Lancashire Primary Strategy: Literacy

Boys’ Writing Project - 2005-2006

A Lancashire project to develop Boys’ Writing through Visual Literacy and Drama

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction and overview</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Drama techniques</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: ICT approaches</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Using poetry and drama</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Visual literacy</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Impact on writing</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: Questionnaires</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8: Conclusion</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction and overview

This project was developed in response to the continuing headlines about boys’ underachievement in writing.

In Lancashire, the 2005 KS2 SATs showed that whilst the gap between boys and girls had narrowed in reading to 6% there was still a large gap of 17% in writing. Furthermore, the gap in achievement for boys between reading and writing was also wide at 25% compared with 14% for girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A boys’ project which had taken place in 2004-5 had had a significant impact on the standards of writing achieved for the children taking part in this. Therefore we were anxious to build on some of the approaches that had already been developed. This project had been delivered to teachers of children in year 5.

The 2005-6 project was designed to look at different teaching and learning approaches that would appeal to boys as much as girls. The aim of the project was to consider ways of using visual images and drama, alongside ICT to stimulate boys’ writing and to look at practical activities which could be developed in the classroom. We also wanted to identify incidental opportunities for writing so that children became used to making notes or writing informal jottings as the unit of work continued.

We were keen to use units of work from the NLS planning exemplification and adapt these to incorporate a variety of teaching and learning approaches. The aim was to take a flexible approach while still ensuring the basic sequence from reading to writing.

Organisation of the project

Fifteen schools, where boys’ writing had been identified as an issue, were identified. These were clustered into three groups in the North, South and East of the county. Each cluster of schools was supported by a Literacy consultant. The focus was on children in year 4.

A programme of training and support was devised to support the schools. Each school was provided with £400 to develop the project in the school. This was to allow the teachers to attend training and have some release time to develop the project in their classes:

- Day 1 – An introduction to the project along with an overview of the timescale and content of the project. Schools were given an introduction to the use of drama techniques (Conkered) and ways of incorporating ICT into teaching and learning activities.
- Gap task – Teachers were asked to identify a group of 6 underachieving boys, ask them to complete an attitudes to writing questionnaire and to bring a sample of levelled writing for each of them. Teachers were also asked to trial teaching approaches discussed on Day 1.
Day 2 - Teaching approaches from Day 1 that had been trialled in school were discussed. Teachers also discussed the target group of boys and their ability in reading and writing. Levelled samples of writing were moderated in the groups. A unit of work which explored an approach to developing writing through the use of poetry and drama was shared with the group ‘What has happened to Lulu?’

Gap task – Trial the poetry and drama unit ‘What has happened to Lulu?’

Day 3 - Teachers discussed the poetry and drama unit and brought practical examples of writing developed in their classrooms. They were introduced to the idea of using visual images and a unit of work on using visual Literacy and drama to develop writing was shared.

Gap task – Trial the visual Literacy and drama unit and develop one of their own. Level another piece of writing from the boys at the completion of the unit. Complete another questionnaire to see if attitudes to writing have changed.

Day 4 - Evaluation of the project. We looked at the writing that had been developed in the last unit and samples of work that had been produced. Final levelled pieces of writing were analysed and discussed. Children’s attitudes were evaluated. Teachers gave feedback on the impact of the project in their classrooms. We also discussed different ways to develop children’s learning through alternative approaches to writing in the classroom through the use of visual Literacy and ICT.

The sample group

The units of work were designed to be delivered to the whole class but the aim of the project was to track the impact of the teaching approaches on a specific group of boys. Therefore the teachers identified a group of underachieving boys and tracked their progress throughout the project. The children completed a piece of writing which was the baseline for comparison and these were levelled. Sample of writing were gathered at the end of the project to analyse development.

The children were also given a questionnaire to examine their attitude to writing. This was followed up at the end of the project to see how the children’s attitudes had changed.

Planning

The training had a clear focus on planning and the inclusion of video/ image/ drama and incidental writing into the planning. Units of work from NLS medium term plans were used and developed to incorporate a variety of approaches and a range of writing opportunities. Visual Literacy and drama are useful tools to support children in developing their ideas and understanding.

Planning circles were introduced as a way of developing a three week plan. The diagram demonstrates the process from text level work to independent writing. The circles show how the planning sequence can be developed. For example, the video extract may be used at the beginning of a sequence of work or following an examination of a relevant text. It may also be used towards the end of a unit to gather ideas for writing. The planning circles also illustrate the different drama opportunities and the range of writing opportunities that can be developed.
Planning Circles

Objectives

Familiarisation
with text type

Capturing ideas

For & against
Fact boxes
Summarising
Character profiles
Thought bubbles
Speech bubbles
Post it notes
Story map
Notes
Diary
Letter
Email or text messages
Problem page

Short play script / conversation / dialogue / gossip

Teacher demonstration

Overheard conversation
Hot seating
Role Play
Freeze Frame
Thought tracking
Conscience alley
Paired Improvisation

Teacher scribing

Supported writing

Independent writing

Unit outcome
Feedback from the teachers indicated that they found this approach to planning very supportive in developing their own practice. They appreciated the structure of using a unit plan but liked the flexibility of incorporating visual images or drama at various points in the planning and teaching process. All the teachers trialled the unit developed by the consultants and some developed their own.

**Recommendations for planning**

- Be flexible – develop the planning over two or three weeks to ensure that there is enough time to explore and develop understanding through speaking and listening, drama and discussion.
- Spend time training the children in new approaches e.g. Hotseating, freeze framing, conscience alley, to ensure they understand the approaches and are confident in their responses.
- Ensure the children are supported through demonstration, shared and supported composition, to develop the understanding of writing.
- Identify opportunities for short, ‘incidental’ writing tasks throughout the unit as well as the more formal outcome at the end.
- Integrate the drama, discussion, visual image and use the approaches flexibly to support the whole process.
Chapter 2

Using drama techniques to support boys’ writing

These drama techniques were used throughout this year’s Boys’ Writing Project to explore stories, poems and films.

Drama is an effective strategy to:
• Develop characters through movement, facial expressions, dialogue and interaction;
• Express and convey situations, characters and emotions;
• Develop understanding of how to act out plots, dramatising the problem, climax and resolution.

The classroom techniques used in the project were:

Freeze frames:
• Still images or silent tableaux to spotlight a specific incident;
• Opportunity to scrutinise an incident;
• Body shape and positioning used to convey ideas and emotions.

Thought tracking:
• Use in conjunction with Freeze Frame;
• The children not in the freeze frame contribute ideas as if they were speaking the thoughts of one of the characters;
• These can support or contrast with the words that character actually says.

Conscience alley:
• To explore a character’s mind at a moment of crisis or decision;
• To explore the complexity of the decision;
• Two lines of children facing each other;
• Character walks through - line of children voice thoughts for and against.

Hot seating:
• Close focus upon a character;
• Explores character’s motivation;
• Explores gaps in a character’s story;
• Class ask questions of someone in role;
• Questions can be prepared or improvised;
• Role player and questioners need to be familiar with character.

Forum theatre:
• To view an incident or event from different points of view;
• Small group acts out a scene;
• The class direct the group to move, speak act differently;
• Questioning actors in role;
• Suggesting alternative interpretations of what is happening.
Meetings:
- Teacher in role calls a meeting of whole class;
- Information shared with whole group;
- Decisions made about the situation they face;

Paired improvisation:
- Encourages collective role. Children works in pairs;
- Given a role or agree them for themselves;
- Begin dialogue on a signal making the conversation up, as they go along.

Flashbacks and flash forwards:
- Children stop at a particular dramatic action;
- They refocus upon something that happened before that may have caused event;
- Focus on something that might happen later as a consequence of the action;
- Other techniques used to review situation from different perspectives; e.g. freeze-frame.

These techniques are described in full in the Speaking and Listening materials ‘Speaking, Listening, Learning: working with children in Key Stages 1 and 2’ (DfES 0623-2003 G).

