lose...

"Spirited and spiritual and quite thrilling to read"

Joan Haig

Also shortlisted

ESCAPE ROOM
Christopher Edge
(Nosy Crow)



THE LIGHT IN EVERYTHING
Katya Balen (Bloomsbury Children's Books)



THE BOOK OF STOLEN DREAMS
David Farr
(Usborne Publishing)



THE LION ABOVE THE DOOR
Onjali Q Rauf (Hachette Children's Group – Orion Children's Books)



THE SWALLOWS' FLIGHT
Hilary McKay (Macmillan Children's Books)



THE AMAZING EDIE ECKHART
Rosie Jones (Hachette Children's Group – Hodder Children's Books)





NON-FICTION

WINNER

KEY CRITERIA

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

The Secret Signs of Nature

Craig Caudill, ill. Carrie Shyrock
(Magic Cat Publishing)

Meet two young adventurers as they discover the ancient art of reading outdoor clues. Join them as they learn to read a full moon, decode the colour of the ocean, and forecast the weather with a rainbow, uncovering the secret signs of nature and a world of forgotten skills. Naturalist Steve Backshall provides a foreword for this book, which made judge Ben Garrod "want to run outside and explore".



"We can all learn something from these pages. This book is an absolute pleasure to read and made me want to run outdoors and explore"

Ben Garrod



Runner up

Live Like a Hunter Gatherer

Naomi Walmsley, ill. Mia Underwood
(Button Books)

"With practical guides, this is the perfect book for any young reader wanting to unravel our own complex but fascinating family tree," said Ben Garrod – and indeed, there is plenty to delight and intrigue children in this informative and generously illustrated guide to the Stone Age, written by a real-life hunter-gatherer!

"This is the perfect book for any young reader wanting to unravel our own complex but fascinating family tree"

Ben Garrod

Also shortlisted

GOOD NEWS

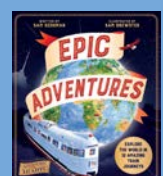
Rashmi Sirdeshpande
(Hachette Children's Group
– Wren & Rook)



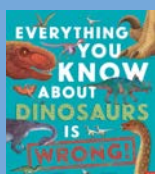
FIRST NAMES:
GRETA THUNBERG
Tracey Turner, illustrated
by Tom Knight (David
Fickling Books)



EPIC ADVENTURES:
EXPLORE THE WORLD
IN 12 AMAZING
TRAIN JOURNEYS
Sam Sedgman
(Pan Macmillan)



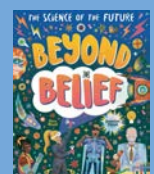
EVERYTHING YOU
KNOW ABOUT
DINOSAURS IS WRONG!
Dr Nick Crumpton, illustrated
by Gavin Scott (Nosy Crow)



EVERYDAY STEM
TECHNOLOGY:
MACHINES
Jenny Jacoby
(Pan Macmillan)



BEYOND BELIEF
Alex Woolf
(Little Tiger)



PHONICS

Jolly Classroom




A fun, multisensory, interactive version of the Jolly Phonics programme

AT A GLANCE

- A new digital platform to support the teaching of the popular Jolly Phonics scheme
- Aligned with the Jolly Phonics Handbook and Pupil and Teacher's Books
- Promotes a fun, multisensory approach to learning letters and sounds
- A comprehensive, year-long programme comprising over 150 pre-planned lessons

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



If teaching phonics is something you feel you can do standing on your head, knock yourself out. If not, this new arrival from Jolly Phonics might interest you.

Of course, you know of Jolly Phonics. Established well before the teaching of synthetic phonics was even included in the National Literacy Strategy of 1998, it is one of the most popular and enduring phonics programmes on the market. Like most successful products, it has had to move with the times. Recently, the fifth edition of the Jolly Phonics Handbook was launched, including updated illustrations and several new worksheets and additional new content. Now, they are introducing a digital platform to enhance its impact still further – Jolly Classroom.

As you might expect, it includes everything you need to introduce the 42 letter sounds to your pupils, along with the accompanying skills of letter formation, blending, segmenting and spotting tricky words. It then goes on to alternative spellings, new letter combinations, further tricky words and so on, while consolidating earlier learning. The resources work together to form an extensive year-long programme, aligned to both the familiar Jolly Phonics handbook, and pupil books.

Each letter sound is pre-recorded for you, in case you're self-conscious about your schwa. And you don't have to worry about repetitive strain injury from flourishing your flash cards, either. But, for me, what really brings the resources to life

is the way they use bright and appealing pictures, entertaining short stories, touch-screen letter formation and even brief ditties using familiar tunes to bring the learning to life. In all likelihood, the rookie readers will be absorbing their letters and sounds so happily, they won't realise what abstract magic they are mastering.

