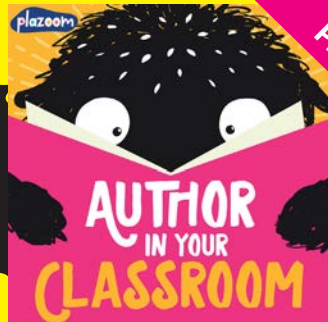


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Welcome...



Author in Your Classroom

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



PHIL EARLE

*The self-professed 'reluctant reader' and author of **Children's Book of the Year, When the Sky Falls**, shares his fabulous journey to writerdom, and the importance of the question 'What if...?'. p10*



LISA THOMPSON

*Coming up with characters is one of the most enjoyable parts of writing a story, says the author of **The Goldfish Boy** and **The Graveyard Riddle**, and there are ideas all around to magpie. p38*



JASON ROHAN

From talking himself into an internship at Marvel when he was only 16 years old, to developing his newest high-octane series, Jason Rohan shares the importance of conflict, and a killer opening line. p62

...to the latest issue of *Teach Reading & Writing*. We're coming to you just as Ofsted has published its review of English, which tells us that since new Key Stage 1 assessments were introduced in 2016, 'the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard for reading and writing has remained broadly stable for reading, with an upward trend for writing'. Whether your children are acing assessments and making great progress, or you can see room for improvement, nurturing a love for the written word is likely on your list.

For reluctant readers in your class, making reading 'cool' could be the answer to your troubles. If this seems like an unimaginable task, catch up with Dr Christina Clark and Fiona Evans from the National Literacy Trust (page 23), who explain the findings of the NLT's 2021 report 'Forgotten Girls: The Reluctant Girl Reader', and share their tips on working with your class to reframe reading as a desirable activity. If you're interested in the impact that diverse books might have on your pupils' enjoyment of reading, head over to hear from three educators on how they have reflected their schools' realities in their book choices (page 26), and get some real-life inspiration from a school that took the diversity challenge into their own hands (page 58).

To take a micro look at reading and vocab, check out Ruth Baker-Leask's ideas on how to choose the tier 2 words you should be teaching your pupils (page 40), power up lexical knowledge with Kelly Ashley and her superhero gang (page 56), and hear all about the Talk for Reading approach from Pie Corbett himself (page 64).

For those focusing on writing, Pie fans will be excited to learn that we have yet another of his exclusive model texts, as well (page 46). This one is a scary story and explores how children can 'show not tell' in their own writing – see also Tim Taylor's explanation of the dramatic imagination, and how pupils can imbue their stories with atmosphere and movement (page 18).

And for pupils that are still working on forming their handwriting, see Dr Jane Medwell's pointers on sneaking in practice, like some sly spinach in a smoothie (page 60).

Last but not least, if you're preparing for next year and looking to develop your curriculum, Rachel Clarke has some great advice on how to build a representative reading spine so all your pupils feel seen in the books you read (page 42) and Alison Dawkins talks us through how to structure a poetry curriculum for KS1 and KS2 (page 68) – hint: the key is in the browsing.

With best wishes, and until next time,

Charley Rogers
(editor)



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Using 'show not tell' is a powerful tool for building suspense... Pie Corbett demonstrates how

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Encourage personal links and fire up the power of association to get your pupils invested in developing lexical knowledge

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Strategy, drama, and investigation – Pie Corbett introduces a new approach to books, and how you can use it in your classroom

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Sharing great (and terrible) speeches from history in the classroom can inspire profound learning opportunities across the curriculum, as Joan Haig explains

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Although they're light on text, reading between the lines of picturebooks is one of the best introductions to critical thinking for pupils

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'No subject is as important as showing the stupidity of war'

Prolific illustrator **Michael Foreman** on friendship in the face of destruction, and how WWII stories can help us talk about the crisis in Ukraine

TR&W You've explored your experience of WWII before. What made you want to revisit it in *Please Write Soon*?

MF My very first book (written by my first wife, Janet Charters,) *The General*, was published in 1961, when we were both still students, and the world then, as now, was on the brink of war. For me, no other subject was as important and relevant as showing the stupidity and evil of war.

My experience of growing up and being bombed in World War II has coloured my life, too. My mother's village shop in Suffolk was a haven for soldiers and sailors stationed in the area. They would come daily for cups of tea and cigarettes and for card games on Sundays. Later in the war, they were joined by German prisoners who worked on local farms. They all told stories of home and loved ones. My book *War Boy* portrays these times.

When I received Michael Rosen's story, *Please Write Soon*, I was reminded of those days and the stories told of faraway loved ones. I knew immediately that this was a book I wanted to illustrate.

How do you think we should be approaching topics like war with primary-aged pupils?

I don't pretend to be a psychologist, and I know that children today are deeply anxious about what is happening in Ukraine, given that the unfolding events are on our screens continually, and they must be aware of their parents' concerns for the people there. Parents and teachers are in a far better position than I, with their experience of the individual children, to handle such crucial issues. However, I think that perhaps the subject should be treated in a way that leaves each child with a feeling of hope, reassurance and the strong idea that, together, we can all do something about it; together we can make the world a better place.

How can art help young people navigate such complicated subjects?

I have written and illustrated books on a wide range of subjects including pollution,

climate change, poverty, and war, and I find that the artwork I use can make all these big, complex, subjects more accessible to children. For example, I often use animals and mythological creatures as symbols for the powers and nations involved and always try to make the ending positive.

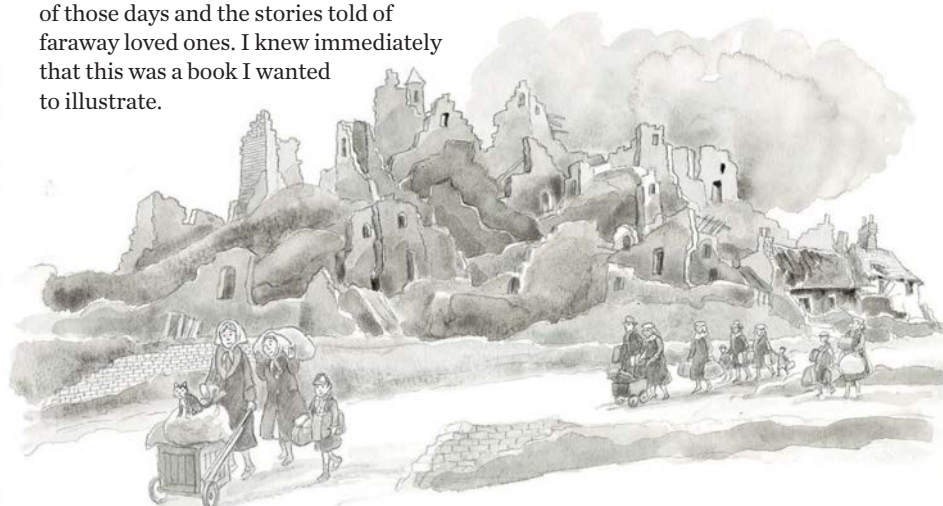
The book is based on Michael Rosen's family history. How do personal stories help us understand the past?

Every family has a story. Every family has a history. Children should be encouraged to explore their own history, and talk to their parents and grandparents about their memories. Pupils could imagine what it would be like if what happened to Michael Rosen's family was happening to their own family. In this way, *Please Write Soon* becomes even more real and moving.

What do you hope children and teachers will gain from this book?

Please Write Soon may appear to be about events of the past, but today the world is facing similar dangers. I hope, after experiencing this book, children will value even more the importance of human connections; family, school friends, and children all around the world. All friends together.

Please Write Soon, by Michael Rosen, illustrated by Michael Foreman, is published by Scholastic.





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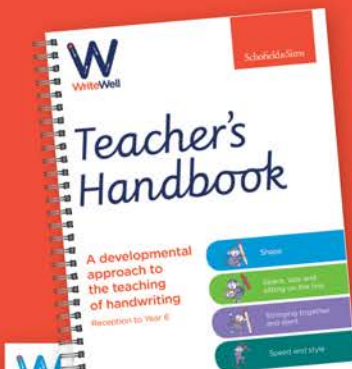
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Take it OUTSIDE

How cancelled trips and a ban on singing didn't stop this school getting creative with the arts post-lockdown...

CIARA GIBSON

Working within the pandemic restrictions over the last two years hasn't been easy. Initially, a lot of the rules seemed stifling and antithetical to a functioning classroom. But what if we could use this unique set of circumstances to unleash our (and our pupils') creativity, and see the challenges as an opportunity for innovation?

At our school, the arts play an essential role, in literacy and beyond. Post-lockdown, though we couldn't take part in our usual activities like artist visits and singing, we decided to find other ways to express our creativity. Between ideas gathered from online and some plans of our own, we decided to use our arts provision to explore the strangeness of the world we were living in.

We already worked mainly outside, which is handy for social distancing and fresh air, and we're fortunate that our school garden and surrounding area provides a wealth of natural materials with which to play and create, minimising the need for sharing resources. However, even in the sparsest school settings, your pupils will find something to use (we have had many excellent images made using gravel!). Here are some of our arts ideas with a difference...

Mark making

Drawing can be a great start to any creative session, and for this activity pupils created their own mark-making toolkit using a mixture of items including twigs, seed pods and leaves, natural paint (made from ground charcoal and water) and a range of chalk pastels. Often, we can be focused on the end product of arts sessions (or handwriting), which has its place, but it's equally important to spend time just exploring and enjoying materials. This session offered pupils the opportunity to find their own materials and explore



the environment around them. Simple exploratory mark making is a great way of engaging pupils (and staff) who might have some anxiety around drawing as well.

Words and images

The arts offer the perfect way to explore emotion and understand ourselves and each other better. Health and wellbeing have been at the forefront of everyone's mind during the pandemic, so when planning how to reconnect with each other after lockdown we wanted to include a range of arts-based experiences through the term.

We began by exploring what different emotions felt like, visualising shapes, colours, textures and forms using objects such as leaves and twigs found outside. The temporary nature of the work (best avoid windy days!) encouraged the pupils to be more relaxed and experimental with their ideas. Creating these sculptures provided an excellent opportunity to discuss more difficult emotions and how to deal with them, too.

Sounds and movement

We were keen to consider how to bring sounds and movement safely into our learning post-lockdown, too. Dancing is always popular with our pupils, especially creative dance, and it's important that we can support and encourage their enthusiasm without feeling the need to perform or be dance specialists (although learning to salsa together via YouTube was one of our highlights!).

After talking through some ideas, we decided to create our own musical (without the singing) of *Red Riding Hood*. After drawing out a storymap, pupils chose characters, and found well-known songs to represent them. Working in small groups they developed short dances in the playground before putting it all together into a film to share with families. Dancing outside in Scotland is not

without its negatives, but pupils are now adept at moving in full waterproofs and wellies!

As well as allowing the pupils to connect with each other, these activities have offered us a great way to reengage families, who have really enjoyed seeing the children's creative work after a full-on period of home learning.

While we are hopeful that the situation will improve this year, and we can return to some of our usual activities, we have also been looking for engaging, online opportunities to keep us inspired. One thing we're planning into June 2022 is Access All Arts Week from Sky Arts, which includes a programme of free learning materials. Check it out at accessallarts.skyarts.uk **TP**



Ciara Gibson
lives and works in
Highland Perthshire
and has been
teaching for 16
years.

Building a story from a story

with Phil Earle

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

Authors can be inspired by other stories they have heard or been told, often about things that friends and family have experienced. They weave their ideas into them, asking 'What if ...?' questions along the way to create many of the incredible books available for children today.

This is precisely what the author, Phil Earle, has done in his novel *When the Sky Falls*. The book is inspired by a true story a family member had told him and, after asking himself a series of 'What if ...?' questions, this captivating tale set during World War II was born.

In this teaching sequence, children will discuss stories they may have heard from friends or families and plan their own writing based on these. They will also explore how the author has created atmosphere and developed characters, applying these ideas in their own writing. Extracts from the *Author In Your Classroom* podcast (bit.ly/AIYCPPhilEarle) 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.



“You have to tackle issues if you want to tell a story”

SESSION 1

A STORY FROM A STORY

1 | Play the section of the podcast that starts at 9:25 up to 13:15, the end of section 1.

2 | Show the children PowerPoint Slide 2 and PowerPoint Slide 3 with Phil's quotes about finding stories. Discuss with the pupils any stories that they may have heard about their friends or families in the past. Explain how these tales may seem insignificant at first, but could be the seed from which a story develops. Allow children time to discuss and share any stories they may have heard from others. Stories about past pupils (without naming them) or events at the school could also be shared.

3 | Ask the children to use Planning Sheet 1 to note examples of stories that they



have heard (all resources to support this lesson are free to download from plazoom.com – see the download panel on the next page).

If children cannot think of their own, remind them that they can 'borrow' ideas from examples they have heard fellow pupils talk about in the class discussions and sharing activities so far.

SESSION 2

WHAT IF ...?

1 | Display PowerPoint Slide 4 with another quote from the author. Recap the story that Phil was told that inspired the book *When the Sky Falls*. (Someone was asked to go to a zoo in Manchester during air raids in World War II and be ready to shoot the lion if the wall to his enclosure was destroyed by bombs.)

2 | Create a list of 'What if ...?' questions Phil might have asked himself to create *When the Sky Falls*. Some examples are given on the podcast, such as: What if it was a gorilla? What if a boy was holding the rifle?

3 | Ask the children to look back at Planning Sheet 1 and choose 2 or 3 ideas they would like to develop



further. Using Planning Sheet 2, record story ideas and note 'What if ...?' questions that could be used to develop their writing.

4 | Allow children time to discuss the answers to their 'What if ...?' questions and complete the activity with other ideas from Planning Sheet 1 to help them decide which they might develop further into their own stories.

SESSION 3

CAREFUL VOCABULARY CHOICES

1 | Listen to the podcast from **13:30 up until 22:00**, where Phil Earle reads an extract from *When the Sky Falls* and discusses what he's written. Pupils could listen or read along using the **Written Extract** provided in the resource pack.

2 | Explain that in the story, including the extract just listened to, the author has made careful vocabulary choices to create an image for the reader. Examples are displayed on **PowerPoint Slide 5** and listed below.

- *The woman's eyes flitted skywards...*
- *Adonis made his*



displeasure felt...

- *Joseph didn't move, so she shoved him on...*

What do these words tell us about the events or characters? What are they showing the reader? Talk about the idea of showing the reader, rather than just telling them, what is happening or how characters are feeling. For example, we know that something was going on above them as the woman was looking up. Can pupils find other examples in the extract of the author showing the reader

something, rather than simply telling? Look for examples of how the author has described the bombing, using sounds to help create a vivid image for the reader.

3 | Explore further how the author develops the characters in this extract using the questions on **PowerPoint Slide 6**.

- What do we know about the characters?
- Which words show how they feel?
- How is a sense of panic and urgency developed by the author?

4 | Using **Planning Sheet 3**, children should record what they know about each of the characters included in the extract (Joseph, Mrs F, Adonis and Tweedy the dog), noting extracts from the text that tell them this.

SESSION 4

PLANNING AND WRITING A STORY

1 | Share the quote from Phil Earle on **PowerPoint Slide 7**. Ask pupils to look back at **Planning Sheet 2** and choose an idea they would like to develop into a story.

2 | Using **Planning Sheet 4**, children should use their idea and 'What if ...?' questions to plan their own story from a story. Encourage them to think about the main characters, what they are doing and how they are feeling at each point, and note words or phrases they could use to show rather than tell the



reader. You may want to model planning a simplified version of *When the Sky Falls* or similar to revisit structure and how to plan.

3 | Before using their plan to write their stories, listen to the podcast from section **22:00 to 26:50** (the end of part 2). Display **PowerPoint Slide 8** with the opening line to the book and discuss how this hooks the reader. Explore the idea that sometimes it might be best to start the

story at a part that the reader might not expect. Allow pupils time to tell their stories orally using their plan, experimenting with different starts. E.g., they may begin with something from the 'problem' section of their story.

4 | Allow pupils time to find images that might help them to picture the events in their stories. Phil used this strategy to develop descriptions in his book. They could look for images that might help them to describe settings or events, recording the vocabulary choices they could use.

5 | Children should write their stories using their plan to help them over several sessions.

SESSION 5

EDITING A STORY

1 | Show the class the final quote from Phil Earle on **PowerPoint Slide 9**.

2 | Ask pupils to reread their stories, or to read a friend's, and think about the extra 'layers' that could be added to give the reader more information. For example, they could add more information about sensory stimulus, or about the historical setting, or about a character.

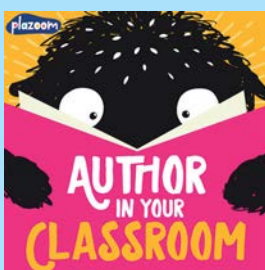
3 | Give pupils the opportunity to edit their writing, adding the extra 'layers' as described by Phil.



AFTER THE UNIT...

- Play the final section of the podcast that starts at **27:50 until the end**.
- After listening, discuss books that have inspired the children to read and ask adults to share the books that hooked them into reading.
- Celebrate all of the reading choices that children make, including comics, and where reading takes place naturally.
- Explore other books set during World War II or other wars, exploring how these historical events are described by the authors.

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To download a full set of **FREE** resources for this teaching sequence – including planning sheets, teaching notes, working wall elements and more – visit bit.ly/AIYCPEarlepack
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10 BOOKS TO END THE YEAR *on a high*

What's a Tasselled Wobbegong? And should you eat your own poo? Get pupils thinking and laughing with these humorous titles...

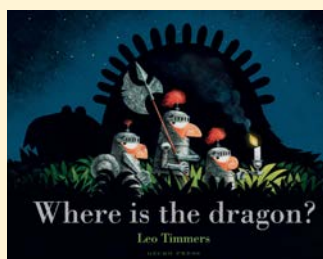
FOUNDATION STAGE



illustrations by Rob Biddulph

2 Dog Gone: The Day I Lost My Human BY ROB BIDDULPH (HARPERCOLLINS, 2020)

1 FOUNDATION STAGE Where is the dragon? BY LEO TIMMERS (GECKO PRESS, 2021)



What's the story?

Guided by a single candle on a moonless night, three knights embark on a dangerous errand for their king. Unidentified shapes loom out of the darkness, spooking Knights One and Two into a slapstick charade of mistaken identity and silhouetted accidents. But small Knight Three guards the candle and reveals the truth about each obstacle – until the final challenge, when the flame goes out! Where could that dragon be?

Leo Timmers makes the most of the tension between light and dark in his dynamic, richly-coloured artwork, and the rhyming translation of his original Dutch text is playful, challenging and fun. What's being shown doesn't always match what's being said, and when the connection between the two finally breaks down, everyone will want to know 'what happens next'.



illustrations by Leo Timmers



Thinking and talking

Why do Knights One and Two have so many accidents?

What do you think will happen when the dragon on the final page wakes up?

What can you see in the pictures that isn't mentioned in the text? Could you see it differently?

Try this...

■ Construct a shadow-puppet theatre using a spotlight and a sheet. Cut dragon



What's the story?

Searching for his lost pet boy in the park, a dog called Edward Pugglesworth confronts a monster and discovers that kindness – and new friends – are found in unexpected places.

There are lots of enjoyable details to spot in Rob Biddulph's bold illustrations, and his rhyming text reads aloud nicely. Edward's well-meaning version of

events doesn't match the visual evidence, and there's fun all round as readers work out what's really going on.

Thinking and talking

What do you know about dogs? Share experiences.

Why does Edward call the lawnmower an eating machine?

Do dogs understand our human world?

Was Edward right about Dave being lonely? How can you tell?

Try this...

■ What really happened in the park? Look for clues, then retell the story from Dave's point of view.

■ Draw new dogs and their owners to add to the final spread.

■ Roleplay a conversation between a child and their pet dog.



silhouettes from card and tell stories with them.

Extend by adding a trio of accident-prone knights!

■ Paint clouds of 'flaming frying boiling scalding sizzling smelly breath', then draw the dragons that created them.

■ Will the dragon behave nicely for the king? Write about what happens next – or tell the 'silent story' of Knights One and Two, with painted and collaged passengers. Who are these people, and why are they riding on your bus? Tell their stories.

KEY STAGE 1

3 Rabbit and Bear: Rabbit's Bad Habits

BY JULIAN GOUGH AND JIM FIELD (HODDER, 2016)



What's the story?

When a kind and unworlly bear meets a pernickety, know-it-all rabbit, an unlikely double-act ensues. Bear is meant to be hibernating and has never built a

snowman, but friendship isn't a concept that Rabbit understands, and he has no time for fun. It takes a hungry wolf to persuade Rabbit that teamwork could make all the difference.

Rabbit's Bad Habits is the first in a laugh-out-loud series, and includes Rabbit's views on gravity, avalanches and the merits of eating your own poo. Julian Gough delivers light-touch humour with a warm heart, and Jim Field provides plenty of visual jokes for attentive readers to enjoy.

Thinking and talking

Would you rather be friends with Rabbit or Bear? Why?

Choose three words to describe Rabbit, then three for Bear. Are the two characters similar, or different?

What does Rabbit teach Bear? What does Rabbit learn from her?