These techniques were used to explore the following story, Conkered! It was used as part of the unit on Issues and Dilemmas.
"You dirty, rotten thief!"
Billy Wilson was really winding me up. I don’t usually kick-off like that but he was slouching on
the playground bench swinging MY prize conker back and forth, back and forth with a really
irritating smirk on his face.
"Prove it, Spud!" snarled Billy.
That’s me, Spud, A.K.A Edward King. Get it? Edward King – King Edward. What were parents
thinking?
"All conkers look the same, don’t they?" he droned on.
"No they don’t! That’s mine. I’d recognise it anywhere."
My Nan had given me the string for it. She’d found it in Grandpa’s old shed. It was old and
yellow and waxy and she said it would never, ever snap. It was wrapped around an old
tobacco tin, and, as she unwound it, she looked sad with a far away look in her eyes.
"There you go, Edward lad, that’s championship string, that is. Your dad used it for his
conkers, too." She held the old tin to her nose before placing it gently back on the cobwebby
shelf.
This all happened the day before the annual conker competition. Billy Wilson
couldn’t be bothered to find his own conkers so he’d stolen mine from my bag. He stole a lot of
things, Billy did, and he couldn’t be bothered to do anything much most of the time, including
having a wash. Mum says it’s not his fault and it’s not surprising, considering.
"Considering what?" I’ve asked a thousand times.
"None of you business," she always says.
I couldn’t complain to the teachers about my stolen conker because we weren’t
supposed to have them in school. Health and safety, or something. You can have your eye out
with a conker, apparently! Any way, there was nothing I could do. Billy Wilson is a big lad and
I’m not. So, I decided to look for another conker.
I went home through the park and rummaged about underneath the conker trees. It
didn’t take me long to find an absolute beauty. I rubbed it on my trousers and it polished up
into a glossy swirl of browns and golds. This would be a winner and Billy Wilson wouldn’t be
smirking tomorrow. I called in at my Gran’s on the way home for some more string.
"Eh, Edward lad," she said, "you took the last of it yesterday. It’s all gone." My heart
sank. It was special string. String that my dad had won competitions with. It would never, ever
snap.
"Never mind, Gran," I sighed. "My Mum’ll have some. See you later!"
Sure enough, Mum had something that would do the trick – an old shoelace. First of all
we followed the old recipe of soaking the conker in malt vinegar for exactly two minutes and
baking in the oven at 250 degrees for one minute and thirty seconds. My dad drilled a hole
through my conker with a sharp nail and threaded the shoelace through, making a big knot on
the end so that it wouldn’t come loose. I was disappointed not to have the traditional family
string but I was determined to beat Billy Wilson.
The next morning, at playtime, we all gathered behind the school kitchens. The smell of
cabbage was belching out of the extractor fan making school dinners even less tempting than
usual. Everyone was comparing conkers and eyeing up the opposition. Marcus Jones was
look-out. His parents wouldn’t let him play conkers because they said competing with other
children was bad for you. That must make the rest of us really bad because we were always
challenging each other to dares and bets and daft races. Anyway, he’d have to stand on a box
he’s so small.
"All clear!" whispered Marcus.
We paired up and tossed coins to see who would go first and then we were off. I held out my conker, steadying the string so it wouldn’t move. Josh Watson drew back his conker, took aim and swung at mine. They crashed together and Josh was left with a piece of string with fragments of smashed conker clinging to the end.

“One-er!” I announced. A long way to go yet, ‘though.

The competition continued until there were only two whole conkers left. We all stood there; the ground covered in bits of smashed conker and discarded pieces of string. Billy Wilson and I faced each other both clutching ‘six-ers’ because we’d smashed six other conkers. I went first. Drawing back my beautiful conker, I took aim and swung. Just at the last minute, Billy pulled his conker out of the way.

“Foul! Foul!” shouted Marcus. For someone who didn’t compete, he had a pretty good grasp of the rules!

“Spud gets another go for that,” he said.

Again . . . pull back . . . aim . . . swing . . . CRASH! Both conkers were still in one piece. Billy’s turn.

“Look out, Spud-face,” snarled Billy, “you’ve got no chance.” He looked me straight in the eyes with that horrid smirk across his podgy face. He pulled Grandpa’s special string slowly between his thumb and forefinger, challenging me to say it was mine. Placing one foot in front of the other and rocking to balance himself, Billy squared his shoulders, pulled back his conker, aimed and swung. The conker flew into the air and across the playground, hitting the kitchen widow with a crack. The string had snapped! Grandpa’s special, waxy, unsnappable string had snapped!

“Winner!” yelled Marcus, trying to hold my arm up in the air like a champ.

“Conkered!” I shouted at Billy who had turned red and was clenching his fists.

“Detention!” thundered Mr. Poskitt, the headteacher, as he stormed around the corner. “Don’t you boys realise, you could have your eye out playing conkers!”

Edwina Maskell
Practical Activities: Using Drama to Explore ‘Conkered!’

Freeze frame and thought tracking

- Read the story ‘Conkered!’ down to ‘apparently.’
- Freeze frame Spud and Billy Wilson.
- Set body language and facial expression.
- Thought tracking: speak the thoughts of each of the characters using evidence from the story so far.

Conscience alley

- Form two lines.
- ‘Billy Wilson’ to walk through the lines.
- One line to voice his conscience about stealing the conker.
- One line to justify the theft.

Hot seating

- Read to the end of the story. Possible characters for the hot-seat:
  - Gran;
  - Billy Wilson;
  - Marcus Jones;
  - Mr. Poskitt.
What sort of questions could you ask these characters?

Forum theatre

- Two children playing conkers.
- Audience stand around in a circle.
- The class direct the group to move, speak act differently.
- Questioning actors in role.
- Suggesting alternative interpretations of what is happening.

Meetings

- Teacher in role calls a meeting of whole class.
- Information shared with whole group;
- Decisions made about the situation they face.
- Encourages collective role.
- Should Conkers be banned from school?
- (Edward De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats)

Paired improvisation

- Billy and Spud.
- Marcus and his parents.
- Gran and Spud.

Flashbacks and flash forwards

- Flashbacks to events in Billy Wilson’s life that have caused him to steal, be lazy and unwashed.
- What might Spud’s mum have meant by ‘It’s not surprising, considering.’
Edward de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats

Edward de Bono developed the ‘six hats method’, a simple yet powerful tool which can be used to teach people to view problems from a range of perspectives, and so develop a more rounded way of thinking. It helps people to look at things in a collaborative way, beyond their normal perspective, and to see new opportunities.

When considering a problem or proposition, people within the group will look at the issues from different perspectives.

- The White Hat deals with just the facts.
- The Yellow Hat explores the positives and probes for value and benefit.
- The Black Hat is the devil’s advocate and spots the difficulties and where things could go wrong.
- The Red Hat expresses emotions and feelings and shares fears.
- The Green Hat focuses on creativity; the possibilities, alternatives and new ideas.
- The Blue Hat is used to manage the thinking process and ensures the Six Thinking guidelines are observed.

Encouraging children to try out roles makes it easier for them to understand the approaches to thinking through problems. This approach could be used to discuss:

- Issues in a text leading to deeper comprehension;
- School issues such as rules, bullying, playtime, etc;
- Historical events from different points of view;
- Geographical issues such as building by-passes.

For more information visit www.edwdebono.co.uk/debono/home.htm.
The Problem
Should Conkers be banned from school?
Feedback from the teachers and children about using drama techniques to explore texts:

In some classes there were initial behaviour issues as the children became used to moving around and being more interactive. This could be avoided if the techniques were introduced over time rather than all at once with one text. These issues soon disappeared as the children became more confident and used to the techniques.

Some teachers used the techniques to explore well-known traditional tales, such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears, so that the children could practise the drama techniques on familiar stories before trying them on an unknown story.

One class explored Goldilocks and the Three Bears and using interviewing/hot seating went on to write newspaper reports about the story. The different points of view which informed the report were much more easily understood after the interviews in role. Many of the comments and speech used in the role play were included in the final writing.

The teachers reported that the final writing, and the process towards the finished piece, was much better as the children had something ‘real’ to write about.

Another outcome of using the techniques to explore a text was the much greater use of deduction, prediction and inference in the discussions. The children explored ideas surrounding the story and gained a much better insight into the characters by talking about their possible backgrounds, only hinted at in the story.

- “I didn’t use drama techniques before this project but I use them all the time now.”
- “Drama techniques have had an impact on the language used in the classroom. They give children many more opportunities to display their knowledge. ‘If I was him I would...’”
- “The children gave more extended answers.”
- “More able to explore characters.”
- “Give children the opportunity to express their thoughts.”
- “Having acted out their thoughts makes writing much easier.”
- “Before I used role play the children wouldn’t take the role of the opposite gender – now both will willingly play the opposite.”
- “Self-consciousness is much reduced.”
- “The main impact of the project is the increase in confidence. The ‘brick wall’ has gone.”
- “Much greater quantity of writing.”

