

# Talk for writing

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## Talk for writing





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# Talk for writing

## Introduction

Thanks to the considerable efforts of teachers across the country, recent years have seen significant improvements in children's writing outcomes, particularly at Key Stage 2. However, national standards remain a major concern and too many primary school children do not attain as highly or make as much progress in writing as they do in reading. This applies particularly, though not exclusively, to boys.

Yet in a small but significant number of schools most children, including boys and girls of all abilities and from a wide range of backgrounds, consistently learn to write as well as they read. This clearly demonstrates that it is a reasonable and realistic expectation.

These *Talk for writing* materials support teachers in further developing children's writing throughout the teaching sequence. They build on the National Strategies' *Support for writing* resources ensuring a focus on a personalised approach to planning based on effective assessment for learning.

The *Talk for writing* approaches were initially introduced through a series of workshops, which the National Strategies provided in collaboration with professional writer Pie Corbett, in the South West, East and East Midlands regions in 2007/8. Many teachers subsequently developed the approaches in their own classrooms and schools. These teachers were extremely positive about the impact and how much they and the children enjoyed working in these ways. They reported that children's engagement in writing increased, particularly for boys and previously reluctant writers. They also found that the quality of children's writing improved significantly.

*'Bridging the gap between quality talk and quality writing is always challenging. With my Year 1 class I often wondered why, after providing lots of opportunities for speaking and listening, writing outcomes didn't reflect the varied and interesting vocabulary used in their talk. The question for me was, "Can children modify their writing more effectively if they hear it and keep making changes until the Talk for writing becomes the writing?"'*

(Year 1 teacher, following the workshops)

We hope that all schools will now explore and develop *Talk for writing* through their collaborative continuing professional development (CPD) and that headteachers and leadership teams will want to pursue this as a key element of their ongoing school development cycle – as described in the booklet *Leading improvement using the Primary Framework* (DCSF 00484-2007BKT-EN).

The brief introduction to *Talk for writing* provided by this booklet is supplemented by extensive exemplification on two DVDs; one is an interactive resource drawing heavily on classroom video and case studies from schools that took part in the original workshops; the other offers key extracts from the *Talk for writing* CPD sessions presented by Pie Corbett on behalf of the National Strategies in May 2008.

Further guidance can be found in:

*Support for writing* (DCSF 00468-2008DVD-EN), also now integrated into the literacy area of the Primary Framework site.

*Getting Going: generating, shaping and developing ideas in writing* (DCSF 00283-2008BKT-EN)

North Yorkshire County Council *Talk for learning* Project, conducted in association with Professor Robin Alexander (to order the *Talk for Learning* DVD/CD pack, email [mike.smit@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:mike.smit@northyorks.gov.uk) or write: Mike Smit, Selby Area Education Office, North Yorkshire County Council, 2 Abbey Yard, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 4PS).

## What is *Talk for writing*?

### Good writers:

- enjoy writing and find the process creative, enriching and fulfilling;
- read widely, recognise good writing, and understand what makes it good;
- are aware of the key features of different genres and text types;
- learn about the skills of writing from their reading and draw (consciously or unconsciously) upon its models in their own work;
- have 'something to say' (a purpose and audience);
- know how to develop their ideas;
- know how to plan and prepare for writing;
- make informed choices about what they are writing, as they write (for example, about vocabulary, grammar, text structure, etc.);
- understand how to reflect upon, refine and improve their own work;
- can respond to the constructive criticism of others.

For **experienced writers**, many of these processes are internal and automatic. For example, they can hold an internal dialogue with themselves about the language choices available and consider how effective a particular word or phrase will be or how well it reads.

However, for **developing writers** it is very helpful for these processes to be explored through talk in a supportive learning context. This involves externalising and sharing the thinking involved in the writing process so that ultimately it can be internalised and individualised again.

It is this developmental exploration, through talk, of the thinking and creative processes involved in being a writer that we are calling *Talk for writing*.



## The teaching sequence for writing

One of the key ways in which the Primary Framework supports the teaching of writing is through the recommended approach to planning. The exemplified units provide a model of planning for learning across longer, extended units of work where reading, planning and writing occur in the context of a rich and varied curriculum. The basis for the approach was set out in the joint UKLA and Primary National Strategy publication *Raising boys' achievements in writing* (2004). Based on the work of Bearne (2002), the research recommended a structured sequence to planning where the children and teachers began by familiarising themselves with a text type, capturing ideas for their own writing followed by scaffolded writing experiences resulting in independent written outcomes.

