

# Herts for Learning - Primary teaching and learning English newsletter

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## Spelling Geek.... Subject leaders.... have you found yours yet?

**Theresa Clements**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



As the title suggests why not make it your mission to create a whole school ethos where children are positive, enthusiastic and enjoy the wonderful world of spelling. One school that I am supporting at the moment is on a journey to create just this and the following is a light hearted attempt to share with you how they went about it:

- Identify the 'spelling geek' (aka...spelling champion) amongst the staff. There is bound to be someone who loves spelling and loves to share their wisdom. This person will usually harbour a secret fascination with spelling in all its' guises.....phonology, morphology and etymology.
- Ensure that this person has good subject knowledge and will want to support teachers in locating and creating resources for teaching and learning. For example through warm-ups - Here's one:

From 'Jumpstart to Literacy for 7-14 year olds' Pie Corbett

List some compound words combinations:

Window	pane
News	paper
Fish	tank
Class	room
Over	use
Foot	ball

Now create a nonsense compound word and provide a definition! For example...a newsball will help you to foresee three things that will happen in the world which will change life as we know it.

These words could be used when writing narrative set in imaginary worlds. Also a technique associated with Roald Dahl.

Anyway back to the top tips...

- Once identified this person will almost immediately insist that there is some attention to the learning of contextualised vocabulary alongside spelling so that pupils have good reason to learn spellings being taught.
- Teachers will begin to see the need for pupils to have their own spelling log to use, if needed, in most lessons where spelling needs attention and the children themselves will be keen to find words in that lesson (Science for example) which exemplify the spelling rule that has been taught as part of Literacy.
- The spelling geek/ champion will support teachers in finding a range of suitably appropriate and popular songs to reinforce and secure phonemic knowledge for spelling. This can work well with older pupils in KS2. Here's an example:

### Pharrell Williams - Happy

Can you hear and identify all of the long vowel sounds?

**It might seem crazy what I'm about to say  
Sunshine she's here, you can take a break  
I'm a hot air balloon that could go to space  
With the air, like I don't care baby by the way  
Because I'm happy  
Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof  
Because I'm happy  
Clap along if you feel that happiness is the truth  
Because I'm happy  
Clap along if you know what happiness is to you**

- In short, the enthusiasm of the spelling champion will begin to 'brush off' on colleagues and you should find that teachers will develop the 'will' and therefore a systematic approach to teaching the 'skill' of spelling will naturally emerge.

## Courses that may help:



## Etymology...in brief

Further fanatical ideas can centre on the study of etymology and developing curiosity amongst pupils. It's amazing what one can find out about the wonderful world of roots and origins which have evolved into our known spellings today. Know this....if you didn't already:

- The word academy is Latin in origin and comes from Plato's garden Akademia where he taught his pupils. The garden itself was named after the ancient hero Akademos
- The word 'bear' is Indo-European and Sanskrit in origin and means 'to carry'. Of course in old English, a bear is a large animal. This helps to give a clue as to why something feels heavy or burdensome when 'overbearing'. One would need to be fairly strong to 'bear' the load for an extended period of time. Of course don't forget the morphology in the pre-fix 'over'.
- The word 'Nincompoop' is New Testament in origin and comes from the Pharisee Nicodemus who took Jesus' teachings very literally. The 'poop' part of the word may have come from the old word 'poop' which meant to deceive or cheat. The 'ninny' part is Latin in origin and maybe a pet form of the name Innocent. Nicodemus was considered to be slow witted....hence the word 'Nincompoop' today.

How interesting is that? Try getting your older pupils to identify origins of words as part of spelling provision and watch the excitement snowball.

**Have fun!**

**15ENG/014A Phonics and spelling at Key Stage 2: pulling it all together**, HDC, Monday 8th June 2015  
£145 (£165)

**15ENG/004P Year 1 phonics and spelling: what's new and what's not**, HDC, Thursday 7th May 2015  
£145 (£165)

**15ENG/015P Year 2 phonics and spelling: what's new and what's not**, HDC, Monday 9th June 2015  
£145 (£165)

**15ENG/016P Year 2 phonics and spelling: what's new and what's not**, HDC, Tuesday 11th June 2015  
£145 (£165)

# Mind the gap

**Michelle Nicholson**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



The last few months have been a demanding time for primary schools as they rose to the challenge of implementing the new Primary National Curriculum. Alongside the development of new schemes of work, teachers have also had to grapple with new processes to measure progress and attainment. All the while, we are still conscious of the need to close attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Indeed, the National Curriculum advises us that:

“Teachers should set high expectations for every pupil. They should plan stretching work for pupils whose attainment is significantly above the expected standard. They have an even greater obligation to plan lessons for pupils who have low levels of prior attainment or come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Teachers should use appropriate assessment to set targets which are deliberately ambitious.”

**Primary National Curriculum Page 8 (inclusion 4.1)**

How can teachers ensure that every single one of their pupils does as well as possible, regardless of gender, background, special needs or disabilities? The starting point is to know your gaps for individuals and groups- use AFL to diagnose the areas of need and target these issues more specifically. What are the child's barriers to learning? Identifying the exact nature of a child's difficulty and targeting support from as early as possible can have a huge impact on a child's progress as well as attainment. It is essential that all children leave primary education with a confident command of the English language.