An Example: Wesley 2.12.05

Conkered!

Today a boy called Spud had his conker stolen it was in a school called West prom. The boys real name was Edward King. It seemed he was really unhappy. Then he went to the park and past looking for a conker he found one eventually then he said he wanted to start a conker competition. the eye witness markus was on the look out. The competition had started the first two people to have a battle were Josh and Billy, they flipped a coin and Josh swung his conker and CRACK! Joshes concker was all over the floor. He did not look very happy. The next two people to have a battle were Spud and Billy they both swung there conkers back and it seemed that it was a foul shhot. They swung again CRACK! Again Spud had won the competition. “I tried to hold his arm up like a champion” said Marcus.
Chapter 3
ICT Approaches

A range of approaches to ICT were explored in order to motivate and engage boys at the beginning of the project.

- the use of interactive and multimedia texts as reading material
- the use of digital image and sound to stimulate and extend writing

Interactive and multimedia texts

The use of interactive and multimedia texts was examined to promote motivation and engagement, develop traditional reading skills and introduce new reading skills, such as the use of non-linear reading and use of hyperlinks to access information.

Several examples are available on the Primary National Strategy resource ‘Learning and Teaching using ICT’ CD Roms. A Year 4 example for guided reading using Little Red Riding Hood illustrates the above skills. Further guidance for using the resource in shared reading was provided with a CD for all teachers in the project, with advice on how to adapt or innovate the Powerpoint file. A few teachers experimented in using the approaches with pupils, although most did not exploit the resource to its full potential. This was due to confidence and skill levels in using ICT and the lack of interactive whiteboards in classrooms.

Using digital image and sound

Using a range of digital images, photographs or portraits can provide excellent opportunities in providing contexts for talk, developing comprehension and inference and can maximise short writing opportunities.

Several examples and approaches to using digital image and sound were explored in relation to characters and settings, focusing on Year 4 objectives.

- Think – pair – share ideas about characters and settings.
- Question hand – who, what, where, when, why. Reading an image using comprehension strategies.
- Hot seating and freeze framing characters and situations.
- Writing thought bubbles and speech bubbles following speaking, listening and drama activities.
- Think – (deduction)
- Say (literal)
- Feel – (inferred)
A number of teachers were inspired by the approaches to using speech bubbles linked to drama activities and found this to be extremely successful in maximising short writing opportunities. One school used the idea in relation to Art work linked to the portrait by Picasso ‘The Weeping Woman’. The boys responded very positively to the speaking and listening activities and enjoyed writing on post-it notes. This approach has now been transferred into many literacy activities within the school and is used frequently in units of work.
Chapter 4
Using Poetry and Drama to Stimulate Writing

The poem that was used for this part of the project was:

*What Has Happened to Lulu? By Charles Causley*

The ideas used were based upon a case study in the publication *Boys on the Margin* Promoting Boys’ Literacy at Key Stage 2 by Kimberley Safford, Olivia O’Sullivan and Myra Barrs. CLPE

The poem contains a series of questions asked by a child to his/her mother. These questions become increasingly anxious and create an atmosphere of tension and foreboding. The character of the title, Lulu, has disappeared in the night and the circumstances leading up to this are unknown. However, there are many possibilities and the children can begin to explore these.

This part of the project was enthusiastically received by the teachers and, without exception, went down very well with the children. All of the feedback was positive and some surprising and unexpected successes were achieved by children who had previously not engaged. More of this later!

For the purpose of the Boys’ Writing project, the following objectives were used to explore and respond to the poem. However, the techniques detailed below are appropriate across the primary age range and could be adapted for many texts and poems.

**Year 4 Reading target Statements**

- Respond critically to issues raised
- Locate evidence in the text
- Explore alternative courses of action
- Evaluate authors’ solution

**Year 4 writing target statements**

- Show imagination through use of detail, e.g. show characters’ feelings or motives

An example plan was created to support the teachers in the project schools.

**Practical Activities:**

Teaching Sequence for Interpreting and responding to poetry

1. First impressions and queries
2. Interpretation of meaning
3. Mood/effect upon the reader
4. Authorial technique
5. Underlying theme
Using poetry and drama to stimulate writing

A poem or text can be used as the central stimulus for writing. Here are some ideas for both incidental and complete pieces of writing using a poem.

What has happened to Lulu?

What has happened to Lulu, mother?
What has happened to Lu?
There’s nothing in her bed but an old rag doll
And by its side, a shoe.

Why is her window wide, mother,
The curtain flapping free,
And only a circle on the dusty shelf
Where her money-box used to be?

Why do you turn your head, mother,
And why do the tear-drops fall?
And why do you crumple that note on the fire
And say it is nothing at all?

I woke to voices late last night
I heard an engine roar.
Why do you crumple that note on the fire
And say it is nothing at all.

I heard somebody cry, mother,
In anger or in pain,
But now I ask you why, mother,
You say it was a gust of rain.

Why do you wander about as though
You don’t know what to do?
What has happened to Lulu, mother?
What has happened to Lu?

By Charles Causley 1917 – 2003
Paired discussion:

- Annotate the poem with your initial feelings and responses

Group Discussion/Question hand

- Where is the poem taking place?
- Who is involved?
- What has happened?
- When did it happen?
- Why did it happen?

Lulu’s note:

- In pairs write Lulu’s note on a ‘post-it’ note.
- Stick it on the board.

Freeze frame:

- Take two lines of the poem each and freeze-frame the action.
- Decide who is saying the lines.
- Consider emotions/feelings/facial expression/gesture.
- Recite the poem two lines at a time, in sequence, around the classroom.

Visualisation:

- Draw and annotate Lulu’s room.

Hot seating:

- Mother;
- Sibling;
- Lulu.
Discuss and write questions onto whiteboards.

Diary writing – In pairs write the diary entry for:

- Mum;
- Dad;
- Brother;
- Sister.

This could be done on whiteboards. The structures and language features of diary writing would need to be revised and modelled prior to this activity.

Character development through:

- Letters;
- Email;
- Text message.

Paired improvisation:

- Lulu talks to a friend and tells her what has happened.
- Friend listens and gives advice.
Problem page:

- Write Lulu’s letter to the problem page;
- Write response from the agony aunt/ uncle.

Conscience alley:

- Should Lulu go home or should she stay away?
- Write final verse.

ICT Activities:

- Find websites on runaways e.g. Newsround;
- Read and research statistics and information about the issues;
- Ask children to contribute to interactive websites;
- Children to email each other in character;
- Email to teacher as problem page (who responds separately).

Other writing activities:

- Personal response to the issues;
- Story;
- Extra verse;
- New poem;
- Lulu’s note that was crumpled up;
- A report on the issue of runaways.

Other activities:

- Compare and contrast - She’s leaving home – Lennon/ McCartney
Feedback from the teachers

- 'I followed the given plan and adapted it in places.'
- 'We did all the activities in the shared session.'
- 'There was no need to differentiate as all children could access and respond to the activities.'
- 'The children who were reluctant to write wrote much more.'
- 'The transcriptional pressure was off.'
- 'The SEN children blew us all away!'
- 'There was no right or wrong answers – no constraints – freedom about the outcome.'
- 'The children enjoyed all of the activities. Most children thought Lulu had been kidnapped' (In one school).
- 'Interesting differences in interpretation.'
- 'The children loved drawing and annotating the picture of Lulu’s bedroom.'
- 'Some children were really pedantic about making sure all the clues in the poem were represented in the drawing.'
- 'Using post-it notes was a huge hit. The children readily engaged with the incidental writing throughout the unit.'
- 'The children (in one school) wrote the post-it notes from Lulu in mixed-ability pairs.'
- 'All of the children were on task during the writing sessions and this was unusual. I’ve never had children on task so much.'
- 'The class was so intense that music could be played – and heard!'
- 'My more able child, who is often bored, was fully engaged.'
- 'There were unexpected responses from children who don’t usually contribute.'
- 'The unit produced improved writing across the board and ability range.'
- 'The boys were much more willing to write about emotions.'
- 'The lower ability were coming up with words they could not write – showing a greater range of vocabulary than previously.'
- 'It was real to the children.'
- 'The children used their own experiences. There was a lot of anger at the mother in the poem.'
- 'Many of the responses reflected the children’s home lives.'
- 'It’s amazing what a good text can produce!'
- 'In the hot-seating you had to be careful who was chosen. The children thought of thoughtful and sensible questions.'
- 'It opened up a debate in the class about open questions.'
- 'Drama did not make a silly class sillier. My silly class settled to it and worked really well.'
- 'Conscience alley worked well in my class.'
- 'Conscience alley was difficult in my class.'
- 'A child with behavioural difficulties responded to the freeze frame activity amazingly well.'
- 'When the children were writing they really became immersed in the role.'
- 'The post-it notes were amazing. The emotional language used was amazing. The children took on the story wholeheartedly and understood the possibilities behind the story. There was no right or wrong answer, which they liked.'
The Extra Verse

Oh, I've come home, Mother,
   I'm sorry I said No,
I will never ever run away,
   Because I love you so.