Try this...

■ Use movement, roleplay and freeze-frames to explore scenes from this book and discover more about the characters and their friendship.

■ Tell the Wolf's story!

■ Mark the locations of key events on the map, then use it to help you plan another adventure for these characters.



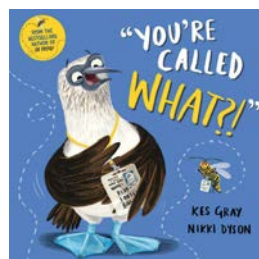
Illustrations by Jim Field

4

KEY STAGE 1

“You’re Called WHAT?”

BY KES GRAY AND NIKKI DYSON
(MACMILLAN, 2018)



illustrations by Nikki Dyson

What’s the story?

There are lots of creatures queueing at the Ministry of Silly Animal Names, and some of them look very strange. Why are they waiting, and what makes them laugh? And who – or what – is a Tasselled Wobbegong?

Told comedy-sketch-style as a cumulative joke building to a punchline, this book will inspire interest in the natural world as well as

raising smiles. The featured animals are all real, and can be matched to photos at the end of the book, where there’s an informative double spread about their habitats.

Thinking and talking

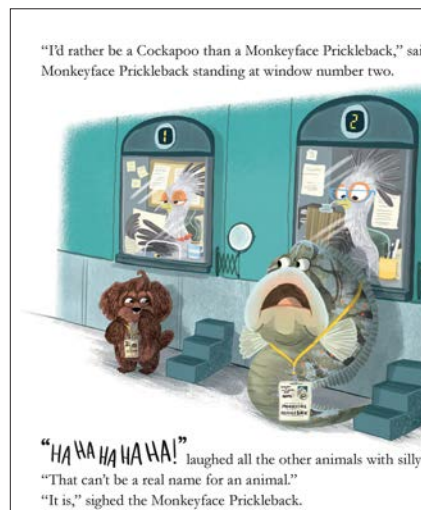
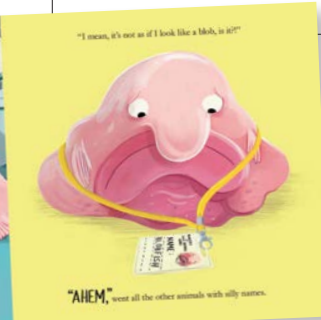
Which animal do you think has the silliest name?

If you were going to change your name, what would you call yourself, and why?

The Aha Wasp changes its name to Dave. What will the other animals choose?

Try this...

■ Draw a self-portrait using the template in this book and choose a new name for yourself. Then write about your visit to the Ministry of Silly Animal Names.



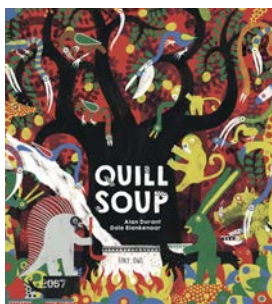
“HA HA HA HA HA!” laughed all the other animals with silly names.
“That can’t be a real name for an animal.”
“It is,” sighed the Monkeyface Prickleback.

KEY STAGE 1

5

Quill Soup

BY ALAN DURANT AND DALE BLANKENAAAR
(TINY OWL, 2019)



What’s the story?

In this African version of the folktale about a hungry trickster, Noko the Porcupine uses his own quills to prepare some delicious soup. Eager to taste such a delicacy, the village animals fall for Noko’s hype and share their food – but tricksters provide opportunities to learn as well as laugh, and even though they’ve been fooled, everyone benefits from a tasty meal.

Alan Durant’s enjoyable retelling reads well aloud, and Dale Blankenaar’s stylish illustrations pop with colour and bring energy to every page.

“Durant’s enjoyable retelling reads well aloud and illustrations pop”

illustrations by Dale Blankenaar

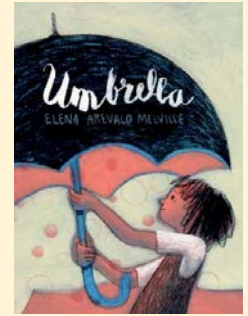


KEY STAGE 1

6

Umbrella

BY ELENA
AREVALO MELVILLE
(SCALLYWAG
PRESS, 2019)



illustrations by Elena Arevalo Melville

What's the story?

Clara has no-one to play with in the park until she discovers a magical umbrella. Imaginative, multi-generational fun and games ensue as the umbrella conjures up a white cat, an apple-picking elephant and a butterfly band. Everyone benefits from its generosity – apart from sneaky Mr Fox, who's been waiting for a chance to wreck everything, and gets the reward that he deserves.

Elena Arevalo Melville's playful, expressive and gently surreal images use magic, music and fun to explore ideas of sharing, forgiveness and connection.

Thinking and talking

What would you like a magic umbrella to bring you, and why?

Find the noisiest picture, and the quietest. Does everyone agree? Talk about your choices.

Why doesn't the umbrella give the fox some money?

Try this...

■ Look at the rainbow picture, then copy the

characters' postures and expressions to explore their happiness and sense of wonder. What brings you together and makes you happy? Paint rainbows and write on them, then hang from an umbrella to display.

■ Dance to the music of the Butterfly Band, or create soundscapes for pictures in this book.

■ Observe, describe and draw a collection of umbrellas. Roleplay opening them to discover a surprise, or use to create art installations by painting them or hanging objects from them.

■ Mr Fox is quietly visible on almost every spread. Tell or write this story from his point of view.



■ What will the Secretary Bird tell its family about its day at the office? Roleplay the conversation, then write a first-person account.

■ Survey children in your school to discover

the most popular names. make a collage of a house. Join your houses to create a street, then give it some 'Tracy magic' by adding flowers, trees and other plants.

Thinking and talking

Does this story have a moral? What could we learn from it?

Have you ever played a trick? What happened?

How would you describe these illustrations to someone who hadn't seen them?

Try this...

■ How does Noko persuade the villagers to share their food? Talk about what's happening on each page and what Noko really thinks, then use sticky notes to add Noko's secret thoughts.

■ Paint or print some colourful Blankenaaar-inspired monkeys. Collage them onto a stylized painted tree, then name your monkeys and tell stories about the tricks they play.

■ Listen to African music and use the final spread to inspire Quill Soup-themed singing, storytelling and dancing.



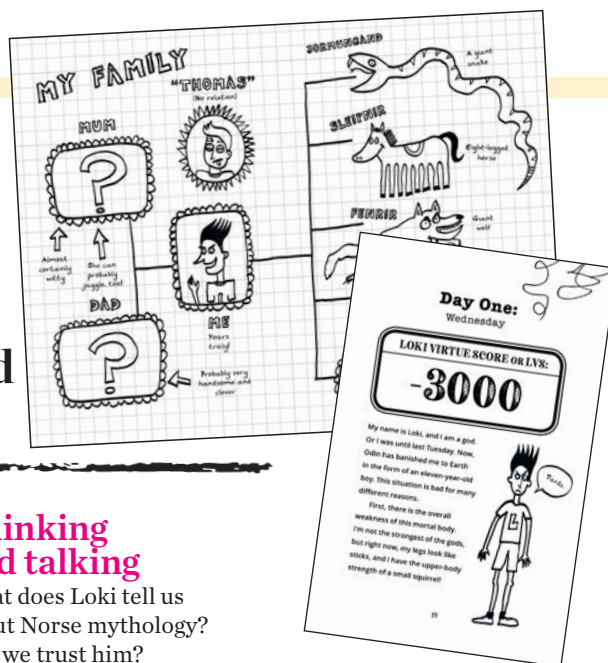


KEY STAGE 2

7

Loki: A Bad God's Guide to Being Good

BY LOUIE STOWELL
(WALKER BOOKS, 2022)



What's the story?

Norse god Loki has played one trick too many and Mighty Odin has banished him from Asgard until he can mend his ways. Forced into the body of a puny 11-year-old boy, Loki must negotiate a stupendously dull place called school, and has a single month to prove his worth by recording his daily thoughts and activities in a magic diary that answers

back and cannot lie.

For Loki to escape eternal punishment, the diary must award him 3,000 Virtue Points, but it's Day #31 and Loki's still in minus numbers. Can he trick the diary? Or is it game over for Loki?

Written in an informal style from Loki's point of view, this witty, deadpan book includes frequent references to Norse mythology, and every spread is illustrated with black-and-white line drawings and doodles.

Thinking and talking

What does Loki tell us about Norse mythology?

Can we trust him?

Could you check his facts?

What does Valerie know about Loki?

How does she find out?

What finally makes Loki do the right thing?

Try this...

■ In-role as the diary, prepare and deliver a verbal report to Odin on Loki's

activities.

■ Use the diary to help you construct corresponding diary entries for Valerie.

■ Follow up one of the mythological events mentioned by Loki to discover what really happened.

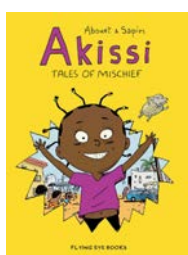
■ Write and illustrate a diary entry, Loki-style, for your day at school.

KEY STAGE 2

8

Akissi: Tales of Mischief

BY MARGUERITE ABOUET
AND MATHIEU SAPIN
(FLYING EYE, 2018)



What's the story?

From flying sheep to baby-snatching via pet monkeys and tapeworms, these hilariously anarchic stories star Akissi, the youngest child in an extended family living in a 1970's Ivory Coast town.

Cheeky, astute and a natural risk-taker, Akissi's instinct for arguing her way out of trouble is even

greater than her talent for getting others into it. She may not be as big, brave or competent as she imagines – much of the humour comes from the gap between her aspirations and the mayhem that accompanies them – but Akissi commands the playground as well as the page, and readers love her for it.



Originally published in French, these stories were inspired by the author's childhood memories. Bonus pages include instructions for African braids, and recipes for tasty treats.

"Akissi commands the playground as well as the page"

Thinking and talking

Who is mischievous in these stories? What happens as a result?

What kind of mischief do you get up to? Does it get you into trouble?

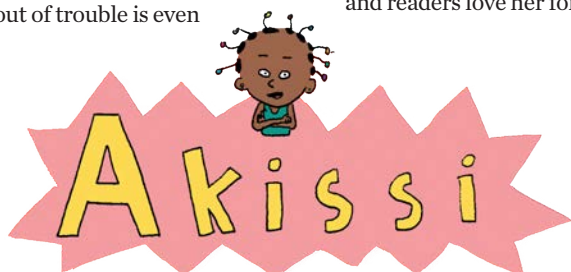
In what ways is Akissi's life similar to yours? How does it differ?

Try this...

■ Choose a chapter and retell it as a text-only story.

■ Write and illustrate a story about getting up to mischief, Akissi-style.

■ 'Children should be allowed more freedom to play out, get into mischief and learn from their mistakes.' Discuss, then write an article for a magazine featuring both sides of the argument.

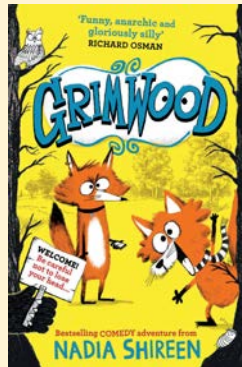


KEY STAGE 2

9

Grimwood

BY NADIA SHIREEN (SIMON AND SCHUSTER, 2021)

**What's the story?**

Ted the fox cub is a gentle soul and never meant to bite off Princess Buttons' tail, but the evil cat won't accept an apology and vows

to seek revenge. Ted and his sister Nancy must hide, and Grimwood – a magical forest where the cubs can live a safe and happy life – is just the place.

Or is it? Grimwood has all sorts of daft and dangerous surprises in store, but with the help of its animal inhabitants, Ted and Nancy might just make it to the end of the book in one piece.

Packed with eccentric goings-on and laugh-out-loud silliness, this warm-hearted story is illustrated throughout with black and white line drawings.

Thinking and talking

What was the funniest moment in this book? Why did you choose it?

Pick a character to describe. In what way(s) are they unexpected or surprising?

Which character would you choose as a friend, and why?

Try this...

■ In-role as Pamela the Eagle, write and record an episode of her podcast.

■ The Grimwood squirrels play a game called Treebonk, described by Ted as "a beautiful, extremely dangerous furry ballet". Provide a commentary for the game described in Chapter 14, or write a newspaper article about it.

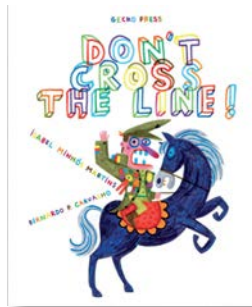
■ Add doodles and annotations to print-outs of old botanical illustrations (cf. Nadia Shireen's frontispiece).

KEY STAGE 2

10

Don't Cross the Line!

BY ISABEL MINHOS MARTINS AND BERNARDO P. CAVALHO, TRANSLATED FROM THE PORTUGUESE BY DANIEL HAHN (GECKO PRESS, 2016)

**What's the story?**

"I give the orders around here!" barks a general to a soldier, then leaves him to guard the right-hand pages from a growing crowd of curious onlookers who can't wait to cross the central gutter of this book. Reluctantly, the guard does his duty – but if no-one's allowed to cross onto the next page, what will happen to the story?

When a ball rolls onto the snowy blankness of the right-hand page, the guard gives in and everyone rushes

to have fun – only for the general to return and order the guard's arrest. Happily, though, it seems that nothing can be done without the acquiescence of the crowd...



Playful, sophisticated and subtle, *Don't Cross the Line* asks questions about power, obedience, and how they are maintained, and suggests that acting together peacefully can change our world. The text is minimal, but visually there's lots going on, and multiple readings are possible. The intriguing postmodern approach draws attention to the physicality of the book and invites thoughtful, creative engagement from a wide age group.

Thinking and talking

Can you spot the author in these pictures?

Which character interests you the

most? Follow their visual story.

When is it OK to break a rule, and when is it not? Who decides? And what should you do if you don't agree?

Try this...

■ Interact with each other in-role as characters from these scenes, then introduce the general and respond to his order to arrest the guard.

■ Draw new characters inspired by this book and use them to create a collaged crowd. Why have they come together? Agree on a scenario, then write speech bubbles and add them to your artwork.

■ Choose a character from the endpapers and follow them throughout the book. Retell their stories orally or in writing.



Carey Fluker-Hunt is a freelance writer, creative learning consultant, and founder of Cast of Thousands (castofthousands.co.uk)

Creative writing's SECRET CODE

How can light, sound and movement help pupils to develop a gripping narrative? It's all in the imagination, says **Tim Taylor**...

How can we support students to write creatively? It is a great teaching conundrum. We have all been there: spending hours setting up a stimulating scenario – a story-starter, an intriguing image, a dramatic moment – in the hope of grabbing the children's imagination and inspiring them to write a gripping narrative. Only to sit down later and read something truly depressing like, *I walked to the door, I was scared. Then I opened the door and a monster attacked me. I died. Aagh!*

It is easy to get frustrated (I know I have) but there is a solution: it is called the dramatic imagination. The dramatic imagination is the secret code of artists. It is used in literature,

film, theatre, art, and music. It is the vocabulary of mood and atmosphere, the language of setting and environment, the magic key to 'show, not tell'. And we can teach it to children.

A little bit dramatic

There are six dimensions to the dramatic imagination: sound/silence; movement/stillness; darkness/light. You might like to try them yourself. Imagine standing in a room in an old house. It is night-time, on one side of the room is a paned window, on the other, a single door. Now describe where the light comes from and where it falls in the room. Is it from the moon outside, casting a silver light on the floor? Or a flicking candle on a table

near the door? Describe what sounds you can hear: the wind outside; the creak of the floorboards; the sound of your heart beating? Now take a step towards the door, describe your movement. Describe the stillness in the room; the darkness; the silence. Now reach out to take hold of the door handle, describe the response from your body, the blood rushing through your veins, the slow movement of your arm, the stiffness of your hand...

How much did you write? If you are like me (and the students who learn how to do this) it will have been a lot. The story hasn't progressed far, but there is a sense of atmosphere, of suspense, of fear. You can imagine it as a film: the music slowly building, the screech of violins, the close-up of the actor's hand. This is the power of imagination.

We can start using the dramatic imagination as soon as children come



to school. In fact, it is one of the great features of the six dimensions that we already use them as a natural part of our teaching whenever we read a book to a class or share a picture. They are all around us, all the time, the trick is to point them out, and later to teach them explicitly.

The secret code

I first did this successfully with a Year 2 class using Ted Hughes' *The Iron Man*. I started by writing the six dimensions on a large sheet of paper and asking the students to point them out as we read through the story (projecting the text onto the whiteboard):

The wind sang [sound] through his iron fingers [movement]. His great iron head, shaped like a dustbin but as big as a bedroom, slowly turned to the right [movement], slowly turned to the left [movement]. His iron ears turned, this way, that way [movement]. He was hearing the sea [sound]. His eyes, like headlamps [light], glowed white, then red, then infrared [light], searching the sea. Never before had the Iron Man seen the sea.

I then supported the students to use the dimensions in their own writing, first while doing guided writing, and then in independent writing. Giving them feedback such as: "You've got a sense of movement and sound here, but where is the stillness and silence?", it was surprising how quickly the children picked them up and how effectively using them improved their writing.

Later, when I taught Year 6 the effect was quicker still and even more effective.

The dimensions are, in my experience, something children understand intuitively and begin to apply almost as soon as they become competent writers. They often find joy in using a 'secret code' used by expert writers, artists, and filmmakers, and the six dimensions can transform children's writing, giving them a strategy to move beyond 'then/and' stories, as well as providing a vocabulary for teachers to provide practical feedback which the children can use to develop their story-telling skills. It is exciting to use too, and you'll have fun incorporating it into your own teaching – teaching as storytelling:

The old house stood alone at the top of the hill, no one had been inside for years. Nothing moved except for the dark figures of animals scurrying across its rotten floorboards, nothing lived in the rooms but shadows filling every corner and every space. The wind and the sun and the rain had not been kind to the house's paintwork which had once been bright and beautiful, but now lay still on the ground like a pale snow. "Why," I asked myself, "had I promised to spend a night here, alone?"



Tim Taylor is a freelance teacher, and author of *A Beginner's Guide to Mantle of the Expert*.
@imagineinquiry
mantleoftheexpert.com

"The dramatic imagination is the secret code of artists. It is the vocabulary of mood and atmosphere"

INSPIRE IMAGINATION THROUGH ART

1 Introduce the lesson by telling the class you're going to look at the dramatic imagination and its six elements. Write these on the board.

2 Explain the elements are used by authors, filmmakers, music composers, and artists to generate atmosphere and to provoke an emotional response.

3 Show the students Joseph Wright's painting 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump' (1768). Find it on Wikipedia at tinyurl.com/tp-JosephWright

4 Ask the students to identify each the six elements in the painting.

5 Discuss the image and the effects created by the artist's use of the dramatic imagination. Give the students more information from your research on this painting using its Wikipedia page (tinyurl.com/tp-ExperimentOnABird).

6 Ask the students to each choose the point-of-view of someone in the painting and to write a description of events using the six elements. Get them to imagine describing the scene as if they were writing a letter to someone about that night, for example: Dear Margaret, last night I saw an experiment with a bird in bell jar. The room was very dark, the only light a lamp in the middle of the table and the moon outside the window... etc.

7 Support the students as they write, asking for examples to illustrate the process as their work develops.

8 Once they have finished, ask some of the students to read out their writing, prompting the rest of the class to listen out for their use of the dramatic imagination.

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FORGOTTEN GIRLS

We need to be mindful of not letting reluctant girl readers slip through the net

DR CHRISTINA CLARK AND FIONA EVANS

When it comes to reading, it's easy to assume all girls love to pick up a book and get lost in a story. And many do. But reluctant girl readers do exist (quite a few, actually), and in terms of research and policy, they are often overlooked. This group is – surprisingly to many – sizeable, and this makes its oversight even more interesting.

In December 2021 the National Literacy Trust published a new report, 'Forgotten Girls: The Reluctant Girl Reader', which showed that over two in five of the 21,000 girls who took part in our annual literacy survey don't enjoy reading. This roughly translates to two million girls in 2020/2021. Furthermore, one in 10 girls also said that they rarely or never read in their free time.

So, what can you do to help engage these millions of reluctant girl readers? First of all, talk to them! It sounds simple, but so often we miss out this step and plough in with well-meaning recommendations or book lists to try and encourage them. We cannot match a book to a child without knowing in considerable detail what that child is into and therefore what might appeal. And often they surprise us! They reveal an undisclosed hobby for scuba-diving or that they are particularly interested in guinea pigs... who knew? It is a terrible, stereotypical mistake to assume that girls prefer fiction to non-fiction or fairies to sharks, but equally unhelpful to ban them from fairy books or stories

about dance and make-up, if that is what they like.

A second – and more powerful – tack is to leave the recommendation to someone else whose opinion they might value more than yours. Getting children to recommend titles to each other through a book-sharing and discussion moment each week can lead to greater engagement, especially when you have a group who

share interests. This seems to work best when done in a fun, social context rather than

through written reviews. This is also an opportunity to make reading seem cool by identifying the influencers in your class and supporting their book choice and recommendations. Often having several copies of a book that has been recommended by a classmate who is held in high esteem can encourage others to read it together, and to enjoy the sense of shared experience and belonging that can create.

