

# Herts for Learning - Primary teaching and learning English newsletter

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## Poetry that sticks to your soul

Michelle Nicholson  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



On Christmas Day 1979, Santa left me a copy of Kaye Webb's anthology 'I like this poem.' It is a delightful collection of poetry, although thirty-five years later the description: 'A collection of poems old and new' could perhaps read: 'A collection of poems, all old.' Searching on Amazon this year for a poetry book for my niece, I was amazed to see that this book is still in print and remains on the top selling list. Many of the reviews are by readers who are replacing their own much loved, but tattered copy. In her anthology entitled '101 poems for children', Carol Ann Duffy - the Poet Laureate- seeks to create a similar legacy. The book is a rich catalogue of poems of all types- short, long, old, new, funny and serious. With entries from writers as diverse as William Shakespeare and John Agard, this is proving to be an enjoyable anthology that I am dipping into again and again. In her prologue, Duffy says she hopes that "the child who owns this book will grow with the poetry here and find poems that will stay with him or her forever".

Returning to Amazon's selection of poetry books, you don't have to scroll far down the 'most popular' list to stumble upon the various works by Spike Milligan. 'Silly Verse for kids' was first published in 1973 and, as my dad was a huge Goon Show fan, he bought me a copy even though I was too young to read it. In time, my sisters and I knew every poem in that book by heart and we can all still recite the vast majority of them! Not very highbrow I know, but they certainly appealed to us as children and they still make us smile as adults. Children love to laugh and they love nonsense or vulgarity - some of our most successful modern writers are people who understand that: Michael Rosen, Allan Ahlberg, Roald Dahl and Roger McGough to name but a few. So if you meet children who seem resistant to poetry or don't naturally pick books of poems, try starting them off with a bit of the aforementioned, sprinkled with Edward Lear, Spike Milligan, Charles Causey or Lewis Carroll. These writers created poems that demand to be read aloud and laughed over with others.

Continued on p.2 >

All 'courses that may help' to be held at Hertfordshire  
Development Centre (HDC) at Robertson House, Stevenage

The new curriculum asks that children can learn by heart and recite poetry. I can tell you now that, despite having studied the works of Shakespeare at university, I am hard pressed to remember more than a smidgen of Hamlet's great monologues or a line or two of a sonnet. I can, however regale you with a few verses of Pam Ayre's 'Oh I wish I'd looked after my teeth' (which, sadly, was not part of the syllabus). I admire those who can remember long narrative poems and speeches. It is good to see that poetry has a its rightful place in the new curriculum and that children will be expected to learn poems. However, I do hope poems will not be learned by rote and drill for the sake of a curriculum directive, but rather through the repeated, joyful readings that cause a poem to stick to your soul, like toffee in your tooth. Following on from the perfect simplicity of nursery rhymes, poems such as Ahlberg's 'Please Mrs Butler, this boy Derek Drew....' have a rhythm and life of their own, with rhyme schemes so perfect that you don't so much learn the poem as it attaches itself to you. Did you consciously learn the "Owl and the Pussycat" off by heart or has it simply lodged in your memory like the lyrics of a popular song?

However, if you are stuck for poems with that dramatic quality, Julia Donaldson, Children's Laureate, has compiled an anthology called '*Poems to Perform*'. Not only is it a fabulous collection of traditional and modern verse, but there is a handy section at the back in which Donaldson gives teachers suggestions for a performance of each poem. Similarly, Roger Steven's compilation '*Off by heart*' is packed with 83 poems arranged in order of difficulty. Number 1, 'Visiting the Library' consists of two words: "Look! Book!" By the time we get to the final poem, 'The Jumblies', children will be ready for the challenge, thanks to the wealth of tips and teaching points found at the back of the book.

And while we're on the subject of 'off by heart', it's worth checking- do all the younger children know their classic nursery rhymes? In recent years, I have become saddened to find more and more children are arriving at school with no idea that Humpty fell off a wall, or that Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep. The National Literacy Trust is an excellent website for professionals and parents. There is a fabulous section for parents of pre-schoolers where you can click on any number of rhymes and ditties and listen to them. It may be worth hyperlinking this page to your school website:

<http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/songs>

'*Over the Hills and Far Away: A Treasury of Nursery Rhymes from Around the World*' is a thoughtfully illustrated anthology by Elizabeth Hammill. It contains all the rhymes you know and love and a whole host of others besides! I am sure it would make a superb addition to any book corner.

Poetry is a genre where every word has been chosen and positioned for maximum effect on the reader- there is not a single superfluous syllable. We can all appreciate the beauty of a well written poem and the vivid imagery it creates in our minds. Sadly, this genre often gets curtailed or left to the end of a busy term. Moving a poetry unit to the beginning of a term can give you a language rich start to inspire further writing. Not only will children enjoy the opportunity to explore new vocabulary and craft their own poetry, but they can magpie words, phrases and metaphors to use in their next piece of writing. Joyce Sidman has written a beautiful book called '*Winter Bees and Other Poems of the Cold*' - perfect for this season! This book captured my interest on many levels: each page takes the theme of an animal or landscape feature of the Canadian Tundra. The poems themselves are beautifully crafted verses, perfect for sharing with children this term. Who could fail to be mesmerised by a book that begins:

***Dusk fell***

***And the cold came creeping***

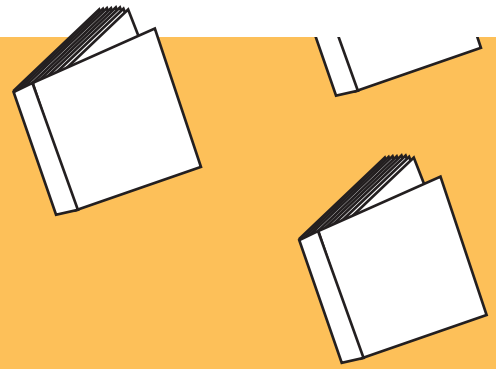
***Came prickling into our hearts.***

The poems are stunningly illustrated with lino prints by Rick Allen. Interestingly, however, they are also accompanied by an explanation of each wintery creature or feature. I could also see myself using the poems as a springboard into some non-fiction writing on icy regions, winter or hibernation. Did you know, for example, that honey bees huddle together in freezing temperatures and flex their flight muscles to generate heat in their cluster?