“Teachers should develop pupils' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching; for pupils, understanding the language provides access to the whole

curriculum. Fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects.”

**Primary National Curriculum Language and Literacy 6.1 page 10.**

Where the fluency in speaking, reading or writing English has been delayed, teachers need to scaffold the child's language and help them bridge that gap. We need to analyse the area of difficulty and support the language development by working closely in a process of 'watch me do it' through to 'let's do it together' before the final 'now you do it'. As Vygotsky said, “What a child can do in co-operation today, he can do alone tomorrow.”

Here are a few strategies that may help

- **Modelling writing**, guided writing sessions- demonstrate the sentence structures you are hoping for. Pull together any children with the same issue for a couple of consecutive teacher led guided sessions and see if you can blitz the problem. Work through the process of 'watch me do it' though to 'let's do it together' before the final 'now you do it'. Provide a writer's toolkit of word banks, phonics mats, editing checklist and writing frames to enable the child to make the jump into independent writing.
- **Targeted feedback**: ensure you target the relevant next step to that child and the misconceptions shown in this text rather than the next steps for age related attainment. What will have the most impact? Are there any 'quick fixes' that you can address eg model a problematic letter formation; get the child to write out a misspelt common exception word or topic word; put in a symbol where they could go back and add an adjective/fronted adverbial/ comma. Scaffold sentences that the child

needs support with eg *The princess was sad because \_\_\_\_\_*. Again the principle here is a mini version of guided writing: not telling the child what to do, but showing. Ensure the children respond to your marking by giving them an action to complete. Sutton Trust has shown that this style of marking can close the gaps by up to 8 months in a year- this is more than a typical intervention.

- **Books:** Send home books on CDs so that children can listen to stories at their interest level with language that we hope they can internalise even if they can't read it yet. Children love story tapes in the car or after 'lights out'. Does the school have books that match this child's interest? Are there books that have 'high interest, low reading age' full of the gritty drama that older children enjoy, or is that Y6 child reading *Horrid Henry*?
- **Talk for writing:** If children can't say the sentence, they can't write the sentence. Oral rehearsal is vital for all pupils, but for those who are struggling, we often find that their spoken language lacks the maturity of the peers. Some children's exposure to spoken English does not match the formal or extended sentence structures needed to write in specific genres. Use strategies such as Pie Corbett's story mapping, oral warm ups to rehearse a sentence structure or Sue Palmer's Speaking Frames that scaffold a whole text for oral rehearsal. Try this oral lesson starter: give pair of children a lotto style grid like the one below (this one is for persuasive writing). Fill the grid with useful sentence starters to fit the text type that you will be writing. Give the children a theme eg We need a three day weekend. Children then take it in turns to provide an oral sentence to fit the theme. If that are successful, they can cover the space with a counter. The first to cover four in a row, wins.



Most people would agree that...	Everybody knows that...	Research shows that...	Scientists have proved that...
Clearly...	Obviously...	The real truth is...	This shows that...
Only a fool would believe that...	Surely you would agree that...	The fact is that	A sensible idea would be to...
The best thing to do would be to...	We all know that...	Also	Finally

**Further reading:** Narrowing the Gaps - Guidance for literacy subject leaders DCSF Publications 2010 (an old document but with some superb information for teachers and subject leaders on identifying and supporting the needs of vulnerable groups).

## Courses that may help:

**15ENG/005P Can't write, won't write: Key Stage 1**, Apsley 2, Hemel Hempstead, Monday 18th May 2015 £74 (£84)

**15ENG/006P Can't write, won't write: Key Stage 2**, Apsley 2, Hemel Hempstead, Monday 18th May 2015 £74 (£84)



## Effective use of Teaching Assistants

**Sabrina Wright**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



Many times during my teaching career, I genuinely felt like my teaching assistants (TAs) were worth their weight in gold. When I look back and think about those moments, I can see very clearly that those TAs were the individuals that were pro-active and had something to bring to the table. I recall all too well, the day when I was sitting in a staff meeting and we were presented with the findings of the Sutton

Trust's research (2012), it stated that students in a class with a TA did not, on average, perform better than those in a class with only a teacher. This moment really made me stop and think. If I'm completely honest, not only did it surprise me, but I almost didn't want to believe it. I began to question what the best use of my TA was, and how I could support my TAs to ensure they had the greatest



impact possible on the children's learning. Surely, that's what it's all about?

Further research, by Peter Blatchford, of 20,000 teachers and teaching assistants, found that TAs did not improve children's learning because they tended to be used in classrooms to support low-attaining students in small groups, meaning that the children spent less time with a qualified teacher. This did not mean that assistants had no value, simply that they were not valuable if used as substitute teachers. With this in mind, I attempted day to day to deploy my TAs to support a variety of children from differing ability groups both within the classroom and as part of structured interventions.

