Talk for Writing

Jordanhill School Parent Conference

Tuesday 16th September 2025

Overview

- What is Talk for Writing?
- The Talk for Writing Process
- How Does Talk for Writing Help My Child?
- How You Can Support at Home

What is Talk for Writing?

- Developed by Pie Corbett, Talk for Writing is a teaching method that helps children develop their writing skills through talking.

- It involves imitating, innovating and inventing stories or texts to help children build their confidence and creativity in writing.

Why Talk for Writing in Jordanhill School?

- Accredited framework developed by experts.
- Research based and evidence driven.
- It is based on the principles of how children learn.
- Whole school approach.
- School Improvement Priority 2024 and 2025 initiated by staff.
- **Imitation** → **innovation** → **independent application**
  can be adapted to suit the needs of learners of any stage.

	Fiction Model Text	Genre	Toolkit	Non-fiction text	Toolkit
Primary 1					
Term 1	The Gingerbread Man	Cumulative	Dialogue	How to make gingerbread	Instructions
Term 2	Take a walk Little bear	Journey	Description	Instructions for Little bear	Instructions
Term 3	Supertato	Defeating a monster	Characterisation	News article Supertato	Recount
Term 4	The Billy Goats Gruff	Defeating a monster	Setting	Persuade troll to leave goats alone	Persuasive
Primary 2					
Term 1	Owl babies (short version)	Losing	Action	Information text about owls	Information text
Term 2	Little Charlie	Journey	Description	Make a recipe	Instructions
Term 3	The Magic Porridge Pot	Finding	Setting	News article Magic Porridge Pot	Recount
Term 4	The Bad-Tempered Ladybird	Warning	Characterisation	How to make a bug hotel	Instructions
Primary 3					
Term 1	Funny bones	Journey	Setting	Facts about body (fact file)	Information text
Term 2	The Owl who was afraid of the dark	Wishing	Dialogue	Plop adventure	Recount
Term 3	Egyptian Adventure	Portal	Openings and endings	Should Howard Carter have opened Tutankhamun's tomb?	Discussion
Term 4	Kassim and the Dragon	Warning	Suspense	How to trap a dragon	Instructions
Primary 4					
Term 1	Stone Trolls	Journey/ Action	Description of setting	The Truth about Trolls	Information text
Term 2	The King of Fishes	Wishing tale	Dialogue		Explanation
Term 3	The Cobbler of Krakow and Smoke the Dragon	Defeating a monster	Characterisation	Apply to be a dragon detective	Persuasion
Term 4	Staying Out	Warning	Description	Should children...?	Discussion
Primary 5					
Term 1	Old Warehouse	Warning	Suspense	Why you should not go to the forest	Explanation
Term 2	Zelda Claw	Tale of fear	Openings and endings	News article - Raucous Rain Cat	Recount
Term 3	King Midas	Wishing tale	Action	King Midas Letter	Persuasion
Term 4	Red Eye	Losing tale	Description	Should Sally be punished...?	Discussion

Fiction

Description toolkit © Pie Corbett 2024

Always ask, "What mood am I trying to create?" – then you can select words that fit.

TalkforWriting

To create a description that the reader can imagine, making it sound real and using it to intrigue, you might want to:

Nursery/Reception

- **Talk about what images and objects look like** using adjectives (describing words): *spotty, colourful, tall, round*
- **Orally describe what something looks like, what you can hear, what it feels like, what it smells like** (senses)
- **Orally describe where something is** using simple prepositions: *The scruffy dog sat under the bed.*
- **Help the reader to see what you are describing** by using a simile: as tall as a giraffe

Y1/2: as in N/R+

- **'Name it' to create a clear picture in the reader's mind** with specific nouns and proper nouns: *poodle/Rottweiler rather than dog*
- **Help the reader picture the object, character or setting** with carefully chosen adjectives: *the small, round pot; the enormous worm; the calm, glistening lake*
- **Create a clear image by piling up the description** using a simple sentence of 3 (commas in a list): *Fred was tired, old and bored.*
- **Add detail or feeling to the character's actions** through verb choice, *i.e. 'crept' instead of 'walked'*
  Limit – got, came, went, said, looked
- **Describe how someone does something** using adverbs: *She watched quietly.*
- **Make it sound good for the reader** by using alliteration: *Sally slept silently*
- **Use repetition to add detail,** e.g. repeating the nouns: *a cat, a lean cat, a mean cat; a bridge, a stone bridge*

Y3/4: as in Y1/2+

- **'Show' not 'tell' how a character feels through their body language response:** *The shadow darted forwards. Her skin crawled!*
- **Match the mood or atmosphere** by selecting powerful, precise and well-chosen nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs: *rusted, overgrown, smeared, smothered, snatched, bounded, savagely, kindly*
- **Create a clear image by piling up the description** using a detailed sentence of 3 (commas in a list): *The dragon's eyes glistened, its scales shimmered and leathery wings beat at the air like bellows.*
- **Bring a setting to life** through personification: *The bushes seemed to be holding their breath.*
- **Create atmosphere** through metaphor and simile: *Flashlight eyes kept watch like scanning towers.*
- **Add intriguing detail** through expanded noun phrases: *The shaggy dog at the end of the lane begged on all fours.*

Y5/6: as in Y3/4+

- **Manipulate detail and descriptive techniques to suit purpose – to scare the reader, to lull the reader**
- **Use a character's reaction or the author's comments to show the effect of a description:** *Joanna shuddered. This was not a happy place.*
- **Explore the sounds of the scene** through onomatopoeia: *The bees buzzed busily.*
- **Ensure all word choices earn their place and add something new and necessary,** *i.e. not the red letterbox but the rusted letterbox*
- **Use precise detail when describing to help the reader to picture the scene:** *His gold fob watch glinted.*

Openings and endings toolkit © Pie Corbett 2024

Always ask, "What mood am I trying to create?" – then you can select words that fit.
Openings an endings should be taught and collected across the year as an ongoing toolkit for stories.

To create openings and endings that hook the reader, you might want to:

Nursery/Reception	Y1/2: as in N/R+	Y3/4: as in Y1/2 +	Y5/6: as in Y3/4 +

• **Learn a** *Once upon a time'* **opening**
• **Learn** *Once upon a time, there was a … who lived …* **to establish a character in a setting:** *Once upon a time, there was a pirate who lived on an island.*
• **Get the story going with** *One day*
• **Take your character home at the end of the story**
• **Learn to end a story with** *Finally, …*
• **Learn how to use a** *happily ever after* **ending**
	• **Think about how the character feels/ what the character wants before the story starts**
	• **Use different ways to start a story**
	  ○ Use more 'time' openers: *There once was …; Once, not twice, …; Long ago, …; Many moons ago, …'*
	  ○ Use 'place' openers: *In a distant land, …; Far, far away, …; On the other side of the mountain, … etc.*
	• **Add in 'early' or 'late' to the 'time' opener:** *Late one night, … Early one morning, …*
	• **Develop the ways to show the reader that the story is ending:** *In the end; Just in the nick of time*
	• **End by stating how the character has changed or what has been learned:** *He would never steal again.*
		• **Use time** (*Late one night, …*), **weather** (*Snow fell)* **or place starters** (*The river teemed with fish*) **plus 'who', 'where', 'when', 'weather' and 'what' is happening to orientate the reader**
		• **Start with the name of your character:** *'Bill stared out of the window.'*
		• **Think about how the character feels (or personality, e.g. bossy) and show this at the start:** *Bill glared at his teacher.*
		• **Use dramatic speech: try warnings, worries, dares, secrets:** *"How do we escape now?"*
		• **Hook the reader's interest** with questions or exclamations:
		"Run!" they yelled.
		"What is it?" she muttered.
		• **End by showing how the character has changed or what has been learned, e.g. a moral**
			• **'Hook' the reader:**
			  ○ *Usually, Tim enjoyed playing in the park but …*
			  ○ **Use a contrast, e.g. inside/ outside:** *Outside, the wind howled. Inside, the fire blazed.*
			  ○ **Use a dilemma, desire or unexpected event:** *Jo wept.*
			  ○ **Suggest something dangerous might happen** *(the ancient bridge shook)* **or has happened** *(smoke rose from the village)*
			  ○ **Dismiss the 'monster':** *Tim had never believed in ghosts.*
			  ○ **Create a mood:** *The fog shrouded …*
			  ○ **Use a 'trigger' to catch the reader's interest:** *someone wants something; is warned not to do something; must go somewhere; is threatened; loses something; finds something*
			• **Use a flashback or forwards**
			• **End the story on a cliffhanger or by setting up a sequel:** *The journey was over, for now.*
			• **End with an author's comment on the events:** *From that day onwards, Tim never looked at the graveyard in the same way.*