For further inspiration, do come along to our Poetry Conference in Cheshunt on 3rd February 2015. There will be poetry focused workshops for you to try and we will be joined by Carol Ann Duffy and Roger McGough!



# Something to try:



If you are stuck for an idea, Pie Corbett is always on hand to help the busy teacher. His super book 'Jumpstart Poetry' is jam-packed with ideas, including lesson starters and ways of helping children to craft their own poems.

Here is an example of a seasonal warm up for poetry taken from his book:  
Create two sets of words that are opposites such as words on a hot/ cold theme. Now pair up the opposites into a list eg:

**Spicy icicle**  
**Sweltering frost**  
**Blazing snow**  
**Frozen sunbeam**  
**Frosty oven**  
**Chilly flame**  
**Cool furnace....**

## Booklist

**I Like This Poem: A Collection of Best-loved Poems Chosen by Children for Other Children in Aid of the International Year of the Child** (Puffin Books 1979) by Kaye Webb

**101 Poems for Children, A Laureate's Choice** (MacMillann 2012) by Carol Ann Duffy

**A Children's Treasury of Milligan: Classic Stories and Poems** (Virgin Books 2006) by Spike Milligan

**Poems to perform** (MacMillann 2013) by Julia Donaldson

**Off by heart: Poems for YOU to remember** (Bloomsbury Publishing PLC 2013) by Roger Stevens

**Over the Hills and Far Away: A Treasury of Nursery Rhymes from Around the World** (Frances Lincoln Children's Books 2 Oct 2014) by Elizabeth Hammill.

**Winter Bees & Other Poems of the Cold by Joyce Sidman** (Author), Rick Allen (Illustrator) (Junior Library Guild Selection) Hardcover– 1 Jan 2015

**Jumpstart Poetry** (Routledge 2008) by Pie Corbett

# **THE POWER IN POETRY**

## **LANGUAGE AS PLAY**

**SURPRISE, IGNITE, INSPIRE, DELIGHT, ENJOY, TAKE FLIGHT**



**Tuesday 3rd February 2015, 9.45am - 3.45pm**  
**Theobald Park Hotel, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire**  
conference code: **14CON/011A** / conference cost **£195**

**In the new primary curriculum for English, poetry is central to reading and listening for pleasure. We are delighted to announce our keynote speakers for this event are Dame Carol Ann Duffy, Britain's Poet Laureate and Roger McGough, CBE for services to poetry.**

Research shows that children are starting school with a much smaller spoken vocabulary than in the past which impacts on their ability to learn across the whole curriculum. For this reason, there is an emphasis in the new curriculum on increasing pupils' vocabulary, ranging from describing their immediate world and feelings to developing a broader, deeper and richer vocabulary.

Poetry is perfect for this! It is a genre where every word has been chosen and positioned for maximum effect on the reader - there is not a single superfluous syllable. The new curriculum asks that children learn poems, not by rote and drill, but rather through the repeated, joyful readings that cause a poem to 'stick to your soul'.

This National Conference aims to encourage you to rediscover the pleasure and power in teaching poetry and to help your children find poems that will stay with them forever!

What delegates say about our National Conference Programme...

**"Great speakers! Thought provoking! Enlightening!"**

**"A really well organised event that considered exactly what schools require to not only meet requirements but to move forward."**

**"As an 'out of borough' learner, I found this very interesting and Hertfordshire is clearly at the forefront of education."**

**"A great conference and thoroughly worthwhile day."**

**"Coming from Suffolk today was very refreshing, so well put together with really good speakers. I will definitely look to Hertfordshire for my future training needs."**



**£185 Early Bird Offer –**  
**extended by one week only!**

Book by 16<sup>th</sup> January 2015

# Blending the advice of experts and digging deep into reading

Jane Andrews

Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



**The following describes a journey from 'delivering' guided reading to facilitating child-led discussions where children construct their own understanding of texts. The expected outcome of this practice based research was that the children would extend their contributions and deepen understanding. The unexpected one was the extent to which it developed and deepened a pleasure of reading.**

In my second year of teaching, I felt I had finally cracked the guided reading nut. I had a carousel of activities in place and was reading with a group of children every day, asking them questions scoured from various reading schemes. I was 'doing it'. The provision was in place, but I needed an effective way of drawing the children into reading and helping those non-readers to experience being lost in a book. Developing extended personal responses was my first priority.

Knowing that I spoke far more than the children in my class, I embarked on some action research with my year 4's. I asked my TA to keep a tally chart of interactions between adults and children during lessons on a particular day. She kept a record of children speaking more than four words in an utterance. The result, as you might have guessed, was shocking, far worse than I anticipated.

The adage 'If they can't say it, they can't write it,' was often bandied about the staff room, but I felt it went deeper than that. During guided reading sessions the children were not encouraged to develop their thoughts. I accepted short answers and continued the hunt for another short answer, until I found the short answer that encapsulated just the sense I was after.

Like most teachers, I used 'talk partners'. However, I was not giving the children any time to think before asking them to talk.

Of course, they were saying the first thought that came into their mind and this was often very similar to the other children's ideas. Once I taught them to consider this first thought - because it might be important and, let's not forget to state the obvious - they then learned to push past this and consider a range of possibilities. Years later I heard the inspirational Pie Corbett exemplify this approach in shared writing.

I also needed to develop their vocabulary to enable them to respond in depth (Wittgenstein - the limits of my language are the limits of my world). I varied my vocabulary as much as possible, as well as employing a variety of vocabulary building approaches.

Now the bar was raised for the expected length and quality of their contributions. Reluctant children were enticed into the discussion by repeating contributions they agreed with, or explaining what they have heard and not agreed with, even if they do not have a contribution of their own.

I learned to put a lot more effort into the framing of my questions and Aiden Chambers' prompts, including 'tell me', 'does this remind you of anything?' were invaluable. (Chambers, A. 1993)

Moving children away from 'right answers', to a range of possibilities was a crucial aspect of developing the exploratory talk. A later reading of Carol Dweck's book, *Mindset*, further developed my thinking about 'right answers'. Tentative language was added to our discussions and prompt cards were used: it could be ... it might be .... I was wondering if ... perhaps .... This language made it clear that there could be more than one possible response and, importantly, invited other contributions. All they needed now was evidence. The word 'because' loomed large in the classroom, literally.

