

Primary Teaching and Learning

English Spring Term newsletter



Painting the picture with words: writing for effect with grammatical accuracy



Using a picture as a stimulus for writing is a well-known approach, particularly exemplified in The National Gallery's 'Take One Picture'. This article explores how one picture can spark children's imagination, develop their reading skills and refine their understanding of writing for effect. You can capture and develop their creative thoughts and support them to turn these into innovative writing. The loveliness will not be marred by the grammar; rather the children will understand how these tools, in their ever-growing toolkit, can be used to craft a treasure for their reader to enjoy.

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Painting the picture with words: writing for effect with grammatical accuracy (continued)

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Whilst success criteria and 'ladders to success' are useful, and sometimes necessary, scaffolds to support writing and assessment, there is always the danger that children will try to please the teacher by shoe-horning every aspect of the criteria into their writing and sit back congratulating themselves (after triumphantly ticking the list) on a quality piece of writing. Unfortunately, this can lead to what I have often described to children as 'wading through treacle'. The writing may be teeming with 'wow-words', adverbial phrases, semi-colons and, if they're feeling really clever, the subjunctive. Is it a pleasure to read? Not always. The skill the children have sometimes forgotten to put at the top of their list is to interest and hook the reader by considering their needs. Audience and purpose are terms that are often used, and ensuring children have experienced 'being the reader' is the first step to effective writing. Are children being encouraged, at the beginning of a writing journey, to consider how they have been influenced/affected by an author and what feelings/thoughts they had whilst reading? Or do they skip this part and begin at the 'unpicking the authorial techniques' stage? Identifying how **they** respond to a text will certainly give them some idea beyond the technical aspects as to what they would like **the reader** to feel and respond. Once these have been identified, the authorial 'tricks of the trade' can be plundered and attached firmly to our children's toolkits. On their journey through the primary years, this toolkit will grow,

and their understanding of how to select the right tool for the right purpose will be continually refined; they will see grammar as a way of refining and controlling their writing.

Although the printed word is our main focus when teaching the Reading Comprehension Programme of Study, every aspect, aside from decoding, can be taught and assessed using pictures and film. It wouldn't take you five minutes to produce a list of a variety of ways to teach 'inferring, retrieving, predicting, analysing, authorial intent, comparing, summarising and vocabulary' with the aid of a good visual stimulus.

The following picture is taken from 'The Arrival' by the award winning author Shaun Tan (published by Hodder Children's Books: ISBN 978-0-7344-1586-8). It is a multi-layered book which tells a powerful story of immigration without a single printed word. This picture is from the beginning of the book as the husband/father in the book prepares to leave. Like Anthony Browne, Shaun Tan offers us a rich understanding of the story, beyond the printed word, with a plethora of detail and symbolism within each individual picture.

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The first prompt we provide is the Aiden Chambers, 'Tell Me' approach:

'Tell me about this picture'.

The use of an open question ensures there are no incorrect responses and values a broad spectrum of replies. The children will not be fishing for the answers in the teacher's head. In fact, they often make observations that may not have occurred to the teacher. This can be carried out as small group or whole class discussions. The children record their ideas on post-notes, gathered on large pieces of paper or scribed by the teacher/teaching assistant. As the children contribute, the teacher promotes the freedom to make any relevant statement, by not commenting on the quality of the answer e.g. 'lovely', 'good', 'that's right'. Instead the teacher responds by asking for more contributions 'keep going', 'and another idea?' Remind children that they mustn't forget to state the obvious which they sometimes do in an effort to say something 'clever'. To develop the quality of the contributions, the children are taught to justify their comments e.g. 'I think because'. This of course is modelled by the teacher throughout the curriculum, not just in reading lessons.

The Spoken Language Programme of Study provides the detail of what should be taught e.g. – *articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions – use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas.*

Possible responses could range from, 'They might be poor because the teapot is cracked and you would probably have bought another one if you had enough money' to 'She is trying to make him feel better because her hand is on top of his and this is how people show they care.' Once children have had an opportunity to make a range of statements, they should then be given a key question. This question is devised to



The Arrival, Shaun Tan (reproduced by kind permission of Hodder Children's Books: ISBN 978-0-7344-1586-8)

focus their thoughts in one particular direction. For example 'Why do you think the author/illustrator chose to place the suitcase on the kitchen table?' or 'Why do you think the author/illustrator chose to set this scene in the kitchen?' In the 2015 KS2 Reading SATs paper, only 51% of children nationally responded correctly when the question was focused on AF6 (*Identify and comment on writers' purposes and viewpoints and the overall effect of the text on the reader*).

Drama is a key component in the teaching of inference. To support the children's understanding of this picture you might ask them to create a **freeze frame**. They could either recreate the positions of the two people in the picture or they might recreate what happens just before/after or what happens when their daughter walks in? Once the freeze frame is in place, another child places their hand near one of the characters and becomes the **'thought bubble'**. They say what they believe the character is thinking right this second. Once these ideas of

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the character's thoughts have been generated in the many groups around the classroom, these thoughts are then explored to see how they differed and what similarities there were. You might take the mother, father or daughter and **hot-seat** them. The teacher acts as one of the characters and the children have the opportunity to devise questions to ask them. The Reading Comprehension Programme of Study requires that children 'Ask questions' but it is the quality of these questions that we will be developing. Which questions will really allow us to know what the characters are thinking and feeling and what they might do next? – freeze frames may lead into role play.

Once the drama has transported the children into the world of the narrative, it is important to **transfer those captured thoughts and feelings into writing**. By now, we have probably built up a picture of despair, fear and pain through this picture. We need to ensure that vocabulary is broadened to express exactly how the characters are feeling and to describe the setting (see our **previous vocabulary newsletter for great ideas**). The children will be constantly reminded that all vocabulary and structural choices will be focused on how to give the reader this feeling/impression. This is where the grammar comes into its own. It allows the children to consciously control their writing.



For example, **year 3** may be focusing on **adverbs** and can be considering:

'**how**' the characters are acting/feeling: Anna *gently* placed her hand on top of Joe's.

'**where**' the people/objects are: The suitcase sat *in the middle* of the kitchen table reminding them of their painful goodbye in the morning.

'**when**' events take place: *After* packing his small amount of belongings, he stood in silence by the kitchen table.

Year 4 could be learning to use **determiners** to subtly add detail:

There had been a *few* tears earlier in the day but with *each* minute that ticked by, the family grew stronger.

Year 5 – relative clauses non-restrictive (with parenthesis) and restrictive (without parenthesis)

The table, *which had seen much sharing and laughter*, was now the centre of sadness.

The person *who he loved more than any other* stood silently by his side.

Year 6 – passive: focuses us on the suitcase rather than who was packing it.

The suitcase was packed and the finality of the clasp clicking into the lock sent them into a spiral of despair.

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You might also find an old suitcase in the loft or a charity shop and fill it with items such as boat tickets, maps, foreign language dictionary, photos of the family and keepsakes. The children could focus on individual objects. Again, the process would begin with discussion prompted by key questions, supporting an understanding of the characters involved, and in turn the discussion is used to inform and make subtle writing choices.

Once you have used this technique you will be looking for pictures and film to support a pathway to writing for many other genres and text types. You might also be interested in attending the year 5 and 6 Take One Book training which will use 'The Arrival' as a focus text, giving you many more ideas.

by Jane Andrews

jane.andrews@hertsforlearning.co.uk



Course suggestions

Take One Book:

KS1 (15RNG/071P)

HDC, Stevenage | Fri 5th February 2016

Year 3 and 4 (15ENG/072P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 8th February 2016

Year 5 and 6 (15ENG073P)

HDC, Stevenage | Wed 24th February 2016





Reading for Pleasure: where to begin...