Non-fiction

Information Toolkit

Nursery/Reception	Y1/2: as in N/R & …	Y3/4: as in Y1/2 & …	Y5/6: as in Y3/4 & …
To inform the reader:			
• **Compose sentences to say what you know.** • **Talk about what images and objects look like** using accurate adjectives (describing words): *Grey elephants have long trunks.* • **Draw and label images and objects** with simple captions. • **Add on more information by using simple joining words** (conjunctions): *and/but* • **Explain what things are like,** by using similes: *Their ears are like sails.*	• **Introduce the reader to the subject** using a simple topic sentence: *Whales are incredible animals that live in the ocean.* • **Hook the reader** with a rhetorical question: *Do you know much about whales?* • **Sound like an expert by using the correct words (technical language) and giving things the right name** (proper nouns): *Beluga whales* • **Explain how many or how often** by using generalisers: *usually, sometimes, some, most, many, a few, all, mainly.* • **Surprise the reader with interesting facts** by using emotive openers (fronted adverbials): *Amazingly, … Surprisingly, … Interestingly,* • **Explain things to the reader** by using conjunctions: *so, because, when, where, etc.* • **Pile up information and ideas** by using sentences of three (commas in a list): *Dragons have leathery skin, streamlined bodies and powerful tails.*	• **Create links between sentences so writing builds information, e.g. linking facts & ideas:** • compare: *like, equally, in contrast, similarly, unlike, by comparison* • cause/effect: *as a result, consequently, this leads to, therefore* • add more information: *moreover, in addition, furthermore* • **Help the reader by drawing attention to key points:** *Most importantly, …* • **Explain how many, often and much** by using more sophisticated generalisers: *the vast majority/minority, usually, occasionally.* • **Set up your reader's expectations** through a variety of emotive openers (fronted adverbials): *Intriguingly, … Weirdly, … Reassuringly, … Sadly, … Incredibly, …* • **Add on more facts** by using *adding on* words (conjunctions): *also, additionally.* • **Make information real for the reader by using comparisons:** *Adult elephants weigh more than a London bus.*	• **Consider your audience and vary your tone and formality for a desired effect:** - formal and precise: *This species is reputed to be …* - formal and friendly: *The breed is thought by many to be …* - informal and chatty: *Crocs are incredible!* • **Dress up information and sell your facts:** - by making them sound special: *astonishing as it may seem …* - by using hyphenated compound adjectives: *mind-boggling, jaw-dropping* • **Present facts in a formal tone,** using the passive voice: *Eggs are laid in the spring.* • **Help the reader by giving examples or dropping in expert knowledge and technical information** (parenthesis): *They live in family groups, known as pods, that can consist of between thirty and one hundred members.* • **Impress the reader by using quotes from well-known experts** (quotation marks). • **Create and sustain the reader's attention using interesting phrases** (superlatives): *It is one of the rarest yet most beautiful …*

Stage overview

Stage: Primary 3		Talk for Writing Overview					
Term 1		Term 2		Term 3		Term 4	
Fiction	Non-fiction	Fiction	Non-fiction	Fiction	Non-fiction	Fiction	Non-fiction
Model Text: Funnybones	Text: Facts about the body (fact file)	Model Text: The Owl who was afraid of the dark	Text: Plop adventure	Model Text: Egyptian Adventure	Text: Should Howard Carter have opened Tutankhamun's tomb?	Model Text: Kassim and the Dragon	Text: How to trap a dragon
Genre: Journey		Genre: Wishing		Genre: Portal		Genre: Warning	
Toolkit: Setting	Toolkit: Information text	Toolkit: Dialogue	Toolkit: Recount	Toolkit: Openings and endings	Toolkit: Discussion	Toolkit: Suspense	Toolkit: Instructions

Reading Spine books - Please highlight the book(s) covered each term.

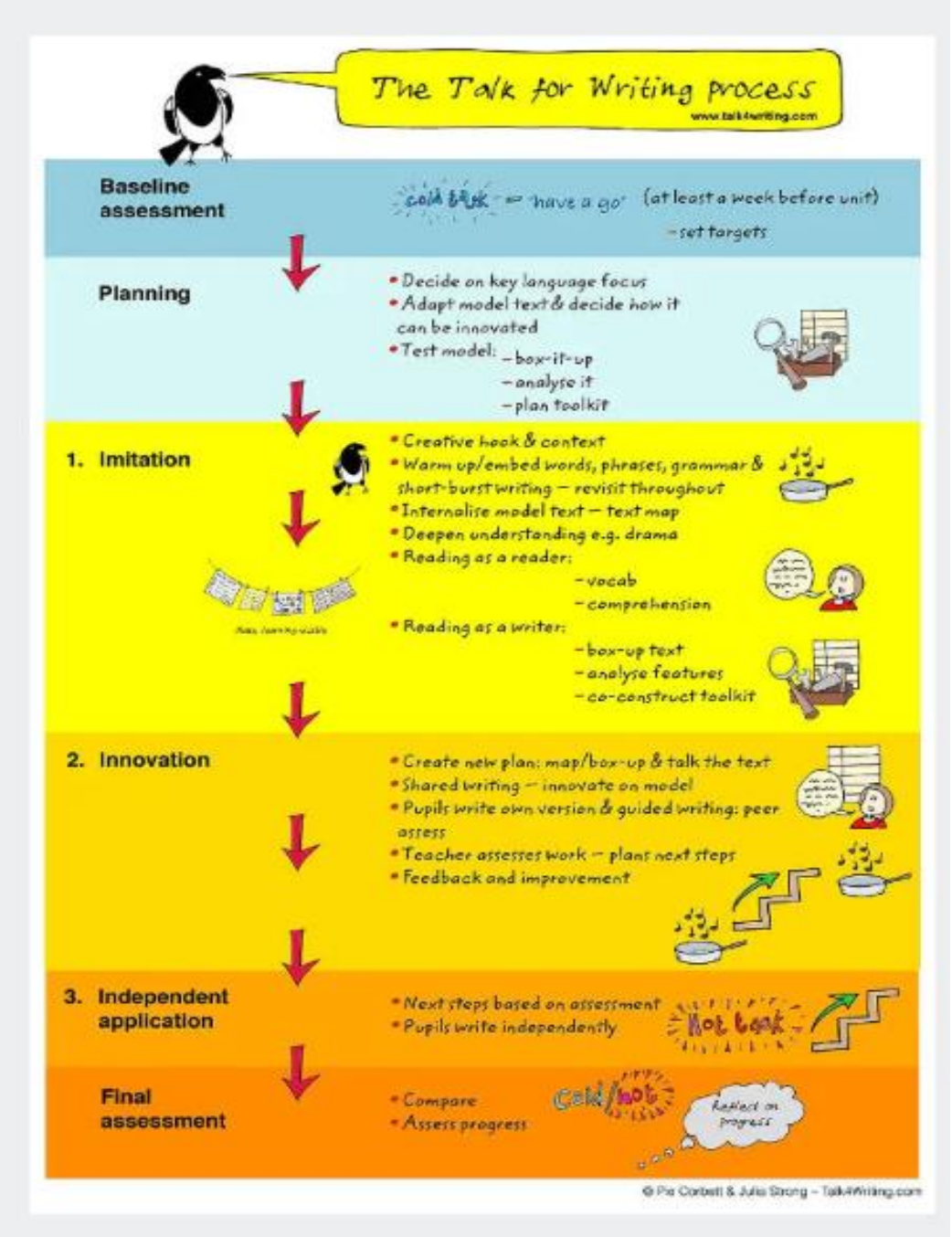
Traction Man is Here
Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?
The Flower
The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark
Flat Stanley