“Make reading seem cool by identifying the influencers in your class”

Thirdly, let reluctant readers choose for themselves. We all decide what we want to read based on a complex interplay of interest, energy level, time, place and the perceived reward we will get.

Children need many more opportunities to choose on their own than we probably give them. This is where the school library and the public library come in. The power of browsing cannot be underestimated, but it does take time and this needs to be built into the timetable and into reading sessions in class or in the library.

Teachers and young people also tell us that improving access to diverse reading

materials can be transformative for some reluctant girl readers. At the same time, the variety of titles available for readers of all abilities, backgrounds and interests in the UK is growing all the time, so it may as much be a case of building better bridges between these girls and books that will resonate with them. If you're lucky enough to have a school or public librarian you can consult, or a local bookshop, you can't beat asking the experts for advice on titles for all tastes.

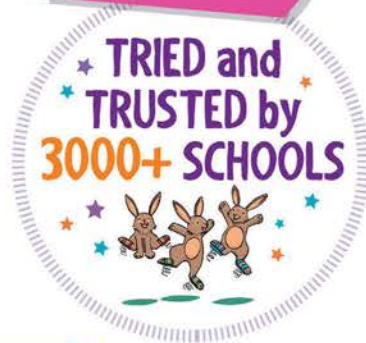
However, our report shows that the discussion around reluctant girl readers is complex. Girls read, or don't read, for a multitude of reasons, so one solution will not fit all. Future initiatives should aim to promote reading in a way that reflects this complexity, understanding that different motivations will work for different girls. We and our partners are calling on policymakers, researchers and everyone involved in the education of girls to consider and support all reluctant and struggling readers, and remember that this can be a problem regardless of gender.

Dr Christina Clark is executive director of research, and Fiona Evans is executive director of schools programmes, both at the National Literacy Trust.



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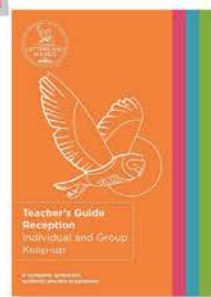
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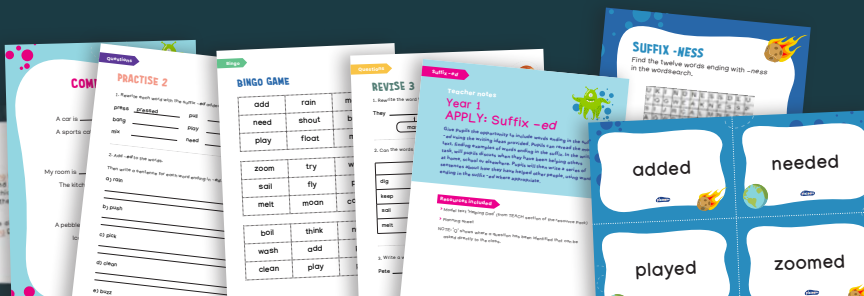
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Reflecting Realities

Book bingo, reading scrapbooks and allowing kids to be experts can all help marginalised readers connect with stories

Something magical happens when a child picks up a book and connects to it. Reading a story in which you recognise parts of yourself is a powerful experience, and these moments can reverberate through childhood and even into adult life. Now, imagine every time you go to choose a book there are no characters that resemble your reality; they're not the same race as you, don't have the same culture, or even eat the same food. You become isolated, and see books as just another one of those things that isn't for you.

It's a situation not too far from the truth for many children. In 2018, the CLPE published its first Reflecting Realities Survey reviewing the extent and quality of ethnic representation

in the content of children's books published in the UK. It found that, of the books reviewed, only four per cent featured a character from an ethnic minority background, and only one per cent of main characters were people of colour. There have been slight improvements, as seen in the CLPE's three following annual surveys, but the problem certainly hasn't gone away.

So, what can you do to help improve experiences for underrepresented children? Here, three educators share insights into the work they have been doing in this area and the impact it's had.



PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Rumena Aktar, primary school librarian

 @rumena_aktar

"Pupils pick up on stereotypes portrayed in books, and internalise them"

Part of our responsibility as educators means ensuring that the lived experiences of our children are not only visible in the texts they read, but valued, promoted and authentic. Pupils pick up on the stereotypes portrayed in books and for some, this will make them question what they are reading and consider if it is offensive or appropriate. But for the most part, children will internalise these stereotypes, or underrepresentation, and accept it as the norm. This was certainly true for me in my formative years, and I have seen first-hand in my school library how children will accept that any representation is okay. That is until they get their hands on the good stuff. After the initial shock they ask for more, craving stories that mirror their lives and those of their community.

It hasn't taken much to boost the uptake of diverse stories in school. Little things like a book bingo game, that actively encourages children to seek out stories written by authors of colour or titles set in different places around the world, have added an element of excitement to browsing. I also create displays linked to different festivals and celebrations, featuring a character from that culture.

So in the spring term, for Lunar New Year, we created a display with Jack from *Tiger Warrior* introducing the

celebration. Since then, *Tiger Warrior* has become increasingly popular with our children. Many have asked for more Maisie Chan books since.

One of the key challenges has been encouraging staff to pick up these stories. Teachers are often too busy to read new books and find it easier to use the same texts year-on-year. Using reading scrapbooks where children review and recommend books to their class has been a really powerful way of sharing knowledge and enthusiasm for the quality titles currently available on the market.



DEGREES OF ERASURE

Matthew Courtney, Year 3 / 4 teacher, training facilitator and researcher

 @mattheweduk

During my MSc in Education (Research Design and Methodology) I have been delving into ethnic representation in the children's literature available in classrooms, exploring the book collections within Year 1 classes in London and Oxford and analysing 1,660 books.

The findings reaffirmed for me the importance of evaluating the quality of the representation of marginalised characters, rather than only focussing on their presence. I used the 'Degrees of Erasure' Framework, first introduced in the

"My research has reaffirmed for me the importance of evaluating the quality of the representation of marginalised characters"

2019 Reflecting Realities report, to critically evaluate the representation of characters from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups within the texts. Alongside explicitly racist material (one classroom had a text published in 1975 that featured a golliwog character), there were further examples of poor-quality representation. For example, the 'Short-term Stay' phenomena, where characters of colour have only a fleeting presence in the text, was prevalent. In the most extreme example of this a Black character was featured for one page of a book only, did not speak, was not named but referred to as 'fatty' in the narrative.

The Degrees of Erasure framework is really useful in developing your own inclusive classroom collection. It can help to critically evaluate the quality of representations of characters. I have also really valued the expertise of librarians and book bloggers such as candidcocoa.blogspot.com. In addition, I would recommend buying books from expert booksellers who specialise in diverse and inclusive texts, such as Letterbox Library, Round Table Books, Book Love, and Mirror Me Write.



CONSIDER YOURSELF

Ameena Gamiet, middle school English head of department

 @MsGamiet

"When we read any book, we need to centre ourselves and consider our own perspective"

Our focus text was *Planet Omar: Accidental Trouble Magnet* by Zanib Mian but we also discussed other extracts. Most of the children admitted that they would not have chosen such books independently, but enjoyed the experience and said they would actively seek stories featuring characters from marginalised backgrounds in the future. Many questioned why these books were not more prominent in bookstores or more 'famous', leading to interesting conversations about the marketing of mainstream children's literature and how our school might promote such texts and ensure a more diverse reading curriculum. When we read any book, we need to centre ourselves and consider our own perspective. We all read texts differently and extrapolate different things from them, depending on what 'baggage' we bring. Considering your perspective

As part of my MA in children's lit, focusing on kids' responses to texts with Muslim characters, I presented my pupils with a range of fiction books featuring characters of colour, most of which were unfamiliar to the children. I invited them to choose three books they might want to read from the collection, stating reasons for their selection. They found choosing the books easy, but articulating their reasons much harder. They didn't acknowledge that the selection exclusively featured protagonists of colour and were written by authors of colour. Occasionally the books were described as 'weird'. It was important to unpick the source of this view to enable the children to engage with texts in a deep and meaningful way.

aloud and acknowledging your standpoint to be 'one of many' to the children is essential when discussing books featuring marginalised communities. Reading and discussing *Planet Omar* allowed the Muslim pupils in my group to take on the roles of 'experts' when it came to understanding context – something they might not have experienced before. Conversely, non-Muslim children benefitted from the opportunity to learn about a 'parallel culture', which is hidden yet present in the same community. Most importantly, it provided a safe and necessary forum to talk about race and religion, promoting understanding and fostering deeper bonds and mutual respect within the group.

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The write kind of **CONFIDENCE**

What do you know about sausages? Getting pupils interested in writing is all about the setup, says **Kathy Ewers...**

Children's writing stamina is one of the areas most impacted by the pandemic according to Ofsted, and this finding rings true for many of the teachers and school leaders I talk to.

While activities such as story time, reading and responding to texts and playing number games fitted into the routine of learning at home, some children had fewer opportunities to develop their writing skills during lockdown.

Helping pupils to see themselves as writers is proving to be a challenge.

The best way to get children writing again is to make it an enjoyable part of the school day rather than a daunting task. Here are some suggestions you can use to turn your pupils into confident, fluent and happy writers.

1. Discuss different forms

Keen readers make good writers, and exposing children to a wide range of written content will help them develop their skills. While some of your pupils may not have read as much as usual when they were not in school every day through the pandemic, others will have read much more.

It's also important to consider that some children might not think of themselves as readers if they don't spend much time reading books, but they often read more than they realise. You can open their eyes to all the reading they have done, from recipes and game instructions to comics and captions.

Similarly, children might be writing more than they realise. If you ask your class to make a list of everything they have written down in the last 24

hours – messaging friends, typing web addresses or writing lists, for example – they may be surprised.

Sharing a range of different formats also brings home to children that they can use writing to communicate in a variety of ways. Poems, song lyrics and screenplays demonstrate how to use the imagination to engage readers, while blogs, articles and infographics show how writers get their messages across.

Celebrating writing in reliable publications – both physical and digital – is incredibly useful in helping children develop their own writing skills.

“So much of the work in creative writing is done before your pen even touches the page”

2. Provide a clear purpose

When children have a reason to write, the exercise immediately becomes more meaningful, so it's a good idea to introduce a task which has a genuine purpose and audience. Letter writing, for example.

During the COP 26 climate summit in Glasgow, many teachers encouraged their pupils to write to their local authority or MP. Some pupils even wrote to the prime minister to express their thoughts on how the climate emergency should be tackled.

Children can also be inspired to write about local issues, for example, letters complaining about the planned closure of a town's library or the increase in litter on the streets.

Talking about different audiences will help pupils understand how their writing style needs to differ for each one. Giving pupils a controversial topic in which they are able to express their feelings to different audiences works well. Here's a good example:

'You have just been told that, in order to address lockdown gaps, you will have to come to school on a Saturday morning and you are not happy about it. Write about how you feel in a formal letter of complaint to the headteacher and governors,





an email to a friend, a newspaper report, and a discussion with arguments for and against.'

A task like this will encourage children to think about what they would say to each different audience while considering the language, tone and style they might use in their writing.

3. Create themes for discussion

For some children, thinking of what to write is the hardest part of the task, and areas for debate can spark ideas and help children articulate their thoughts in writing. Topics on which they have strong views will work best.

You could try providing your pupils with some subjects to debate in their writing, then see how many children agree or disagree with the opinions. Good examples are 'dogs are better than cats', 'football is a better game than cricket' or 'diving in the sea is more exciting than climbing a mountain.'

Alternatively, you could give your pupils a thought-provoking statement and ask them to write a persuasive newspaper article to argue the theme. Ideas which work well include 'there should be no homework at school', 'Roald Dahl is the best children's author ever,' or 'the Queen is the most important person in the world'.

4. Use props for inspiration

Objects can be a powerful way to free writer's block. You could bring in a toy from your childhood, a top hat, a piece of jewellery or an old photograph. Then ask the children to write about the person who found or owned the object, and what the history behind it might be.

Some children prefer to write non-fiction texts, and you can easily give them that option when writing about objects. For instance, if you show the children a conker you could ask them to write about the tree it came from or the animals that live in the forest where it grows. A seashell could inspire a section of a travel brochure or a persuasive leaflet about keeping beaches clean.

The objects you choose could tie into a topic about which pupils have been learning in other areas of the curriculum. For instance, if you've been focusing on the digestive system in science, show them an apple and ask them to write about it travelling through the body.

As pupils explore their own authentic voice as writers, they will gain confidence, and their stamina and enthusiasm for writing will also grow. As a result, children gain a richer learning experience along with effective writing skills which will serve them well in the future.

QUICK STARTERS TO MAKE WRITING FUN



- Start a lesson by asking pupils to write a list. It could be an inventory of fruits, round things, red things, happy words or animals – the possibilities are endless.
- Set a timer and ask the children to write all they can about chocolate in one minute. Or try pandas, snow, parties, holidays or secrets.
- Ask pupils to write a short text without using any words containing the letter 'a'.
- Get children to make a list of five objects they can see in the room, then choose one of them and write as though they were the object.
- Give the pupils a list of words – precious, elephant, joy, envelope, sausage, brutal – and ask them to come up with the funniest sentences they can from them.
- Ask each child to write 10 sentences starting with 'I wish...'
- Challenge the class to write an A to Z of animals or places.
- Give pupils a slip of paper and ask them to write a topic on each one. Put all the slips of paper in a jar, take two out and ask the children to write all they know about one of the topics.



Kathy Ewers advises subject leaders in primary English teaching as well as being an experienced KS1 and KS2

moderator and an accredited trainer for a number of effective literacy interventions. For more information on teaching and learning in primary schools, visit [Juniper Education at junipereducation.org](http://junipereducation.org)



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To whom it MAY CONCERN

The novel as we know it has its roots in letters, so why not return to this original form to help pupils structure their narrative?

BETHANY WALKER

When I first started writing what would become my debut book, *Chocolate Milk, X-Ray Specs and Me*, in letter form, I did so because I thought it would be funny and that it suited the story I wanted to tell – about a ten-year-old boy who didn't realise his parents were spies. It was only after completing the book that I realised how important letters were to me during my childhood. From thank-you notes and holiday postcards to foreign pen-pal correspondence and an exclusively paper-based 'relationship' with a boy in the next village, my childhood was

filled with letter-writing. With *How to Steal the Mona Lisa*, my new, funny art-heist story, I can firmly say that this process has found a home in how I write my middle-grade books. Letter-based (or epistolary) stories have an enduring popularity and I have to credit the awesome *Dragonsitter* series by Josh Lacey, and Oliver Jeffers' wonderful picture book, *The Day the Crayons Quit*, for inspiring me. But what makes a collection of (made-up) letters so appealing to read? Whether about spies or about art thieves, telling a story like this is a great way to introduce children to, and engage them with, different forms of written communication.

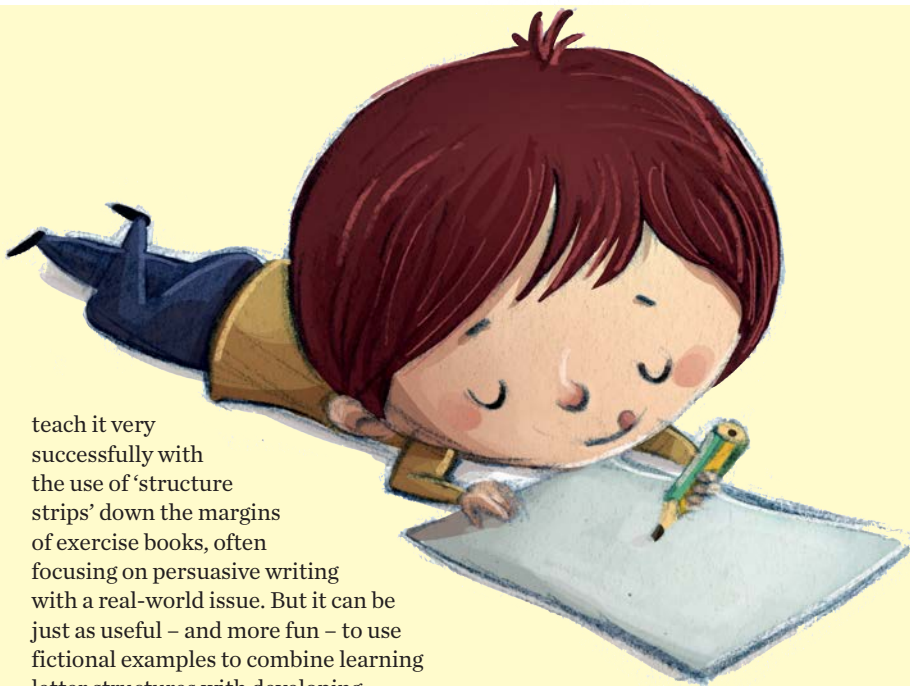
Writing with purpose

All teachers know that half the battle, when it comes to learning pretty much anything, is for a child to understand why it is important for them to accrue particular skills. Children know reading and writing is important but cannot necessarily pin-point why. What I love about letters is that they are written for a purpose, whether this is to communicate ideas, share information, forge relationships or ask and answer questions. Letter-writing does, of course, appear in the curriculum as an exercise for learning structure or how to write persuasively, but these can often be one-off activities. By only seeing one side of a written communication (either as the writer or as the reader of a letter as part of a comprehension exercise), children are not able to appreciate what can develop from an ongoing exchange. Even though they may be made up, the letters in epistolary stories show children this process, often in a child-friendly format, and the relationships, understandings and misunderstandings that can evolve from them.

Structure

Letter-writing can seem 'outdated' as a form of communication, but there is still much it can teach us. If nothing else, that there is joy in sending and receiving letters! Many of the strict traditions of letter-writing are no longer relevant in most of society but it is still good to know how to structure them properly, and how to start off appropriately. Structuring a letter properly is not rocket science, and I have seen many schools





teach it very successfully with the use of 'structure strips' down the margins of exercise books, often focusing on persuasive writing with a real-world issue. But it can be just as useful – and more fun – to use fictional examples to combine learning letter structures with developing empathy and analysing action in texts.

Voice

One of the most enjoyable aspects of writing books with letters is developing the voices of the different characters. Each letter has to be written 'in character' and I often find myself adopting a certain facial expression depending on who I am writing in that moment. In traditionally-told stories, children are taught that reported speech for each character should be distinctive enough for the reader to be able to tell who is saying what without the dialogue tags. This is challenging and speech often remains rather bland, not reflecting each respective character's personality. However, when children are encouraged to act and respond as a character, they embrace this very well. Drama activities such as hot-seating are brilliant for understanding a character and letter-writing is more an extension of that, allowing children to establish personality through a character's voice.

Inference and relationships

In an exchange of letters, especially when characters know each other well, shorthand is often used and things are left unsaid. This gives pupils insight into the relationships between characters, but also calls upon them to read between the lines, meaning letters can be brilliant for understanding inference. Through reading letter-based stories, children can start to understand why something is being written and can begin to question whether

the writer is being honest. This ability to judge the value, meaning and truth of what is on the page is an increasingly important skill in the age of fake news!

Telling a story

Writing a whole book through letters is challenging – partly because there has to be a good reason why the characters are apart and need to communicate in writing – but, when it works, it is really fun. Both of my books focus on some kind of mystery and action, with a drive towards how it is all going to be resolved. The clues for working it out are sprinkled through the letters and,

hopefully, all come together in the end.

Of course, stories don't have to be made up *entirely* of letters and there are loads of examples of books that make use of occasional letters or other written communications within a normal first- or third-person narrative. In this kind of story, letters are excellent additions to provide clues to help move the story on, or give exposition in a succinct way (such as using newspaper articles).

If used nowhere else, letters can be a great starting point for a story because they can appear from out of nowhere and upset the status quo: they are the ultimate 'inciting incident'!



How to Steal the Mona Lisa by Bethany Walker, illustrated by Jack Noel (£6.99, Scholastic) is out now

IDEAS FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



1. EXPLORE THE PURPOSE

Print out pages from *How to Steal the Mona Lisa* or another letter-based story, and ask your class to colour-code what the written communication is trying to do:

- Use a green highlighter for the parts that are asking something
- Use a blue highlighter for the parts that are answering something
- Use a pink highlighter when the writer is sharing ideas
- Use an orange highlighter when the writer is providing information to the reader
- Use a yellow highlighter when the writer is attempting to develop a relationship with the reader



2. REWRITING ACTION SCENES

Here's a creative writing exercise to encourage your class to pair letter-writing skills with developing empathy and analysing events in a story. Ask your pupils to write a letter from the perspective of a character in their favourite book, explaining or apologising for a key incident. The challenge here is not describing the action 'live'; as the character is describing action to someone else, we don't need everything described in chronological order.

- Example: Write a letter from one of the other children in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, apologising to Willy Wonka and Charlie after the events of the novel.
- Key questions: What happened according to this character? What did they see? What didn't they see? How did they feel about the event? Was the outcome what they wanted? Are they writing a letter of apology, or are they trying to justify their actions?
- Top tip: Think carefully about the character's voice. Is there a key phrase in the source text that the character would say? How would they say it?