After reading 'Words and Minds' (Mercer N. 2000), I introduced other prompts to help children think together. These included: I agree because, I disagree because, In addition to that ..., Do we all agree? What if ...? The children were encouraged to use this language as often as possible and not just in guided reading. Of course, they only really used it if I did. It became part of our everyday interactions in the classroom. When an angry Y6 boy used 'I disagree because .... whilst being interrogated by a midday supervisor, I was ecstatic.

Learning to keep out of the discussions was the difficult part. I also wanted to contribute and it wasn't easy. A profound change had taken place. In guided reading, the ratio of child/teacher speak was about 90/10. The children enjoyed the sessions and would often ask if they could carry on longer than the time allowed. They were digging deep beyond the written word now.

Some years later, I attended a speaking and listening conference with Neil Mercer as the key note speaker. It was reaffirming to hear his messages in person but then another transformative moment occurred. He explained that, of course, the most important skill you can teach the children during group discussions is to summarise. As a result, when modelling guided reading approaches for teachers, I supported children to pull the main points of their discussion together and consider how, as a group, they could agree on an answer to the initial question. As Neil Mercer explained, this is where the understanding occurs.

This term, working with some year 6 pupils and their teachers, we have been adapting SATs questions and using them as prompts for discussion on a range of lovely books such as Noah Barleywater Runs Away, My Name is Mina and The Graveyard Book (to name but a few). The children have, without fail, enjoyed the discussion, provided the justification and, with varying success, zipped it up into an answer to the original question. We are continuing the journey.

Given my long-standing interest in group discussion to teach reading comprehension, it was not surprising that the 'DXYZ of reading' emerged and was included on the Herts for Learning subscription website. It is a simple document to facilitate effective reading discussions.

It has been quite a journey over the last few years and, I have to say, an enjoyable one.

*Chambers, Aidan (1993). Tell Me: Children, reading and talking Newtown: PETA.*  
*Dweck, C.S. (2006). Mindset. New York: Random House*  
*Elliot, A., & Dweck, C.S. (Eds.) (2005).*  
*Mercer, N. (2000) Words and Minds: how we use language to think together. London: Routledge.*



## Courses that may help:

**14ENG/082P Guided reading at Key Stage 1: developing fluent readers**, HDC, Monday 12th February 2015 £72 (£82)

**14ENG/083P Guided reading at Key Stage 2: developing thinking readers**, HDC, Monday 12th February 2015 £72 (£82)

**14ENG/105P Practical and engaging approaches to teaching reading comprehension in the new curriculum**, HDC, Wednesday 26th February 2015 £142 (£162)

# Reading aloud

**Martin Galway**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



'How do I know you'll keep your word?' asked Coraline.

'I swear it,' said the other mother. 'I swear it on my own mother's grave.'

'Does she have a grave?' asked Coraline.

'Oh yes,' said the other mother. 'I put her in there myself. And when I found her trying to crawl out, I put her back.'

Coraline by Neil Gaiman

Cue a (rather loud) gasp from one of the girls in my class when I got to this part of our then current read aloud. This was followed by a moment of silence and then a collective collapse into giggles: a shared reading experience of the best kind. Connections were being formed not just with the text and our individual lives, as is the aim in terms of comprehension, but with each other. One of the most satisfying rewards of a tough profession is the journey that you get to share with the children in your class and reading aloud can take hold as a life-long memory. Whether it's a book at bedtime, a gripping story shared in class or a poem that reframed your thinking or turned your head towards literature, everyone deserves to have these milestones set out for them along the way.

At this year's NATE conference, the poet Anthony Wilson set out how one poem, and one teacher, changed the course of his life. A transcription of his talk is available at <https://anthonywilsonpoetry.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/the-power-of-poetry-nate-conference-20141.pdf>. Here (on page 7) he talks about sharing Red Boots On with his then Year 1 class, inspired by the snow falling outside. The poem is reprinted here too but is interrupted with small bursts of the children's responses. The poem became a virus of the best kind, the rhythm and words infecting the children and taking over the group. This, again, is part of the magic of reading aloud.

But what of the learning? Reading aloud to children has too often been seen as an adjunct to "real teaching". Something that is difficult to fit in around packed timetables. Something that might lead an observer to ask: "but where is the learning?" (I'll remain diplomatic here and move on). Nikki Gamble, in her highly recommended book, *Exploring Children's Literature: Reading*

with Pleasure and Purpose, sets out a range of educational benefits that you might want to arm yourself with if the value of your reading sessions is ever questioned. These include: developing vocabulary; understanding stories beyond [the children's] reading ability; improving concentration and attention span; allowing interaction and the asking of questions; improving knowledge and understanding through the sharing of complex stories; providing models of fluent and expressive reading.

The new curriculum not only gives you licence to provide these opportunities, it makes them a statutory requirement. References to reading aloud are sprinkled liberally across the programmes of study (POS). It starts in the introduction to the year 1 POS, where children "need to hear, share and discuss a wide range of high-quality books..." and continues with the statutory teaching requirement to "Listen to and discuss a wide range of poems, stories and non-fiction at a level beyond that which they can read independently." This carries on as an evolutionary process across the years until we hit the POS for years 5 and 6. At this point, the statutory requirements for comprehension describe the behaviours of an independent and willing reader yet still, in the non-statutory guidance, we see the following caveat: "Even though pupils can now read independently, reading aloud to them should include whole books so that they meet books and authors they might not choose to read themselves."

So reading aloud is something that not only might we want to do, we have to. Flip back to the very opening of the English section of the Primary curriculum and we are very swiftly met with this pretty bold statement: "Schools should do everything to promote wider reading." Everything. That's a pretty broad remit, and we might have to draw some boundaries around that one, but frequent reading to your class should certainly form part of this drive. If you're less inclined towards what might seem "less academic" pursuits, try to think of reading aloud as just another form of modelling, of reading skills but perhaps more importantly of reading habits. We want children to appreciate that reading can be relaxing, scary, funny, and can turn the screw on a range of other emotions. How can children be realistically asked to write for specific effect if all too-often they are not necessarily aware of how they should react to what they hear or read?

There's no doubt that some obstacles can get in the way but these obstacles can be overcome with a determined approach and the right support around you. So let's look at some of the pitfalls.

