

Non-fiction writing

SCAFFOLDS

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Non-fiction writing scaffolds for Year 4

INTRODUCTION

Non-fiction Writing Scaffolds for Year 4 is intended for use in schools to help teach children how to write effectively in a variety of non-fiction genres. It improves children's ability to organise their writing so that it has purpose by familiarising them with a system of planning which they can apply to any title. As they work through the units, the children assemble a portfolio of non-fiction texts containing genre-specific vocabulary and writing features. The chosen text types correspond with those in the Literacy Framework's text-level objectives.

Many non-fiction texts are essentially cross-curricular. Thus the ability to write specifically and purposefully about a subject will benefit other areas of study.

Each unit includes information and activities on at least one sentence-level objective. Therefore the book also enhances the children's knowledge of grammar, punctuation and style.

THE PROGRAMME CONTAINS:

a teachers' book comprising:

- notes for teachers on the genres
- a bibliography for each genre
- copies of exemplar texts with teaching notes
- guidance on how to develop grammar and punctuation skills in children's writing
- guidance on how to write in the particular genre and on specific features of each non-fiction text.

a resource book of photocopiable material comprising:

- illustrated versions of the exemplar texts especially produced for children
- notes for the children on understanding the grammar and punctuation (optional reference material)
- photocopiable activity sheets to reinforce the grammar and punctuation (optional)
- notes and tips for the children on writing non-fiction texts (optional reference material)
- differentiated scaffolds which give the children choices and guide them through the course of the text they are about to write
- vocabulary banks for them to use and add to.

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAMME

- 1 After examining texts in the target genre, read and discuss the exemplar text with the children, using the notes in the margin to highlight the examples of the unit's teaching point and writing feature. The children should follow the text using their own illustrated version from the resource book.
- 2 Next, read through and explain the 'Understanding the grammar and punctuation' section of the unit. The children can do the activities together, either orally or using whiteboards, or independently on paper.
- 3 Then explain the 'Helpful hints' and 'Writing features' sections of the unit to the children.
- 4 Read through the scaffolds with the children. Then give them the differentiated word banks and ask them to record their own vocabulary suggestions in the space provided.
- 5 Give the children time to plan, write and edit their non-fiction text. Each child can then store the best copies in a writing folder.

NOTES

When using the scaffolds, give the children strict time limits to plan and write each of the sections. This will give them practice in writing timed non-fiction texts as preparation for the Key Stage 2 writing test.

However, the system is entirely flexible. The activities in each unit, from reading the exemplar to composing their own text using the scaffolds, can be used in shared or guided time, with the children working collaboratively or individually.

The order of activities for each unit corresponds exactly with the sequence for the teaching of writing outlined in Grammar for Writing (DfEE 0107/200). First the model can be discussed and its grammatical and thematic features interrogated during shared reading. Next the grammar and punctuation activities can be undertaken to reinforce the children's understanding of the relevant sentence-level objectives. The helpful hints section, scaffolds, and vocabulary banks support the teacher and children in shared writing sessions and in subsequent guided and independent writing.

The method works well with children of all abilities and with bilingual pupils, as it offers the security of a detailed framework and a bank of appropriate vocabulary together with the challenge of a grammar and writing features component for each unit.

The units fulfil the text-level and sentence-level requirements of the NLS Framework for Year 4 and revise components from Year 3. The following units may be used specifically in literacy lessons or they may be linked with work in other curriculum areas and used accordingly.

TERM 1

UNIT 1

Genre: newspaper report: sports event (T16; T17; T18; T20)

Grammar: verbs and verb tenses (S2);

Punctuation: direct speech (Yr3 revision)

Writing features: headlines, style, verb tense and language (T24)

UNIT 2

Genre: newspaper/magazine article: holiday travel (T16; T17; T19; T20; T21)

Grammar: powerful verbs; adverbs (S3)

Punctuation: commas (revision: lists, direct speech)

Writing features: headlines, presentation, content, language and layout (T24)

UNIT 3

Genre: instructions: how to make a mobile of flying owls (T22)