You can imagine my utter delight that new findings suggest, that when used to support specific pupils in small groups or through structured interventions, TAs can be effective at improving attainment. The results published by the EEF are based on trials with 6,800 pupils at 238 schools, and represents a major new source of independent evidence to help schools narrow the attainment gap between rich and poor pupils.

Rob Webster and Peter Blatchford from the IOE with Jonathan Sharples at the Education Endowment Foundation, who lead on the research, have written an important new guidance document that will help school leaders make sense of, and act on, the research evidence about the impact of teaching assistants **(see below for link to download)**.

Seven recommendations in the guidance are as follows:

- Teaching assistants should not be used as substitute teachers for low-attaining pupils
- They should be used to add value to what teachers do, not replace them
- They should help pupils develop independent study skills and manage their own learning
- They must be fully prepared for their role in the classroom through out-of-class liaison with teachers
- They should deliver high-quality one-to-one and small group support using structured interventions
- Evidence-based interventions should be adopted to support them in their small group and one-to-one instruction
- What students learn from TAs should complement what they are being taught in the classroom

The recent guidance reinforces the key message that well-trained TAs are clearly a key resource. School leaders need to put pupils' needs at the heart of a review of current practice and to think through ways of strategically deploying TAs across the school to ensure that pupils receive the best possible educational experience. TAs can scarcely be expected automatically to produce good practice without guidance and sound training. This of course has huge implications on schools to ensure they provide such training and support to teaching assistants in ways which benefit children. Some suggestions to creatively provide ways to ensure time for TA training and for teachers and TAs to have time to meet out of class include:

- adjusting TAs working hours
- including TAs in staff meetings and INSET where the focus is on developing subject knowledge
- carrying out an audit of skills and confidence and then using this to set up a rota of TA training sessions run by teachers during assemblies
- having TAs join teachers for part of PPA time

Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants - [http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/TA\\_Guidance\\_Report\\_Interactive.pdf](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/TA_Guidance_Report_Interactive.pdf)

## Courses that may help:

**15ENG/003P Teaching assistants: spotlight on phonics and spelling**, HDC, Tuesday 5th May 2015 £145 (£165)

**15ENG/007P Effective support in primary literacy for teaching assistants**, HDC, Monday 18th May 2015 £145 (£165)

**15ENG/012P Strengthening subject knowledge through fun approaches to teaching grammar for teaching assistants**, HDC, Thursday 4th June 2015 £74 (£84)

# Y1 Reading Screening Check 2015

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



We have received a lot of questions recently about the content of the 2015 screening check. I felt that we needed clarification around the expected graphemes that our Y1/Y2 children will be expected to read. I emailed the Standards Testing Agency asking whether the reading screening check will change this year in light of the new NC. Their response was as follows....

**'Although the national curriculum sets out the graphemes to be covered in year one for spelling, it does not provide the same detail for decoding.**

**The standards on the phonics screening check were set recently in 2011 and were intended to indicate the minimum acceptable standard required to demonstrate a child is on track to become a successful reader.'**

This means that although the teaching of spelling in Y1 (Phase 5) has changed somewhat in content, the teaching of graphemes for reading appears to remain the same. If schools are in doubt about which graphemes will appear in the check they need to look back at the assessment framework 2012 where it lays out each section in detail.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/230810/Phonics\\_assessment\\_framework.PDF](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/230810/Phonics_assessment_framework.PDF)

In summary the new graphemes for reading (Letters & Sounds p134) are included in the check and most of the common alternative pronunciations for graphemes in Phase 5 (L&S p136) are also included. There is a danger that if you only look at the 'English Appendix 1 –spelling work for Y1' and use it as a basis for teaching phonics for both reading and spelling you will miss out on teaching the alternative pronunciations for graphemes for reading on page 136 (L&S) as they are not all included in the English Appendix 1- Y1.

If you need further support with delivering the Y1 Reading Screening Check please see details of our May training course in the HfL Summer Training Brochure – 'Delivering the Year 1 phonics screening check'.

## Assessment framework for the development of the Year 1 phonics screening check



**Standards and Testing Agency**  
An executive agency of the  
Department for Education

## Courses that may help:

**15ENG/009P Delivering the Year 1 phonics screening check**, HDC, Thursday 21st May 2015  
£74 (£84)

**15ENG/010P Delivering the Year 1 phonics screening check**, HDC, Monday 21st May 2015  
£74 (£84)

**15ENG/004P Year 1 phonics and spelling: what's new and what's not**, HDC, Thursday 7th May 2015 £145 (£165)

**15ENG/024P New to Year 1**, HDC, Tuesday 23rd June 2015 £145 (£165)

# Grammar: 50 shades of meaning

**Jane Andrews**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



If we think back to our own school days and the teachers who inspired us most, it was often the teachers who were passionate about their subject. How many of us can claim a 'passion' for grammar? Thankfully for all of us, there are one or two in every staff room. However, there are many more teachers with a passion for reading and a passion for supporting children to communicate effectively through the spoken and written word.