### **It is very difficult to find enough time for a worthwhile reading session**

This is something that should really be looked at a whole school level. Scheduling will need to fit in with the policies and procedures of the school, but it is also important to have some agreement around the level of commitment to the reading for pleasure agenda. Coming to a whole school agreement will also allow for a creative and flexible approach to addressing this issue: reading weeks with guest readers; flexibility around guided reading sessions (could one session at specified intervals be given over to reading aloud?); using the greater freedoms around text types to have a Take One Book (see Autumn's newsletter) unit that is driven by a book that you love and will love to share. Remember, too, that reading aloud will occur during shared reading, particularly in phase one of the teaching sequence, at points in guided reading, and during some assemblies.

### **I tried reading aloud but they just cannot cope with sitting and listening...are too immature...are not interested.. etc.**

This most likely refers to reading aloud from a book on the carpet (or outdoors hopefully, when the weather's on our side). It can be hugely frustrating and distracting when we have a frantic wriggler in our midst or an uproar over whose fingers touched whose knee. It can also feel like a judgement on our delivery of the book. It mustn't. They're children. You're the boss. In this instance you certainly know what's best for them. And it's space. And a bit of time. First of all, make sure that they know to, and are able to, get comfortable. Explain that you want them to relax and take in the story; to give it a try. The more forceful or restrictive we are around books, the more likely they are to run for the hills from them (Daniel Pennac's *The Rights of the Reader* remains the last word on this aspect of reading provision). If a child cannot sit and attend when they can be reasonably expected to, and given that we have played fair and been upfront with the children in our expectations, have them sit away from the group but within earshot and certainly in plain sight of you. They might doodle – I like to doodle when I listen – but they should not engage in anything likely to distract the group. In most cases, the magic of the text and the responses of the children will prove irresistible

and a slow shuffle back into the group is likely to occur.

### **I don't feel confident in reading aloud/ it's an area I wish to develop.**

You might want to head to [memfox.com](http://memfox.com). Mem is a well-regarded authority on reading aloud and a published author (her *Possum Magic* and *Koala Lou* have been read aloud favourites with some of my former pupils). Her site is dedicated to reading and reading aloud is a particular area of focus. The site provides hints, tips and even commandments for a reading aloud session (which can help in creating a parents' reading guide or training session). It also contains reading aloud recommendations and modelled sessions. It is so important to choose a text that you love, that you know you can bring to life. Keep your audience in mind, but remember, some revered children's books make surprisingly dull read alouds. Try a chapter out loud and see what you think. Recording yourself in action can be very helpful (and you might be pleasantly surprised at some of the clever, unplanned ways in which you manage the reading behaviour of your group).

Reading aloud to a group of children can be one of the most immediately gratifying things you can do as a teacher. You only have to experience the shared delight of a full-on reading of *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* to a nursery class, or a year one class, or a year 6 class, or even your colleagues at a twilight session on reading to know the truth of this. If you really go for it, and I mean wild-eyed pigeony abandon, it works like a charm every time. Then maybe, just maybe the book bug, the infection of *Red Boots On*, might spread that little bit further.

## **Further reading**

**memfox.com** for passionate advocacy of reading aloud to children

**The Literacy Shed facebook page** has collected favourite books for reading to your class

**Shakespeareandmore.com** has a page on reading aloud and some wonderful book lists.

**<http://www.goodreads.com/list/tag/read-aloud> a comprehensive guide to great books for reading aloud.**



# Book reviews

**Martin Galway**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning

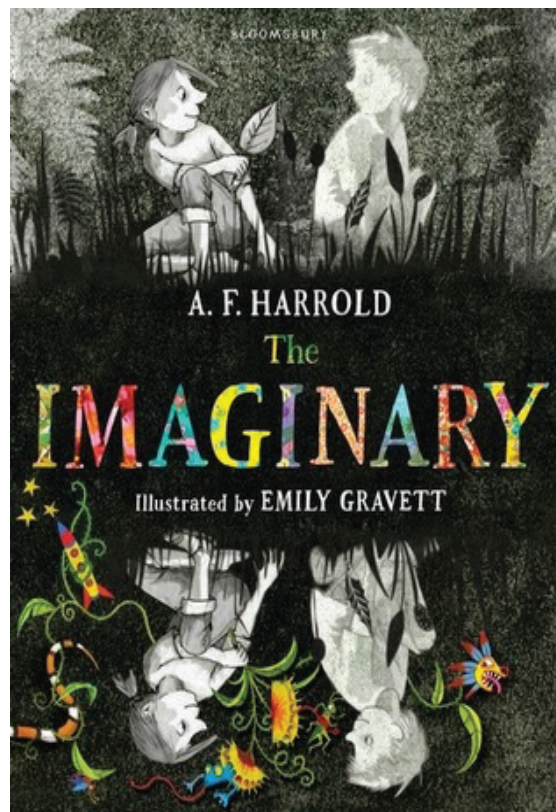


## The Imaginary

by A.F. Harrold Illustrated by Emily Gravett (Bloomsbury, 2014)

We are rather fond of Emily Gravett here at HfL. If you've attended our Great Expectations KS1 course you will have no doubt enjoyed immersing yourself in the deceptively simple wonders of *Monkey and Me*, swinging arms and all. Now she joins forces with A. F. Harrold and between them they have created a seamless mix of gripping narrative and illustration that serves as a tribute to the powers of the imagination. As the blurb tells us, Rudger is Amanda's best friend but he doesn't exist. He's an imaginary and he is not alone. A.F. Harrold creates a parallel universe of imaginary friends: bears that serve cakes, walking record players and a girl in unfortunate dungarees. The only trouble is that there is someone out there who likes the imaginaries in a very particular way – as food. A tragic event separates Rudger from Amanda and forces him to go deeper into the world of the imaginaries as he fights for survival and a way back to Amanda.

The interplay between the text and Gravett's illustrations is a real strength of the book. A game of hide and seek provides a stand out sequence packed with tension. As the lights fail and briefly recover, something is revealed to be lurking very close to Amanda as she hides in her mother's study – something unfriendly and, in Gravett's eerie work, reminiscent of the sort of lank-haired ghost favoured by Japanese horror movies. Although the book has some scary moments, it would work well as a shared text from Year 4 upwards. Highly recommended.