Who that knocking at the door mother?
   Shall I go and see?
It is Lulu Mother
   She has come back for me.

Where do you think she is staying Mother
   Where do you think she'll go?
Is she sheltering in the subway?
   From the thick and icy snow

Has she got some food mother?
   Has she got som were to slepe
Has she go something to drink Mother?
   Is she with her friends?

Why is her wardrobe open Mother?
   Has she gone to work with Dad?
Has she gone to her friends house?
   Or has she broken her leg?
Or has she ran away Mother?
   Has she gone to Gran's?
   As quiet as a mouse.
   Please don't make me beg.

Are you OK Mother?
   Was a note on the wall, Mother?
I know Lulu is the one you miss.
   Or did you see nothing at all?
Byt she'll be OK for now.
   Do you know where she would be, Mother?
I wish I could give her a kiss.
   Why didn’t she talk to me?

I know what happened to Lulu Mother,
   I know what happened to Lu,
She says she hates you mother,
   That's what happened to Lu.
Visualisation – Annotated drawings of Lulu’s bedroom
Examples of Lulu’s Note

Dear Mum
I have left home because of the arguments. I may stay or I may come back. I am sorry if I have upset you.
Love from Lulu

Dear Mum
I have left because you don’t feed me good stuff only junkfood and you are shouting at me every day. Please tell my little brother that he is the Best Brother ever been made.
From Lulu

Dear Mum
I will be back soon so don’t worry. I have gone away for a while because you have got on my nerves by shouting and arguing with me. So after I have got over it I will come back. Please don’t be cross.
OK
Bye
Lulu

To Mum
I am leaving for a little bit with my boyfriend I will be back soon I am going for a long time I will miss you. Some day I will come back cause I will miss you so much Lulu.

Mum sorry I had to do this but I have to do this
Love Lulu

Dear Mum
I hate you because you keep on arguing with me and my little brother so I went to my friend’s house who lives across the road:
Number: 61945 7912
P.S. From Lulu your little girl.

Dear Mum,
I have ran away from home because I don’t like the way you treated me, and I don’t like the way your hitting me. If you could please tidy my room because it is a terrible mess. Tell my sister you have been the best sister in the world.

Dear Mum
I have ran away because I don’t like the way you treated me, and I don’t like the way your hitting me.

Dear Mum
I ran away with my friend because I am sick and tired of you shouting at me. Please do not be cross because I have ran away. I thought it was the right thing to do or I would be getting told of for the rest of my life. I think you should know how I feel, a bit lonely and angry. If I do come back please do not be cross with me.
P.S. Please tell my little sister I miss her very much.

Love Lulu

Dear Mum
I have run away because you keep on arguing with me and my little brother so I went to my friend’s house who lives across the road.

Dear mother I ran away because I don’t love you any more because you never listen to me.

Love Lulu

Dear Mum
I hate you and I will never come back and I have run away with my boyfriend.

Love Lulu

Mum
I hate you because you hit me. I’ve run away — you don’t like Callum and I’ve gone to live with him instead. I don’t like my family any more, you’re all mean and annoying. I am angry.
Lulu
P.S. I’m never coming back!
Examples of Lulu’s Note

**Dear Mum**
I have run away because you keep on shouting at me. You be kind to my brother but not to me and that is why I have run away. I will come back when you have learned a lesson. You have been the nastiest mother I have ever seen.
Lulu

**Dear Mum**
I am running away from home because you have NOT fed me well. You always pay attention to my sister and not me. Plus I am sick and tired of you shouting at me fornothing. I will miss you a tiny weeny bit. Just please tell my little sister that I will miss her so much. I will come back after 10 years.
P.S. If you have time send a letter back to me.
Love Lulu

**Dear Mum**
I went because you was arguing if you stop i will come back if you done arguing by next week i will come back next year. i am in a hotel I took my money i have 200 pounds left from christmas im getting bored of you shouting at me. Im sorry by.
From Lulu

**Dear Mum**
I have left because I don’t like the way you treat me. I have left the note because if I didn’t leave it I would of felt bad.
P.S. Please tell my little brother he is the best and I left because you don’t feed me good food and you hit me all the time.
From Lulu

**Dear Mum**
I have run away because we keep on arguing over and over again why can’t we just stop. I’ve tried to start a fresh with you but no you just keep on arguing. I am sorry but I am not coming back.
Love Lulu xxx
Dear Diary

Yesterday I got kidnaped at 12.00 I think my mother was involved. I felt rely scared
Because the kidnaper had a gun. I thought he was going to shoot me if he never got money
off mother and Daddy. I tried to escape but the kidnaper saw me.

Examples of Diary Writing

Wednesday 5th December
Dear Diary Last night something terrible hapend. Lulu left home and mum was
ting. Lulu and mum had big row. I felt crying. Lulu and mum had big row. I felt
cryod and sad that Lulu had left. Mum. puzzeld and sad that Lulu had left. Mum.
puzzled and sad that Lulu had left. Mum, puzzeld and sad that Lulu had left. Mum,
puzzled and sad that Lulu had left. Mum. Lulu and mum had big row. Lulu and mum had big row.

Dear Diary

I've been kidnaped. It is Dark and gloomy were I am it smells horrible I was scared to death Last
night I almost had a heart attack it was pouring it down. When I got to the
warehouse the kidnaper started to hurt me.

Dear Diary

I am sad about my Lulu running away from Home. I now had a big agmnt but I miss her. I want
her to gim back. I am still anxious In cays sunun hapns to her. I now I sudit put the note in the
flyer because dad hast sen it.

Dear Diary

1-1-05
I had a row with my mum about being grounded nerly every week. My mum said it was being out to
lai so I pland to ryn away that night. So I could har som pece and quit. In staid of a row. When I had a row
with mum I felt mad with mum. When I ran away from home I felt sad. I took my money box so I could
buy some food and some drinks for my selv. I took my mobile phone and some cloth’es with me. Tomoro I
might go back home and tell mum that I will run away for good if she grounds me nerly evry week but
if she does not I will stay.

Dear Diary

I do not know why Lulu ran away. I like my sister very mutch. I wish she will come back. I am still trying to find out what
mother is so upset about. Mother and father had a divorce so I don’t think that she wuld of told
him but you never know it is the first week and mother is still crying. Whell I don’t blame her I
still have a teyr in my eye.

Tuesday 1st April 2008
Some thing terrorBle has happend to day my sister has ran away from home and mother
doesn’t want to talk about it I feel sad and misrible Because nobody will tell me what is
going on. I Realy miss Lu because she’s the only one I can talk and she’s my Best friend I
hope she come’s Back to the house and Never runs away again.
March 1th
Dear Diary
Today I felt upset because it's all about mum. She can't treat me this way. So I climbed out of the window and met my boy friend and had tea and green and went for a walk.

kiss

December 23rd
Dear Diary I'm feeling very upset. Because Lulu left me. I've given her everything she wanted but she still left me. I don't know why because I let her friends stay and even her boyfriend stay as well.

Dear Diary I am feeling very upset. Because Lulu left me. I've given her everything she wanted but she still left me. I don't know why because I let her friends stay and even her boyfriend stay as well.

Lulu

Dear Diary
I felt puzzled because of Lulu running away.

Dear Diary
I feel upset because of Lulu running away. I ran upstairs to see her bedroom but her bed hadn't been slept in. I am very shocked because I didn't know she would go. She took her money box. I saw her window it was open. I feel scared because she might get hurt. I also feel worried in case she might get killed. Not only am I scared, I am frightened and terrified. I am very worried to very very worried.