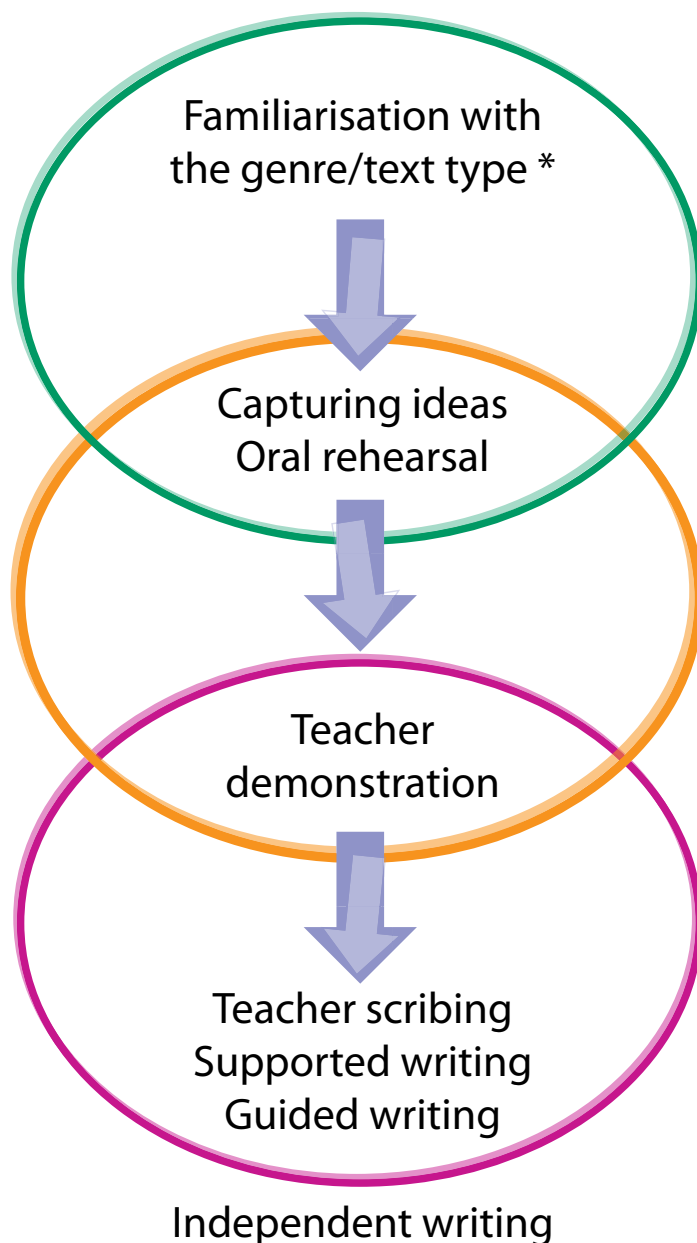


Diagram taken from p.7 of *Raising Boys' Achievements in Writing* (September 2004). Used with kind permission of the UKLA (United Kingdom Literary Association).

\*guidance to support the explicit teaching of the key features of genres/text types can be found in *Support for Writing* (DCSF 00468-2008DVD-EN, 2008), also now integrated into the literacy area of the Primary Framework site.

To be productive, *Talk for writing* needs to be extensively embedded in every phase of this teaching sequence, that is:

- **During reading:** When familiarising with the genre/text type and its key features; when responding to, exploring and drawing on models.
- **Before writing:** When generating ideas, preparing for and planning writing.
- **During all stages of writing** (teacher's demonstration and scribing, and children's supported, guided and independent writing): When making the choices involved in creating, developing and improving texts.
- **After writing:** When reflecting on and learning from a writing experience.

In this it will need to be structured at the following three levels.

- **Teacher talk:** The verbalisation of the reader's or writer's thought processes as the teacher is demonstrating, modelling and discussing.
- **Supported pupil talk:** Structured and scaffolded opportunities for children to develop and practise *Talk for writing* through class and group conversations and activities.
- **Independent pupil talk:** Opportunities for children to develop and practise *Talk for Writing* in pairs and small groups, independent of the teacher.

All of this needs to be applied in **whole-class** learning and teaching and in **guided writing**.

**The precise nature of what is planned as *Talk for writing* in any particular unit will obviously need to take into careful account:**

- **the purpose and audience of the writing;**
- **the key features of genre text/type;**
- **the learning objectives of the unit;**
- **the current learning targets of the children, identified through Assessment for Learning (AfL) (see *Support for writing*);**
- **implications for the children's social and emotional development (SEAL);**
- **the needs of particular children and groups, such as English as an additional language learners (EAL) and those with special educational needs.**

Detailed guidance on planning *Talk for writing* into the teaching sequence, together with video exemplification, case studies and example plans, can be found on DVD 1.

## What does *Talk for writing* look like?

### Talk strategies

During the CPD and its subsequent follow-up in schools *Talk for writing* was developed around certain key strategies.

#### 1. Book-talk

'Book-talk' is the extended opportunity to use **talk** to explore children's personal and collective responses to a text **as readers**.

It is categorically **not** a barrage of closed 'comprehension' questions but rather an open-ended eliciting and development of response.

After careful reading of a shared text, the teacher often best initiates 'book-talk' with open invitations such as, 'Tell me what you thought/felt about...', 'What came into your mind when you read...', or 'Have you come across anything like this before?' and then focuses on extending the children's responses with prompts such as, 'Tell me more about...', 'What led you to think that?' or 'Can you extend that idea a bit for us?'. Frequently, groups of children can be supported and encouraged to feed off each other's thinking and talking, with prompts such as 'Do you agree or did anyone have a different response to that story/paragraph/sentence/word?' In this way rich exchanges often occur, helping children to develop and extend their own responses.

A more detailed explanation of the nature and importance of 'book-talk' is given by Pie Corbett on DVD 1, where examples of 'book-talk' in the classroom can also be found.

Examples of CPD sessions to develop 'book-talk' can be found on DVD 2.

#### 2. Writer-talk

'Writer-talk' is the articulation of the thinking and creative processes involved in all stages of the act of writing; talk that helps children to think and behave like a writer (and indeed consider themselves to be one).

It involves externalising and making explicit, through **talk**, the thinking involved in both '**reading as a writer**' (understanding what response the writer wishes to elicit in the reader and how he/she achieves this) and '**writing as a reader**' (applying the same understanding when making the choices involved in planning, creating and improving one's own writing).

'Writer-talk' is most helpful when focused on the purpose and audience of a piece of writing (that is, its intended effect on the reader). Although it will often rightly and importantly consider choices made at word and sentence level, these always need to be seen in this text-level context.

It is a useful way of following up and reinforcing direct teaching of the features of a particular genre/text type.

A more detailed explanation of the nature and importance of 'writer-talk' is given by Pie Corbett on DVD 1, where examples of 'writer-talk' in the classroom can also be found.

Examples of CPD sessions to develop 'writer-talk' can be found on DVD 2.

#### 3. Storytelling and story-making

This involves the learning and repeating of oral stories, building children's confidence to develop them through telling and then extending that development into writing; later creating 'new' stories orally as a preparation and rehearsal for writing.

The learning and development of stories through oral retelling builds up in children enormously valuable banks of language and narrative patterning that can be incorporated into later writing. It can also build towards a confidence to create 'original' stories (although even these often draw on or 'magpie' previously learned/read ideas) and to rehearse them orally.