In order to embed that new learning still further, there is a wide variety of engaging activities included in Jolly Classroom. These can all be completed on an interactive whiteboard with the whole class, and many can also be printed out for pupils to attempt individually, if you so wish. I have every confidence that the children will love doing the activities, as they are based on the winning formula that has worked so well for Jolly Phonics for so many years.

From the teacher's perspective, I can see this not only saving a lot of planning time, but also providing an easy-to-follow, carefully structured programme that should make teaching phonics a joy. It's simple to set up and intuitive to use. But, just in case, like me, you are prone to techno-befuddlement, there are tips and instructions at every stage to keep you on track.

For existing fans of Jolly phonics, it will probably feel like an impressive film adaptation of a favourite book. But I can see it converting many newcomers, too. If you like to make your phonics lessons a vibrant, multi-sensory experience for your pupils, you will probably take to this like a spotty snake to hissing.

Teach Reading & Writing

VERDICT

- ✓ Bright and engaging
- ✓ Simple to set up and use
- ✓ Attractive, screen-based lessons
- ✓ Interactive, multisensory activities
- ✓ Saves planning time
- ✓ Perfectly pitched for young children
- ✓ Useful online support

UPGRADE IF...

You want to give your phonics lessons extra impact through engaging, multisensory, screen-based activities.

HANDWRITING

STABILO EASYoriginal pens & EASYgraph S pencils

Ergonomic pens and pencils developed by experts specifically for both left- and right-handed children



AT A GLANCE

- Skilfully designed pens and pencils based on ergonomic principles in penmanship
- Left- and right-handed versions
- Focused on comfort and efficiency
- Tested by expert scientists
- Pencil wood is sourced from responsibly-managed forests

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



How much do we think about handedness when we consider children's needs? Handedness is the preference for using one hand over another and when it comes to the school environment this really matters.

Left-handed children often struggle when the resources aren't there to support them. This is often the case when it comes to writing utensils and scissors. Left-handed pupils can often appear uncoordinated or disorganised as most equipment is set up for right-handed children.

STABILO has thought long and hard about the user experience to cater for everyone and its product range is impressively inclusive. Every operational characteristic has been considered from the size, weight, shape and length of the instrument to the surface texture and hardness of the shaft, ink flow, smoothness, writing fatigue and more.

The EASY Start range is a vibrant and ergonomic family of writing equipment specifically designed for learning and improving handwriting skills at a young age. Led by the latest research in handwriting ergonomics, these are clever products that put writing comfort, legibility, efficiency and motivation right at the centre of design so that children can have fun improving their skills.

STABILO's EASYoriginal pens are a joy. These really attractive wide-barrel refillable

pens have been ergonomically moulded so that children use the lightest grip possible while writing. The slightly arched shape helps pupils to achieve the recommended tripod grip, eliminating strain. It also features a rubberised grip around the pen barrel for increased traction.

The STABILO ergonomic pens use a rollerball design which flows freely. This helps reduce writing pressure which can lead to pain over longer pieces of written work. The nibs are broad and flexible and use royal blue erasable ink, ideal for school use.

STABILO's handwriting pencils with break-resistant 2.2mm lead have also been designed specifically for left- and right-handers. EASYgraph S pencils have a brilliant triangular design and non-slip grip moulds which magnificently support a relaxed hand posture. They also have a subtle yellow and red colour coding at the end of the pencil to indicate whether it is a left- or right-handed version.

They come in a range of five shaft colours and the S (slim) versions have a slenderer barrel than the original, but still with a space for inscribing your name.

Every child should benefit from adopting an ergonomic way of working and STABILO has given us the tools to work in a more efficient and child-friendly way. These are writing resources that truly break the mould.

Teach
**Reading
& Writing**

VERDICT

- ✓ Sophisticated, intelligent and intuitive designs to tackle handwriting issues
- ✓ Non-slip, comfortable to hold and prevents stress, tiredness and potential damage to hand posture
- ✓ Revolutionary, fun and attractive designs
- ✓ Quality through and through for a great price
- ✓ Takes the stress out of handwriting

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for writing resources that truly cater for left-, right- and mixed-handers.