Children can struggle with audience and purpose. They are sometimes so engrossed with the success criteria and ensuring they meet their targets that they fail to notice that their writing doesn't quite fulfil the purpose it was designed for. Discussing the effect of the writing at word and sentence level, ensures they consider the reader and embeds the use of grammatical terminology. This is the point where we can engender a love of language, a love of words.

One effective approach is providing children with two sentences that are grammatically correct but with subtle differences. For example we could explore the difference between placing the adjective before or after the noun

'It was a beautiful day' or, 'the day was beautiful'.

Younger children can be encouraged to use both ways as it breaks their list like approach to writing adjective/noun. Children from year 4 upwards should be able to discuss the differences of these two sentences in more detail. They might notice that when the adjective is placed after the noun, it was necessary to change the pronoun 'it' to a determiner 'the'. This would also aid assessment and provide us with an understanding of who can naturally use age appropriate terminology. Reading books could then be used to notice how good authors provide a balance of adjectives before and after nouns.

You might also compare small sections of texts. One written by an established author and one that the teacher has written based on the author's work. For example:

**Text 1** – It was an ordinary spring morning in 12 Lark Lane. Lying awake in the early light, Lizzie could hear the birds singing and the distant rumble of the passing traffic. The alarm broke into her thoughts, making her jump out of bed. She got washed and dressed and, as usual, went down to the kitchen to prepare breakfast.

**Text 2** – An ordinary spring morning in 12 Lark Lane. The birds were tweeting and whistling outside. The city traffic rumbled and roared. Lizzie's alarm went ringadingleling. She jumped out of bed, washed her face, scrubbed behind her ears, brushed her teeth, brushed her hair, put on her uniform, went downstairs, filled the kettle, switched it on, put bread in the toaster, set the table with two plates, two mugs, two knives, milk and butter and jam, then she went to the foot of the stairs.

We could then use the Aiden Chambers 'Tell Me' approach. Rather than saying which one is best, we want the children to say what they notice. This way, they are not trying to provide correct answers. Anything they say might be valid. We could then discuss, as a class, which points were useful when considering the effect created by each text. It could be noticed that both texts make use of the co-ordinating conjunction 'and' to link events. Sometimes 'and' is used to link two clauses as in text 1 and sometimes to link two words (verbs) in text 2. Children might consider how often they use co-ordinating conjunctions to link clauses and how often to link words or phrases. More advanced users of grammar might discuss the use of the non-finite verb 'Lying awake' rather than possibly using the past progressive 'She was lying awake'.

This forms a key element of the teaching of reading comprehension in KS2 (Identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning) as well as writing for effect at all ages.

Model and use the 'what's the same and what's different' approach on a variety of fiction, non-fiction and poetry texts and see if you notice a difference, not only in children's ability to use grammatical terminology but, in their ability to select words and sentences for effect?

*Text 2 – My Dad's a Birdman, David Almond*  
*Tell Me – Aiden Chambers*

HfL run a range of grammar courses that not only support you with your subject knowledge but also provide suggestions for contextualising the learning with active and fun approaches.

## Courses that may help:

**15ENG/008P Year 5 and 6 grammar: the fine detail and application**, HDC, Wednesday 20th May 2015  
£145 (£165)

**15ENG/013P Year 3 and 4 grammar: the fine detail and application**, HDC, Wednesday 10th June 2015  
£145 (£165)



# Professional Reading Corner

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



Here at HfL towers we have two enduring weaknesses; reading and learning. We lollop through the long grass of fresh ideas, we slurp up words dancing across pages, then best of all we share with you.

This issue's round-up features some particular aspects of English that we have recently been asked about or worked with schools to address, in the quest to embed the new NC's expectations – all freely available (occasional free sign-up required – all links live at time of publication).

## Spelling:

### **The spelling conscious classroom**

<http://www.schofieldandsims.co.uk/becoming-spelling-conscious/b34>

### **Dictation sentences for spelling application/assessment (examples):**

<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Year-2-Dictation-Sentences-for-2014-curriculum-6406767>

### **A passage for dictation - 95 out of the first 100 High Frequency Words are used in this passage:**

<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Reading-Dictation-exercise-using-95-100-HFW-6445310>

## Reading:

### **Ofsted's paper evaluating some effective and less than effective practice in the teaching of reading. Messages around struggling readers, AfL, subject leadership etc:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ready-to-read-how-a-sample-of-primary-schools-in-stoke-on-trent-teach-pupils-to-read>

### **Some recently-emerging research about how the brain learns to read:**

[http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/NSED\\_LitReview\\_Final.pdf](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/NSED_LitReview_Final.pdf)

### **Case studies on Lesson Study outcomes in Guided Reading in a trio of YR (CLLD Leader), Y1 (Reading Recovery Teacher) and Y6 (English Subject Leader):**

<http://lessonstudy.co.uk/the-role-of-the-expert-in-supporting-guided-work/>

### **Quality Big Books for shared reading and modelling reading strategies:**

<http://www.madeleineindley.com/ecommerce/Browse-By-Category/big-books/>  
<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Big-books-reception-nursery-children/lm/R3TCZIWK4O1K4Y>