A love of books is something we all aspire to develop in the children we teach. **Studies have found that reading for pleasure is more important to a child's educational achievement than their family's wealth or social class.** Research carried out for The Reading Agency has found strong evidence that reading for pleasure can increase empathy, improve relationships with others, reduce the symptoms of depression and the risk of dementia, and improve wellbeing throughout life. If reading is a pleasure for them, children won't see it as 'work', but as a way of accessing a wealth of information and opening door to other worlds. We are all well aware of the link between reading and writing: good readers are most likely to be good writers. So the underlying message in the English curriculum - that promoting reading for pleasure is vital - is one that every teacher would echo. Although there is a greater focus on skills teaching in the current curriculum, there is far more freedom to choose the genres that will provide the context in which to learn and apply those skills. However, finding books that children want to read, or authors that excite them, can

be difficult; the choice is endless and time for searching out texts is not. Fortunately, help is out there in the form of some great websites.

Start with books that you enjoy. All of us have read books that leave us breathless as we tell someone about the 'best bits'. The passage in 'The Weirdstone of Brisingamen', where the children escape through tunnels barely wide enough to wriggle through, is so well-written and exciting that I had to pause after reading it to recover! If you don't enjoy a book, you will have a hard time enthusing and engaging your children in learning from it. Does the cover make you want to pick it up? Does the blurb make you want to read it? Is the print clear and well-spaced on the page? Are any pictures attractive? Try reading a page at random to get a feel for the style and see if the pitch is age appropriate (guidance on characteristics of age-appropriate texts can be found on the HfL reading assessment criteria). Model this behaviour to your children to help them know what to look for when choosing books that will suit them.

A fabulous website is **Lovereading4kids.co.uk** . They give book recommendations that are sorted by age group with enough of a blurb to help you make informed choices. There are many different categories: reluctant readers, children's classics, books for boys, books reviewed by children and, my favourite, 'If they like... They'll love' which is designed to help children discover new authors.

- If they like Michael Morpurgo they'll love Megan Rix and Nick Garlick
- If they like David Walliams they'll love William Sutcliffe
- If they like Jacqueline Wilson they'll love Anne Booth and Dawn McNiff
- If they like Alex Rider they'll love Urban Outlaws

The website is particularly useful for teachers because, once you have registered, you can read extracts from the books and the opening pages to help you identify whether a text will be an

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appropriate model for writing as well as a great read. Take a look at the awards section. Those books selected for the UKLA award are specifically selected by teachers, for teachers, to share with pupils in the classroom. The website is constantly updated and you can see the top 10 bestselling children's books for each week.

BookTrust's stated aim is to inspire a love of reading; BookTrust's Children's books (<http://bit.ly/BookTrustChildren>). Amongst the myriad book recommendations, again usefully sorted by age, genre and interest, there are also downloadable resources, lesson plans, videos and guides to holding whole school events to celebrate books and authors. Children can read books online, listen and read along and take part in quizzes and competitions. Have a look at the Blue Peter Book Awards if you want some ideas for good quality texts. Perhaps you could get your children involved with voting when the shortlists are announced?

Steer parents towards **Words for Life** (<http://bit.ly/WordsforLife>) a website set up by the National Literacy Trust which is set out in age bands from birth to 11 years. As well as the book recommendations you would expect, there's guidance to help parents recognise key milestones in children's development as readers and fun ideas and activities for parents and children do together. There are also helpful videos to support with both decoding and comprehension. Together with a video on understanding phonics with guidance on pronunciation, parents can watch Michael Rosen's top tips for reading bedtime stories.

Books for Keeps (<http://bit.ly/BooksforKeeps>) is an online magazine devoted to children's literature. As well as hundreds of book reviews, you can find articles on every aspect of writing for children and news about all the latest children's book awards. I was familiar with the Guardian and Costa book awards, but this website introduced me to great new non-fiction texts such as **Atlas of Adventures**, illustrated by Lucy Letherland and written by Rachel Williams - winner of the 2015 Educational Writers' Award - and **Utterly Amazing Science** by Robert Winston which won the Royal Society Young People's Book Prize for 2016.

These websites will help to keep you up to date and provide you with ideas to refresh your children's diet of quality texts and introduce them to new authors. With school budgets shrinking, if you collate a selection that tempts you, it's worth putting in an order at your local library as they can draw from stock all over the country. Then it will be free to use the texts and you can 'try before you buy' without committing school funds.

At the heart of great English teaching are good quality texts. We all have our tried and trusted favourite books which we enjoy sharing through our teaching, but it's great to know that there are great new books being published all the time that will add to the pleasure of learning for our children.



By Kerry Godsman

kerry.godsman@hertsforlearning.co.uk

Course suggestions

Take One Book:

KS1 (15RNG/071P)

HDC, Stevenage | Fri 5th February 2016

Year 3 and 4 (15ENG/072P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 8th February 2016

Year 5 and 6 (15ENG073P)

HDC, Stevenage | Wed 24th February 2016

Guided Reading at KS2 (15ENG/075P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 18th January 2016

Reciprocal Reading at KS2 (15ENG/076P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 21st March

Resources to Support Planning for English

Do you feel confident in planning units for English?

Do you spend time endlessly searching for resources online?

Are you in Year 2 or 6 and currently implementing the new curriculum?

If so, look no further.

To support you, Herts for Learning has developed a suite of resources entitled the **Primary PA Plus** package, which contains material focussed on the national curriculum and provides new approaches to mid-term planning. To find the most recent resources, simply log on to the Herts for Learning website, select 'My Groups' and then click on the 'Primary PA Plus' followed by 'Primary English Resources'. Save yourself some time by downloading the resources in preparation for planning, but remember to log back in at regular intervals to check for new additions.

Here is a quick guide to the top ten HfL English planning resources (in no particular order):

1. Long term plan with grammar links

This suggested long term plan allows for two planning approaches: planning which follows the teaching sequence for writing, or a topic based approach using a text as a stimulus ('Take One Book'). This document also suggests the grammar emphasis for each unit. A must-have in every planning folder.

2. Teaching Grammar to Improve Writing

This document consists of the table from the English National Curriculum (Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation), but it has been colour coded to indicate which statements are fundamental to improving writing and therefore should be focused upon. The statements have also been numbered; these are recorded on the Long term plan with grammar links document (above) to suggest the grammar emphasis for each unit. A really useful resource when considering children's next steps, but also a quick guide to give you an overview of the National Curriculum expectations for each year group.

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3. Text recommendations for narrative modules

This text list aims to provide you with a starting point for building your own bank of quality texts that could be used to support teaching in the modules identified in the HfL suggested Long term plan with grammar links document. These texts exemplify the vocabulary, grammar and punctuation expected at each year group and offer a good model for writing at a suitable pitch for each year group.

4. Progression in sentence structure

These two documents can be found in the grammar section of the Primary English Resources. There is a narrative and non-fiction document that set out the National Curriculum programme of study for each year group with a few sentences to exemplify the expectations for that year group. This document is very useful to enable you to see the progression of sentence structure. However, a word of warning... remember the sample sentences exemplify every aspect of the programme of study at once, and a child may/may not be including every aspect at any one time.

5. Text type grids

This folder contains over 20 text type grids that were part of the National Strategy in 2008. These documents set out the purpose, generic structure, language features and knowledge necessary for the writer, for a variety of genres. Vital before planning any unit to support you in your knowledge of specific features and the structure of the text type.

6. Progression papers

This folder contains progression papers that are based on the 2006 National Strategy Progression Papers. They have been rewritten to reflect the increased expectations of the 2014 Curriculum, specifically taking account of the grammar Programmes of Study. Where appropriate, some exemplification of the age appropriate vocabulary, grammar and punctuation has been included. Progression is shown from Year R through to 'Moving Beyond', which informs teaching for those children who are working well beyond the age related expectations for the end of key stage. These papers can be used in conjunction with the National Strategy Text Type grids to support planning for pitch, and to guide differentiation. See [hfl_progesion_papers_overview](#) for further guidance.

