



# Somerset Literacy Network

## Starting Points for Writing

Annie Fisher

### ***Sentence String/List Poems***

**Adapt according to level of children's writing – model simple, compound or complex sentences as appropriate**

Play oral version of **eye spy** but saying whole sentence "In this room I can see..." Children have to look around and identify what you have described.

e.g. In this room I can see a book corner full of books.

In this room I can see shiny windows.

In this room I can see a red door.

In this room I can see our drawers.

Make more descriptive according/complex/extended according to experience and ability

Children write sentence stings beginning *In this room I can see....*

See how many you can write in 10 minutes

As above but for **sounds** heard (inside or outside) e.g.

With my little ear I can hear....

If I listen, I can hear....

As above but for **touch** e.g. With my little hand I can feel, or

In our playground I can feel...

#### **Other Sentence/List openings**

In my dreams I saw.....

In my dreams I heard...

Through the magic window I saw.... (encourage use of poetic devices such as simile and alliteration and surreal ideas)

Through the magic window I saw etc etc

It's a secret but... (repeat)

Come with me to a land where..... (repeat)

### ***Riddles***

#### **Have objects in bag**

Say riddle sentences e.g. 'I am long. I am thin. I am pointy. I am made of wood. You write with me.'

Children practise orally. Give children envelope with two or three small objects. Children write riddle sentences

#### **In my magic box**

Have special looking box which is empty. Pull out imaginary and fanciful things...

e.g. In my magic box I have a silver space rocket. Encourage wild ideas!

In my magic box I have the biggest chocolate cake in the world.

Children write their own *In my magic box* sentences – expectations for sentences according age



## Recounts

Practise recounting simple events – adult models and children practise orally

e.g. At playtime I ....

Before I came to school I .....

At the weekend I .....

Adult models writing before children write simple recount

**Practise recounts using a news frame** as shown below, with **When? Who? Where? What?**

Model writing sentences from this. Add **Why?** column for older children

Practise writing sentences where you try to vary the sentence order by chopping up the columns and rearranging in different ways, e.g.:

when	who	what	where	why
at playtime	our class	pulled our teacher round in a sledge	in the playground	because it was snowing

**Further recount ideas:**

- Imagine you went on a school trip to the Planet Gloob, where you found strange things to eat on the trees, a strange creature and an amazing underground city. Write a letter to a friend recounting this trip.
- Write a recount of something funny that happened to you.
- Write a recount of something scary that happened to you.
- Write about a time when you got into trouble for something and how you felt about it

## Draw and Write

Adult draws monster and makes up oral story. One day my monster picture came alive and...

Draw some different monsters for children to invent stories around.

Children draw a monster and write what it did when it came alive.

Adult draws **character** and describes:

e.g. This is Sally. She has long curly hair and blue eyes. She loves riding her bike and climbing trees.

Draw another character for children to describe to their friend.

Model writing a description. Children write description

As above but for a **setting**.

As above but for an **imaginary animal**.



## ***Using traditional tales***

- Translate the story into stick picture notation for **retelling**
- Listen to then re-write story in own words
- Give picture of part of the traditional tale – child writes that part of the story
- Write a **letter** as from one of the characters – e.g.
  - Jack or Little Red Riding Hood to mother telling what has happened
  - From one of the Three Little Pigs complaining to the wolf that he keeps trying to destroy their house
  - From the third little pig to the wolf warning him of the dangers of climbing on roofs
  - From the Little Gingerbread boy explaining why he ran away
- **Thank you letter**  
e.g. From Snow White to the seven Dwarfs for letting her stay  
From Little Red Riding Hood to the Woodcutter
- **Formal Invitation** to Cinderella's ball
- Write **diary** entry as one of the characters
- Write **Instructions** based on the story  
e.g. Instructions from Little Red Riding Hood's mum before setting out to see Grandma
- Re-write traditional tale as a **newspaper report**  
e.g. Blonde Burglar Escapes from Three Bears' Cottage  
Biscuit Boy Missing: Police question suspects
- Write a **Police Eye-witness report** based on traditional tale  
e.g. from one of the characters who saw the Gingerbread Boy running away.
- Retell story from a **different character's perspective**.
  
- Change the setting, characters, names, details or events to **disguise a well-known story**

## ***Using Objects***

Have an object such as an old boot, a bottle, a bar of soap (anything really!).

For each object play 'tell me about.....' Speaker has to say all they can about the object.

Each table then has an object and they have to **write everything they can think of about the object in a given time**.

Write as if you were the object.

Imagine an object that has been stolen – **write a full description of it for the Police including**

- What it is and why it is precious
- A detailed description (e.g. colour, shape, size ,weight features)
- When it was last seen



## ***Write what you know about...***

Have picture of something for the children to write around the picture all they know about it

## ***Personal Writing***

**Talk, then draw, then talk again, and then write about:** your family, one person in your family, your house, your favourite place in your house or garden, your favourite toy, your favourite meal, your favourite place, your friend...