Meerkat Mail
Dr Xargle's Book of Earthlets
Gorilla
The Giraffe, the Pelly and Me
Willa and old Miss Annie

Amazing Grace
Not Now Bernard
Emily Brown and The Thing
Fantastic Mr Fox

Pumpkin Soup
Tuesday
Frog and Toad Together
The Hodgeheg

The Process


The Talk for Writing process
www.talk4writing.com
Baseline assessment
cold task = 'have a go' (at least a week before unit)
- set targets
Planning
• Decide on key language focus
• Adapt model text & decide how it can be innovated
• Test model:
- box-it-up
- analyse it
- plan toolkit
1. Imitation
• Creative hook & context
• Warm up/embed words, phrases, grammar & short-burst writing – revisit throughout
• Internalise model text – text map
• Deepen understanding e.g. drama
• Reading as a reader:
- vocab
- comprehension
• Reading as a writer:
- box-up text
- analyse features
- co-construct toolkit
2. Innovation
• Create new plan: map/box-up & talk the text
• Shared writing – innovate on model
• Pupils write own version & guided writing: peer assess
• Teacher assesses work – plans next steps
• Feedback and improvement
3. Independent application
• Next steps based on assessment
• Pupils write independently
hot task
Final assessment
• Compare
• Assess progress
cold/hot
Reflect on progress
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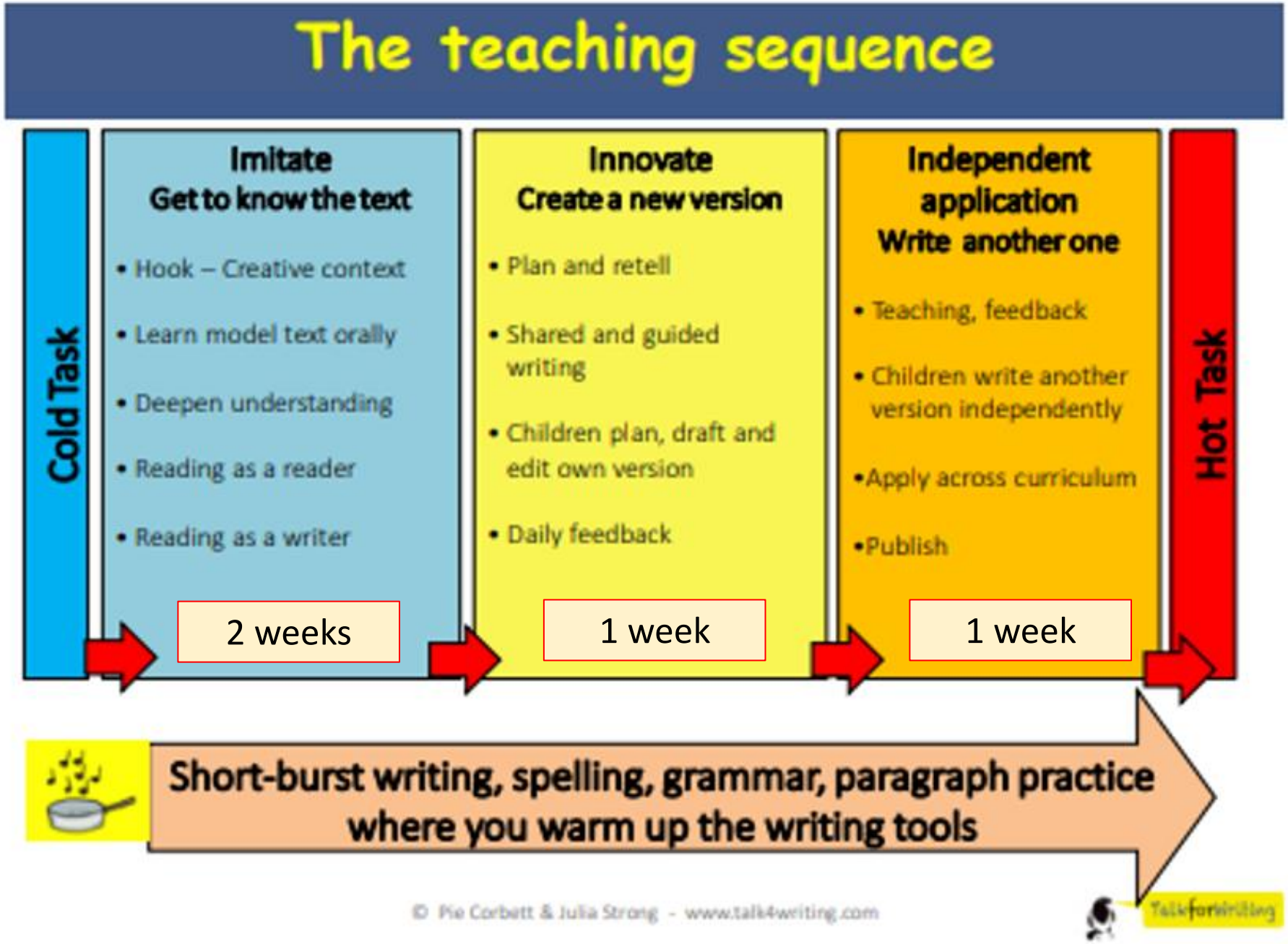
Talk for Writing Overview: 3 big ideas

1. **Imitation**
   Know a model text really well

2. **Innovation**
   Create a new version.
   Teacher Models –
   Children have-a-go with scaffolds and support

3. **Independent Application**
   Children create a new version independently



Cold Task

- Children are provided with a 'hook'.

  (object / photograph / audio clip / video clip / music/ technology apps FX Guru / poster / visitor).

'You can't create or imagine something out of nothing' and *'imagination is the manipulation of what you already know.'*

Pie Corbett

- A cleverly manufactured hook will capture children's imagination and it will provide a purpose and audience for their writing.

- It is a stimulus to get their ideas flowing and will encourage class discussion with pupils' ideas being shared.

- This is the only time the teacher DOES NOT model before the children begin writing.

P1 hook example

Model Text

Poppy had always been curious. One sunny afternoon, she was walking happily down Elf Road when she saw something unusual. In the brick wall, there was an ancient, wooden door. The metal handle was shaped like a dragon's mouth. Gently, she turned and the door creaked open.

Inside, there was a huge dark hall. On an enormous table, someone had set out a great feast with thick slices of juicy chicken, huge bowls of green salad, glass jars of fresh fruit and silver plates of sweet puddings. Hundreds of tiny people were dressed in curious clothes with scarlet cloaks, yellow shoes and crimson caps. Poppy desperately tried to talk to the tiny people, but they did not say a word!

In the middle of the table, there was a glittering dragon carved out of ice and in its beak, she could see a folded piece of paper.

'Look where you wish,

But don't touch a dish'.

So, Poppy wandered curiously into the hall where she found a crystal cupboard. Amazed, she opened the door and inside was a golden apple sitting on a silver plate. It smelt so sweet, so she picked it up and took a bite. At that moment, Poppy gasped because she had remembered what she had been told.

Instantly, she could hear a thousand voices ringing in her ears like sharp, clanging bells. Poppy ran quickly from the echoing sound. Clutching the apple, she dashed through the dark hall, past the great table with the tiny people running behind her. Just in time she found the wooden door that led her back to her own world.

First, Poppy planted the apple pips. One grew into a beautiful tree with blossoms of silver and apples of gold that glowed like tiny suns. Secondly, poor Poppy never found the door again even though she walked up and down Elf Road many times.

Sadly, the other world disappeared, and Poppy never found her way back again.