Dear Diary
I'm just fed up of mum shouting at me all day and night. SICK AND TIRED! Of mum telling me what to do. I'm 15, old enough to do whatever I want whenever I want. I am leaving tonight and no one can stop me! Don't want to leave but I think it's for the best. Got to leave Sister Emaily. She's been the best sister ever. Going to stay at my friend's house. I fell very frightened.

Dear Diary
I am so upset and angry that my dear child has ran away from home. I am very angry but I still wish I knew where she was. I am getting the police involved because I do love my child. But maybe I went too hard on her. I am so upset. I just want to know if she is ok and well. I hope my sister has found her. Because my kids are nagging me to get Lulu back.

Right that's it! I'm just fed up of mum shouting at me all day and night. SICK AND TIRED! Of mum telling me what to do. I'm 15, old enough to do whatever I want whenever I want. I am leaving tonight until mum has learnt a lesson. Really frightened! Gonna be ok cause I'll be with a friend. Feeling angry, sad and happy. Feeling sad because I'm really going to miss Sophie. The BEST little sister in the world! Bye for now.

Lulu x
Examples of Letters

33 Shell Road
preston
La8 52B
12/1/06

Dea Lulu, How are you feeling we are relly worred about you and we are despete for you to come home. It felles so different without you. How long until you come home? Your sister cody is relly sory for blaming you and if you come home we not be angry with you.
Love mum, sister and dad

3 Sun Valley
London
Lo1 23C
12/1/06

Dear Lulu, please come home we are all sorry, I am sorry for shouting Laura is sorry for arguing, and your dad is sorry for everything. Please come home we beg with all our hearts we all feel very sad and scared. I can not sleep because I keep thinking about you.
Love from mum xx

17 Werning Court
Grosvenor park
La33 SH
12/1/06

Dear Lulu
Where are you were all worried sick. Your sister spends more of her time looking for you. She never goes to sleep and every morning she comes down stares and says is Lulu here is Lulu here so please come home.
Yours sinserly mother

Dear Lulu
Me and mum miss you so much. Please will you come back! Why was your window wide open and were is your money box gone? What did you need you money for? What did it say on the letter by the fire? Why did you leave your rag doll and a boot? We can play out all day and go to the shop. If you come back you can stay put longer with your friends.
From your brother Andy.

Dear Mum,
Please can you come and help me Mum I've been kidnapped. I am rely scared. I got kidnapped at 12.00am. There is five of them one has a gun the other four had knife's. If you want to see me again give the kidnap's £10,000000.
Love Lulu

in a dark cave in the middle of nowere
12/1/06

Dear Mum,
Please will you come back! Why was your window wide open and were is your money box gone? What did you need you money for? What did it say on the letter by the fire? Why did you leave your rag doll and a boot? We can play out all day and go to the shop. If you come back you can stay put longer with your friends.
Love Lulu
Examples of Problem Page Letters

166 Elmridge
WN8 6dB
11/1/06

Dear James

My name is Mrs Cropper and I am frightened because my Daughter has gone. And I am scared because she might of got lost. I am worried because her money might run out, and I am angry because she has run away from me. I am so terrified that she might of got killed. I am so sad about it. I am so upset because she might not come home. I am so cross because I just want her to come home. I hope that she is not lost because I will have to send for the police and she is scared of them.

Mrs Cropper

12 New Lane
Old town
OL3 7eg
11/01/06

Dear Jack

Im Lulu Cropper. I have left home. I am facing about going home. I miss my mum and she miss me. I don't want to go home but I think that she will life me out again. I am cross and filled because my mum hit me. I am upset because I dist now my mum won't hit me.

yours faithfully miss cropper

190 New Lane
Skemesdale
OL3 7Fg
11th January 2006

Dear Toby

What should I do? I am running out of money. I am worried of what my mum is going to do to me if I go home. But I am still cross of my mum hitting me. I feel scared and cold. I am going to have to go home sometime other wise I get sick and die, but I don't want to die either.

P.S. I ran away because my mum wouldn't let me see my Dad.

Lulu
### Literacy Unit Plan

**Unit:** Poetry on similar themes  
**Texts/Resources:**  
- What has happened to Lulu? By Charles Causley  
- Lyrics of She’s Leaving Home by Lennon and McCartney

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Whole Class Shared Reading and Writing</th>
<th>Whole Class Phonics, Spelling, Vocabulary and Grammar</th>
<th>Guided Group Tasks</th>
<th>Differentiated Independent Tasks</th>
<th>Plenary Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1   | Shared Reading of ‘What has happened to Lulu.’  
| 2   | Re-read What has happened to Lulu?  
Dramatic interpretation – freeze frame. | | Setting. Visualise, draw and annotate Lulu’s room. Clues to her character and what has happened. | Feedback: What type of character does her room suggest? Teacher scribe one sentence to sum up the room. |
| 3   | Hot seating of one of the characters: Mum, Dad, Lulu, Sibling.  
Speaking and Listening: What do you think was in the note?  
Demonstration writing of a diary. | | Writing a diary of one of the characters. Mum, Dad, Lulu; sibling. | Feedback: Evaluate examples against checklist. |
| 4   | Shared Writing: An informal letter from Mum to Lulu or Lulu to Mum or Lulu to a problem page. | | Letter to one of the characters from another character. | Feedback: Evaluate examples. Paragraph labels for each paragraph. |
| 5   | Conscience Alley: Lulu – Should I stay or should I go?  
Share write an alternative verse depending upon decision made  
Compare and contrast Lulu poem with the lyrics of She’s Leaving Home by Lennon and McCartney | | Children to use ‘What has happened to Lulu’ as model for writing an extra verse. | Feedback: Performances of last verses. Has authorial style been maintained? |

**Cross Curricular Links:**  
- PHSE: Issues raised in discussion of poem.  
- ICT: Newsround website about runaway children.

**Outcomes:**  
Poem based upon imaged or personal experience; e-mails; letters; diary

**Speaking and Listening focus:**  
Drama techniques to explore and interpret moods, feelings and responses.
Who?
What?
When?
Why?
Where?
How?
The Beatles – She's Leaving Home

Wednesday morning at five o'clock as the day begins
Silently closing her bedroom door
Leaving the note that she hoped would say more
She goes downstairs to the kitchen clutching her handkerchief
Quietly turning the backdoor key
Stepping outside she is free.
She (We gave her most of our lives)
is leaving (Sacrificed most of our lives)
home (We gave her everything money could buy)
She's leaving home after living alone
For so many years. Bye, bye
Father snores as his wife gets into her dressing gown
Picks up the letter that's lying there
Standing alone at the top of the stairs
She breaks down and cries to her husband
Daddy our baby's gone.
Why would she treat us so thoughtlessly
How could she do this to me.
She (We never thought of ourselves)
is leaving (Never a thought for ourselves)
home (We struggled hard all our lives to get by)
She's leaving home after living alone
For so many years. Bye, bye
Friday morning at nine o'clock she is far away
Waiting to keep the appointment she made
Meeting a man from the motor trade.
She What did we do that was wrong
is having We didn't know it was wrong
Fun Fun is the one thing that money can't buy
Something inside that was always denied
For so many years. Bye, Bye
She's leaving home bye bye

John Lennon and Paul McCartney
Chapter 5

Using visual literacy to support boys’ writing

Visual Literacy is a powerful way to explore texts with children. Children are already very familiar with, and knowledgeable about, moving images and boys in particular can relate to this genre. Visual images offer stimulating ways of thinking about texts. However, it is important to ensure that extracts are carefully selected to meet particular objectives.

Suggested way to incorporate visual images into planning:

• Select the particular text type you want to cover within a unit of work
• Decide on the materials you will use to familiarise the class with the text features (e.g. books, artefacts, video clips)
• Select the key reading, writing and sentence level objectives to be covered
• Decide on the written outcome

During the project, we looked at ways of incorporating visual Literacy and drama techniques into a three week unit of work. The example that was given was based on the film Stuart Little. A suggested plan was given to the teachers but they were at liberty to change or adapt this to fit in with the needs of their class. They were also encouraged to take the ideas and develop their own units of work.

Some of the teachers were concerned that the children might have already seen the film. This is not really an issue when using a short extract in a focused way to support specific objectives. Most children are able to suspend the knowledge they have in order to develop their own writing.

