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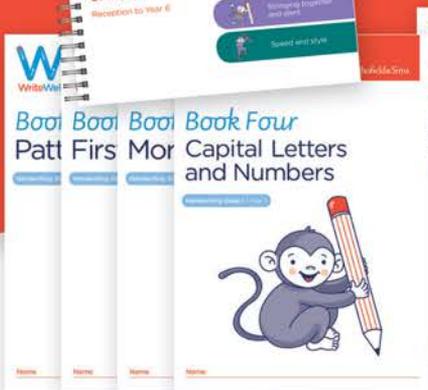
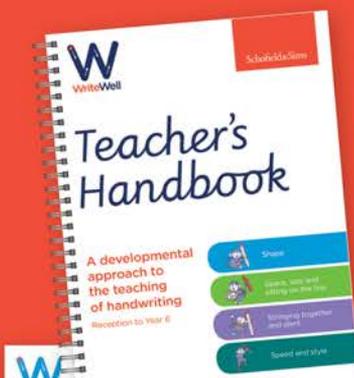
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Hello!



Yet again I'm trying to predict the future while writing this editor's letter. Currently the plan is to reopen schools again on the 8th March. Whether that goes ahead is yet to be seen, but whatever happens, I know you're all working amazingly hard to do right by your pupils. You may even find, like the schools featured on p25, that some of the changes you've been forced to make during this chaotic year are ones you actually want to stick with for good.

Getting children settled back into classroom life will of course be a priority. Teacher Dan Whittaker has found social norm behaviour scripts to be a powerful classroom management tool. Find out more on p30, then download Dan's free video CPD session to share with your colleagues.

If getting pupils' reading back up to scratch is your priority, read Claire Jones' account of how and why she completely redesigned her Blackpool primary's reading curriculum (p55). Use Claire's reading spine as a starting point for your own curriculum refresh.

Of course, children's emotional wellbeing is on everyone's minds at this strange time. Walsall-based Headteacher Leanne Bridgwood has come up with a simple morale-boosting idea that replaces a little of what children have missed out on over the last year due to the pandemic. Read about it on p19.

Finally, if you're feeling overwhelmed by the heavy burden teachers have had to carry over the last few months, I urge you to read Peter Radford's letter on p21 – you're doing an awesome job.

Until next time,

Elaine

Elaine Bennett, Editor

@editorteach

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next issue, on sale
9th April*

POWERED BY...



KATE PENARSKI
joined up with fellow local
science leads to create a
community space week

*“For these children, having
the chance to interview a real
astronaut is extraordinary”*

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CLAIRE JONES
completely redesigned
her Blackpool school's
approach to reading

*“We decided that reading
needed a non-negotiable
space in the daily timetable”*

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ANDREW LINHAM
shares his advice for
keeping music alive
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*“We took the decision to move
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We're all ears!

We want to make sure our magazine is a brilliant resource for teachers and are always striving to improve. That's why we host a reader feedback panel every issue to hear from real teachers about what they liked and what they would change. Got feedback? Contact us via the details in the yellow box below.

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We want to hear from you!

Get in touch with your rants, comments, photos and ideas.



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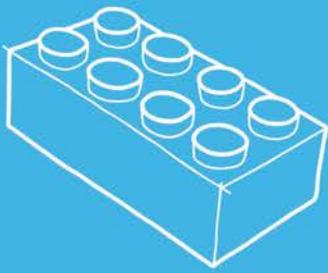
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Breaktime

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Taking Care

Charity Barnardo's has launched a website to help teachers support pupils who may be experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues. Called Barnardo's Education Community, its aim is to be a one-stop shop for trauma-informed resources, support and advice, with a focus on loss, grief and bereavement. There is also a selection of resources for education professionals to help them deal with the immense strain they are under in managing their own experiences, while also coping with the impact of secondary trauma through supporting children. Visit for free access to video, webinar and audio training. educators-barnardos.org.uk

3 INSTANT LESSONS... (You're welcome)



FREE RESOURCES

Music teacher Jimmy Rotheram has created new video lesson plans and resources for teaching music. There are six weeks of KS1 plans and 12 weeks of KS2 plans, all designed to be accessible and easy to deliver, despite Covid restrictions. Visit benedetti.foundation.org/primary-music



RHE READY

Get ready for the statutory RHE curriculum changes and support blended learning by using Discovery Education's health and relationships digital programme. It provides complete coverage of the new RHE curriculum and is free to use until October. Sign up at discoveryeducation.co.uk/rse



FEELING BLUE

Use free digital book *Sadsville* by TV presenter Martin Roberts to help children understand sadness and how to get support. To accompany the story, download free supporting teaching materials, resources and a lesson plan to help pupils understand their own emotions. Visit sadsville.co.uk

→→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**

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Plazoom's specially created home learning packs for KS1 and KS2. Each offers five mornings' worth of creative and purposeful activities, requiring minimal adult supervision and leading to clear reading and writing outcomes. Topics are varied, and include feelings and emotions. Why not take a free 14-day trial, and see for yourself? Visit tinyurl.com/tp-emotions



Q & A



YolanDa Brown
Musician and broadcaster

What was primary school like for you?

I remember it being a fun and engaging place to go to. I felt very independent and listened to and there were lots of extracurricular activities to take part in, including music groups, sports and languages. I loved science and remember feeling really grown up using the science lab and soldering iron. I have lots of fond memories of primary school and am now reliving it with my daughter in Y2.

Why are you so passionate about music education?

It allows children to be creative and work together in a unique way. It builds confidence and helps children express their feelings. When children engage in music-making they build on skills that they will continue to use in other subjects and throughout life. Creating music together requires listening, compromise and brainstorming. Learning musical techniques touches on all areas of the curriculum, including literacy, maths, science and more. It's my dream that every child can both make and experience music, regardless of barriers.

How can music help children cope?

The change to routine that Covid has brought, and hearing the effects of Covid on the news, is unsettling for children. Music is an escape and can give a platform for reflection. Creating music based on emotions and exploring what a piece of music makes children feel is powerful. Relaxing and therapeutic exercises that help with mindfulness and overall wellbeing are also paramount.

YolanDa Brown has created free KS1 'Join the Jam' resources to accompany her new album, Yolanda's Band Jam. Download them at tinyurl.com/tp-yolanda

Blending in

Now you and your pupils have (hopefully) got to grips with the basics of blended learning, what exactly is it that makes for effective teaching and learning when digital technology is added to the mix? BlendEd is a new online programme of free CPD and resources to help you deliver a blend of distance learning and face-to-face teaching. Designed by teachers for teachers, all the resources, videos and online courses are bite-sized, to enable you to develop your skills amid the existing significant demands on your time. Find out more at blended.org.uk

Good to talk

Talk to Me is a new free-to-use immersive learning simulation that offers a new way for school staff to build the knowledge and confidence they need to talk to children about abuse. Developed in collaboration with the NSPCC, it guides users through multiple interactive fictional scenarios.

The fictional children users encounter are all voiced by real actors and feature realistic body language and facial expressions. Try it at attensi.com/talk-to-me

92%

OF TEACHERS BELIEVE THAT THE VOCABULARY 'WORD GAP' HAS WIDENED BECAUSE OF COVID-RELATED SCHOOL CLOSURES*

*Oxford Language Report 2020

Look ahead | Book ahead

BEST OF THE BARD

Shakespeare Week takes place between 15th-21st March with a theme of wellbeing. Join in with activities and virtual events inspired by the Bard.

shakespeareweek.org.uk

FINISH A STORY

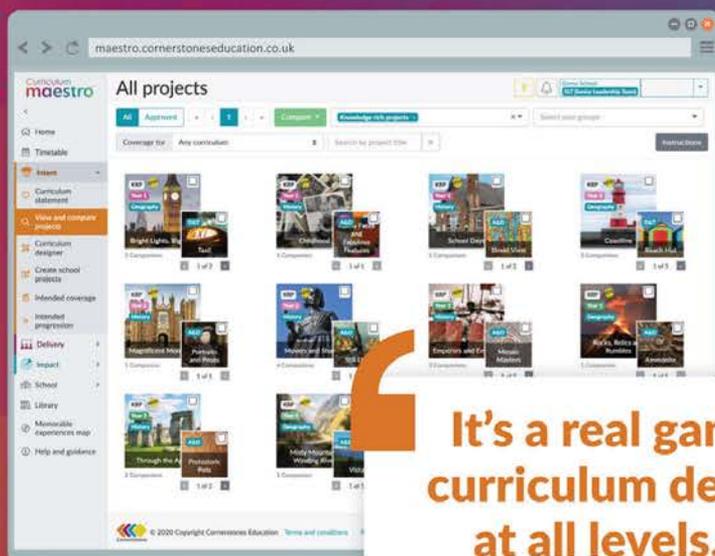
The deadline for entering the Henrietta Branford Writing Competition is 23rd May. Children must finish a story by an award-winning author. Find more at branfordboaseaward.org.uk



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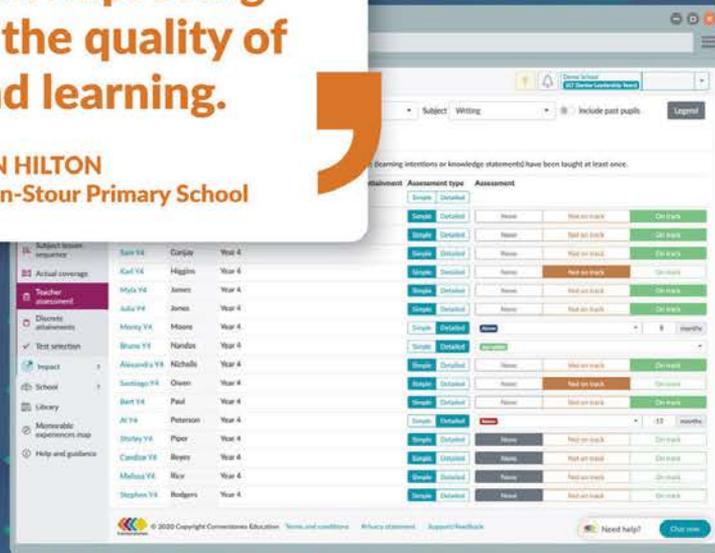


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6 TIPS for ending lessons successfully

We often consider how to kick off lessons, yet pay less attention to bringing them to a conclusion, say **Daniel Sobel** and **Sara Alston**

1 | USE PRE-WARNINGS

We all know how irritating it is when we are asked to stop something in the middle. Yet we do this all the time to children. Instead of saying, "Pens down, finish what you are doing"; try giving children time warnings, so they know when they will be expected to finish a task. By pre-warning pupils, we enable them to prepare for a smooth transition. There are many useful timers that can be displayed on interactive whiteboards to show the countdown to the end of an activity.

2 | HAVE CLEAR TASK ENDINGS

We often tell children to "finish their work". This instruction carries with it the implication that the child knows what this means. For most tasks, the expected finished result is flexible. Writing for 20 minutes will look different for different children. Most pupils can manage this degree of uncertainty, but not all. The majority of children will benefit from understanding your expectation of the finished activity. This can be a modelled example or clear instruction, such as: "Complete ten sums" or "Write to here"; shown by a mark on the page, and so on.

3 | FINISHED MEANS FINISHED

Setting a clear end to a task can be more complex than it first appears. When we set out a clear expectation for an activity, but a child finishes before the end of the lesson, it's all too tempting to add an extension task. Often this is the right thing to do. But for those children who are highly routine- or rule-bound, this creates confusion. For others, it tells them that if they complete their work they will just get more, so it is better not to complete it. To counter this, be clear what your expectations are, or the unexpected presentation of an extension task can feel like a punishment and become a disincentive to complete the first one.



Daniel Sobel and Sara Alston are the authors of *The Inclusive Classroom: A New Approach to Differentiation* (£16.99, Bloomsbury).

4 | PLAN END-OF-LESSON ROUTINES

Exactly what your finishing routine will be depends on the lesson and the age of your children, but what is clear is that it needs attention. Think about including support for: ensuring children have their belongings and are organised enough to be able to pack them away; helping children manage anxiety and sensory overload; a clear and planned route to help children reach their next destination safely.

5 | MARK THE STAGES OF THE LESSON

Reception, and sometimes infant school classes, often use 'tidy up music' at the end of lessons to gently remind children to finish what they are doing and clear away. It provides a clear auditory cue and support for transition. Many children need this kind of support long after we stop using it. Consider age-appropriate ways of using visual and auditory signs to mark the stages of the lesson, so not only is the lesson end clear, but the journey through the lesson is clear as well. Consider the use of a marker on lesson slides to display 'Starting activities', 'Teacher input', 'Group activities' and 'Summing up,' for example.

6 | BE AWARE OF ANXIETY POINTS

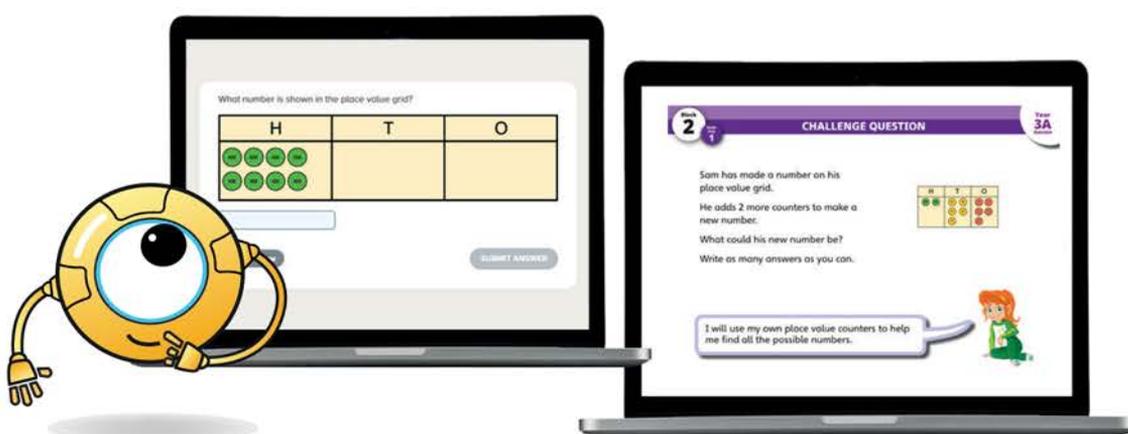
For some children, particular times of day or week may be triggers for increased anxiety. Many children (and adults!) begin to struggle as they move towards lunchtime. For many, as they become hungry, particularly if this is combined with anxieties such as managing lunch routines, having sufficient time to eat or bullying from others, their ability to manage the end of the lesson successfully will be reduced. At the end of the day there can also be anxieties about being picked up or managing the transition into an after-school activity. Be cognisant of these anxieties and enable children to share them so you can support them to manage and hopefully reduce their worries.

MATHS Flex

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Mike Davies, Teach Primary.

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How I do it

Bring Roman history alive by launching your own relaxing spa experience for modern customers

ADAM JEVONS-NEWMAN

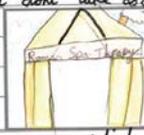
Let's have a spa day – ancient style! You can't seem to go on Groupon these days without being offered multiple places to pamper and unwind at a luxurious spa, but everybody knows the ultimate spa experience is travelling back some 2,000 years to truly unwind at the Roman Bath House. This is a great

opportunity for pupils to combine the modern and ancient world and persuade their customers to relax in the world of the Roman Empire.

1

This activity works best if pupils already have some knowledge of life in Roman Britain, so try and place it at least midway through your unit of work. *Empire's End* by Leila Rasheed is a superb novel to use as a class text. Ensure children have an understanding of what life in a Roman city was like – the structures, buildings, culture, beliefs and architecture.

Do you feel that you need a relaxing, soothing day?
 Start your spa visit with a nice chat, in a cosy room but don't take off your shoes. After that, make your way to our Tepidarium, this is a nice, warm pool!
 Don't forget about the Natatio which is a perfect place to catch up.
 Splash and swim with your friends.
 So what are you waiting for? Come and chill out with Roman Spa Therapy.



3

Start by talking about what pupils already know about luxurious activities in our modern world. Has anybody been to a spa? What do we mean by 'luxury'? Talk about how we unwind, calm down and relax and mention leisure centres and swimming pools. It's important for children to really think about their modern context so they're ready to draw comparisons with the Romans.

2

Look online at some 'spa day' experiences. Talk about how phrases like 'unwind' or 'soothe' are designed to make us feel. Gather similar language. Talk about how an atmosphere is created in the text and how persuasive writing does this. How should we feel reading about a spa day? Why? Ask pupils how they think the Romans relaxed. Draw out the conversation based on pupils' existing knowledge of the Roman Empire and the things that were important to the Romans.

4

Next, share a range of sources about Roman Baths to encourage a class discussion. This might include a labelled map of a bath house,

photos of different houses and video footage of the baths at Bath. Encourage pupils to draw their own conclusions as a mini historical enquiry. Ask them to think about the similarities and differences to our modern day, such as the importance of relaxation and the different 'treatments'.

BATHS IS RELAXING

Do you need to relax with your mates? Then you need to visit our Relaxing Baths.
 Good use of historical ideas.

Begin your day in the Caldarium. This is where you pick up most of your sweat.
 The Tepidarium is where you relax and rub olive oil onto yourself. Don't forget to visit the Lacunarium this is where our most luxurious slaves scrape all the sweat off your back but not least is our Natatio. You can splash, soak and swim with your mates.



To enable pupils to talk about Roman spas as an experience, rather than a set of facts, think about the narrative of a spa visit. What would you do, how would it feel and what might it look like? This helps children to immerse themselves in the history and imagine what life was like. Finally, challenge pupils to launch a 21st-century 'Roman spa experience'. How can we take the Roman experience and bring it to a modern audience? Design the building and write immersively and atmospherically about what customers can expect.

5



Adam Jevons-Newman is KS2 and curriculum leader at Farmilo Primary School and Nursery in Nottinghamshire.

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UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

"It's incredible how a small number of parents can make life so difficult for staff"

Why do the emails that make your heart sink always arrive either when you are about to sit down to Sunday dinner or just as you're settling down to watch something good on TV? The phrases "I am very disappointed", "I would like to know the reason" and "I am disgusted with" now have a physical effect on me.

Don't get me wrong. Most of our parent body are amazingly supportive. We've worked hard over the past five years to build strong relationships and we try to listen to any issues early on so we can sort out small things before they become big things. I've always said to my staff that although we have nearly 300 children, for each parent *that* is their baby. Despite this, it's incredible how a small number of parents can make life so difficult for school staff.

For most parents, and seemingly the people who populate the DfE, their only experience of school is that they attended one. Their knowledge of the day-to-day challenges are small, if existent at all. I don't expect to understand what happens beneath the bonnet when I take my car to the garage. However, I wouldn't feel the need to write a strongly worded email expressing my disappointment with the design of the mechanic's overalls or asking for a list of all the tools they used and an explanation why.

Recent issues I've had to deal with include parents demanding an immediate call back to discuss an unknown issue, even if it's the weekend, late in the evening or when teachers are halfway through teaching a lesson. Parents have complained that staff are selfish for not planning their pregnancies around the school year and have griped about who their child sits next to (then complain again when they've been moved and ask if they can be moved back). One parent moaned that their child with additional needs who was recognised in reward assembly for his singing "didn't sing that well", saying, "I know, because I was in that assembly."

Parents have called saying they are disgusted that their child has been asked to clean the toilets (clearly not true). I've been told that I've personally ruined a child's life because the local high school announced their transition day at the last minute and it was on the same day as our Y6 leavers assembly. I've been held personally responsible for every fall-out or disappointment that certain children encounter and have been expected to walk pupils to their parent's car after school so they "don't have to get out."

I also regularly receive long emails detailing the number of ways the school has gone downhill since I took over. I could go on, but you get the gist.

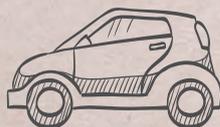
On a serious note, I feel very strongly that schools have become the sticking plaster for many of the gaps in our society.

We are responsible for everything from childhood obesity to holiday hunger. We work well over the hours we are paid and do it with a smile because, for most of us, this job is a vocation.

I know that I should turn my email notifications off on my phone but at the moment we are on alert for track and trace and sometimes nipping something in the bud means that it doesn't end up all over social media. I just wish that the small minority who take up the majority of my time would realise that we are human beings with our own families, issues and challenges.

On that final note, here's what I've learnt about dealing with parental complaints over the years:

- Listen. Give parents a chance to get things off their chest. Their issue may be valid and easily sorted.
- Try and arrange a face-to-face meeting or telephone call. Email can be misinterpreted on both sides.
- Don't take it personally. This is tricky but sometimes parents are annoyed at the system, not at you.
- In the immortal words of Elsa, "let it go." Some people just like to complain and whatever you do will not be good enough.
- Smile. It reassures the genuinely concerned and really annoys the perpetual complainers. **TP**



"I have been expected to walk pupils to their parent's car after school so they 'don't have to get out'"

The writer is a headteacher in the north of England.



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(people.org.uk/itp) and Family Links (familylinks.org.uk) and have also trained parents to deliver programmes and foster networks and relationships.

We must also find ways to start earlier. The period from conception to age three is so critical and the support currently provided is patchy and inconsistent. Could schools play a stronger role here, building networks at an earlier stage? At Reach Academy Feltham we have strong referral pathways from pregnancy onwards. Early signs are that this is delivering important support for families.

It's also important to continually strengthen our workforce. This ultimately involves funding Early Years to enable teacher-led provision far more widely. However, in the interim, we can offer high-quality training. Last September we launched a foundation degree with Kingston University and have ten practitioners feeling empowered, accessing great PD and on the path to a degree.

In the interim, Reception teams around the country will be figuring out how to support this growing group of children. Leaders should reflect on whether different types of CPD are needed to set their teams up for success. Maybe teachers need more training in areas like health and self-care?

Alongside this, I hope that teachers remain curious about the root causes of the behaviours they are seeing. The YouGov report didn't explore the role of attachment and separation anxiety in the behaviours they identified. For example, it would be interesting to explore whether the fact that children are struggling to manage their behaviour in school, particularly in terms of self-care, is a symptom of emotional distress. We know that on some occasions, having toileting accidents can be a sign of anxiety. Many of these children will have never been away from their caregivers for a full day, a situation that has been heightened by the pandemic. Curiosity about children's 'emotional worlds' will help us identify the right support to help each child.

In the interim, we should be pleased that Early Years is creeping back into the consciousness of the profession, the public and the policy makers. The road to an education system where every child is able to flourish leads through strong Early Years foundations. **TP**

Ed Vainker is the co-founder of Reach Academy Feltham and the CEO of the Reach Foundation.

 @edvainker

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NEARLY HALF OF PUPILS AREN'T SCHOOL-READY

Early Years has been off the agenda during the pandemic and the scale of the problem is striking, says Ed Vainker

A recent report by YouGov on behalf of the charitable foundation Kindred2 (kindredsquared.org.uk/not-school-ready) has found that almost half of children starting Reception in September 2020 were not "school ready". This represents 250,000 children not ready for school and has been exacerbated due to Covid-19. Children have missed out on nursery, as well as access to other services. The report estimates that £300m is spent annually getting children ready to start school.

The YouGov report is one of a number of calls to action for Early Years, alongside the recent Royal Foundation IPSOS-Mori poll and the Nuffield Foundation Report. This can only be welcomed. It was striking that early in the pandemic, Early Years was off the agenda – not mentioned in the media despite education frequently being the lead story. The £1bn catch-up funding was noticeable for not including any

funding for children below compulsory school age.

While we can't expect every single child, including those who are barely four years old, to be school-ready on the 1st September, the scale of the problem is striking. The £300m figure is huge and yet likely underplays the impact these children have – often draining senior and specialist resources away from other school priorities. Perhaps the pandemic provides an opportunity for a reset on Early Years. How might we set about reducing the number of children not ready for school?

First, we need to work more closely with parents. They play a critical role in setting their children up for success. The Royal Foundation research found that 70% of parents feel judged, making building trusting and respectful partnerships with parents all the more critical. At my school we've had success with parenting programmes PEEP

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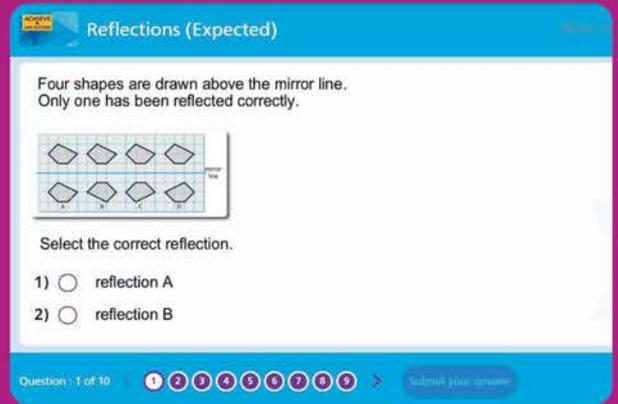
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- Read the question and read it again. What is asking? $31,680 + 2,948 = ?$
- Estimate an answer by rounding each number to the nearest 1,000. $32,000 + 3,000 = 35,000$
- Write the calculation, using place value to line up the digits.

3	1	6	8	0
+	2	9	4	8
3	4	6	2	8
- Work from the ones column to the tens of thousands column, carrying when needed.

3	1	6	8	0
+	2	9	4	8
3	4	6	2	8
- What is your answer? Check your answer is close to your estimate. 34,628 is close to 35,000. My answer is 34,628.