7. Planning menus

This folder contains a selection of narrative, fiction, non-fiction and poetry planning menus for each year group. They provide examples of possible learning objectives appropriately pitched for each year group. Literally like a menu, pick and choose the LOs that suit your children's needs and your module.

8. Comparison of teaching expectations for the teaching of phonics and spelling between Letters and Sounds / Support for Spelling and the National Curriculum 2014

This document can be found in the Phonics and Spelling folder. An important document that sets out any old/new learning in Year 1 & 2 for phonics and spelling. Important to note that, though the new National Curriculum has changed the content for spelling in Y1, the expectation for reading has not changed (See Assessment Framework 2012 where it lays out each section in detail for reading).

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9. Exemplar planning guidance for the teaching of spelling and phonics in Year 2-6

These documents can be found in the Phonics and Spelling folder. Three essential documents for the planning of phonics and spelling from Y2 -6. They set out the programmes of study organised into 3 blocks (terms) for each NC phase. The statements from the programme of study are recorded with references to documents with lesson ideas/further subject knowledge

10. Discussion Structure document

This document can be found in the discussion section. It is a tool to support structuring discussion. Based on the concept of exploratory talk, this document sets out four stages of discussion to enable pupils to use discussion as a tool to think collectively.

The resources above are available to schools via a web subscription service, which enables all staff within a school to download the materials applicable to their teaching role from the Herts for Learning website. Further resources will be added throughout 2016. Watch this space...

by Sabrina Wright

sabrina.wright@hertsforlearning.co.uk



Course suggestions

Planning new curriculum units for Key Stage 1 (15ENG/066P)

HDC, Stevenage | Tues 26th January 2016

Planning new curriculum units for fiction and non-fiction

Years 3 and 4 (15ENG/067P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 25th January 2016

Year 5 and 6 (15ENG/068P)

HDC, Stevenage | Wed 27th January 2016

Take One Book:

KS1 (15RNG/071P)

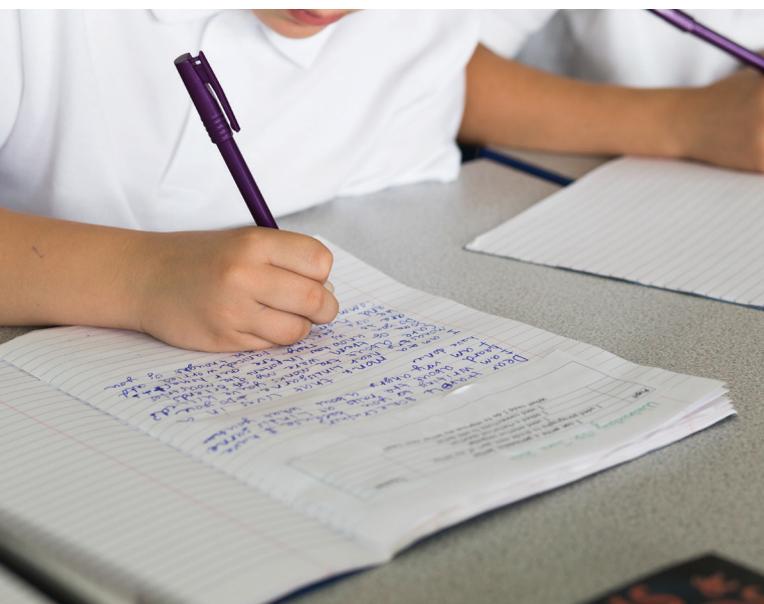
HDC, Stevenage | Fri 5th February 2016

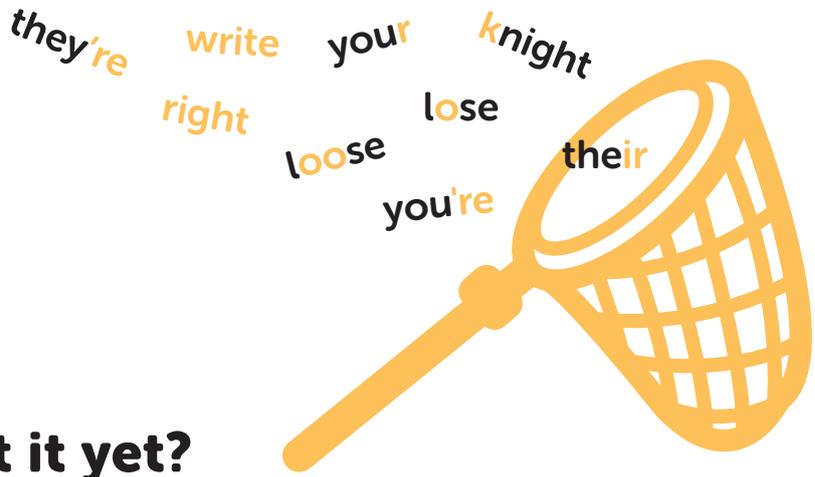
Year 3 and 4 (15ENG/072P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 8th February 2016

Year 5 and 6 (15ENG073P)

HDC, Stevenage | Wed 24th February 2016





Spelling Fever: have you caught it yet?

English really is a fascinating language, and its spelling system is no doubt one of its most intriguing facets.

There is no denying the fact that the National Curriculum 2014 has catapulted spelling at KS2 into the literacy limelight, and the latest interim assessment framework document, which states the importance of correct spelling, has further intensified the focus of attention on this somewhat contentious element of English language. I for one am thrilled about this. For too long, spelling has had to play second fiddle to its bolshie rivals, sneaking under the feedback radar in favour of a focus on sentence construction and grammatical accuracy. This side-lining has led to a skewed perception of spelling as an add-on to the process of becoming literate, rather than an integral part of it.

Indeed my suspicions have been confirmed during recent CPD sessions when I have begun by asking teachers to rate their feelings towards different aspects of language and learning, using a 1-10 scale (10 indicating that the person holds very positive feelings about this aspect; 1 meaning the opposite). I asked teachers to rate the following areas accordingly: poetry, grammar, history, spelling, literature. Sure enough, a discrepancy often appeared, with – you've guessed it – a love of spelling languishing behind the other disciplines. Following on from this activity, I then try my very best to convince teachers that their dislike (and let's face it – distrust) of English spelling is unjustified

and illogical. Here's how I put it: if you have a penchant for history then you should love spelling. It is in fact the living embodiment of history, right there, in front of you, staring you in the face. With just a little nudge, it is not hard to conjure up an image of a medieval scribe, bent over his parchment, quill in hand, faced with the arduous decision of how to represent the long vowel sound in the much used word of the time: 'stake'. After much deliberation, he opted for the split digraph (e.g. a – e as in 'stake'). And so it was decided: the split digraph would be the way of marking a long vowel digraph. Job done! Or at least that is what he must have thought. Just imagine then, the heated discussion that must have arisen several hundred years later when scribes were faced with the same sounding word, entering the language from Nordic parts, to describe a piece of meat. What were they to do? Keep the same spelling? But that of course could lead to confusion. So, the decision was made that when new words entered the language, and they sounded like existing words, they would be spelt differently, hence the introduction of the long vowel sound represented by two adjacent vowels (e.g. steak), and the birth of the homophone. And so the variations began.

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So what value does this information hold when it comes to the task of inspiring KS2 children (and sometimes teachers) to enjoy spelling?

David Crystal (British linguist, academic and author) puts it like this:

‘Explaining why words are spelled the way they are can help us remember them. The stories behind the spellings are often fascinating, and interest adds motivation.’