### **CLPE core book lists – register to have free access to lists of age-related texts:**

<http://www.corebooks.org.uk/>  
(also see <https://www.clpe.org.uk/page/52>)”

## Closing the gap:

### **Self regulation and metacognition – Sutton Trust research re impactful use of Pupil Premium Grant:**

<http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects/using-self-regulation-to-improve-writing/>

### **Selecting interventions based on value for money research, rates of progress to expect etc (Greg Brooks 4th edition, 2013):**

[http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/widgets\\_GregBrooks/What\\_works\\_for\\_children\\_fourth\\_ed.pdf](http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/widgets_GregBrooks/What_works_for_children_fourth_ed.pdf)

### **Award-winning blogger David Didau thinks about ‘thinking about thinking’:**

<http://www.learningspy.co.uk/featured/what-is-meta-cognition-and-can-we-teach-it/>

## Just for fun:

### **Inspirational Scottish blog on outdoor learning, including poetry and number sense (can sign up for alerts to new blog entries):**

[http://creativestarlarning.co.uk/developing-school-grounds-outdoor-spaces/the-hobbit-house-at-highway-farm/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_](http://creativestarlarning.co.uk/developing-school-grounds-outdoor-spaces/the-hobbit-house-at-highway-farm/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_)

## Courses that may help:

**15ENG/020P Leading change in English: raising standards through the new curriculum** HDC, Tuesday 7th July 2015 £145 (£165)

**15ENG/022P Developing a robust whole-school approach to assessment in English,** HDC, Thursday 7th May 2015 £145 (£165)

**15ENG/001P Enhancing the learning of English through iPads,** HDC, Monday 8th June 2015 £74 (£84)

## Subject leader clusters:

**15ENG/029P English and mathematics funded subject leader clusters**

**15ENG/030P English and mathematics funded subject leader clusters**

**15ENG/031P English and mathematics funded subject leader clusters**

**15ENG/032P English and mathematics funded subject leader clusters**

**15ENG/033P English and mathematics funded subject leader clusters**

# Guided reading - let the assessment materials work for you.

**Alison Dawkins**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



How do you decide the focus of a guided reading session?

What about the learning objectives for independent activities?

The HfL reading criteria are there to support you with answering both of these questions. Before planning your guided reading, take a few moments to read over the criteria for your year group (and the one before in case there are gaps you need to fill) and you will probably find that two or three statements leap out at you as: they find that really hard. Now you have a learning focus for independent groups that needs to be worked on over a series of weeks AND a focus for some guided teaching.

Developing and extending vocabulary is one that very often comes up, in all year groups. The two ideas outlined below could work towards meeting this learning need and can be carried out by independently working groups. The first one where the children are working at reading related activities, the second as a learning focus for a group who are reading a set of books independently. Both would need to be modelled first.

## Word Washing Lines – to build understanding of synonyms

Start the children off with a 'basic' word like 'sad' or 'big'. Allow a minute for them to generate the synonyms they already know for this word. (A sand timer on the desk means they can self-regulate this.) For the next 5-10 minutes they can use a thesaurus to find more synonyms for the base word. After this, they have to arrange the words as a 'washing line' according to strength / intensity. They should have the opportunity to talk about their decisions (speaking objective!), it won't matter whether that is in pairs or the larger

group, but their thinking will be deepened by discussion.

You will overhear conversations like, 'is unhappy more sad than miserable or less?' Or, 'heart-broken must be really, really sad because your heart is broken'

And hopefully, words that have been 'maggied' because they have been labelled as 'good / interesting' words, will also begin to be used appropriately.

## Word spotting and collecting

– If some or all of your children are reading selected texts, in groups, while you work with a guided group, then why not focus them on vocabulary development?

At the start of the session, make the learning focus clear so that as they read, they need to be noticing particular words that they think are effective. However, you don't want them to spot words at the expense of engaging with the whole text, so don't let them write anything down until 5-10 minutes before the end.

At this point, tell them to look back over what they have read and find the four words that, for them, are particularly effective. They must be prepared to explain why. (Limit them to promote thinking – you don't want a word list.) Three minutes to do it and then five for a whole class plenary devoted to developing and exploring a wider vocabulary.

Head back to the assessment criteria to look for the next focus!

# Courses that may help:

**15ENG/019P Practical and engaging approaches to teaching reading comprehension in the new curriculum**, HDC, Tuesday 30th June 2015 £142 (£162)

### Assessment in Literacy courses:

<http://bit.ly/1ColubH> - **Developing a robust whole-school approach to assessment in English**

<http://bit.ly/1NxMPy6> - **Developing a robust whole-school approach to assessment in English**

