

Explorative Considerations For Teaching To Greater Depth



The Writing For Pleasure Centre

- Promoting research informed writing teaching

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Introduction

The mission of The Writing For Pleasure Centre is to help all young people become passionate and successful writers. We look to accomplish this goal through curriculum development, conducting and publishing research, and by working with children, teachers, school leaders, teacher-trainers and charities.

We have developed our research-rich website to share the most effective teaching practices. It's our hope that teachers regard The Writing For Pleasure Centre website as a place where they can access a specialist network and continued professional development that is free.

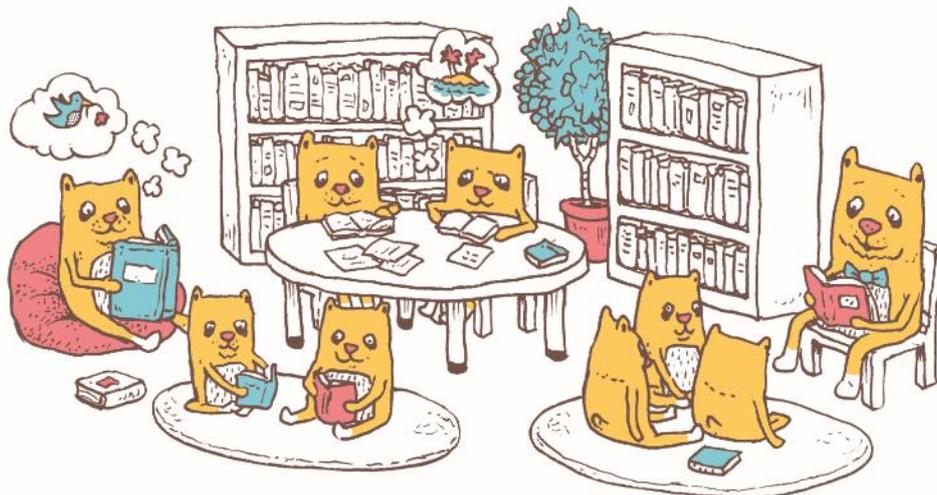
The Research Base

For the past fifty years, research has been consistent on what makes great writing teaching. Despite this, we as teachers can be inundated by a variety of approaches and training, all promising a lot but often lacking the necessary grounding to be successful in the long-term. This is why our website is based on the following:

- Extensive scientific research into the most effective writing instruction.
- Case studies of what the best performing teachers of writing do that makes the difference.
- Our own research into a *Writing For Pleasure* pedagogy.
- The wisdom of professional writers.

If you're new to the idea of a *Writing For Pleasure* pedagogy, you can read about it [here](#).

The Writing For Pleasure Centre functions both as a think tank and as an action research community. The result is that we are continually engaged in sharing effective practices, case studies and research findings.



1. CREATE A COMMUNITY OF AUTHENTIC WRITERS:

Firstly and most importantly, create the conditions for greater depth writers to thrive. Attend to and have an awareness of children's intellectual, creative, socio-affective interests/abilities and allow these to enter their writing as an area of strength. Create a positive and very writerly/explorative environment in which children can craft their writing. Have an awareness of their need to have 'intrinsic motivation,' 'volition,' and 'self-efficacy' maintained and respected. They need time and space to self-manage and self-regulate their own writing processes and final writing 'products'.

- Allow them to pursue writing projects which attend to their 'funds of knowledge', opinions, interests and emotional responses. Writing projects which are personal to them.
- Create a small peer workshop environment in which to write with other mature experienced writers.
- Consider ways home and school writing can merge and influence one another.
- Use their own writing processes and ways of producing a final writing product.
- Children need to read and talk about the craft of writing with peers and their teacher with regularity.
- They need to feel they are living a literate life.

2. GENRE EXPERTS:

- *Write effectively for a range of **purposes** and **audiences**, selecting the appropriate **form**.*
- *Choose the appropriate **register**.*
- *Distinguish between the **language of speech** and **writing**.*
- *Exercise conscious control over **formality** through grammar and vocabulary.*

Move children away from genre imitating to 'innovating' or active hybriding or subversive manipulation. This could provide useful evidence for the above standard. Show them the typical register of major genres and ensure they have an understanding of their 'field', 'tenor' and 'mode'. By allowing them to read about the register of the genre (potentially through [genre-booklets](#)), and to understand it (through exemplars), allow them to use it and then play around with it. This should provide rich examples for this standard. Some examples of manipulation include: metafiction, deconstructionist, intertextual, hybriding and the concept of 'faction'.

3. PARENTHESIS:

- *Use semi-colons, dashes, colons, hyphens to enhance meaning and avoid ambiguity.*

Teach the function of parenthesis explicitly. Teach that they have a variety of options to choose from when enacting parenthesis and that they function in slightly different ways. This should help attend to the above statement. Use our [Functional Grammar Table](#) to help you if you'd like.