**Spell It Out: The Singular Story of English Spelling, David Crystal
(Profile Books, ISBN 978-1846685682)**

In my experience, providing a narrative, a rationale for why our spelling system might have ended up the way it is, gives spelling acquisition a new edge. Helping the children to imagine the real people, who had to make real decisions that ultimately shaped our language, can make the information more tangible and relevant. Ultimately, it brings a subject, that - let's face it, can be as dry as dust – to life.

I am not suggesting for one minute that we need to become scholars of English language in order to teach spelling well. I am not an English language scholar myself – far from it. As a teacher, our mission in acquiring knowledge has a very specific purpose. We want to know enough of the juicy bits to light the fire of interest for the children. We must know enough about our subject to stimulate their interest and imagination. Our aim must be to make the nugget of information we are imparting juicy enough to stick. This information then acts as a magnet, attracting more and more information. I know enough therefore, to make the subject come alive for the children.

Acquiring knowledge of the juicy bits isn't as hard as you may think. Once you know a little, you become intrigued and then you want to find out more. Here are a few tasty morsels to get you started:

Did you know...

The letter string 'ii' is, apparently, an 'unacceptable combination' in English spelling. This is why we see apparent exceptions to the 'turning a y to an i' rule when adding vowel suffixes (cry + es = cries, but not cry + ing = criing x; instead we retain the 'y' = crying). Apparently, this is because, when handwritten in connected script, this can look too much like the letter 'u'. In my reading, I have come across this term ('unacceptable combination'), on many occasions, and I don't know why, but I like it. I like to come across a rule that is so solid, so undeniable, so irrefutable, that scholars feel confident enough to use words like 'unacceptable'! I like sharing this term with the children. I find myself shouting it a little, in a sergeant major type manner.

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I usually find that this makes the knowledge stick! What I then love, and I mean this genuinely, is when an inquisitive child (or teacher) offers the heckle: 'what about skiing?' The cognitive effort that must have gone into seeking out this exception is worthy of praise in itself, and as a teacher, this is surely worthy of a mini-fist pump moment. After all, making the children think is what we are all about. This is of course a true exception (along with 'taxiing' which they are probably less likely to offer). True exceptions like this are to be noted and celebrated. If we can get the children to celebrate and enjoy finding those words that don't follow the rules, rather than be affronted by them, I feel we have won half the battle.

This leads me onto a Top Tip. When I have supported schools to develop their subject knowledge and skills in teaching spelling at KS2, I have urged them to introduce a spelling 'Wonder Wall'. Here is where the children can ask those spelling questions that are puzzling them. These can be wild and wacky; precocious and pretentious. It doesn't matter: the most important thing is that they are asking them. You can start the ball rolling with a few of your own puzzlers: what has 'secret' got to do with being a *secretary*? Why is there a 'w' in 'two'? Which is correct: spelt or spelled? (All of these questions are answered in our training: 'Y5/6 Spelling: the fine detail').

Although a seemingly small - and seemingly gimmicky - addition to the classroom wall, I feel that a spelling 'Wonder Wall' represents a major mind shift in our approach to teaching spelling. It represents a shift from a fearfulness about spelling and its myriad of apparently arbitrary and confusing exceptions, to an acknowledgement that our spelling system is fascinating and intriguing and worth exploring, as well as an awareness that the answers to many of our spelling queries are out there, hidden somewhere in the murky depths of our history. We just need to have the inclination to both ask the questions, and seek the answers. Fundamentally, we are not denying that there are odd things at play within the English spelling system, but instead we are helping the children to see that there is some

method to the madness, and where there is no method, there is at least intrigue and a good old yarn to discover.

by Penny Slater

penny.slater@hertsforlearning.co.uk



Course suggestions

Phonics and Spelling at KS2:

Pulling it all together (15ENG/088A)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 18th January 2016

Spelling: the fine detail and application

Years 3 and 4 (15ENG/069P)

HDC, Stevenage | Tue 2nd February 2016

Year 5 and 6 (15ENG/070P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 8th February 2016

Supporting Children to Engage with the Words on the KS2 Word Lists

In the blurb to the 'English Appendix 1: Spelling' you will find the following statement:

The word lists for years 3 and 4 and years 5 and 6 are statutory. The lists are a mixture of words pupils frequently use in their writing and those which they often misspell. Some of the listed words may be thought of as quite challenging, but the 100 words in each list can easily be taught within the four years of key stage 2 alongside other words that teachers consider appropriate.



It is worth noting that despite these words having to be learnt, they will probably not be the main focus of the KS2 spelling test. In fact, an analysis of the 2016 sample paper revealed that only one word (from the Year 3 and 4 word list) appears in the sample test.

How we actually 'teach' these words will no doubt be one of the many questions that teachers are currently grappling with. Getting the children to play with the words, and therefore engage with them in creative and fun ways, is one way forward.

Try some of these games and activities at the start of your English lessons, or as homework challenges, to help the children become familiar with some of the words on the lists.

The following ideas are based on the Year 5 and 6 word list, but could be applied to the Year 3 and 4 word list.

Word Ladders

Present the children with the first word of a word ladder e.g. 'brain' and the category: 'Parts of the Body'. Working in small groups, challenge the children to create a word ladder where each word starts with the last letter on the last word (this can be done on mini whiteboards, post-it notes, or on strips of paper). So a word ladder beginning with the word 'brain' might look like this:

brain
nose
ear
ribcage

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The challenge of the game could take several different forms:

- Challenge the children to make the longest word ladder that they can in 1 minute. They could receive a point for every correctly spelt word. They could receive 5 bonus points if they manage to use the target word from the board, and spell it correctly. The target word should be taken from the Y5/Y6 word list e.g. 'stomach'.
- Challenge the children to create a word ladder of a specified length e.g. 10 words, where both the first and the last word must be the target word.
- Challenge the children to take turns within their group, each child adding a new word in turn. The winner is the child who is able to add the target word on their turn. The other players will have to think strategically in order to avoid other people in the group having the opportunity to use the target word before they get a chance!

This game could be repeated with different categories and different target words taken from the word list:

Category	Target word/s from the Y5/6 word list
professions	soldier/secretary
transport	yacht
body parts	shoulder/stomach/muscle
weather	lightning
books	dictionary



Words within Words

Present the children with a word from the word list and challenge them to find as many words within that word in 1 minute. The letters must be adjacent within the original word (this will encourage the children to focus on the letter order). Tell the children that they cannot use abbreviations, or proper nouns.

Explanation: (5 words within words)
plan, an, at, l, ion

Category: (5 words within words)
cat, at, ego, go, gory

Determined: (7 words within words)
deter, term, ermine, mine, mined, in, l

Try presenting them with a list of words and ask them to find the word within the list that yields the greatest number of 'words within words'.