# Stepping Up to Quality

## Writing: Planning Units of Work for the New Curriculum

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



Blank page syndrome? It's real and it affects thousands of pupils across our schools on a daily basis. But it can affect teachers too – especially when it comes to planning. Frankly, it affected me as I sat down to write this, but now is not the time for all that. Rightly, there has been much talk and even a consultation around teacher workload in recent months and it is fair to say that any issues around workload will only have been exacerbated by the implementation of the new curriculum and its timescales in particular. That's where we hope to help. Clawing back valuable teacher-time is vital and this informed much of our thinking in writing our materials to support the implementation of the new Primary Curriculum for English. HfL's materials were designed to support the planning and assessment cycle. Like much of our work pre-new curriculum, they continue to be informed by two core approaches: the Teaching Sequence for Writing and Deborah Myhill's work around Grammar for Writing: both informed by research; both proven to have impact. We wanted to provide clarity around pitch and progression in particular as this is vital if we are to properly embrace good assessment for learning principles and practices. They were also designed to properly complement each other in providing structured support across the planning process. We exemplify this in detail using a range of exciting texts in our central training, and our narrative booklist features a range of great books for every year group. Planning a great writing sequence simply must rest on a foundation of excellent texts. With this in mind, here is a capsule summary of the process as we see it and a brief guide to the materials (in bold) that go alongside it.

### Creating a Teaching Sequence for Writing using the HfL materials

- **Select Module (Long Term Plans)**  
Our Long Term Plans could be taken wholesale as a curriculum map, but we'd prefer that they are seen as a menu to select from according to the needs of your school and the children. One of the most frequently cherished units from the days of old (aka last year and beyond) has to be the work around Alfred Noyes' *The Highwayman*. Rightly so. It can lead to brilliant outcomes. It's not explicitly listed in our long term plans but this in no way means losing it. Keep and adapt anything that works well. Extend or reduce units as appropriate. This is **your** class and they need **your** curriculum.
- **Formative assessment to inform the unit (this will take on its own life across the unit).** Use children's current writing to inform next steps – our **reading and writing assessment criteria** will help here, together with our **progression papers**. Children will not evolve overnight to fall in step with the new curriculum, so gaps need to be identified and planned for.
- **Shaping the outcome.** This combines several steps from our **planning flow chart**. It's all about the outcome. Familiarise yourself with the text type/style of writing that you intend to teach using the **progression papers** and the **text type guidance**. Our book list (**Text recommendations: Narrative**) will help you to choose genuinely

inspirational, high quality texts to use to enthuse and motivate the young writers in your midst (Non-fiction and poetry lists coming soon!). Allocate the grammar to be taught using **Grammar Emphasis (numbered) and English modules Y1 to 6 with grammar (found in Long Term Planning section)**. This largely informs the teaching of skills in phase 2 of the teaching sequence. While we're thinking about skills, don't forget to refer to the Spoken Language section of the curriculum and to carefully consider the reading work that will support you in this.

- **Create an outline by allocating the number of days for the skills to be taught within the Teaching Sequence for Writing.** Let's keep this simple.

How heavy is the skills/knowledge teaching of phase 2? Allocate the days needed for this first. It's quite clear, given the levels of detail, that this is a curriculum mapped across spelling and grammar expectations. Be ambitious but do not set yourself up for frustration by allocating too few days. Next, estimate the time children need for planning, drafting (phase 3) and redrafting/editing (phase 4) the final writing outcome. No more squeezing time in for responding to marking – plan for whole lessons on editing and improving. The new curriculum is very explicit in giving weight to this part of the writer's craft, and it needs sufficient teaching/practice time. Once we've totted up the days needed for phases 2 to 4, you now know how long you have for reading. Not enough time to cover your reading? Extend the unit – you're the boss (or certainly should be when it comes to your own planning).

- **Plan the detail - daily learning objectives using Planning Menus, Phonics and Spelling, Grammar Support and DXYZ as appropriate.**

Here's where the magic happens, and again, keep what you know works well. The curriculum has changed; the fundamentals of good reading and writing have not. Some of the ramped up expectations, particularly around grammar, may mean that you need help. See the further reading list below for some very useful publications

that might be of help. Remember, children will not make the progress that they should if they are not given opportunities to write across the unit including the reading phase. However, we should endeavour to make the writing relevant to what is being taught rather than tie ourselves up in knots thinking of creative tasks for the sake of producing a written outcome.

Your planning formats will vary according to your school. Some expect more than others. The steps above provide the means of securing a clear route to a desirable outcome - an outline to which you can add as much or as little detail as necessary.

Of course, writing is a wildly exciting, sometimes frustrating beast and the last thing that we want to do is reduce it to a formula. Planning requires so much more than a fixed approach. However, in this time of change, as we become increasingly familiar with the content and expectations – as we develop new teaching instincts and learn from our early experiences – it really doesn't hurt to have a clear structure or way into a unit. We hope that our materials can help to make this process as painless as possible, and we absolutely welcome your feedback.

Our central training covers this process in far greater detail and exemplifies fiction and non-fiction units in years 3/4 and 5/6 – with full copies of the plans provided.