In this way, the development of storytelling is built through a sequence involving first **imitation** (the straight retelling of learned stories) then **innovation** (developing, extending and changing elements of a story) and finally **invention** (creating a 'new' story).

To build confidence, storytelling and story-making are often more effective if initially carried out communally, gradually working towards greater independence through group, paired and finally individual approaches.

A more detailed explanation of the importance of storytelling is given by Pie Corbett on DVD 1, where classroom examples of storytelling and its extension into writing can also be found.

Examples of CPD sessions to develop communal and more independent storytelling and then extend this into writing can be found on DVD 2.

#### 4. Word and language games

Talk games and activities can be used to:

- stimulate and develop vocabulary (for example, word associations);
- 'warm up' the imagination and tune children in to more creative thinking ('Crossing the river'; 'Box of stars');
- orally develop a character ('Tell me more about...');
- orally develop a setting ('Painting the picture').

Each of these examples is modelled in a CPD context on DVD 2.

#### 5. Role-play and drama

There are many examples in the Primary Framework of the effective use of role-play and drama activities, such as 'hot-seating' and 'conscience alley', at various stages of the reading-writing teaching sequence. Additional helpful suggestions can be found in *Shakespeare for all ages and stages* (DCSF 00470-2008BKT-EN) where many of the practical talk/drama activities exemplified have a potential application beyond the Shakespeare context in which they are given.

Each and all of these key *Talk for writing* strategies are greatly enhanced and extended by frequent repetition and revisiting – both within literacy lessons and across the curriculum. They also need to be developed and practised cumulatively and progressively each year, so that children build up confidence and skill as they move through the primary school.

## Talk for writing in Reception

Talk for writing is just one kind of the purposeful talk that is key to all areas of learning and development in Reception classes. Speaking and listening are of central importance in their own right as well as paving the way for children to make a good start on reading and writing.

Many of the strategies and approaches described throughout this booklet are suitable for adaptation and use with children in Reception classes, but in this section there is some additional guidance particularly focused on the needs of these younger children.

### Storytelling and story-making

For younger children, stories told or heard can help them understand the world in which they live and allow them to transmit that understanding to others. Furthermore, the 'internalisation' of stories and understanding of their structures, allows children to build confidence through oral re-telling.

To support the learning of a bank of well-known stories and other repetitive narrative structures, teachers and practitioners should begin by choosing an enjoyable story that can be told and retold many times (see 'Little Red Hen' example on DVD 2). A story map or storyboard that records the plot in a simple series of images or symbols provides a visual prompt to guide the children. The storytelling should also include gestures or actions. While some of these actions might be extemporaneous or individual to the particular story it is recommended that set or fixed actions should be used for particular connectives or other conventions of story language (e.g. once upon a time, suddenly...).

Over the course of the re-tellings of the story, children should be encouraged to join in with the aim of learning the story for themselves. As they become more confident in the re-telling, the teacher/practitioner should take a step back to allow the story to be 'carried' by the children.

When children have acquired a confident familiarity with the story, the teacher/practitioner can demonstrate how it can be varied through an innovation, for example by substituting a different character or setting. Children can be encouraged to make substitutions of their own and could record these in their own story map to support them as they tell their own variation of the story to other children. When children are confident with the idea of innovating through substitution, the teacher/practitioner can demonstrate innovation through adding an element to the story. Children can then experiment with their own additions.

Many of these storytelling techniques can be adapted to support the oral rehearsal of other forms of writing (see for example the sequencing of the instructions to make gingerbread men, on DVD 2).

Another starting point for storytelling could be the exploration of timeline or journey stories through the use of props or story bags. For example, bringing in the fruits that Handa collected for Akeyo in 'Handa's Surprise' and placing them in the correct sequence, or ordering the animals collected on a broomstick in 'Winnie the Witch'. The first-hand experience of a bear hunt or environment walk could be recorded by fastening various objects or pictures onto a story stick. Crucially, such techniques support children in recounting orally a story or experience they have shared, in the correct order. Accompanied by drama and discussion these multisensory approaches can scaffold children's understanding through into their writing. The use of visual prompts, real objects and other props will also allow children learning EAL to access the story or recount more readily, while the regular re-telling and oral rehearsal will extend their familiarity with the structures of spoken English as well as developing their vocabulary.

Children's writing should be encouraged and enriched by opportunities throughout the learning environment both indoors and outdoors, supported by props and dressing-up clothes. This allows children, through their child-initiated play, to recreate or extemporise around the stories they have experienced. This, in turn, provides an opportunity to cultivate confident storytellers and early story writers.

A more detailed explanation of the importance of storytelling is given by Pie Corbett on DVD 2, where classroom examples of storytelling and its extension into writing can also be found.

## Book-talk

Practitioners are the central storyteller in the classroom, modelling a varied and rich array of stories and language choices in their readings. 'Book-talk' for younger children can be thought of as an extended opportunity for children to talk about and respond to stories through discussion, drama and creative play.

'Book-talk' also provides particular opportunities to develop vocabulary, through highlighting unfamiliar words or expressions. These words or phrases are more likely to be learned by children (and so become potentially available as part of their active vocabulary) when discussion goes beyond just an explanation of meaning and is supported by the use of real objects, physical actions or other devices to make the words and their meaning vivid and memorable.

After sharing a familiar picture book with a group of children, the practitioner can provide opportunities for children to explore the narrative further. For example, in teacher directed activities, the practitioner may use a story sack to facilitate a discussion about the text, allowing children to respond to a particular character or prop. Similarly, story boxes, puppets and role-play areas will support and stimulate young children in their early imitation of and response to stories. Opportunities such as these can then be accessed freely by children across all areas of learning through continuous provision within an Enabling Environment.

'Book-talk' can also develop children's emotional responses to texts. Indeed, much of this work supports the underpinning qualities and skills that help young children learn effectively, as outlined in SEAD and SEAL by, for example, encouraging children to:

- LOOK at the face – what is it showing?
- LISTEN to the words – how are they spoken? How do they make you feel?