Try this

- $42,341 + 15,420 = \square$
- In early September, a further 1,999 rose bushes were planted. At the start of August, there were 10,123 rose bushes in the castle grounds. During August, another 1,056 more rose bushes were planted. What is the total number of rose bushes in the castle grounds at the end of September? \square

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WE'RE KEEPING SPIRITS HIGH WITH PARTIES

Children need to feel safe and loved before they can learn, and monthly class birthday celebrations are a fantastic way to boost morale

Do you remember the thrill of your childhood birthday parties? I do. I remember one in particular; I was eight and it featured a clown with a fear of balloons. When my friends started popping them, he ran out the room. That's a whole other story, but what is intriguing, though, is why such things are so memorable. When I think back to my childhood, I recall learning to ride a bike, losing my first tooth – things that mattered to me. The Covid pandemic has been tragic in many ways, but for our pupils it's stolen many of these memorable experiences and this has impacted children emotionally, socially and mentally.

At our trust we've always believed in putting children first and unlocking academic and personal potential. As more children started returning to school following the partial closure of the first lockdown, we worked tirelessly on creating an accelerated curriculum while also ensuring that mental wellbeing and mindfulness were part of this. With our

plan complete, we felt proud of what we'd accomplished, but when I spoke to pupils they said they were sad. I listened – the single most powerful thing you can do for a child.

It was clear that our pupils missed having things to look forward to. They missed seeing relatives; days out with their friends; celebrations. Once we heard this, we knew something had to be done. It was clear to us, as practitioners, that there was a danger of spending so much time focused on the logistics of learning that we forgot that being ready to learn is the foundation. This includes skills such as resilience and being able to thrive socially in an environment where you feel safe and loved. Without this, there's no point trying to teach lessons on fronted adverbials.

A saying I remember from my own youth is, 'You can't build your castle on quicksand and expect it not to sink.' If we didn't help the whole child, how could we help them learn? We needed explicit ways to show our children they were loved and cared for, and wanted to give

them positive memorable experiences.

School is full of unforgettable experiences: discos, shirt signings and graduations, to name a few. These usual rights of passage were different last year, and that's understandable – it's hard to sign a shirt standing two metres away. So, as a school, we decided to unpick what was missing and think creatively about how we could give children a memorable experience in these unfortunate times – an experience unachievable anywhere else presently. We had many ideas, but giving children birthday parties in school was probably our favourite one. I mean, who doesn't love a party? This idea also comforted parents, knowing that their children's special day was important still and they could be with their friends to celebrate.

While we can't replace all the experiences children are missing out on, they specifically mentioned missing parties. This was something we could help with. We knew it would provide a sense of belonging and normality, and, let's face it, they'd also have some fun (and the teachers could get their groove on too!). As we were in bubbles of 30, we were able to give children the birthday party that Covid restrictions had prevented parents from organising.

We hold the parties on the last Friday of every month for every child who has celebrated over that time. As we know families are facing financial difficulties, we fund the parties and cover all costs. Staff have created Covid-friendly 'pass the parcel' and 'pin the tail on the donkey' games, which are huge hits. There's party music in the background, socially-distanced dancing and the sound of a wonderful atmosphere around school.

Seeing the pure enjoyment and happiness on children's faces every month as they celebrate their birthdays with their teachers and friends is truly special. The enthusiasm and joy radiates around the whole building. Pupils are so excited to celebrate their friends' special days, and their own. It's really had a huge impact – friendships have been strengthened and children have enjoyed having some normality back in their lives. It's certainly made me realise the importance of 'readiness to learn' and community collaboration. **TP**

Leanne Bridgwood is headteacher of Goldsmith Primary Academy in Walsall which is part of the Windsor Academy Trust.

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Each issue we ask a contributor to pen a note they would love to send

A letter to... *teachers striving to be perfect*

We need to bin the idea of relentlessly trying to achieve the unachievable



My guess is that you became a teacher because you believe in education and you want to make an impact on young people's lives.

You went through the significant challenge of teacher training and the NQT year. The learning curve was steep. You gave yourself and invested fully in the job. You sacrificed free time, family time and any semblance of a social life.

Over the past year you adapted to every change and new government directive. You jumped through the hoops and even risked your own health and perhaps that of your family. But no matter what you do, whether in the eyes of the senior leadership team or the media, government, parents or the general public, it seems your best is never good enough. And this feeling chips away at your sense of self-worth and your mental wellbeing. The bar of 'outstanding' seems to lie forever beyond reach.

Here's a thought: maybe there's no such thing as 'outstanding'. "Nobody's perfect", we tell ourselves, but hang on, maybe 'perfect' isn't even a thing? We've bought into this notion of perfection as a culture and as a profession. If we affirm the idea of 'perfect' or 'outstanding', we inevitably set ourselves up for repeated failure as we relentlessly try to achieve the unachievable. We need to bin the idea.

Your only requirement is to be you, and you are the best *you* there has ever been. There's never been another you in the history of the universe, and there will never be another.

We don't look at the sun and ask whether it's a perfect or imperfect sun. It's the sun. It's perfectly what it is. The notion that you are not a perfect teacher is nonsense. There's no such thing. You are a perfect *you*. In Don Miguel Ruiz's 1997 book *The Four Agreements*, the author suggests that your only responsibility is to do your best. And, he adds, no one else can say what your best is:

"All your life you tried to be good enough for somebody else ... you sacrificed your personal freedom to live according to someone else's point of view. You tried to be good enough for your mother, your father, your teachers, your beloved, your children, your religion, your society ... You can relearn how to love yourself by accepting yourself unconditionally."

Your best is not a static thing. It changes every day. Your best first thing in the morning is different to your best last thing at night. Your best at the beginning of term is different to your best at the end of term. Your best when your kids are ill or when your car has broken down is different to your best when everything is going beautifully. Your best is not the same as someone else's. You're not supposed to be like them; you're supposed to be like *you*. You're supposed

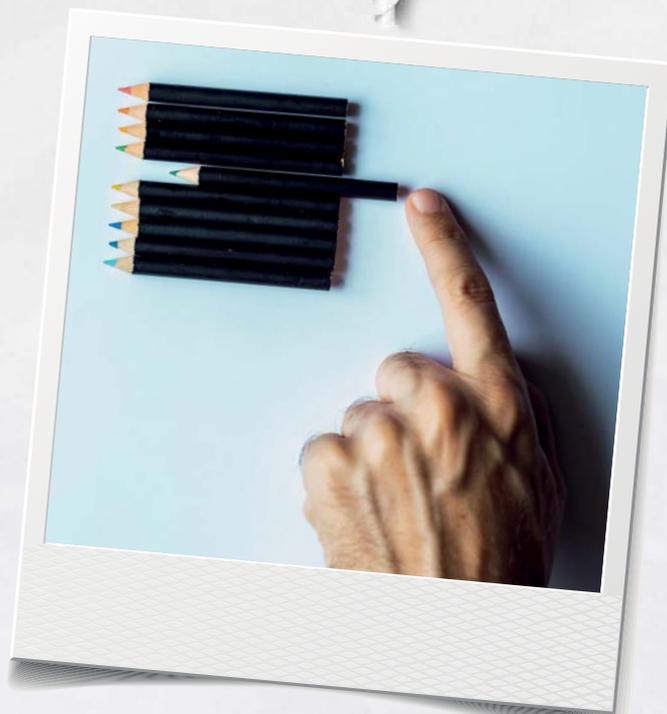
to be a *you* kind of teacher.

Teaching isn't like delivering a speech or making a cake. It's not a one-way thing or a functional task. That was the educational philosophy in the 1950s: deliver your knowledge into the recipient's brain – job done, like filling up a car with petrol. That's nonsense. Teaching is personal, interactive and transactional. Our 'clients' are not passive recipients, so teaching cannot be a one-dimensional exercise.

If you're going to achieve balance in this area, you must abandon the idea of 'outstanding'. Instead, embrace a very simple question by which to self-evaluate each day: did I succeed in helping my pupils to grow today? The various other measures will vary from day to day, class to class, government to government. You will have better days and worse days. But keep this as your baseline and you will have a better chance of maintaining balance in life and teaching.

Give yourself permission to be yourself and teach as yourself. Abandon perfect. Commit to do your best, but remember to balance being your best as a parent, a friend, a partner and so on. Don't rail against yourself for what you could have done differently. Tomorrow is another day, when you get to go at it again and be even better than today. Today you gave your best and you learnt, so go to sleep with a clear conscience.

From Peter



Peter Radford is a teacher, trainer, public speaker and coach.

*He is the author of *Love Teaching, Keep Teaching* (£16.99, Crown House Publishing).*

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BURNOUT IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

We have a responsibility as teachers to make sure we take time out for ourselves so we can recharge our batteries...

March is always the time of year when resolutions made at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve suddenly take a nosedive. As the wheel of the new term starts to revolve, our concentration shifts to that of preparing for the summer term, assessments in whatever form they will take and, of course, the many changes in education that may be ahead. With the future changing in front of our eyes on a weekly

and sometimes daily basis, it's key that we keep self-care high on our list of priorities.

Teaching and education is, in essence, transactional, from the carefully planned and sequenced sharing of knowledge and skills to pupils and the timely and effective administration of good practice to develop our staff teams, to the successful distribution of information to ensure sustained and positive relationships within our wider school community. All of these transactions are for the betterment of our schools and, without doubt, our pupils.

To do all of this effectively, our individual and collective cups need to be full. Not overflowing, not sloshing precariously over the brim and splashing the toes of our smartly polished shoes, but carefully measured to ensure there is enough available to support our individual roles in school and, if needed, to top up those who are becoming empty.

To keep my cup full, I run on a daily basis. It gives me the time to reflect, recharge and keep the work-life balance as balanced as I can make it.

It's not perfect, but I'm beginning to know how to ensure I support my self-care. Don't get me wrong, sometimes my sense of motivation feels like it's trapped in a dusty, battered box lodged at the back of a cupboard, but

running always keeps coming back to move me forward.

Let's use the analogy of a relay race. Imagine being in the final handover position, waiting with anticipation for the baton. Unfortunately, the runner currently holding the baton, the one you are waiting so patiently to receive, has already run a marathon. They are tired, broken, worn-out, wobbly and miles behind the other runners. Their cup is empty, or nowhere to be seen. Furthermore, no one saw it was missing, or that it didn't have anything in it before the race even started. The impact, however, is noticed by all.

The key to keeping a full cup is to make time to fill it. No matter how busy and hectic our lives may be, burnout is always around the corner. It hides, lying in wait, and when we are least expecting it it silently sits alongside us. It's evident that we all need to take time for ourselves and rediscover the activities that enable us to keep our cup brimming, but sometimes we forget.

For some, like me, it might be running. For you it might be reading, singing in a choir, playing an instrument, knitting, bungee jumping, learning a new language, cooking or simply taking the time to stop, switch off and spend time with friends and family. Whatever it is, we have a responsibility to make sure that we take time to recharge; to replenish our cup in order to pour again.

It's critical for those of us who are leaders to ensure that we construct and embed cultures within our schools, institutions and organisations that look out for those colleagues whose cups are not yet full, provide development opportunities for those who don't know yet how to fill them and, sadly, support those who may have lost their cup completely because of the systems and processes we, or the custodians before us, have put in place.

Our work in education is vital. Now, more than any other time in our careers, we need to ensure we are all still standing to support the children and families who belong to our school communities. With the Easter holidays only a few weeks away, what better time to find out what fills your cup? **TP**

Dan Edwards is principal of a large primary school in Leicester.

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Accentuate THE POSITIVES

We celebrate some of the successes that have emerged out of the challenge of the last year in education...

We've all had to change the way we do things during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many teachers have completely altered the way they work to take into consideration bubbles, isolating children, staff shortages and periods of lockdown. However, change isn't necessarily always a bad thing. These schools, all part of the Diocese Of Ely MAT, were forced to alter how they operate but have discovered that, actually, it might just be a better way of doing things....

“TEACHERS ARE TRAINING EACH OTHER”

School: Guyhirn
C of E Primary
Location: Wisbech,
Cambridgeshire
Number of pupils: 70+



We've amended our strategy so that training now comes from classroom teachers, rather than just from senior leaders. After delivering training sessions, staff are paired together so they can observe each other and give written and verbal feedback. This has helped staff to support their colleagues' development and knowledge and has ensured a consistency to teaching across the school.

Because we are a small school with mixed-aged classes, we feel that all staff need to have a thorough understanding of progression across year groups. This approach has increased teachers' skills and confidence, meaning we now have the flexibility to allocate staff to different classes if needed.

This strategy has been so beneficial in supporting and engaging staff in improving standards as one strong team. We intend to continue embedding these new ways of working in the future.

Karen Milnthorpe, headteacher

“OUR TIMETABLE HAS CHANGED”

School: Bury C of E Primary
Location: Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire
Number of pupils: 170+



We've modified our timetable for Y5 and Y6 so there is more time to focus on English and maths during the morning, with teachers building in cross-curricular opportunities in all lessons. For example, we've been using historical texts in English lessons that lead directly to our topic.

This change has given teachers and TAs time to thoroughly assess prior knowledge, teach and then extend within the same session. Children complete pre-assessment tasks, undertake mini assessments and use lots of discussion throughout lessons. This has assisted us in closing gaps in learning.

One of our Y5 pupils said that at first they were worried about the morning session being longer, but now feel they have more time to get stuck into their work which has helped them with their understanding.

Emma Heanes, headteacher

“WE'VE MADE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS”

Schools: All Saints Academy/St Martin at
Shouldham C of E Primary Academy
Location: Stoke Ferry/Shouldham, Norfolk
Number of pupils: 100+/220+



We are two nurturing schools that have worked together to raise community spirits during these unprecedented times. During the first lockdown, pupils, families and staff from both schools worked together to create exciting videos. These were then shared around the community to create a feeling of connection. We danced to *Is This The Way to Amarillo?* and tried the Matilda challenge. Parents said that creating the videos made pupils feel that they were part of a team.

When we returned to school in September we continued to stay connected with our partner school by partaking in daily worship sessions via Zoom.

We've also made connections with a local care home and have shared letters, photos and videos to support residents' wellbeing. Pupils love sharing their amazing work and information about their extra-curricular activities. Recently we shared our celebrations for Diwali with the residents and they sent a video in return. It's a new partnership that we're planning to nurture over the coming months.

Harriet Hurrell, KS1 teacher



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Giving every pupil in our school their own iPad has had a really positive impact on learning

MATTHEW TRAGHEIM

My school, Wayfield Primary in Chatham, Kent, has 260 pupils aged three to 11. Our motto, 'proud to achieve', is reflected through the leadership team who work together to ensure that every pupil in every class reaches their full potential. In September 2016, when I joined Wayfield, we had recently been

rated as 'inadequate'. My mission as IT lead was to support the headteacher to turn the school around. Once we'd sorted out the priorities, we looked at how technology could help.

Our school sits in an area of the country which is mixed-income but has a fairly high level of deprivation. It was important to me that children didn't miss out on future opportunities due to lack of technology. I wanted to be able to use technology to support pupils' learning, both in the classroom and at home, but affordability was a key factor. We needed to look at how we could deliver technology for all, without parents going over budget.

Fiver a month

We came up with a £5 per month payment scheme, which was fund matched by the school for any children receiving pupil premium.

This meant that every child has their own iPad to use in school, but also to take home. Writing is one of the key foundations in a child's education, and Wayfield is on a mission to ensure that every child's writing ability is assessed so that anyone needing support gets the interventions they need

sooner rather than later.

Once you have your tech in place, the next minefield is what apps to install. As a starting point, we looked to other schools to see what they'd been using and why. We also looked at apps to help with screen time usage – it's imperative that we teach our children when, and when not to, use technology.

Children need to have an element of independent learning so we gave every pupil an Apple pencil (a stylus designed to work on iPads) and the freedom to go on many approved apps on their iPads, such as sketching programs. We use a number of tools to regulate screen time within devices and individual apps. For example, teachers use the Classroom app to 'lock down' all iPads in the classroom when they don't want pupils to use them.

Added value

An app that we've found adds value in the classroom is Kaligo, an intuitive, self-improving and monitoring AI handwriting tool. During the Covid pandemic we were able to maintain handwriting skills and as the quality of content on the platform is so high, our teaching teams find it very helpful. Times Tables Rock Stars is brilliant for bringing pupils on with their timetables. We also use EdShed apps (spelling, maths and literacy) to provide creative and fun ideas for the classroom.

We made a conscious decision to monitor the impact of any edtech introduced, and we're delighted that we can clearly see from our results that the



This article first featured in our sister title *The Headteacher*. Find out more at primaryleaders.com

impact has been a positive one. Increased collaboration using technology engages the pupils more and homework completion has also significantly improved.

However, the most important impact has been that pupils' wellbeing has improved. They tell us that they aren't as anxious about learning and are keen to take on new ideas. Another brilliant outcome is that pupils can get immediate intervention without adding to the workload of staff. Teachers can easily see what progress every pupil is making and whether they are where they should be. Technology isn't just a gimmick. Introducing iPads for every pupil and giving them full ownership has been worthwhile for learning. **TP**



Matthew Tragheim teaches at Wayfield Primary in Chatham and is Kent ICT Champion of the Year.

Champion of the Year.



“During the Covid pandemic we were able to maintain handwriting skills”

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Social norm behaviour scripts may well be the most powerful classroom management tool you ever try...

DAN WHITTAKER

I can see Dana* is working hard – her pen’s working furiously. I’m sure her work will be wonderful.” This was the moment I unleashed the most powerful classroom management tool I’ve ever used: social norm behaviour scripts. Dana was a social influencer in a class I was struggling to socially influence. While the pupils were all lovely as individuals and full of character, the class’ effervescence was far greater than the sum of its parts. As soon as I highlighted Dana’s behaviour, two pupils started to write. “Adira and Lauren, I can see your pens working furiously too.” A few more started. “That whole table too, and that one. You’re working silently and very hard, well done.” Within 20 seconds, social norm scripts had rescued a transition that was way less than senior leader friendly.

Behaviour scripts on their own are pretty handy. In a nutshell, they’re pithy messages you memorise and use for dealing with tricky behaviour issues with calm authority and consistency. Up to this point, I wasn’t bad at classroom management but my mouth wouldn’t always find the right words when needed and I’d end up a waffly mess. Using behaviour scripts, I dealt with issues far better. For some pupils though, the scripts were water off a duck’s back. That’s when I stumbled across social norms – my comment to Dana was my first script that included them. The class and I never looked back.

Peer culture

So what are social norms? Essentially, they’re a shared understanding of what you should and shouldn’t do in a social situation or group. Whether explicit or unsaid, they’re incredibly powerful. Think about the last time you entered a library. There probably weren’t any ‘be quiet’ signs up, but you knew the expectation. And think about how eyebrows raise when someone doesn’t buy a round of drinks when it’s their turn. These are social norms in action. Following a group’s social norms signals your belonging. Run against them and you risk exclusion.

Social norms are powered by people’s resolute desire to belong to and comply with their social groups. Sometimes people aren’t aware of the norms – the idea is you tell them and they begin to comply. Policymakers have used them to reduce households’ energy use by sending ‘your neighbours use less energy than you’ letters and even reduced the amount students drink on a night out by putting up ‘most students only have a couple of drinks’ posters.

Social norms hold great power in classrooms too. In *The Hidden Lives of Learners*, Graham

Nuthall describes how peer culture makes or breaks a learning environment. If there’s a choice for pupils to follow peers’ or teachers’ norms, there’s only going to be one winner, and it’s not going to be the teacher. It’s almost impossible to impose teacher norms when peer culture is strong or there’s a gulf between teacher and peer norms. I admired Dana for her strong will and social influence even though to her I wasn’t worth too much attention. So rather than fight her or the strong peer culture, I decided to embrace their collective vim and vigour. Instead of advertising the social norms I wanted to reduce, I resolved to share positive norms through behaviour scripts.

Because people have a strong desire to belong and conform, and because I was giving the class the information to be able to do so, it worked. It worked so well, in fact, that my class became a joy to teach. They

gained a sense of collective focus and their work improved immeasurably. Transitions became easier and off-task behaviour diminished. All this while they retained their individual character and close bonds. Since then, I’ve used social norm scripts with countless classes and colleagues and the outcomes are always the same: behaviour improves and class cultures get stronger.

Concrete and specific

Social norm scripts are relatively easy to craft by adhering to a few key principles. First, you need to identify the target behaviour that you want to encourage. It sounds obvious, but if you don’t know what you’re looking for, your pupils will have no chance. You need to be concrete and specific. Children want to belong and conform but they need to know how. Consider how the behaviour



“Instead of advertising the social norms I wanted to reduce, I resolved to share positive norms through behaviour scripts”

looks, sounds and when and where it might happen.

For example, you might expect whisper voices, open books and moving pencils within 30 seconds of a writing task transition. When talking to the class, you might wish to see forward-facing eyes and shoulders, raised hands for verbal contributions and hear no other voices except your own. Of course, these are generic, but you can adjust them to your own style and your pupils’ needs.

There are two types of social norms – descriptive and injunctive. Descriptive norms are just as they sound: they describe what is typically done. They are also the easiest to construct. Simply

highlight the target behaviour (see the italics, right) that are being done by the majority or key

individuals (see bold, below). For the writing task and teacher-talk target behaviours, you might write them as follows:

- Thank you to the **middle tables** who are showing me they’re ready because *their eyes and shoulders are facing me.*
- I can see **Dana’s book** is open and *her pencil is working furiously.* And **Adira’s** too. And the whole of **Mohammed’s table.** Thank you.

Injunctive norms are important because descriptive norms on their own can have unintended effects. While the heaviest student drinkers in the social norm campaign I mentioned before drank less, teetotalers and light drinkers ended up drinking a little more to meet the norm. Injunctive norms (in bold, right) can negate these boomerang effects. They describe what the majority approve or disapprove of and can be added to the end of our descriptive norm scripts:

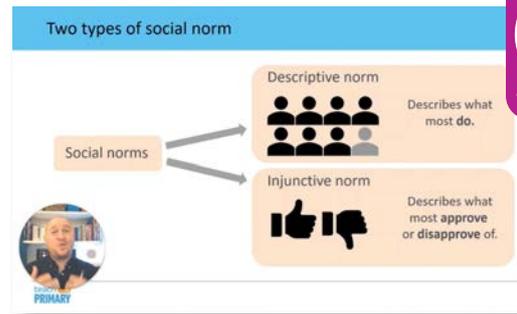
- Thank you to the middle tables who are showing me they’re ready because their eyes and shoulders are facing me. **You’re helping others by being so quick to get focused.**
- I can see Dana’s book is open and her pencil is working furiously. And Adira’s too. And the whole of Mohammed’s table. **Your class is proud of how hard you’re working.**

At first, it’s better to have a few social norm scripts that work than loads that don’t. You don’t want to overload yourself and you can build slowly on your success. The trick is to make them as pithy as possible – too wordy and they’ll get lost in the moment

and stall on your tongue. Next you’ll need to memorise your scripts. Rehearse them in a mirror until you find the sweet spot of automatic clarity and calm authority. This bit is excruciatingly awkward but if you skip it, you won’t get the most out of your hard work. Finally, use them consistently. The more your children hear the scripts, the more they’ll recognise them as cues they can easily respond to.

The *really* juicy secret to let you in on is using social norm scripts to create new norms. If your class is unfocused and unsettled, a few judicious scripts that highlight one or two individuals – even those without a lot of social influence – will quickly get the majority on board. Enjoy crafting them and enjoy their results. **TP**

FREE ONLINE CPD



Want to use this idea in your next CPD session? Share our video of Dan delivering training on social norms scripts. View it for free at tinyurl.com/tp-socialnorms



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across the West Midlands and specialises in computing and classroom management.

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animal planet
MAGAZINE

Design your own STRANGE ANIMAL

We've teamed up with **Animal Planet** magazine and science expert **Beth Budden** to bring you a Y6 evolution lesson plan

Perfect for
**British
Science
Week**

New magazine

Animal Planet magazine fuels curious minds, helps children make sense of the world and sparks joy on every page. The 100% recycled, eco-friendly magazine brings kids up close and personal with animals, teaching them about conservation, science and the people making a difference to the planet's future. Find out more at animalplanetmagazine.com/schools



More resources

Children's author Jo Franklin has written an original story charting the journey of a blue whale as it migrates across the ocean. The story and linked resources can be used to teach aspects of the science curriculum to Y3 and 4 pupils, with opportunities for cross-curricular writing throughout. Download the free resources at tinyurl.com/tp-whale



One thing that is hard for children to grasp is how adaptation through natural selection may lead to evolution. A common misconception is that animals change to suit where they live in the same way that humans do, for example by wearing warmer clothes in the cold. However, evolution does not involve animals suddenly growing hair when it's cold, or feathers when they need to fly, but rather involves variations in populations that create an advantage which may mean more survive to adulthood to reproduce and pass on their adaptations.

In this way, a basic understanding of genetic heritability and reproduction is needed as prior knowledge. When we teach evolution, we need to ensure that the concept of this natural selection is made clear to pupils so they understand that species evolve through a natural process over

generations, and not because individuals physically change.

Begin the session by allowing pupils to browse Animal Planet magazine (free with this issue of Teach Primary). Highlight the 'Wow! It really exists!' feature on page 59 (or download the page from Teachwire at tinyurl.com/tp-strangeanimals), which looks at some of the strangest animals on the planet.

This lesson revolves around shoebill storks. Nicknamed 'king of the marshes', this is one of the world's strangest looking birds. Like all birds, it is a modern day dinosaur, but this giant also looks the part, with its massive beak shaped like a shoe and its huge, outsized head and piercing eyes. In fact, its beak

has the largest circumference of all birds and is lined with a razor-sharp edge to tear away swamp grasses so it can see its prey. It also has one sharp spike at the end for stabbing creatures swimming along below. It can reach up to a metre and half in height, and almost the same in wingspan.

Shoebills are only found in East Africa, in tropical swamps. They eat anything from frogs and fish to young crocodiles and even giant monitor lizards. On their long bony legs, they will stand motionless for hours on the edges of marshes, waiting for their unsuspecting prey to come along. Their eerie appearance and slow mechanical movements give them an evocative character

"Evolution does not involve animals suddenly growing hair when it's cold"

that has inspired cartoon characters and Muppets alike.