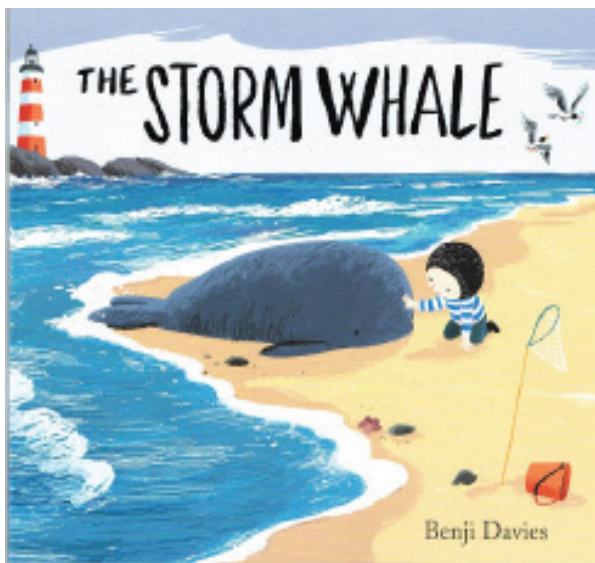


# Book reviews

## On Sudden Hill

by Linda Sarah and Benji Davies (Simon and Schuster, 2014)

look at this



now look at this



Now tell me not to judge a book by its cover. How could you not? They're as gorgeous on the inside as they are on the out.

I first fell in love with *The Storm Whale* when I realised its potential to complement two firmly-established favourites: Julia Donaldson's *The Snail and the Whale* and Simon James' *Dear Greenpeace*. What a killer set of reading and writing opportunities that trio provides. In *The Storm Whales'* opening pages, the charming illustrations establish a fully-realised sense of place in a way that seems effortless. This holds true with *On Sudden Hill*, a simple tale of friendship, change and reconciliation. A delightful book, it provides a plot that is ripe for exploration in Key Stage One. It practically begs you to pop to your local supermarket and secure the biggest boxes available to bring back to your role play area and let the magic happen. Who knows what they'll invent and the friendships they might form in the process?

This delicate treat of a book also supports work around friendship, change and acceptance which we can never have too much of. Also highly recommended.

# Guided reading at YR-KS1: Wringing progress out of the teaching sequence

**Kirsten Snook**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



**Book introductions** – are these in place and effective? DO we ‘plan for the ideas and the language to be in their heads in order to have a successful first read’ (Marie Clay, Reading Recovery creator)? Do all practitioners activate prior knowledge, efficiently, and making formative use of prior assessment about the group’s strengths & needs (e.g. they’re not very secure orally on the irregular past tense coming up in text so I’ll Booktalk it first to prime their vocabulary, ready to draw upon & support their decoding later)? We should also set a key question as a mission to direct children’s comprehension, keep their focus on meaning and message, and to which they will return at the plenary (e.g. Booktalk that leaves the ending a mystery to predict how something, character/setting/event, will turn out).

**Strategy checks** – do these cover a wide range at every band? The better-known ones include product-based strategies such as chunking, syllables, words-within-words, prefixes/suffixes, specific grapheme-phoneme correspondences, etc. But, we should also model a range of process-based strategies such as cross-checking their decoding with comprehension (Simple View of Reading), self-monitoring, re-reading a sentence/line/phrase if it doesn’t make sense, self-correcting etc. Metacognitive and self-regulatory approaches need to be developed by young readers at every band/level in order to monitor - and repair if necessary - own comprehension (e.g. they don’t fix up own errors, so I’ll model how). If not, it is even harder to instil this later on.

**Independent reading** - is this slow and laborious? First, rarely round robin! It dilutes active learning time and usually only serves a purpose of allowing us to hear everyone one by one without having to get up and go listen to them, but it can be very damaging to

progress. For most sessions the children should go into their own ‘reading bubbles’ where they shut the world out and read to themselves, either quietly or silently, and more audibly when the adult comes round to support, assess and re-teach.

There are, of course, some circumstances and stages when hearing each other read aloud is desirable, as part of helping to explore or achieve a particular objective – but this should not be a default mode at KS1 purely for manageability. To view an example of when children reading aloud for each other can be warranted (for part of the lesson) see ‘Ofsted: Literacy a non-negotiable – Year 2: Reading for Meaning’ (<http://tinyurl.com/kt7mapl>). If, after an effective book introduction & strategy check the independent reading is slow, try these ideas:

- Model how to read it fluently, saying “Read it like this” or “Make it sound like talking” (<http://tinyurl.com/q9chxbr>)
- Get child to repeat it after you saying “Do you sound good to listen to?” (if s/he still reads it slowly, insist. Habitual over-sounding-out can be a hard habit to break if they already think reading is only ever about that)
- You can have a child copy you one phrase at a time according to complexity of sentence and individual needs

If still disappointing reading pace/fluency:

- Consider dropping the difficulty level/band slightly, to enable her/him to regain confidence, fluency and to re-orchestrate the effective problem-solving strategies on easier texts again. Carry out a Miscue Analysis or Running Record, to identify areas of strength/weakness, over-reliance/under-use of strategies, and to help shape questions and prompts to use. S/he may benefit from joining the next group down, possibly as an additional session per week, where s/he can feel confident as a ‘big fish in a little pond’. Once the child is steaming through that band again, lift again, but consider a gentler trajectory from one band to next, of sentence structures, to retain the growing fluency and strengthen working memory gradually

**Return to text** – is this used to close the ‘effective strategy’ loop? Could they answer your mission question from the beginning, demonstrating how they found the answers and showing/reading parts that justify their view? Could they show you words they found difficult,

and how they tackled them? How did they know when to stop and re-read something? This is also a good chance to have children use mini-wipeboards to practice how to spell Look Say Cover Write Check (LSCWC) a difficult or high-utility word, e.g. 'their' or 'would'. This helps them recognise those words more fluently in reading, having studied them (and their tricky bits) closely in writing, as well as pack some punch in getting to other new words. E.g. learning the word 'would' instantly unlocks TWO more, 'should' & 'could' and so has a 'multiplier effect' on learning. (see Ross, M. J. (2008) *The Multiplier Effect in Teaching - how to increase the impact of day to day teaching* . ISBN 9 780955 948602.)

**Response to text** – does this follow up and deepen understanding of the text? This is usually on the next day, sometimes supported by an adult. If a group is underachieving then this additional time with the teacher could afford the target group the boost needed to accelerate progress, on a two slot per week basis. Some provide the two slots as a pre-reading day (extended book introduction/check) and the GR day – you can vary according to need.