Children can work collaboratively, watching and learning from each other, and hearing each other's responses. Stories often contain choices or problems for characters to overcome and children can explore these through role-play and drama. Fairytales can be one such text type that can spark children's imagination and dialogue, but there are numerous examples in modern children's fiction.

'Book-talk' invites young children to externalise their 'inner voices' and respond to a text in a variety of ways. This, in turn, shapes their experiences and develops a narrative understanding and response that paves a way into writing.

## Linking sounds and letters

Systematic phonics, in line with the recommendations of the Rose Review, provide children in Reception with the skills and knowledge that enable them to write phonemically plausible attempts at anything they can verbalise. This gives the children the confidence to apply their *Talk for writing* in the creation of simple captions and sentences, either by writing or manipulating plastic letters.

## Case studies

### Year 1 case study

#### A narrative unit with Year 1

Written by a class teacher who attended the four East region workshops and took active steps to put into practice the messages and strategies explored in relation to *Talk for writing*.

#### Teacher's comments:

Bridging the gap between high-quality talk and high-quality writing is always challenging. With my Year 1 class I often wondered why, after providing lots of opportunities for speaking and listening, writing outcomes didn't reflect the varied and interesting vocabulary used in their talk.

Boys particularly struggled to make the move from what I describe as the '*I went to the park*' stage to something more dynamic and rich. Perhaps the solution, or part of it, is far simpler than we anticipate. As adults not only are we equipped with well-developed oracy skills, our auditory senses are switched on too. In other words we listen, evaluate and modify our spoken language and when we write, this rehearsal technique occurs quite naturally. We experiment with words and sentence structures until they convey our thoughts in the most appropriate and effective way.

The question for me was, '*Can children modify their writing more effectively if they hear it and keep making changes until the Talk for writing becomes the writing?*'

#### The unit

My aim was to see a marked improvement not just in the vocabulary choices but with sentence structure too.

Key objectives from the Primary Framework:

- Compose and write simple sentences independently to communicate meaning.
- Use key features of narrative in their own writing.
- Explore familiar themes and characters through improvisation and role-play.

This unit was developed from the exemplified unit taken from the *Primary Framework: Year 1 Narrative, Unit 4 – Stories about fantasy worlds*.

#### Phase 1

As a class, we talked at length about painting a picture in the reader's mind. We reflected on how authors achieve this and wondered if we could recreate it. We stole any good ideas from our reading such as using alliteration, repeating words and phrases, using similes and metaphors.

Rather than use a written text, I chose a short British Film Institute film called *The Baboon on the Moon*. It neatly dovetailed with Unit 4 where children become engaged in fantastical settings and explore problem and solution patterns within a story. This simple animated sequence with no words seemed ideal in generating lots of interest and discussion. It contained just the right amount of 'space' interest and eeriness to motivate the children in my class.

Much time was spent capturing ideas through drama, small world-play, model making and moon dances in order to channel thoughts about the character and setting. We made word mats with exciting words related to what the children had seen and used them in our everyday talk about the story.

Guided work gave the opportunity for reading books within the genre and immersing the children in these stories. From these stories children could carry out imaginary walks through the settings gathering ideas and developing vocabulary.



## Phase 2

To embed linguistic patterns we made a communal story map and chanted the story language, *'Once upon a time there was a baboon who lived on the moon. One night he got out of bed...'*

We rehearsed, recorded ourselves on a CD and listened.

Quite naturally the children began to evaluate their language choices. *'Let's say climbed out of bed instead of got.'* We tweaked the word order, substituted exciting words for dull ones and all the time we listened to the changes. If we liked the sentence, we used it in our shared writing.

A mantra was beginning to form in our heads and repeatedly I modelled this approach: *'Think it, say it, hear it, like it? Write it!'*

Guided, shared and independent work supported this development of secure sentences. Whiteboards were used to generate phrases to share orally. Story maps supported the children's telling and retelling of their stories.

## Phase 3

Finally, the children set about writing their 'golden sentence'.

In groups, the children recorded, listened to and modified their ideas. Then we wrote them down.

### Impact on learning

This method of listening and redrafting orally allowed creative ideas to flow without the pressure of immediately writing them down.

Everyone was eager to listen to their recorded ideas and motivated to generate something worth recording.

Their final ideas demonstrated how they were beginning to write in order to make an impact and at last, there was evidence of reshaping a sentence based on their developing thoughts.

We often reminded ourselves that our first thought would not always be our best one, but our last one might just be fantastic!

By the end of the unit, even some of the currently lower attaining children were writing sentences like *'She saw a silver alien shining like glitter'* and *'Next to the rocket was an alien red with rage'*, whilst our shared writing produced *'Once upon a time there was a baboon who lived on the moon. He had spiky hair like a hedgehog and enormous googly eyes. Every night he lights up the moon so children aren't afraid of the black night sky. His home was a little house, as small as a dinosaur's fang but as shiny as a dinosaur's eye.'*



## Year 2 case study

### A narrative unit with Year 2

Written by a teacher who attended the four South West region workshops and took active steps to put into practice the messages and strategies explored in relation to *Talk for writing*.

#### Teacher's comments:

I became involved in *Talk for writing* through my role as a Leading Literacy teacher and have been amazed at the way the approach has had a massive impact on the children's writing.

I'd like to share my learning journey from the beginning through to the moment when my Year 2 class begged me to let them all stay in at break time and continue writing their stories.

Phase one of the unit exposed the children to high-quality texts. We read and discussed challenging stories with rich language ('book-talk') and the children were given time to 'magpie' words and phrases that they could potentially use in their own stories. They noted these in their writing journals, otherwise known as their 'magpie' books. Indeed, throughout the unit, the children had opportunities to 'magpie' ideas from authors and each other. To encourage the children to read as writers, we made pretend reading glasses. They would wear them during a shared reading session, focusing the children on reading the text from a writer's perspective, and then they would discuss what they noticed in pairs, group and as a class ('writer-talk').