However, shoebills can teach us much about evolution and adaptation because of their distinctive features that make them so well adapted to their environment.

Curriculum link

Identify how animals and plants are adapted to suit their environment in different ways and that adaptation may lead to evolution.

Key vocabulary

Evolution: changes in a population, resulting from the increase of certain features in the population over many generations.

Natural selection: the mechanism by which evolution occurs.

Adaptations: evolutionary results of natural selection, in a population.

Start here

Look at a photo of a shoebill stork and discuss its features. What do the children notice? Next, share pictures of swamps or marshland. Draw the children's attention to the long grasses growing up through the water. Now share photographs of the other types of creatures that live there, focusing on the shoebill's prey. Discuss what it would be like standing in a marsh trying to find prey to eat. What would a shoebill need to do? Watch clips of shoebills hunting online.

Give pupils photographs of other birds less suited to swampland, like penguins, seagulls and owls. Discuss the features of the shoebill that might give them an advantage over these other types of birds. Draw attention to their long legs that raise them up, and their sharp front facing eyes that enable them to look down into the water for prey.

Next, look together at the type of prey shoebills eat. How does that giant beak help them? How easy would it be to grab a baby crocodile and crunch it up if you had a

beak like an owl or a penguin? Would those birds be able to clear away the grasses to see their prey in the first place, like a shoebill does?

Main lesson

1 Which beak is best? Provide children with small plastic creatures like frogs, small fish and reptiles, or ask pupils to make some from plasticine. Next, give children small tweezers or lolly sticks folded in half and taped to make miniature tongs, like small beaks. Tape (clean) socks to large pieces of strong card the size of a shoebill beak so when a hand is inside, it makes a large shoebill mouth.

In groups, ask children to lay the small swamp animals on the table. Start with the 'tweezer' model of a smaller bird's mouth. How many small animals can they pick up with the tweezers in ten seconds? Repeat with the giant shoebill mouth. Do each experiment three times each in order to replicate and check the results. The shoebill is able to pick up and eat more small animals which means they are more likely to survive for longer and reproduce, passing on their distinctive features to their offspring, while the smaller birds would be less likely.

2 Using scientific models

Explain that you have been using scientific models to investigate. Explain that this can show the effects of a real situation, but it may miss out a lot of the detail, and sometimes not work as well. Draw out from pupils what's missing from their model. They haven't got the grasses or water which would give further advantage to the shoebill, or the spike on the front of the beak. How would that affect results? Discuss how you could make the model more realistic.

When you have established that a shoebill has these adaptations that make them better suited to their environment, discuss why

that might give the shoebill population an advantage. Here, you might need to scaffold understanding by linking pupils' thinking back to heritability and reproduction. It is those members of a population with the adaptations that enable them to survive for longer and reproduce that will then pass those adaptations on to their offspring, who will in turn be better suited. This is why shoebills thrive in swamps and other types of birds might not.

3 Design your own strange animal

Using what they've learnt, ask pupils to design their own unique creature that is specifically adapted to a specific environment. First of all, look at and discuss some of the more extreme environments on Earth. What kind of unique features do living things need

to survive there?

Remind children that finding water, food and not getting eaten mean creatures are more likely to survive and reproduce. What special features will their creature have that will help them obtain more food, allow them to escape predators and look after their offspring? Can they make their creature look stranger than a shoebill and be perfectly suited to their environment? **TP**

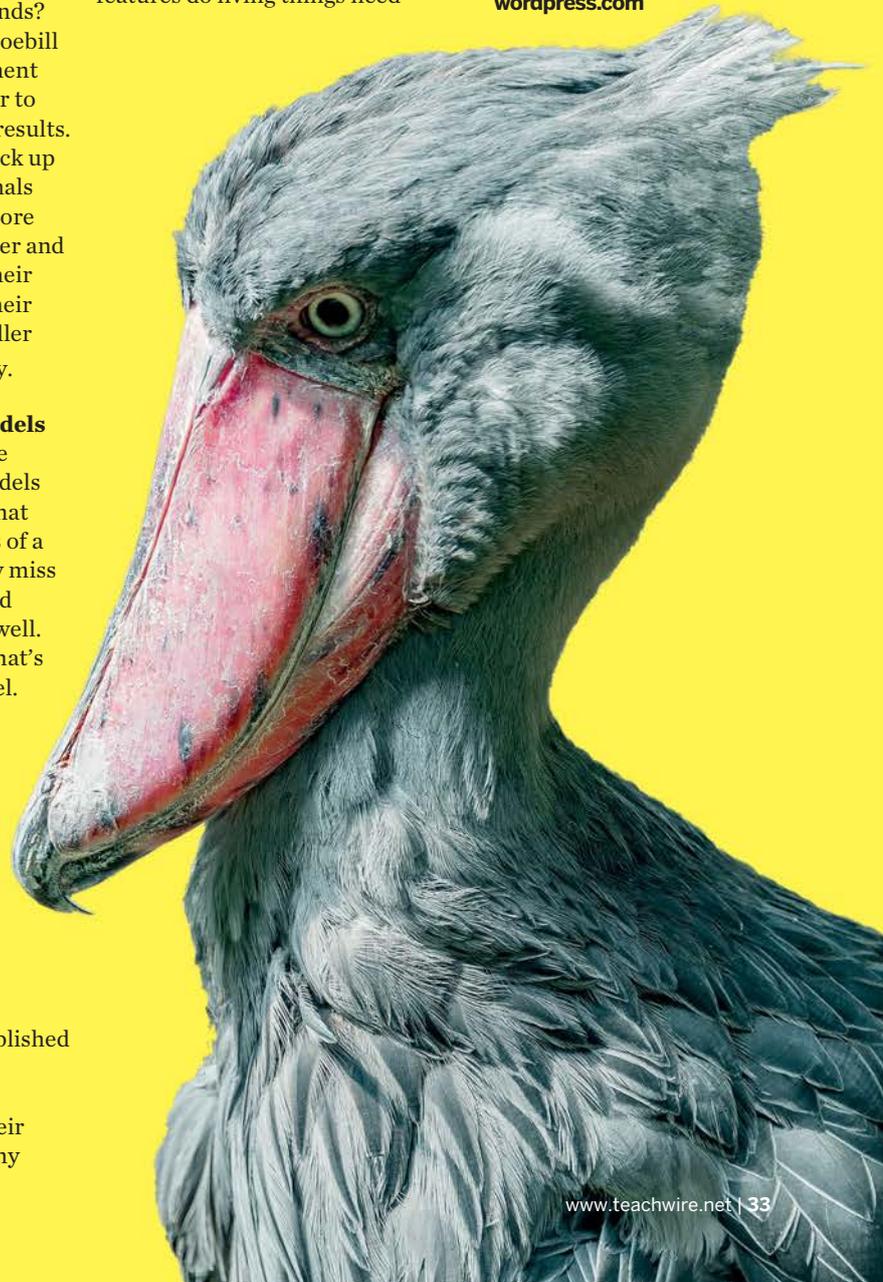


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 @bethbudden

 bethbuddenteacher.wordpress.com



AUTHOR IN YOUR CLASSROOM

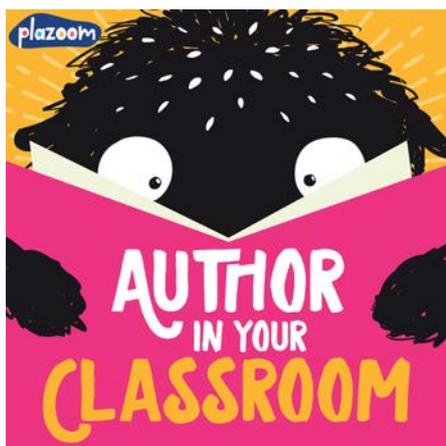
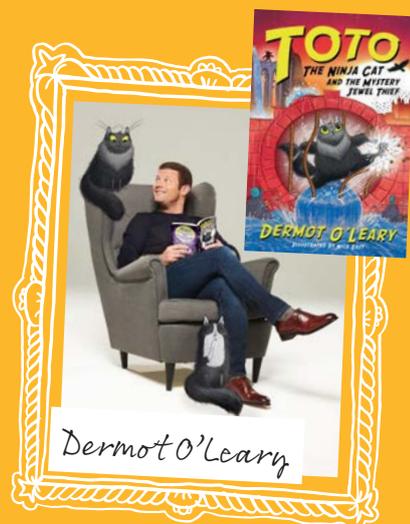


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Fancy a virtual visit from a real author? Luckily for you, Dermot O'Leary, author of the wildly popular *Toto the Ninja Cat* series, is ready and waiting to share his thoughts, ideas and inspirations with your budding wordsmiths, via our free literacy podcast. The experience doesn't end there either; we've created some amazing free teaching resources to download at plazoom.com, so you can continue your reading adventure in the classroom.

The advice given to budding novelists is always the same: write what you know. But what if we don't know much about what we want to write about yet? Research is an important part of the writing process but it's a stage we often skip in the classroom. In this episode, Dermot talks about how good research can inspire truly outstanding stories, sharing plenty of anecdotes and writing advice along the way.



HOW TO USE THE PODCAST

- ✓ Search for 'Author in your Classroom' podcast wherever you listen to podcasts
- ✓ Play it in your classroom in one go, or in shorter chunks
- ✓ Pause the podcast to talk about the points being raised, using our teaching notes



THREE THINGS KIDS WILL LEARN FROM THE PODCAST



1 LET YOUR MIND WANDER

"Presenting live television and radio requires a very different set of skills to writing – you have to think on your feet. What I love about writing is that it's almost the opposite – there's an awful lot of preparation that goes into it but then you can just let your mind wander and have so much fun."

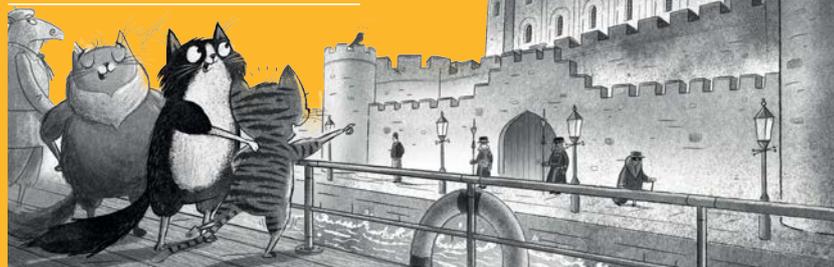
2 READ WHAT YOU WANT

"I can't remember a time in my whole life when I haven't had a book on my bedside table. Reading can take you somewhere completely different and you learn a lot about yourself when you're reading. It doesn't matter what you read – it doesn't have to be the most complicated book in the world; it can be a comic. There's value in every single thing you read."

3 WORLD CREATION

"I've tried to create a whole alternate world for the animals in London. The chap who designed a lot of the London Underground was called Leslie Green. I thought, "What if Leslie had a cat called Cornelius Green who came in and changed the blueprints and the plans?" So in the book there's an animal tube that got built, unbeknownst to Leslie, on top of the normal tube."

LISTEN TO DERMOT'S ANSWERS IN FULL BY DOWNLOADING THE PODCAST



PREVIOUS EPISODES



CRESSIDA COWELL, Children's Laureate and author of *The Wizards of Once* series, spoke about the power of creativity. Download our teaching sequence, including lesson plans, teacher notes and activity sheets, and give children the chance to create a new magical creature and write a scene featuring their invention.



PROFESSOR ROBERT WINSTON, scientist, broadcaster and author of *Inventors*, shared inspiring and motivating ideas about how to research, plan and write a piece of engaging non-fiction. Download our accompanying resources to help pupils plan their own text while keeping their audience in mind at all times.

How to download the resources



To accompany the podcast, teaching experts at Plazoom have created free resources that you can use to develop your pupils' writing. The teaching pack includes a PowerPoint, print and audio book extracts, working wall display, worksheets and teacher notes.

In this teaching sequence, children will have the chance to learn about how research can help them to write wonderful stories of their own, learning and taking inspiration from Dermot O'Leary.

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5 REASONS TO TRY... Cooking workbooks

Learn how free workbooks from Maple from Canada and Cook School can get kids into the kitchen...



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Maple from Canada and Cook School have produced three workbooks with age-appropriate activities and skills. They are tailored to children from Foundation Stage to KS2. Each contains two recipes, a series of educational activities and a list of key skills to learn and practise.

1 FREE WORKBOOKS TO DOWNLOAD

The three workbooks include information on maple syrup, how it's made and where it's produced. Exercises and tasks in the workbooks are not only informative but help improve numeracy and motor skills and involve geography and art tasks. The resources are easy to download and print at home or use digitally.

2 HEALTHY INGREDIENTS

Maple from Canada represents 11,300 maple syrup producers from Quebec, where over 72% of the world's maple supply is produced. The recipes in each booklet use pure, Canadian maple syrup as a completely natural and delicious ingredient, enjoyed by children of all ages. The materials help to give children suggestions for healthy balanced dishes to cook at home, encouraging them to experiment with flavour and simply enjoy cooking and creating.

3 RECIPE TUTORIAL VIDEOS TO WATCH

Each booklet includes links to a recipe tutorial video, giving each age group the chance to follow along at home, as the steps are demonstrated by children of their own age. The recipe videos produce homemade maple granola, maple and cream cheese pizzettes and 'bang bang' cauliflower with a maple sauce.



4 VIRTUAL AND IN-CLASSROOM LEARNING

The collection of educational workbooks can be used to support both virtual lessons at home and traditional classroom learning. Pupils can independently follow the workbooks as content has been developed to closely match the practical skills and abilities of each age group.



Find out more:

Download the workbooks from maplefromcanada.co.uk/education

5 CERTIFICATE ON COMPLETION

Children will also be able to receive a personalised certificate of completion by sharing a photo of a finished recipe along with their completed checklist. This free, interactive workbook collection can help break up a long day in front of a screen, while encouraging kids to develop new skills and taking some of the pressure off remote teaching.

KEY POINTS

Each workbook contains two recipes, a series of activities and a list of key skills learnt. A step-by-step recipe video complements each workbook.

The educational workbooks can be used to support both virtual lessons at home and traditional classroom learning as pupils can independently follow the activities.

In February and March, the Canadian maple syrup producers are particularly busy as these are normally the main months of the maple tapping season.

The free-to-access workbooks and videos are available to download from the Maple from Canada website and are perfect for virtual teaching and home-schooling.

Developing trust

Our best practice sharing initiative is taking our MAT to new heights

CLAIRE INGRAMS

At Woodland Academy Trust, community is at the heart of everything we do. In preparing the young people we serve for happy and fulfilled lives, we also want to improve the happiness and optimism levels of our local community. In our latest efforts to share this collaborative spirit across our various settings, we've established a trust

development team to enhance what we can offer our current and prospective schools. The group was formed last September so we can now reflect on the progress that has been made.

The trust development team was founded by removing a layer of the senior leadership team at each of our four schools. These team members were brought into the core trust team to work across all four schools.

The group is made up of six individuals, and is led by me and our director of education. Each of the six members have been given specific areas of development to focus on across the trust, broken down as follows:

- English and Y2-4
- Phonics and EYFS
- Maths and Y5-6
- Teaching and learning
- Pupil entitlement
- Wider curriculum

We deemed these six themes to be some of the key areas across the trust which we wanted to improve. Having a specific person driving progress and expansive thinking in these areas is really helpful. The role of each of the six members of the trust development team involves the following:

- Shape and evolve the trust's offering in their designated area
- Identify if staff across the trust would benefit from additional support
- Work with teachers to further develop their abilities and ideas
- Deliver training in the specialist area to spread best practice
- Encourage lateral thinking
- Support with PPA where needed

Staying focused

In particular, the professional learning meetings the development team runs are of real benefit to so many across

the trust. These can take the form of whole-trust training or a member of the team might visit just one of the individual schools. These training sessions, and sometimes full training days, are not always compulsory and are offered to staff who have self-identified areas which they might want to improve in. For example, we might run a session on the best ways to teach spelling to young pupils, or a refresher on the key things to incorporate into handwriting lessons.

Another benefit of this team is the layer of separation it creates from individual schools. Members of the trust team are able to stay above the daily goings-on of school life and stay focused on teaching, learning and developing their work. As teachers, we know how busy day-to-day life in a school can

TRY IT AT YOUR TRUST

Want to set up your own trust development team? Think about the following questions...

- Who in your trust would suit this kind of role? Look for progressive, passionate, dynamic 'big thinkers' who are great at working with and leading other staff.
- What would suit your internal structure best? At Woodland Academy Trust we knew that having an additional layer within the trust team that worked across all of our schools would be most beneficial, but think about the structures in your organisation which already exist and work out where this new group would best fit.
- What areas do you want to focus on? The areas we picked may not suit your trust. Think about where your priorities for your pupils are. Do you want to expand your wellbeing and extracurricular offer, or do reading and writing need a bit of a boost? Maybe religion, PSHE, history and geography would be better areas for you to focus on?
- How do you want this idea to grow? Start off small, with a focused group, but have in the back of your mind the potential for this to grow. In the future you may like to support schools outside of your trust or add additional members who focus on other areas, such as parental engagement and external relationships.



be, and how quickly your attention can be taken from your work and planning because you are needed by pupils. These team members have the ability to go into schools then continue with

their work undisturbed.

We use ideas from Professor Barak Rosenshine's 'ten principles of instruction' and Tom Sherrington and Oliver Caviglioli's teaching 'Walkthrus' (walkthrus.co.uk) to shape our work. The Walkthrus consist of more than 50 essential

teaching techniques, each with five clear and concise illustrations and explanations. It forms a unique repository of key teaching methods, valuable to any classroom practitioner

in any setting. During the autumn term, the team focused on the techniques of modelling and explaining. This term, our focus is on questioning. Next term we will revisit all three of these areas to consolidate our learning.

So what's next?

We've had the team in place since September and have been really pleased with how everyone has slotted into their roles. As part of our monitoring policy to ensure that the team is creating change in our schools, we've started to hold 'impact weeks' three or four times per half term. This involves the trust development team going into a particular year group in one of the schools to explore what is going well, what can be improved, and where the team's ideas have been implemented. This is extremely useful for each school's headteacher and SLT and allows the development team to see what is going on

at a school level and adapt their approach going forward, while also supporting teachers to improve their delivery and style. Ultimately the goal of the team is to be constantly developing and meeting the needs of the schools. So far, we feel this initiative is really achieving this ambition. **TP**



Claire Ingrams is executive headteacher at Woodland Academy Trust

 @wat_exec

 woodlandacademytrust.co.uk

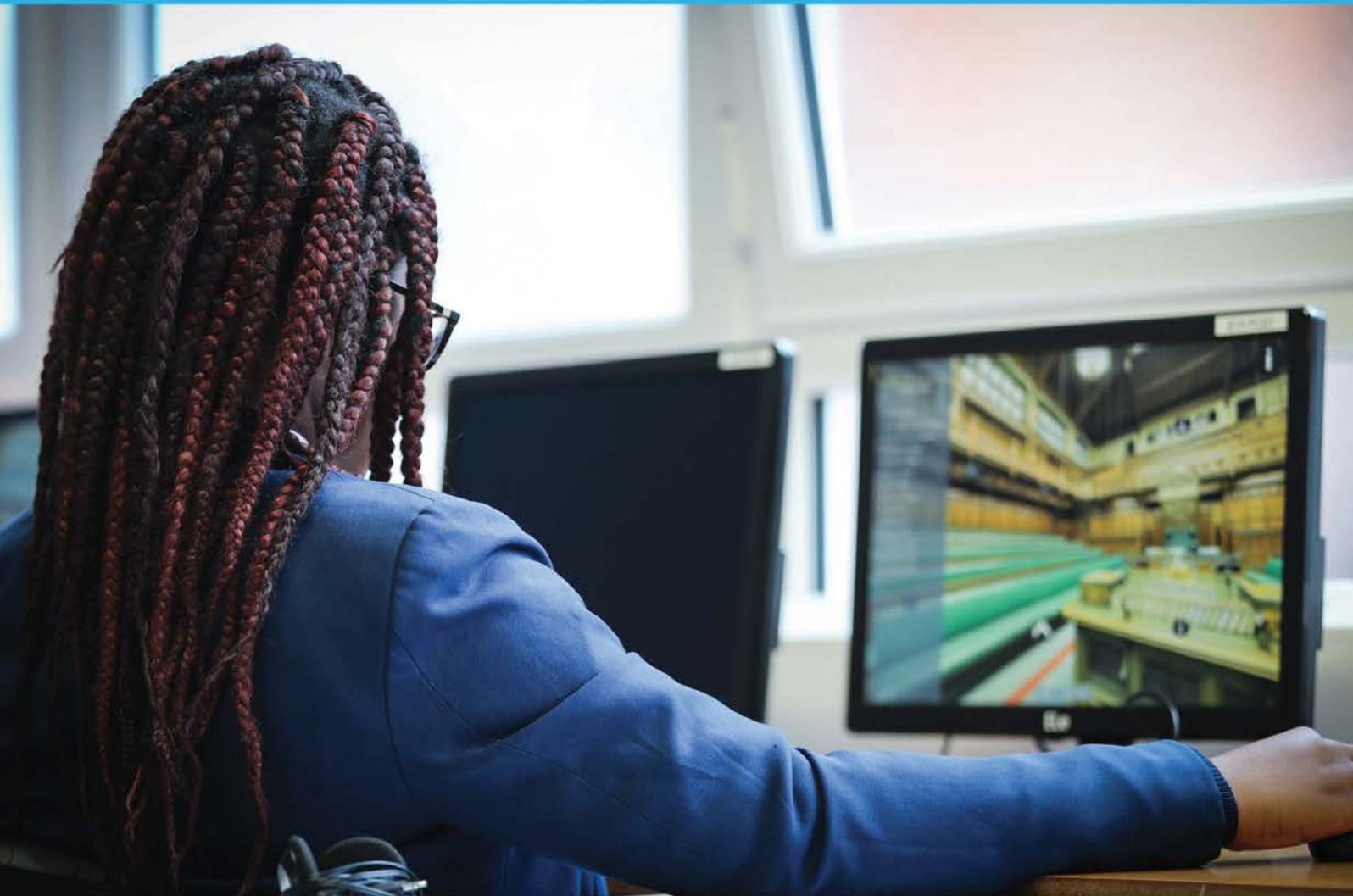


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OUT & ABOUT

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STAYING IN? *Virtual visits*



1 COLCHESTER CASTLE, ESSEX
Take a 360° virtual tour of the castle's Roman vaults with an expert guide then explore a museum loans box featuring a mix of replica and real Roman artefacts. Goodie bags for each child are also included. Visit colchester.cimuseums.org.uk/learn

2 CANAL & RIVER TRUST
Book a free interactive virtual workshop to develop children's knowledge of water safety. Each workshop is delivered by staff or volunteers from the Canal & River Trust team. It's suitable for KS1 and KS2. Visit canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers

3 STRATFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL
Not been able to host any authors this year? Attend the Stratford Literary Festival from your classroom by watching exclusive free videos from authors including Michael Rosen, Frank Cottrell-Boyce and Sita Brahmachari instead. Visit stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk

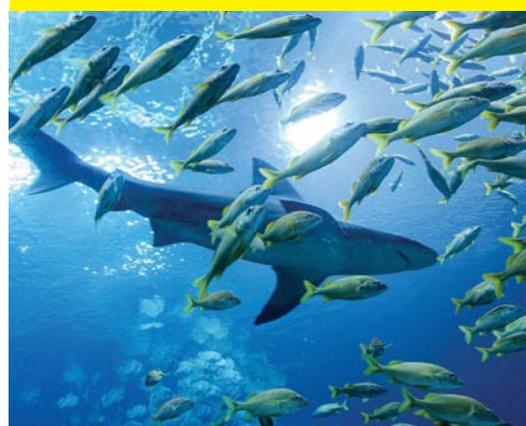


LISTEN TO STORIES

THE STORY MUSEUM
Oxford, Oxfordshire

Take a virtual front row seat at The Story Museum in Oxford for 'Stories From The Woodshed', a weekly online series aimed at children in KS2, featuring some of the UK's most celebrated storytellers. Each week a different story is uploaded to the museum's YouTube channel. Children will learn how tales travel and take on different forms over time. Visit storymuseum.org.uk

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Take a live 90-minute bespoke guided tour of the UK's largest aquarium from the comfort of your classroom. Join a member of the education team and encounter charismatic wildlife from around the British coast, then move on to the Atlantic Ocean and Blue Planet exhibits where you'll meet turtles, stingrays, sharks and more. All tours are linked to the science curriculum and you'll also receive post-tour lesson plans and downloadable resources. £120 per class. Visit oceanconservationtrust.org

3

ONLINE TOURS

1 THE MARY ROSE
Explore the main deck via an interactive panorama experience. maryrose.org

2 WARWICK CASTLE
Take a 360° tour of state rooms. warwick-castle.com

3 INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION
Learn how astronauts sleep, eat and, of course, use the toilet. tinyurl.com/tp-nasatour

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The pandemic has seriously disrupted the provision of SEN support, but could digital options ensure children get the help they need?

MARTHA CURRIE

Covid-19 has caused no end of difficulties for schools. There have been the direct educational challenges; the safety precautions to implement and upkeep; the emotional drain. And what is becoming increasingly more pressing is the ongoing problem of supporting SEN. As teachers, you'll already be very well aware of the difference it can make when children with special educational needs receive the right support. It builds confidence and can change futures. But the pandemic has seriously disrupted the provision of SEN support. With schools first closed for months, then reopened but with external agencies prevented from entering the school grounds – or only entering under very strict control measures – SEN support has been limited at best, non-existent at worst.

Teachers and SENCos have been left over-burdened as they've worked to plug the gap. Children have faced disruption and, occasionally, a complete cessation of support, which can have a critical impact on academic – and emotional – development. So, with the pandemic rumbling on, what are the options for securing essential SEN support for the children in your care?