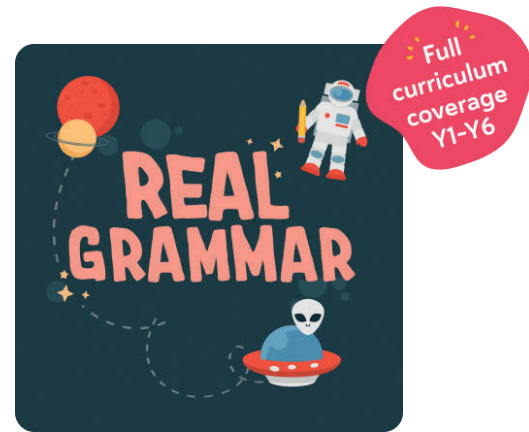
Pens from £3.29, pencils from £1.04, stabilo.com/uk

LITERACY ➔



Plazoom – Real Grammar

A whole-school grammar resource, packed with plenty of pedagogical punch



AT A GLANCE

- Quality-first grammar lessons furnished with a raft of resources
- Follows a simple five-step structure
- Three levels of differentiation included
- Terminology definitions and modelled examples
- Superb teaching guide

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



Recent research suggests that what helps children to develop their writing skills at different points in development, is focusing on teaching approaches such as sentence-combining, strategy instruction and emphasising the processes of writing. For this you need innovative, interactive and expert literacy resources such as those by Plazoom. For grappling with grammar then look no further than their new whole-school programme, Real Grammar.

This multimodal and visually appealing set of resources follows a new approach to teaching grammar to ensure deep learning through meaning, creativity and choice. Real Grammar adopts a very structured approach and is taught as part of the literacy sequence 'teach, practise, revisit, apply, revise', so that learning can be spaced over time. The units have been organised to cover all the grammar and punctuation objectives and each has a specially written model text showing the objective in context.

The 'teach' section provides comprehensive teaching sequences so that pupils are able to get to grips with every concept and can apply their learning in context. There are impressive teaching scripts to follow, with key questions and

prompts included for high-quality learning. The 'practise' examples are pitched at three different levels and so they should capture the needs of most pupils, and can be used to consolidate learning and identify any gaps or misconceptions. These sections can be adhered to as part of a classroom literacy routine, but they can also be used flexibly rather than as a fixed route through grammar terrain.

A range of games and activities are included so that areas can be revisited and embedded. 'Revise' sections include differentiated exercises to help prepare pupils for end-of-year assessments. Embedded within these sections is an outstanding collection of teaching essentials, including detailed notes, editable PowerPoint lessons, model texts, practice worksheets, games, writing prompts, and more, all of which have suggestions for challenge and support, with opportunities to investigate and develop ideas.

The high-quality resources are child-friendly without being childish, age-appropriate, and have plenty of pedagogical punch. These are genuinely outstanding materials that are expertly created for making grammar lessons easy.

Teach Reading & Writing

VERDICT

- ✓ A sure-fire way of helping pupils to generate sentences and get in the groove with grammar
- ✓ Supports children apply their skills across the curriculum
- ✓ Grammar for fun, challenge, interest and creativity
- ✓ Helps to improve listening and comprehension skills
- ✓ Everything you need to introduce, explore and identify each objective in context

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to create cohesion in your grammar provision using effective resources underpinned by a robust teaching sequence so that children can achieve deep grammatical learning.

PHONICS →

raintree
a Capstone company — publishers for children

Raintree Red Squirrel Phonics

Thoughtful, precise and fun books to help pupils develop their reading abilities



AT A GLANCE

- 100 decodable books
- Authentic storylines and fun characters
- Systematic progression for learning phonemes and graphemes
- Teaching notes included in each book
- Comprehensive teachers' books with lesson plans, activity sheets and assessment
- Clear guidance to support children

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



Red Squirrel Phonics are multifaceted reading materials tailor-made for phonics fun and progression. They allow children to practise their emerging phonic knowledge by reading books that only comprise the sounds that they have learned.

There is a precision and intelligibility to each page with large, well-spaced text in an unfussy font. The attractive and colourful illustrations support the text and bring the books to life. The book levels are sagely sequenced phonetically with lots of practice at the vital CVC stage with a measured build-up of sight vocabulary. They combine decodable, predictable, and repetitive text in the context of topics that are age-appropriate and familiar to children. Some trickier 'difficult to decode' high-frequency words are also included that are not phonetically consistent. They are well-written and thought-provoking too, each with a meaningful storyline – both fiction and non-fiction – with plenty to dissect and discuss. At the early levels, the books are supported by the same key characters along with their pets and friends, and later levels introduce a wider range of characters and artwork.

Levels 1–3 introduce all consonants and short vowels, and the focus is on predominantly VC and CVC words and a few tricky words. Levels 4–5 introduce consonant digraphs, vowel digraphs and trigraphs and adjacent consonants with short and long vowels. Levels 6–7 introduce new graphemes for known phonemes. An indicator of a good series of decodable texts is that the concepts are laid out in a clearly defined way, with

new concepts building on those addressed in previous books. These books do exactly that. A Phonics Overview chart is also available to download from the Raintree website, providing a very helpful breakdown of the phonemes and graphemes introduced at each level.

On the inside front cover there is a Before Reading skills-focus practice page for warming-up, and at the end there is a summary of how to use the book with pre-reading ideas in more detail, words to blend, and a tricky words review. There is also a post-reading section with ideas for applying learning and building understanding, and supportive notes for helping children to read a text accurately, quickly, and with expression.