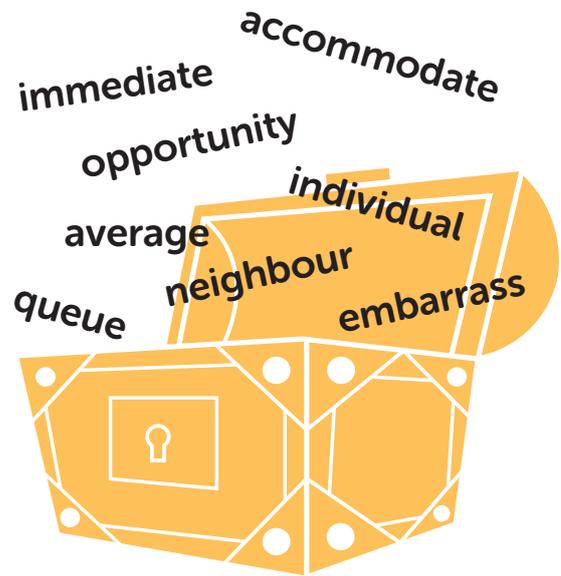
Continued >

Treasure Hunt Games

Provide the children with a limited selection of words from the word list and set them various challenges, such as:

Find:

- The word with the longest vowel chain (**queue** – 4 vowels)
- The word with the longest alternate vowel/ consonant letter pattern (**average** – v/c/v/c/v/c/v)
- The longest word/s that have no repeated letters (**neighbour** and **signature**).
The children might be interested to know that the longest word in the English language with no repeated letters is 'copyrightable'.
- The word with the greatest number of adjacent double consonants (**committee** – 3 sets of double consonants). They can then be challenged to find other words with 2 sets of double consonants (**embarrass** and **accommodate**).
- The words with the greatest number of pronounced syllables e.g. without using artificial articulation (**opportunity**, **pronunciation**, **immediately**, **curiosity**, **individual** – 5 syllables).



by Penny Slater

penny.slater@hertsforlearning.co.uk



Course suggestions

Phonics and Spelling at KS2:

Pulling it all together (15ENG/088A)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 18th January 2016

Spelling: the fine detail and application

Years 3 and 4 (15ENG/069P)

HDC, Stevenage | Tue 2nd February 2016

Year 5 and 6 (15ENG/070P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 8th February 2016

Tracking Phonics Throughout Primary School

The YR/KS1 phonics tracker has long been an important tool in supporting schools with tracking the progress of all their pupils through the phonic phases. Since it was published alongside the introduction of 'Letters and Sounds' it has been adapted for AM7 and is widely used across the authority as well as nationally. With the launch of the new NC and changes to expectations for KS1 and KS2, the tracker has now been updated to reflect these changes. A copy of this tracker can be found on HfL website in the English resources section.

No longer is the teaching of phonics seen as being time-limited to YR and KS1 but instead it continues throughout KS2. Therefore, there is now a need for the tracking of phonemic/morphemic knowledge from YR – Y6. We are currently in the process of creating a tracking format to reflect this need. It will be completed in the same way but will support tracking pupils all the way through primary school. Keep an eye out for this new tracking format on the subscription website in Spring '16.

Letters and Sounds: Phonic progress tracking sheet – Early Years Foundation Stage through Key Stage 1

Class: Teacher/Practitioner:		Autumn	Spring	Summer
Phase 1 continues through Phase 2 - 6 Distinguish between different sounds in the environment and phonemes. Explore and experiment with sounds and words.	Progression Y2 Expectations (including elements of Phase 6 plus NC expectations) Working on: Recognising phonic irregularities and becoming more secure with less common grapheme-phoneme correspondences. Reading and spelling the next 200 Medium Frequency Words and Common Exception Words. Applying suffixes where changes are needed to the root (morphology). Applying phonic skills and knowledge to recognise and spell an increasing number of complex words. Writing simple dictations.			Y2
	Y1 Expectations (including elements of Phase 5 plus NC expectations) Working on: Reading phonically decodable two-syllable and three-syllable words. Using alternative ways of pronouncing and spelling the graphemes corresponding to the long vowel phonemes. Reading and spelling the 100 High Frequency Words and Common Exception Words. Spelling complex words using phonically plausible attempts. Applying affixes where no change to the root is needed, e.g. un-, -er, -est, -ing, -ed. Writing simple dictations.			Y1
	Phase 4 (YR) Working on: Segmenting adjacent consonants in words and applying this in spelling. Working on: Blending adjacent consonants in words and applying this skill when reading unfamiliar texts.			YR
	Working on: Reading and spelling a wide range of CVC words using all letters and less frequent consonant digraphs and some long vowel phonemes. Graphemes: ea, ai, ure, er, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ai, ee, igh, oa, oo Working on: Reading and spelling CVC words using a wider range of letters, short vowels, some consonant digraphs and double letters. Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng Working on: Reading and spelling CVC words using letters and short vowels. Letter progression Set 7: y, z, zz, qu Set 8: l, x, w, x			
	Phase 3 (YR) Working on: Reading and spelling CVC words using a wider range of letters, short vowels, some consonant digraphs and double letters. Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng Working on: Reading and spelling CVC words using letters and short vowels. Letter progression Set 7: y, z, zz, qu Set 8: l, x, w, x			
Phase 2 Working on: Using common consonants and vowels. Blending for reading and segmenting for spelling simple CVC words. Working on: Knowing that words are constructed from phonemes and that phonemes are represented by graphemes. Letter progression Set 5: h, b, t, ff, ll, ss Set 4: ck, e, u, r Set 3: g, o, c, k Set 2: l, n, m, d Set 1: s, a, t, p				
Phase 1 (7 Aspects) Working on: Showing awareness of rhyme and alliteration, distinguishing between different sounds in the environment and phonemes, exploring and experimenting with sounds and words and discriminating speech sounds in words. Beginning to orally blend and segment phonemes.				

The phase summary boxes for Y1 and Y2 have been updated to reflect new NC expectations.

End of Year expectations:

YR – secure phase 4

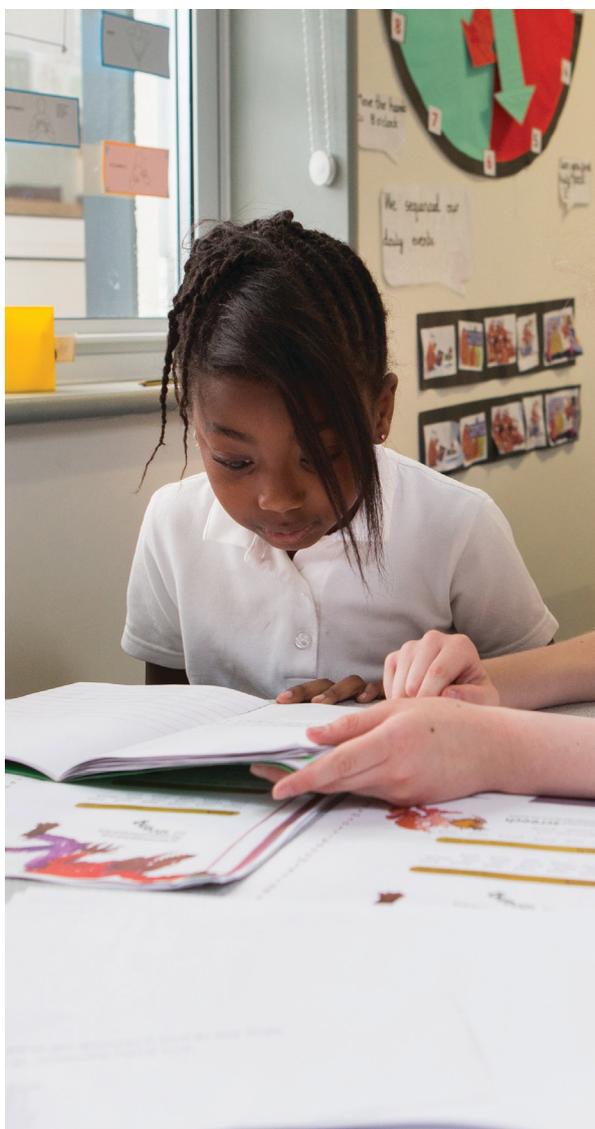
Y1 – secure Y1 NC expectations plus elements of phase 5

Y2 – secure Y2 NC expectations plus elements of phase 6

Continued >

How should the Literacy SL and SLT use the tracker?

The phonic tracker should be populated every half term by class teachers and handed to the English Subject Leader every term for analysis. The English Subject Leader should then analyse this tracking data to inform their knowledge of how well **all** children are progressing and to ensure that they are aware of those pupils not at ARE and which vulnerable groups they fall into. This information should then be feedback to SLT and used to inform teaching, interventions, pupil progress meetings and discussions on transition. Once the current tracker has been used to track children through YR-KS1 it should then passed on into KS2 where it will inform the teaching of those pupils who are still working through the phases. The tracker instantly informs KS2 teachers of which phase each of these pupils is secure with and what their next steps should be.