Essential routines

SEN provision has never been easy, simply because it covers such a large remit. SENCos might be supporting behavioural difficulties in one child and physical impairments in another, while a third could potentially benefit from a multi-tier approach. Coordinating that support requires the involvement of

numerous agencies and specialist practitioners. That's difficult enough at the best of times, but when movements are restricted and contact necessarily limited, accessing that support has become extremely problematic. While this is totally understandable in the current climate, the potential repercussions of the disruption could be significant on the individual level.

For many children in need of SEN support, routine is essential. A break in routine can be a trigger for anxiety and disruptive behaviour, particularly for children with autism spectrum disorders. Pupils with communication problems are far more susceptible to developing negative mental health. Although that statement is worrying when standing alone, it becomes fairly desperate when you add in the fact that over 80% of children with social, emotional and mental health concerns may have undiagnosed communication problems.

While communication difficulties can present in a huge

array of forms, they all carry significant social implications. Bullying is common; many children experience difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships. And most children with communication concerns suffer from lack of self-esteem. These issues all necessitate significant support.

And then, of course, there are the pressures of the pandemic itself to deal with – bubbles; reduced access to established facilities such as sensory rooms; one-way systems to contend with. Alongside the ever-changing societal regulations and rules, many children with special education needs are already feeling off kilter.

Future planning

At the current time, no one really knows what's going to happen next with Covid-19. Restrictions are limited, enforced, eased, then re-enforced. This makes planning for the future nearly impossible, for both schools and the external agencies who would normally support them.

While observing the two-meter rule and wearing PPE when providing support in schools is an option for therapists, these measures aren't conducive to building the trusting and receptive relationship necessary to provide the support that SEN children often need. And, of course, any therapist who serves multiple locations

runs the risk of becoming a 'super spreader' as they move between schools and towns, often within the same day. And even if that is an option, if schools are closed again children will be faced with yet more disruption.

“For most adults, the knee-jerk reaction to the concept of online therapy is negative”

Online therapy

One obvious solution is to use technology to supply SEN support. Benefits include the fact that it's contact-free and flexible. If a child is unable to attend school for any reason, they can still access their therapy if they wish to. So, why haven't we all adopted digital SEN support already?

The problem is that as adults, we're all guilty of projecting our own opinions on our charges. And for most adults, the knee-jerk reaction to the concept of online therapy is negative. On the whole, this is because we're not fully comfortable with technology ourselves, and the idea of sitting through any kind of virtual therapy session is anathema. For kids, this isn't the case.

All of the children currently within the school system have been born into technology, and it has become a huge part of day-to-day life. Young children know how to use touchscreens with confidence and ease; teens typically talk more online than they do 'in real life'. This gives them a degree of confidence when working online that few adults can comprehend. And this carries over into digital therapy.

Kids in control

Dialling into a Zoom call is absolutely nothing to most kids. It holds none of the natural anxiety that can come with sitting one-to-one with an adult in a physical room. And this is because technology is their territory. They are in control. They know that they can leave a conversation without even

leaving their seat, should they need to.

Technology can't answer every SEND requirement – physical support will still need to be provided face-to-face. However, it can relieve the pressure on schools, and help ensure that children with SEMH concerns receive the help they need without interruption, regardless of what's happening in the wider world. During the summer lockdown, over 70% of children who required speech therapy through the company that I work for were able to continue receiving support online.

SEN support has always been an area that has required careful handling. It's always been difficult for schools to access the expertise their pupils need. And yet it's an area that simply can't be allowed to fail. Teachers and SENCOs are working incredibly hard to find the best solutions for the children in their care. Covid-19 is not making that job any easier. Technology, potentially, could. **TP**



Martha Currie is the clinical director of Mable Therapy.

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 mabletherapy.com

MEDIUM TERM PLAN

Y3
SCIENCE

ROCK DETECTIVES

KULVINDER JOHAL & CAROL SAMPEY

In this six-week series of science lessons from Primary Science Teaching Trust experts, pupils will compare and group together different kinds of rocks, developing their 'working scientifically' skills at the same time. From becoming the owner of a pet rock, to going on a rock hunt, drawing a comic strip and making their own sedimentary rock, there are a variety of cross-curricular ideas here that will engage and excite the children in your class while learning about the physical properties of rock.



FREE RESOURCES!

Download FREE accompanying worksheets and PowerPoints for this plan at tinyurl.com/tp-rockdetectives

Identifying rocks	Describe the colour	Has there been any patterns? Describe them.	Does it sparkle?	How does it feel? (Crumbly, hard, smooth)	Has there any grains? How big are they?	Rock type
Rock A						
Rock B						
Rock C						
Rock D						
Rock E						
Rock F						



yes or no answers. This is a good way to develop children's questioning skills and vocabulary.

WEEK 2 Learning objectives:

- Compare and group together different kinds of rocks on the basis of their simple physical properties
- Carry out simple investigations, gathering and recording data

Begin by reminding children of last week's lesson. Can they name the rocks? Explorify's free 'zoom in, zoom out' activities (a series of images that start close up and pull back until the whole image is revealed) make a good warm-up (explorify.welcome.ac.uk).

Explain that in this lesson the children are going to deepen their knowledge of rock properties. Involve children in deciding ways to test the rocks. Testable ideas include hardness and porosity. Concentrating on developing 'working scientifically' skills, support the children to devise tests. They can choose things to scratch on the rock surface (fingernail, coin, nail, cheese grater, etc) and rank the samples in terms of hard to soft (explain the term 'soft' in relation to rock).

Ways to test porosity include immersing rocks in measuring beakers of water to work out the amount of water absorbed, counting bubbles that appear or observing what happens when you use a pipette to drop water onto the surface. Do the porosity test after the hardness test to enable links between these properties to be made – some rocks have spaces between grains that

WEEK 1 Learning objectives:

- Compare and group together different kinds of rocks, using appropriate vocabulary, on the basis of their appearance (visual characteristics)
- Make systematic and careful observations, gathering and recording data

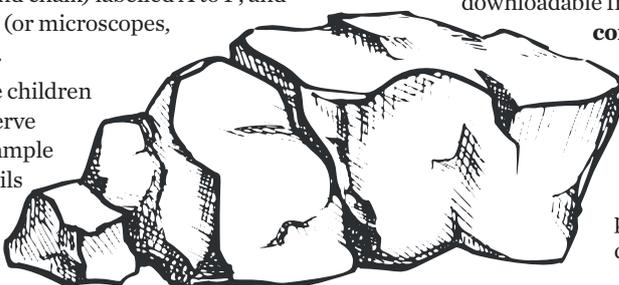
Begin by splitting the class into groups. Provide each group with a set of six rock samples (granite, marble, slate, sandstone, limestone and chalk) labelled A to F, and hand lenses (or microscopes, if available).

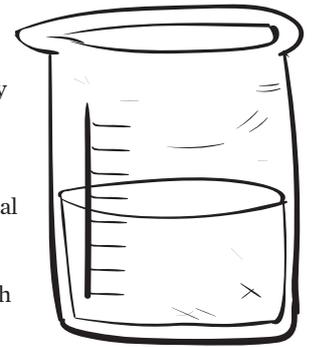
Give the children time to observe each rock sample closely. Pupils can use the table

in **Resource 1** to make a note of each rock's colour and characteristics, noting whether there are any layers or patterns, whether it sparkles, how it feels (crumbly, hard, smooth, etc), if there are any grains and, if so, how large they are.

Reveal the names of each rock and support the children to become confident in recognising and naming the rocks. Group the rocks in as many ways as possible using sorting hoops, Venn diagrams and Carroll diagrams. Identify the rocks through the use of simple sorting trees (find one on p15 of The Big Jurassic Classroom resource pack, downloadable from tinyurl.com/tp-jurassic).

Finish the lesson by playing 'guess my rock'. Encourage pupils to ask questions with





Think about how the property of the rock influences its use. What is the predominant local building stone? Make a link with the rocks beneath children's feet.

If possible, invite a STEM ambassador to talk to the children about local geology.

Back in the classroom, think about what makes the best building stone. Read 'The Three Little Pigs on the Jurassic Coast' (see worksheet 2 at tinyurl.com/tp-pigs) to support learning. If possible, organise a visit to a local builder's merchant or quarry or visit a local churchyard to look at gravestones. Children can identify the rocks used and also observe how these have changed over time due to weathering.

WEEK 4

Learning objectives:

- Begin to link rocks to the past and to the changes Earth has experienced
- Recognise that rocks are classified according to the way they were formed
- Retell the story of a pebble through a comic strip cartoon

A brief introduction to rock formation at this stage will prepare children for learning about fossils and future learning in Y6 and KS3. Look at the pebbles image in **Resource 2**. Why do the rocks look different to each other? Bring the children's attention to the fact that rocks found on the beach are rounded. Why might that be?

Read the picturebook *The Pebble in My Pocket* by Meredith Hooper or look at the rock cycle diagram on page 17 of *The Big Jurassic Classroom* resource pack to explain how pebbles and rocks are formed. Over many years, through weathering and erosion, jagged pieces of rock are broken away and transported into streams and rivers towards the sea, becoming more and more rounded. Eventually they end up on the beach as smaller, smooth pebbles before breaking down into grains of sand.

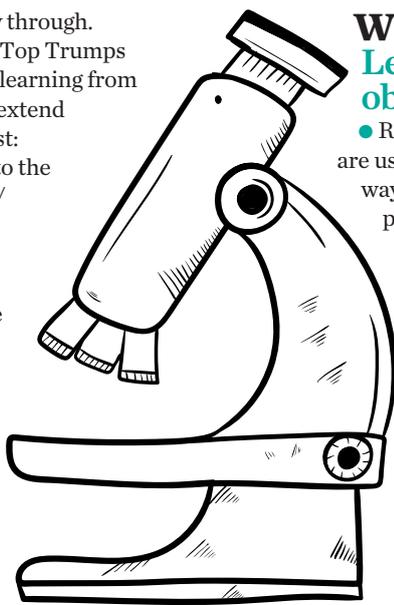
Ask the children to retell the story to a partner. When confident, pupils can draw a comic strip, imagining themselves as a piece of rock and telling the story of how they came to be on the beach. Some children may be particularly inspired to learn more about rocks – suggest they begin a collection of

allow air or water to flow through.

Create rock-themed Top Trumps style cards to collate the learning from lessons one and two. To extend learning, try the 'acid' test: drip drops of vinegar onto the rock surface. Limestone/chalk should fizz (as the rock contains calcium carbonate, found in bones, a link which some children may make after later learning).

To consolidate learning, ask children to choose a 'pet' rock and become an expert 'owner' by gathering all the knowledge they have gained about properties of rocks, before presenting their pet to the rest of the group and explaining how it is the same or different to others. Stick googly eyes on the rocks to make them more pet-like.

Play games encouraging the children to use their new learning by working in pairs. For example, one child can group rocks and their partner can guess the property used to create the group.



WEEK 3

Learning objectives:

- Recognise that rocks are used in many different ways, depending on their properties
- Observe how rocks change over time, eg on gravestones or an old building
- Use secondary resources to research information

Ask the children to name as many ways as possible that rocks are used.

Using secondary sources, research how each type of rock is commonly used. Pupils may be surprised that rocks are used in pencils, phones, glass and as a coating on chewing gum.

Next, go on a rock hunt around your school grounds or local area, looking for ways in which rocks are used (clarify the difference between 'natural' rock and human-made such as brick and concrete.)

rocks and fossils from different places they visit.

Next, explain that scientists called geologists have pieced together evidence found in rocks today to learn about the past. Watch the short BBC Bitesize 'What is a rock?' video at tinyurl.com/bitesize-rocks. This introduces how rocks are formed and sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic rocks. The formation of igneous and metamorphic rocks is complex and does not need to be covered in Y3, but look at samples of granite, drawing attention to the minerals and crystals these contain. Explain that granite was formed within a volcano. This presents an opportunity to make a cross-curricular geography link with a volcano unit.

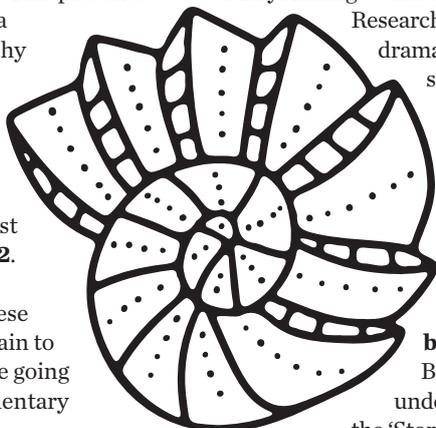
The focus of this lesson is on the formation of sedimentary rocks. Look at the Jurassic Coast cliff image in **Resource 2**. The rocks are built up in layers. Geologists call these sedimentary rocks. Explain to the children that they are going to make their own sedimentary rock 'cliff'.

Give each pupil a clear plastic cup and some sand, gravel, and shells. Half fill the cup with water then carefully put in different colours of sand or gravel, one layer at a time, allowing time for each layer to settle. Squash the layers down gently with your hand to squeeze out any water between the layers. Carefully tip away any excess water then leave the cups to dry out. If the layers have been compacted enough, you may be able to remove the sedimentary 'rock', but if not, children should be able to see the layers clearly through the cup.

Look at the three illustrations of the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods on pages 2-4 of The Big Jurassic Classroom resource pack to explain how, over millions of years, the climate and the environment changed from desert to lagoon to swamp. When plants and animals died, they fell to the bottom of the seabed and became squashed by other material (like the shells in pupils' 'cliffs'). Over time these formed fossils.

WEEK 5 Learning objectives:

- Describe in simple terms how fossils are formed when things that have lived are trapped within rock
- Use secondary sources to research the work of Mary Anning



Look at the paintings *Duria Antiquior* by Henry de la Beche (painted in 1830) and *Duria Antiquior* by Richard Bizley (painted in 2007) on pages 6 and 7 of The Big Jurassic Classroom resource pack. What do pupils think these pictures show? Where might they be? What period in history do they think the pictures represent? What similarities and differences do pupils notice about the pictures? Which picture do children think is more scientifically accurate and why?

De la Beche based the picture on knowledge developed from the study of fossils found by Mary Anning. Who was Mary Anning? What did she find out?

Research her life and use drama strategies like hot seating, freeze framing, or tableau to bring her to life.

Watch the BBC Bitesize clip 'How are fossils made?' to explain fossil formation (tinyurl.com/bitesize-fossils).

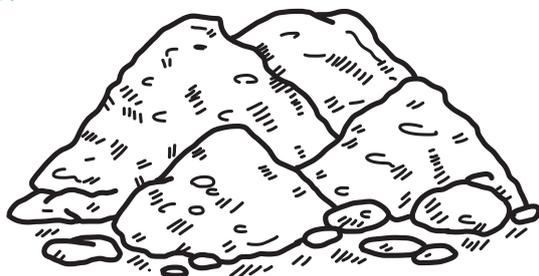
Build on children's understanding by using the 'Story of the Ichthyosaur

who died' cards from pages 27-40 of The Big Jurassic Classroom resource pack. Ask pupils to sort the cards into the right order and match the speech bubbles to the picture cards to explain the formation of a fossil.

Support children to realise that the fossil is not the dead creature, but the impression left *behind*. Discuss which objects might become the fossils of the future. Look at a collection of fossils (or pictures). Identify the most common (ammonites, belemnites). Ask pupils to choose a fossil and come up with 'What', 'Where', 'How' and 'Why' questions as the basis for independent research (see the template on p27 of The Big Jurassic Classroom resource pack).

WEEK 6 Learning objectives:

- Recognise that soils are made from rocks and organic matter
- Use close observation to classify soils in a range of ways based on their appearance
- Carry out simple investigations gathering and recording data



Provide a set of soil samples for children to examine, such as clay, sandy, loam, topsoil and garden compost. Using a hand lens and tweezers, look carefully at the samples. Record the colour. What can the children see? (Twigs, leaves, stones, living creatures, sand, etc.) What happens if they squash the soil in their hands, rub it between their fingers or sieve the sample?

What is the difference between soil and rock? How could we sort the soils based on their appearance or permeability? Provide a range of equipment (clear beakers, filter paper, funnels, sieves) and allow the children to set up their own investigation. Discuss their findings. Why might there be a difference between the samples? Why might it be useful for gardeners to know the properties of their soil? To reinforce the learning, watch the BBC Bitesize clip 'What is soil made from?' (tinyurl.com/bitesize-soil).



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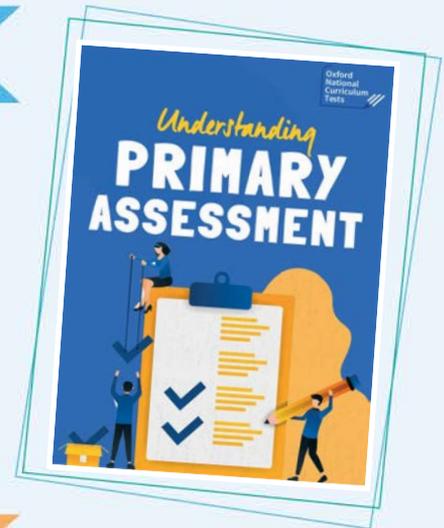
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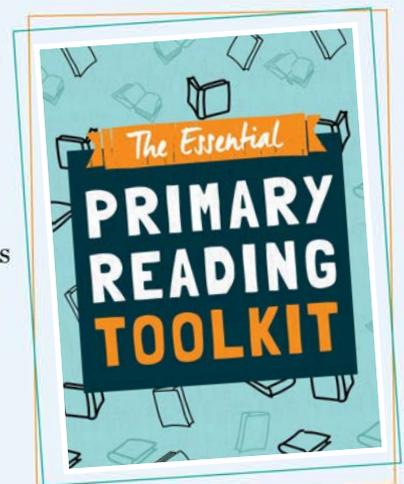


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Ready to LAUNCH

Why I joined up with fellow local science leads to create Bolton's first ever space week

KATE PENARSKI

Whenever I'm given a challenge, I try to rise to meet it. This year, the challenge has been becoming STEM lead at St Bede Primary Academy in Bolton. Leading science is something that primary teachers can find daunting because in a lot of cases, it's not our subject specialism. But instead of worrying about it alone, I decided to reach out to my fellow science leads. I wanted to begin a culture of sharing and supporting our pupils' science journey across Bolton.

My research into primary science didn't stop at the teachers. I also asked my pupils what they wanted from their lessons and how we could help them reach their dream goals. The school is in a challenging area, and our children need and deserve a curriculum that is as engaging and inspiring as possible. We knew we needed practical activities, inquiry-based learning and resources to support the five lines of

scientific enquiry.

I decided to build a space curriculum that we could share across primary schools in Bolton. As busy teachers, if we don't share then we all end up building resources from scratch. The process was incredibly exciting and I received such positive feedback from colleagues in

other schools that I decided that we would create Bolton's first ever 'space week' to launch the new curriculum.

Space bundles

My first step was to pitch a space week for EYFS to Y6 children to the Royal Engineering Society. I was absolutely thrilled when we won a £15,000 grant. This meant we could create a 'space bundle' for every school taking part, containing lights, planetariums, drones, and kits to make space suits and moon buggies.

In a previous teaching role in Washington DC, I was lucky enough to be introduced to a NASA astronaut, who is now going to talk to the Bolton children

live and answer all their questions about what it's really like to go to space. For these children, having the chance to interview a real astronaut is extraordinary and will be a great way to experience science first-hand and bring their learning to life.

As part of the St Bede Teaching School we've also created a 'science centre' where teachers can access free online CPD and workshops. We share what's really working in our lessons, such as resources from Learning by Questions which have been a revolution for our children. I've never done so much presenting

and have enjoyed learning from and sharing with so many educators in the UK.

Working together

One of the best things about creating Bolton's first space week and our science centre is that it has inspired other teachers to share their knowledge and resources. My colleagues have been motivated to set up truly remarkable initiatives, including a maths centre to engage and support SCITT students and teachers with maths mastery, and an outdoor learning centre to improve children's wellbeing through utilising nature in education.

By working together, science leaders and teachers no longer feel on their own. By opening our classroom doors, we can all join in the conversation and be part of a cluster of teachers supporting each other and providing the spark to ignite pupils' enthusiasm for learning in science. **TP**



Kate Penarski has been a primary teacher and leader for over a decade and was awarded

Enthuse Primary STEM Teacher of the Year in 2020. She is also an ambassador for Learning by Questions.

 @kpenarski

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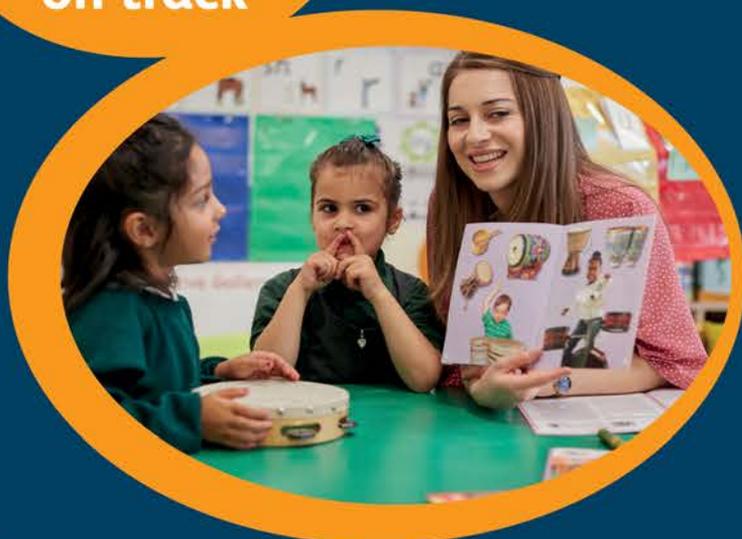
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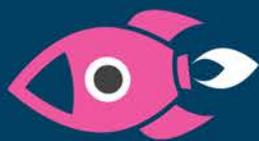
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INSIDE THIS SECTION



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Claire Jones explains how she completely redesigned her school's approach to reading



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Modelling invented words? Teaching spelling 'rules'? Saying that letters are 'silent'? No, no, no, says Charlotte MacKechnie



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Inspire stories with these cross-curricular suggestions, designed to get children's imaginations active



p62

We review five brand new titles that primary-age children will love, including Stars With Flaming Tails by Valerie Bloom

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Meet the AUTHOR



Zaro Weil on the energising double act of poetry and nature

What child doesn't want to wake up and feel free as the breeze? To go through the day on a whistle and hum? And to conjure up all the magic, mystery, curiosity and wildness they can at the same time. That's a happy child – something we all want for those kids in our charge. And what is it that creates that whistle and hum? It's nature: the ever-present universe of creatures, plants and atmosphere here on earth. Pure and simple.

Now, let's you and I take a walk outdoors. What do we see? Hear? Maybe there is sun. Or wind. A bird flies by. Leaves rustle. Of course, there are many other things going on. The problem is, most of us don't always catch the comings and goings of the natural world: the scuttling of bugs; the intricacy of veins on an oak leaf; the shape and colours of ever-shifting clouds; the candied scent of rotting leaves.

Now ask a child when they are outside. It doesn't matter if they are in a park, on some patch of rough ground in the city or walking through a wild forest. They are in their 'outdoor' world. A world of play; of running hard; looking hard; tangling with nature. Whether nature is a weed popping out of asphalt, a patch of smooth lawn or a leaf-covered woodland floor, it doesn't matter. For wherever outdoor lies, the child is inordinately serious about it all.

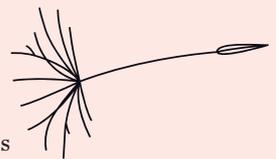
Magical transformations

Children perceive and experience the world of nature with a closeness, excitement and clarity of vision we adults lack or have forgotten. The child will not just point to a worm wriggling in the ground. He reaches down to get closer; to see it; maybe to pick it up. Nature encourages imagination. A whipped-up ocean may trigger the possibility of unfettered ideas.

A beautiful meadow could offer a chance to dream big. The quietness of a dark sky may allow us to feel at ease with our own silence. For if we look or listen to something long enough and hard enough the object in view magically transforms. Rocks become figures; shadows grow real; a single leaf rustle can tell a whole story.

Nature looms large with children's emotions as well. Biting cold wind; gentle snow falling; a hot sun; a swirling river; the glimmer of moonlight on rooftops – these things we experience on the outside can shape inner experience and emotions to a high degree for a child.

How does poetry fit in with this



romp in nature? With words, meaning and imagination. Poetry is created through a particular and unexpected musical placement of words which encourage the reader to see and 'get' things in a new – almost tickling – way. Just imagine for a moment the adult 'you' steps outside and sees a dandelion. Most of us see, well, a dandelion. "What is that dandelion doing?" someone asks. "It is waving in the breeze," you might reply. Then ask a child what that dandelion is up to. They might say without blinking twice, "It's tickling the sky" or "It's telling the sky a secret." This personalisation of the environment is the beginning of metaphor; the first sparks of poetry. How does the fog come? It comes on little cat feet, says Carl Sandburg in his poem Fog.

My point is that a child's first response to nature is poetic. They endow nature with a special quality. The dandelion is *like* something else. It is *like them* because the dandelion sees the sky like a person would. Nature gives children the freedom to see, question and imagine anything they want. Trees become figures. Those clouds are battling dragons. The wind is telling me a secret. Nature is personal. Things

are *like* something else. And at once we have metaphor, the heart and soul of poetry.

Powerful poems

This world of imagination and poetic play is also the world of language. Stories and poetry are the way information has been shared and passed down through generations. Interaction with language is vital for exercising the imagination. When we hear a powerful poem we visualise it, feel it, even become it a little. And not only that – we learn to 'super' listen; to hear both the words and the silence between them; to see both the trees and the spaces between them. Our experience is enriched until we are magically transformed. And the more exacting and exciting the language, the further and deeper our visions can travel.