Ingredients for Learning a Model Text

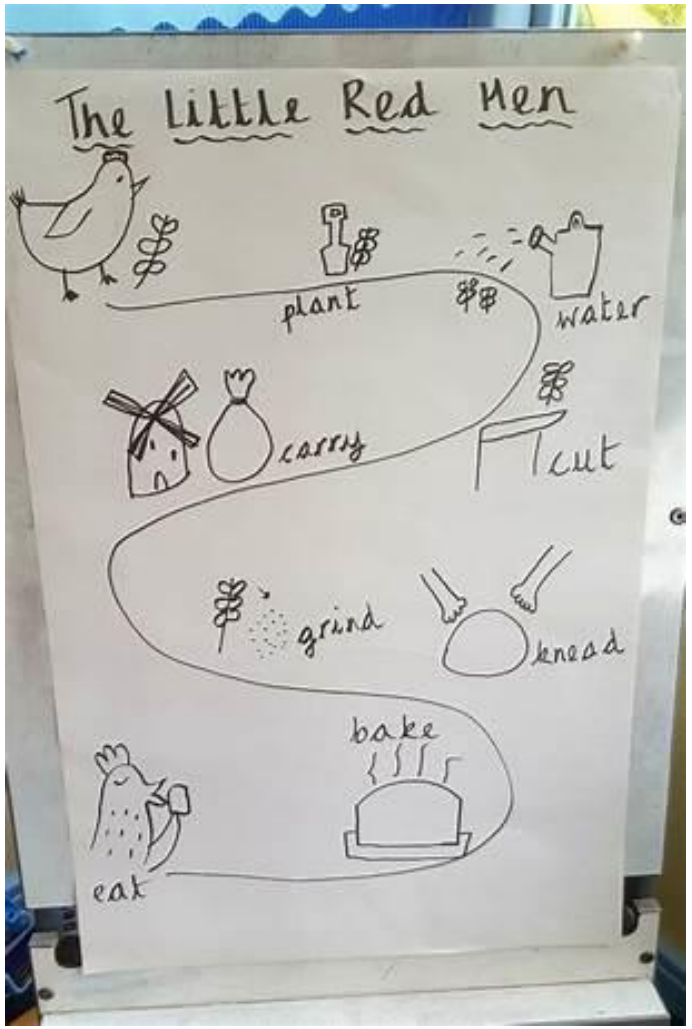
- Whole class, groups, pairs.
- **REPETITION**
- **VISUALS**
- **ACTIONS**
- **INTONATION**

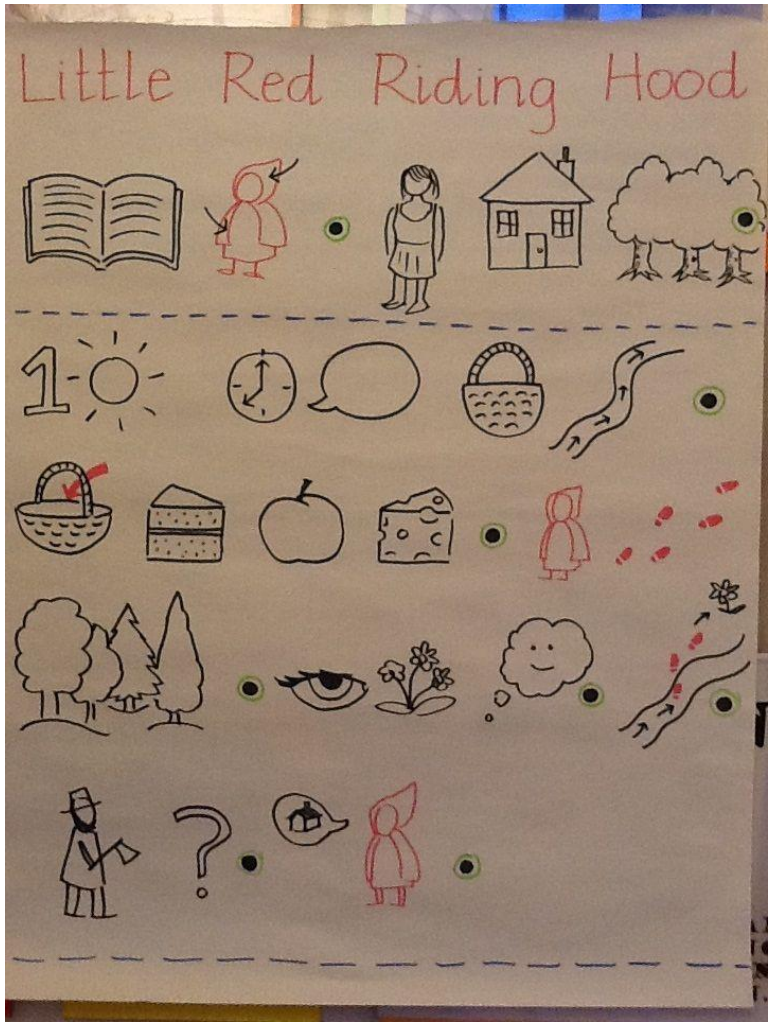
- Plus activities for the children to 'deepen their experience' and understanding of the story
- e.g. drama, art, models, adding percussion.

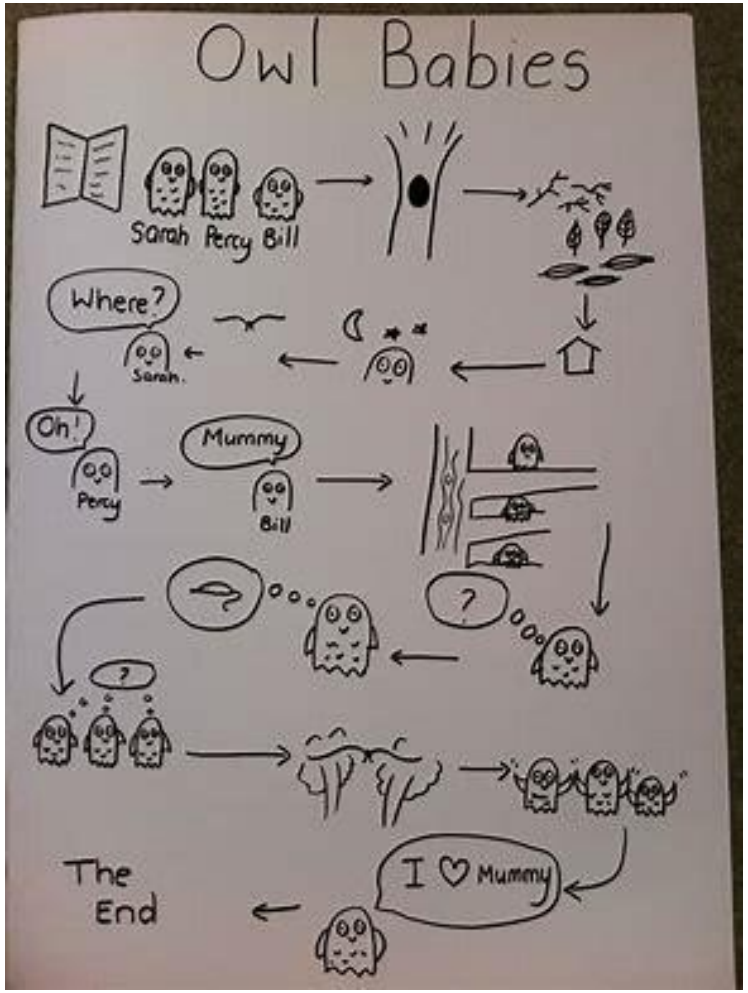
Week 1 – Imitation

Children learn the model text orally using actions to support this.

Story maps of the model text







Deepening Understanding Through Drama

- Freeze frames
- Hot seat main character
- Conscience alley
- Eyewitness, on-looker or spy
- Play resources to act out the model text
- Jump into a scene – see, hear, feel, think
- Speaking picture – I am the …

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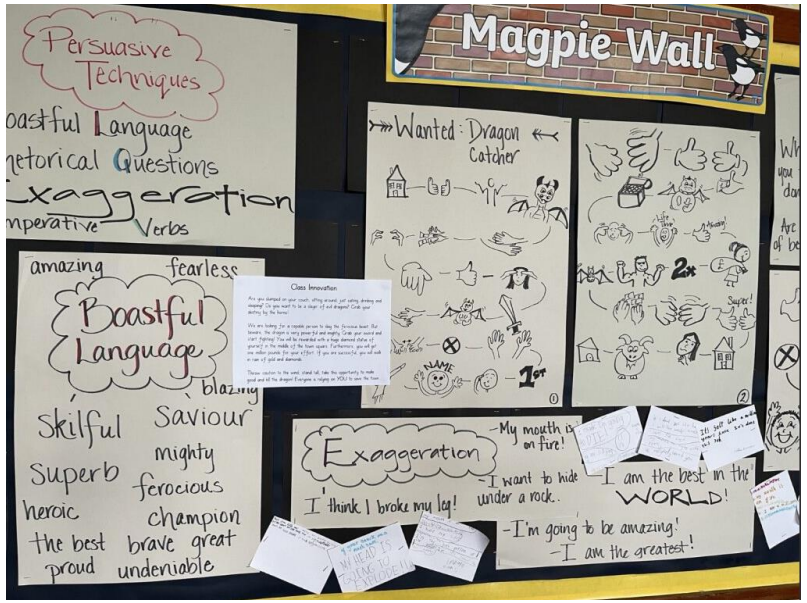
Week 2 – Imitation

short burst writing



Building Language

I opened the magic door and

saw...

heard...

smelled...

touched...