The key objective was from Y4 Term 2 looking at, ‘How settings influence events and incidents in stories and how they affect characters’ behaviour.’ This extract could also have been used to support the unit on issues and dilemmas in term 3.

The main outcome was for children to write their own story using a story mountain. However, throughout the unit children had lots of opportunities to respond by using drama or short incidental writing opportunities.

Context of the film

The Little family includes Mr and Mrs Little and their son George. They decide to adopt a baby brother for George but when they go to the adoption agency all that is available is a mouse, called Stuart. Mr and Mrs Little adopt the mouse but at first George is not very happy about this. The film is about the various exploits that Stuart the mouse gets up to. Snowbell, the pet cat, is not too keen on Stuart’s role in the family.
Suggested activities to support children's understanding and writing development:

1. Listen to the soundtrack of the extract without watching the visual image

Children work in pairs to predict what they think is happening by listening to the music, the sound effects and the dialogue.

Comments from the children about this activity include:

‘The music gives you more of an idea of what’s going on’ and
‘The fast music tells you that the characters are in a hurry’

2. Use the question hand to discuss:

Where is the extract taking place?
Who is involved?
What has happened?
When did it happen?
Why did it happen?

3. Watch the extract up to the point when Stuart is stuck in the washing machine and Snowbell the cat walks past

Freeze frame the action. What are the characters thinking? Complete thought bubbles.

Some examples:

- Help me. I don't want to die.
- Please Snowbell, let me out!
- I have got you now mouse boy!
- What kind of cat would help a mouse?
- I might let him out, so I can eat him.
- I'm glad I'm not the one trapped.
- If you help me I'll get you some food.
4. Conscience alley

What should Snowbell do?

A useful drama technique when the children become the two sides of the character's conscience. They think of one thing each that they will say and then form an alley. One side of the alley gives reasons to help Stuart and the other side gives reasons not to help. A child is chosen to take on the role of the character facing the dilemma – in this instance, Snowbell. ‘Snowbell’ walks through this alley and listens to the two points of view before making a decision.

5. Role Play

In small groups ask the children to predict what will happen next and act it out.

6. Hot seat the main characters

Using the question hand are the children to think up questions to ask them about the situation.

7. Write a list

The pros and cons of having a mouse as a brother.
Examples from one of the children:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for</th>
<th>Reasons against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He can get things</td>
<td>He can’t go bowling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can sneak about</td>
<td>He can’t ride a bike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can ride</td>
<td>He can’t play catch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can climb</td>
<td>He can’t play football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can slide</td>
<td>He can’t play tig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can make stuff</td>
<td>He can’t wear boxing gloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can paint</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Drama: Discussion between George and his mum

George tries to persuade his mum to take Stuart back and mum tries to persuade him that having a mouse as a brother is a good idea.

9. Write a diary extract

This could be done by different characters:

- George (the boy)
- Stuart
- Mum

### Stuart’s diary extract

Today was an awful day! George put his clothes in the washing basket and mum picked them up and put them in the washing machine. BUT … I was inside the clothes! The washing machine started to fill up and I went under the water. The cat came and wouldn’t let me out. Mum was talking to dad. Then she came in and shouted me! She noticed that I was in the washing machine and let me out.

### George’s diary extract

Monday 6.00pm

I can’t believe it! My mum has got me a mouse for a brother. I thought I would have a real brother. I can’t do anything with a mouse. NOBODY CAN! My friends are going to laugh at me when they find out. Maybe he might be good at some games. Maybe he is fun. My mum said he is called Stuart.

10. Letter of complaint

Write letters from the neighbours to the Little family or to the local council about the fact that a mouse has moved in next door.

**Dear Mr and Mrs Little,**

I have a complaint to make about your mouse. You better remove your mouse or I will call the council immediately. A mouse can cause a disease to my child and your George and you don’t want that do you? You should have adopted a boy or a girl but not a mouse. A mouse would not adopt a child.

From James R

**Dear Mrs Little,**

Is it true that you have a funny little rodent in your house? If it is true can you keep it in a cage? It might come into my house and I am allergic and it might have fleas. He might come through the floorboards and come in my house.

From your angry neighbour
11. Story Mountain

Write a story based on this problem where the main character gets stuck somewhere. How does he out of the situation?

The process of writing a story using the different elements of the story mountain is modelled over the week during shared writing sessions by the teacher. Children are then asked to apply what they have learnt in their own stories. They are asked to think about their own character who is stuck somewhere and think about how the problem is resolved.
One example of a story with a character who is stuck, using a story mountain to plan. Written by Clayton from St Edmunds, Skelmersdale.

It was a day like any other day when Gerard got up. Gerard lived in a forest with lots of other interesting creatures.

Gerard wasn’t a human. He was a dog. He was a dark brown colour. He was really fast and he was a boxer. Gerard went for a walk in the forest but suddenly!! A voice went ‘TIMBER’ and he heard it again.

Just then the biggest, brownest tree fell on Gerard. Gerard was horribly hurt.

Ben Beaver saw Gerard stuck under the tree. He ran towards him. Ben Beaver came to the rescue. He munched and crunched the tree to bits. Ben Beaver said to Gerard ‘Are you OK?’ ‘I suppose so’ so Gerard faintly.

Two weeks later Gerard and Ben Beaver were lying on the forest floor and were looking at the clouds.

The unit of work was extremely well received. The children responded enthusiastically in all cases with comments like:

‘I got lots more ideas’

‘You get the picture instead of just thinking’

‘I didn’t used to write a lot but now I do’

‘I’m writing more down and having more fun and you get more done’

The teachers too felt that this approach to teaching writing through a flexible and creative approach was much more interesting. Some have started to trial developing their own units of work and have used a range of extracts including ‘A series of unfortunate events’, ‘The Iron Giant’ and ‘Shrek 2’.

Comments were made such as:

‘Using film clips has opened up so many more possibilities to explore units than just using texts’

‘Film images help children to make characters real - some children can’t do that with texts’.
Chapter 6
Impact on writing

In order to achieve a measure of comparability of progress during the course of the project, assessments of two writing samples occurred at the beginning and end of the project.

Teachers were asked to assess pupils’ current writing levels using the Lancashire Levelling Narrative/Non-narrative document in November 2005. The samples were levelled with some degree of moderation; teachers were asked to bring samples of writing and level certain samples with another participant involved in the project and the final levels were all representative of either teacher assessment or optional tests during May 2006.

The levelling process took account of:

- Sentence structure and punctuation
- Text structure and organisation
- Composition and effect
- Spelling
- Handwriting

according to the QCA strands of assessment and eight Assessment Focuses for writing in line with NC tests.

The pupils selected were a cohort of boys who were deemed to be underachieving within Year 4. For example, the brick wall was one of the vehicles used to identify and track progress during the project and by using the current levels of teacher assessment, a cohort of boys could be chosen.

After a period of approximately 6 months, the majority of pupils appeared to have made progress in all three strands of sentence structure and punctuation, text structure and organisation and composition and effect and had greater motivation in presentation and attempts at more accurate spelling. The most significant progress is evident in the three main strands with pupils having:

- Greater control of a variety of sentence constructions
- Clearer understanding and handle of narrative structure
- Wider use of vocabulary

Stimuli from drama and visual approaches have also resulted in a greater control of voice, style and pace, noticeable progress in sub-levels across the strands and a positive attitude to writing for specific purposes.

The following case studies illustrate good and significant progress in writing.
Sample 1 – Pre-project writing

Adventure story

One morning my friend ring me up. I whent to his house but was a false call. There was a moving tree. what I was trying to get passed and it hit me. then with the corner of my eye I sor some bats coming to me. They bit me and make me into a vampire. There as a cell I whent inside. the devele tryd to lock me up but he dient. Because I siked his blood. then I turned back normal. I front of me I saw a big harry spider wick crallet up my arm so I stamped on it was the ghost. I knew I could fist walk through it. So I did. There was a skull I piked it up and threw it and it land in the witches head. Then I jumped over the cauldron and then I ran home.

At this stage the pupil is clearly working within Level 2. The writing demonstrates:

- Some accurate use of capital letters and full stops
- Some variety in the choice of connectives
- Characteristic forms of narrative are beginning to be developed
- A simple story structure with a series of events
- Vocabulary choices relevant to the narrative

Sample 1 - Post Project writing

Narrative adventure following a story mountain planner

Bob got stuck!