To support the books are three brilliant teachers' resources that go into greater depth with explicit guided teaching notes, a phonics overview, scope and sequence, word banks, assessments and photocopiable pages matched to every title. These can be followed to the letter but there is also room for thoughtful adaptation where teachers can employ their expertise in ways that best meet the needs of their children.

The Red Squirrel series makes a valuable contribution to the 'Big 5 of Reading' by helping children build their phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. They provide children with exciting opportunities to practise specific phonics concepts, and are fantastic tools for building reading confidence and allow children to show they CAN read.

Teach
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& Writing**

VERDICT

- ✓ Systematic, explicit, engaging and success-orientated
- ✓ Helps teach children phonics skills in a sequential and systematic way
- ✓ Meaningful books that develop context, interest, and engagement for all children
- ✓ Ensures that every beginning reader experience success in their reading
- ✓ Perfect for use in the classroom or for home reading
- ✓ Pitch-perfect levelled books
- ✓ Clear, concise and comprehensive teaching notes for phonics coaching

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for high-quality resources that can be used alongside SSP programmes, and that draw upon multiple criteria to promote phonics literacy.

Red Squirrel Complete Pack – 100 titles plus four teacher books £525. Please contact feedback@raintree.co.uk to find out more

‘Emotion made into a dance of words’

Waterstones Children’s Laureate and award-winning poet **Joseph Coelho** on the power of poetry to literally change lives

Twenty years of running poetry sessions within schools has shown me that there is a general fear around writing; poetry in particular.

I want to help change that.

I really enjoyed my own time in primary school, and even back then I was entranced by words and poetry. I have particularly fond memories of teachers reading Anne Holm’s *I Am David* and Allan Ahlberg’s *Please, Mrs Butler*, and of borrowing a copy of Raymond Briggs’s *Fungus the Bogeyman* from the local library. It was immersing myself in these texts that inspired me to try writing my own stuff. When I first got *Fungus* I took it straight home and traced the pictures, then attempted creating my own stories to match the images. From that point, I was hooked! That’s the kind of process I’d like to recreate for pupils – that feeling of reading or seeing something, then getting that spark of an idea that you just have to get down on paper. There’s nothing like it.

Sadly, all too often, reluctant writers can see the process as something that just isn’t for them; that writing is somehow difficult and mysterious. Especially poetry. Teachers often tell me of their own fear regarding poetry, too, so my idea for Poetry Prompts grew out of a desire to provide a resource that will get pupils writing in fun, creative – and most importantly – non-threatening ways. Each prompt is no more than 10



“When I was a child, poetry was confined to the page, but as an adult, I’ve realised it’s that and so much more”

minutes long, so they’re designed to fit into the gaps in the school day. The idea is you could slip in a prompt during registration, before a lunch break, or perhaps at the end of the day when your class have finished a unit of work and there’s a little bit of time left. I want these writing moments to be fun and engaging – not just for children but the adults, too – and for them to be seen as gentle invitations to write, helping to rid our classrooms of this fear of putting pen to paper.

And the inspiration doesn’t have to be existing poems, or a book, necessarily. There are ideas everywhere – you might write about what you can hear, or see from your classroom, for example. If you are using texts to inspire kids, you can use any kind of format that they’re

already interested in. But, of course, your children might also surprise you in their choice of reading material. My love of language actually came into its own when my grandmother gave me her old dictionary and thesaurus – not something you’d think would be especially interesting for a child, but I couldn’t get enough!

Another thing that really brought poetry alive for me was discovering the performance poetry organisation, Apples and Snakes. In my early 20s I saw poets like Stacy Makishi sharing poems and smashing eggs filled with paint; and performers like Francesca Bears creating whole theatrical shows using poetry. The form completely shifted in my mind, becoming

a theatrical art that could include lighting, sound, costume, voices, and physical theatre. When I was a child, poetry was something that was definitely confined to the page, but as an adult, I’ve realised it’s that and so much more – it is song, it is theatre. It is emotion made into a dance of words.

And engaging in poetry – in whatever form – can be incredibly powerful.

Some of my favourite memories are where I’ve experienced a child with elective mutism choose a poetry session as the place to share their voice. This was a *huge* inspiration behind my book *My Beautiful Voice*, which tells the story of a little girl who doesn’t speak, but who, through gentle and patient listening and encouragement from her teacher, finds the courage to talk. I’ve met with some absolutely brilliant teachers who have worked with children like this over weeks and months, and sometimes years, to find their voice. Being able to be a part of that – even a small part – is extraordinarily humbling and exciting.



Joseph Coelho is an award-winning performance poet and writer.

He is currently the Waterstones Children’s Laureate for 2022-2024, and you can see his Poetry Prompts series at tinyurl.com/tp-JCPoetryPrompts



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