

4

Writing

Activities

Thinking about text types

Aim

To understand that we write in different ways for different purposes and different audiences.

What to do

Students should think about the writing they have done in the past 24 hours. For each piece of writing they should think about text type, purpose and audience. They might come up with a list like the following:

Text type	Purpose	Audience
diary entry	record/reflect	self
letter	keep in touch	friend
advert	persuade	unknown buyers
poem	enjoyment	self
note	regulate behaviour	family member

Analysing a piece of writing

Aim

To understand that purpose, audience and outcome determine text type and choice of language.

What to do

Ask students to analyse the following advertisement for purpose, audience, language, how it was written and outcome:

Norfolk Caravans and chalets for sale or to let,
idyllic settings between Norfolk Broads & coast
on unspoilt parkland sites. 01692 123456

They might have suggested the following:

- Purpose – to provide information, to persuade people to buy or rent a caravan or chalet.
- Audience – unknown to the writer, potential holiday-makers.
- Language – chosen to make the location of the caravans and chalets a perfect location for a holiday, e.g. 'idyllic', 'unspoilt', and to let people know that there are lots of places to visit and possible activities nearby, e.g. 'Broads', 'coast', 'parkland'.
- How it was written – careful selection of words and ideas to convey as much as possible about the location of the caravans and chalets and the possibilities of a holiday in Norfolk in a limited number of words.
- Outcome – publication in a newspaper.

Now ask them write an advertisement to sell a caravan that they own. How would this differ from the advert above? Can they see how purpose makes a difference to how they write?

Writing an advertisement

Aim

To understand what writers need to know in order to write and how they go about producing a piece of writing.

What to do

Tell students they have got three minutes to write a lonely hearts advert for a friend who is looking for a partner. They have a limit of 15 words.

After writing the advert students should consider how they went about the activity. Possibly they visualised their friend and their likes and dislikes. They thought about the sort of language that is used in lonely hearts adverts, for example abbreviations such as GSOH. They probably wrote fairly quickly and then read through their advert and changed or crossed out some words.

They might have found it frustrating to have so little time to write the advertisement. They can consider how children might feel when they are writing against the clock. Asking children to produce a piece of writing that they feel pleased with in 20 minutes, often the time set aside for writing, can leave them feeling dissatisfied too. It takes them a lot longer than adults to write.

Analysing fiction

Aim

To understand the elements that can be included in the opening of a story.

What to do

Students should read the following opening which is taken from a picture book for children. What has the author included in his opening?

In the early morning, Jamina went with her Grandfather to collect honey. They followed the honey bird far into the bush. 'I want to see elephants!' Jamina cried. 'Grandfather, do you think we will?' 'You'll be lucky', said the old man.

Paul Geraghty (1994) *The Hunter*. London: Walker Books.

The following elements were included:

- The setting – the bush, early morning.
- The characters – Jamina, grandfather.
- A quest – to find elephants.
- Something to keep the reader reading, something to find out – will Jamina see the elephants?

Story openings

Aim

To understand that there are many ways to start a story.
To use these ideas in school.

What to do

Ask students how many ways there are to open a story. The previous activity will have suggested some: setting, character and a quest. Can they think of any more? They might suggest:

- traditional;
- dialogue;
- question;
- action;
- object.

Ask the students to write the opening to 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' using these starting points. For example,

- Character: Goldilocks was a curious little girl.
- Setting: The sun was shining through the branches of the trees in the forest.
- Traditional: Once upon a time there were three bears.
- Dialogue: 'Don't forget. You are going to visit grandma today', said Goldilocks's mother.
- Question: Why did I go into the three bears' house that morning?
- Action: Goldilocks skipped happily down the path towards the house in the forest.
- Object: The house looked empty and the door was open.

When teaching children to write openings could they use these ideas? Using one of these ideas they could ask children to:

- write an opening for a known story;
- write an opening for a previously written story;
- write an opening for a friend's story.

Every time they are teaching children about writing fiction they can vary what they teach the children about writing effective openings.