The class chose their favourite story to retell. Allowing the children time to perform aloud gave them a confidence I had never witnessed before. Later in the unit we created a story map. As a whole class, the children used the story map to support a retelling of the story using actions. Next, they practised retelling the story in small groups and then finally, in pairs. Some children acted out their story using props and costumes. By the end of the unit, they had internalised the story and could tell it off by heart. This then allowed the children to be innovative and alter their story. For example, some children substituted their own characters and others added in extra detail (storytelling and story-making).

In Phase 2, we spent time exploring the characters in more detail. To support and enhance the children's learning, I often dress up and assume the role of story characters. For this unit I became a mermaid! Through the technique of 'hot-seating' the children questioned me in role and built up a sense of the mermaid's personality. Later we watched a DVD and explored the setting in which she lived. The children and I stepped into our magic mirrors and were transported to a world beneath the ocean. There the children used all of their senses to explore the setting. This stimulated their imagination and the impact was evident in the quality of their final written piece (role-play and drama).

Modelling story telling for my own version of the adapted story was crucial. Looking back, I can't believe I have never done this in my teaching career before now, as it seems such an obvious step. The children watched me make mistakes and play with word choices. My teaching assistant and I also modelled conversations demonstrating the thinking process behind story-making. In effect, I highlighted my thinking processes and therefore, the process writers go through when constructing a story. Although this is challenging, the children benefited from seeing me rise to the challenge (more storytelling and story-making).

The next step, in Phase 3, was to model writing. I used the story map created in Phase 2 to guide my story. I had internalised the structure of the story which certainly made it easier for me to model how to put it on to paper. I was able to clearly demonstrate how I played with words, exploring and plunging deeper for better words; after all, the first words you think of aren't necessarily the best. I described these to the children as surface words (more 'writer-talk' during modelled writing).

During shared writing sessions, I built on the modelled writing and encouraged the children to play with word choice. I was aware that the more reluctant writers tended to choose words that were easy to spell. To counter this, I encouraged the children not to dodge a good word, but rather to put dots beneath the word as a reminder to check the spelling later. I demonstrated how to be a reflective writer by highlighting the mistakes that I made. I realised that this was crucial for the children to see. A large poster at the top of

my working wall reminded the children to 'hear it, say it, read it, explore it'. With careful, explicit modelling of each of these elements children became more confident in using this structure independently (yet more 'writer-talk' during shared writing).

The impact of this on the children's writing was phenomenal. Initially, I had a handful of boys who were reluctant to put anything down on paper. However, by the end of the unit, I could not stop them from writing their own stories. I had learned that, by giving the children the structure of stories, I was releasing cognitive space – they were not trying to cope with the demands of making up the story at the same time as writing it down.

To summarise, as the unit progressed, I witnessed a dramatic improvement in the children's writing. More importantly, a new passion and enthusiasm was ignited, giving them the confidence to achieve more in their writing. The children not only wrote their stories more quickly but the quantity and quality of their writing was greatly improved.

### **The unit (based on Primary Framework Year 2 Narrative Unit 3)**

#### **Under the sea (three-week unit)**

Key objectives from the Primary Framework:

Engage with books through exploring and enacting interpretations;

- explain their reactions to texts, commenting on important aspects;
- sustain form in narrative, including use of person and time;
- use planning to establish clear sections for writing.

#### **Phase 1**

Read a selection of books, with a seaside theme by the same author. 'Magpie' ideas from the stories, recording them in writing journals. For one of the books, use a story mountain to summarise the plot. Keep a record of key events and review the structure of the story at intervals. Improvise and discuss what could happen next through drama. Use a DVD version of the story to explore the setting and characters. Enact pieces of dialect through 'hot-seating'.

**Learning outcome:** Children can talk about a text and identify how words and phrases have been used to create effects.

#### **Phase 2**

Act and retell all or parts of the story using actions.

#### **Drama**

Work collaboratively on a short dramatised presentation from one of the stories and perform to the rest of the class. Respond to the presentation and with talk partners, make constructive suggestions about changes or improvements.

#### **Story-making**

Tell the story to the whole class using drama and actions. Repeat the story until the children know it off by heart. In small groups, have the children rehearse the story and then repeat it with a talk partner.

#### **Innovation**

Adapt the story using the basic story structure. Amend the original story maps using alteration, substitution or addition.

**Learning outcome:** Children can orally sequence a story correctly using connectives appropriately.

### Phase 3

- **Teacher scribing**

- Following the story map, begin to write the story, making the thought process explicit.

- **Teacher demonstration**

- Demonstrate reflective writing by making mistakes and plunging deeper for better words. Re-read and edit constantly. Demonstrate how to compose sentences with subordination for time and reason.

- **Supported writing**

- Use the children's ideas when creating the story. Have the children devise their own success criteria. Discuss and list essential story ingredients. Refer to 'magpie' writing journals for ideas, building in discussion time.

- **Guided writing**

- Focus on specific writing targets for children in the group. Give time for the children to reflect and respond to marking.

- **Independent writing**

- The children create their own story. Tell the new story to a partner and explore suggestions for improvements. Re-tell the story with refinements. As the children write the story, continue to orally rehearse, making changes where necessary. After writing, children individually decide how to present their stories, for example as an audio recording, making a book.

**Learning outcome:** Children plan, tell, re-tell and write a story in clear sections, applying their knowledge of story elements. Some consistency of person and tense is maintained.

#### **By the end of the unit**

These are just a couple of typical samples of the way many of my children were writing:

There was once a pretty meamaid called Louise, she was sitting on her shiny shell at the bottom of the sea. She looked out of her window 'WOW!' said the meamaid, there right at the bottom of the ocan was a shipwreck coverd in seaweed. The brave meamaid, would often explore forbidden places, she cautiously dived into the shipwreck it was gloomy and dark.