William Wordsworth didn't just see or describe the daffodils dancing outside. He got inside and became them; tangled with them. He danced with daffodils in his poems. He understood nature from the inside out. A child gathers in the world and learns through their senses and through play.

And what better place
to harness senses
than that great
provider, nature?



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Because when these senses are fed, nurtured and developed they become a storehouse of sense memories; a great learning-pad and enabler of understanding, perception and problem-solving.

Children are poised at the beginning of a long quest for definition and self-identity. And what better way to fill in the mystery of who you are on the inside than by looking at and becoming part of the mystery that is nature, outside. Not only does poetry allow us to be who we are, it gives us the opportunity to be many of the things we cannot imagine ourselves to be. Listening to, writing or sharing a poem, hearing and feeling the swing and sway of the words, seeing them in our mind's eye, grips us. It's a magical, evocative, interactive learning process.

As educators, parents, and poets, our challenge is to keep young minds not just listening but involved, curious and open. And what finer way to enable our kids to live and learn free as a breeze with a whistle and hum than through that wonderful energising double act of nature and poetry? **TP**



Zaro Weil
is author
of CLIPPA
award-winning
book *Cherry
Moon* (£14,
Troika).

 @zaroweil

 zaroweil.com

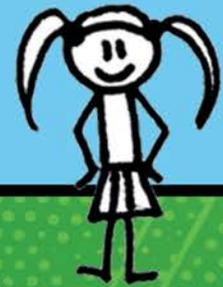
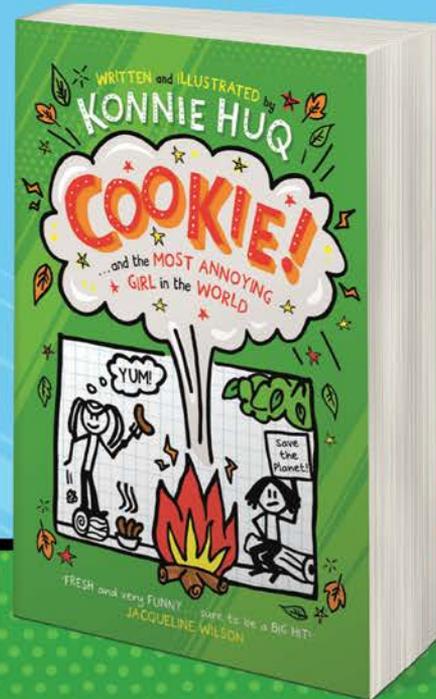
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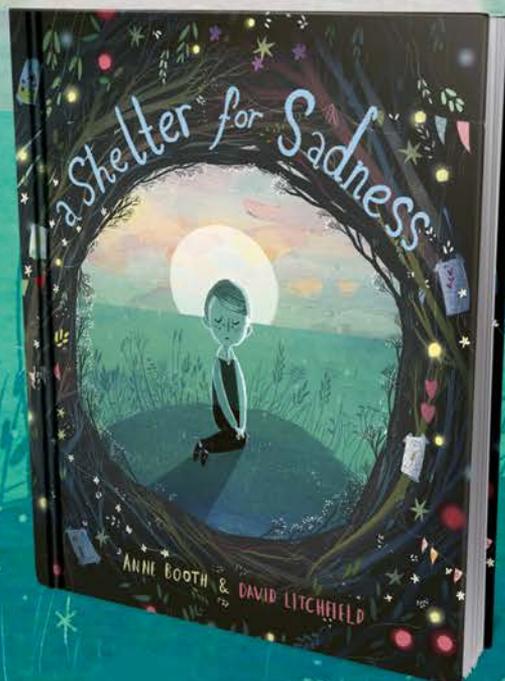
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**School
profile**

Name: Layton Primary
Location: Blackpool, Lancashire
Ofsted rating: Outstanding
Number of pupils: 600+
Twitter: @layton_primary



Claire Jones

“We needed a clear whole-school picture”

How and why we completely redesigned our school's approach to reading...



Overhauling the way we taught reading had been on our school development plan for a long time, but other things became a priority and it kept on getting pushed further down the list.

Our end of KS2 results have been above the national average for many years and children *were* reading, so change didn't seem urgent.

At the start of 2019, after attending a session at Blackpool Research School on whole school implementation, I started thinking more about my vision for reading and had discussions with my headteacher around the topic. As a large school in Blackpool, the most deprived seaside town in the UK, we faced many barriers, but we never put a lid on our children's abilities to learn.

Around this time, the Literacy Trust conducted some research in Blackpool and identified that in 2019, only 71% of pupils reached the expected level in communication and language at age five, compared with a national average of 82%. It also found that as many as 32% of underprivileged children in Blackpool left primary school unable to read well. We knew that the children in our school start significantly below where they should be in terms of speaking, listening and language development. As a result, it was time to refocus on what our vision for reading was.

It's all very well saying that reading was on our school development plan, but what was it that we wanted to change? We knew why we had to have it as a focus, but needed a clear whole-school picture. The Education Endowment Foundation's 'Putting evidence to work' guidance report ([tinyurl.com/tp-evidence](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-evidence)) was a really useful starting point for implementing change. It breaks the process down into four stages: explore, prepare, deliver, sustain.

Initial exploration

At the time I was teaching in Y4 and identified that while we were using texts in literacy, we weren't giving children opportunities to read a book without having to keep stopping and analysing it. Teachers read to children but it wasn't consistent across year groups and books were seldom finished. In addition, time in literacy lessons was often spent analysing a text with few writing skills being taught. This became increasingly evident when I looked at work in pupils' books and talked to children about links in the curriculum. We carried out a staff survey, asking questions about how often teachers read to their class and which text types they chose. We also surveyed pupils and asked then if they enjoyed reading, which types of texts they liked and if they read at home. We found the Open University's whole-school development resources really useful during this stage ([tinyurl.com/tp-development](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-development)).

After spending time in classrooms and holding discussions with teachers, it was clear that we didn't have a consistent whole-school approach to reading. A lot of time in Y6 was dedicated to teaching comprehension and preparing for SATs. Some year groups did reading carousel activities – planning so many differentiated activities took a toll on teachers' workloads. They would often give groups of children 'holding' activities to keep them busy while offering very little challenge. In addition, different year group teachers were asking different types of comprehension questions: some used the 'VIPERS' approach (vocabulary, inference, prediction, explanation, retrieval, summarise), while others used different approaches they'd found online. It was clear we were lacking consistency, clarity, challenge and a clear vision. The surveys we ran made it clear that staff



were desperate to improve in these areas.

In the national curriculum, the programmes of study for reading at KS1 and 2 consist of two dimensions: word reading and comprehension (both listening and reading). Skilled word reading involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Underpinning both is the understanding that the letters on the page represent the sounds in spoken words. This is why phonics needs to be emphasised in the early teaching of reading to beginners (unskilled readers) when they start school.

Good comprehension draws on linguistic knowledge (vocabulary and grammar, in particular) and knowledge of the world. Comprehension skills develop through pupils' experience of high-quality discussion with teachers, as well as from reading and discussing a range of stories, poems and non-fiction. All pupils must be encouraged to read widely across both fiction and non-fiction to develop their knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live, to establish an appreciation and love of reading, and to gain knowledge across the curriculum. Reading widely and often increases pupils' vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech. Reading also feeds pupils' imagination and opens up a treasure-house of wonder and joy for curious young minds.

2 Researching and preparing

I started off by reading the Education Endowment Foundation's guidance reports on literacy in EYFS, KS1 and KS2. I also found the following three books incredibly useful:



“We decided that reading needed a dedicated, non-negotiable space in the daily timetable”

the texts we’d considered were written by white British authors. We didn’t feel this would prepare our children to be global citizens. In his book *Reading Reconsidered*, Doug Lemov says that children should have access to five types of text in order to read with confidence. These are complex beyond a lexical level and demand more from the reader than other types of books. To fit our school’s context and our pupils needs, we adapted his suggestions, enabling us to include a more diverse range of text types. As many staff are avid readers, we were able to identify many books to include, and also used Scott Evans’ *The Reader Teacher* website for ideas. Our reading spine uses four text types (see panel, overleaf).

Following on from Ashley’s Zoom session, we adopted the idea that teachers would choose a text from the reading spine, which is a working document, and read this book every day for 15 minutes, always making sure to finish the book. On Monday and Friday, the text was studied through a quick quiz, recap questions and VIPERS questions. There was no differentiation – every child stayed in class and had the same challenge. The teacher used scaffolded questioning to support pupils. All children had a reading workbook but these weren’t marked. Instead, teachers looked at them during the lesson to identify any misconceptions that they could address in the moment or feed into the next day’s lesson.

Thinking back to our vision of reading more non-fiction, we decided that reading lessons on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays would be based on non-fiction texts. The beauty here is that if – for example – you have something in science coming up on electricity, you can use non-fiction texts to learn about who invented the light bulb. This means you can spend your science lesson practising scientific skills rather than researching. During the reading lesson pupils used their comprehension skills to answer VIPERS questions.

3 Sharing the vision

While it had been me who had gone away and done the research, I knew I couldn’t deliver this new and ambitious reading programme alone. I began by presenting the redesigned reading curriculum to the rest of SLT. Because the vision was so clear, along with why we were doing it and how we were going to achieve it, there was instant buy-in.

Because we’re a large school we don’t have subject leads but instead work in curriculum groups. We identified five teachers who have a real love of reading and formed a new reading group. I shared the vision with them. They had been longing for clarity around our reading approach and were eager to go away and plan lessons for each year group to deliver to staff during our September Inset day. Due to Covid restrictions this was done via Zoom. Download examples of these lesson plan PowerPoints at tinyurl.com/tp-spine. We made it clear to staff that this was a trial period and that we’d be having a meeting in a few weeks to share what was and wasn’t working. Teachers were encouraged to reach out to the core reading group for support.

Once the school had been using this new approach for a little



- *Reading Reconsidered* by Doug Lemov
- *Closing the Reading Gap* by Alex Quigley
- *Hooked on Books* by Jane Considine

At the start of lockdown I was fortunate to join one of teacher Ashley Booth’s Zoom sessions on whole-school reading. This was a real ‘lightbulb moment’. Everything Ashley said summed up the findings from our ‘exploring’ stage. As a result I was able to go away and start redesigning our reading curriculum.

Our vision was to prepare pupils for university and college, where they’ll mostly be reading non-fiction articles. We worked backwards from there, identifying what we needed to teach our pupils and which skills we needed to equip them with. The below quote from Dr Seuss proved particularly inspirational:

*The more that you read, the more things you will know.
The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.*

We decided that reading needed a dedicated, non-negotiable space in the daily timetable. In addition, we decided that reading lessons would be separate to literacy lessons, with word reading and comprehension taught in the former, and writing skills taught in the latter. Every day, each teacher would read to their class for 15 minutes without any interruptions – just simply modelling ‘how to read’. In KS2, we planned for reading to take place after break between 10.30am and 11.15am, followed by literacy until lunch at 12.15pm.

But what texts would pupils read? We wanted to challenge our children so classic texts were an obvious choice, but when we set about designing a whole-school reading spine that teachers would use to select their class novel, we realised that most of

while it became clear that the mid-week non-fiction sessions were a fantastic opportunity for pre-teaching across the curriculum. Each teacher was able to select their preferred text from the reading spine and could then incorporate this title into their literacy lessons. So, for example, in our three-form entry school, Y6 pupils might be writing a diary extract, but it will be based on a character from *The Nowhere Emporium*, *Holes* or *Goodnight Mr Tom*, depending on which class they are in. This gives teachers autonomy and recognises that what works for one class might not be relevant for another.

I've recently left the school to take up a headship position so it was really important for me to know that they could sustain the reading curriculum I'd helped to set up. Having buy-in from staff and a dedicated reading group has really helped. The school is now looking at implementing a whole-school reading assessment. This will give a baseline assessment of where the children are. Of course, some children still need intervention so this happens as and when it's needed.

It's vital that Layton Primary now embeds a real love of reading in pupils so it's at the heart of the school. I'd love to see children and adults sharing the texts they're reading; book clubs; online videos of teachers reading stories. This really is just the start of the journey. In my new school I want to ensure that no matter what children's backgrounds are, we bestow them with the gift of reading – it's our duty. Author Jane Considine puts it perfectly: "Without reading, a child's world shrinks and begins to narrow. Opportunities are limited, doors begin to close and self-esteem crumbles. Teachers must get it right." **TP**



Claire Jones is now headteacher at Eccleston Primary School in Chorley.

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WHOLE-SCHOOL READING SPINE

Here's a sample of some of the books featured in Layton Primary's new whole-school reading spine.

Classic text

This involves texts that are over 50 years old and feature vocabulary and syntax that is vastly different and typically more complex than texts written today. Examples include:

- The Velveteen Rabbit (Margery Williams)
- Winnie the Pooh (AA Milne)
- A Bear Called Paddington (Michael Bond)
- The Borrowers (Mary Norton)
- The Jungle Book (Rudyard Kipling)
- Oliver Twist (Charles Dickens)

Non-linear time sequences

In these books, time doesn't unfold consistently. It may move in fits and starts or double back. These books need careful introduction and may need to be read more than once. Examples include:

- Voices in the Park (Anthony Brown)
- The Worst Witch (Jill Murphy)
- The Iron Man (Ted Hughes)
- Walk Two Moons (Sharon Creech)
- The House with Chicken Legs (Sophie Anderson)
- Letters from the Lighthouse (Emma Carroll)

Narratively complex

These books may feature unreliable narrators, multiple narrators or non-human narrators. They may also feature multiple plot lines.

- The Tiger Who Came to Tea (Judith Kerr)
- The Twits (Roald Dahl)
- The Sheep Pig (Dick King Smith)

- Varjax Paw (SF Said)
- The Boy at the Back of the Class (Onjali Rauf)
- Wonder (RJ Palacio)

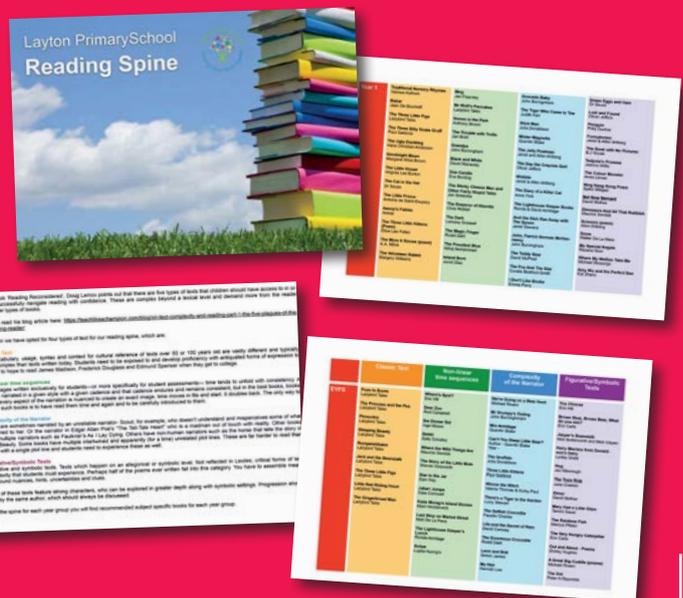
Impressionist

Poetry often features in this category. Pupils need to assemble meaning via nuances, hints, uncertainties and clues.

- The Book With No Pictures (BJ Novak)
- The Red Tree (Shaun Tan)
- Journey (Aaron Becker)
- Cloud Busting (Malorie Blackman)
- How To Live Forever (Colin Thompson)
- In Flanders Field (John McCrae)



Download the whole reading spine at tinyurl.com/tp-spine



How not to TEACH SPELLING

Modelling invented words? Teaching spelling 'rules'? Saying that letters are 'silent'? No, no, no, says **Charlotte MacKechnie**

If you allow a child to spell 'he' as 'hee' or 'they' as 'thay', they're going to practise misspelling these words. They'll become so familiar with their invented spellings that they may struggle to unlearn the inaccurate sound-spelling correspondences. I use 'invented spelling' because the notion of 'phonetically plausible' spelling is flawed. All spellings are phonetic. If a word wasn't 'phonetic', you wouldn't be able to say it. Anything that is spoken can be represented with various combinations of the 26 letters in the English alphabet. Spelling has been standardised since the 1700s, yet pronunciation is constantly evolving. While many words are certainly complex to spell, they are not phonetically irregular.

Unfortunately, it appears to be common practice for EYFS and KS1 teachers to model 'phonetically plausible' (ie invented) spelling. The rationale? Depending on where you are within your systematic teaching sequence, there will be parts of code that you haven't taught yet. The misconception that teachers should model invented spelling

likely comes from the Early Learning Goals for writing in EYFS which state that:

"Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. [...] Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible."

The key word here is 'children'. Pupils use their phonic knowledge for spelling; sometimes they misspell words, but their attempts are phonetically plausible. This doesn't suggest that teachers should model invented spelling. Instead, we should provide the parts of the code that haven't been taught yet. Here are some more 'dos and don'ts' for teaching spelling:

- Don't introduce only one spelling of a vowel sound. It's particularly important not to encourage children to use this one spelling whenever they write that sound. You'll be reinforcing illogical positioning of alternative spellings. For example, the 'ay' spelling is rarely used before the sound 'l' (there's no 'snayl', 'tayl' or 'whayl', for example).
- Don't replace phonics with spelling rules at the end of Y1.

Phonics is reading and spelling. It takes a minimum of three years to teach the alternatives of the English alphabet code, and phonics should continue to underpin spelling beyond KS1. Here are some alternative spellings to work on in Y5 and 6, for example:

'ie' sound – island
'ee' sound – deceive
't' sound – doubt
'm' sound – climb

- Don't teach spelling 'rules' such as 'i before e except after c'. English spelling doesn't obey rules. If you take this approach you'll probably spend more time teaching the exceptions ('seize', 'feisty', 'foreign'...).
 - Don't use 'look, cover, write, check'. This whole-word memorisation ignores the fundamental construct of the alphabet and the research into eye movements in the context of how we read. Similarly, don't encourage children to look at 'word shapes' or to 'look and say'.
 - Don't refer to letters as 'silent'. Take a moment to listen carefully to the letters on this page – every letter is silent. Letters do not make sounds – we do. Why do we accept 'k' as silent in 'know', but we don't question the 'w'?
- Teach 'kn' as a spelling of the sound 'n' much like you would teach the spelling 'funny' or 'gone': it's as simple as that.
- Do approach the complex code (one sound: different spellings) in a systematic way. Introduce the frequent and consistent spellings first, then introduce the less frequently encountered spellings in successive cycles.

For example:

EYFS: play, rain
Y1: cake, they, great
Y2: vein, eight, straight
KS2: gauge, ballet

- Do insist that children say the sounds when they are writing the words. The integration of sensory input (auditory and visual) and the motor output (writing the spellings) helps embed sound-spelling correspondences and reinforces the link between sound and spelling.

Do have realistic expectations. If you're teaching the basic code, is it realistic to expect students to attempt to write words with complex spellings, or polysyllabic words? Are students ready to write independently, or would it be more beneficial to lead a shared writing session?

- Do teach students to spell high frequency words by drawing attention to the spellings which are exceptions. Remember, an exception word is simply a word with sound-spelling correspondences that are beyond the systematic teaching sequence. Find the first 100 and next 200 high frequency words organised by sound at tinyurl.com/tp-hfw-sound. **TP**



Charlotte MacKechnie is a Sounds-Write trainer and reading development lead for

STEP Ahead Teaching School Alliance.

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7 ideas for creative WRITING PROMPTS

Inspire sophisticated stories with these cross-curricular suggestions, designed to get children's imaginations active wherever they're learning...

SUE DRURY

It was terrifying. As they all stared at it, a feeling of intense dread grew in the pits of their stomachs and swept throughout their bodies. Their hands started to shake. Beads of icy sweat began to blossom on their brows. Their eyes swam in and out of focus. What could they do? Where could they start? How could they overcome the horror of... **THE BLANK PAGE!**

As any artist will confirm, probably the most difficult part of any creative exercise comes long before you put pencil to paper or brush to palette. If you need a spark to get your creative motor running, the same will probably be true for your class. So, what can you do if your dream machine has a flat battery? The following tips, pointers and creative writing activity ideas might provide the jump-start you need.



Sketch it out

Sometimes, a great idea just pops into your head. If you're lucky enough to have this happen to you, don't be afraid to run with it – just check that it has legs first. Some story ideas simply don't have the staying power to sustain a whole narrative so, first, see if you can quickly sketch out in your mind, or as a rough plan on paper, a coherent plot. This will be true whether it's your

own project or a stimulus for your class.



Take seven

According to an idea most famously popularised by Christopher Booker, there are only seven basic story plots: overcoming a monster; rags to riches; the quest; voyage and return; comedy; tragedy; and rebirth. Knowing this could form the basis of one of your creative writing prompts. It might also make you stop and think if your great idea doesn't really fit into any of those categories.



Think of a style

If you consider it prudent to constrain the imagination still further (and there are very good reasons for doing so with pupils), you might like to consider the type of story that you want to be written. Will it be a historical tale, a fantasy adventure, a mystery or a spooky story, for example? Whatever you have decided, this will usually help to focus the mind on the sort of plot that will work well and offer guardrails to avoid the ideas becoming too outlandish.



Link to a topic

Another consideration is whether the narrative is going to

serve any other learning purpose. Most obviously, you could be aiming for stories that fit in with a particular period you're studying in history. This is a great chance to stimulate pupils' imaginations while securing teaching points (see panel, right).



Rewrite the classics

Don't fall into the trap of believing that creativity equals complete originality. Just think of the many successful books, plays and films that have been based on well-loved stories or characters. After all, you wouldn't condemn Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim for lifting the plot of Romeo and Juliet when they wrote West Side Story. Many tales are completely compatible with a creative retelling, especially legends. A prime example is Beowulf (see panel, right), especially when you are covering Anglo Saxons as a history topic – but of course, you can also look to Greek or Roman myths and folk tales and fairy stories from around the world.



Supply a starter

Sometimes, all it takes to get the creative juices flowing is an

opening sentence. These are particularly good for finding out how imaginative your pupils are. Just make sure your story starters are sufficiently intriguing.

Even simply suggesting story titles can be enough to get the inspiration flowing. Just like with starters, they do need to offer some clue as to which direction a plot could lead. If not using it as a creative stimulus, however, it is usually best to decide on the title after the whole thing has been written.



Voice and perspective

Finally, a quick word of advice about helping your class decide on their great idea: the concept alone is not enough. As well as a solid plot, they also need to think about the perspective from which they are writing the story as well as the 'voice'. That means that the person (first or third, most likely) has to be consistent and the reader needs to be clear in which direction the author's overall sympathies lie. Even though this is more of an objective for higher

level writing, it's not a bad thing for younger writers to start thinking about.

With any luck, you and your class will now feel fully equipped for slaying the beast of the blank page. As the old saying goes, the pen is mightier than the sword. **TP**

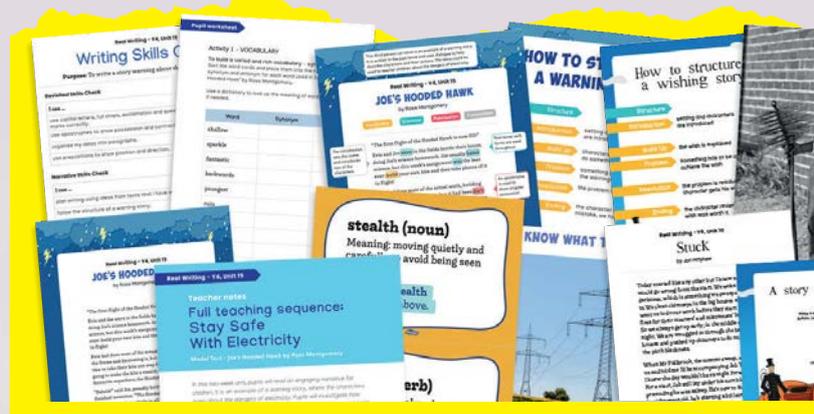


Sue Drury is literacy lead at Plazoom, the specialist literacy resources

website for primary schools.

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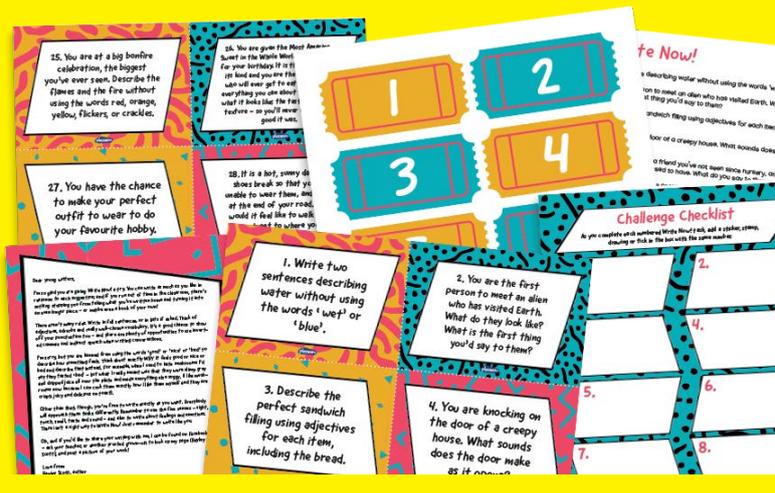
HISTORICAL CONTEXT
This two-week writing unit for Y6 is based on an original model text by Jon Mayhew about a child chimney sweep in Victorian Britain. bit.ly/plazoomstuck

A SCIENTIFIC TWIST
Link creative writing to science with a Y4 unit of work focused on the safe use of electricity. bit.ly/plazomelectricity

THE STUFF OF LEGEND
Share the story of Beowulf with Y5 pupils, then encourage them to create their own legend. bit.ly/plazombeowulf

INSTANT IMAGINATION
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We review five brand new titles that your class will love

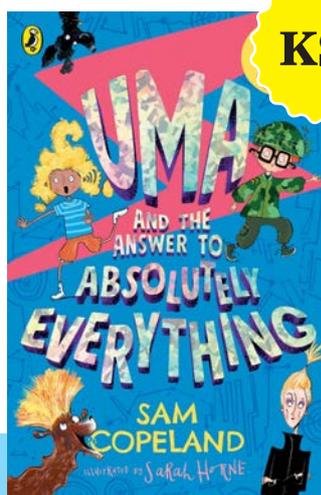


Stars with Flaming Tails

by Valerie Bloom

(£7.99, Otter-Barry Books)

Funny, thoughtful and perceptive, this joyful and richly varied collection of poems by Jamaican-born poet Valerie Bloom will inspire curiosity and laughter in pupils, alongside a deep sense of wonder at the beauty and mystery of life. Many of the poems focus on friends, family, empathy and care for others, and topics such as conservation and the environment are also included, alongside Ken Wilson-Max's thought-provoking illustrations. The verses are rich in wordplay and use forms that you can have fun exploring in the classroom, including echo poems, cinquains (five-line poems), riddles and limericks. Bloom is a popular performer in schools and her education experience shines through with clever in-poem references to onomatopoeia, similes and personification: "If the boy is as free as a bird in a tree, that's a simile". This book and the 60-plus verses within have been tailor-made for classroom performance and study.