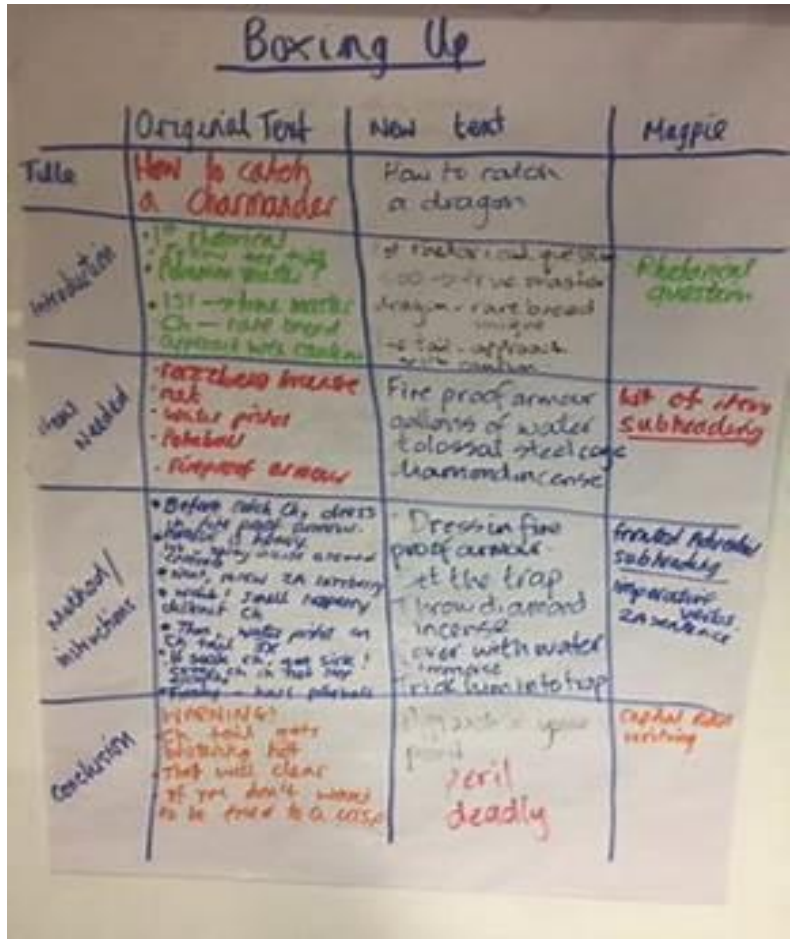
found...