'YEEK' she screamed. In front of her was a nasty scelton holding a piece of parchment and slumped by its side a tresher chest she ceafly unrolled the piece of parchment 'Wow!' exclaimed Louise. it was a map but it was in English wrighting. (James)

There was once a beautiful Mermaid sitting at the bottom of the Ocean. She was sad becose she was yuning to own her legs so that she cold play with children, playing on Sandy bay. She dived splashing her tail over the owshan waves. She has a Gooldon tail it shins like the moon twinkling in the moon light sky.

She saw a old sunken shipwreck she was shocked becose she never seen something like it YIKS! Her heart beat like a lowd drum. She popped her head up and saw a skelton with a bottle in his hand she cefly sliped it out of his hand. But she was fstrated by the riddol (Bethany).

## Year 4 case study

### A poetry unit with Year 4

Written by a class teacher who attended the four South West region workshops and took active steps to put into practice the messages and strategies explored in relation to *Talk for writing*.

#### Teacher's comments:

It became clear very early on that as teachers at the workshop we all felt the same way about children's writing; if you can't talk it, you can't write it, and so many children in our classes were clearly not talking – certainly not in order to write anyway. What a difference the chance to talk makes!

As a result of the workshops I now ensure that every lesson involves an 'imagination warm-up' in much the same way that maths lessons have an oral mental starter.

Talk is modelled by me, and the children often volunteer to demonstrate paired talking for the particular lesson we are involved in. This has worked especially well in science in order to clarify thoughts, establish facts and to reach conclusions. I now ensure that I plan clear opportunities for talk throughout the curriculum.

The impact on my class has been amazing. A culture of talk and writing has really grown out of the project, with children sharing ideas, actively looking for more interesting vocabulary to put into their own writing and physically standing back from their own writing in order to be able to evaluate it. We have implemented the modelling process in other areas of the curriculum and it has allowed the children to be more adventurous with their thinking without fear of failure among their peers, simply by using phrases such as '*I wonder if...*', '*I think that...*', '*Perhaps...*'. This has worked especially well in science. Learning stories for whole-class retelling, dressing up in story telling cloaks and going on to perform these for younger children has lifted the profile of talk, stories and drama, boosting confidence and giving the children the scaffolds they so desperately needed in order to be able to write. These days when I tell the children we are going to write a story, they all want to talk the text first, and they all have a story in their heads. Brilliant.

### The unit (based on Primary Framework Year 4 Poetry Unit 2)

Key objectives from the Primary Framework:

- Explain how writers use figurative and expressive language to create images and atmosphere;
- interrogate texts to deepen and clarify understanding and response;
- explore why and how writers write, including through face-to-face and online contact with authors;
- choose and combine words, images and other features for particular effects.

## Teaching sequences

| Phase 1 : reading and performing poems (4 days)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Learning outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The teacher reads poetry texts that follow simple patterns, for example haiku or cinquain. Through listening, the children attempt to identify any features that interest or provoke them. The teacher records suggestions on an interactive whiteboard's notepad for reference.</li> <li>● Discuss how spoken rhythm, stress and emphasis help bring poetry to life and how different reading styles may change emphasis.</li> <li>● Children study text versions of poems and, using the notepad notes, identify language features that helped to interest or provoke them.</li> <li>● In groups, children study a range of poetry to identify different patterns of rhyme and verse in poetry, for example choruses, rhyming couplets, alternate line rhymes.</li> <li>● Children identify one text and discuss its theme, content and any particular stylistic features, for example humorous verse.</li> <li>● Children then read this text aloud and experiment with different ways to present it effectively orally.</li> <li>● The teacher demonstrates use of recording software available on laptops to highlight the potential of how a poem might be performed, for example echo, changes to speed and overdubbing effects. Children experiment with software to create simple recorded phrases based on poems studied in shared reading sessions.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Children listen for and use some technical terms in discussion of poems.</p> <p>Children understand how the use of expressive and descriptive language can create effects or generate emotional responses.</p> <p>Children can experiment orally with phrases and words to create different effects and responses.</p>                                                                                                |
| <p><b>Additional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen to a recording (or me!) of <i>The Tyger</i> by William Blake. Collect initial thoughts on whiteboards. What is the poem about? What interesting words were used?</li> <li>● We are going to learn the poem by heart to perform for assembly next week. How can we best remember it?</li> <li>● Write reactions to the poem.</li> <li>● Write a question and a statement, then give it to a talk partner. Respond in writing and give it back. Discuss as a whole class.</li> <li>● What is the poem about? In pairs come up with 3 possibilities and the lines in the poem that back up your ideas.</li> <li>● Explain thoughts about the poem, provide evidence in the poem for your ideas</li> <li>● Talk about song lyrics and occasions when people use poetry to express their feelings ('the light has gone out of our lives' or 'a piece of the jigsaw is missing'). What do these lines mean? Would it have the same impact to say something else? Write suggestions on whiteboards and discuss with a partner.</li> <li>● Re-read <i>The Tyger</i> and look at the poetic language, particularly focusing on how to perform it.</li> <li>● Show the children a picture of an animal. Begin the process of writing a poem using the flipchart with lots of crossing out, etc. Base it on <i>The Tyger</i> and follow same the rhythmic pattern, alliteration, onomatopoeia.</li> <li>● Draft your own poem based on <i>The Tyger</i>, using shared writing as a model.</li> <li>● Read a range of poems such as <i>The Magic Box</i> (Kit Wright).</li> <li>● Share or write a poem using one of these as a starter. Have the children use 'chooser books' to suggest vocabulary. Step back from the poem and read it. What would we change? Remember, the first word is not always the best.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Resources</b></p> <p><i>The Tyger</i> (William Blake)</p> <p><i>The Magic Box</i> (Kit Wright)</p> <p>Whiteboards and pens</p> <p>Talk partners</p> <p>Range of song lyrics to suit the class (mine were particularly keen on rap music, but it needed censoring!)</p> <p>Pie Corbett's poetry posters</p> <p>Pictures of animals (electronically or otherwise)</p> <p>Interactive whiteboard</p> <p>Flipchart</p> |