A man called Bob is a homeless tramp. He has got brown eyes, he is so skinny he’s like a twig. Bob’s clothes are brown and smelly because they haven’t been washed for six months. Bob is homeless because he spent all his money, and his family threw him out because they thought he stole the £40 million from the bank. He was always cold because he was outside all the time. He sometimes goes to the library just to get warm. He only gets £3 a week that he finds on the floor. One day he had a brilliant idea. If he pretended to die he would be safe and warm in hospital. He was a very good actor. One day outside Asda he started screaming, pretending to die. He was holding his heart and collapsed. When Bob was lying on the floor he was trying to hold his breath, so he looked like he was dead. A man was coming out of Asda, he looked at Bob as if he was a smelly dog. The man was not going to give him first aid. He didn’t even look at Bob. He only rung the ambulance and the man said “please could I talk to the ambulance service? A homeless man is outside Asda dead and he smells and I don’t dare touch him. I think he has been hit be a car, come as quickly as you can!” A whole crowd of people came out of Asda looking down at him.

The ambulance service came in ten minutes and they squirted him with air freshner. Bob was going purple because he had been holding his breath for over 10 minutes. So they put some oxygen in him through a pump. The siren was blasting he was in an ambulance. After a while he was in a mortuary. Bob was absolutely freezing he couldn’t move at all. His plan had failed he wanted to get hot, not to get cold!

When Bob was in the fridge he could only blink he couldn’t move a single part of his
body. It smelt disgusting. He could smell his armpits the most. Some one was coming, but the bad thing was he couldn't move his lips because he didn't eat anything for a long time or drink, but he tried to get his teeth into the ice but he never did. When some one was coming they were going to bury Bob. They realized that he was blinking. So they let him go home. So he went back to his family and said “I'm sorry I ran away from home”. “Oh while you are at it, can I have one of those chocolate bars?”.

After that he stayed with his family. And if he ever felt like he wanted to run away from home he would remember how cold it is in the morgue, and that’s one place he never wants to be stuck in again.

Following the unit of work the pupil is now deemed to be working within Level 3. Writing demonstrates improvements in:

- More adventurous use of sentence structure – simple/compound/complex
- Use of dialogue for and examples to develop characterisation
- Wide range of connectives
- Further examples in the use of punctuation
- A clearly structured narrative
- Effective ending, e.g. and that’s one place he never wants to be stuck in again
- Attempts to create pace and relationship between events
- More precise vocabulary choices, similes, adjectives
- Various attempts to engage the reader through word use to entertain and amuse
- Development of a main character through action, dialogue and description
- Greater clarity of ideas
- Increased fluency, quantity and control of viewpoint

Sample 2 – Pre-Project Writing

Fantasy Story

One sunny day Alex was a boy and had yellow hair and his friend James he had blue eyes and brown hair.

Then they saw a magic box what was red and then a genie came out and he said "you let me OUT! of my box how der you" Now you shall feall the concresins, the world will be horrible!

Now the genie destroyed the world
Alex said "what can we do"
James said back “We can’t do eneythin because he is to strong I now what to do get the magic box so the genie went back in so the world is back together
Writing is assessed at working within Level 2. At this stage the writing demonstrates evidence of:

- An understanding of simple narrative structure
- Awareness of punctuation e.g. full stops, speech marks
- Simple connectives
- Attempts at vocabulary choices
- Dialogue and action and an attempt to open the narrative with description

**Sample 2 – Post-project writing**

**Story with a dilemma**

One cold windy morning Paul and John had woke up by their mum and dad. Paul and John where brothers. They did get along with each other. Paul was older than John, Paul was 15 years old and John was 13 years old. Paul didn’t boss John around if he did his mum and dad would shout at him. They where on there last day on there holiday when it was chilly.

A few minutes later Paul and John went mountion climbing and Paul and John was great at moution climing they always went to the top, they got closer and closer. After that they got to the top and Paul saw a open door.

After that Paul went in the door and John did but John went out and Paul declarl “I will come out in a bit.
But Paul didn’t come out because the door shut behind him. He thought it was a bit scary at first because it had lots of bats and spiders and all of the other horrible stuff. He banged on the mountion door but no look.

Just after John was wondering where Paul was, but he heard a bang on the mountion door.
When Paul got out Paul boomed “oh, thankyou  thank you”
Where have you been? yelled John and Paul giggled
“I have been in the mountion door.

Finally, Paul and John where back together again.
Paul and John went back home to their mum and dad. Paul prompised he would never go in a spishes door again.

Following the unit, writing is assessed at working within Level 3. Writing demonstrates evidence of:

- More adventurous use of sentence structure
- Range of connectives
- Attempts to use a wider range of punctuation including direct speech
- Some development of characters through action, dialogue and description
- Simple story structure – opening, events and a clear ending where the main character learned his lesson
- Use of paragraphs
- Some attempts to describe characters
Elements of story language e.g. closer and closer, would never go in a suspicious door again
• Greater clarity of ideas
• Increased fluency and quantity

Sample 3 – Pre-project writing

Adventure Story

One day when I was walking down the street. I got lost I kept on walking until I got traped In a foreist It was a darke forest. I could not see where I was gowing so I kept on going and going until I found some light on the other side and I whent near the light so I found it wherenet light I was fine so I ran and ran and I escaped the place In time. And I kept on going and found a castel so I whent in it.

Writing is assessed at working at low Level 2

Writing demonstrates evidence of:
• Use of phrases and simple statements
• Awareness of full stops and capital letters
• Simple narrative structure with events
• Vocabulary chosen to convey ideas

Sample 3 – Post-project writing

Adventure Story

The Burning Hose

One day Jorge and Stuart day dreamed to the park. They played so much that they were tied.
Jorge said “mum I am exhausted!”
Mum replied “Yes we shold go bake home”.

When they got home, Mum said, “You must be hungrey. I will make you a meal.”
When mum was making dinner Jorge sed “Mum I need help on my work”.
Mum expland, “Ill be there in a minut.” But Mum forgot to shut the oven door.
Suddnly the house started on fire. Mum discoved that the kichen was burning into ashes. Mum expland “The kichen is burning. my gosh”
Stuart and Jorge whent to look.They were skared and they whated to get out but they coldent. They whent up sters to get Snowbell and to find a way our. Suddenly some of the roof calapest.

They whent down stairs. Snowbell triped and he was about to hit fire but Jorge grabed him. Mum piked up the forne but the fire at the line made a “dung” and some electricity turned off. Then the doors upsters craked and were still then the door clasped and it gave them time to get out and get in the car and when they did they whent off. Then the door up stairs craked letting them excape.
When the door upstairs craked Jorge said “Every one the door upstairs has craked” then they went upstairs slid down the roof. Everyone slid down the pipe and got in the car and when they reached the road the house exploded. Then they started to cry because the house exploded and they went to the hospital. But Jorge had a scratch but the doctor fixed it.

Writing assessed at working just within Level 3. Features include:

- Awareness of capital letters and full stops and other punctuation
- A range of connectives
- Developing narrative structure with an opening, events and resolution
- Use of action, some dialogue and description
- Some words chosen for effect
- Developing narrative voice
- Descriptive phrases

...
Overall progress of pupils in the project

Percentage progress

The following figures are indicative of teacher assessments. Expected progress according to National Curriculum is two sub levels per year. In six months there is obviously evidence to suggest the approaches used have had impact on pupils’ writing levels.

Percentages based on the results of 60 pupils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of pupils - increase in sub level</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>+ 1 sub level</th>
<th>+ 2 sub levels</th>
<th>+ 3 sub levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

Following the delivery of the units of work all teachers reported that they felt the children had made progress in a variety of ways. Overall the movement to higher sub levels was evident. Although a few pupils remained within the same level, other aspects had progressed. Teachers reported an intuitive feeling that the children had improved and noted that pupils required less adult intervention and support on task. Pupils were writing at length and were more eager to proceed with activities, wanted to begin writing, sustain tasks and complete them to produce a quality piece of work. In addition, they felt all children in the class had improved and not merely the target group. Teachers also commented that they would continue to use the approach in the future and wanted to monitor the sustainability of progress into Years 5 and 6. One three form entry school has set up a peer coaching model with each Year 4 teacher being paired up with a Year 5 and Year 6 teacher to ensure the approaches continue as the pupils move through school.
Chapter 7

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were given out at the beginning and end of the project to see if the variety of teaching and learning approaches would have an impact on the boys’ attitudes.