Populating the tracker

The tracker is only useful if it is completed accurately and consistently across the school. It is important that the YR/KS1 tracker is completed using 'secure' judgements and 'not working within'. For a child to be considered **secure** in a phonic phase they should be **frequently demonstrating most** of the required knowledge for that phase across the curriculum. When assessing children, it is important to consider that 'Letters and Sounds' does not advocate one-to-one testing e.g. at the end of a half term. Instead, ongoing observations should be used to inform planning whilst teaching the phases. Only 20% of the weighting of assessment judgements should come from discrete assessment/sessions; about 80% should come from a broad range of activities:

- The discrete teaching sequence
- Adult led activities
- Application during independent writing
- Observation made during CHIL
- Guided/shared reading and writing sessions
- Dictations
- Cross curricular writing samples

Continued >



Ensuring that phonics is being rigorously tracked using secure judgements means that no child will fall through the net, interventions will be tailored to need and pace and progression across the year groups will be monitored.

If you wish to purchase the phonic tracker on AM7 please use the following links:

<http://bit.ly/PriAssMgrPhonics>

<http://bit.ly/am7literacy>

by Ruth Goodman

ruth.goodman@hertsforlearning.co.uk



Course suggestions

Phonics and Spelling at KS2:

Pulling it all together (15ENG/088A)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 18th January 2016

Phonics and Spelling: what's new and what's not!

Year 1 (15ENG/086P)

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 21st January 2016

Year 2 (15ENG/087P)

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 25th January 2016

Phase 2-4 phonics: teaching and supporting 'Letters and Sounds' (15ENG/085P)

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 28th January 2016

Teaching assistants: spotlight on phonics and spelling (15ENG/089P)

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 3rd March 2016

Spring into words:

**web links to support
your subject knowledge,
planning and teaching**

Much is buzzing around the media and research these days relating to reinvigorating a broader understanding of the unit-sizes of our language, yet maintaining a whole-school approach to phonics. Topics such as onset-rime, morphemes and etymology are the subject of the websites listed below: how they help develop more accurate spelling and reading skills, broaden vocabulary usage and support an inclusive approach for those with poorer working memories or at risk of being left behind.

- 1. Amusing, brief, animation showing the History of English:** <http://bit.ly/EngHisVid>
- 2. Blog about how unpicking morphology of words (units of meaning), though looking at word-formation, can help children understand the apparent strangeness of English spelling:** <http://bit.ly/StrangeMorph>
- 3. Blog on using morphology to support phonics and spelling:** <http://bit.ly/MorphBlog>
- 4. Fascinating database of information on word origins:** www.etymonline.com
- 5. Tips on pre-teaching new vocabulary (including posters):** <http://bit.ly/PreTeVoc>
- 6. Fun with syllables:** <http://bit.ly/FunwSyl>
- 7. Australian blogs on child-centred spelling investigations to help learners shift from phonetically plausible attempts to accuracy:** <http://bit.ly/SpellIn>
- 8. Blog on how morpheme awareness can aid fluency and other aspects relating to links between working memory and ability to comprehend:** <http://bit.ly/MorphMem>

Course suggestions

Phonics and Spelling at KS2:

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HDC, Stevenage | Mon 18th January 2016

Spelling: the fine detail and application Years 3 and 4 (15ENG/069P)

HDC, Stevenage | Tue 2nd February 2016

Year 5 and 6 (15ENG/070P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 8th February 2016

Guided Reading at Key Stage 1: developing fluent readers (15ENG/044P)

HDC, Stevenage | Fri 5th February 2016

Phase 2-4 phonics: teaching and supporting 'Letters and Sounds' (15ENG/085P, 15/ENG094P)

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 28th Jan / Mon 14th Mar

Phonics and Spelling: what's new and what's not!

Year 1 (15ENG/086P)

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 21st January 2016

Year 2 (15ENG/087P)

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 25th January 2016

by Kristen Snook

kristen.snook@hertsforlearning.co.uk



Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling

Assessment: An Update

Way, way back in September 2014,

in our autumn newsletter, I wrote this:

“The teaching and assessment of grammar in primary – like language itself – continues to evolve.” Little did I know how true this would continue to be. In the space of the year-and-a-bit since that article, further changes around assessment have come into play in both the form of revised statutory testing frameworks and the long-awaited (and notably interim) teacher assessment performance descriptors. It’s fair to say that the past two years have proven the lie of the old saying that “a change is as good as a holiday.” If that were true, we’d feel a good deal more rested than is currently the case.

In terms of where the lion’s share of change has occurred, it’s the revised test frameworks for grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) at key stage 1 that concern us here. For reading, the shifts largely centre on the renaming of testing domains and these (together with their respective weightings) are reflected in our revised reading assessment criteria – now published on our subscription web service. Of note too, and the subject of much discussion, is the nature of the level of stamina required for the higher level paper that all children are now required to sit/ begin to attempt. The Herts assessment team have been running advisory sessions around the administration and requirements of these new papers.

As for GPS, there are significant shifts in test design at Key stage 1: no more contextualised questioning and no written task - it’s short answers all the way. The simplest way to convey the nature of this change is to point out that the KS1 GPS test now broadly reflects the structure of the KS2 test. Perhaps this is shorthand for the “rigour revolution” – KS1 testing increasingly mirroring that at the end-of-KS2 to quickly convey its heightened, decontextualized

expectations. If you have yet to take a look, follow the links below to the initial sample materials and begin to get a feel for how the test looks and feels in terms of content and design.

Of course there are some implications for how we will help to prepare children – but it is vital that we do not lose sight of what we know to be true of good, principled teaching. Children in key stage 1 (and in the early years) attach huge weight to the messages they receive around reading and writing, and teaching to the test would be entirely detrimental to their development as curious and growing readers and writers. If you would like further guidance around how to tweak and adapt your pedagogy so that you are taking account of the new expectations around terminology and

[Continued >](#)



content knowledge, I can heartily recommend our new KS1 grammar course. I had the pleasure of sitting in on its maiden voyage. Of course, I concede that I might not be the most objective audience member, but I hope that you might trust me when I say that what I saw was heartening: great, age-appropriate teaching ideas; beautiful, fun and engaging texts and grammar seamlessly woven into good, time-proven pedagogy for writing. Forgive the advert – but the delegates evaluations spoke for themselves.

Let's return to the papers themselves.

At KS1, we have two papers: one that tests grammar, punctuation and vocabulary, and one that will test the heightened expectations for spelling. The former will consist of a mix of short answer, tick box and matching questions. The paper has been the subject of much online debate. One test item that has caused most debate has been the accepted definition relating to exclamations, and this means that teachers will need to be familiar with the accepted form for the purposes of the test. Once again though, it is vital that we do not lose sight of what we already do well, and that we continue to respond to the needs of our children and support and prepare them to function as fully literate members of society. A narrow definition of "exclamations" should not skew the bulk of our teaching away from the wider forms of exclamatory statements and interjections that children will encounter in all of the reading materials they read, and certainly should not impact upon their use of exclamation marks in the widest accepted sense. If you need further advice or guidance, this aspect of the test is covered in the course described above, or you can contact the English team for tips on how to preserve a sensible and healthy approach.