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1



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3

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Collecting ideas for characters,

with Lisa Thompson

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

In her new novel, *The Graveyard Riddle*, Lisa Thompson revisits characters first introduced in *The Goldfish Boy*, telling a completely new story focused around the character Melody Bird. In the story, she meets a mysterious new character in an old abandoned house, who claims he is an undercover spy...

The Graveyard Riddle is written as a companion novel to *The Goldfish Boy* and they can be read in any order. In this teaching sequence, children will have the chance to develop their own characters, and to explore how the author uses dialogue to give information about her characters. Extracts from the Author In Your Classroom podcast (bit.ly/AIYCLisaThompson) 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.



SESSION 1

COLLECTING IDEAS

- 1 | Play the podcast from **18:35** up to **22:05**.
- 2 | Show the children **PowerPoint Slides 2 and 3** with Lisa's quotes about collecting ideas for stories (all resources for this plan are free to download from plazoom.com). Discuss what interesting or quirky facts the children could use in their stories.
- 3 | Explain to the pupils that they will begin a collection of ideas that they will then pick from to create their own interesting characters. Display **PowerPoint Slide 4** and discuss where they could get ideas. Add their suggestions to the list.
- 4 | Look at **Planning Sheet 1**

and explain that they will have some time to jot down ideas. Encourage children to keep adding to the sheet. Explain that they can collect as many ideas as they can and that they do not have to have a particular story or character in mind. This should be a random gathering of interesting ideas that they can come back to time and time again. Pupils could create their own notebooks to record interesting thoughts that could be used to spark ideas for a story.



SESSION 2

CREATING AN INTERESTING CHARACTER

- 1 | Play the section of the podcast that starts at **10.41** up to **18.35**, in which Lisa reads an extract from *The Graveyard Riddle*, where the character Hal is introduced.
- 2 | While listening to Lisa reading the extract, ask pupils to think about what we learn about Hal in this section. Questions are displayed on **PowerPoint Slide 5** for the class to think about.
- 3 | Ask pupils to look at their collections of ideas on **Planning Sheet 1**. Are there any interesting facts or memories that they could incorporate into

their own characters? Allow time to discuss ideas.

- 4 | Display **PowerPoint Slide 6** and explain that they will be creating a new character that Melody will meet. Discuss the questions displayed and explore ideas as a class.
- 5 | Children should use **Planning Sheet 1** and develop ideas for their new character, and **Planning Sheet 2** to record their ideas.
- 6 | Once pupils have recorded ideas, allow them time to introduce their characters to their peers, discussing any interesting facts. Encourage pupils to ask each other questions about their characters, with pupils noting any additional ideas or information on their planning sheets.



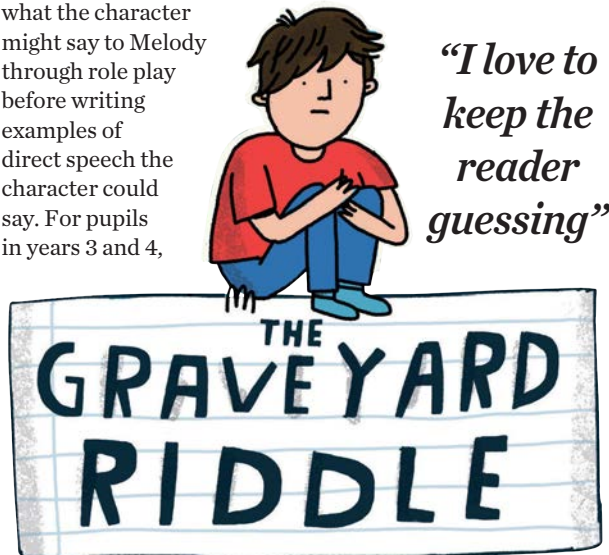
SESSION 3

USING DIALOGUE

- 1 | Read the extract again from *The Graveyard Riddle*. Ask pupils to identify the dialogue in the text, revisiting how this is punctuated as needed.
- 2 | Read the section of the extract displayed on **PowerPoint Slide 7**, highlighting the sections that are direct speech and how they are punctuated. Discuss what we know about Hal from this section.
- 3 | Explain that when authors write, they often give information about a character through what he or she says. Ask pupils to revisit the extract and list the information that Hal gives Melody through his direct speech.

- 4 | Explore how pupils could use direct speech to tell Melody about their new character. Orally rehearse what the character might say to Melody through role play before writing examples of direct speech the character could say. For pupils in years 3 and 4,

you may want to focus on the skills of punctuating direct speech. In years 5 and 6, pupils could explore how the speech is delivered and what that tells us about the character; they could also describe movements or facial expressions to show how the character is feeling.



SESSION 4

PLANNING YOUR IDEAS

- 1 | Play part 3 of the podcast, where Lisa gives young writers some helpful tips on how to get started with their writing.
- 2 | Display the quote from Lisa Thompson on **PowerPoint Slide 8**. Why do we think she advises children to 'just get started' with writing?

"Authors are a bit like magpies"



- 3 | Explain that pupils will be writing a short section where Melody meets their new character. Ask pupils to revisit their ideas on **Planning Sheet 2** and think about their character and where they might first meet Melody.
- 4 | Show the pupils **Planning Sheet 3** and ask them to record their ideas to help them to sequence the events in their dialogue.
- 5 | Once planned, pupils could orally rehearse sentences and dialogue that they could include in their writing.

SESSION 5

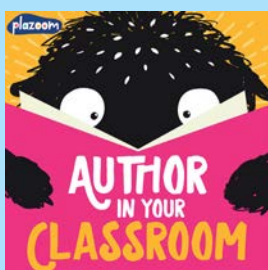
WRITING AND EDITING

- 1 | Remind pupils that they will be using their ideas on **Planning Sheets 2 and 3** to write a short section where Melody Bird meets a new character. Explain that this should include dialogue to give information about the character, and be punctuated correctly.
- 2 | Read the quote from Lisa Thompson on **PowerPoint Slide 9** and discuss why editing is so important when writing, talking about how even established authors need to edit their work.
- 3 | Give pupils time to write and edit their work, thinking about how they have included dialogue to give information about a character. Encourage them to think about the speech verbs used when editing, and extra information that can be given about the character in reporting clauses and sentences around the direct speech. Rereading the extract and discussing how the author has given information about the character 'Hal' might be beneficial before editing so pupils can use ideas from this to improve their own writing.

AFTER THE UNIT

- Continue to collect ideas for writing either independently or as a class, noting anything interesting that could later be used for a story. Encourage pupils to refer to these when planning their own stories.
- If you haven't already, read *The Goldfish Boy* to the class. Explore what we know about the three main characters, Matthew, Melody and Jake, from both books. Discuss whether pupils agree with Lisa Thompson's idea of creating a new book centred around the character 'Jake'.

DOWNLOAD NOW!



To download a full set of FREE resources for this teaching sequence – including planning sheets, teaching notes, working wall elements and more – visit bit.ly/LThompsonpack. To subscribe for free, just search for 'Author In Your Classroom' wherever you get your podcasts!



CAN'T FIND THE RIGHT WORD?

What vocabulary should you be teaching your pupils?
These strategies will help you decide

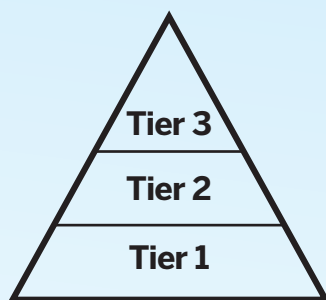
RUTH BAKER-LEASK

There are over a million words in the English language, so it is no wonder that teachers feel overwhelmed when choosing the words to form the focus of their vocabulary teaching. I'm going to tell you about some simple strategies that can help with this, but never forget that many of the words we chose to use ourselves are 'caught' from the books we read and the language-rich environment in which we live, so use every opportunity to model your own expertise in using language and words.

Let's start with a very popular resource. I have noticed that many schools are now familiar with the tiered vocabulary framework, created by education researchers Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown. This is a great place to start because of the useful way it categorises words:

TIER 1 – everyday, familiar words for those children who speak English as their primary language. These are often 'caught' rather than learned through direct instruction.

TIER 2 – high-frequency, impactful language encountered more often when reading than used when speaking. These words are



useful in multiple contexts and help children express themselves clearly and with precision. These are the words that you should be directly teaching during English lessons (and beyond).

TIER 3 – The words we use when talking and writing about specific subjects or a particular field of study.

This framework is a useful guide when selecting words, and we have become experts at spotting tier two language in a text, but this can still leave us with an unmanageable amount of words to focus on.

So what else might we use as a measure of a word's usefulness?

High-value words (tier 2)

The direct teaching of tier 2 words will broaden children's vocabularies. While planning a Year 5 teaching sequence on *The Explorer* by Katherine Rundell recently, I stumbled across several tier 2 words in the space of one paragraph: *summon*, *cascaded*, *assumed*, *compulsory*, and *exasperate*, to name but a few! It would take a week's worth of lessons to study all of these words; time which we just don't have to spare. So, how do we decide on our focus? Answering these questions can help:

- Which words are most useful to the children? Are any of the words transferable to other subjects or scenarios already familiar to pupils, allowing them to use these words more frequently?

For example, *summon* and *compulsory* can both be related to a school context: it is *compulsory* to attend when *summoned* by the headteacher.

- Which words are vital to understanding the plot? For example, *cascaded* describes the motion of a fast-moving river, and therefore impacts on the main characters' decision regarding the safety of building a raft.
- Which words are the children likely to understand most easily? Choosing words for which there is a simple definition can help to save time.

“If you want children to have a more expressive vocabulary, they must care about words”

• Do any of the words have interesting histories (etymology), and will studying the morphology (root, prefixes and suffixes) of the word be of interest?

A wise combination of these factors can help clarify the process of choosing the ‘right’ words to study.

Book talk

Sometimes, choosing words to focus on can depend on the text you’re using. For instance, *The Explorer* traces the adventures of four children stranded in the rainforest, following a fatal plane crash. This, of course, is an experience you would hope the children do not have first-hand experience of! Bearing that in mind, there may

be additional words that become your focus for vocabulary instruction; words that are not necessarily part of the text itself but will help the children talk about it. For example: *tropical, vegetation, humidity, peril, jeopardy, and quest*.

One way you can test whether a word might be classified as tier 2 is to imagine its tier 1 counterpart. In this case, rather than *peril* or *jeopardy* the children might say *danger*. A *quest* may be replaced by a *hunt* or a *journey*.

Morphology and etymology

Learning word families – that is, words that share a common root – is an important part of broadening vocabulary. It can be useful to look out for such words when reading. In this case, when looking at the word

assume, I would focus on the root ‘-sume’ which means to take up (derived from the Latin ‘sumere’). To assume is to take meaning from something but this is just the start:

Consume: to take and use up, e.g. Being hungry, he *consumed* his lunch with vigor!

Presume: to take onboard a thought or believe something without proof, e.g. I *presumed* you weren’t coming and yet here you are!

Subsume: to take something in or absorb something, e.g. All of the information was *subsumed* under one heading.

And there’s more...

Some of the other words in the passage from *The Explorer* also have interesting roots, and although exploring this will take some internet research, you will be expanding your own knowledge of words and how they work as well as the children’s. For example: *compulsory* has its root in the word *compel* which means to drive together (from the Latin *com*, meaning together, and *pollere*, to drive). This provides a number of options for how you might dive deeper into this word, such as:

- How many words can you find with the prefix ‘com’ that relate to togetherness? E.g. *combine, community, comfort, and communicate*.
- Can you add further affixes to the words above to create other words in the same word family? E.g. *combination, telecommunication*.
- Think about the meanings of the following words: *connect, congregate, concord*. Does the prefix ‘con-’ have the same

meaning as ‘com-’? How do you know?

Now, you are not going to study every word at this level of detail, but showing an interest and delving a bit deeper when the opportunity arises, will not only broaden children’s knowledge of words, but also their interest in how language works.

I know that the words above actually have multiple, nuanced meanings that are not represented here, but language is tricky and sometimes simplifying definitions, as long as you don’t lose the meanings along the way, can help children understand how to use the word. Based on my basic definitions you can see that each involves *taking* or *taking in* something – be it information, ideas or food. And you don’t need to be Susie Dent to plan such activities, there are many reputable websites that list root words and their meanings.

Language is fun

Finally, be vigilant for those words that children just like the sound of. Learning language should be fun and I often find myself talking about how, if you really want children to have a more expressive vocabulary, they must care about words and language; they must become ‘word nerds’! We focus on word meanings and usage but sometimes it is just as important to ask the children what words interest them (regardless of their root or tier) and take it from there.



A former primary head, Ruth Baker-Leask is director of Minerva Learning and chair of the National Association of Advisers in English (NAAE). To discover more, including a range of teaching approaches and activities, please head to [Plazoom \(tinyurl.com/tp-VocabCPD\)](https://tinyurl.com/tp-VocabCPD) and watch our *Building Brilliant Vocabulary* videos, made in partnership with the National Literacy Trust.

Gather ROUND

Settle down on the carpet and delve into storytime books that help all your pupils feel seen, says Rachel Clarke

We all like to belong. It helps us feel valued and builds our sense of self-worth.

In recent times there has rightly been an increased focus on ensuring that our book stock represents the children in our classes.

Behind much of this focus is the work of legendary educator Rudine Sims-Bishop who has referred to books as offering children 'windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors'. It's a vivid analogy that shows how books give children a view into new worlds, reflections of their own world, and the chance to step through a portal into the world of the book they're reading. To hear Rudine Sims Bishop talking about her analogy, it's well worth watching this short video:

tinyurl.com/tp-RudineSimsBishop

While Rudine focuses primarily on the experiences of black and minority

ethnic readers, in my work with schools, I've been expanding this to include all pupils who need their differences and uniqueness represented in the classroom book selection.

This means that I've been recommending titles that represent children from different ethnic and cultural groups, children with disabilities, with fears and worries, those who live in different types of families, or who are exploring gender roles, and so on. By doing this I've helped the teachers I work with ensure their pupils see people that look like them as main characters in stories, they've seen families in all their forms, and

they've met real and fictional role models that encourage them to fulfil their aspirations.

Listen closely...

Creating a collection of representative books is a good starting point to ensuring that all your children feel a sense of belonging, but what can you do with those books once you've got them? Certainly, you need to display them, you need to give children access to them and you need to encourage your pupils to read them. But weaving your representative titles into your storytimes is one of the best ways you can give your new books the focus they deserve.

“When we share books that represent the members of the class, we’re showing that we value everyone; that we all belong. We strengthen relationships and create a classroom community through reading”



Why storytimes? We often talk about storytime as a place where we can expose children to vocabulary and sentence structures they may not find in their own reading books. After all, the books we read are usually more challenging than the stories pupils are likely to read as part of the school scheme. Storytimes can also be a place where we choose to read books that introduce children to themes and ideas that they may not otherwise connect with, and also with narratives that represent their view of the world. There's another important dimension too: primary school children tend to value the choices made by their teachers. If we read a book to them, it gains a certain amount of kudos that it wouldn't have if we just put it on a shelf without comment. Storytime is where we can be book pushers.

I'm always moved by this comment captured in *From Striving to Thriving* by Stephanie Harvey and Annie Ward, from a child called Michelle: 'The best books are the ones the teachers read aloud... and I can't find anything as good.'

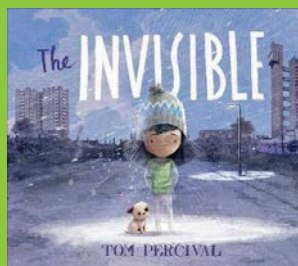
To avoid Michelle's situation, once we've read our representative stories, we need to put them in our book corners so they can be seized upon by the children. But this comment also touches on another important aspect of shared storytimes, and that's the emotional bond created when we read to our pupils. When we share books that represent the members of the class, we're showing that we value everyone; that we all belong. We strengthen relationships and create a classroom community through reading. We also create memories that last longer than the stories we share.

Finding books that represent all children regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability or any other perceived difference is a vital part of building a sense of belonging in our classrooms, and storytimes are a quick and easy way for us to bring these books to the attention of our children.



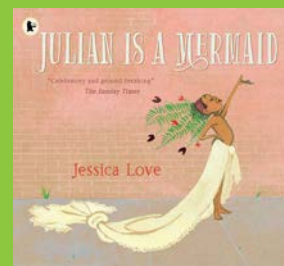
Rachel Clarke is the director of Primary English and works with teachers across the UK to raise standards in all aspects of literacy. @PrimaryEnglish

RECOMMENDED READS



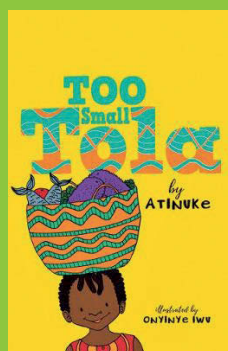
***The Invisible* by Tom Percival**

This poignant picture book deals with a child's feelings of invisibility after her family experience financial difficulty and so move to a new, poorer part of town. It's a book about community, belonging and making a difference to those around you. It provokes conversation and encourages empathy, so is great for discussions after sharing the story with the class. For some children it will be a mirror, for many it will open a window on the experiences of people less fortunate than themselves.



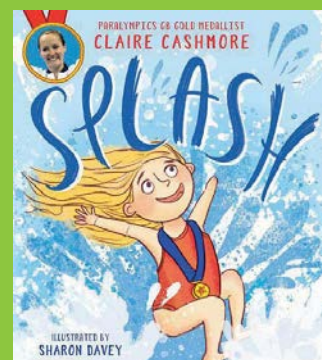
***Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love**

This is the book you need to get started on your representative journey. Julian is a little boy who wants to be a mermaid. He borrows various drapes and jewellery from his Nana and realises his dream when he joins the local carnival. It is an illustrative delight that deals sensitively with gender stereotypes. All characters also happen to be people of colour.



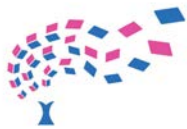
***Too Small Tola* by Atinuke**

This is currently one of my favourite books. As a Nigerian-born author, Atinuke is a great role model for so many of our children. This is a short chapter book about Tola, a child growing up in Nigeria. It opens a realistic window on childhood in the country, and shows that while life in Africa can be very different to life in the UK, there is much that is the same. I think this is a perfect book for children just beginning to read independently and its short chapter format with lyrical repeated phrases makes it perfect to read aloud.



***Splash!* By Claire Cashmore**

This autobiographical story recounts how Claire Cashmore overcame her fear of the water to become a Paralympic gold medallist. Teachers in my network have loved this because of the way it represents a common fear felt by many children, but without overt attention on Claire's difference: her disability. Allowing people with perceived differences to 'just be' is an important aspect of building a representative book collection. This story reads aloud well and will also make a valuable addition to your classroom book corner.



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Spice up your READING JOURNALS

From scripting film trailers to designing covers, pupils are exploring the wonders of books in the classroom – every day

STEPH ELLIOTT

As a big reader and book blogger myself, I am a massive fan of encouraging my children to think about and reflect on what they're reading. One of the things I inherited when I moved into Year 6 was reading journals, and I have embraced them, but I've also changed them slightly based on my own vision.

I wanted to make the journals an integral part of our everyday lives in the class and become something that we shared and enjoyed together. It's so important that stories are part of school life and I really think reading journals are helping to encourage the joy of books in my classroom.

How does it work?

Each child has a reading journal – a jotter-sized book – and every half term, I stick in a new set of activities. I expect a certain number of activities to be completed, but this changes half term by half term, and child by child. You know your pupils; you know (and they should know)

what is expected of them. For example, my desired number of activities completed this half term is five – I know there are some children who will meet this (as I expect them to) and I know there will be some children who, for a range of reasons, will complete only three or four. I know my children well and I have high expectations of them all, so five activities in a seven-week half term is more than doable.

Every afternoon after lunch, we have a 15-minute reading slot. Without fail, every day, we all read (including me!). In those 15 minutes, pupils may choose to read, or, if they've finished a book, they can use that time to complete a reading journal task. Once they've completed the activity, they pop it in the box for me or my TA to mark.

Tasks can vary massively, but all journal activities are designed to make children think a little deeper about what they're reading. It could be anything from 'Write a letter to the author about your thoughts' to 'Design a new front cover', or even 'Write the voice-over for a film trailer based on the book'.

Each child gets the same sheet of activities at the start of a half term and we have the same high expectations for each child. What they produce based on that task can vary a lot, too! As you can imagine, some activities take longer than others and some are more involved, but the children can complete the activities in any order they wish. I ask pupils

not to do the same activity more than once, though, so I can see a range of responses to their tasks.

Making it fun

One thing that's important to me is that children are allowed to read books for the enjoyment of reading. With that in mind, they are not expected to do a task on every book they finish. However, if my children do choose to do an activity around every book, that's fine with me.

I think these reading journal tasks have added an abundance of chances for pupils to think and talk about the books they're reading. It's made them more conscious of the authors, the genres and the types of titles they read. They complete journals on all kinds of books, including graphic novels, novels, non-fiction and poetry. There's no limit to the journals, and you can get out of them whatever you and your class are willing to put into them.