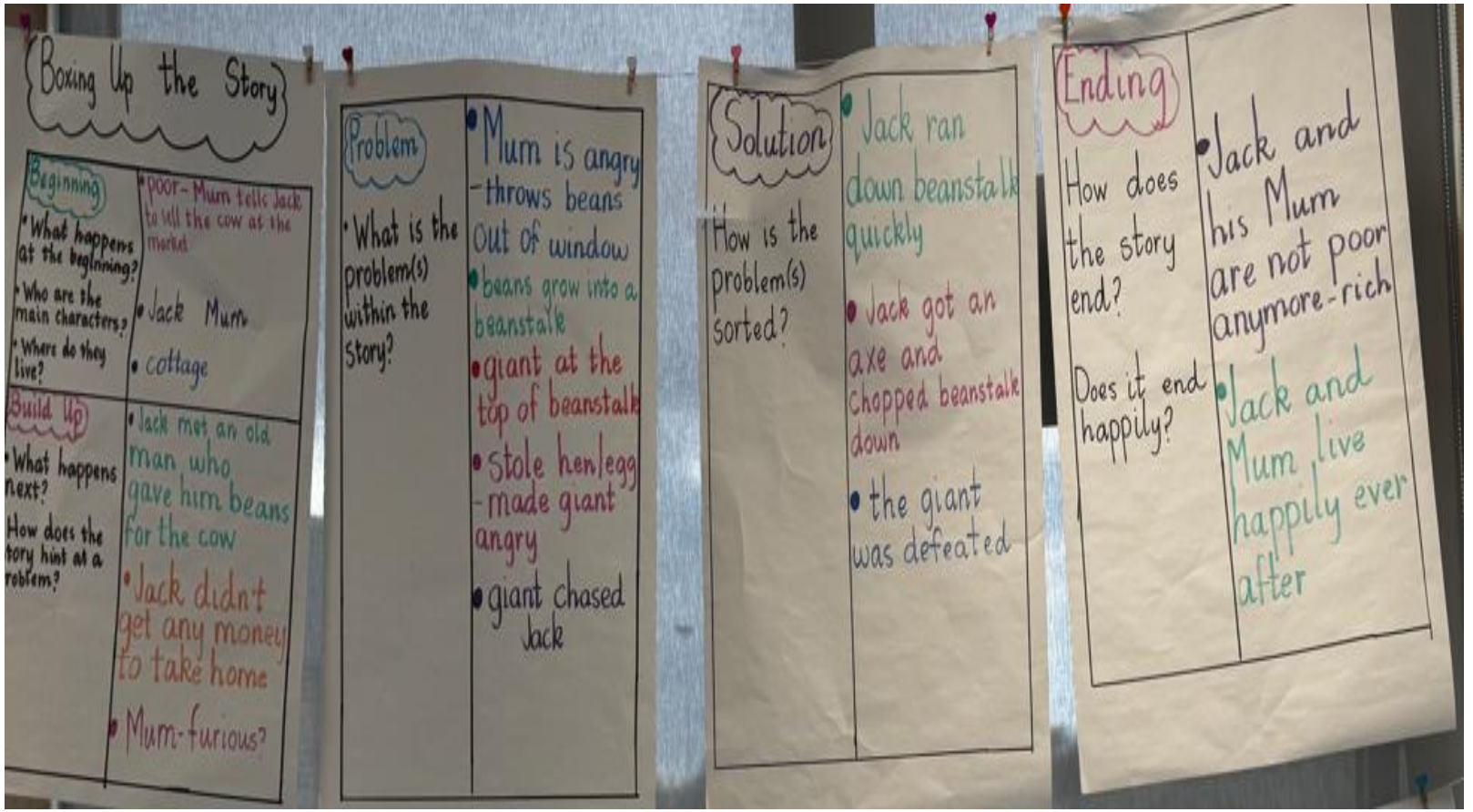
Week 2 - Imitation

Boxing Up

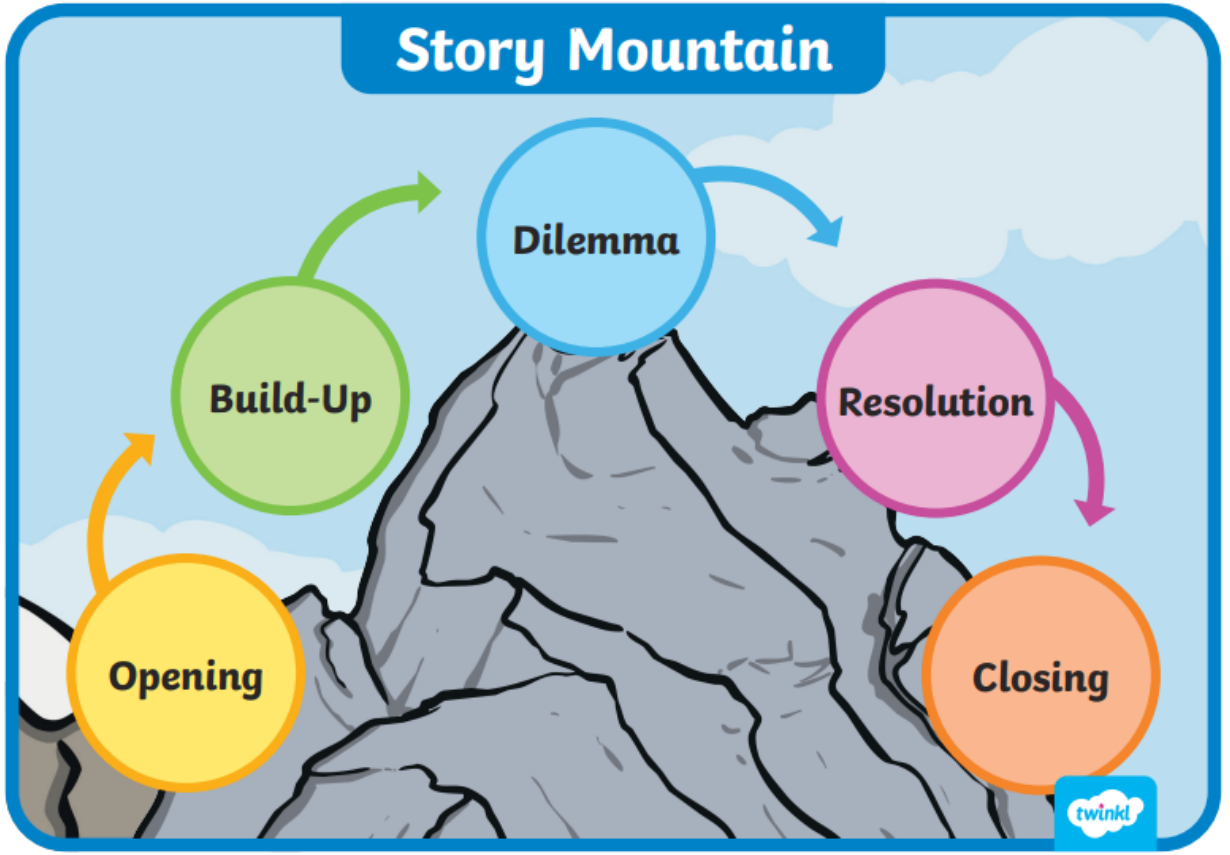
Box up model text – portal story	Innovation
Main character finds a portal.	
Main character explores a new world and is given warnings.	
Main character ignores warnings.	
Main character runs and escapes.	
Main character reflects/ reminisces.	

Boxing Up


Boxing Up
Original Text
New text
Magpie
Title
How to catch a Charmander
How to catch a dragon
Fire proof armour
peril
deadly

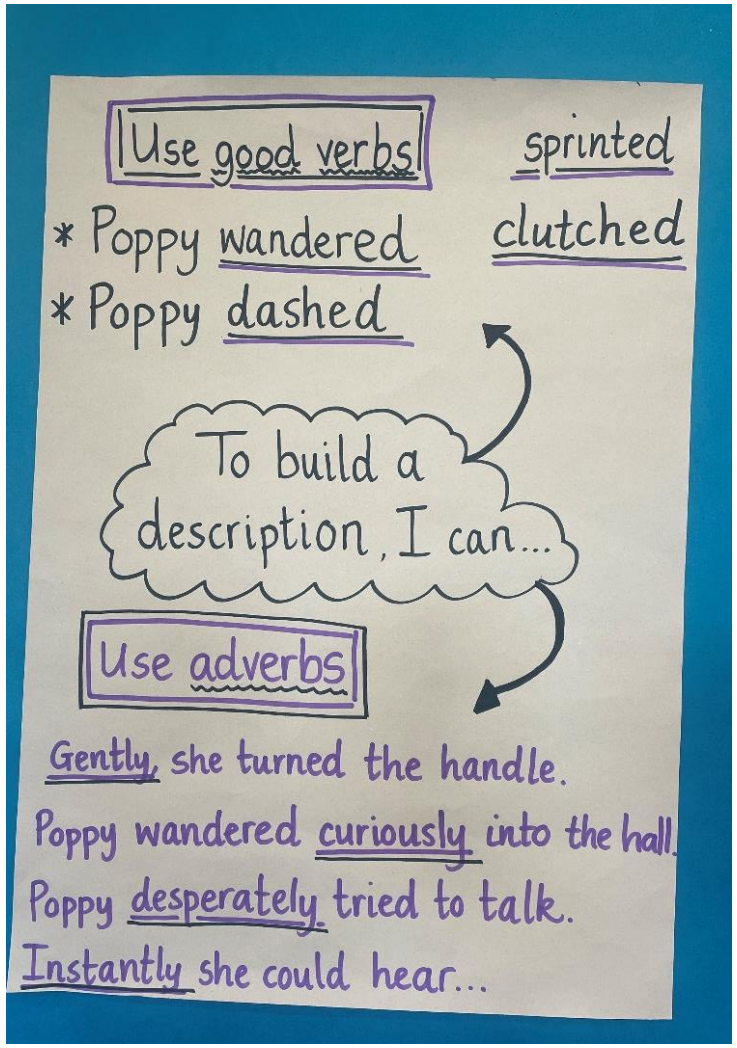

Boxing Up the Story
Beginning
What happens at the beginning?
Who are the main characters?
Where do they live?
poor - Mum tells Jack to sell the cow at the market
Jack Mum
cottage
Build Up
What happens next?
How does the story hint at a problem?
Jack met an old man who gave him beans for the cow
Jack didn't get any money to take home
Mum-furious?
Problem
What is the problem(s) within the story?
Mum is angry - throws beans out of window
beans grow into a beanstalk
giant at the top of beanstalk
Stole henlegg - made giant angry
giant chased Jack
Solution
How is the problem(s) sorted?
Jack ran down beanstalk quickly
Jack got an axe and chopped beanstalk down
the giant was defeated
Ending
How does the story end?
Does it end happily?
Jack and his Mum are not poor anymore - rich
Jack and Mum live happily ever after