Thinking about poetry

Aim

To understand what children should learn about poetry.

What to do

Ask students to answer the following questions:

1. If you had to explain poetry what would you say?
2. What are the characteristics of poetry?
3. What should children learn about poetry?

Words such as rhythm, compression, figurative language, sounds, sound patterns, rhyme, carefully chosen words, serious, funny, emotions, explore, surprise should appear in the answers.

Read 'What is poetry?' by John Mole, in A. Wilson (ed.) (1998) *The Poetry Book for Primary Schools*. London: Poetry Society.

Writing poetry

Aim

To learn about poetry.

What to do

I deliberately work with 'The Magic Box' because many students see it being used in school and it can be used in a way that conceals rather than reveals the delight of the poem and of poetry.

First, read 'The Magic Box' from *Cat Among the Pigeons* by Kit Wright to the students. There is a copy on the Poetry Class website <http://www.poetryclass.net>. Spend some time discussing the students' responses to the poem. Ask the students to think of someone who is important to them – a partner, a child, a sister or a friend. Then ask them to imagine that they are creating a box for this person. What colour is it? What shape and size? Is it textured, covered in velvet or lace, or is it smooth and shiny? What does the inside look like? This helps the students to really focus on the person that they will be writing for and think about their likes and dislikes.

Tell the students that they are going to put a number of things in the box. These are special things that will bring the recipient of the box pleasure. Ask them to think of what will appeal in response to the following prompts:

- something you can see;
- something you can hear;
- something you can touch;
- a special colour;
- a feeling;

- a dream or hope;
- something from the natural world.

Then, making a selection from their ideas, they can fill in the following frame:

<p>A Gift In my box I will put ... For you</p>
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This activity helps students to see that poetry does not have to rhyme. It helps them to understand that poetry involves the careful selection of ideas and words. By the end of the session each student has produced a very individual poem and this helps them to see how having a specific audience influences what and how we write.

This activity can be combined with a design technology session where students do make the box that they have designed before they write their poem.

On the Poetry Class website there are some more ideas about how to teach children about poetry by using this poem.

Looking at samples of writing

Aim

To apply an understanding of the writing process to children's writing.

What to do

Students should look at a number of samples of children's writing, gathered from their placement schools if possible. They then look at what the children know about writing organisation, structure, audience and style.

How far do the children meet the objectives in the Early Years Foundation Stage document, the Framework for Literacy and the National Curriculum?

What would the students like to discuss with the children?

What oral and written feedback would they give to the children?

Some samples of writing follow.

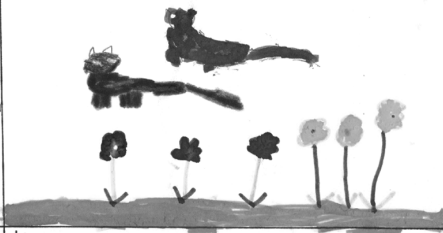
Figure 4.1 was written by a six-year-old boy.

Figure 4.2 was written by a six-year-old boy.

Figure 4.3 was written by a five-year-old girl.

Figure 4.4 was written by a seven-year-old girl.

A. Scary Story Night.
 ONE Day. There was a
 mouse that was tired
 He read a Scary Book
 and then He had a nos He ran
 out side and ~~it~~ OPed the
 Door it was SCARY and
 cold He went SCARY and
 Back inside and here a



Now the Ghost Story
 There was a mouse Boo
 mouse was F. tired and
 then he went back inside
 night and then went to
 bed. Then went to

Figure 4.1 Writing Sample

when I was naughty I was
 only 4 and Slammed The
 lamp and my mum came up
 and I Hide at The Back
 of The chair and keji told
 my mum and my mum
 Samacke me with a Belt and
 sent me up my room for a week
 and I did NOT go to school.
25 th June
 when I was naughty.