I love reading them, too, because it really helps me to see what the children have taken from the books: they open conversations about stories; they help me recommend books to pupils; and they allow my children and I an opportunity to make reading an integral part of our classroom life.

It really is that simple. Do they need some training? Yes. Do they need reminders about expectations? Yes. But make it a habit and they will embrace it. I've gone from having a few reluctant readers (not a phrase I like) to having a class of 31 children who read every single day. I hold this 15 minutes of daily reading very dear – and it's something I think every classroom should have. I would be MUCH aggrieved if someone tried to take it away from me!



Steph Elliott is a Y6 class teacher in a one form entry school in Newcastle. She has a passion for maths and all things books.

 @eenalol

 alittlebutalot.com

CATAMANDER

Using 'show not tell' is a powerful tool for building suspense...

Pie Corbett demonstrates how

During the last year, I have worked with hundreds of children through a weekly online writing session (more details at teachinglive.net). Each term, we feature a novel as a basis for writing an extended 'chapter' story over a month. Thomas Taylor's novel, *Malamander*, has been a popular choice for exploring writing suspense and 'show not tell'.

It is very tempting when writing a story to tell the reader what to think or feel (it was creepy / eerie / scary) rather than letting the writing build the scene so that the reader imagines what is happening and feels a shiver up their spine. Compare these two sentences. The first tells the reader, but the

second shows the reader that the character is happy:

- a. Joanna was happy.
- b. Joanna grinned.

This is the difference between allowing the reader to experience the story for themselves, through the senses, or just reporting what happened.

In the following instance, the reader is told, 'the sun shone brightly'. However, if we write, 'the tarmac shimmered' the reader can form a picture of the heat haze. Anton Chekov, the Russian playwright, advised writers not to 'tell me the moon is shining; but show me the glint of light on broken glass'. This technique is especially useful when trying to create suspense.

Build writing knowledge

In this mini paragraph, the writer is trying to scare the reader. This is achieved without telling the reader how the main character feels. The impression is built through concrete description and action. The scene is revealed so the reader infers and experiences what is happening:

Joanna stood alone in the warehouse. At that moment, she heard something moving.

*From out of the darkness,
something scratched,
something scraped.
Joanna ducked
down. What was it?*

From close
reading, work with
the children to
explain how

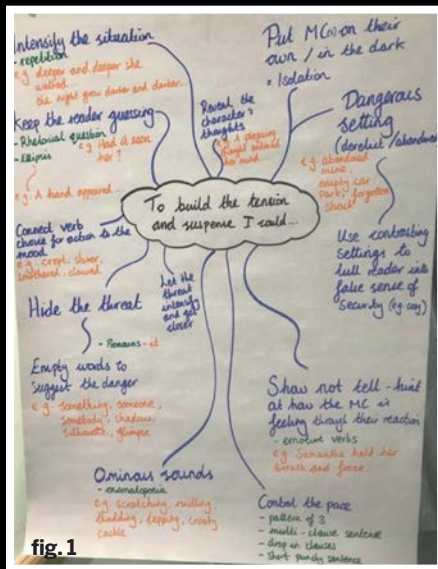
the effect has been created. This could be presented as a list of writing ideas for pupils to use, such as:

- Put the main character on their own (e.g. in the dark, or in a slightly unusual or forbidden place)
- Use a dramatic opener to inject action (e.g. 'at that moment', 'in an instant', etc.)
- The character hears or catches a glimpse of something
- Use empty words to hide what it is so the reader starts to imagine (e.g. 'something')
- The sound is slightly unusual, possibly desperate
- Suggest how the character feels through their reaction (e.g. Joanna ducked down)
- Make the reader wonder by using a rhetorical question
- Note too how a short sentence provides drama

Embed this by finding these writing tools in extracts from great novels. Then try them out in shared writing before children's own independent writing. It is worth building banks of possibilities, e.g.:

- Something suspicious that might be heard: a door opening, footsteps, a twig snapping, a scratching noise, a low moan, a scream...
- Something odd that might be seen: an eye staring, a hand, a shadow moving, a distant light, a flickering flame...

The writing tools should be displayed for reference when reading and writing as in the flipchart shown from Jamie Thomas's Year 6 class, (*fig. 1*). Notice the use of the colour blue for the tool, green for technical language and orange for examples. The tools are an option (I could). This is not a checklist to be ticked off. They are not 'success criteria'. Indeed, all these tools could be used and ticked off, and you may still have a



“What matters is the effect created on the reader. These are tools, not rules”

poor piece of writing. What matters is the effect created on the reader. These are tools, not rules. Through constant reading, writing and discussing, the children internalise these techniques and, in the end, use them automatically to create suspense and build tension.

Suspense warm-up

This game tunes the children into suspense writing, using ‘show not tell’. Begin by getting pupils to work in pairs, taking turns to come up with ideas. Provide a timer so that in five minutes they should be able to create about four scenarios. I have provided a suggestion in the third column of the table below to give you an idea of what I mean. This sort of oral activity before writing is handy as it provides a chance to warm up ideas.

Key elements for suspense:

- Who
- Where
- Time of day
- Weather
- Doing what?

| | | |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------|
| Who | Your main character | Joe |
| Where | Choose a scary place | In an abandoned mine |
| Time of day | Show by description | The moon shone down |
| Weather | Show by description | Lightning crackled |
| Doing what | What is main character doing there? | Looking for her lost dog |
| Hear | What do they hear? | Footsteps |
| Catch a glimpse | What do they catch a glimpse of? | A red eye flickers |
| Reaction | Show they are scared by their reaction | Joe held his breath |

- Hear
- Catch a glimpse
- Reaction

Talk into Writing warm-up

First, get the children to work in pairs, taking it in turns to create the sentences. In this way, they try to build a paragraph orally by using the sentence starters from the grid. Make sure that the sentences hang together to create tension. These could then be shared by hearing some spoken aloud or by shifting into writing on mini whiteboards or on a Padlet. Notice and discuss how in this game, there is a balance between ‘showing’ and ‘telling’.

Other openers to trigger a dramatic event

At that moment,
Without a warning,
Within a moment,
In a flash,
In the blink of an eye,
Within seconds,
In an instant,
Out of the blue,
Instantly,

The grammar should be practised in relation to the reading and writing. If children are practising using dramatic fronted adverbials, ensure that they are used appropriately and punctuated accurately.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Introduce main character in a setting | Hardly daring to breathe, | Hardly daring to breathe, Jo stepped into the old warehouse. |
| Use a dramatic opener to get suspense going | At that moment, she/ he heard... saw... | At that moment, she heard something in the darkness and saw a distant shape move towards her. |
| ‘Ed’ starter | Horried, frightened, scared, petrified... | Terrified, she knelt down and waited in the shadows. |
| ‘Ly’ starter | Silently, quietly, cautiously, warily... | Silently, she crept forwards. |
| ‘Ing’ starter | Shaking with fear, shivering, tiptoeing... | Shaking with fear, Jo made her way towards the door. |
| What is happening outside (create a contrast) | Outside... | Outside, the wind picked up and rain beat against the building. |
| What is happening inside | Inside... | Inside, Jo halted and tried to hold her breath. |
| Character sees or hears something | Something was... | Something was edging closer. |

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“Through constant reading, writing and discussing, the children internalise these techniques and, in the end, use them automatically to create suspense”

Inject suspense

To reinforce the idea of building suspense, provide a dull paragraph. Ask the children to rewrite the sentences to inject suspense, but with the condition that they are not allowed to tell the reader what to feel. This game is also good for bringing settings alive, developing characters and action. I have provided an example with suspense added:

Violet went into the busy shoe shop. Outside, the sun shone down. Inside, she was trying on some shoes. At that moment, she heard somebody whistling in the shop. She could see that it was one of the shop assistants. Grinning, she laced up her new shoes.

Bronte slipped into the abandoned cinema. Outside, snow swirled across the town, smothering the streets. Inside, she peered at the empty seats and blank screen. At that moment, she heard the sound of footsteps pacing towards her. She could make out a shadow moving up an aisle. Heart beating, Bronte crouched.

Working with *Malamander*

As preparation for the month of story writing workshops I mentioned earlier, the children heard the story at the end of each day and we wrote:

- An advert for the Grand Nautilus Hotel
- A news bulletin for a sighting of the Malamander
- An information report about a legendary sea creature

The opening of *Malamander* provided a model for writing a prologue, as well as a backstory and getting the action going. In the second chapter, I provided the model text *Catamander*. The two main characters (Frankie and Viola) search for and meet the Catamander, a legendary sea creature. The structure for this chapter is a basic ‘meeting a monster’ story. The underlying pattern provides a plan for many different versions.

When writing, the children were drawing on the model text, the novel and their own broader reading. The main focus was suspense, using ‘show not tell’.

CATAMANDER

The sea gale blows so hard that we tilt into the wind, pushing forwards, otherwise we would be blown off our feet. Distant thunder rumbles and lightning crackles over the sea like a jagged claw stretching down.

We pass the Rainbow Fish Bar, Miller’s icecream parlour and Mrs Butcher’s Bucket & Spade corner shop. All of them are boarded up against the impending storm. The promenade is empty and only a few cars scurry by, late for home.

Viola tugs me towards the pier and it is there that we see them. Huge footprints. Claws rather than toes at the end of what look like webbed feet. The sea surges up the beach, smashing against the struts of the pier. Together, we follow the footprints as the wind and rain lash against us.

At that moment, out of the darkness, someone or something howls. It comes from the old arcade at the very end of the pier. We stumble forwards, without thinking.

Hardly daring to breathe, we tug open an arcade door and slip inside. At that moment, the wind chooses to give a sudden blast and slams the door shut, shattering the glass. Across the room, something sighs heavily, almost a throaty purr, a low growl. Hearts thumping, we pause, peering into the darkness. Is anything really there?

Silently, Viola edges forwards but I stay by the door, watching. Shaking, not from the cold, I can just make out something by a slot machine. A vague shape crouches, large as a tiger but with spines on its back and thin green eyes. The stench of rotten fish and dead men’s bones emanates from its scaled body. Like a huge cat, it paces towards Viola.

Outside, lightning tears open the night. Inside, the sudden flash illuminates the arcade. The Catamander crouches, leaps and in one swift movement and a rush of air, it smashes through the broken door, bounding towards the edge of the pier. There it pauses, turns to watch us, green, greedy eyes widening and its mouth of needle teeth open wide. Then, with a growl, it springs and dives back into the safety of the crashing waves.

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| Underlying structure | New idea |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Main characters outside in bad weather | Billy and Joe in snowy weather |
| They pass various places | They pass through the town |
| They find a clue left by the monster | They see footprints in the snow |
| They hear something | A sudden screech! |
| They enter a place and hear the monster | They go into an old cinema |
| They get closer and see the monster | They get closer to the Catamander |
| The monster escapes | It charges past them |



PIE CORBETT is an education consultant, poet and author known for *Talk for Writing*. His most recent book is *Transforming Learning across the Curriculum (talkforwritingshop.com)*.

WAR STORIES

We need to expand narratives about WWII beyond a narrow, white history, says **Dan Smith**



I've been fishing with a hitman, lived in the jungle, and climbed a live volcano. I've tracked a Sumatran tiger and ridden with Brazilian cowboys. I once wore my trainers all evening without realising there was a frog in one of them. The frog did not survive.

These are some of the stories I tell the children when I'm visiting schools to talk about my books and my journey to becoming an author. They always go down well – especially the ones about the hitman and the frog. But when I talk about WWII, and the things that have inspired my books about the war,

children often connect in a different way. Perhaps it's because they find it easy to relate to... People weren't so very different back then. They lived in the same towns and villages that we live in today. Pupils' families are often somehow connected to the war, so when it's time for the Q&A, they put their hand up because they want to tell me something rather than ask me something: they want me to know about a family member who was 'in the war'. They want to tell me about the old bomb shelter under their garden, or to relay some interesting fact they have learned about air raids.

Always relevant

WWII stories are as popular now as they have ever been. If you browse the tables and shelves in your local bookshop, you'll see old classics, re-printed time and again, and you'll see new books, written by contemporary authors. I suppose WWII is an excellent backdrop for unsupervised adventure, and its scope was so far-reaching that there are always new stories to tell. But many contemporary authors are telling their stories from a more modern point of view, using more current language, which makes them more accessible and

more relatable to young readers today. And it isn't difficult to make those stories feel relevant. They are stories that deal with loss, hope, courage, and the best and worst of humanity. These are universal themes that relate to modern times as well as they do to the past.

We do not live in a perfect world. All around us, and on the news, we see refugees, evacuation, and persecution. We see children fleeing the devastation of war. Right here, in Britain, there is inequality, racism, and hardship. There are children in our schools who are worrying about where their next meal is going to come from. Their parents have to make heart-breaking decisions like whether to heat their home, feed their children, or clothe them. Authors can use stories about the second World War to help young readers indirectly connect with these issues and to explore the mental health effects of such hardship. We can transport young readers into the shoes of others, helping them to develop empathy and understanding. And we, as adults reading with those children, can help them to draw parallels between events in the past and events in the modern world.

The truth of it is that authors will always find a way to make stories about WWII relevant to young readers today. But there are things we can do to *expand* the relevance.

Diverse histories

Many second World War stories focus on events on the home front in Britain, but we need stories told from alternative perspectives. I was interested to understand what life was like in Germany during WWII, so I did extensive research, learning about teenagers who called themselves 'Edelweiss Pirates', and opposed the Nazi regime. The research led me to write *My Brother's Secret* which is about two young brothers – one a proud Nazi, the other an objector – and the conflict it causes within their family. The story is written as an exciting and adventurous mystery, but it deals with important themes like trust, betrayal, and guilt. When I talk about this during school visits, children are always interested to hear about young Germans, not much

older than themselves, who opposed the Nazis and suffered as a result.

We have an ever more diverse population in Britain, and I would like for every child to be able to see themselves in the stories they read, and the things they learn. One of the most important things we can do is to show young readers that Britain did not have an exclusively white population in the 1940's. We can explore the experiences of non-white children growing up in Britain at that time, making stories more relatable to modern young readers. I have done this in my novel *Nisha's War*, which is about a dual heritage British-Indian girl who evacuates from Malaya to England where she faces suspicion and racism. These are the same issues that refugee children coming to Britain today will face – not to mention non-white children who have lived in Britain all their lives. Stories can highlight the effect these issues have on young people, and they can teach young readers to be more accepting and understanding.

It's important to remember

that the war was far-reaching, too. It wasn't just about air raids over London and the Normandy Landings, but affected people right across Europe, Asia, and Africa. And it wasn't only white British people defending Britain, either. I

wonder how many school children know that 2.5 million Indians fought for Britain? The largest volunteer army in history. I wonder how many know that the soldiers who fought bravely when the Japanese invaded Malaya, were Indian. Do they know that Nepalese Gurkhas served in Italy, Greece, Malaya, Singapore, Burma, and Africa? Or that thousands of African, Arab, and Jewish soldiers fought for Britain across the globe? And there are darker, more shameful histories, too, such as the three million Indians, mostly Bengali, who were killed by famine as a result of Winston Churchill's policies.

There are still so many more stories to tell; so many more lives to explore. It feels to me as if these stories will always be relevant because they remind us of things that we must never forget. But we can make them *more* relevant by expanding and making them more inclusive.

“World War Two is an excellent backdrop for unsupervised adventure”

4 WAYS TO EXPLORE INCLUSIVE HISTORY

💡 Try introducing your class to some diverse World War Two stories such as: *Noor Inayat Khan* by Sufiya Ahmed, or *Now or Never: A Dunkirk Story* by Bali Rai.

💡 Investigate something unfamiliar such as the Edelweiss Pirates in Germany. What did they stand for? What actions did they take? What happened to them? You could discuss this with your class, then encourage children to write a story from their perspective.

💡 Explore a lesser-known aspect of World War Two, such as the 300 Indian Muslims from Punjab who were evacuated from Dunkirk and spent most of the war in Britain. How would they have felt about this new life? How did British people react to them? How does this relate to things happening in our country right now?

💡 Or learn about the Maharaja of Nawanagar who took in Polish refugees fleeing from the war, when no one else would accept them. He gave them a home, an education, and kept their culture and traditions alive. Imagine the relief and bewilderment of those Polish children in their new home in India. How do people react to refugees in Britain today? How are they treated?



Nisha's War by Dan Smith, is out now in paperback (£7.99, Chicken House).

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7 Stories

The National Centre for Children's Books

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Published by Walker
Books, 2022

Viking Boy: The Real Story

Step into a warrior's shoes and learn about everything from sacred spells to longboat life with this *Viking Boy* companion by **Tony Bradman**

JO CUMMINS

Tony Bradman is a prolific and well-respected children's writer, and his books feature in countless classrooms and libraries up and down the country. But the one I've seen used the most across KS2 is his epic adventure, *Viking Boy*, which stars son of a Viking chieftain, Gunnar, and follows him on his journey to avenge his father's death and rescue his

mother from Skuli and his Wolf Men. It's full of the actions, battles, and excitement you would expect from an author as exciting as Bradman!

Fans of this book will be delighted to know that there is now a non-fiction companion guide to accompany this novel, which allows readers to take an immersive tour of Gunnar's world. *Viking Boy: The Real Story* is a fantastic illustrated guide

to Viking life as described by Gunnar. Learn how the Vikings lived, how gender roles were divided, and how they gained their status as legendary warriors (plus many other things besides). It's an ideal book to dip into at leisure, with enough nuggets of information within its pages to satisfy any aspiring Viking raider.

Let's take a tour with Gunnar and dive deeper into *Viking Boy's* pages...



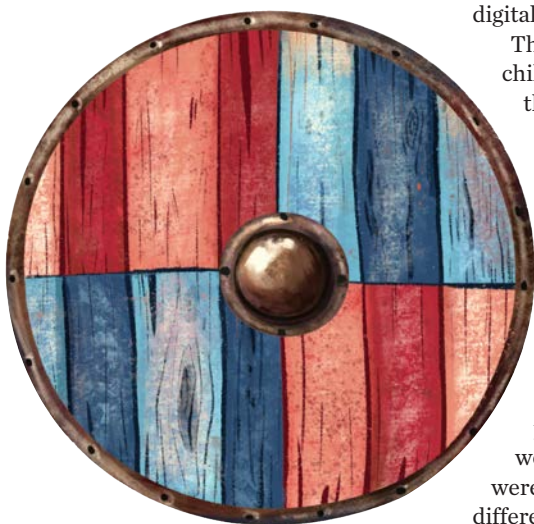
Sharing and talking about the book

Shape shifting

On page 11 of the book, readers are encouraged to become another creature, as Vikings believed that humans could shape-shift into different forms. In this instance, we become eagles soaring over the land below.

Read the description of what the eagle sees. Ask the children to underline any descriptive phrases, words, or figurative language that captures their interest or about which they have questions. Note which landmarks the eagle flew over. Discuss what they have found and magpie good examples to use in their writing later.

What other animals would have been around in Viking times? Share some examples (wolves, reindeer, boars, seals, elk etc.) How would the same landscape look from their perspective? What would be the same? What would be different?



What else would it be interesting to get an 'animal's-eye' view of? How about a longhouse or a steading? Or perhaps a Viking longship setting off on a raid? What are the key geographical features an animal would see?

After some research, children could then go on to write their own descriptions from the perspective of an animal of their choosing and in a location of their choice. Try and include lots of interesting descriptive phrases and perhaps some figurative language too.

Activities

Viking jobs Venn sort

On pages 30–31 and 34–35, we are given lots of information about the kinds of jobs male and female Vikings would have been expected to do. Make cards with all the different jobs on for pupils to sort into two overlapping Venn hoops – one for jobs men were expected to do, one for jobs assigned to females, and one for both, overlapping in the middle. This could be done as a class or in pairs, on paper or digitally, depending on your preference.

The first time around, have the children sort the cards without reading the text. You could then take a photo of their arrangement, ready to be compared to their second attempt.

Now it's time to share the text! Ask the children to re-sort the roles according to the information they've just read. Have any of the jobs moved? Are there any that surprised them?

To encourage further discussion, ask the class "Would you have preferred to be a man or a woman in Viking times? Why? How were expected gender roles the same or different to now?"

Viking warrior women

I am sure pupils will be surprised to discover there is now evidence to suggest that there may have been Viking warrior women. As the children would already know, if they've explored traditional Viking job roles, it was usually the men of the village who went to war and fought.

In light of the recent discovery that a warrior found in a grave in Birka, Sweden, was female, challenge the pupils to find out more and create a fact-file. They may like to consider the following points:

- Where was the grave found?
- What artefacts were discovered within it?
- Why do archaeologists believe this was the grave of a warrior?
- What made them believe the warrior was female?

Viking burials

Pages 67–69 look at the rituals surrounding Viking burials. There is some detail about the burials for warriors, but what about people with other roles? Ask children to draw on their knowledge of life in a Viking village and create a list of the jobs people would have had. If warriors were buried with swords and treasure, what items might other people be buried with to give clues as to what they did during life?