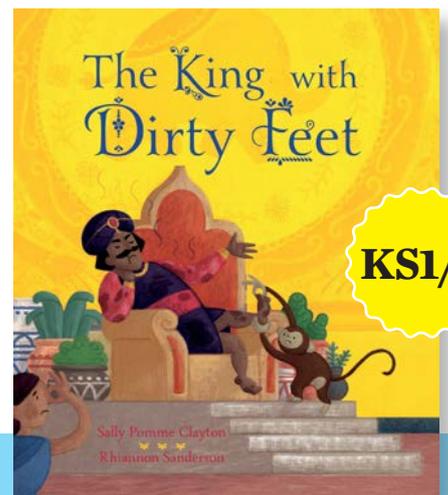
Uma and the Answer to Absolutely Everything

by Sam Copeland

(£6.99, Puffin)

Sam Copeland is already a star of middle grade fiction. His 'Charlie' novels – about a boy who changes into animals when he gets nervous – tackle the insecurities and anxieties of childhood with a laugh-out loud hilarity that children love. Copeland's new heroine, Uma Gnudersonn, is similarly striving for control over the challenges in her life – the death of her mother, the silence of her grief-stricken father, school bullies and an evil corporation threatening to destroy her neighbourhood. Una's many questions are answered when a car crash with a drunken alpaca leads to the discovery of a genius AI named Athena who knows absolutely everything. Much tomfoolery follows, as together they take on the sinister corporation, while helping to restore Una's dad to his normal self. This book will not only have you and your class crying with laughter, but more importantly, will help to instill a real love of reading.

Recommended by ReadForGood.org



The King with Dirty Feet

by Sally Pomme Clayton

(£7.99, Otter-Barry Books)

There once was an Indian king who hated bath time so much that he never washed. When he demands the land be rid of dirt instead, his servant tries his best to oblige but it's not as simple as it seems. At last, an old man steps forward with a very clever solution. This is a delightful, funny retelling of an Indian folktale, The King and the Cobbler, about the invention of shoes. Author Sally Pomme Clayton has a background in performance storytelling and this shines through in her witty text that is perfect for reading aloud to children. The colourful, detailed illustrations by Rhiannon Sanderson are vibrant and engaging and this is a great story to use to help introduce children to traditional tales. Why not ask pupils to have a go at retelling the story in a number of different ways?

→→→ **RECOMMENDED**
RESOURCES



This resource pack, based on Ross Welsford's novel *When We Got Lost In Dreamland*, can be used to develop pupils' reading comprehension and writing skills. It contains a topic map with exciting ideas on how the book can be used to inspire activities across the curriculum, an extract and comprehension question sheets. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-dreamland

Meet the author

HANNAH GOLD ON THE APPEARANCE OF A VERY SPECIAL POLAR BEAR



Was the story always destined to be about a bear?

When I set out to write a children's book – something I'd always longed to do – it was born out of an instinctive urge to write about everything I loved most in the world, and that had to include animals. One day, a polar bear appeared in my mind's eye, staring at me with his dark chocolate eyes. There was a story he wanted to share and I, apparently, was the one to tell it. From that point on I was committed to him. So yes – it was team polar bear all the way!

Tell us about the illustrations in the book.

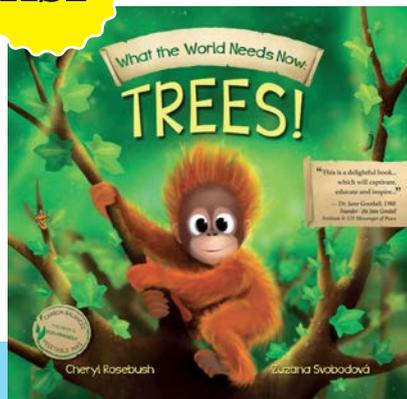
The illustrations by Levi Pinfold are absolutely breathtaking – they capture the bare, sweeping Arctic landscape but, at the same time, the heartfelt bond between April and Bear.

The art designer is the one who mainly communicates with the illustrator and decides what art the book is going to have, but I was shown a rough copy and gave feedback. They were so stunning that there really wasn't much to say, other than just gasp. For me, this was a book written with love, and it feels like it's been illustrated with an equal amount of love too.

How would you like teachers to use the book in the classroom?

Many teachers have already commented on how they plan to use the text to showcase the dramatic loss of sea ice in the Arctic and how this is impacting the polar bear population. This makes my heart sing because one of my primary goals when writing the book has always been to empower our children to find their roar and know that no one is too small to make a difference. It would be great to use a class project to highlight what positive eco steps can be taken individually and collectively to save polar bears.

KS1



What the World Needs Now: Trees

by Cheryl Rosebush

(£12.99, Cheryl Rosebush Communications)

If we want kids to grow up to respect the world they live in, they first need to fall in love with nature. This simple book explains to young children the reasons we need to look after our planet. The story follows an orangutan called Jefri who lives in Indonesia. The simple prose and vivid illustrations explain why life-giving trees are vital not just for animals, but people too. Endorsed by primatologist Dr Jane Goodall, the book also walks the environmental walk – it's printed on 100% recycled paper and emissions generated from its manufacture are offset. Author Cheryl Rosebush, a climate change specialist, acknowledges that deforestation may cause children to feel worried, but is quick to reassure readers that there is a solution. The back of the book features a range of amazing tree and animal facts. Look out for the sequel title about bees.

KS2



The Last Bear

by Hannah Gold

(£12.99, HarperCollins)

When master storyteller Michael Morpurgo describes a book as “deeply moving, beautifully told, quite unforgettable”, you know you're onto a winner. There are no polar bears left on Bear Island. At least, that's what April's father tells her when his scientific research takes them to the Arctic for six months. But one endless summer night, April meets one. He's starving, lonely and a long way from home. Determined to save him, April begins the most important journey of her life. This moving story will win the hearts of pupils. It's a celebration of the love between a child and an animal, an environmental battle cry and, perhaps most importantly, an irresistible adventure. Use the book to show pupils that they're never too young or insignificant to make a difference. Illustrator Levi Pinfold, who you may know from his award-winning picturebook *Black Dog*, provides breathtaking artwork that brings April and the bear alive.

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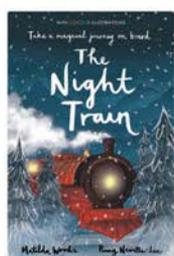
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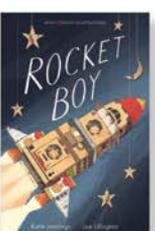
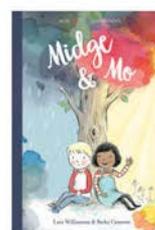
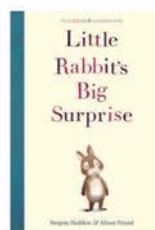
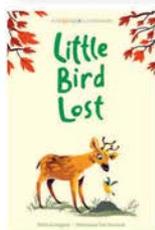


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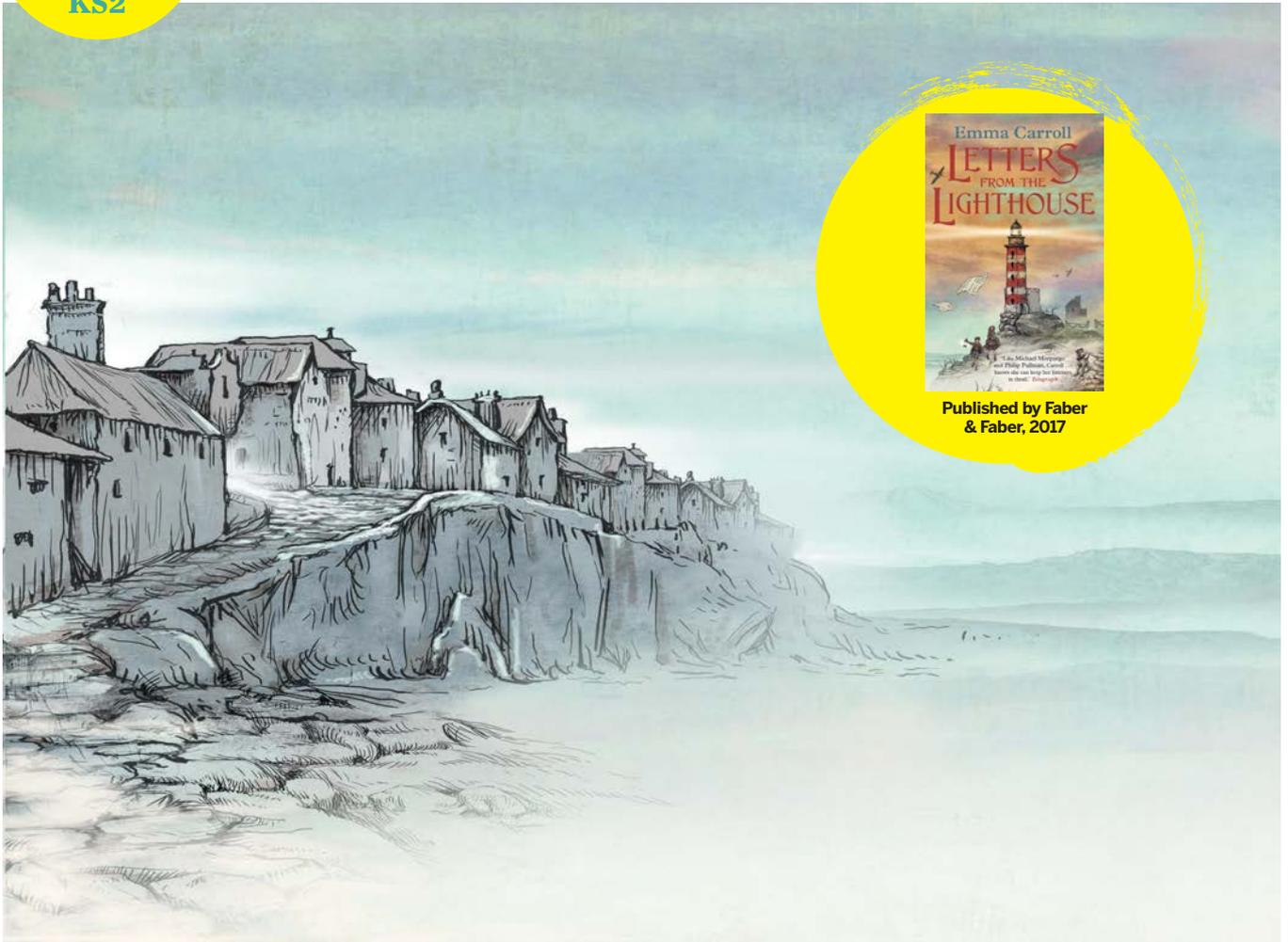
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Letters from the Lighthouse

Complement your second world war topic with
Emma Carroll's evocative mystery novel

JOHANNA HOWARD & JONATHAN ROOKE

Letters from the Lighthouse is a mystery; a spy story; an evacuee story; a refugee story. Above all, it's Olive's story. The second world war turns schoolgirl Olive's life in London inside out. Her father is shot down over France, her glamorous older sister, Sukie, goes missing during an air raid, and Olive is evacuated with her younger brother, Cliff, to Devon. Along the way she meets a variety of both friendly and unpleasant characters and

not all of them are what they seem.

Strong, loving and resourceful, Olive is driven to extraordinary acts of courage by her sense of responsibility to her family, like the way she fiercely protects her little brother. The book revolves around Olive's persistent efforts to solve the mystery of why her sister has disappeared and piece together the clues to find her.

The crisp prose and pacy plot make the novel a joy to read. The setting of

Budmouth, a coastal Devon village dominated by a lighthouse, lends atmosphere and plenty of scope for exciting adventures. Historical accuracy and fine details mean Letters from the Lighthouse slips effortlessly into second world war topics while at the same time providing space for children to think and talk together about deep themes such as hope, loss, separation, prejudice, truth, forgiveness, bereavement, love and kindness.





Practical activities

Cinemas and sirens

Start the novel by transforming your classroom into a 1940s cinema. Arrange seats, stick up posters and give children tickets printed with 'Picture Palace 6pm'. Dress up in 1940s clothes and put a thick curtain over the classroom door.

Watch early wartime cinema newsreels on YouTube (tinyurl.com/reel-one and tinyurl.com/reel-two) then let children watch a few minutes of 1940 film *The Mark of Zorro* (tinyurl.com/1940-zorro). Play an air raid siren and lead the children to a pretend shelter in the hall. There, read the first chapter of the book and discuss characters' feelings and thoughts and the mystery of Sukie's disappearance.

Codes and coats

Share the mystery code in the chapter *Do Your Duty*. Try to solve it with the children and speculate what it might say. Show pupils how to make codes themselves. Make mystery story messages such as "Meet me at midnight with the gold."

Put your codes in a coat like Olive's and hang it in the book corner. Let the children take each other's codes from the pockets and try to solve them. Hide some codes around the school for other classes to find and decode. Use other pupils' messages as a first line for your own mystery stories.

Introduce code breaking in problem-solving maths lessons or explore using Morse code and make your own telegraph key using wires, batteries and buzzers in a DT/science project.

Pen pals

We're told Sukie and Queenie are pen pals. Olive informs us that this is all the

rage at the time. Link up with another year group or school and get children to write letters and send them to each other. Look at the Imperial War Museum's Letters to Loved Ones site (iwm.org.uk/history/letters-to-loved-ones) and ask children to consider how important receiving a letter would have been when this was the only form of contact for prolonged periods of time.

Olive writes a postcard to her mum and is told to be positive about the situation at Budmouth. Give children a blank postcard and ask them to write what they think Olive really wanted to say to her mum.

Secrets and lies

One of the themes of the book is people concealing who they really are. Mum, Esther, Queenie and Miss Carter all hide things and keep secrets. Make paper masks of these characters. On the outside of the mask, write the words and phrases describing the characters as Olive knows them. On the other side put drawings, words and phrases that tell their secrets. Open up a P4C debate: how much do we ever really know someone?

Ropes and rescues

Read together Olive and Cliff's rescue of Pixie the dog from the quicksand on the beach. Discuss how the dramatic action in this nail-biting episode reveals more about the characters of Cliff and Olive and their love for one another.

Discuss how Emma Carroll has written this tense scene in the chapter *Turning the Tide*. Talk about the effects on the reader of the writer's choices. Ask children to choose their favourite sentence, copy it onto a piece of paper then attach it to a rope in the classroom. Put characters from the

book in new dangerous places (a cliff edge or abandoned building, for example) and write together new riveting and exciting episodes for the book, imitating the author's writing techniques.

Stay or go

Olive comes face-to-face with the enemy when a young German pilot crash lands in Budmouth. Imagine the smells and sights. Explore the mood, the excitement and the expectations of the villagers. Tease out and infer how different characters feel about the enemy and discuss Olive's motivations for defending the pilot.

Roleplay Olive's defiant speech in front



Author Emma Carroll

Take it further → → →

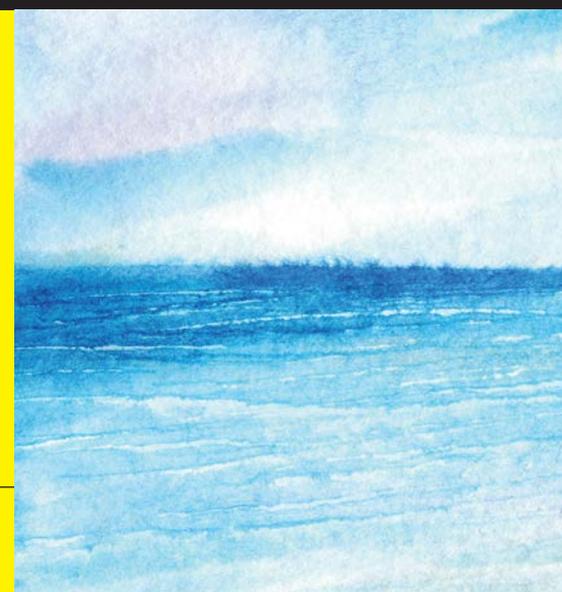
TEA PARTY FUN

Set up your classroom as a village hall and have a tea party for refugees and evacuees. Make food like carrot fudge, jam sandwiches and apple strudel. Invite children to roleplay a character from the book. Dance the Lindy Hop, give some speeches and roleplay the scene with Spratt and the policemen. If possible, invite children's elderly

relatives to come and share their experiences of the war.

LIGHTHOUSE ILLUMINATIONS

Give children shoeboxes and use the description of Budmouth lighthouse in the chapter *Careless Talk Costs Lives* to make the living rooms, control room and beacon of the lighthouse. Discuss the symbolic meaning of the lighthouse in the book. Creating a papier-mache





of the plane and hot seat the wounded airman. Freeze frame some scenes, photograph them and use sticky notes to add thought bubbles and feelings. Write a letter home from the pilot telling the story from his perspective or imagine a scene after the war when the pilot meets Olive to thank her. What reasons would Olive give for her actions that day?

Boats and beaches

After reading the chapters Together and It's a Full Time Job to Win, make a cardboard refugee boat and cardboard puppets of the refugees. From the perspective of their puppet, children can write a diary of the

crossing and rescue, referring to their lives before they were refugees. Turn it into a display and put a QR code on each puppet, connected to their story, so parents and visitors can use their own phones to read them.

Olive and Esther

Olive and Esther share so much but don't become friends until the end of the book. Both girls are experiencing loss and family bereavement and are forced to leave their homes and make journeys to a new place where they are strangers and must fit in. Both have to keep secrets and show courage and independence in the face of

Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ Goodnight Mister Tom – Michelle Magorian
- ❖ Girl with a White Dog – Anne Booth
- ❖ Friend or Foe – Michael Morpurgo
- ❖ My Secret War Diary by Flossie Albright – Marcia Williams

adversity. Make a display noting Esther and Olive's characteristics, feelings and motivations, inside and outside. Make connections between them and discuss how and why each girl deals with their challenges differently.



Girl power

Men are often the main focus when discussing war, but in this book we find strong, brave and resourceful women. Make a character web of Olive, Sukie, Mum, Esther, Queenie and others. Jot down their character traits around their heads and then draw lines between them showing their relationships.

Consider the many roles Olive takes on – younger sister, older sister, daughter, friend, motherly figure to Cliff. Consider what makes her such a strong character and how we know this through inference. Research what women did during the war and learn about female war heroes such as American pilot and commander Nancy Harkness Love. **TP**

Johanna Howard is LKS2 Y3/4 lead at Weeke Primary in Winchester. Jonathan Rooke is a senior lecturer in education at the University of Winchester.



lighthouse and using an electric circuit to light it up is an excellent opportunity for cross-curricular science, art and DT.

MAPPING JOURNEYS

On a map of the world, plot the refugees' journey from Vienna to Budmouth and beyond. Mark Esther's Kindertransport journey and Olive's journey. Make some false papers. Discuss if it is right or wrong for the rescuers to break the law to help the refugees leave England.

MYSTERY BOARD

Olive is trying to solve the mystery of Sukie. Where is she? What is she doing? What is her connection to the refugees? As Emma Carroll reveals clues during the novel, pin them up on a classroom version of a TV police drama case board, with photos, letters, codes and arrows to show connections. Enjoy solving the mystery together.



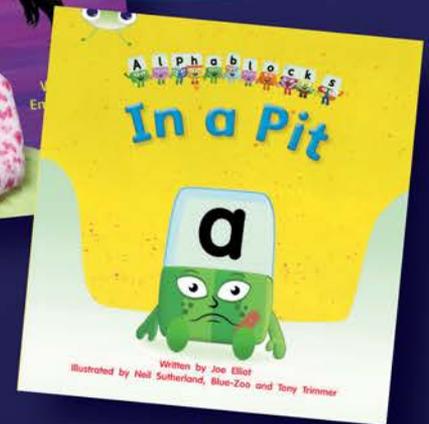
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Music SPECIAL

INSIDE THIS SECTION



How musician Andrew Linham is keeping music alive without in-school singing



Are school productions really worth the effort? For Tom Kirkham, the answer is “yes”...



Use these simple Covid-secure ideas to kickstart your music lessons again

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Are you LISTENING?

Make a Covid soundscore by heading outside then creating drawings to represent the sounds you hear

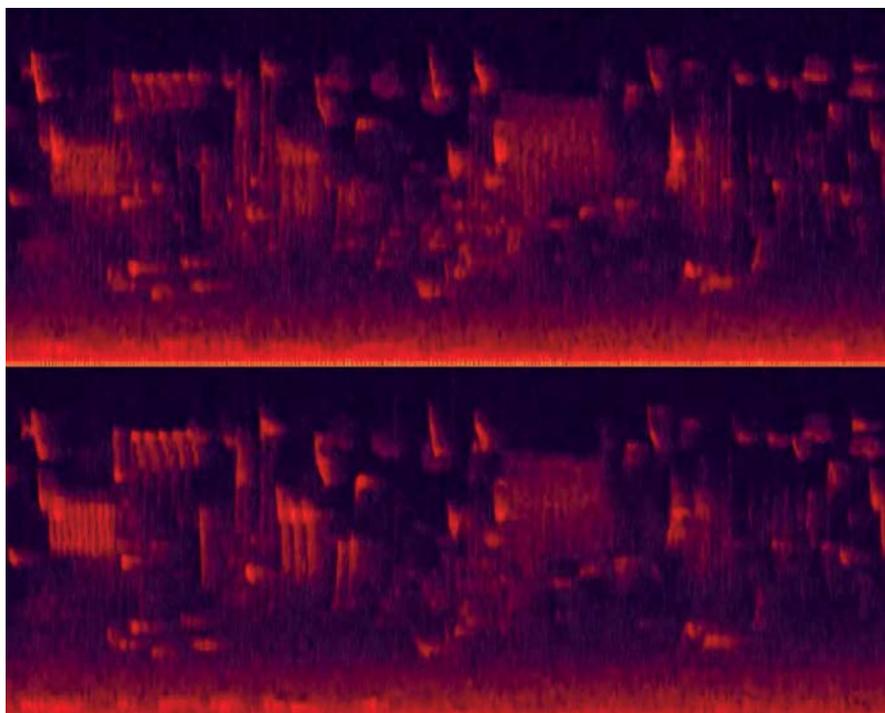
DR ELIZABETH DOBSON

Children have a particular talent for focusing on environmental sound, but as we mature we gradually focus more on functional audio like speech, music, and media. During the first pandemic lockdown when we were mostly confined to our homes, I spent time ‘sound walking’ and listening to our local environment. Enjoying a local wood with our dog Poppy, I noticed a drop in ambient background motorway sound and noticed more birdsong. Using a portable recording device I made a 20 minute recording. I then used a sound visualisation software (similar to the free Sonic

Visualiser at sonicvisualiser.org) to explore the recording visually (see below). This is a stereo screen capture showing frequency (low at the bottom, high at the top), time (from left to right) and volume (black means no sound, red means medium volume and yellow means louder). You can really see melody repetition and even the low hum of the motorway. Listen to my recording and watch the image together at tinyurl.com/covidsoundscore1.

Sound score challenge

Sound is a constant. Even for audio-impaired learners there



is often something being perceived and experienced. As we can't close our ears or focus in the same way that we can with our eyes, our brain acts like a filter. Start with the following exercises to help pupils to switch their sonic awareness back on. They are inspired by A Sound Education by Murray Schafer (tinyurl.com/tp-murray) and Hildegard Westerkamp's 'Soundwalking' activities (tinyurl.com/tp-hildegard).

Invite your class to stand up without making a single sound. Next, ask pupils to describe what they heard. Make a list together. The children will most likely name the objects that created the sounds, so choose one and discuss how pupils can describe the sounds (for example, quiet, low, short, repeating, in one spot or everywhere).

Ask the children to stand again, this time concentrating on one sound they are making, one sound in the room, and one sound outside the room. Document the sounds either in writing or as a picture to be explained. This is an opportunity for children to notice what they don't notice, and think about how they can use language, gesture and diagrams to communicate about sound.

Head outside

Next, head outside and encourage pupils to sit and listen for one minute. Record what you hear on a phone or other device. Listen to the low, middle and high sounds. What did the children hear? Now do it again, this time listening out for close sounds (like your breathing and clothes), sounds coming from very close by and sounds from further away. Repeat the exercise for a third time, this time paying attention to rhythmic, repetitive sounds (like birds), long sounds (like a distant motorway) and irregular sounds that vary lots.