Figure 4.2 Writing Sample

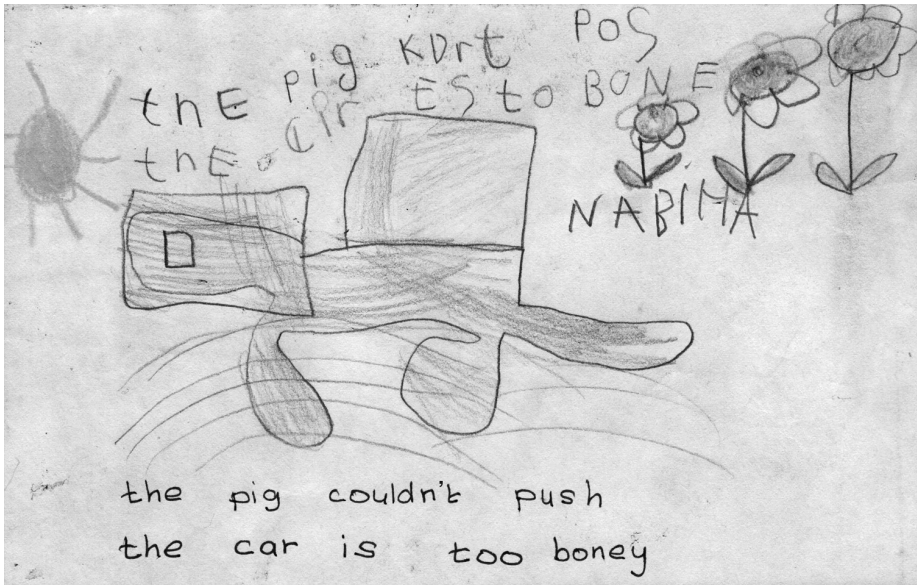


Figure 4.3 Writing Sample

my fantastic home

my home has got a garden and it has trees in
 it and when you throw bread down there.
 Birds see it and they come down there get
 the bread and the little birds are more
 stronger than the big birds and fly off and
 snach the bread and I wanted to live in a
 rich house and I wanted to be rich and I
 would get a new house and a new car. when I
 would buy a new home and I would give
 the house to the people who don't have
 homes my home would have a sky TV and
 video and it would have a ice cream maker
 I would have 4 bedrooms and I would want
 it to be in a nice place with a sea side and in
 my room there would be a cupboard to keep
 my cloths in and a table to keep my books on
 and my bed would be on the side. and the
 carpet would be on the middle and a 3. draws
 to keep my toys in, and a nuther cupboard
 to keep my best cloths in, and my best toys.

Figure 4.4 Writing Sample

Websites

Everybody Writes: <http://www.everybodywrites.org.uk>

The website celebrates innovative writing projects taking place at local, regional and national levels and lists writing events and news. It contains some practical resources, created by teachers, to get primary pupils excited about writing. It contains a writing audit which provides teachers with a way of assessing individual pupils' writing needs. There is also a whole-school audit which can be used by teachers to reflect on their school's current practice with pointers for the future development of writing.

Links to on-line reading

Poetry in Schools: A Survey of Practice (Ofsted, 2007): <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070034>

The report shows that although the teaching of poetry is good in many of the schools inspected, it remains weaker than other areas of English. Poetry still appears to present a challenge for teachers, and remains an area in which they need extra support. It gives some examples of good practice.

Improving Writing with a Focus on Guided Writing (2007): http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/imp_writ/imp_writ_0061807bkt_en.pdf

This booklet is part of the overall Primary Framework Continuing Professional Development package on Improving Writing and is designed to accompany the DVD *Improving Writing* that provides exemplification of shared and guided writing in Years 1, 3 and 5.

Mills, C. (2005) 'Effective teachers of writing', *Literacy Today*, 43. Available from: <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Pubs/mills.html>

In this article Colin Mills describes the successful classroom practice of effective teachers of writing.

Turbill, J. (2007) *Targeting Text: A Guided Writing Project*. Department of Education, Tasmania, School Education Division. Available from: <http://www.wfp.education.tas.gov.au/english/targeting.htm>

This is a description of a workshop given by Jan Turbill to a group of teachers. It contains information about writing and practical examples of activities to use with children when teaching writing.