## Courses that may help:

**15ENG/018P Planning new curriculum units for fiction and non-fiction in Years 5 and 6**, HDC, Thursday 18th June 2015 £145 (£162)

**15ENG/021P Planning new curriculum units for fiction and non-fiction in Years 3 and 4**, HDC, Tuesday 23rd June 2015 £145 (£165)

**15ENG/011P Great expectations at Key Stage 1: moving writing forward in Year 1 and Year 2**, HDC, Wednesday 3rd June 2015 £145 (£165)



## Further reading

- Covering aspects of the Teaching Sequence for Writing, the Transforming Writing: Final Evaluation Report summarises effective practice across a writing sequence : [http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/research/nlt\\_research/5714\\_transforming\\_writing\\_final\\_evaluation\\_report](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/research/nlt_research/5714_transforming_writing_final_evaluation_report)
- To read more on the Grammar for Writing approach which advocates the teaching of embedded grammar and the use of meta-language: <http://www.cybergrammar.co.uk/>
- For a Grammar for Writing research summary: [http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofsocialsciencesandinternationalstudies/education/research/centres/writinggrammarforwriting/Research\\_Summary\\_for\\_Teachers.pdf](http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofsocialsciencesandinternationalstudies/education/research/centres/writinggrammarforwriting/Research_Summary_for_Teachers.pdf)
- For teaching activities around grammar in line with the new curriculum:
- Horton, Suzanne and Bingle, Branwen (2014) Lessons in Teaching Grammar in Primary Schools, Sage
- Corbett, Pie (2014) Jumpstart! Grammar, David Fulton



# Editing and redrafting – the journey to excellence

**Kerry Godsman**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
Herts for Learning



In Ofsted reports that state they are looking for children's responses to marking, they are looking not so much for a comment in response to next steps marking, but more that, in their writing half a term later, the child will be working on a different aspect of writing. They will have mastered previous targets or followed 'next steps' guidance and progress will be evident in their writing. Editing and redrafting is where the 'magic' that leads to that progress happens. Early in KS1 we may focus more on secretarial skills of spellings and punctuation with the view that fluency in key skills (transcription) is crucial to free up the creativity of our children while as we move through to upper KS2 the emphasis shifts to ensuring the writing is the best it can be for audience and purpose.

I'm sure we've all taught the children who firmly write THE END and who are dismayed at the suggestion that they should revisit what they have written. It can be difficult, sometimes, to get pupils to move from an entrenched position of, 'it's done, and nothing needs to change' or viewing editing as 'correcting' with the implication that what was originally written was 'wrong'. We need to consider the process that children go through over the years which looks very different with an emerging Y1 writer against a confident Y6. Decisions need to be made around what we can realistically ask of the youngest children so that they are able to start the editing journey and it is important to provide balance in redrafting opportunities so that children don't feel that their efforts always need improvement.

We have to plan in the time for editing and adults have to model that process of constantly refining their thinking and their writing in order to develop increased audience awareness in children. We therefore need to build in opportunities for children to write for an audience beyond school e.g. writing a letter to the council/ an author/ school children elsewhere; entering

competitions; writing articles for school newspapers. These all provide a real need to edit and redraft for publication. Peer assessment can be an important part of this, as can publishing class books, displaying writing and sharing in assemblies or with other classes and parents. Given these opportunities, our children will continue to develop skills and to take responsibility for changing and improving their own work.

**How** - Good impact is obtained by setting the benchmark. Discussions can be scaffolded through developing the use of sentence stems and conjunctions to frame explanations, justifications and descriptions. Once you start to blend in the grammar learning, the children are well-placed to talk knowledgeably, kindly and specifically about their own and each other's writing.

**When** – It is daunting to be asked to revisit and rewrite a 'completed' text. The redrafting process is better seen as ongoing; tackling the editing as part of checking that learning objectives have been met, using assessment for learning to monitor through peer feedback, highlighting text, using a visualiser to critique and edit work throughout a lesson or to redirect and affirm progress in a plenary; using 'early work' to revisit feedback; building in time for response to marking. Guided Writing, following on from shared writing, also provides opportunities for addressing the specific identified writing development needs within a group. Improvements will happen in stages and each time the writing gets slowly better. The first step is for children to carefully proofread what they've written - aloud if possible – so they can hear where what is written may not tally with their original thoughts.

**Where** – We want children to have pride in the presentation of their work as well as the content so thinking about how and where we ask children to write is important. Some teachers use writing journals effectively for planning, editing or redrafting. Another strategy is using only the right hand page in their English books for extended writing which means that the left hand page is free for redrafting sentences or adding more detail to paragraphs. Evaluating writing for the purpose of redrafting and editing is about making a judgement about quality and we need to be clear with children about our criteria for quality and the means by which we achieve it. In this way we can support our children in their journey to becoming confident and competent in their choices as authors.