Back in the classroom, watch my example again with the children (tinyurl.com/covidsoundscore1). Can pupils see the bird song in the video and follow it like a musical score? Choose ten seconds of your audio recording from earlier and see if pupils can draw the sounds, using my film as a guide. If getting outside to record is difficult, Minute of Listening has some free recordings that would be suitable for this activity at tinyurl.com/tp-minute.

Reading pictures

Help pupils to create drawings that use lines and spots to show repetition and different pitches. Explain to the children that the pictures can be 'read' from left to right, and that the shapes they use should represent the sounds they hear. If they're finding it tricky, create a set of paper shapes and encourage children to organise them in a way that feels similar to the soundscape. When creating their drawings to represent their soundscape, encourage children to think about:

- Frequency (low to high)
- Volume (size or colour)
- Repeated and sustained sounds
- Relative position to other sounds
- Changes in any of the above
- Contrasting sounds

INSPIRING SOUNDSCAPE EXAMPLES

Kate Halsall, creative engagement officer at arts organisation Highlights Rural Touring Scheme tried this project with children in the north east. See two examples below and listen to the accompanying recordings at tinyurl.com/tp-soundscapes



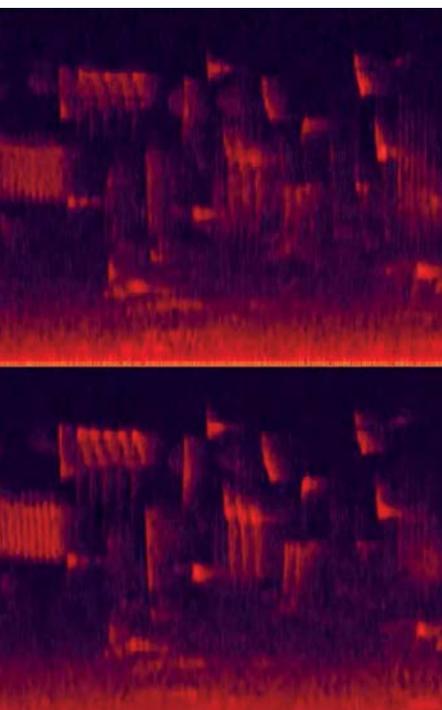
William Graham, Year 2, Whitehaven, Cumbria

I love the frequency matching of the regular digging sound, and the wispy wind background that runs throughout, presented alongside representations of William's garden.



Bertie Dickinson, Year 2, Tirril, Cumbria

This circular score is stunning, with holes, texture, text and pictures of footsteps and birds. Search the hashtag [#covidsoundscore](https://twitter.com/covidsoundscore) on Twitter and Facebook for more inspiration.



Once pupils have created individual scores, invite children to find a way to perform theirs. If children are learning at home at the moment, encourage them to develop a system and undertake their own minute of listening in their environment, then ask them to create their own original score to send to you. Once the children's pictures are ready, post them on social media using the hashtag [#covidsoundscore](https://twitter.com/covidsoundscore) and tag me at [@lizdobsonuoh](https://twitter.com/lizdobsonuoh), or email them to me at e.d.dobson@hud.ac.uk – I'd love to see them! **TP**



Dr Elizabeth Dobson is a composer, a director of the Yorkshire

Sound Women Network and a senior lecturer in music technology at The University of Huddersfield.

 [@lizdobsonuoh](https://twitter.com/lizdobsonuoh)

Facebook CHOIR

How we're keeping music alive without in-school singing

ANDREW LINHAM

I was a very lucky musician in 2020. While many of my contemporaries were without work, my role as 'musician in residence' at Ardleigh Green Learning Federation expanded throughout the pandemic. Finding a way to connect with students, staff and our wider school community was a substantial challenge while we were apart, and continues to be tricky with social distancing still in place.

I believe that one of the fundamental principles of art in the widest sense is to bring people together. Therefore the most colossal challenge in a time such as this is keeping music alive when we're unable to sing together. How can we build links with our community and continue the shared experience of creating music together? I don't have all the answers, but I can share how we've tried to solve them.

Original songs

Our school has music and singing at the heart of our curriculum. I've written a book of original songs exploring the social, moral, cultural and spiritual needs of all students, and our school mottos are enshrined in song. The music curriculum is taught through songs, exploring the various elements of music in a practical way with opportunities within the songs for improvisation and composition. Many of the vocal warm-ups we use were written by the children. In my unique role within this state school I've been lucky to spend the past eight years exploring creativity in music with the full support of the

management team.

I quickly realised when the pandemic struck that the creative arts would suffer, both in wider society and within our school community. I knew that our days of raising the roof of our school hall, singing our catalogue of songs in our Friday singing assembly, were not coming back any time soon.

Therefore, we took the decision to move singing online by building a home learning platform called LyricLand featuring all of the songs. Each week, the children can log in and sing any of the songs, complete with backing tracks, guide vocals, lyrics and pre-pandemic videos of student performances. We've encouraged parents to actively engage with singing too (I know!) and have talked about the mental health and wellbeing benefits of raising your voice in song.

However, we knew that not all students and parents would engage with the website, so we started Facebook Live sessions of the songs for parents and their children. I wrote some new songs in a collection I amusingly called "Sergeant Linham's Social Distance Land", exploring wellbeing in these unprecedented times. We taught the songs through Facebook then directed pupils to our website to encourage them to sing them.

Bespoke videos

I quickly realised that the response to seeing staff



“I knew that our days of raising the roof of our school hall during Friday singing assembly were not coming back any time soon”

members’ faces engaged a far wider audience of parents and pupils and again reaffirmed the importance of singing in our school. When September came around, even though we were all back in school, with bubbles in place it was clear that I’d be unable to teach across all year groups. I needed to find a way to put in place a curriculum that could be delivered across all year group bubbles by any member of staff. Learning from the success of our Facebook videos we made the decision that half the school would have bespoke videos exploring the musical content, led by me via a screen. All of the knowledge,

planning and learning objectives would be contained within the videos and all teachers would have to do is pause the video occasionally for discussion work (and laugh at my jokes). It was a risky tactic. What if the children didn’t find me as entertaining through a screen? However, it paid off and the response to me being ‘trapped in a box’ again has kept children engaged in music and arts.

Embedding music

The content of music lessons has changed too. We switched focus to composition, songwriting and improvisation, knowing that singing was covered as part of the ongoing online curriculum. Each week, all children are expected to log in to LyricLand and sing the prescribed song. Judging by the website data, most of them do. If singing had not been a fundamental part of our school pre-pandemic then I don’t think the uptake would have been as large. By embedding the importance of music within our curriculum, the children know and value what singing does for their wellbeing. Most of them can’t wait until we sing together en masse again.

PROJECT EXAMPLES

There are plenty of musical topics to explore that are 100% Covid-secure. Here’s a few examples of our work with different year groups.

YEAR 6

Pupils each wrote original songs in a project that culminated in writing and performing a class ‘Christmas number one’ in December that was disseminated as part of our online Christmas extravaganza.

YEAR 5

Children developed their own forms of notation after exploring standard music notation.

YEAR 4

Pupils have been exploring rhythm through body beats. I’ve recorded around 50 videos featuring rhythm games, getting progressively more difficult, that pupils can do from home. This is especially useful if any pupils are self-isolating. When they complete various levels they can even print off a certificate.

YEAR 3

We’ve developed a listening project that was started in 2016 as a way of encouraging students to listen to a wider range of music. With carefully curated playlists for each year group, covering a wide range of music styles, we encourage children to open their ears and minds to music that wasn’t written in the last five years.

This year we’ve explored both active and passive listening and listening to music with specific questions and objectives alongside exploring a more holistic, emotional approach. This links to our PSHE mindfulness project, where each week I record a five-minute piano improvisation for children to emotionally respond to. This has been particularly valuable for younger students who are struggling to process the pandemic.

I’m so blessed to work in a school that values music as much as I do. Although we’ve missed out on our live performances, we’ve adapted so we can deliver fun and engaging musical activity that keeps

the passion for music and the wider arts alive in our school. As I wrote in one of my new songs, the day that we are all back together raising our voices will be triumphant. But until then, we will be resilient and know that one day soon it will pass. **TP**



Andrew Linham is musician in residence at Ardleigh Green Junior in Hornchurch,

East London and has been writing original songs for primary pupils for ten years. Find free resources at the below website.

 @alinham

 lyricland.co.uk

Putting ON A SHOW

Are school productions really worth the effort?
For **Tom Kirkham**, the answer is an unequivocal “yes”

With winter behind us, spring all around, and summer creeping tantalisingly into sight on the horizon, it’s time to whisper those inevitable three words – the three words which, perhaps more than any others within primary education, have the capacity to excite and terrify in equal measure: the school production.

Teachers up and down the land, already spinning plates by the dozen, are about to add even more into the mix. Those who have done it even once know precisely what is in store: there’s the acting, of course, and the singing, yes, lovely. But then there’s the staging, the costuming, the make-up, the props, the lights, the sound, the programme, the tickets, the absent children, the lost shoes, the mislaid scripts, the needy child, the needier parent. It begs the question – why on earth does anyone do it? And is it really worth it?

Life-enhancing opportunity

Well, while only the individual teachers can answer that question (and certainly don’t ask them it the week before the show), from the perspective of pupils, parents and the wider school, the answer is an unequivocal “Absolutely!”.

You see, there is nothing like a school production for bringing pupils together in a sustained,

shared experience. Sports days can be exciting, concerts can be rewarding, and residential trips can be great fun, but only a school production provides so many children with so many life-enhancing opportunities to be experienced all together.

These include:

- Instilling a sense of common purpose in a class or year group
- Developing teamwork and leadership skills
- Enthusiasing young learners
- Sparking an interest
- Building friendships
- Increasing confidence

Out of their shells

Productions are not just for confident, extroverted children. They can offer plenty for the quieter, less flamboyant members of the community too. Directed and produced well, a production can really bring children out of their shells and be hugely influential in developing self-confidence and a sense of self-worth, not to mention a host of other transferable skills. Isolated, socially-withdrawn children can be transformed by their involvement in a school play, as little by little their shared experiences bring them closer to their peers. Indeed, the rehearsal period and in particular the performance

days can create new and enduring friendships, such as the



“There’s no getting away from the fact that the work that goes into a school production is colossal”

impact of a production.

I have witnessed this so many times over the last 15 years while directing school productions. I remember one child in particular who had been really struggling to integrate in his (relatively) new school. He was often alone and isolated, and clearly felt awkward and uncomfortable a lot of the time. His transformation began when he was cast in a medium-sized role in a production. Suddenly he was involved; he had a way in.

He rehearsed with different groups of children and got to know them outside of the classroom in a more structured way than in the playground. Gradually

his confidence grew and friendships developed. He became increasingly at ease. The production was the making of him, and before long, the impact could clearly be seen in other areas of his school life too.

And that in itself is probably enough of a reason for most teachers to go through with it, regardless of how exhausting it can be. But actually the benefits go even further. A school production has the power to bring together the entire school community, not just those directly involved. It generates its own momentum. It excites and engages; unifies and motivates. It creates a wonderful focus for pupils and teachers alike. Whole schemes of work can be devised around the show and almost every subject or department within a school can find itself lending a hand in one way or another.

For those teaching English, a production serves as the perfect opportunity to develop and assess spoken language, helping children to speak audibly and fluently, gain and maintain the interest of their listeners, vary tone, pace and inflection. And don’t forget how fun it can be to design posters (art), create props (tech), manage ticketing (maths), help backstage or front of house. Some children may not

enjoy performing but can gain immeasurably by being given meaningful opportunities in other areas.

Passionate singing

There are other less immediately obvious benefits too. Singing within a production, where there is context, narrative, characters, themes and usually an excellent array of musical styles and genres, often leads to some of the best, strongest, most passionate singing that children can do, perhaps because of the production framework which allows them to give their all with less fear of embarrassment. Or perhaps just because it’s more fun.

Because really, fun is what it should be about – indeed, *must* be about. And not just for the children. Teachers shouldn’t have to suffer in the process, and deserve to enjoy it as much as anyone – more so even, given their efforts.

So, is it worth it? Well, there’s no getting away from the fact that the work that goes into a school production is colossal. But what makes it truly worthwhile is not one person heroically shouldering the burden, but when it serves to bring together the whole school community in a memorable shared experience. After all, if as a school you can succeed with a production, you will probably be able to succeed in most other areas too. **TP**



Tom Kirkham is the publishing director of The School Musicals

Company and a qualified teacher of English and drama.

 @musicalsco

 theschoolmusicals.com

How to make your show a SUCCESS

Careful planning and being organised from the outset is the key. A good production schedule is a great place to start. This is a document, usually in table or calendar format and arranged chronologically, which contains all of the practical elements that need to be considered to make sure your show is a success.

Often it helps to work backwards from the last thing you’ll have to do (taking down the set, returning the costumes, sending out the DVD) to the first thing you’ll have to do (choosing the show, confirming the performance date, booking the hall). Other key considerations include dress rehearsals, room bookings, stage design, costuming date, ticketing process, programme design and printing.

Equally vital is to get others involved as much as you possibly can. Rally the troops, badger other staff for support, keep the parents in the loop and invested. Plan early which tasks can and should be outsourced, who and how many people you will need backstage or front of house, who will take full responsibility for the technical demands of the show and who will help to market it and undertake administration. It’s always worth meeting with your headteacher to outline how best the production can be served by the school community in order to be something of which everybody can be proud.



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Let the MUSIC PLAY

The virus has caused a decline in music education – use these simple Covid-secure ideas to kickstart your lessons again

PETER SIMONS

Stop the music. No singing, no blowing, no scraping – Covid has come! This is the message many teachers have received from their schools since March 2020 when the virus began to impact our education system. With so little support from the DfE on the matter, there's been a huge decline in music being taught across the country.

Music is one of the key subjects that children learn, yet time and again I see the subject treated as an add-on; taught infrequently as a special treat or passed out to a local music service. However, by treating the subject in this way, children are really missing out on many important life skills. Music helps develop pupils in so many ways and covers key metacognition areas which many schools are trying to address in their curriculum. But all is not lost, yet! Now is the moment to start the push back and make music one of the key subjects every child learns on a weekly (if not daily) basis.

Below are some simple ideas that can be used by anyone during Covid and beyond. Best of all, they can be applied to all year groups and abilities. Children won't be developing just their musical skills – these activities touch on other areas of the curriculum without children (or you) even realising. I hope they'll motivate and inspire you to start delivering your music curriculum again. My advice is start small. Try one or two ideas out and build from

there. You'll be surprised how quickly children become musicians and the joy this can bring to your classroom.

Keeping the beat

Pulse is key to helping pupils develop their ability to play, sing and clap in time to music. Like any skill, it needs to be taught and nurtured. A child who has been sung to from an early age will find clapping a pulse really easy, but those who haven't will struggle. It's vital that the first skill pupils learn is how to find the beat of the music.

I teach my children that pulse is the heartbeat of music. To find the pulse, listen to music, create dances and move different parts of the body in time to the music. For instance, punch the air, clap, tap your head, jump or pat your knees. By doing this on a regular basis as a warm-up, all children will begin to find out what a musical pulse feels like and develop this essential skill. There are so many brilliant tunes

out there to use, but my favourite is Wipeout by the Surfaris.

All ears

Musical games are vital for developing the listening skills of all pupils. We use hand drums but clapping or turning your chair into an African drum work just as well.

Start the listening section of your lesson by playing a short rhythm and allowing the children to copy it. Do this for a minute or so and then ask one of the children to become the teacher. It's

important that every child has a go at leading, so take your time with it. Stop every now and again and ask why a rhythm was a good one to copy, or why that one was really difficult. This will help children understand that to be successful they have to keep their rhythms short and memorable.

You can then play a game called 'pass the beat'. The idea is that the children must play their drum (or clap) as soon as the person next to them has played. The effect should be similar to a Mexican wave, but with drums. Ask pupils to sit in a circle and choose a child to choose the direction and start the game off. Use a stopwatch to time the group. Once children have got the hang of it, they can try and beat their time and can come up with strategies to speed up the group.

This is great for developing children's concentration skills. Add a level of challenge by regularly changing the direction of the beat.



“Now is the time to explore and teach music in a way that perhaps you haven’t thought about before”

Transferable skills

At my school I introduce different note lengths at different ages and pupils master these before moving on. In foundation stage we look at crotchets and quavers; in Y1 we add the crotchet rest; Y2 look at minims, minim rests and semibreves, and so on.

Over the years I’ve developed my own rhythm cards featuring tadpoles and frogs (see panel, right). First, introduce each card to the children and talk about the note name and length. Counting to four, pupils can

now try playing each card in turn. We use hand drums for this but you can easily clap, use pencils on tables or turn your chairs into African drums.

Next, while you keep a steady pulse, ask the children to have a go at playing all the cards without stopping. Finally, combine two cards and play two bars of music. Once children can read the notation you can start to have fun with these ideas:

- Play two bars backwards
- Split the group into two and have half play forwards and half backwards at the same time
 - Start groups off in a canon or round and keep repeating two bars

- Try playing four bars
- Tell certain groups of children that they can only play certain notes.

Children can come up with ideas for extending this activity too. It’s a skill that is transferable to reading and

will help develop pupils’ ability to speed read and look ahead.

I am extremely fortunate to work across a trust where music is considered to be of high importance and have been able to, with some mitigations, carry on with the music curriculum and keep children motivated, helping to protect their mental health through this difficult period.

We have to concede that for safety, restrictions are paramount and some elements of music in schools are not feasible currently, but don’t let this stop you. Embrace these changes as opportunities and unleash your creative side. Now is the time to explore and teach music in a way that perhaps you haven’t thought about before. **TP**

FREE RHYTHM CARDS

Use these frog and tadpole themed rhythm cards by Peter Simons to teach pupils about crotchet rests, crotchets and quavers. Download them for free at tinyurl.com/tp-rhythm



Peter Simons is a Silver Pearson National Teaching Award winner

and works at Thornhill Junior and Infant School in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire.

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WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Identify key moments within a story/text
- Use drama techniques to explore a story/text
- How to create role play that balances dialogue with action
- How to evaluate drama critically but empathetically

Explore an Ancient Greek myth via drama



Act out the tale of Persephone and the pomegranate seeds via tableau and role play, says **Tom Kirkham**

[@musicalsco](#) theschoolmusicalscompany.com

Drama provides children with a fun, practical and meaningful way of exploring the world, both in the present day and in times past. In this lesson plan, it is used to explore the Ancient Greek myth of Persephone and the pomegranate seeds, a story which the Greeks used to help them understand the changing nature of the four seasons. Pupils will undertake practical activities in small groups, demonstrating an awareness of story sequence, characters, themes via tableau, hot seating and role play activities.



START HERE

Read the class the story of Persephone and the pomegranate seeds. This is freely available online – choose a version to read in which the Greek god of the underworld, Hades, features rather than the Roman god Pluto. Alternatively, listen to a 15-minute audio version from the BBC at tinyurl.com/tp-persephone.

Discuss the main sequence of events. How does your class feel about the actions of each of the main characters in the story? Ask the children how this myth would have helped the Ancient Greeks to make sense of the changing seasons.



MAIN LESSON

1 | TERRIFIC TABLEAUX

Divide the class into small groups of four to six children, depending on which version of the story you have chosen. Explain to them that you would like them to decide on five or six key moments from the story; the events which drive the tale forwards and without which it wouldn't really make sense.

Introduce the word 'tableau', explaining that it is another word for a freeze frame or still image. Tell the children that an effective tableau can convey lots of meaning, just like a picture in a comic can.

Discuss the importance of body language, facial expressions and positioning in

order to convey meaning.

Ask the groups to work on five or six tableaux in the order that they appear in the story, each child playing one (or more) of the characters from the story.

2 | SUPER HOT SEATING

Introduce the drama technique of 'hot seating'. This involves a character from a play or piece of drama being asked questions by the other members of the group, to which they respond in character. It is a useful exercise for helping actors to get to know their character, and to practise the voice, physicality and body language that they want to use. Ask the children to undertake hot seating in their groups. The better the questions that are asked, the more useful



“Ask pupils to try to balance dialogue with action in their piece of drama”

feelings, wishes and regrets of their character. Introduce the word ‘dialogue’ to the class, explaining that this is what we call the lines spoken by characters within a play or a story.

Ask pupils to try to balance dialogue with action in their piece of drama, using both to convey meaning to an audience. You may wish to give groups the option of using a narrator too. This can be useful in introducing a scene or connecting two parts together, but shouldn’t take the place of characters using dialogue.

Watch the performances, asking the audience to jot down on a simple evaluation form two things that they thought had been done well, and one thing that they thought could be improved. Steer children away from any personal comments about individuals, such as someone being amazing or too quiet, and guide them instead towards comments about the feel and atmosphere of the piece, how well the story was conveyed and the quality of the dialogue and movement. Wrap things up by considering the role of stories in Ancient Greece as a way of helping people to understand the world around them.

Tom Kirkham is the publishing director of The School Musicals Company and a qualified teacher of English and drama.

the exercise will be in helping a student to develop their character. Good examples of questions would be:

- **To Hades:** do you think your actions in kidnapping Persephone can be justified whatsoever?
- **To Demeter:** How did you feel when you couldn’t find your daughter?
- **To Persephone:** How difficult was it to resist the pomegranate seeds offered to you by Hades?

3 | ROLE PLAY

Ask each group to dramatise a particular part of the story. This will involve them playing their role and trying to convey the thoughts,



EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Ask children to try scripting part of the story. Remind them of the typical script format (character name, dialogue, stage directions) and that there is no need for speech marks or “he/she said”. Encourage them to write dialogue that conveys atmosphere (harmony between Persephone and Demeter and conflict between Persephone and Hades, for example).
- Write a diary entry for Persephone while she is trapped in the Underworld. Consider her thoughts, feelings, hopes and concerns.
- Imagine Hades has been summoned before Zeus to explain what he has done and why. Prepare a persuasive speech that justifies his actions. Use persuasive techniques such as evoking sympathy, empathy and guilt.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- How would Persephone react to being kidnapped by Hades?
- What dialogue could you include to help convey what it is like in the underworld?
- How might you convey Demeter’s heartache at the disappearance of her daughter?



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Use creativity to explore and gain a deep understanding of different aspects of a story
- Develop teamworking skills through listening and responding to each other's ideas
- Gain confidence through seeing value in their own ideas and opinions and presenting them in a variety of ways
- How to infer and justify ideas about a story

Introduce a new story with drama



Explore people and places with techniques from the National Theatre's Let's Play programme, says **Emily Azouelos**

[@nt_schools](#) nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning/primary

The National Theatre Let's Play programme aims to transform creative learning and theatre-making in schools. This lesson takes a creative literacy approach to introducing any new story using Let's Play methodology. All the activities can be delivered prior to reading the text for the first time and involve thinking about characters' thoughts and feelings, mapping out locations and drawing visuals. These tasks allow children to engage with the story you're studying through drama and are designed to help deepen pupils' understanding.



START HERE

'Story whoosh' is a great way to introduce a story without prior knowledge of plot or characters. Seat or stand children in a circle. Explain that you will narrate a story. Each time you mention a character, ask one pupil to come into the circle and perform the actions of that character as you've described them. Continue narrating the story, incorporating all characters, places and plot points. You can clear the 'stage' at any point by calling "Whoosh!". At this point, pupils rejoin the circle and are no longer the characters that were assigned to them. Continue until the whole story has been acted out.



MAIN LESSON

1 | CHARACTER BOARDS

Divide the class into small groups. Provide each group with a piece of paper large enough for one child to lie on. Allocate each group a key character from the story you are looking at and ask them to draw round one member of their group to create an outline for their character.

Ask pupils to note the motivations, thoughts, feelings and character traits on the inside of the outline. Children should note any physical characteristics they observe or infer from the story on the outside (see image, right). Encourage them to consider how the character might walk,

talk and laugh. What kind of habits might they have?

What would be a common expression or turn of phrase for the character? What kind of impression would they make when they entered a room? Think about how the character might dress. This could be based on research pupils have done if the story is set in a particular time period.

Provide magazines, fabric and other art materials. Give each group the time to source examples of clothing and styles that they would associate with their character and attach these to the paper. After the children have collated their notes and finalised their character board, ask them to share their ideas with the class.



2 | MASKING TAPE MAPPING

To gain a deeper understanding of the world of the story, use masking tape to create a map of a particular location featured in the story, imagining it as a bird's eye view.

Split the class into small groups and assign a different location from the story to

each group. The masking tape maps can either be created on the top of the desks or on the floor (preferably uncarpeted). Encourage the children to include as much detail as possible about their location from the story as well as adding in details from their imagination to bring greater depth to the locations.



Pupils can also make small objects out of the masking tape to go into their location to add another element to the map. Give children time to visit each group's location with the host group acting as a tour guide, pointing out all the features and different key areas of their location. Add an extra element by asking children to write on the masking tape any key vocabulary taken from either the story or their imagination that describes the location.

3 | PLOT IMAGERY

Gather the class on the carpet and retell the synopsis of the story they are studying. As they listen, encourage them to see what images come into their mind as the story evolves and think about whether they are adding any details to the image that aren't necessarily in the story but that can be inferred.

At the end of the retelling, ask the children to select the strongest image in their mind from the story. Hand out paper and a range of drawing materials and ask the children to sketch their image. It can be useful to play music and create a purposeful atmosphere here to focus children on their task.

When pupils have finished drawing, come back together as a class and examine the images. Place them in chronological order, referring back to the story plot, and noticing differences or similarities between the images as a discussion point. Hang up the drawings around the classroom in chronological order to cement the children's understanding of the plot in the story and as a useful reference point as you study the story further.

Emily Azouelos has worked as a teacher and senior leader in London primary schools and is a consultant and writer for the National Theatre Let's Play programme. Let's Play is the National Theatre's programme to inspire creative learning and transform theatre-making in primary schools across the UK.