5 Sentence Story



Week 2 - Imitation

Co-construct Toolkit

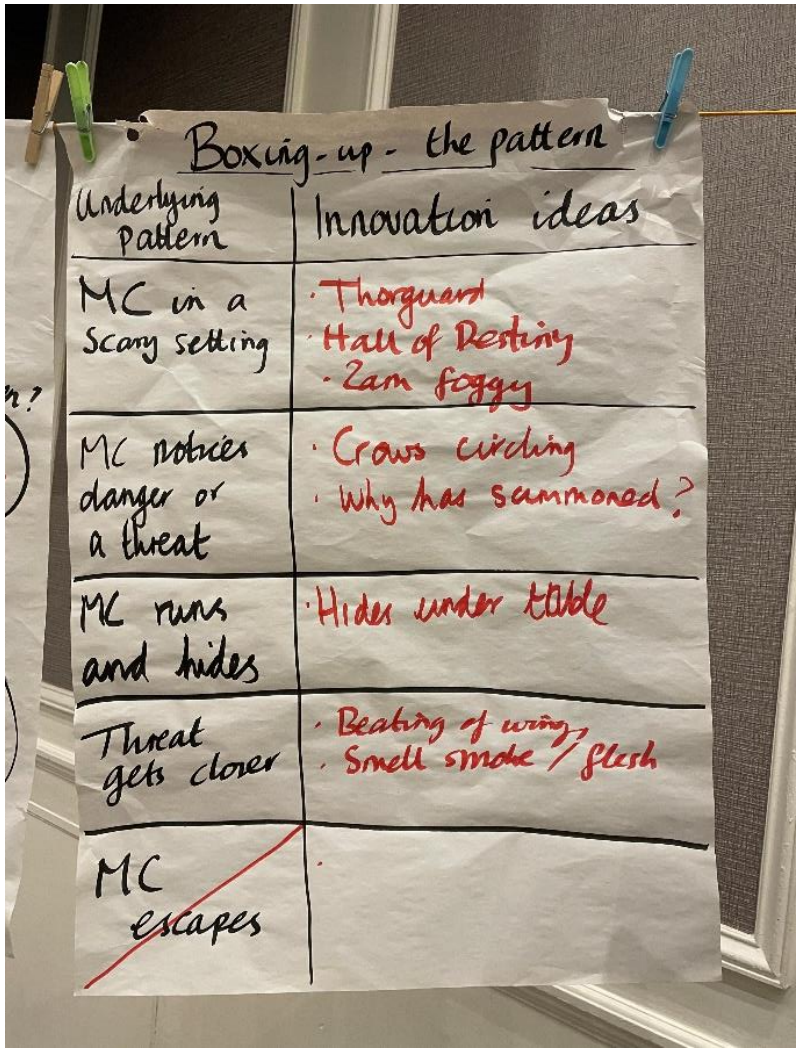


All Time toolkit

P4 'All the Time' Toolkit

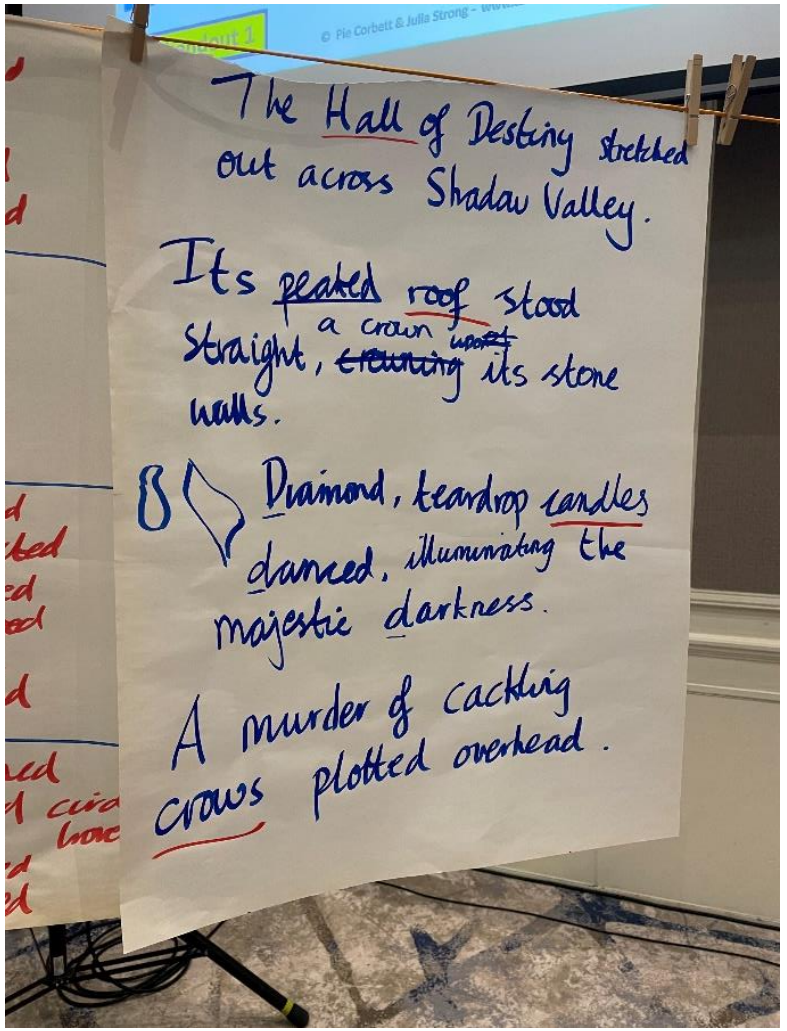
I can...	T1	T2	T3	T4
Use clear and accurate letter formation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use capital letters correctly.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use full stops correctly.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use a range of connectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use a range of openers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use a range of adjectives and descriptive phrases.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use phonics to sound out words.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spell most common words correctly.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Include enough information or description to interest the reader.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Check that my writing makes sense.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Week 3- Innovation (bit-by-bit)



Boxing-up - the pattern

Underlying Pattern	Innovation ideas
MC in a scary setting	· Thorguard · Hall of Destiny · 2am foggy
MC notices danger or a threat	· Crows circling · Why has summoned?
MC runs and hides	· Hides under table
Threat gets closer	· Beating of wing · Smell smoke / flesh
MC escapes	

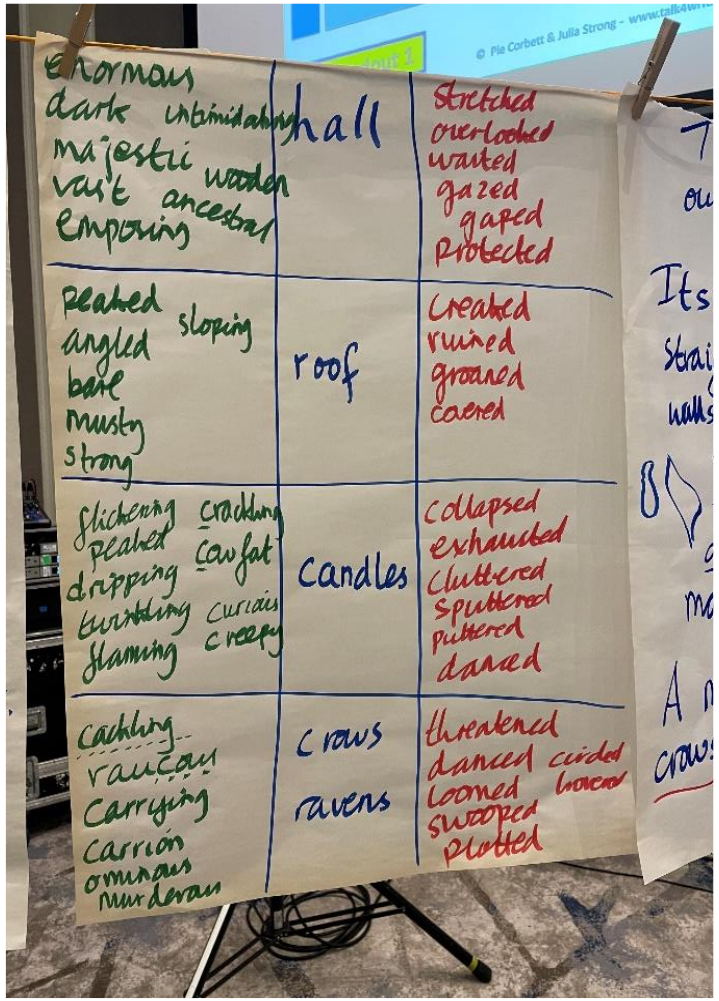


The Hall of Destiny stretched out across Shadow Valley.

Its peaked roof stood a crown straight, ~~towering~~ its stone walls.

Diamond, teardrop candles danced, illuminating the majestic darkness.

A murder of cackling crows plotted overhead.



enormous dark majestic vast imposing	hall	stretched overlooked waited gazed gaped protected
peaked angled sloping bare musty strong	roof	created ruined groaned covered
flickering peaked dripping twinkling flaming	crackling tallow fat curtains creepy candles	collapsed exhausted cluttered spluttered puttered danced
cackling raucous carrying carrion ominous murderous	crows ravens	threatened danced cursed loomed swooped plotted

Children are encouraged to magpie words, phrases, ideas to use in their own writing.