# Book reviews

**Martin Galway**  
Teaching and Learning Adviser,  
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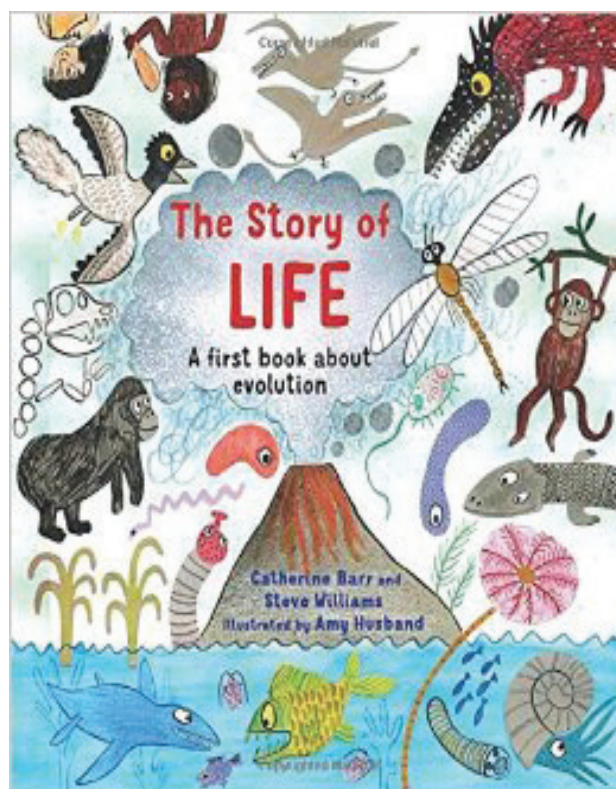
## The Story of Life: A first book about evolution

(FrancesLincoln Children's Books, 2015) RRP £12.99

We're undergoing our own evolutionary process as we speak with the fast pace of change around the new curriculum, assessment and the like but for the purpose of this review we are concerned with evolution on an even bigger – if slower – scale. Here we have a book that takes on evolution and Inheritance, as required by the Programme of Study for Science in KS2, and endeavours to bring it to life in all its epic glory for primary-aged children (lower KS2 upwards).

The book takes one very long process and moves through it at a pace of up to billions of years per double page spread. That's some achievement. Starting with the first cell, we are transported through the ages till we hit the point where human life first roamed the planet. The fact that it remains engaging, accessible, but wholly informative throughout is thanks to the fine balance carefully maintained by its creators. Even better, a set of supporting notes can be found at [www.franceslincoln.com/media/The\\_Story\\_of\\_Life\\_Teachers\\_Notes.pdf](http://www.franceslincoln.com/media/The_Story_of_Life_Teachers_Notes.pdf) and these contain further references that will support teachers in forming plans and gathering resources to support this area of learning.

Illustrated by Amy Husband, the creator of a very different favourite of ours: "Dear Miss", her characteristically playful illustrations enliven a book that firmly deserves its place in the KS2 library.

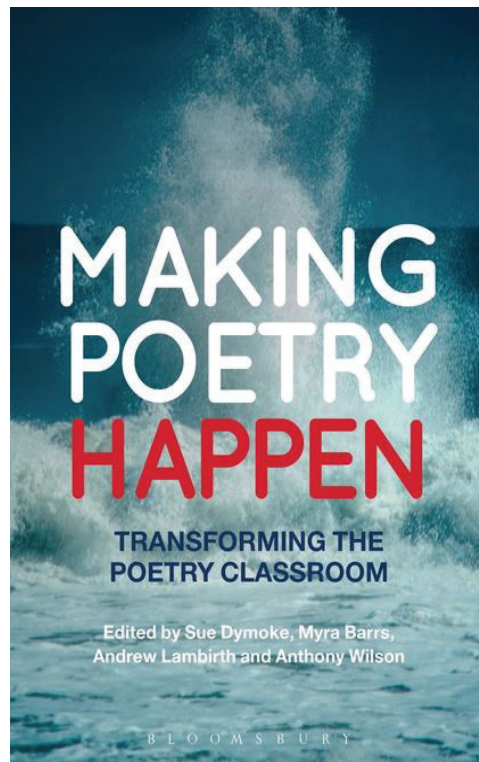


## Book reviews

# Making Poetry Happen

Transforming the Poetry Classroom

Edited by Sue Dymoke, Myra Barrs, Andrew Lambirth and Anthony Wilson  
(Bloomsbury, 2015) RRP £24.99



The first words in this recently published text (once the usual contents, credits, and editors' introduction are done with) are these:

*I have always hated poetry. I loathe and despise it, in fact.*

A pretty unambiguous quote and not the most edifying of openings, but it frames and grounds this highly practical and inspirational text within a national and professional context that is too often resistant to the singular – sometimes intimidating – power of the poetic voice. The book's stated aim is to exemplify "how poetry can empower and transform – how young people and their teachers can find their voices as poets in the making and discover the sustaining power of poetry." And it sets about achieving this through the presentation of research-driven practice, coupled with an energising, no-stone-left-turned approach.

Organised into four sections – reading poetry; writing poetry; speaking and listening to poetry; transformative poetry cultures – the key strength of *Making Poetry Happen* is the way in which it marries the academic with the practical. This is a book alive with pedagogy. It is also a book attuned to the range of challenges that poetry teaching faces and meets them head on. Chapters cover a broad range of contexts that require sensitively pitched teaching – giving voice to "invisible learners", recognising EAL learners as active agents in language learning – and are centred on the transformative powers of poetry. This book is highly recommended for literacy leaders keen to develop their school's poetry culture and for teachers with either an academic interest in the pedagogy of poetry or that are seeking to extend the reach of poetry within and outside of their classrooms.