Seventy five questionnaires were analysed and it was evident that there had been a real impact on the attitudes of most of the children. Interestingly, this varied according to when the questionnaires were carried out.

If the questionnaires took place immediately at the end of a project the results were much more positive than if the children waited for several weeks before completing them.

It was also interesting to note that the children's comments before the project tended to focus on secretarial aspects of writing such as handwriting and spelling whereas afterwards they focused more on the content of the writing. However, the secretarial aspects of the comments on the final questionnaires were much better, and responses much fuller, than at the start.

Boys with a high self image were definitely better writers and those with a good self esteem were more positive about themselves as writers. They enjoyed the creative approaches to Literacy responding particularly well to the use of visual images, speaking and listening activities and drama.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires: % positive and negative responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Start of project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boys with a high self image were definitely better writers and those with a good self esteem were more positive about themselves as writers. They enjoyed the creative approaches to Literacy responding particularly well to the use of visual images, speaking and listening activities and drama.
The children in the project schools were given writing attitude questionnaires at the start and end of the project. The colours represent the same child's initial and final responses.

### Questionnaire Responses at Start of Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you enjoy writing? Why?</td>
<td>I enjoy writing because my imagination is good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you find hard about writing?</td>
<td>I find it hard because I'm not good at spelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a good writer?</td>
<td>I am a good writer because I learn to write at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the best piece of writing you've ever done?</td>
<td>My best story was using a story map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give to someone in the year below to help them get better at writing?</td>
<td>Tell them that writing is fun.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Questionnaire Responses at End of Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you enjoy writing? Why?</td>
<td>I enjoy writing because it's fun making your own story up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you find hard about writing?</td>
<td>I find writing hard because I forget to put full stops and I don't have a good imagination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a good writer?</td>
<td>I'm a good writer because I get stars for my writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the best piece of writing you've ever done?</td>
<td>The best piece of writing I've done was the story map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give to someone in the year below to help them get better at writing?</td>
<td>I would tell them to watch a bit of a film and then write about it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Examples of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you enjoy writing? Why?</td>
<td>Yes, I do enjoy writing. Because you think it's fun and it makes me better at writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you find hard about writing?</td>
<td>I find thinking of a story hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a good writer?</td>
<td>Yes, I think I am a good writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give to someone in the year below to help them get better at writing?</td>
<td>I would tell them to use their imagination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Attitude Questionnaires**

The children in the project schools were given writing attitude questionnaires at the start and end of the project. The colours represent the same child's initial and final responses.
The teachers and children involved in the project were all very positive about the results.

**Successes:**
Initially, many of the teachers were concerned that involvement in the project would mean a great deal of work and a large commitment of time and energy. However, by the end of the project, they were all delighted with the results. Many commented that it had changed their overall approach to teaching. They all agreed that it had had big impact on the children's motivation and enthusiasm. The positive change in the children's attitudes towards writing was mentioned frequently throughout the project. Several teachers observed that the boys were much more willing to use emotive language when speaking and writing. Almost all the writing showed positive gains as a result of the project. Some of the children's writing had improved by more than three sub levels within two terms. Teachers particularly enjoyed the flexible approach to planning and the range of activities to support the children's learning.

The drama activities were a key part of the success of the project. This was an area that some of the teachers were initially a bit reluctant to try but after they had trialled some of the approaches they became much more confident. One of the teachers commented that the children enjoyed the drama activities so much that every time they reached a dilemma in a story the children suggested that they carry out a quick 'conscience alley' to consider what the children should do next.

As well as enjoying the drama activities, the teachers also felt that the children responded well to the use of visual images. They were able to use short extracts as prompts to stimulate children to write.

One of the greatest successes was the development of incidental writing opportunities throughout a unit of work. Children are used to producing a final written outcome, but this gave them the chance to write as a response to reading or as a prompt to writing. Children were more confident at writing when they thought it was less formal and didn’t matter as much. They also liked writing on post it notes or formats other than their writing books.

It was useful to have several months to develop the programme. It was developed over two terms and teachers had the opportunity to try out ideas in the classroom and feedback on successes and concerns as they went along.

**Issues:**
The teachers responded very positively to the units of work they were given but only a few of them have developed their own. We would hope to be able to see some more impact on planning, teaching and learning in the future.

Although some ICT techniques and strategies were introduced, these ideas were not followed up by teachers in the classroom as much as the other suggestions.

Some of the teachers shared the findings from the project with colleagues back at school, but this was most likely to happen if the were senior teachers or Literacy subject leaders. It would be useful if colleagues were able to have a greater impact on teaching and learning at a whole school level.
**Future plans:**

- The next project will involve working with subject leaders so that results from the project can be shared more easily with colleagues back in school and therefore have a greater impact.

- Teachers will be encouraged to develop their own units of work to share with colleagues.

- ICT will have a greater focus with teachers being encouraged to trial a range of approaches and strategies.

**Key findings:**

Children as a whole, but particularly boys, seem to produce better work when they:

- Are having fun and enjoy what they are doing;
- Are involved in the process;
- See a purpose and audience for their writing;
- Can join in with interactive activities;
- Have the opportunities to talk about and discuss what they are doing;
- Have the opportunity to develop understanding through role play and other drama activities;
- Respond to a range of approaches, e.g. still and moving images; sound;
- Have clear targets;
- Have focused objectives and success criteria;
- Develop writing in a series of lessons within a unit of work;
- Engage in short ‘incidental’ writing opportunities;
- Can choose from a range of text forms and presentation formats, e.g. ICT, post-its, posters, big books, leaflets, etc.
13/2/06
Dear Miss Tomlinson,

We enjoyed your visit during our press conference. Thank you for giving us a three week Stuart Little project. My favourite lessons were the Oh!Dear; the conscience alley, the newspaper report and the washing machine role play. We hope we have another project to do from all of Year 3/4.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

14.2.06
Dear Miss Tomlinson,

I really enjoyed your visit please come and see us again while doing a press conference.

My favourite lessons were the roll play, watching the DVD, News report, press conference and the story mountain.

From Connor
We are very grateful to the following schools, teachers and teaching assistants for taking part in the project.

Grosvenor Park Primary School in Morecambe

Mayfield Primary School in Lytham St Anne’s

Deepdale Junior School in Preston

St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School in Preston

St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School in Preston

Moorside Primary School in Skelmersdale

Hillside Primary School in Skelmersdale

St Edmund’s Catholic Primary School in Skelmersdale

St Theresa’s Catholic Primary School in Skelmersdale

Brookfield Park Primary School in Skelmersdale

St Paul’s CE Primary School in Oswaldtwistle

St Leonard’s CE Primary School in Padiham

Heasandford Primary School in Burnley
Teachers’ Comments

It has put the fun and enjoyment back into teaching literacy!

N. Allen

The course has created more enthusiasm, confidence and excitement for both teachers and children in my school.

Steve Barlow

It has been fantastic for some of my very poor writers who excel at the drama activities and don’t realise they are working and improving their writing at the same time.

Anna Suggitt

Very successful project, I felt enthusiastic about using these techniques, and the results have been really pleasing.

A different way of working. I and the children now enjoy literacy.

Steve Barlow

The emotional language used in the Lulu work was amazing. The children took on the story behind the poem wholeheartedly and loved the way there was no right or wrong answer.

Rachel Gerrard

I just wish that my teacher training had included this style of teaching.

It’s fab!

Anna Suggitt

Using drama techniques empowered the children not to think about gender issues, boys role played girls’ roles and vice versa without it being a problem in the class.

Joyce Hung

His classroom has come alive over the past few months. Superb development of reluctant writers for the first time. Has had an impact on self-esteem not just in literacy but across the curriculum. It has unlocked the potential of pupils.

Mathew Richardson

The project has been hugely successful... Classrooms have come to life with exciting, stimulating pieces of writing. Some youngsters have made considerable and very impressive progress. One particular child has “unlocked” the door to success and has become a highly motivated, accomplished writer whose self-esteem has grown enormously. This has had an extremely positive impact in all areas of his work and behaviour—not just his writing!

Mathew Richardson

The project was a hugely positive experience for me, improving my teaching strategies and knowledge of resources etc. It was equally as positive and successful in improving the boys’ writing. They find it exciting and really feel as though they have achieved greatly after every session.

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