4. MATURE INDEPENDENT WRITERS:

- *Drawing independently on what they have read as models for their own writing.*
- *Literary language*
- *Characterisation*
- *Structure*

COLLECTING: Collecting words, collecting sentences/poetic moments, collecting themes, trying out types of openings, types of endings, collecting metaphors, collecting characters as metaphors, collecting/discussing psychological/philosophical ideas as plots/characters/settings for narrative writing.

BEHAVING LIKE A FILM DIRECTOR: In narratives, use flash-backs, multiple perspectives/changing perspectives, considering 'camera angles,' using delay, try out different chronology and use of tenses and consider pace.

READING FOR PLEASURE + 'WITH RIGOUR': Build a reading for pleasure culture in the classroom/home. Provide children with particular books/exemplars which could showcase teaching points and provide 'rigour'.

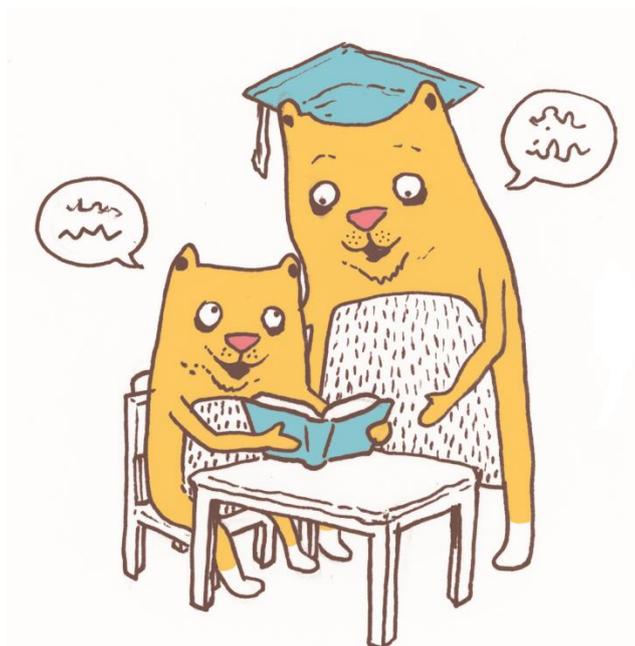
DEVELOPING NARRATIVE:

- Know what psychological or philosophical point they want to make through their narrative first then build/disguise this idea in their characters, settings, objects and events.
- Give them time to dig deep into the consciousness of their characters. Encourage some of their writing to be character led – not plot led. They should be doing more than simply making up a character and then try to explain and authenticate them. Character, plot and setting are all interconnected behind one coherent psychological/philosophical theme that they want to deliver. They interrogate their character until they know everything about them and why they do the things they do.
- Know about and use a variety of story arcs.
- They do more than those children who simply have the ability to flesh out with vivid detail an otherwise dull and clichéd plot. In other words, they do more than those who are able to disguise their bad or shallow narratives.
- Appreciate that narrative is made up of structural units 'description', 'dialogue' and 'action'. They are able develop these in both an individual way (almost as pieces of poetry or art in themselves) and as part of the collective whole. Their narrative works should read as an uninterrupted fictional dream which is wholly convincing and never broken through awkwardness or by their sense of ego as the writer.
- As a narrator, they keep a cool distance away from the story and instead use their characters and the events themselves to give over the emotional quality. An extension of this is that they don't entertain needless explanations – which disrupts this ideas of a 'narrative dream'. They basically stay out of the story if they can help it. In this kind of writing, they understand they are nothing more than an observer of the story and a reader of characters' minds.
- They see sentences as being made of 'slots'. E.g. *The man walked down the road*. The slots that can be modified in this sentence are the following: 'the man,' 'walked' and 'the road'. One or two of these will typically be modified in the form of 'show don't tell'. They are always looking to 'convince' to 'prove' that the narrative is 'real' to their reader through literary language.

- The descriptions they use are always affected by the mood of their characters and their present feelings.
- They check the variety and length of sentences. Actively looking at pace and flow. They don't fall into the trap of 'subject-verb-object', 'subject-verb-object' for example.
- Their writing often deals in the concrete as opposed to the abstract. It's the difference between *That autumn day* as opposed to *autumn* or *happiness* or someone's *specific* happiness.
- They revise their piece to near death. No aspects are left untouched or underappreciated.

A QUICK NOTE ON NON-FICTION:

- These writers should seek the opportunity to play around with non-fiction genres, deliberately turning them on their head in new and creative ways. They will take part in writing 'faction' and will also begin to naturally mix different non-fiction genres together through hybridisation.
- They will classify their subject of choice before moving onto to discussing its nuances. They include rich poetic descriptions as well as definitions for technical vocabulary their readers may not know.
- They therefore use formal and informal voice as well as figurative language when describing phenomena.
- They are not afraid to reveal their personal response to the non-fiction subjects they write about; providing personal anecdotes and feelings towards their subject which really brings an extra dimension to their non-fiction.
- They have complete control over their non-fiction writing and use subtleties and nuances of language which evoke all the senses and leave their reader genuinely in awe, entertained, thrilled, emotional, persuaded and informed – all within a non-fiction text.
- As a result, they are able to have their own style and voice within non-fiction writing. This can include using figurative language, poetry or personal narrative to enhance their piece and the information they want to get across.