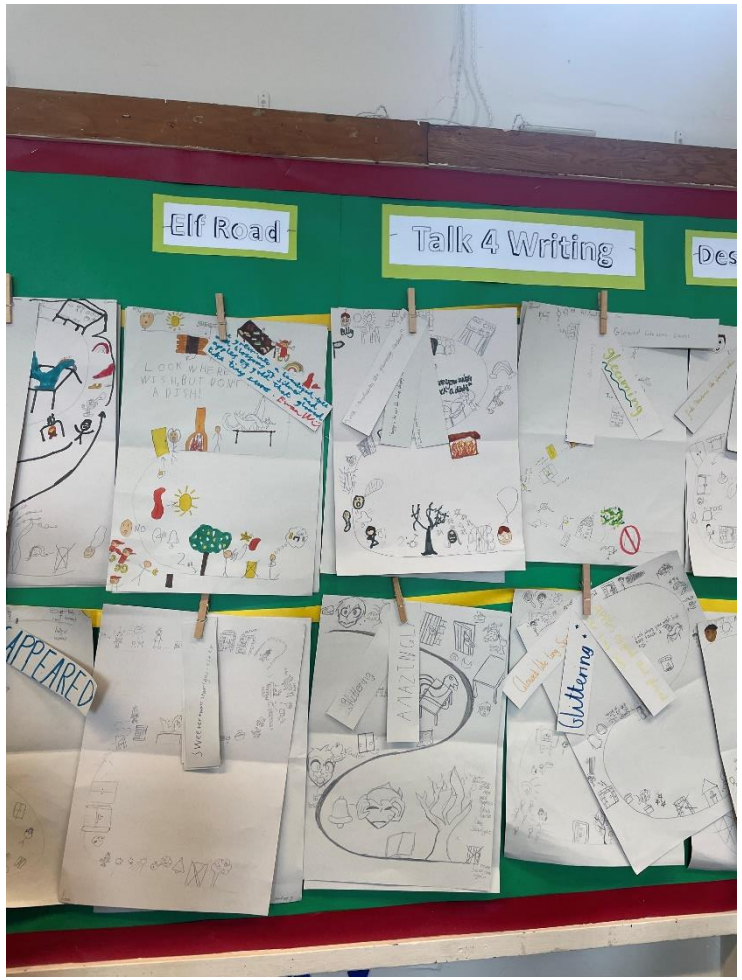
Week 4 – HOT task

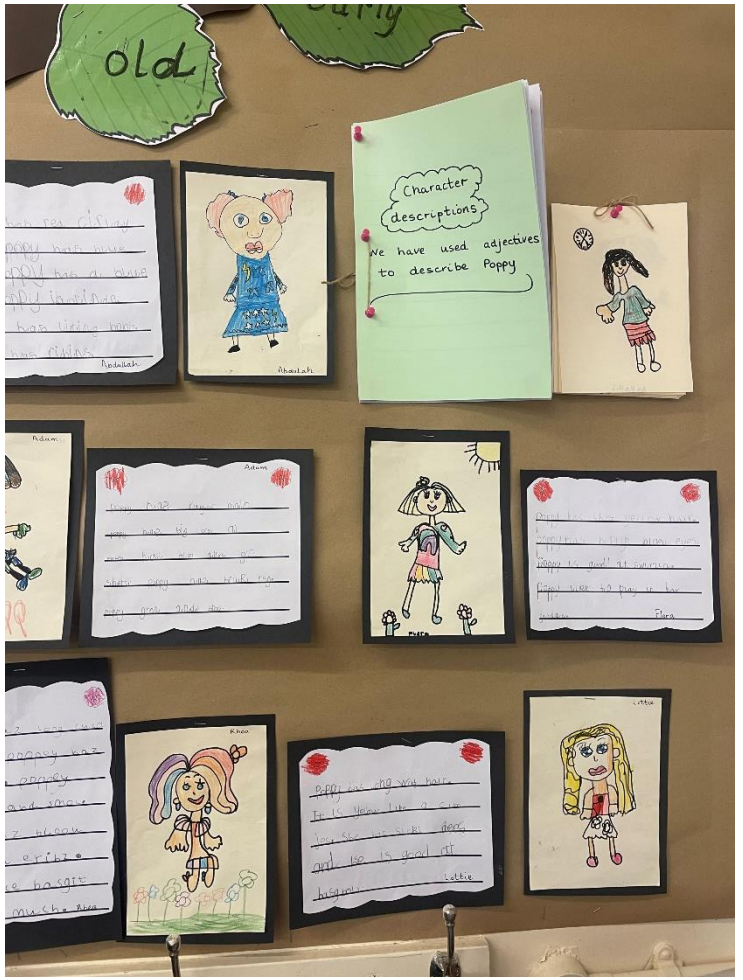
Once you have ….

- Engaged the children with playful writing.
- Rehearsed skills and tools in short burst writing.
- Modelled and shared innovated story writing.
- Engaged the youngest children in modelled and guided story invention …..

…. Then the children will be ready for the independent challenge!

Celebrating Children's Writing





Reading Spine

How Does Talk for Writing Help My Child?

- Builds children's confidence in writing.
- Expands vocabulary and understanding of language patterns.
- Encourages creativity and independent thinking.
- Helps structure writing in an organised way.

P2 Cold Task (typed as written)

Primary 2 – Description Toolkit

Once upon a time there was a little king callad Lily.

One day she went to the shop after that she went to school and wazd reading at home time. She went to her NANNYS hous and went home and went to bed.

P2 Hot Task (typed as written)

Once upon a time there was a beautiful girl called Hollie who had a Ladybird in a matchbox. One sunny day they went for a stroll and lost her Ladybird. They started to look for it. First they met a naughty wich whith a hungry rabbit but they could not find the Ladybird. Next they met a wise unicorn but they could not find the Ladybird. After that they met a furry Bear whith sorne juicy sweets. Unfortunately hungry rabbit ate the juicy sweets.

What has this P2 child learned across the T4W unit?

How you can support at home

- Encourage storytelling at home: Ask your child to tell you a story they have learned.
- Help with retelling stories using their story maps or prompts.
- Encourage creative writing by asking your child to change parts of familiar stories.
- Encourage your child to create a '5 Sentence Story'.
- Praise and celebrate all attempts at writing, no matter how small.

Pupil Voice

I liked changing parts of the story because I could use my own ideas.

I really liked drawing the story map because it helped me to remember the story.

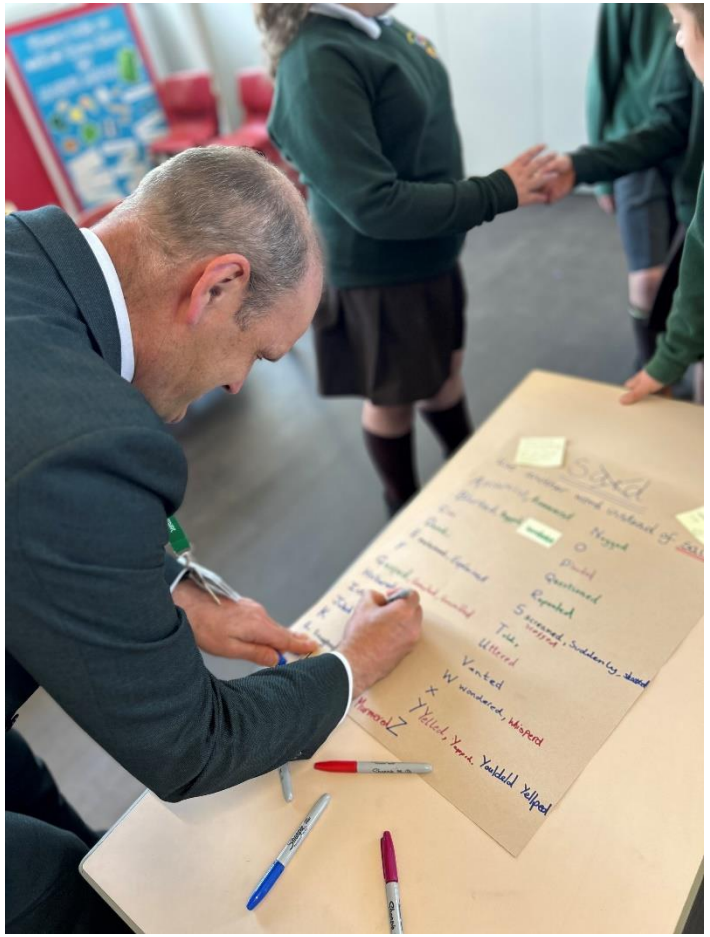
Acting out the story with our hands and our voice was fun because we got to use drama.

I like being able to 'magpie' words and phrases from other people. It helps me make my writing even better.

It's good to talk about our ideas before we write them down. It helps me think about what I want to say.

The 'power of 3' helps you the most in writing.

Celebration event



Pupil Voice

I love how they display lots of different age groups on the desks.

I love all the storymaps and writing techniques.

It's really nice to see all the work everyone did.

It's been amazing learning Talk for Writing.

I loved the interactive stations. I got 9 words on the vocab station.

Wow I'm so impressed with all this. It's really well presented and I know all the information now.

THANK
YOU