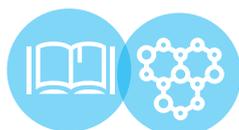
EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Using the character boards for reference, ask children to explore their characters further using hot seating. One child should sit on a chair in role as the character while the rest of the class asks them questions. Start with general questions and then move to questions about how the character felt at specific moments in the story.
- Ask the children to write tour brochures about the location they created using masking tape. Alternatively, assist pupils to film themselves advertising their location as an interesting place to visit.
- As the children learn more about your story's plot, ask them to write descriptive words and phrases on sheets of acetate and staple these over their drawings. This is a great reference point for children if you go on to do creative writing inspired by the story they are studying.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- If you could discover more about the location or character, what would you want to know?
- Tell me about your image from the plot, drawing upon the storytelling to support your ideas.
- Which exercise helped you to connect to the story/character and how did it help?



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Use the possessive apostrophe in sentences that contain both singular and plural nouns
- Use high-level vocabulary when writing sentences about orangutans
- Enhance their interest in and improve their knowledge and understanding of the natural world

Use orangutans to teach about apostrophes



Use the hook of amazing Attenborough wildlife clips to get children engaged in grammar lessons, says **David Millington**

@natural_curric naturalcurriculum.co.uk

This Y5 grammar lesson, based on a David Attenborough clip about orangutans, will help children to develop an understanding of possessive apostrophes in plural and singular nouns. It's been adapted from the Natural Curriculum, a website developed in partnership with the Educational Recording Agency, that features fun free animal-themed grammar lessons for Y4-6 centred around captivating clips from the BBC's natural history archives. Use the resources in the classroom, or direct pupils to the easy-to-navigate website if they're working from home.



START HERE

The activities outlined in this lesson can be broken down into grammar starters and spread out over consecutive days or taught together as an hour-long session. Begin the lesson by visiting the Natural Curriculum website (tinyurl.com/tp-orangutan) and showing children the picture of the orangutan that appears on screen one. What do pupils already know about this remarkable creature? This will give children the opportunity to connect their learning, and the exciting animal focus will get them instantly engaged in the lesson.



MAIN LESSON

1 | WAYS OF THE FOREST

Introduce the following grammar objective to the children: "We are learning how to write sentences that contain possessive opportunities." Next, read the clip description at tinyurl.com/tp-orangutan. The facts about orangutans and details about the clip should excite the children about what is to follow and focus their attention on Sir David's fabulous narration.

Watch the four-minute clip on the website as a class. It shows a mother orangutan teaching her youngster the ways of the Borneo rainforest.

Once it's finished, compile a class list of words and phrases to describe the appearance and behaviour of the furry primates. A focus on the word level early on will help children construct descriptive sentences as they move through the lesson sequence.

2 | MASTER APOSTROPHES

Use the following orangutan-themed sentences to teach the mechanics of possessive apostrophes:

- The infant's human-like fingers probed deep inside the termites' nest.
- The orangutan's daughter was learning how to identify when the durian fruit's flesh had ripened to perfection.



“Ask children to write their own sentence about the orangutans featured in the film clip”

Display the word wall on screen three (tinyurl.com/tp-orangutan). It features rich vocabulary relating to the film clip, such as ‘termites’, ‘raided’ and ‘ripened’. Encourage children to use words from it in their sentence.

3 INDEPENDENT WRITING

Download and adapt the worksheet that appears on screen four so that it suits your pupils’ needs. This task gives pupils the opportunity to apply their knowledge of possessive apostrophes by adding apostrophes to sentences where they have been omitted, rewriting sentences so that they include possessive apostrophes and writing their own follow-on sentences including possessive apostrophes.

To finish the lesson, recap the main grammar points, drawing on examples from children’s own writing. Once you have done this, get the children to discuss with their talk partners what they have learnt about the natural world and orangutans. Bring the lesson to an end by watching another orangutan clip (see screen four) that shows a mischievous youngster hurling a branch at a wildlife presenter.

David Millington teaches at Cotham Gardens Primary in Bristol. He is the creator and principal author of the Natural Curriculum.

● The lumberjacks’ chainsaws could be heard from far and wide.

They each contain a possessive apostrophe (used to show that someone or something belongs to someone or something else). Draw pupils’ attention to the fact that when something belongs to a single noun, an apostrophe is added and this is followed by an ‘s’, eg ‘orangutan’s nest’. When something belongs to two or more (plural) nouns, we add an apostrophe after the existing ‘s’, eg ‘termites’ nest’. Exceptions to this include pluralised nouns

that don’t end in ‘s’, eg ‘children’s’.

Ask children to copy and complete the following sentence by putting in a possessive apostrophe:

The orangutans reddish-orange fur was thin and shaggy.

Next, rewrite the following sentence so that it contains a possessive apostrophe:

The prickly skins, that belonged to the durian fruits, made them hard to carry.

Now ask children to write their own sentence about the orangutans featured in the film clip that includes a possessive apostrophe within a pluralised noun.

EXTENDING THE LESSON



● Use your knowledge of orangutans to write a persuasive letter to a supermarket chain that buys and sells palm oil. List the accurate use of possessive apostrophes in the success criteria.

● Writing as a mother orangutan, create an instructional leaflet that will help infants learn the ways of the forest.

● After watching both film clips, ask children to imagine that they are members of a film crew that have been tasked with filming orangutans in Borneo for a new BBC wildlife series. Write a diary entry about a day’s filming that didn’t quite go to plan. Again, encourage children to accurately use possessive apostrophes in their writing.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Where have you come across apostrophes before?
- How do we show possession when something belongs to two or more (plural) nouns?
- Why are orangutans critically endangered and how can we help them?

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I wish to be a teacher

Leah, 7

Brain tumour



"Leah is noticeably more independent since her wish."
Mum, Elaine

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Hold a Bake-A-Wish fundraising event this term and help grant life-changing wishes for seriously ill children, like Leah.

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REGULATOR**

ASSESSMENT 

Shine

Targeted interventions for primary reading and maths from RS Assessment from Hodder Education



AT A GLANCE

- A complete solution for assessment, intervention and reporting from Y1-6
- Enables teachers to identify and address gaps in learning
- Effortlessly generates everything you need to provide targeted intervention
- Builds confidence among pupils
- From trusted brand RS Assessment from Hodder Education

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



As any teacher knows, testing pupils is just the beginning. It's only once those assessments have been marked that the work really begins, assuming you want pupils to benefit from the information they reveal. Not only do you want to know who is struggling with what, but you also need to do something about it so that they can show tangible progress come the next stage in the testing cycle. Fortunately, Shine gives purpose to the whole process.

Developed by RS Assessment from Hodder Education, the trusted provider of assessment resources, Shine is a complete solution that makes assessment produce results. Starting with the tests themselves, it enables teachers to turn their pupils' performance automatically into useful reports that identify gaps linked to ready-made, targeted interventions. What's more, it's all wrapped up in one neat, easy-to-use package.

Shine is beautifully simple, yet comprehensive, detailed and streamlined. Once the termly standardised PUMA, PiRA or NTS assessments have been administered, teachers input the scores into MARK, the free online assessment and reporting tool. This generates Shine reports for individuals or groups that highlight gaps in understanding at the content domain level. You'll also be

provided with links to suggested learning sequences, expertly tailored to address those learning needs.

These learning sequences include 'Prepare, do, review' sections that give teachers all the information they need to implement the interventions successfully or delegate them to a teaching assistant. There are activities, worksheets, quizzes and review sheets to help pupils build confidence. There is even software provided for modelling responses on an interactive whiteboard – ideal for group work.

Intuitively designed and easy to use, Shine provides an effortless way of delivering targeted interventions in response to expertly created assessments that closely resemble national tests. It covers Y1-6 and allows for three test points per year. It's available for reading, maths or both.

Just think of the time and effort it could save: meaningful reports generated with a few clicks; no need to create child-specific intervention materials; no need to explain to teaching assistants how you want them to deliver the support sessions. Where else could you find all this in one comprehensive package? It's almost like cheating. When it comes to assessment and targeted intervention, Shine has all the answers.

teach PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Created by experienced teaching experts
- ✓ Thoughtfully designed and easy to use
- ✓ Identifies learning gaps with precision
- ✓ Saves time and effort
- ✓ Suitable for group or individual work

UPGRADE IF...

You want a comprehensive package that gives confidence and purpose to teacher assessment and intervention.

Annual subscription; Shine Reading Skills, £400 + VAT; Shine Maths, £400 + VAT; both, £720 + VAT, risingstars-uk.com/shine

SCIENCE

Animal Planet magazine

100% recycled, eco-friendly magazine that teaches children about conservation, science and protecting the planet




animal planet
MAGAZINE

AT A GLANCE

- Immersive magazine devoted to curious creatures and awe-inspiring natural wonders and phenomenon
- Brimming with magnificent photography, fun facts, hands-on activities and stories that spark a feeling of wonder
- Cultivates a direct and contemplative connection with nature
- Every page is a world of adventure, excitement, inspiration and discovery

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



Any children's magazine has to be able to capture a child's interest and keep hold of it. New magazine Animal Planet does just that. It describes itself as action-packed and it certainly is. The magazine feels and looks exciting – it's teeming with so much life and diversity that you feel like you're on an actual adventure.

Like the Animal Planet TV channel, the magazine promotes a desire to explore and discover by helping children understand and appreciate the wonders of the natural world around them. It asks and invites big questions and gets readers to think like professional naturalists and behave like conservationists. Every page is enlightening and inspirational, encouraging children to be attentive, present, mindful and watchful.

The content is compelling and enables children to get face-to-face with the animal kingdom, learn lots of facts, complete puzzles, engage with challenges and experiment. The colourful photographs used throughout are simply breathtaking. Key concepts and information are presented in memorable ways and nothing is dumbed down. Instead, it's written in an age-appropriate format that is spot-on.

A children's magazine has got to have a big offering and Animal Planet delivers plenty on every page, with opportunities to learn, investigate, participate and win prizes.

There are plenty of wildlife educators and experts on hand to share their knowledge and answer questions, including Ben Fogle, Michaela Strachan, Dr Jess French and Ellie Harrison. There is also a regular spotlight on a wildlife personality. In the first issue, this is YouTuber and Animal Planet TV host Coyote Peterson.

Children will also enjoy a fun comic featuring Lily and Leo Dolittle (who can, of course, talk to the animals), important wildlife days to remember, ways to save the planet, reviews, animal profiles and a page devoted to readers themselves.

Animal Planet magazine helps children seek deeper awareness, appreciate how life fits together, build their knowledge, change their field of vision and open their minds. It teaches young people that there is no such thing as a stupid question.

At just £40 a year for a school subscription, this adrenaline-fuelled magazine is perfect for the classroom and home learning.

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Immersive, engaging and enriching
- ✓ Includes a plethora of magnificent photos that are bold, beautiful and mesmerising
- ✓ Packed with fascinating facts and exciting escapades
- ✓ Quality content and fabulous features for captivating reading
- ✓ Encourages children to engage with the world, connect with others and link ideas
- ✓ Kick-starts curiosity and creativity

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for a magazine crammed with amazing animals, conservation, environmental science, pets, experts and activities galore.

Find out more at animalplanetmagazine.com/schools

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Schools

LITERACY 

Bug Club Shared

A structured, systematic approach to vocabulary progression featuring books designed to introduce children to rich, challenging words


 Pearson

 Bug Club Shared

AT A GLANCE

- Engaging stories with curriculum-linked vocabulary progression
- Helps pupils develop a love of reading for pleasure through a whole-class approach
- Introduces children to rich and challenging words from across the curriculum
- Beautifully illustrated books with highly engaging texts by leading authors
- Superb supporting video content

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



Guided online learning and digital provision is now more important than ever. But it isn't new, and some publishers have been supporting schools with their trusted brands for years. Well ahead of the pack have been Pearson and its ActiveLearn platform which contains plenty of online resources to help schools plan, teach and assess. Its latest resource offer is Bug Club Shared which forms part of a whole-school reading solution for enhancing reading skills.

This new reading scheme has been created to help Reception, Y1 and Y2 children become fluent and self-assured through the exploration of a range of cross-curricular subjects, using high-quality books, each with a flexible two-week teaching cycle. It makes the sheer delight of sharing wonderful texts with children a top priority as a key part of boosting their emergent literacy skills.

In the shared reading collection there are 36 books available for reading aloud, dissecting and discussing as a class. They are perfect for introducing children to complex gear changes in their reading, extending their vocabulary and widening their ownership of the

world. Each contains engaging text and high-quality illustrations.

To support these books are 36 Storytime videos, read aloud by professional storytellers. Tailor-made for the IWB, they can also be allocated to children for home learning and shared reading.

Bug Club Shared is easy to use and no training is needed beyond a little time to familiarise yourself with the various bits and pieces. There is a neat and tidy support section with information for parents, book trackers, classroom goodies and case studies. These link to further reading about what you need to know and the programme principles and pedagogy. Underlying the whole collection is a strong reading for pleasure message – it's about helping pupils develop a love of reading and getting them excited about books in a whole-class context.

The beauty of Bug Club Shared is that the resources are ready to go. Shared reading sessions are easier to organise as everything is streamlined. This resource was a winner in the literacy category of the Teach Primary Awards 2020. A 30-day free trial of the online resources is available from Pearson.



VERDICT

- ✓ Built to ensure the effective delivery and retention of knowledge
- ✓ Inspires children to become confident speakers and fluent readers
- ✓ Builds excitement around reading for pleasure and closes the word gap
- ✓ Ready-made, adaptable resources which ease workload
- ✓ Dynamic and responsive to all needs
- ✓ Promotes reading aloud as a vital bridge to literacy

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for a set of intuitive, self-service resources with built-in cognitive empowerment for ensuring children have the vocabulary they need to succeed.

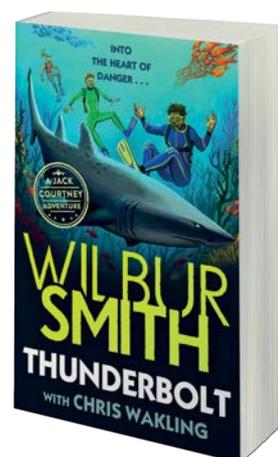
Digital subscription, £349; print pack, £239, pearsonprimary.co.uk/bugclubshared

LITERACY



Thunderbolt by Wilbur Smith

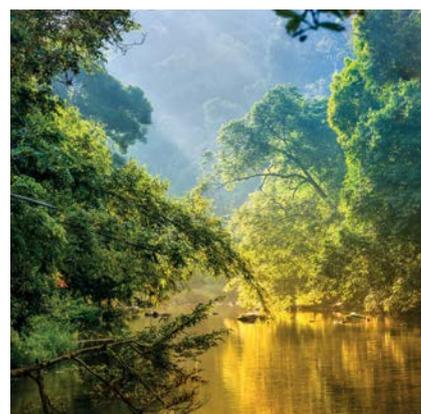
The second in a new action adventure series from worldwide bestselling author Wilbur Smith, starring 14-year-old Jack Courtney



AT A GLANCE

- Action-adventure novel following 14-year-old Jack Courtney
- Set in the diverse and tropical East African country of Zanzibar
- Second in a series of adventures by author Wilbur Smith
- Laced with accurate, rich and topical description
- 272 pages of action and adventure

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



Author Wilbur Smith is no new hand when it comes to adventure novels. Smith was born in Central Africa and has since written over 30 novels. What is instantly noticeable in *Thunderbolt* is that the novel is meticulously researched. This not only adds plausibility to the narrative, but also boosts the educational value of the text in terms of cultural capital and engages the reader in terms of the astute attention to detail.

Thunderbolt is the second in the series of Jack Courtney's adventures. What captures my attention most about the series is that the setting goes against the grain. Fusing the teenage protagonist with the tropical setting of the Congo means there is an Indiana Jones-esque level of adventure and escapism.

The main character, Jack Courtney, along with his friends Amelia and Xander, start the story in Zanzibar, diving for lost treasure to support Jack's mother's coral protection project. Going further than usual on their last day, their dive boat is lured into a trap and captured by Somali pirates. Determined that his mother shouldn't pay a ransom for their release, Jack won't give up his attempts to escape. The adventure follows the friends to a militia training camp for boy soldiers. Here they befriend another child, Mo, who gives them hope.

Full of twists and turns, the narrative is both exciting and educational. The immersive setting descriptions makes the reader feel as though they are there with the characters, experiencing exactly what they are. Stylistically, the novel is divided into bite-size paragraphs, ideal for class reading. Moreover, the nature and setting descriptions makes for rich topical discussion around themes outside of the main narrative.

The vocabulary in most instances is accessible and although there are some words which may border on more challenging, the context in which they are placed makes them mostly decodable. A nice feature is the seamless direct speech which compliments the vivid descriptions brilliantly.

Thunderbolt, for all of its merits, comes with a minor warning. As with any action adventure, there is a level of threat and peril. The references to threats and weaponry may not appeal to all. The novel is in many ways geared towards boys, but the inclusion of a strong female character goes some way to making the novel feel a bit less typical of the genre.

Overall, *Thunderbolt* certainly caught my attention and I have no doubt that it will grip young people who read it – it's a real page turner. Jack Courtney is certainly a hero to rival Alex Ryder.

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Packed with action, depicted through vivid description
- ✓ Structured in a way that makes it suitable for use as an individual reader or class reader
- ✓ Rich content allows for topical discussion around themes and settings
- ✓ Relatable and accessible narrative and sustained character development
- ✓ Exciting, engaging and well-balanced plot

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for a book that appeals to stronger readers who have a taste for adventure and action, or want to complement a unit on Africa or tropical nature.

£6.99 from all good book retailers

ART & DESIGN

Kapow Primary art & design resources

Teacher videos, lesson plans and progressive schemes of work for Y1-6



AT A GLANCE

- Complete coverage of the art curriculum with an easy-to-follow scheme of work
- 100+ teacher videos to develop subject knowledge and confidence
- 70+ pupil videos, demonstrating skills and techniques
- Overview of progression of skills included
- Outcome snapshots and knowledge organisers for all topics



REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES

Kapow Primary provides accessible support for teachers across non-core subjects, helping schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum. The Kapow Primary team comprises educational experts and former teachers and this is shown in the quality of its resources.

From the outset, the art and design resources exude quality. The package is comprehensive, comprising lesson plans, resources and live modelling videos. You can pick up the resources and use them out of the box, whether you're a subject specialist or not.

The units focus around making, meaning that the emphasis throughout is on the practical elements of art and design. Students are exposed to numerous different approaches to creation, including painting, drawing, printing, crafting and creating 2D and 3D art. What is most striking about the Kapow Primary offer is that it is so broad, meaning you can adapt the learning to suit those in front of you without the rigidity of having to follow laborious lesson plans.

At their core, Kapow Primary's art and design resources are inspired by a diverse range of real artists and craftspeople who are experts in their trade. This is instantly evident when you see the videos and modelled resources. In effect, you have an art expert in the classroom with pupils, meaning you can act as a facilitator

or add your own expertise if you choose. It is the inclusion of the experts in the creation of the videos that makes these resources so pertinent in the current climate. Kapow Primary has ensured that the spring term content is distance-ready, so to speak.

This responsiveness doesn't just add value to the resources; it highlights the ability of the Kapow Primary team to adapt to the needs of teachers.

As with any form of learning, there needs to be foresight of the next steps. Alongside the highly creative ideas, the art and design package has a curriculum-based underpinning. Students are introduced to formal elements such as colour, form, line, pattern, shape, texture and tone, as well as being given knowledge of artists' work and techniques. This is imperative for progression to KS3 and beyond.

A final feature of the Kapow Primary art and design content is the embedded reflective and evaluative encouragement. The lessons and resources encourage pupils to look at their own work and think about what they are doing. Although subtle, the emphasis on self-efficacy builds independence and adds to the wider value of the package. The peer-based reflection is also a nice touch and builds a sense of collaboration for learners.

VERDICT

- ✓ Exceptional breadth and depth
- ✓ Videos add an extra element of functionality and value
- ✓ Easy to navigate and integrate into planning
- ✓ Clear presentation of content that can be used to supplement teaching or as full units
- ✓ Real emphasis on progression in skills and understanding
- ✓ Lesson plans that show clear progression, with presentations and additional resources

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for a scheme of work with adaptable lessons that allow you to deliver an exceptional art and design curriculum.

Prices from £185 + VAT, depending on school size, [kapowprimary.com](https://www.kapowprimary.com)



DAY in the LIFE



A one-day diary from first alarm to lights out

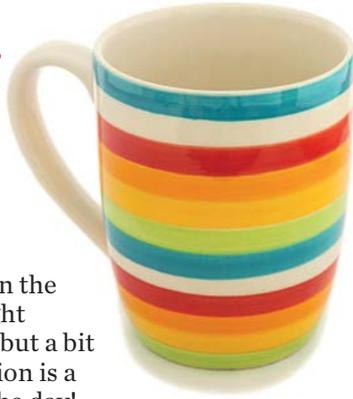
SUE O'MALLEY
IS A Y6 TEACHER
IN COVENTRY.

 @suey2chaussures



WAKING UP

My alarm goes off at 5.30am and the first thing I do is grab a cuppa and sit in the dark. That might sound strange but a bit of calm reflection is a great start to the day!



MY MORNING

On days when I'm in school I leave home at 7.45am. We start with a feelings check-in – wellbeing checks are a vital part of our day. We then get straight down to a morning task.



MY AFTERNOON

Our afternoon sessions start at 1.30pm and generally involve science, RE or PE.



LUNCHTIME

We're not all allowed to use the staffroom at the moment so we have allocated areas to eat. We get a free meal every day which is great for the wallet, but not the waistline!

MY EVENING

At the moment I leave school around 4.15pm. Before lockdown I went to the gym three evenings a week – it's a great way to switch off. Nowadays I read, watch Netflix or spend too much time on Twitter!



BEDTIME

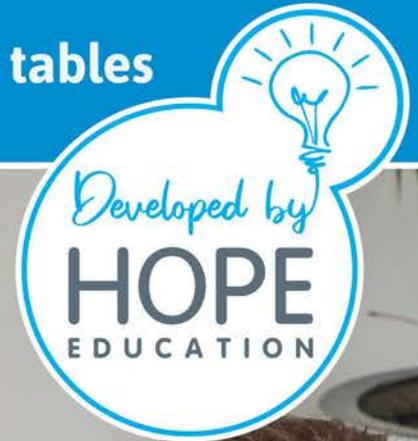
I'm a bit of a night owl. It depends on my workload but I try to head to bed before 11.30pm. I read a bit but usually have no trouble getting to sleep!

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

- ❖ **Career plan B?** I didn't train to be a teacher until my 40s. Before that I had bilingual jobs in logistics.
- ❖ **Music rec?** Music is a huge part of my daily life. My current favourites are SAULT and London Grammar.
- ❖ **Must-read?** The Midnight Library by Matt Haig. It's a fantastic concept and you immediately connect with the main character.
- ❖ **Twitter hero?** Paul Garvey (@paulgarvey4) helped me to build my Twitter connections just before lockdown started and the support I've received from eduTwitter has been fantastic.

Multiplication Monsters

The *New* fun and easy way to teach times tables



Reasons to love

- ✓ 1-3 player game to improve recall of times tables/division facts
- ✓ Covers times tables highlighted in Year 2/3 curriculum objectives
- ✓ Each set easily lends itself to intervention learning and can be sent home for blending learning

Wipe clean to share between groups

Children can independently learn and assess

INSPIRED,
TESTED &
Loved
BY TEACHERS

Multiplication Monsters game Set 1 **HE1821746 £29.99**
Multiplication Monsters game Set 2 **HE1821748 £29.99**

'Fun' isn't usually the first word children think of when they think of times tables, but the new **Multiplication Monsters game from Hope Education** a fun and easy way for children to **learn times tables**. Children simply match sums on the board with the correct answer square and flip to reveal a Multiplication Monster if they're correct! There are **two games**, one supporting the **2, 3, 4, 5** and **10 times table** and the other supporting the **6, 7, 8, 9, 11** and **12 times table**.

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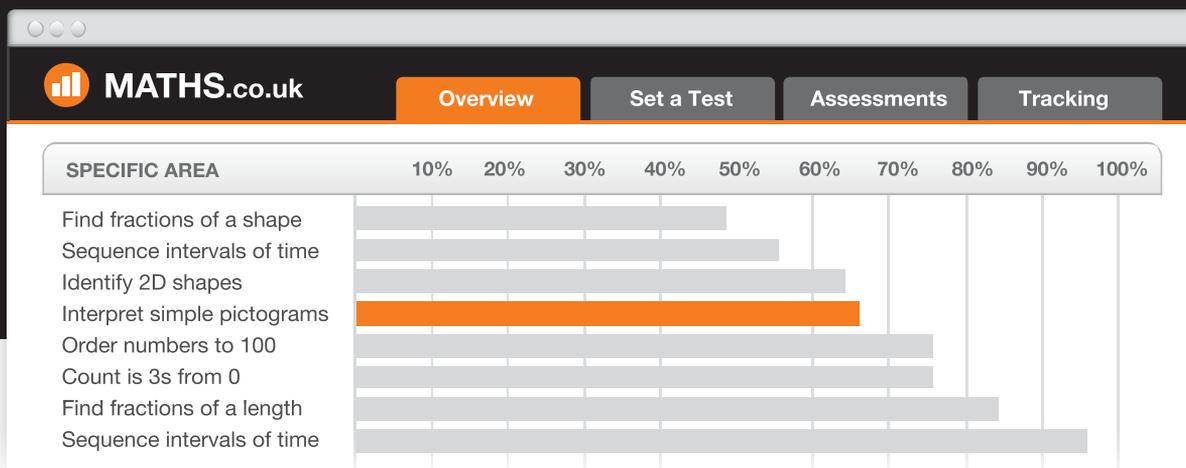


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