Further details of the testing arrangements can be found in the Standards and Testing Agency documents at: <http://bit.ly/GPSTestArrange>

Designed for test developers, additional information may be gleaned from the test framework published here: <http://bit.ly/TestFW>

Expectations for KS2 remain unchanged in terms

of test design. Sample materials can be found here: <http://bit.ly/KS2Expect>

Together with the associated test framework here: <http://bit.ly/KS2FW>

Some further notes that continue to apply (re-published from our autumn 2014 newsletter):

The primary national curriculum sets out statutory requirements for the terms that must be used and/or understood by pupils. It is worth bearing in mind the following points that emerge across the programmes of study and their associated appendices:

- In delivering the programmes of study, pupils learn the correct grammatical terms in English and these terms are integrated within teaching.
- In delivering the content set out in Appendix 2 : Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, building knowledge of grammar is "best achieved through a focus on grammar within the teaching of reading, writing and speaking. References to teaching "explicitly" should therefore not be assumed to mean decontextualized drills/exercises although these may have a place in securing some concepts or in preparing children for statutory assessment.
- The tables of Appendix 2 in the curriculum set out "when concepts should be introduced first, not necessarily when they should be completely understood." However, schools must bear in mind that the content up to and including year 6 will be assessed under the new assessment regime from Summer 2016 onwards.
- Content in earlier year groups must be revisited to "consolidate knowledge and build on pupils understanding."

Continued >

- The terminology that pupils should learn is set out clearly in the box labelled as “Terminology for pupils” but all bold terms across the Appendix should be understood with the meanings set out in the Glossary. All of the bold terms appear in one of the “Terminology for pupils” boxes with the exception of:
 - plural noun suffixes (Y1)
 - subordination (Y2 – however, subordinate clause is in the terminology for Y3)
 - progressive form of verbs in the past and present tense (Y2)
 - present perfect form of verbs (Y3)
 - verb inflections (Y4)
 - cohesive devices and subjunctive forms (Y6)

All of the above may be used to form questions in the new test papers from 2016 onwards.

For further advice and guidance, the Herts for Learning Primary English team will provide updates on their twitter page (follow us @HertsPrimaryEng). The team also provide a range of central course covering grammar at every primary phase and spelling/phonics across the key stages.

by Martin Galway

martin.galway@hertsforlearning.co.uk



Course suggestions

Phonics and Spelling: what’s new and what’s not!

Year 1 (15ENG/086P)

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 21st January 2016

Year 2 (15ENG/087P)

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 25th January 2016

Guided Reading at Key Stage 1: developing fluent readers (15ENG/044P)

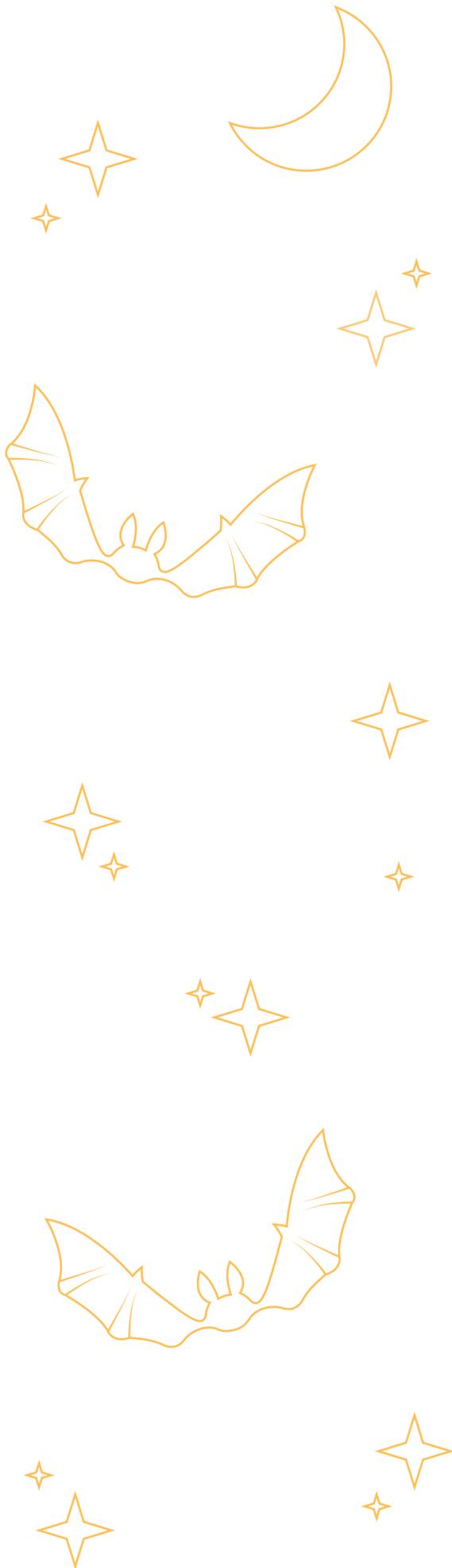
HDC, Stevenage | Fri 5th February 2016

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

by Lewis Carroll

Last November marked the 150th Anniversary of the publication of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' (generally shortened to 'Alice in Wonderland'). Events around the country celebrated this occasion, as this story has come to be one of the most popular fantasy books ever written for children. To commemorate this special anniversary, the original publishers Macmillan republished 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' in the same style as the original with the definitive Tenniel illustrations, costing £4.99. For collectors, Macmillan also created a beautiful hard-backed edition to be treasured: The Complete Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There. At a recommended retail price of £30 this is fairly expensive, but does contain stunning colour plates by Tenniel as well as material from the publisher's archives. But by far my favourite copy of the book is a special anniversary edition published by Walker books at £7.99. The text is the original Carroll version, but the colourful illustrations are by the incredibly talented Helen Oxenbury. In this edition, none of the characters have lost the personality that Tenniel helped to forge in everyone's mind, but they have an updated appeal- Alice is unmistakably Alice, but she wears a little blue denim dress and white lace up plimsolls. I personally think that these illustrations have not only brought the book into the 21st century, but have also removed the darker, slightly disturbing feel of some of the original sketches. I know that there will be purists who disagree. Some may feel that Carroll and Tenniel are as synonymous as AA Milne and Ernest Shepard, but today's children will not be prejudging in this way and the

[Continued >](#)



Oxenbury book would make a beautiful gift or keepsake. Do not be tempted to buy an abridged version or -worse still- somebody else's version of the text. It is Carroll's humour, his language play and effortless storytelling that makes this a marvellous tale and even the youngest of children will have no difficulty tuning into the language. Yes it's old-fashioned, yes there are some tricky words, but children love a challenge. We don't need to avoid difficult vocabulary – we need to introduce children to new words. And of course Alice is a little girl who sometimes has trouble with language too:

Chapter 1:

Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end?... "I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth.... I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to?" (Alice had no idea what latitude was, or longitude either, but thought they were nice grand words to say.)

Chapter 2:

"Curiouser and curiouser," cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English).

Classroom activities to develop vocabulary:

Year 1/2: Carroll wrote several poems and songs for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Some are his original verses, but many are parodies of Victorian poetry. These would have been familiar to the Victorian reader but most are lost on the modern children, as Carroll's versions are now more famous than the original. The exception is perhaps the Mad Hatter's 'Twinkle, Twinkle' in Chapter 7: KS1 children could have great fun writing their own versions for this, playing around with the nonsensical language and substituting other words and rhymes for those in bold:

Twinkle, twinkle little **bat!**
How I wonder what **you're at!**
Up above the world **you fly**
Like a tea-tray in the sky
Twinkle, twinkle **little bat!**
How I wonder what **you're at!**

Continued >

Year 3/4: There are many surreal scenes in the story and the descriptive language is vital to setting the tone of the scene. Take a short passage and ask children to identify the descriptive vocabulary. Then substitute the words to create a different image or tone. For example, at the beginning of Chapter 5, Alice meets an enigmatic blue caterpillar who gives her advice:

The caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in **silence**: at last the caterpillar took the hookah out of his mouth, and addressed her in a **languid, sleepy** voice.

“Who are you?” said the caterpillar.