Children should create a labelled diagram of a Viking grave for their chosen worker. Think carefully about what clothing they might be buried in, where their grave would be positioned, and what objects will be put with them to take to the afterlife. Ensure notes are added to explain each item's significance. You could even encourage pupils to create a model of their Viking's grave in an empty tub or box.

Take it further → → →

FEELING ARTISTIC?

Vikings were incredibly skilled craftspeople, creating intricate knotted designs in jewellery and word carvings. Take a look at the door post carvings shown on page 28 and the artefacts on page 32. Encourage children to look carefully at the patterns and motifs used. Can they spot any lines of symmetry or perhaps rotational symmetry?

Now pupils are going to design and make a special brooch for their family or tribe. If they choose to use animal motifs, think carefully about what the

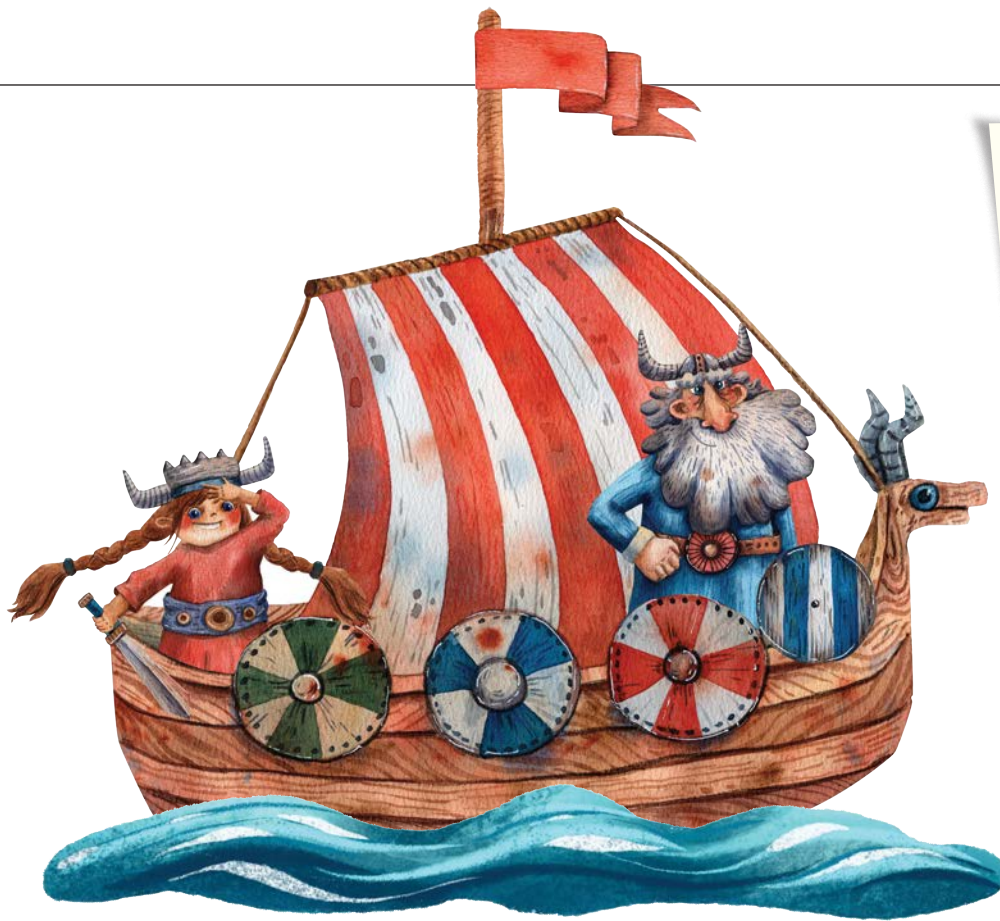
animal they've chosen might symbolise, e.g. a dragon could represent bravery or strength. Will they need to leave space in the centre to embed a precious jewel to show their wealth and status? They will also need to ensure they feature some type of symmetry – squared paper, mirrors, and tracing paper will help with this!

There are several mediums they could use to create their brooches – string glued carefully onto card then spray painted is one, though clay and metallic paint is my preferred method.

These designs would also look very effective as tile prints. Use polystyrene tiles, semi-sharp pencils, rollers and printing ink.

SWORDS

No self-respecting Viking warrior would be seen without their sword. In the 'Way of the Warrior' chapter, we learn a lot about the armour and weapons Vikings would have had and the craftsmanship that went into making them. Viking swords were bestowed great power via special spells, represented by runes. The



Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *Odd and the Frost Giants* by Neil Gaiman (I love the version which is illustrated by Chris Riddell)
- ❖ *Loki – A Bad God's Guide to Being Good* by Louie Stowell
- ❖ *She Wolf* by Dan Smith
- ❖ *The Monster Slayer* by Brian Patten
- ❖ *Viking Voyagers* by Jack Tite

events are represented. Note also the balance of text to images, and the use of foreground, midground, and background in each frame.

Give pupils the extract you'd like them to represent (everyone could have the same, or different groups could focus on different sections). Asking pupils to represent events in this way provides an excellent opportunity to assess their understanding of the story and of Viking life. Have they managed to correctly capture the key events, characters, and settings? Are the buildings, clothing, boats and other details historically accurate? Are there areas of teaching that need to be revisited?



Jo Cummins is an experienced KS2 teacher, English lead, and children's book blogger. She has been part of the judging panel for several children's book awards and has delivered workshops at conferences around the country.

[@BookSuperhero2](https://twitter.com/BookSuperhero2)

LibraryGirlAndBookBoy.com

The way of the warrior

Viking warriors are a topic of perennial interest, with children often becoming great experts on the subject. After reading the relevant sections in Bradman's book, ask pupils to create a job advertisement for the post of Viking warrior. Make sure you look at more traditional job ads first and note the type of information requested.

If you were trying to recruit new warriors for your village, what qualities would they need to have? Think about: physical attributes, character and temperament, skills, previous experience, weaponry.

This could be extended to the role of chieftain or farmer etc, and then used to create a 'Jobs' page for *The Viking Times*.

A graphic retelling

Several Norse Gods and myths are referenced throughout the book. Vikings were well-known as fantastic storytellers, reciting epic tales of bravery and monsters by firelight. Select one of the myths or stories mentioned in the book (Thor versus the Frost Giants, one of Loki's tricky tales, or perhaps learn about the Nornir, who speak in riddles and decide everyone's destiny).

Once pupils have had time to explore the selected story, ask them to create a graphic novel-style layout for some of the key events. If they haven't had much experience of graphic novels before, make sure the children have time to look at a selection to get a feel for the style and how

smith would then carve these secret runes onto the blade.

Children would love creating spells to imbue their own (cardboard) swords with great power, and what better way to do this than through a kenning? Kennings are full of alliteration, rhyme, and figurative language. For example, a 'gold-giver' could be a generous chieftain, or a 'sky-candle' could be the sun. Swords were often named in a similar fashion such as 'death-bringer' or 'flesh-splitter.'

Encourage the children to think of suitably blood-curdling names for their swords which they can then use to begin and end their kennings. Challenge

them to describe the actions of their blades in battle in a similar format until they have their complete kenning (or sword-magic.) These could then be displayed alongside replica swords.

SETTING SAIL

Vikings were well-known for their daring raids abroad thanks to their longships, but how much do children really know about their crews and the conditions onboard? Read the beginning of chapter five – Fire and Plunder, and take time to familiarise pupils with the key features of a longboat and discuss the roles of the various crew members. To really

breathe life into the perilous journey involved in crossing the oceans to pillage monasteries, get the class to roleplay setting sail to England.

Organise pupils into groups and assign them roles in the crew to do research. They may also like to create some basic props. When they have had time to learn more about their jobs, encourage the groups to script and perform a brief scene where each crew member is discharging their duties. Think about who would need to speak or may remain silent. Alternatively, groups could create a 'freeze frame' of life aboard ship which clearly shows what each crew member is doing.

Connecting the VOCAB DOTS

Encourage personal links and fire up the power of association to get your pupils invested in developing lexical knowledge

KELLY ASHLEY

As a child, I loved ‘connect the dots’ games. Do you remember them? They involved a series of numbered dots that, when connected, revealed a hidden picture. I spent many hours on car journeys working to uncover these images. Just as we connect the numbered dots in the pictures, we also use our lexicon (or language) to paint a picture of the world around us – connecting the vocabulary dots to unlock what we know about words and the world.

The images we create with language are crafted from our own unique experiences, identities and interests. The bespoke, personal nature of these connections invites new words into our mental libraries of language (our ‘word hoard’) in different ways, as we organise and reshuffle to connect the dots between new and known knowledge. It’s this connection between the new and the known that will help strengthen pupils’ word knowledge and aid them in building word depth over time.

Let’s exercise these mental library muscles by thinking about the word *comfort*. Does this make you think of a place, a thing, a person or an experience? How do you connect the dots around this word by activating personal links? As it lights up in your mental library, you may also think of associated words, contexts and memories. For instance, you may link *comfort* to similar words such as *contentment*, *safety*, *warmth* or *wellbeing*. Alternatively, you may relate to opposite words, for instance *sadness*, *gloom*, *discomfort* or *displeasure*. Additionally, you may be reminded of a specific time when you felt comfort – enjoying a favourite meal, spending time with a loved one or reading a favourite book. Word learning is personal; we are all unique in our connection capacity.

These links are powerful in the process of language development.

When learning new words, our mental library highlights pathways – akin to a lexical motorway – connecting language, concepts, experiences and memories. The teacher’s role here is to help learners to be more aware of word learning strategies to activate in order to connect their own, unique pathways, and forging roadmaps of linguistic connection within the mental library.

As part of the approach to vocabulary instruction I outline in my book *Word Power*, children can enlist the help of the dynamic team of superheroes to ‘power-up’ learning strategies. Each superhero of the Word Power League has been designed for learners to zoom in on different features of language such as listening to sounds in words, spotting visual features, exploring word history, investigating meaning, and uncovering root words (including prefixes and suffixes).

Two special members of this lexical band of heroes are focused on helping children forge stronger connections both inwardly and outwardly. Professor Personal helps learners to unlock personal links with new language and ideas. What does this word make me think of? What associations can I make? Captain Connector, on the other hand, helps learners springboard associations beyond the target word. What other words can I connect that mean the same, the opposite, share a root word or share a visual pattern? Which other words can I link to help me communicate more effectively about this idea?

Professor Personal and Captain Connector help learners connect the dots when learning new language. Consider the following routes, outlining two different starting points for exploring word meanings...

Route 1: Link new words to familiar experiences

Teach children a new or unfamiliar word and actively link to words and concepts that are already known.

When learning about the idea of *conservation*, there are many fantastic texts to explore such as *The Promise*, a picture book by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin; *The Lost Words*, a



collection of 'nature spells' by Robert Macfarlane, illustrated by Jackie Morris; and *The Last Bear*, a novel by Hannah Gold, illustrated by Levi Penfold.

The word *conservation* may be unfamiliar; however, it provides a golden opportunity to unlock existing language and ideas related to this concept. Forge connections with familiar words such as *care*, *keep*, *save* and *protect*. Help children to build roadmaps with coupled words to build strong mental schema and foster knowledge of semantic relationships. Teach words in related groups to communicate the approach with a clear purpose.

As a cross-curricular example, consider *fieldwork* in a geographical sense. While this term may be new to some children, highlighting the morphology of the word (familiar root words – *field* and *work*) can help pupils connect new and known. You could also highlight other linked words, to support description of the process of carrying out fieldwork, such as: *study*, *look*, *find* and *explore*.

Route 2: Link new language to familiar words

Start with something familiar in their mental library and then extend into new ideas and linked language.

One word that will be very familiar is *playtime*! By starting with a known idea or concept (*play* or *playtime*), we have the opportunity to open new pathways into more challenging words such as *recreation*, *relaxation*, *leisure* or *entertainment*. Don't pass over the opportunity to focus on seemingly simple words. The key is in the connection; teach words in groups rather than as isolated units.

In a cross-curricular context, consider how the word *art* could springboard connected word learning. Art may be familiar as a subject or as something that is produced (*artwork*), but how do children describe the processes when creating art? You could launch a purposeful investigation into linked words such as *material*, *creative*, *product*, *sculpting*, *technique* or *designer*. Think carefully about which words will be most useful and let the connection commence!

By connecting the vocabulary dots, we are starting from a place of celebration rather than of deficit.

Children bring a wealth of knowledge to the table; let's bring this into the conversation. Launch the connection journey by *unlocking* what children already know. Next, *Power-Up* by explicitly

teaching language alongside word-learning strategies to deepen connections. Model strategies and teach related words in semantic groups to forge new mental pathways. Finally, don't forget that mental motorways need maintenance. Ensure regular opportunities for learners to *charge* and *recharge* newly learned words with a purpose.

6 WORD-GAME IDEAS

HEXAGONAL LEARNING

Write each target word onto a hexagon shape. Encourage children to physically connect hexagons by articulating how words are related (e.g. by meaning, sound or visual features).

WORD WEB

Start with a target word (from instruction) and create a 'web' of connected ideas (mind map). Link words with the same or similar meanings (synonyms), words that mean the opposite (antonyms), and other ideas or related contexts.

NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

Are you ready for the O & X challenge? Set up a game board with familiar target words written in each section of the grid. To 'capture' the square, get pupils to share a personal connection with the chosen word – what do they think of when they hear it?

WORD RIDDLES

Come up with a word-themed riddle to describe a target word. For example, for *playtime* you might write: "This word has two syllables. It is made up of two root words. The first root word rhymes with *stay*. We have this every day in school."

PERSONAL LINK

As a group, share personal links to target words. What does this word make you think about? How do we connect with words in different ways?

QUESTION MASTER

Recharge knowledge of new words with these question stems: *How might... Who would... How could...*



Kelly Ashley is a freelance English consultant based in Yorkshire and author of Word Power: Amplifying vocabulary instruction (2019).

 @kashleyenglish

 kellyashleyconsultancy.wordpress.com

Ordinary HEROES

From a nameless teddy bear to a publishing success story – a diverse and inclusive approach to literacy is no more than our pupils deserve, says **Shirley-Anne Brightman**

“**M**iss, we can’t think of enough names!” I was on playground duty, and the Christmas Fair was fast approaching. Two Primary 5 pupils (Y4) were holding a large piece of cardboard on which they had drawn a 5x10 grid. About half a dozen of the squares were filled: James, Emily, Sally, John...

“What do you need names for?”, I enquired, slightly absent-mindedly as my ‘on duty’ eyes scanned the raucous cricket game beyond.

“For the teddy,” one girl explained. “We need 50 names and we don’t know enough – can you help?”. Realising with sudden, gut-wrenching clarity, what the issue was, I looked around the playground again. St. Albert’s Primary School in Pollokshields, Glasgow, has a pupil intake that is almost 90% non-white. And the horrible truth was that these intelligent, diligent and impeccably behaved girls considered neither their own nor any of their classmates’ names worthy for inclusion, even in this most trivial of contexts.

“Of course I can help,” I said, sincerely; and the conversation that followed, in which I suggested their own

names, their friends’ names and their parents’ names, was the first of very many exchanges which have shaped our successful social enterprise and our culturally responsive literacy teaching policy over the past two years.

Written out

Talking with colleagues and senior leadership, we gathered other examples of the pupils’ deference to Western ‘white’ names: they chose them for characters in their own stories, they used them in imaginary play. An infant teacher even commented that she had seen many children draw themselves with pink (white) skin when theirs was most definitely brown. We asked the children why, and they said that they had never read books or seen films featuring characters with Arabic names.

“When a character is like you, it gives you a value in the world”

Of course, as a school we quickly looked into buying new books for our pupils; but as the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) would reveal later that year (2018), there weren’t many to be had. CLPE’s first Reflecting Realities research report on children’s publications found that of new books published in 2017, just four per cent had Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) characters, with only one per cent featuring a BAME protagonist. Happily, the head teacher at St. Albert’s, Clare Harker, is a creative and brave leader. “We’ll just have to write our own, then!” she said.

Success stories

Over the following few years, a small group of teachers and pupils led a project called ‘We Can be Heroes’. It aimed to engage South Asian writers to work with our pupils on stories that would feature characters like them. The pupils co-wrote the stories and we self-published three beautiful, illustrated editions of short stories in November 2021. To date, we’ve sold over



300 copies of our books direct from the school and via our Etsy online shop (see panel). It's a major success story which has run in parallel to the Black Lives Matter movement and a zeitgeist of change which we are now seeing in new publishing. The 2021 Reflecting Realities report showed an encouraging increase in books featuring BAME characters – now 15%; and 8% of main characters were BAME. It is progress, but it's far from ideal. The demographics of St. Albert's are such that we would want every book in our children's hands to feature a range of ethnicities of character.

The Social Enterprise Academy (SEA) has worked with St. Albert's on a number of projects over the past five years and we have been repeatedly recognised as a National Social Enterprise Champion school by them. 'We Can be Heroes' operates as a social enterprise model, whereby sales revenues go back into the social aim of the project – in our case, into producing more stories. So now, in phase two, 'We Can be Heroes' is working with parents to delve deeper into the school community's heritage and six new stories are in production, dealing with themes such as cultural norms for marriage, bilingualism and pre-partition India. This next phase of the project has attracted a grant from the Scottish Library and Information Council's School Library Improvement Fund, which has enabled greater partnership working, including with Glasgow's Barrowland Ballet, to create a performance element to the storytelling.

Real change

The St. Albert's school motto is 'Conscience-led Communities'. The



writing project has raised awareness and built momentum and excitement as it has attracted funding, awards, media coverage and the acclaim of national organisations such as the Scottish BAME Writers' Network, the Scottish Book Trust and BBC Scotland. The real work, however, is only just beginning at St. Albert's, as we now translate this into classroom practice and into a true overhaul of our school's literacy resources.

Three new library spaces are currently in development to be stocked with all the titles featuring diverse characters that we could purchase, thanks to advice from Glasgow's Mitchell Library team and specialist bookshop A New Chapter. A new literacy teaching policy is in development through a collaborative process, and it has been encouraging to see almost half of the class teachers engaging in it. Ultimately, the real impact of the work will emerge when the teaching and learning in St. Albert's consistently interrogates the texts (including audio-visual influences) that are forming our pupils' ideas of who can be a hero.

Why bother?

In March this year, I took four pupils along to the Social Enterprise Schools: Glasgow 'Dragon's Den' event run by the Social Enterprise Academy to present an update on 'We Can be Heroes'. As we were preparing, I asked the children if they felt like what we'd done mattered. Did they really mind that characters in books didn't very often have names or skin like theirs? Part of me has always been conscious that back when the pupils asked me for teddy bear name suggestions, they were in no way sad, angered or feeling second-rate about the fact that their names didn't seem appropriate. Had we, in fact, drawn



WANT TO KNOW MORE?



The books produced by the St. Albert's social enterprise can be purchased via Etsy (scan the QR code to visit the shop). There's also a blog, where you can find out more about the social enterprise project and see the latest updates at:

blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/gc/wecanbeheroes

 **@StAlbertsG41**

attention to something that wasn't causing them any immediate problems?

One said, "Well, when characters are nothing like me, I feel like, why should I bother reading this?", another added, "If your family is like the ones in books or films, you feel included", and a third told me, "When a character is like you, it gives you a value in the world". What better reason to continue could there be?



Shirley-Anne Brightman studied languages at the University of Cambridge and holds an MSc in Social Policy from London School of Economics, and has taught ESL and primary in four countries. She is currently a Leader of Learning for Glasgow City Council's Improvement Challenge.



LIKE SNEAKING BROCCOLI...

Teaching kids handwriting is akin to getting them to eat their veg – essential, but often tricky

DR JANE MEDWELL

There are some things we all know are good for us, but it can be hard to engage children with them without specific strategies. In the same way as we strive to include veggies in our kids' diets, teaching efficient, legible handwriting is an essential part of a well-rounded education – the 'class diet', if you will.

There is no doubt that fluent, automatic and legible handwriting is good for children and has both short and long-term benefits for the quality of their composing. If a child can generate letter shapes automatically, without giving the process cognitive attention, there is plenty of evidence that this leaves them much more capacity to focus on content. But correct letter formation needs to be learned, and failing to master automatic letter generation can have serious consequences. A child who is struggling to generate those letter shapes automatically is disadvantaged because their cognitive attention is going to the lower-level process of handwriting, when that attention should be going to composing. The challenge facing all pupils is learning to make those letter shapes accurately, consistently and automatically, and then learning the basic joins that they will take into adulthood. This takes practice, which again, like eating vegetables, is not every child's favourite thing.

So, how can we learn from mealtimes? How can our veggie strategies be applied to teaching handwriting?

Start at the beginning

Getting children to eat healthily is so much easier if they have been doing it since they were tiny. In early years settings, we want pupils to engage in writing for their own purposes and to use their 'emergent' writing to express themselves. However, we also want them to learn the correct letter movements, so they become automatic and can be easily joined up later. Those shapes are not obvious to young learners just from looking at letters. For example, b, p and d all look similar in a world where an object, when rotated, is still the same object, yet these letters require entirely different movements. So, just as we might repeatedly present children with the same veggies in different ways – steamed, roasted, pureed, snuck into smoothies! – we need to introduce a variety of methods of practising those letter movements.