| Phase 2 : planning and creating poetry presentations (4 days)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Learning outcomes                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The teacher demonstrates using a simple graphics program, for example greyscale, stencil effects, how to manipulate a photograph taken with a digital camera.</li> <li>● The different versions of the image are placed within presentation software and the children discuss the different effects that can be created.</li> <li>● In groups, the children choose a poem studied within the shared reading sessions. They plan and photograph with a digital camera a series of images, for example landscapes, objects and people that represent the 'feel' of the poem.</li> <li>● The images are manipulated with an art package to generate a particular effect and imported into the presentation software.</li> <li>● The children assign speaking roles for their poem and, using laptop recording software, record their poem in sections.</li> <li>● These sections are then manipulated to add vocal effects, for example echo, sound effects, changes to speed and overdubbing effects.</li> <li>● The children decide how effective their soundtrack and images are in conveying the poem as a presentation.</li> <li>● After any alterations, the children import their soundtrack into the presentation software to accompany their images as a completed presentation.</li> </ul> | <p>Children can plan, organise and create an ICT-based poetry presentation that involves each member of the group.</p> |
| <p><b>Additional notes/activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Using the poem created in the shared writing session, demonstrate how it can look on the computer in a slide show presentation. Record voices on the laptop and experiment with timbre, putting emphasis on different words.</li> <li>● Rehearse the poem, as a whole class, using actions. The teacher will need to help initially and gradually withdraw support until the children can do it on their own, using actions where necessary.</li> <li>● In small groups take photographs around the school that would go with the poem. Upload them on to the computer and begin the process of manipulating them. Take pictures of the children and use a computer program that will allow them to manipulate their faces so that they look like they are talking.</li> <li>● Explore music/sound effects that would be suitable. Use sticky notes to offer opinions such as 'It seems to me that...'; 'Perhaps...'; 'I wonder if...'</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                        |

| Phase 3 : showcasing and evaluating poetry presentations (2 days)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The class views the presentations to evaluate each group's work. The key features of the poems presented are reviewed and presentations are evaluated against this review.</li> <li>● The children evaluate the presentations through self-assessment and peer assessments following agreed criteria set against knowledge of poetry's form, for example is the humour of the poem clearly emphasised?</li> <li>● A viewing session is undertaken with an appropriate audience.</li> <li>● Presentations are downloaded onto the school website or internal network for the rest of the school community to access.</li> </ul> | <p>The children can reflect on and evaluate the quality of their own and their peers' poetry presentations.</p> |
| <p><b>Additional notes/activities</b></p> <p>Agree the success criteria before viewing the poems, based on the poem written during shared writing.</p> <p>View each poem in turn, with the children evaluating their own performances before others give their opinions. What would you improve? What did you especially like about your performance?</p> <p>Model how to give responses and the language to use such as '<i>I liked it when...</i>', '<i>The way you said...</i>', '<i>Tell me more about...</i>', '<i>Perhaps you could use (a different word)</i>'.</p>                                                                                              | <p><b>Resources</b></p>                                                                                         |

### My evaluation

I've never taught poetry this way before – what an eye opener! So many of my class can now talk with great authority on the works of William Blake, using sentence openers like, '*It seems to me...*' and '*I wonder if...*'.

Shared writing worked so much better on the flip chart and it gave the children a much better sense of the flow of a poem.

They really got the hang of 'First word not always the best' and responded well to using success criteria in their own writing.

By the end of the unit, almost all the children were well on their way to achieving the objectives, and had certainly started to think about the words they choose and the effect they want to create.



## Talk for writing and SEAL

There is considerable overlap between the skills involved in *Talk for writing* and those used in developing social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL). Additionally, both involve the notion of making internal, essentially personal processes **external and explicit**, so that teachers can model them and children explore them in order to develop understanding and control.

Open discussion with and between young learners, with all the personal vulnerability and risk-taking that this involves, needs to be nurtured within an emotionally secure environment.

*Talk for writing* can, therefore, be greatly enhanced by the development of SEAL and vice versa. This can be achieved through:

- parallel work in *Talk for writing* and SEAL, with the links made fully explicit and opportunity provided for transference of skills in both directions;
- shared work where materials or themes allow the children to learn and practise skills common to both *Talk for writing* and SEAL (for example, when responding to fiction or writing a story that highlights a character's emotional reactions, or where a moral choice has to be made in the face of a particular dilemma).

Some of the skill sets common to *Talk for writing* and SEAL can be explored in the following situations.

- When conducting conversations/discussions in large and small groups and pairs, for example, in relation to:
  - achieving clear, purposeful communication;
  - explaining reasons;
  - appropriate turn-taking;
  - listening to others and responding to what they say;
  - respecting others and their views;
  - avoiding conflict.
- Learning to learn:
  - feeling safe/taking risks;
  - understanding how to learn effectively;
  - taking responsibility for own learning;
  - learning from others;
  - feeling good about learning;
  - recognising when something is difficult;
  - reviewing and evaluating;
  - supporting others.
- Empathising:
  - recognising feelings;
  - understanding the thoughts and feelings of others;
  - relating to them and responding appropriately;
  - learning from sharing.
- Understanding motivation:
  - considering why people behave as they do;



- linking thoughts, feelings and behaviour;
- knowing why writers write.
- Making choices:
  - understanding why characters make the choices they do and their consequences;
  - understanding why writers make the choices they do and their effects.
- Self-awareness:
  - relating and comparing my own experience to that of others;
  - knowing what I like and why.
- Generating ideas by:
  - drawing on my experience and that of others;
  - verbalising thoughts and feelings;
  - experimental talk activity, for example, role-play (risk-taking).
- Planning and preparing:
  - motivating myself to write;
  - setting and meeting challenges;
  - envisaging desired outcomes;
  - planning tasks in achievable steps.
- Developing ideas and their expression:
  - exploring ways of expressing thoughts and feelings;
  - using external and internal dialogue to explore choices and consequences;
  - reflecting and refining; evaluating effect/impact on others;
  - giving and responding to constructive feedback;
  - being persistent and resilient; learning from mistakes;
  - enjoying achievement.