**Next steps** - are assessment notes completed effectively? Evaluative more than descriptive? Are your notes succinct, diagnostic, fed forward, acted upon, and having impact? This is the reading equivalent of formative marking in writing books. If it is not having impact then the assessments are not being used formatively enough. How do we record the processes and learning behaviours the chn display...? Do we use every bit of time observing and tutoring the chn SMARTly..? E.g. for a child who re-reads to self—correct a word, do we write lengthy prose about it or draw an arrow and note the attempts to show diagnostically what triggered it? Do our notes allow us to use the information formatively? Or are we making our jobs harder for ourselves through underdeveloped use of this golden observation & tutoring opportunity?

**keep their focus  
on meaning and  
message**

## see also:

Bodman, S. and Franklin, G. (2014): **'Which Book and Why: Using Book Bands and book levels for guided reading in Key Stage 1'**. London: IOE Press.

Ross, M. J. (2008): **The Multiplier Effect in Teaching - how to increase the impact of day to day teaching**. ISBN 9 780955 948602. Available from: michael.ross.888@btinternet.com

Saunders-Smith, G. (2009): **The Ultimate Guided Reading How-to Book**. USA: Corwin Press.

**HfL's subscription website's Book Band reading tracker** (also soon to be updated on AM7) **& Reading Assessment criteria for comprehension**

'**Guided Reading at YR-Y3 FAQ**' document – coming soon on the subscription area

## Courses that may help:

**14ENG/087A Delivering the 'Better Reading Partnership' scaffolded reading intervention**, HDC, Thursday 26th February 2015 £142 (£162)

**14ENG/080P Can't write, won't write! - Key Stage 1**, HDC, Thursday 26th March 2015 £72 (£82)

# Let's get them going – lesson starters to engage and motivate.

**Alison Dawkins**

Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



**If children are motivated and engaged they will learn better. When we guide that engagement towards deliberate practice they will learn better still.**

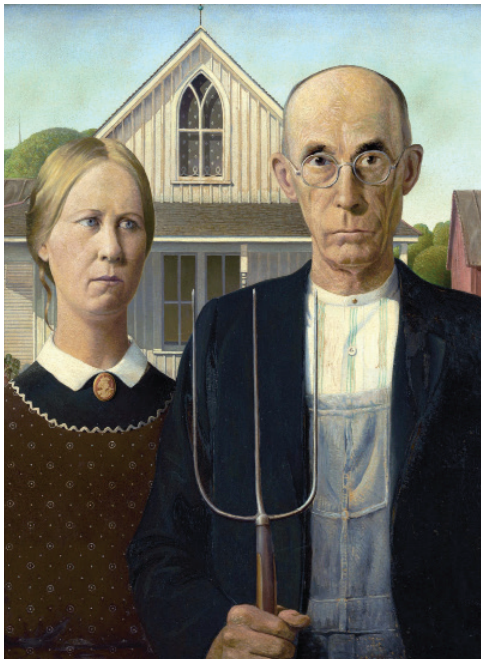
**Many starters focus on whole class learning / practise / exploration of something together. These ones involve letting them go a little bit. There is absolutely a place for the former but also for the latter, particularly because after having a go at a 'mini-task' many, if not all of the children, are ready to start in properly.**

**We want active learners, children who are falling over themselves to get going with the learning. If we are crafty about what we ask them to do at the start of the lesson, they will often motivate themselves. With this in mind I have two essential resources that I would not be without. The first is a bag of second-hand art postcards, the second a small collection of CDs with various downloaded 'dancing' songs on them.**

## The **Power** of the Postcard

**I would usually give one postcard to a pair of children, sometimes one between three.**

**It might be this one,**



**or perhaps this one**



**Along with it, a 'thought' or question to consider**

They would have five minutes to discuss the 'question' and would often need to decide on a sentence (sometimes written, sometimes orally rehearsed) to bring back to the group.

Before using these I do talk to the children about a painting being a 'text'; somebody created it with an audience in mind. We can think about it exactly as we would a book because it is telling us a story of a particular moment and we need to use many of the skills we use with a book to

to help us to understand it. What we don't need is the ability to decode and comprehend words, which is why paintings can unlock engagement with text for children of all ages and abilities.

To make sense of a text, we need to engage with it. We need to use skills such as visualising, predicting, connecting and empathising, amongst others. So now I have objectives for when I am using art postcards as lesson starters aimed at developing reading skills.

## To help children make connections you might ask:

- What does this make you think of that's in your own life?
- What else does this picture make you think of?
- Why do you suppose they painted it?
- Do you like it? Why? Why not? Talk about that.

## To understand authorial voice:

- Who is the main character? How do you know?
- Find something you think someone else might not notice straight away. What's the point of it?
- Choose something that interests / puzzles you. Tell me about that.

## To make predictions:

- What happened just before the moment of the painting? What will happen next? (Justify with evidence from the painting of course.)

## To develop vocabulary:

- The obvious – what words does the picture make you think of? List them. Do any of them link together? Talk about that.

## To develop inference:

- Can you work out anything about one of the people in the painting?
- Or the setting?
- What's the 'mood'? What made you think that?

Key to all of this when you are using postcards as starters is not to ask them too much. Instead, focus them on the thing you want them to get better at and let them practise it. When they come back as a group they will all have something to say. Of course they can't all contribute, but you can look at one or two cards and because they have all had the same learning intentions about their own pictures, they will make links for themselves.

All of these 'reading led' starters can be differentiated by the number of connections / words / reasons given for opinions that you ask of the children and also by the language you ask the children to use.

It might well be however, that you want to develop and practise writing and sentence structure skills through your starters. Again, postcards are perfect.

You can do any of the above activities and specify the language/sentence structures that you want used. But that will be hard and might be better in a whole lesson. If you want to enable deliberate talk that will lead to a well-crafted sentence from a starter, taking no more than ten minutes including feedback, you will need to be more specific.

- Know what you need them to practise (expanded noun phrases, relative clauses etc)
- Give them a model using your own postcard

Eg 'The little girl, who is crying, stands behind the boy.'



- Tell them to try out several sentences until they find their favourite
- Remind them to 'talk like a writer' as they work
- Let them go

Children like postcard starters because they are able to be active and engaged from the very beginning of the lesson. They have something to look at to give them ideas and they can all be successful. How challenging you make the activity is up to you and the needs of your class.