Provide a structure for writing about any of the above e.g.:

*Tell me about someone in your family. Tell me:*

- *Their name*
- *How old they are*
- *What they wear*
- *Typical things they say*
- *What they like to do*

*Tell me about your favourite place. Tell me:*

- *Where it is*
- *What it looks like – details,*
- *What it feels like*
- *What you do there*

**Write an autobiography:** My Life So Far – introduce yourself, where you were born, your earliest memories, key events in chronological order.

## ***Writing from a picture***

1. Label the picture with initial letter, word, phrases or sentences according to ability
2. Talk then write about what you can imagine you can see, smell, hear and feel in the picture
3. Talk then write about a character in the picture. What is the character's name? What do they like? What don't they like? Are they a good or bad character – how do you know?
4. Write 'wonder bubbles' with all the questions that occur to you about a picture e.g. "I wonder why..." "I wonder if..."
5. Make a word bank using what you see and what is happening in the picture. Use the word bank to write sentence strings. (the word bank could be nouns and verbs, or nouns, verbs and adjectives, or nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs depending on the skills and experience of the writers.
6. Imagine you are in the picture. What happens?



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### ***'On my way to school...' or 'On the way home...' stories***

Orally rehearse or act, then write stories beginning, e.g.

*One day, on my way to school, I met a talking tree.*

*One day, on my way to school, I found a cloak that made me invisible.*

*One day, on my way to school, found that I could fly*

*One day, on my way to school, I met a little old lady who gave me three wishes*

*One day, on my way to school, I found a magic key*

*One day, on my way to school, I found a magic ring*

*One day, on my way to school, I turned into a giant.*

*One day, on my way to school, I began to grow smaller and smaller*

*One day, on my way to school, I met a talking owl.*

*One day, on my way to school, I met a crying dragon*

### ***Instruction Writing tasks***

- Write instructions for a game that you know how to play so that younger children can learn to play it
- Write instructions for a new member of the class explaining daily routines
- Write instructions for a new teaching assistant about routines in your classroom
- Write instructions for a new caretaker
- Write an improved and more striking version of the instructions for what to do in case of fire.
- Write instructions for a new babysitter to your house (could be funny)
- Write instructions for how to get from the school to ...
- Write instructions for making simple piece of apparatus e.g. paper cup telephone
- Write instructions for how to make your mum, dad, brother, sister or your teacher cross
- Write a recipe for your perfect sandwich
- Write a recipe for a dreadful day out

### ***Explanation writing tasks***

- Explain to an alien how an everyday object such as a pencil sharpener, iron, bottle opener or hair drier works
- Use a diagram showing the life-cycle of a frog or butterfly and explain the stages in paragraphs
- Explain how an invented object such as Time Machine works
- Explain the events that led to you not being able to finish your homework



Find out about and write an explanation of...

- How a spider spins its web
- How a bee makes honey
- How a volcano erupts

## ***Report Writing tasks***

Write a report about a strange creature found living in the woods nearby. Include:

- What it is and what it looks like
- Where it lives and what it eats
- What it does
- How people should behave when they go into the woods

Write a report for the school website about your school so that parents, who might want to send their children, can learn the **main facts**. Include:

- Name, location and size of school
- Size of school and age ranges of children
- Special activities that the school offers
- Any other features of the school

(**Note** that this should be factual rather than persuasive)

Write a report about something you know a lot about e.g.

- Popular Pets
- Games that cost no money to play
- Celebrity chefs
- Worthwhile hobbies
- Judo
- Horses etc

## ***Persuasive Writing tasks***

- Write a short article persuading children at the school to eat more healthily. Expand on these facts, using paragraphs and appropriate conjunctions:
  - people need 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day
  - too much fatty food is bad for the heart and causes weight gain
  - eating less sugar is good for the teeth
  - we need food with fibre such as cereals to help us digest food
  - we need vitamins to fight off infection and keep our bodies healthy
  - we need a balanced diet
- Write a letter to your teacher persuading them that you deserve an extra Golden Time
- Write a letter to the head teacher persuading them that ..... (something that can actually happen)



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- Write an advert for a toy made from clay or plasticine or a drawn cuddly toy

### ***Interviews***

Write an interview script for an interview between yourself and:

- A fairy tale character
- A famous person
- A person from history
- A cartoon character

### ***Discussion/Argument Writing***

Collect pros and cons for the following propositions and orally rehearse arguments on both sides before writing.

Finally come down on one side of the argument and give your reasons

- The Gingerbread Boy deserved to be eaten
- Little Red Riding Hood's mother was irresponsible
- It is better to have lots of friends than one 'best friend'
- Summer is the best season

#### **A supermarket chain wants to build a new store near your school.**

Discuss the arguments for and against. Include discussion of:

- Convenience of supermarkets
- Threat to local small shops
- Employment in the area
- Traffic issues
- Safety issues
- Effect on the environment

#### **Other arguments**

For and against: zoos, homework, school uniform, footballs/skateboards at playtime, TV during the week, sweets in school...

### ***Letters of Complaint***

- To Baked Bean company re a piece of metal found amongst the baked beans
- To a clothing manufacturer about an item that has shrunk in the wash
- To a restaurant or hotel that has given bad service
- To railway company about late or crowded trains
- To toy company about an unsafe baby toy