Examples of planning and classroom practice that integrate concern for SEAL with *Talk for writing* can be found in both the video sequences and the case studies on DVD 1.

## Talk for writing and inclusion

*Talk for writing* has a strong contribution to make to the learning and writing development of **all** children including those identified as having special educational needs, children from diverse cultural backgrounds, those for whom English is an additional language and children who are particularly gifted and talented.

Children in any of these groups are likely to benefit considerably from the same strategies and approaches introduced in this booklet and exemplified on the DVDs. However, this learning can best be enhanced where teachers make appropriate provision.

### **For children from diverse cultural backgrounds:**

- Use stories and experiences from the children's cultural heritage to engage and motivate them and thus support their writing.
- Remember that many communities (including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and many Black and Asian communities) have a strong culture of oral storytelling that needs to be harnessed and built on in the classroom.

### **For children identified with special educational needs/language and literacy development:**

- Wherever possible, include all children, whatever their needs, in *Talk for writing* sessions and learning sequences.
- Make appropriate adjustments for pupils identified with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) or dyslexia with reference to the modules and linked resources in the *Inclusion Development Programme* (Ref: 00070-2008DVD-EN), remembering that around 50 per cent have transitory difficulties, which can be resolved with the right kind of support.
- While retaining high expectations, remember that for some children, we may need to broaden the concept of writing to include mark-making in its widest sense and also accept that some children may never write totally independently.
- Where needed, provide ICT and other technological aids for children with learning and/or physical needs.
- Where needed, provide additional support such as a teaching assistant or peer response partner, intermediary or scribe. The nature of this support should always be underpinned by the drive to encourage independence.
- Take care to ensure that a ceiling of expectation is not set and, where a pupil gives a very limited response, that she/he is encouraged to elaborate, if it is known that she/he is able to do so.
- Allow time for those who may be slower to respond and accept and value the limited responses from any who may be unable to respond more fully.

### **For children for whom English is an additional language:**

- Provide opportunities to tell stories in their first language to enable children to draw and build on prior learning.
- Provide support from peers and adults who share their first language and show how the children can draw on this to enrich their writing in English.
- Facilitate appropriate exploration of the difference between informal conversational language and writer's language, including grammatical structures.
- Provide opportunities to explore and use vocabulary and language, including idioms and expressions, in the children's first and additional languages.
- Model and scaffold talk, particularly in English, through a range of strategies including speaking frames.

**For gifted and talented children:**

- Create a classroom climate that encourages risk-taking and accepts and values 'different', experimental and, perhaps, idiosyncratic responses.
- Encourage playfulness with language and ideas.
- Provide texts and talk or writing tasks that allow for challenge and/or the open-ended extension of response (for example, writing the text to a word limit while including all the necessary features or analysing the style of an author and writing in that style).
- From the earliest years, continually challenge and extend their thoughts and ideas (including those expressed in role-play, drama and games) through dialogue and debate.
- Provide opportunities to transfer talk and writing from one context and medium to another (such as re-telling or writing a story for a completely different audience, from a novel point of view, or through a different medium, such as podcasting).
- Target provision for 'stretch' and challenge through guided talk/writing sessions.

Examples of integrating planning for inclusion into the teaching sequence can be found on DVD 1, together with video examples of its integration into classroom practice.

## Additionally available

### On DVD 1: *Talk for writing*

#### **What is *Talk for writing*?**

Introduction, video exemplification and background information for:

- Book-talk;
- Writer-talk ('reading like a writer' and 'writing like a reader');
- Storytelling.

#### **Developing learning through *Talk for writing***

Pupil writing targets for the Primary Framework strands 9, 10 and 11 (from *Support for writing*) linked directly to *Talk for writing* exemplification for each of:

- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4

#### **Integrating *Talk for writing* into planning**

Planning guidance for:

- Primary Framework literacy units;
- guided writing;
- integration of social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL);
- inclusion groups
  - special educational needs (SEN);
  - English as an additional language (EAL);
  - children from diverse cultural backgrounds (DCB);
  - gifted and talented (G&T).

#### ***Talk for writing* in practice**

Case studies of inclusive practice in *Talk for writing* developed through all phases of the teaching sequence.

Video exemplification of inclusive practice in *Talk for writing* developed through all phases of the teaching sequence for:

- Year R
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4

## DVD 2: Pie Corbett *Talk for writing* CPD.

### Session 1

Developing language power through 'quick write' poetry, including:

- introduction;
- word and language games;
- 'book-talk';
- 'writer-talk';
- shared writing.

### Session 2

Storytelling and story-making, including:

- introduction;
- communal storytelling;
- more independent storytelling;
- developing a story into writing (shared writing).

### Session 3

Developing story structure and building suspense in fiction writing, including:

- introduction;
- 'book-talk';
- 'writer-talk';
- talk activity to develop a story structure;
- talk activity to develop a character;
- talk activity to develop a setting;
- shared writing.

**N.B:** Although the specific exemplifications on the DVDs focus on poetry and fiction writing, the strategies and approaches of *Talk for writing* are **equally applicable to non-fiction writing**.

Although the video exemplifications on the DVDs focus on year classes from Year R, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4, the strategies and approaches of *Talk for writing* are **equally applicable to all year groups**.

## Acknowledgement

Page 4; diagram taken from p.7 of *Raising Boys' Achievements in Writing* (September 2004).  
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Audience: Literacy consultants, headteachers,  
literacy subject leaders, inclusion coordinators,  
SEN coordinators, Foundation Stage practitioners  
and Key Stage 1 and 2 teachers

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