There are so many tactile ways to practise letter movements that take very little time, but are still valuable: tracing movements on sandpaper letters; tracing letter shapes in trays of jelly, cornflour or damp sand; or making letter shapes in porridge or soft playdough. These are all fun ways to share the understanding that there is a 'right' way to make each

letter shape and that it's the movement that counts. Once children are used to this idea, they can look for starting dots and practise letters in other ways, gradually learning control over the size and orientation.

Keep it simple

Lots of children like familiar dishes they can identify – there is something to be said for simplicity in terms of introducing new flavours. So, if you are choosing the handwriting style in your school, think about what is essential and keep it simple. Most adults end up writing an efficient, mostly joined style with a simple letter formation. Very few adults use handwriting joins that involve complex loops or changes of direction. So it makes sense to choose a handwriting programme that teaches a simple letter formation and emphasises the common joins for children, too. It also makes handwriting easier to master.

The same goes for practice activities. Sometimes pupils like the familiarity of short, simple exercises like those planned in the published handwriting schemes. Think of these like the 'frozen peas' of the handwriting world:

activities that are easy for teachers to fit into the school day, that children are familiar with and that they can achieve easily. Successful handwriting practice (like a well-cooked frozen pea) can be surprisingly



satisfying! And of course, handwriting schemes structure the introduction of new joins and patterns effortlessly for busy teachers. A good handwriting scheme is convenient, nutritious and reliable, and will have materials for parents to use. For some children, a regular five to 10 minutes of handwriting

homework can be satisfying and very effective. As with veggies, little and often is important, and – let's be honest – more sustainable than huge portions.

Set realistic expectations

Some children like healthy food more than others,

and some children find handwriting easier than their peers. In both cases, we try to have clear minimum expectations. What are the basics all children need to learn? The fundamentals boil down to producing correct letter movements automatically, joining letters and gaining control of the size and orientation of their writing. A good school handwriting programme will structure the introduction of these handwriting aspects for teachers and parents alike.

However, some children love handwriting and are good at it. For these pupils, it is important to recognise the aesthetic and creative pleasure of really neat writing, perhaps by encouraging them to develop

their own style as they get to the end of primary school, or even to try calligraphy. It is also important

to offer praise for neatness as an achievement when children have really worked hard on a final piece of writing.

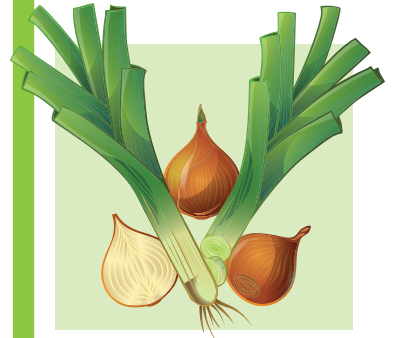
At the end of the day, each young person engages with vegetables at their own pace; this is the same with handwriting. Your class may not all progress at the same rate, but with specific strategies, they can all be successful.



Jane Medwell is an associate professor at the University of

Nottingham, researching and writing into handwriting and primary education. She is the series editor of Happy Handwriting from Collins.

3 ways to fit handwriting practice into your class diet



Variety is the spice of life! Handwriting, like a sneaky piece of broccoli, can be slipped into children's daily routine almost invisibly. Here's some easy ways to introduce practice little and often:



Produce folded A4 sheets with practice

activities on each side. These can be made from existing activities from whole-school schemes, so won't demand a lot of preparation. To encourage a sense of achievement, pupils could paste them into a scrapbook or string them on a washing line when they are done.



For younger children, use big chalks to write

letters on outside walls or on the playground, so they have a chance to practise casually between playtimes.



For older children, write a letter join you've recently

taught in the corner of the classroom whiteboard each week (cl, or, at, etc.). Ask children to find as many words as they can that include that letter combination. At the end of the week, pupils can share their findings with their table group and each write a list.

Keeping up the pace

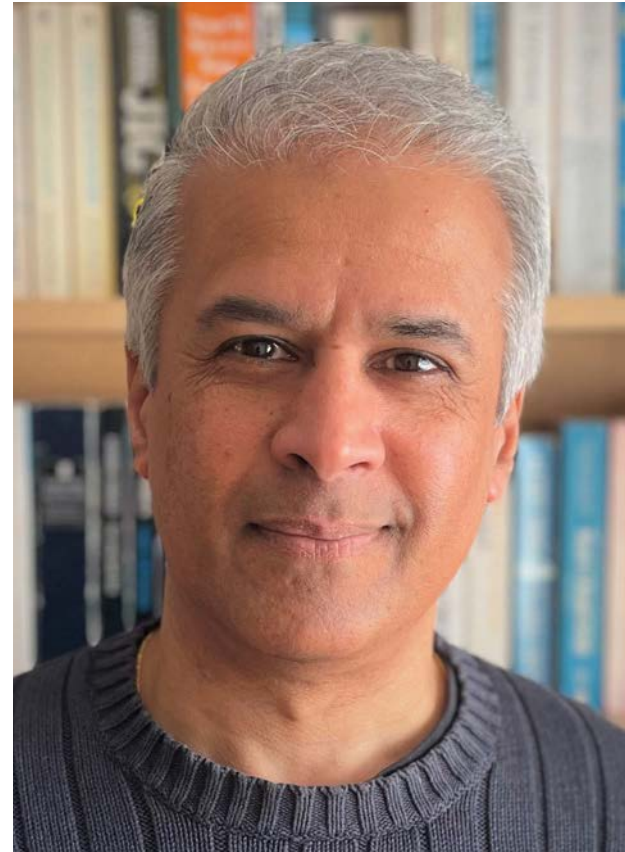
with Jason Rohan

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

An action-packed adventure with amazing characters and a gripping storyline is tricky to write, but this is precisely what Jason Rohan manages to do with the first book in his new high-octane series.

As a guest on the Author in Your Classroom podcast, Jason talks about his internship at Marvel Comics in New York at the age of just 16, his time spent in Japan and how both experiences have inspired the writing in his first series, *Kuromori*, and in the first title of his new series *S.T.E.A.L.T.H.: Access Denied*.

In this teaching sequence, children will discuss how action stories are planned and the importance of strong contrasting characters to further the plot and engage the reader. Extracts from the podcast (bit.ly/AIYCJasonRohan) 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.



SESSION 1

A JUMPING OFF POINT

1 | Play the first section of the podcast from the beginning, up to 15:40, the end of section 1. Listen to Jason's experiences before writing *S.T.E.A.L.T.H.*, listening to his tips for writing.

2 | Discuss the inspiration for Jason Rohan's series of books *Kuromori*, and how pupils need a 'jumping off point' to kick-start their own writing.

3 | Show the children **PowerPoint Slide 2** (all resources for this lesson can be downloaded for free from plazoom.com)

with Jason's quote about starting a story. Discuss the jumping off point he used for *Kuromori* (his time in Japan,

discussed in section 1 of the podcast) and how that helped him to create his books.

4 | Look at the **Inspirational Images** and discuss how they could be used as a 'jumping off point' to start a story. The images are also displayed on **PowerPoint Slides 3 – 6**. Allow pupils time to explore ideas as groups, noting down their thoughts. These could be collected as a class, allowing pupils to develop and expand ideas further. Pupils could also suggest their own ideas for 'jumping off points' for a story, based on things they have seen or drawing on their own imaginations.



SESSION 2

KNOW YOUR START AND END POINTS

1 | Display **PowerPoint Slide 7** with another quote from the author. Why do pupils think that Jason finds it easier to know the start and end point of his stories. How might this help them as writers?

2 | Listen to part 2 of the podcast, from 26:49 to the end of section 2 at 29:49. In this section Jason talks about how he plans his stories.

3 | Refer back to the images in session 1 and ask pupils to choose one and explain that they will be writing a short action story where characters are on a mission to find something or solve a problem. Allow pupils time to discuss and share ideas. **NOTE:** you may want to limit the pupils to using two or three

characters in their stories, to avoid them from becoming over complicated. Developing characters will be explored further in session 3.

4 | Display **PowerPoint Slide 8**, with a quote from Jason about how he imagines his stories. Discuss how thinking about stories visually might help children with the planning process. Using **Planning Sheet 1**, ask pupils to plan their story using images in a comic book style. Remind them that Jason recommends knowing your start and end point first, so these sections on **Planning Sheet 1** should be completed before anything else.

5 | You may also want to discuss writing stories in 'real time'. In *S.T.E.A.L.T.H.: Access Denied*, Jason Rohan uses time stamps as chapters. This is something pupils may wish to use in their stories, highlighting the fast-paced action.

SESSION 3

PEOPLE ARE THE CORE

- 1 | Display **PowerPoint Slide 9** with another quote from the author. Recap how, in the first section, Jason talked about how important.
- 2 | Listen to part 2 of the podcast, from 15:40 to 26:48, where Jason reads an extract from *S.T.E.A.L.T.H.: Access Denied* and then discusses the characters. Pupils could read along, using copies of the extract.
- 3 | Discuss the characters with the pupils and what they know

about them from the extract (or from what you have read of the book so far). Which is their favourite character? Encourage pupils to share their answers, explaining their choice.

4 | Display **PowerPoint Slide 10**, with another quote from the author. Discuss how the characters contrast in the extract. Using **Planning Sheet 2**, ask pupils to write what they know about the three characters using the role on the wall template to note ideas. Pupils could write facts about the characters in the inside of the template and

their thoughts and feelings on the outside. This could be added to as you read through the book.

- 5 | Remind pupils they will be writing their own short action story, inspired by *S.T.E.A.L.T.H.: Access Denied*. Using their ideas from the 'jumping off point' in session 1 and **Planning Sheet 1**, ask pupils to develop characters for their action story, thinking about how they may contrast. Pupils should use a copy of **Planning Sheet 2** for each character, noting ideas to develop them further.



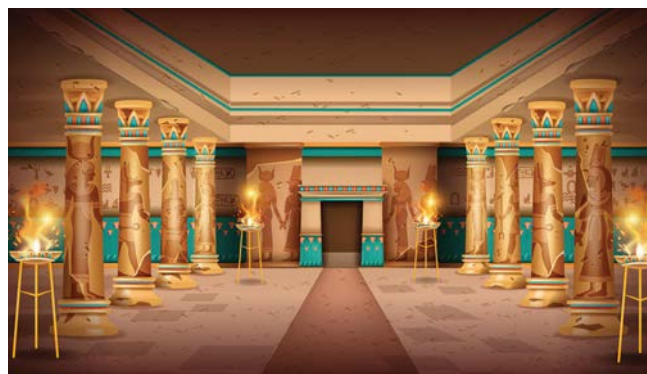
SESSION 4

OPENING LINE

- 1 | Listen to the podcast from 4:08 to 6:20 where Jason discusses the importance of the first line of the book to hook the reader in. Read the quote from Jason on **PowerPoint Slide 11** about the opening line.
- 2 | Display **PowerPoint Slides 12** with the first line of *S.T.E.A.L.T.H.: Access Denied*. Discuss how this hooks you in as a reader – what questions does it prompt?

- 3 | Using their ideas on **Planning Sheet 1**, pupils can explore writing their opening line for the reader. Pupils should read and reread their

opening sentence, making changes to hook in the reader and create an exciting start to the story that encourages them to continue.



SESSION 5

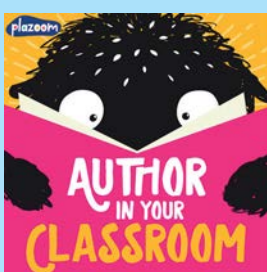
WRITING ACTION

- 1 | Listen to the end of section 2 of the podcast, from 29:49 to 31:50
- 2 | Discuss why short sentences help to show where action is taking place. Read the quotes from the author on **PowerPoint Slides 13 and 14**. You may want to reread the extract and look for examples of short sentences used, particularly when the characters are speaking to increase the tempo for the reader.
- 3 | Pupils could use **Planning Sheet 1** to orally tell their stories, thinking about how short sentences could be used at the points with the most action.
- 4 | Allow pupils time to write their stories, thinking about which sections are showing action, and so need shorter sentences, and which are the 'linking' sections that join the sections of action together to give information about characters or events.
- 5 | After writing, pupils should be given the opportunity to share their writing with a friend, editing their work where needed.

AFTER THE UNIT...

- Play the final section of the podcast that starts at 31:50 until the end.
- Explore how films show action. Watch a section of a suitable action sequence from a film and ask pupils to write a story from that scene, using short sentences to move the action on quickly for the reader.
- Explore comics and graphic novels with the pupils, looking at examples that inspired Jason Rohan in his early writing career.
- You may want to read Jason Rohan's series *Kurimoro* as a class.

DOWNLOAD NOW!



To download a full set of FREE resources for this teaching sequence – including planning sheets, teaching notes, working wall elements and more – visit bit.ly/JRohanpack

To subscribe for free, just search for 'Author In Your Classroom' wherever you get your podcasts!



Talk for Reading

Strategy, drama, and investigation – **Pie Corbett** introduces a new approach to books, and how you can use it in your classroom

Apart from developing kindness, reading is the most important part of the curriculum, as it opens up the world for children, giving access to information, ideas and stories about the human condition. Reading is an extraordinary form of abstract thinking in words, images and feelings. Potentially, it provides a lifetime of enrichment that binds us all together as one human race. Everyone loves a good story.

With this in mind, we spent six years developing Talk for Reading. We worked with schools that have high attainment, despite serving challenging areas, to figure out what they were doing that was so effective. It focuses on three core aspects:

- A very positive reading culture;
- Highly effective teaching of phonics and fluency;
- Successful teaching of vocabulary and comprehension.

Here's how they work...

Books as core knowledge

Effective schools loiter with great books and texts. Once a child has spent time with Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park*, for example, working for a week or so considering the four characters' viewpoints, the book becomes a frame of reference for exploration of other narratives. This enables pupils to discuss how texts can be seen from the author's viewpoint, the narrator's, and different characters', as well as how different readers might view a text.

Familiarity with great books provides core book knowledge. This is the school's Reading Spine; a mapped-out book curriculum that provides the basic entitlement to experience great literature (narrative, nonfiction and poetry).

Picturebooks

Picture books can be an ideal place to begin to develop deep thinking about texts. Because words are accompanied by images, everyone will have something to say. Pictures make it seem simpler and so children gain confidence. I would suggest starting with:

- *Voices in the Park* by Anthony Browne
- *I'll take you to Mrs Cole* by Nigel Gray
- *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan

Reading strategically

This is not the same as 'doing strategies' whether the text needs them or not! Pupils should learn how to tackle different texts efficiently alongside what to do if they start to lose the meaning. So, reading a nonfiction book to discover information involves a different strategic approach to reading a short story or poem. Generally, losing the thread of a text is addressed by slowing down, rereading, trying to extract the key idea or action, and perhaps making notes to clarify what is happening before summarising. Nonfiction, however, involves skimming, scanning, and using an index or glossary.

Text choice

The approach to teaching depends on selecting a worthwhile, challenging text. If the children can already read and understand a book, then nothing new will be learned. The movement from dependence to independence stretches across three phases:

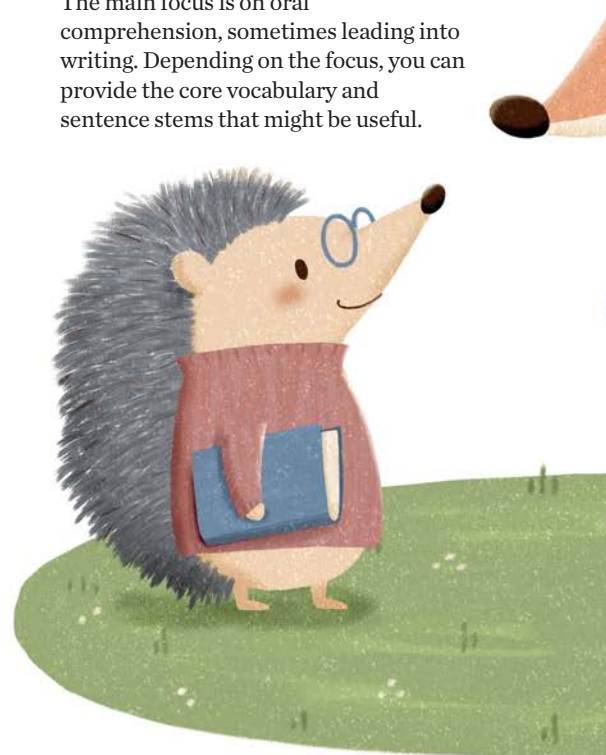
a. Introduction – read the text aloud fluently a number of times and ask the children to share first responses and ideas. Carry out initial work on vocabulary so that soon everyone can reread the text with basic understanding.

b. Investigation – increasingly dig deeper, usually with a core focus based on a relevant literary concept. Use teaching approaches such as reading aloud, sentence-by-sentence, close reading, drama, writing in the style and summarising. By the end of this phase everyone should be able to read the text fluently with understanding.

c. Independent application – finally, this involves children demonstrating what they have learned. This may be writing something similar, writing about their reading discursively, answering questions, or applying what they have learned to another text.

Provide reading vocabulary

The main focus is on oral comprehension, sometimes leading into writing. Depending on the focus, you can provide the core vocabulary and sentence stems that might be useful.



For instance, when discussing character, provide words such as character, hero/ine, protagonist, supporting characters, inner thoughts, speech, action, reaction, motivation, description; give pupils key words to describe personality such as brave, bold, calm, shy, angry, humble, etc, alongside the core vocabulary; and provide relevant sentence stems such as ‘The way the character behaves suggests that...’; and ‘This provides an insight into...’.

Core teaching approaches

Dialogic comprehension is an opportunity for the children to share and discuss their ideas as a group or class. Prompt their discussion, listening to

responses and challenging as necessary. This is NOT about questioning children to test comprehension. When such discussions are effective, everyone deepens their comprehension and the possibilities that the text offers. The rules for such discussions are:

- *All contributions are listened to and given serious consideration*
- *Everyone should ‘have a go’*
- *Be ready to change your mind*
- *Listen to each other*
- *It helps to be tentative*

Training the children how to have a good discussion also involves developing the following approaches. They should be ready to:

- Suggest a new idea – *I think... because...*

before the children work in pairs using the same strategy.

Questioning – this might arise from you or the children. The most powerful questions are usually open-ended and lead into a meaty discussion based on careful rereading of the text. They could be built around literary concepts, e.g. *What is your impression of the author’s viewpoint of the subject? Is the author biased and how do we know? How does the character’s emotional journey through the text link to the theme of sacrifice?*

Drama – use this to deepen and strengthen emotional engagement with the text. This might involve hot seating, freeze frame, and re-enacting a scene or interviews by journalists about key

“Apart from developing kindness, reading is the most important part of the curriculum”

- Challenge – *I’d like to challenge Jenny...*
- Build on an idea – *I’d like to build on Raj’s idea...*
- Explain – *Can Kabir explain why... I think I can explain why...*
 - Question – *We were wondering whether...*
 - Justify – *The author states that... I think that... because the author...*

Talk aloud – model being a reader out loud, to reveal the thought processes that happen as we read. These might be very general, but it is most effective when you focus on the key concept being explored, e.g. talking about the characters and picking up on what the text suggests or reveals.

Sentence-by-sentence

reading slows the text right down and allows you to demonstrate how to tie ideas

together rather than skimming the surface. Model the way in which the text works

events. It can be helpful to use ‘one minute drama’ whereby the children perhaps say a sentence aloud with emotion, provide an action for a sentence, mime a section, chat with a partner in-role as characters, or conduct a phone call in-role about a key event.

Reading as a writer – once the children have a good understanding of the text, the class can consider how the author created certain effects. For instance, we might be thinking about how a persuasive argument is structured and how the key points have been made so persuasive.

Writing in the style – use the text as a model so that the children have the chance to try out the techniques used by the writer.



Pie Corbett is an education consultant, poet and author known for Talk for Writing. Talk for Reading

is available at tinyurl.com/tp-TalkForReading



More than WORDS

Sharing great (and terrible) speeches from history in the classroom can inspire profound learning opportunities across the curriculum, as **Joan Haig** explains...

When I was in early secondary school, my RE teacher taught us how to knit for those in need.

As we sat twiddling wool, she played us famous speeches on her vintage record player. Occasionally, she talked about the context of what we were hearing. But, for the most part, she let the crackly voices do the work (she was, after all, busy instructing us in needlecraft).

And yet, perhaps we did absorb something more in the process than just the words: a sense of the political urgency and the gravity of what was at stake; the mechanics of the speeches themselves; and the vocabulary of power. Reflecting back, I wonder what else speeches can offer us in terms of wider classroom learning. Here are four suggestions:

1. A gateway to history

Historical speeches are powerful introductions to big topics and moments that altered the course of our social and political realities. The speech itself in this case is the gateway and starting point, not the focus. We can use it to move from the micro level – the words of one person – to the macro – the situation from which the words emerged. From Nelson Mandela standing at the dock in a court room in Pretoria, you can enter the world of apartheid, of racial segregation, massacre and freedom fighting. And if you can get hold of the original recordings to allow the pupils to hear the speaker's voice, so much the better. (Obviously this is a little hard if it's the Sermon on the Mount that you're after.)