Ten Practical Ideas For Encouraging Possible Greater Depth Writing

Whilst it is unlikely that the below strategies or teaching points will make a significant contribution to a child reaching greater depth, I hope they might provide important reflections. Perhaps they can potentially spark additional thoughts and actions on teaching all children to write but particularly for those considered greater depth writers.

1. Try introducing your writers to '[genre-booklets](#)'. For them to read them and be informed by them. They explain the typical 'register' of the chosen genre before providing a couple of exemplars of the genre in action. Children could then be encouraged to use the genre for their own purposes.
2. In narrative writing, encourage children to write their piece (or part of their piece) from another character's perspective. Remember, character can include settings too. Alternatively, they could try and write it in a different narrator point of view (1st, 2nd, 3rd).
3. In narrative writing, encourage children to move the chronology of their story around. They could be photocopied and **paragraphs cut and moved around**. For example, placing their ending at the beginning of their narrative. They can also **experiment by writing different types of openings and endings (see genre booklets)**.
4. Encourage children to build a story around a psychological/philosophical idea or theme. For example, a plot, character and setting which deals with *fear*. Or the philosophical idea that *the ends always justify the means or people and the environment must be able to live peacefully together*.
5. Provide lessons, activities and resources which encourage children to interrogate their characters in fine detail ([see genre booklets](#)). Encourage them to use their character as a metaphor for a theme/idea/emotion. An obvious (and not very subtle) example of this is the characters from ***Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*** – there to represent all the worst of human beings!
6. Encourage children to try out different story arcs. **The six common story arcs** are: fall-rise-fall, rise-fall, fall-rise, steady fall, steady rise and rise-fall-rise. **The Tony Ross Shakespeare Short Stories** are a really good way of showcasing some of these. See [\[www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3679510\]](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3679510) for more details.
7. Encourage children to see **sentences as being made up of slots**. Each slot has an opportunity to be modified. Modification can come through 'show don't tell'. Typically, authors will modify one or maybe two slots. E.g. *The man walked down the road*. The slots that can be modified in this sentence are the following: 'the man,' 'walked' and 'the road'.
8. Encourage children to write '**faction**'.
9. Michael Rosen says you can encourage children to simply '**talk posh**' when writing formally. You can also encourage them to write figuratively – even in non-fiction. You'll be surprised how much both figurative language and metaphor are used in non-fiction texts!
10. Allow children to mix non-fiction with personal response of the subject. This creates two different types of formality and points of view writing. Eventually, you can encourage them to include personal narrative or even poetry within non-fiction pieces too.

Conclusion

We offer a wide variety of high-quality and research-rich CPD nationally and internationally. This includes our school residencies, specialist teacher institutes or our single or multi-day school-based teacher workshops. We value our long-term and close affiliations with schools and other stakeholders. This means that we, like the schools we work with, share a longstanding commitment to embedded school CPD and providing pleasurable, satisfying and effective writing teaching. For more information on becoming one of our school affiliates, please email us at literacyforpleasure@gmail.com

School Residencies

When we do residencies in schools, we will visit for several days to work with senior-leadership, teachers and children. Over the course of the week, we provide after-school teacher workshops, teacher mentoring and will teach exemplar lessons for teachers to observe. We spend a lot of time observing and mentoring teachers in their classrooms and provide each teacher with their own summary report. Once the residency is over, we encourage schools to engage in action-research and to work on their own examples of practice. We ensure we maintain contact with our school affiliates over the long-term and continue to make ourselves available to staff who need us without extra cost. We see this as embedded CPD and is based on what research tells us is the most effective type of teacher development.

- [Download our school residency brochure](#)

Spring, Summer & Autumn Institutes

- [View our institute programmes](#)

We have created our out of term-time institutes so that teachers can come together and enjoy a 'working holiday' learning about different aspects of teaching writing and can network and enjoy the company of like-minded colleagues. We have found that these 'working holidays' can be particularly attractive to schools who are committed to improving children's writing experiences and outcomes but may have limited budgets. We have found that senior leadership teams are very willing to pay or heavily subsidise teachers' participation in these institutes.

Teacher Workshops

In terms of workshops, we can do half, whole-day or multi-day workshops on one or more of the topics listed below. Throughout these fast-paced sessions, we draw upon our own research, case-studies of the best performing teachers and our own classroom experiences as teachers and staff developers to create genuinely enjoyable but also utterly useful and practical experiences for teachers. Our participants always leave with new understandings about the teaching of writing and have a host of strategies and techniques they can implement in their classrooms the next day and beyond. Again, once these workshops are over, teachers are offered the opportunity to become teacher affiliates and so access our continued support to schools and teachers remotely without extra cost.

References:

This pamphlet is produced as a result of the following reading:

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- Young, R., (2020) *Writing For Pleasure Manifesto* [online: <https://writing4pleasure.com/the-writing-for-pleasure-manifesto/>]