## Courses that may help:

**14ENG/079P Moving level 5 writers to level 6 in Year 6**, HDC, Tuesday 17th March 2015 £142 (£162)

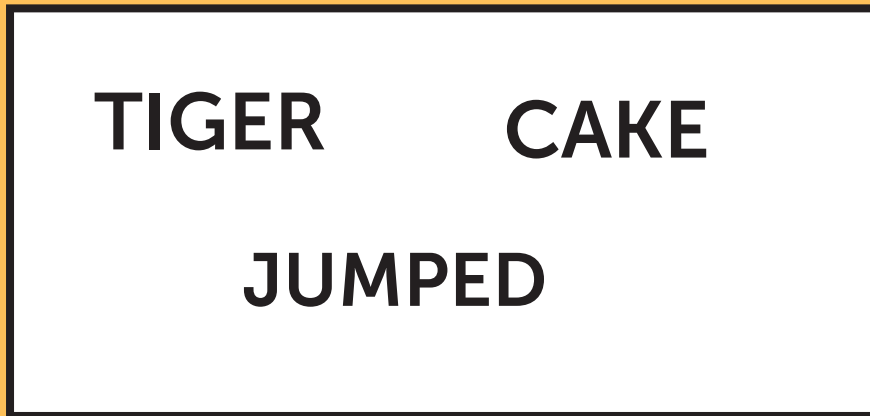
**14ENG/077P Great expectations at Key Stage 1: moving writing forward in Year 1 and Year 2**, HDC, Monday 15th January 2015 £142 (£162)

# Musical pie

This is where you need your dancing CD. The format of this 'game' (because that is how the children view it) comes from a group of 'Musical Maths' starters. The content is Pie Corbett's (hence the name) 'build a sentence' game when you start with three unconnected words and create sentences. Having three words will make the children more inventive; further constraints ('include a ....') would challenge them even more.

Each table needs a piece of sugar paper with something written or drawn in the middle of it, different for each table. (In this case, three words, two nouns and a verb, although two nouns and a conjunction are good fun too.)

example:



The rules of the musical starter are simple.

Begin at your own table. When the music plays you are allowed to work on whatever it is you have been asked to do. When the music stops, you stop. The teacher will ask you to move on to the next table, (don't forget the opportunity to do clockwise /anticlockwise).

Now, depending on what the needs are, the children can either repeat step 1, continuing to create sentences with whatever parameters you have chosen, or, they can improve on sentences that have already been created by the group before them.

For the third go, the group decide on the 'best' sentence to bring back to the whole class, including the reasons for their choice.

They are unlikely to get round more than three tables in the time available, but the sheets can always be saved for another day or re-used for improving if that wasn't the focus the first time.

**Just like with the postcards, the children are now thoroughly 'warmed up' and ready to make progress with the main learning of the lesson.**



# Modelling a writer's voice

**For even the most experienced writers, holding an internal dialogue with themselves about the language choices they make when writing and considering how effective a particular word or phrase will be or how well it reads, can be tricky. For developing writers it is very helpful for this internal dialogue and process to be explored through talk during teacher demonstration. This involves the teacher externalising and sharing the thinking involved in the writing process so that ultimately it can be used as a reference point for the pupil's own writing. Pupils observe the process and how the teacher, as an 'expert writer', continually makes decisions as they construct the text.**

Modelled writing allows the teacher to teach, follow up and reinforce direct teaching of the features of a particular genre/text type. In addition to this, through externalising and sharing the thinking involved pupils are shown; how effective writers compose texts, about purpose and audience, about the process of writing and about the relationship between spoken and written language.

Modelled writing is most effective however when the teaching focus is based on the pupils' needs rather than being genre specific. By no means should creative writing take a back seat in the pursuit of technical and functional approaches to writing but with the new curriculum for English in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 being underpinned by a set of statutory grammar statements, that clearly set out the age-related expectations, this cannot be overlooked. The fine detail set out in the curriculum alongside the assessment of pupils' writing should directly inform the content of the teacher's modelled writing and influence what is externalised and shared with pupils.

The curriculum states that for pupils, knowledge of grammar provides "more conscious control and choice in our language [and that] building this knowledge is best achieved through a focus on grammar within the teaching of reading, writing and speaking" (NC: 2014). Modelled writing is a vehicle through which the teacher can convey this conscious control and choice of language and hone in on a particular writing skill at the same time. It provides an opportunity in which grammatical terminology can be introduced, exemplified and also allows opportunities to "consolidate knowledge and

build on pupils' understanding" (NC: 2014).

Focusing on the effect of word choice and sentence structure, when modelling writing, enables teachers and pupils to develop a shared language with which to talk about their writing. The benefits of providing children with metalanguage to talk about their writing is made clear in the National Literacy Trust's Transforming Writing: Final Evaluation Report (2013) which describes this type of teacher modelling as "a deliberate representation of the voice in the writer's head; a voice that questions, judges, decides and manages the thinking and writing processes in the working memory. The voice is the metacognitive manager." This in turn can lead to greater understanding and precision during teacher, self and peer assessment.

## Planning for modelled writing:

- Determine the purpose, audience and form for the writing.
- Determine a focus for the session based on pupils' needs and the age related expectations.
- Decide on the specific details that will be shared with the children during teacher talk.  
Do you like it? Why? Why not? Talk about that.

## During modelled writing:

- Explain the learning objective and focus for writing.
- Review the success criteria/ expectations for the writing.
- Explain the purpose of writing and audience.
- Begin writing, pausing to demonstrate particular points. Pupils can ask questions but the focus is on the teacher's demonstration, in particular, the thought process, effect of choices and reasons for choices.
- Re-read to check for sense or improvements.
- Keep the modelled writing displayed for pupils to refer to.

### After Modelled writing:

- Provide opportunities for pupils to practice and apply what they have been taught through scribed, guided and independent writing.
- Repeat modelled writing sessions on the same focus using different genres, as needed, until students can independently apply their understanding to their writing.

### Reflecting on the effective use of the Modelled writing

- Was the focus and learning objective clear?
- Did I use teacher talk clearly as part of my demonstration?
- Were the children able to stay focused on the demonstration?
- What opportunities have I planned for pupils to apply what they've learnt?