What is fresh about this approach, I think, is that you purposefully enter the story through a subjective position and are therefore forced to

look at the topic critically. What are the motivations of this person? Who is their audience? Who are they speaking for? Who might be against what they say, and why? Why are they speaking out? What events led up to this moment? What came next?

2. Critical listening

This subjectivity also allows us to talk about trust. Today's world is one of skewed statements and statistics issued by politicians. It is one in which mainstream media and online content are designed to obfuscate the truth in order to sell ideas or products. In helping young people navigate this landscape, why not use speeches? They provide concrete examples of how information and ideas are transmitted – including the dangerous ones. The various UK curricula already go beyond simply comprehending information; they require pupils to apply analytical powers, such as inference, and to try their hands at persuasive writing. Examples of famous speeches can support this.

Moreover, speeches can open a discussion about how different platforms have been used, and abused, in the distribution of information. The internet is a space in which extremist groups

can take advantage of vulnerable individuals; it is also the space in which Malala Yousafzai's blogs informed the world of what was happening within the



*“How do we know
whose voices to trust?
Who is behind the
headlines?”*

Taliban-controlled regions of Pakistan. How do we know whose voices to trust? Who is behind the voice that we hear? Who is directing the newspaper headline that we read? (BBC Bitesize has some great tips for young people on spotting 'fake news'.)

3. STEM inspiration

According to a recent article in Scientific American, one of the difficulties in getting young people excited about STEM – and keeping them excited – is that sometimes its purpose is not made clear. So, what about sparking pupils' interest with some authentic and varied voices from this area? Read extracts from Angela Merkel addressing the World Health Organisation in the midst of the Ebola crisis and it's clear that the world of science and technology is fiercely exciting, involving drama, politics, money and ego. Or check out some Nobel Prize speeches from over the years. What was the story? What was the problem to be solved? And if you want children to hear a young person on the subject, how about introducing them to 13-year-old Taylor Richardson in her 2017 'March for Science' speech? Or Greta Thunberg on the topic of the climate crisis?

4. Confident voices

Not all young people have the skills, opportunity or motivation to stand on a public forum and talk about what they care about. However, there is certainly an argument for teaching rhetoric and public speaking in the classroom – and a good way to start is

with what makes a 'bad' speech. Channelling my own drama lessons from school days three decades ago, I began a recent workshop by performing a terrible speech opener: legs twisted, I looked at the ceiling and off to the sides, mumbled to my feet, twiddled with my hair and 'ummed' my way


through. I then performed a 'good' speech opener – I stood confidently, had good eye contact, a clear voice, controlled hands and a simple message. I asked the class what differences they spotted and they were quick to identify exactly where I'd gone wrong in my first attempt.

I was then taken aback – several of the children volunteered to share their own terrible performances. They were hilarious – truly abysmal – and more and more pupils volunteered to be ridiculed. Little did they (or I) know at the offset that they were learning a valuable lesson: their next performance could only be an improvement. Giving the pupils permission to try out 'bad' speechmaking for themselves turned out to generate a greater understanding of what makes a speech good. It gave them an appreciation for the importance of body language and physical presence. Oddly, it also gave them confidence to stand up and speak out in the first place.

I'm sure there are many other creative ways speeches and speechmaking can be employed to support wider learning, to boost children's confidence or simply spark their interest in a new way. My RE teacher believed that listening to and learning from speeches (and knitting for the needy) would make the world a better place. I don't think she was wrong.





Joan Haig grew up in Zambia and Vanuatu and now lives in Scotland, where she is a lecturer and writer

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Part Scottish, part Canadian, Joan Lennon is a novelist, poet and non-fiction writer living in the Kingdom of Fife.


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Together, they are the authors of Talking History: 150 Years of Speakers and Speeches (Templar Publishing).


RAISE THEIR VOICES


9 steps for leading a successful public speaking session...





 Discuss subjects about which your pupils feel strongly and have them choose their own topic.


 What can speakers do to make an audience believe them? Talk about what makes a good beginning to a speech, and how to close it.


 Compose the speeches on the chosen topics – a one-minute speech is generally around 150 words long.


 Rehearse speeches in small groups, inviting feedback, until speakers are sufficiently confident to present them to the whole class.

 Encourage the speakers to stand up straight, with their feet flat on the ground, and to aim their voices towards the back of the room.

 Speakers should deliver their speeches more slowly than they think they need to – nerves can make us speed up.

 Pauses are important – they let the most important points sink in.

 Speakers should look up from their notes, and look around, engaging their audience.

 At the end, conduct a straw poll – which speeches changed minds?

Additional teacher notes on Talking History: 150 Years of Speakers and Speeches, designed by Templar Publishing, can be found on the authors' websites.

The best words in THE BEST ORDER

From classics to modern favourites, **Alison Dawkins** shares her advice for building an effective poetry curriculum

I'm starting with a confession: I've been meaning to write this piece for more than two terms.

But things keep getting in the way, or seeming more important, and a poetry article has slipped further down my list. And I do remember that used to also be the case when I was in school – the poetry lessons I'd intended, sometimes didn't happen.

And yet, I love teaching poetry; I really love it. When I think back, some of my standout memories are of how readily children can become utterly absorbed by a poem, in ways that they might not always be by prose.

For example, I remember a child weeping at the end of *Today Was Not* by Michael Rosen, and when I asked him what was wrong, he said, "It's so wonderful – his dog came back, and that's what it's like when you lose a pet and then find him again."

For me, teaching poetry is a chance to become immersed in the form. It should be a delight. Through poetry we can enable children to feel the rhythms and flows of complicated language without, at this point, much complicated analysis. They will experience moments of high intensity and high emotion in what is usually a short piece of text. Pupils can also appreciate precise word choices more easily than in longer texts, because there aren't likely to be a lot of other words around, cluttering up the images or the story. As Samuel Taylor Coleridge said, poets aim for 'the best words, in the best order'. This description remains (for me anyway) the best definition of what poetry 'is'.

Each to their own

But how do we choose poems?

When I've been working on shaping curriculums with schools lately,

we've tended to go from our existing knowledge, to browse the internet, and to dip into anthologies. 'Dipping' is the key though – you're looking for things that you like, that sing for you on a first read, without too much thought.

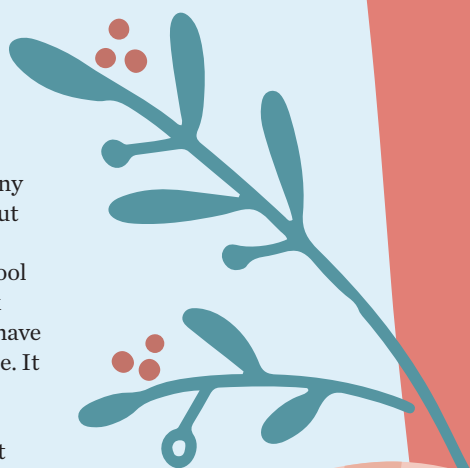
Many of the poems I mention in this article, apart from the longer 'classics' that are freely available on the internet, are from a book called *My World – Poems from Living Language*. It was my 'go to' anthology if I wanted a new poem for my class. It's out of print now, although you can still get second-hand copies, but the point is the process, not the actual book.

Poems tell stories and if a quick read sparks your imagination – it's probably going to be a goodie. There are many, many anthologies out there – many indeed in school libraries. Pick them up and have a quick browse. It really doesn't take long.

You might want a closer look at one poet, or one type of poetry – but the approach is the same. That's how I chose *The Lost Spells* by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris as a poetry collection around which to base some recent planning. I'd already been blown away by the illustrations, and as I read a few sections from a few poems, beautiful lines began running repeatedly through my head. Personally, I think every child should read at least one of them.

However, and as a note of caution, don't just take my word for it. A few

"Keep it simple and let the poem do the work"



times when I've shared a poem I love, the subject leader has looked at me blankly, saying "It doesn't do anything for me, sorry." To which I've replied, "No need for 'sorry'; let's find something else. Let's read some more." And in every case, we've found the poems needed. Different things sing for different people.

Share and share alike

So, how do you go about effectively teaching around these poems?

My advice is to keep it simple and let the poem do the work. My (sort of) blueprint for planning would probably run like this:

- Before you read the poem, it's often helpful to do a bit of brief scene-setting first. (For example, with Tennyson, "This poem is about a

battle that took place over a hundred years ago, when, because of a muddle in communications, a battalion - that's a group of soldiers - called the Light Brigade rode into a valley they weren't supposed to go into. And nearly all of them were killed.")

- But sometimes this is not helpful. John Walsh's *The Bully Asleep* unfolds as we read, letting the reader explore their own reactions to the situation and the different characters.
- Read the poem aloud - in sections or straight through - and be guided by your own feelings.
- Briefly explain any particular words that really matter and/or will help the children get better mental images. For example, with Tennyson again, you could say: "Sabres are swords that have a slightly curved end. Everybody just practise brandishing (that's waving in a fierce way) one. Actually, they're quite heavy; have another go."
- Keep re-reading the poem. This might involve the children echoing your model to mimic 'intonation, tone and volume' (National Curriculum 2014); or reading to themselves - get them to cup their hands around their ears so they can work in a loud whisper; or working in small groups to achieve a polished reading of all or part of the poem.
- Learn sections by heart. It's a statutory requirement in the National Curriculum for many good reasons. Not least that it develops memory, and allows young children to internalise unfamiliar language patterns. Don't worry if they don't fully understand what they're reciting; let the poem with its patterning and rhythms take over. After all, at the very earliest stages with nursery rhymes, we'll give simple explanations for unknown vocabulary, but the quite complicated sentence structures used are simply absorbed by the children and pave the way for their use of those structures later on in their school careers.
- Do a bit of 'in your seats drama'. (Thank you to Martin Galway for the term; much better than my 'let's act out this bit guys'). Picture the scene in my Y5 classroom: the drum roll on the tables to simulate the pounding hooves of the horses as we chant and dramatise with faces, arms and

FOUR ALTERNATIVE POETRY ACTIVITIES

There are an enormous number of outcomes that can arise from reading poetry - if you want something different to 'write your own poem'. Here are a few that I've tried, and which, most importantly, the children have really enjoyed:

- Diary entry and instructions for looking after a dragon - *A Small Dragon* by Brian Patten
- Labelled diagram and explanation - *My Blood* by Carolyn Ross
- Interviews and newspaper reports - *Adventures of Isabel* by Ogden Nash
- First person recounts - *That Spells Magic* by Tony Bradman

voices, parts of *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.

- Turn the words into pictures - either literally by drawing, or mentally into mind pictures. Jane Pridmore's *In the Dark* works brilliantly to unlock imagination, or to literally see how *Seaweed* by D H Lawrence works, pop a piece of seaweed in a bowl of water and let the children play with it, while you read.
 - Decide what sort of recorded outcome you want. I wouldn't always have one, but generally the children want to produce something to showcase their learning. This might be writing a poem. It's often fun to have a fiddle around with form; it's almost always fun to write list poems.
- Writing poetry can be fun and enjoyably challenging, but of course, apart from in Y2, it's not statutory in the National Curriculum. Reading poetry is, though - for every year group, from Y1 to Y6. And even if it weren't, I'd still do it.



Alison Dawkins is a teaching and learning advisor for English at Herts for Learning.

LITERACY

The Literary Curriculum

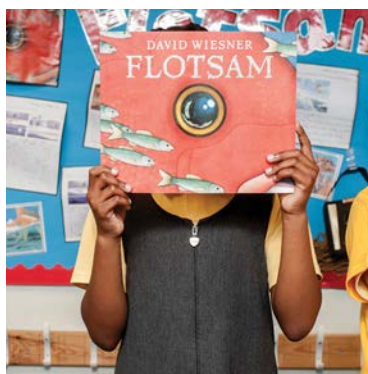
A complete thematic approach to primary English, with literature at its core



AT A GLANCE

- A complete book-based approach to literacy to interest, engage and activate inference
- A rigorously curated collection of rich and varied books rooted in strong contexts
- Follows a 'Teach Through a Text' pedagogy
- Cohesive sequences to help children build a literary repertoire
- Structured to develop deeper reading

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



Giving children access to all varieties of literature is extremely important for their success. One way to underpin your curriculum is to teach topics focused on a book-based English curriculum, encouraging children to work towards shared goals of ownership and authorship of their reading and writing.

Well worth considering is the Literary Curriculum, a complete, thematic approach to the teaching of primary English that places children's literature at its core. This flexible and cross-curricular treasure trove provides ideas, inspiration and structure galore for your literacy curriculum and raises standards by immersing children in a literary world, creating strong levels of engagement to provide meaningful and authentic contexts for their studies.

Taking out a school membership of the Literary Curriculum is probably the best value option because this gets you access to an impressive repository of 300+ top-quality resources. These include planning sequences, Literary Leaves, Spelling Seeds, Home Learning Branches, Learning Log videos, recover and catch-up resources, and writing samples. It also gives you access to a recording and assessment tool for English, whole-school overviews and coverage maps, Literary Curriculum yearly thematic map, a literacy policy statement and permission to use the Literary Curriculum badge on your website.

Let's not forget the 200+ books, which include an impressive range of novels, novellas, picture books, wordless texts,

narrative poems, playscripts and narrative non-fiction with a healthy cross-section of genres from historical narrative and mystery to adventure and fantasy. They dare children to grow and challenge perspectives, and allow them to experience multiple realities and bring reading and writing to life.

Thorough downloadable planning is provided, too, based around high-quality children's books dovetailed to detailed daily session plans for writing, reading and spelling. All come with customisable medium-term overviews.

The plans follow a 'Teach Through a Text' pedagogy to ensure participation, scope and outcomes, including explicit grammar objectives, spelling investigations and purposeful writing opportunities that are varied and highly engaging. The planning, resources and activities are a superb mix and are brilliantly written and very accessible.

The Literary Curriculum provides children with innumerable opportunities to respond to literature and acts as a powerful change agent by developing their intercultural awareness while at the same time nurturing empathy, a tolerance for diversity, and emotional intelligence. It dynamically builds sophisticated reading and writing experiences, provides pleasure and its flexibility makes it particularly suitable for a wide range of needs.

It is a whole-language resource constructed with precision and flair with the belief that you can promote literacy by developing a love of literature and reading, through positive contact with books.

Teach Reading & Writing

VERDICT

- ✓ Puts literature at the very heart of English provision
- ✓ Creates immersive experiences for children that provide a platform for learning
- ✓ Helps pupils develop their critical reading, critical thinking, and self-regulated learning skills
- ✓ Provides outstanding opportunities for children to write for a range of meaningful and 'real' reasons
- ✓ Creates opportunities for learners to develop empathy and enquiry
- ✓ Supports the development of a school-wide reading culture

UPGRADE IF...

You want to develop a high-quality literacy curriculum, foster a whole school love of reading and writing, and provide children with plenty of cognitive and creative challenges.

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

READING

The Mermaid in the Millpond

Build reading confidence with this new, dyslexia-friendly short novel by Lucy Strange, illustrated by Pam Smy



AT A GLANCE

- A new dyslexia-friendly atmospheric short novel by bestselling children's author Lucy Strange
- Written with a reading age of 8+ for students ranging in age from 8 to 13 years old
- Uses high-quality, pale-yellow matte paper with a spacious, clear layout
- Specially modified font to encourage a smooth read with well-paced plot and short chapters



When it comes to book recommendations for children, where do you start, especially when considering dyslexic readers and those who are under-confident?

Well, let your pupils be submerged in a strange world and read a tale with a tail that will really get them hooked. Lucy Strange's new book is a historical mystery dripping with murky strands of fantasy; it's punchy, emotional and captivating.

Set during the British Industrial Revolution, when child labour was the norm, this is the story of a young girl, Bess, who leaves behind the daily grind of a London workhouse for a better life as a piecer at a rural cotton mill in the North of England. This turns out to be a bad move because life at the mill is similarly brutal and she becomes the property of the mill, destined to work in cruel and harsh conditions without mercy until she is 21. But Bess isn't the only one who is trapped. When she hears rumours of a monstrous mermaid lurking in the millpond, she doesn't believe a word of it. Until she discovers that she's not alone in longing to escape.

This is a fantastic descriptive story that blurs the lines between myth and reality and contains lots of tense action packed into short chapters, which is perfect for engaging children and helping to build up their confidence and reading stamina. The story covers a range of themes including

friendship, freedom, loss, and power, and features a strong female protagonist with agency who really drives the story forward, which readers will find empowering. Striking black and white illustrations add a real sense of the industrial setting and the desperation engulfing Bess, adding a melancholic but realistic aura to the text.

This book is published by award-winning Barrington Stoke and that's significant because they take great care in publishing super-readable books with a whole host of specialist features designed to help dyslexic and reluctant readers. They are thoroughly reviewed by children, too.

What this means is that you get a book designed with a dyslexia-friendly font, accessible layouts and spacing to stop the page from becoming overcrowded, and yellowish, heavier paper to help reduce visual stress by minimising confusing show-through. This really matters to dyslexic readers.

An effective hi-lo (high interest, low ability) book offers unpatronising content inside a compelling story with engaging characters to interest struggling readers. This is combined with carefully chosen vocabulary, simple sentences and illustrations to support the text. Lucy Strange's book does all this and makes it look easy, which of course it isn't because to write in this way requires heaps of skill.

Teach Reading & Writing

VERDICT

- ✓ A gripping, age-appropriate and highly readable story packed with dynamic illustrations
- ✓ A very accessible book to build fluency, vocabulary and interest in reading
- ✓ Aimed at the age of the reader not their reading level
- ✓ Perfect for engaging under-confident, struggling and reluctant readers, those with dyslexia, Irlen Syndrome, EAL readers and children with low attention spans and low self-esteem
- ✓ Ideal for classroom discussion and cross-curricular studies

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for a hi-lo fictional story that is dyslexic friendly and will engage, excite and be a stepping stone to other books by the same author.

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Although they’re light on text, reading between the lines of picturebooks is one of the best introductions to critical thinking for pupils

CHRIS HAUGHTON

We all know the power of the slow reveal – the anticipation of ‘what comes next’, and the guessing game we play with ourselves along the way. A lot of the time, we connect this process to traditional novels, which lay out the plot over hundreds of pages, leaving clues throughout the chapters as to what twist or essential plot point lies in wait. But this is an approach that can work just as well, if not better, with picturebooks, and help our youngest children develop that excitement for storytelling.

There is something so satisfying about reading a book out loud and seeing pupils physically react to the narrative, and being able to achieve this while introducing them to books that are specifically written for their own age group is thrilling. When I first read my latest book, *Maybe...* out loud, children were jumping up out of their seats, commenting on the tigers that had appeared creeping up behind the monkeys in pictures, but hadn’t yet been mentioned in the text. It was lovely to see them so excited, and witness how they read between the lines, without even realising they were learning a really important skill.

Picturebooks are also a fun way to introduce critical thinking, and the idea that when you’re talking about literature, whether that’s Shakespeare or monkeys who want mangoes, everyone’s opinion is valid. I worked with the CLPE on their Power of Pictures programme a little while back, and the approach reminds me of the most fun classes that I had as a child; where everyone is asked for an opinion, and there’s a proper discussion. My book *Shh! We Have a Plan* is used as part of Power of Pictures, and it’s great to see children discussing the cover, guessing as to what the characters might



“The magic of getting invested in a story is one of the best gifts we can give someone. It’s powerful stuff”

be representing, and developing ideas together. There’s so much curiosity among children, before the book has even been opened, it’s lovely. This kind of approach also works for all sorts of pupils – some may be incredibly literate, and be able to use sophisticated vocabulary to express their ideas, and others may have less of a grasp on spoken language but be very perceptive, noticing small details and things that are going on in the pictures.

Going through page by page also helps to slow everything down, and really allows you to get the most out of every story. Picturebooks are typically very short, of course, but the amount

of feeling and ideas they can pack in is impressive. It’s like zooming in on an emotion or an event that perhaps plays out over 30 pages or so, allowing you to delve into concepts that might be new to your youngest readers, and helping them understand the world around them. For instance, in my second book, *Oh No, George!* (which turns 10 this year!) I wanted to take the issue of making a decision, and really slow it down to dramatise the moment of choice between the right thing to do, and what you want to do. For George the dog, this manifests as whether to eat a whole cake, or chase cats, or dig up the garden, but for children, it can serve as a great lesson in impulse control, and learning that what feels good now might not be best in the long run. It’s essentially the marshmallow test in story form!

Reading between the lines of picturebooks is an excellent way to develop literacy, I think. The evidence is there for it too, from practitioners like Dr Mary Roche, whose book *Developing Children’s Critical Thinking through Picturebooks: A guide for primary and early years students and teachers* is a great insight into the rich teaching and learning we can get from this form.

But on top of that, reading Mary’s work, and having interacted with children myself, has really brought home the magic of getting invested in a story, and having the chance to talk about it with peers. No matter their age, this is one of the best gifts we can give someone. It’s powerful stuff.



Chris Haughton is an author and illustrator. His books include Shh! We Have a Plan, Oh No, George! and Maybe... See more of Chris’ work at chrishaughton.com



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