Children could change the vocabulary to create an alternative feel, then act out both mini scenes. They should notice that even subtle substitutions of two or three words can dramatically alter the tone of a sentence. Their vocabulary choices need to be precise in order to accurately portray a scene so that an actor may depict it or a reader may visualise it.

Year 5/6: Chapters 11 and 12 are the famous trial scenes to discover ‘who stole the tarts’. Upper KS2 children could practise debating skills by holding court and trialling one of the characters. As the King and Queen are trying to conduct official proceedings, some of the language of this episode is quite formal in tone (whilst still being hugely comical) for example:

“I beg pardon, your Majesty....but I hadn’t quite finished my tea when I was sent for.”

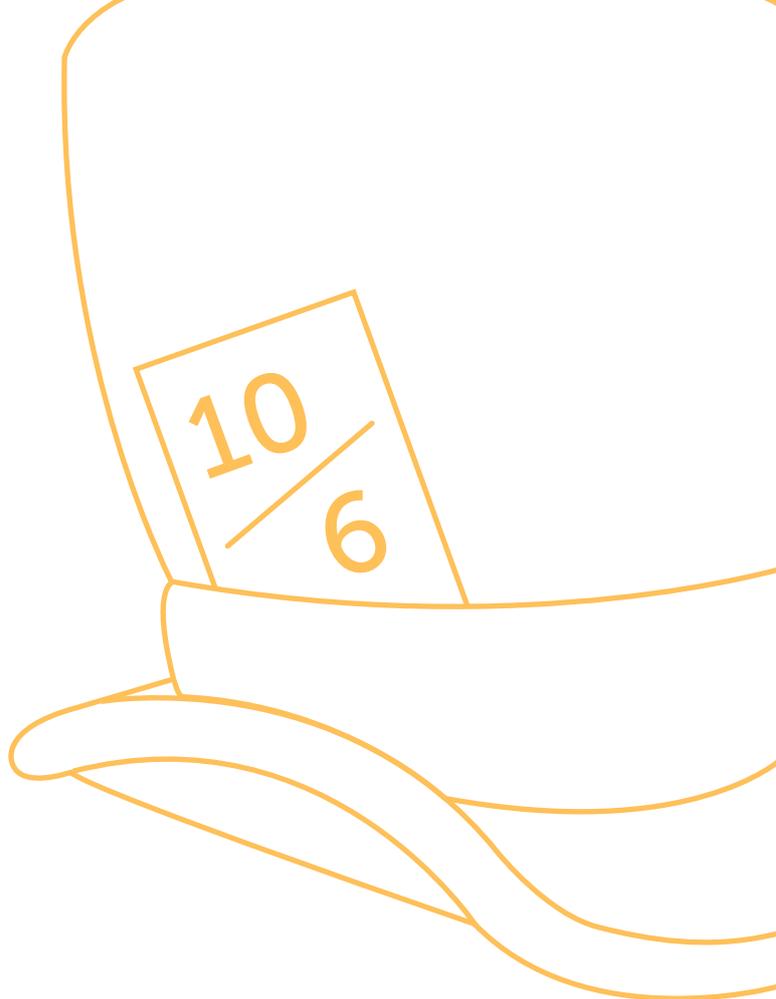
“You ought to have finished,” said the King.

This scene could be so useful for the development of formal vocabulary and structures including the use of the subjunctive. Children could experiment with writing official language such as:

“I insist that the witness take to the stand immediately”

“We formally request that she attend the hearing.”

I am sure that as he penned his masterpiece, Carroll had no idea at all that children would be enjoying his legacy for generations to come.



Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland is a joy to read for adults and children alike and certainly provides a rich seam of activities to be mined.

Review by Michelle Nicholson
michelle.nicholson@hertsforlearning.co.uk



Course suggestions

Take One Book:

KS1 (15RNG/071P)

HDC, Stevenage | Fri 5th February 2016

Year 3 and 4 (15ENG/072P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 8th February 2016

Year 5 and 6 (15ENG073P)

HDC, Stevenage | Wed 24th February 2016

More Able Writers

KS1 (15ENG/090P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 29th February 2016

KS2 (15ENG/091P)

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 29th February 2016

Whoops

By Suzi Moore

Illustrated by Russell Ayto

(Brubaker, Ford and Friends, 2015)

Whoops (*Exclamation informal*)

Another term for oops.

Oops (*Exclamation informal*)

Used to show recognition of a mistake or minor accident, often as part of an apology.

Whoops! is a new picture book by Suzi Moore that considers the plight of a dog, a cat and a mouse that are unable to express themselves in their own doggy/catty/mousey language.

They're all mixed up and in need of help. As the rhyming text highlights:

"This is the cat
who didn't know how,
she didn't know how
how to say meow"

You can probably imagine what the dog and the mouse respectively struggle to articulate. Imagine their frustration! Animal linguistic confusion reigns. But... help is at hand. A wise old owl sends this unfortunate trio to the "old lady at the tumbledown house". And so the mayhem begins...

She means well, this particular old lady, she really does. She wants to help the voiceless dog, cat and mouse find their respective bark, meow, and squeak, but magic is never that simple – especially in the hands of the easily confused. Each of the old lady's spell adds a further twist to the ensuing chaos. Along the way, we explore the humiliating delights of a dog that neighs and a mouse that moos.

Here we have a picture book – as fun and bold as the best of them – that takes great delight in exploring the onomatopoeic tortures that ensue when three small creature suffer the slings and arrows of finding their own true voices.

Vivid illustrations and playful manipulation of language make *Whoops* a fine complement to the likes of *Oi Frog!* as a fun, rhyming read aloud suitable for both early years settings and the key stage 1 classroom.

Review by Martin Galway

martin.galway@hertsforlearning.co.uk



What makes it rain?

Usborne Lift-the-flap First Questions and Answers

(Usborne, 2015)

As someone who has attended more than their fair share of children's parties, I think I am qualified to run with a children + food-based analogy here. In the buffet that is the KS1 grammar curriculum, questions and statements are your hardy breadstick. Used by all, sometimes plain but with scope for all kinds of interesting and tasty additions. Mmmm. I won't stretch the analogy too much further, other than to say that unlike breadsticks, questions and statements can be notoriously tricky to handle – particularly when it comes to punctuation and particularly so for full stops. Here's a book to help you along the way.

Alongside great early years and key stage 1 teaching that emphasises the importance of knowing the grammatical patterns of basic sentence structures, we also want to make best use of enjoyable texts that will support them in this notoriously tricky early writing concept.

'What make is rain?' takes a look at weather in general, and then brings it to multi-coloured life in a series of charmingly-illustrated double page spreads. It also weaves in a range of jolly interesting questions. So the book provides plenty of models of questions for the eager and the curious, together with high engagement levels for the, shall we say, "more discerning", dare I say, reluctant reader. A swift lift of a well-placed flap and hey presto, you now know why thunder is loud, or how snowflakes get their shape - all expressed in friendly terms for younger children. It's a winner on many fronts. It's enjoyable and informative, and it provides a raft of good models of a core concept of Key Stage 1 learning.



If it has one failing, it is simply this: my own favourite weather question – why are children so much odder after a windy break time? – remains a mystery. Answers on a postcard please and enjoy those breadsticks.

Review by Martin Galway

martin.galway@hertsforlearning.co.uk





English Teaching and Learning Advisory Team, Herts for Learning Ltd

Postal Point SROB217, Robertson House, Six Hills Way, Stevenage, SG1 2FQ

Herts for Learning - Educational excellence together

Office: 01438 84462

Website: www.hertsforlearning.co.uk

Twitter: @HertsLearning @HertsprimaryEng

Facebook: [facebook.com/HertsforLearning](https://www.facebook.com/HertsforLearning)

Details of our Literacy Consultancy, Training and CPD Courses
can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1OvSkRd>

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