For many teachers, modelling writing reveals knowledge about the process itself, such as the false starts, uncertainties and anxieties; in short, for some the immense difficulty of finding a way to say what we think we want to express, with hesitancy and vulnerability. Teachers that took part in the National Literacy Trust's Transforming Writing Project (2013) stated that when they modelled their writer's voice they "believed that their own confidence to write and talk about writing increased and underpinned their successes in providing formative assessment experiences for children." It is often the knowledge revealed through this process that provides clarity in the specifics of what needs to be taught at each particular stage.

Modelling writing provides opportunities for pupils to witness that writing can be a difficult task but at the same time full of pride and excitement. In essence pupils are expected to publically reveal and work on improvements in their own writing all the time; it seems only fitting that teachers do the same to support pupils' learning.

Department for Education. (2013) The National Curriculum in England: Key stages 1 and 2 framework document. England.  
Rooke, J (2013). Transforming Writing: Final Evaluation Report. London: National Literacy Trust.



## Courses that may help:

**14ENG/075P Planning new curriculum units for fiction and non-fiction in Years 3 and 4**, HDC, Monday 2nd March 2015 £142 (£162)

**14ENG/076P Planning new curriculum units for fiction and non-fiction in Years 5 and 6**, HDC, Monday 9th March 2015 £142 (£162)

**14ENG/073P Year 3 and 4 grammar: the fine detail and application**, HDC, Wednesday 11th February 2015 £142 (£162)

**14ENG/074P Year 5 and 6 grammar: the fine detail and application**, HDC, Monday 9th February 2015 £142 (£162)

# Phonics and spelling in the new National Curriculum Q and A

**Ruth Goodman**  
Teaching and Learning  
Adviser, Herts for Learning



## Can I still deliver phonics through the daily discrete teaching sequence?

Yes, the 15 – 20mins daily sequence as outlined in Letters and Sounds is still a very effective method of teaching the phonics expectations in KS1 and KS2.

## Can I deliver the spelling expectations through the daily discrete teaching sequence?

When teaching spelling the extended teaching sequence as outlined in Support for Spelling is an effective way of ensuring that the children are given enough time to investigate and learn spelling rules and conventions. This may mean that over a course of a week a teacher would plan for two or three 15mins sessions.

## How do I use the HfL termly spelling objective exemplification tools for Y2, Y3/4 and Y5/6?

The termly planning exemplification have been devised to support teachers 'in front loading' the teaching of phonics in the first term as outlined in column one entitled Block 1 Phonemic/Phonological. The next two columns entitled Morphological outline the spelling expectations. We would recommend that phonics should be taught through the daily teaching sequence and the spelling through the extended sequence which has been divided up into blocks of teaching that roll over a couple of weeks at a time.

## If I have children who are secure with Y1 expectations for phonics/spelling do I move onto the Y2 expectations?

The new NC states that children should not be taught the expectations of the year above but that pupils who have mastered the age-related expectations should be provided with opportunities that enable them to work in a 'broader and deeper' way. This would enable pupils to become more fluent and accurate in their application of ARE expectations for spelling.

## Do I have to teach the common exception words listed in Y1 and Y2 appendix 1?

The common exception words listed in the new NC are non-statutory but it states that pupils' attention should be drawn to the grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) that do and do not fit in with what has been taught so far. Some of the words listed have come from Letters and Sounds tricky words and some cover teaching that is no longer explicitly covered in Y1 e.g. Phase 5 did cover teaching u as in put - (south). Children will be coming across words with this phoneme grapheme correspondence so teaching the Y1 common exception words pull, push, put and full will support their application in spelling.

## Do I have to use the term 'Common Exception Words'?

The new national curriculum does not give pupil spelling terminology as it does for grammar so using this term is not statutory but schools do need to use a term for words with unusual correspondences. If you use Letters and Sounds as your scheme then your children are used to the term tricky words in YR. In Y1 teachers may like to continue with this term or tell pupils that these words are an exception which may lead into calling them common exception words as time goes on.

## What is the best way to assess spelling?

In the new NC they talk about the use of dictations for assessment. The two routes into dictation as outlined in Phase 6 and repeated in Support for Spelling are very good ways of delivery. They enable the application of spelling rules, proof reading and self/peer assessment. As pupils in KS1 are being taught spelling many of their attempts may be plausible until they learn more alternative pronunciations for known

graphemes. As children move into KS2 spelling may still be plausible but with ever increasing accuracy. In the new NC there are many examples of words that could be sent home to learn as they are taught in class.

### **Is the AM7 phonic tracker going to be changed?**

The AM7 phonic tracker is still a very good tool for tracking secure phonic knowledge but it will change slightly in line with new NC. Phases 1 – 4 will stay the same but the boxes outlining Phases 5 and Phase 6 expectations will change in content to take into account the new expectations. Keep an eye out for AM7 updates on the web.

### **How many spelling mistakes should I correct in a pupil's written work?**

When marking written work pick out words demonstrating previously taught alternative pronunciations for known graphemes and tricky/common exception words that they should know. Pick up on no more than 5 words for them to practise during marking response time.

### **Are previous National Strategy spelling documents still relevant and useful?**

Yes, previous NS documents are still useful for activity ideas but the order of teaching across the year groups no longer remains the same for KS1 and KS2

### **Letters and Sounds**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letters-and-sounds>

### **Support for Spelling**

[http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/687/1/01109-2009PDF-EN\\_01.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/687/1/01109-2009PDF-EN_01.pdf)

### **KS2 Spelling Bank**

[http://www.educationbooks.co.uk/images/nls\\_spellingbank008601.pdf](http://www.educationbooks.co.uk/images/nls_spellingbank008601.pdf)

### **Y7 Spelling Bank**

<http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/secpartners/Resources/KS3%20Yr7%20Spelling%20Bank.pdf>

## **Keep your eye on the HfL subscription site for new documents supporting phonic/spelling assessment in KS1**

## **Courses that may help:**

**14ENG/090P Phase 1-2 phonics: teaching and supporting 'Letters and Sounds'**, HDC, Tuesday 10th February 2015 £142 (£162)

**14ENG/091P Phase 2-4 phonics: teaching and supporting 'Letters and Sounds'**, HDC, Thursday 29th February 2015 £142 (£162)

**14ENG/093A Phonics and spelling at Key Stage 2: pulling it all together**, HDC, Wednesday 18th March 2015 £142 (£162)

**14ENG/092A Year 1 phonics and spelling: what's new and what's not**, HDC, Tuesday 20th January 2015 £142 (£162)