Grammar: imperative verbs (S4)

Punctuation: organisational devices, such as numbered and bulleted lists (T22)

Writing features: layout, chronological order, the use of labelled diagrams (T25; T26)

TERM 2

UNIT 4

Genre: report: notes and final text on Henry VIII (T15)

Grammar: adjectives: comparative and superlative (S1)

Punctuation: apostrophes: singular and plural possession (S2)

Writing features: orientation, chronology, time connectives (T21; T22)

UNIT 5

Genre: explanation text: electricity (T20)

Grammar: verb tense (revision: Term 1)

Punctuation: subheadings, organisational devices, such as numbered and bulleted lists

Writing features: opening statements, logical and chronological order, technical information, diagrams (T24; T25)

UNIT 6

Genre: explanation text: making glass bottles (T20)

Grammar: paragraphs and link phrases

Punctuation: connectives (S4)

Writing features: opening statements, presentation, sequential order, sequential connectives, tone (T24; T25)

TERM 3

UNIT 7

Genre: advertisements (T18; T19)

Grammar: different types of adjectives (revision: Term 2)

Punctuation: exclamation marks, dashes, colons, bullet points (S2)

Writing features: layout, symbols, speech bubbles, illustrations (T25)

UNIT 8

Genre: discussion text: letters to the press about school uniform (T16)

Grammar: connectives (S4)

Punctuation: setting out formal letters

Writing features: presentation of point of view, language used (T23)

UNIT 9

Genre: editoria: tabloid and broadsheet presentation of viewpoint on a traffic issue (T16; T17; T18)

Grammar: connectives (S4)

Punctuation: the use of inverted commas when quoting

Writing features: presentation, verb tense, style, emotive language (T23)

Newspaper reports

A newspaper or magazine article is written for interest; a report is written to convey news. This distinction between articles and reports is important. This exemplar text is a report and the topic is sport.

The sports reporter wants the reader to read his article. He is giving information that he hopes the reader is going to find important: the reader needs to know if his team (or sportsperson) has won! The main facts must be conveyed quickly and clearly, and in crisp language appropriate to the sport. Descriptions of the action tend to use familiar similes and metaphors, sometimes rather worn out, but still enjoyed in the sporting world; for example, 'He ran straight as an arrow.' Sports readers enjoy the language they know from television punditry but there is certainly room for some sparkling originality.

After that, much depends on the space the editor allows. Further details about the event and individual competitors add interest, as do tantalising hints of possible behind-the-scenes action, perhaps offering hints of change/upset/disharmony/intrigue. Note the difference between hints and statements, and ensure that the children recognise this distinction between fact and opinion. The paper cannot afford to lay itself open to legal action!

Further interest is often provided by more detailed reference to one individual, perhaps in the form of quoted words. The paper may have secured an interview, or have access to the opinion of a known expert, such as a famous, former player. All this could offer a different slant.

The writer must keep the reader's attention right to the last word, so a good finish is important. Information about the future, or questions which will only be answered by the next match, are good devices.

Reports have typical features:

- a headline – to catch the reader's eye and to encourage them to read the story;
- a subheading – adds information to the headline. It does not have to be a sentence.
- a topic sentence – usually the first sentence of the report to explain what the story is about;
- short paragraphs – to enable the reader to locate information quickly;
- columns – to make the article easier to read;
- use of different type-faces – to add interest and enhance the design;
- photographs – to add interest and authenticity to the story;
- quotations – to give an air of truth or reality to the story.

Journalistic writing

Examples of journalistic writing

Newspapers – local, regional, national; tabloids and broadsheets.

Greek Gazette by F Fleming ('Newspaper History' series, Usborne, 1997)

The Roman News by Philip Gates and Ghislaine Lawrence (Walker Books, 1994) Others in the series cover Egyptians, Aztecs, Vikings, Greeks and the Stone Age.

1910s by Margaret Sharman ('Take Ten Years' series, Evans Brothers, 1991) Uses newspaper reports from the period.

Good Writing by William Edmonds and Karen Wilbraham ('Guides to Good English' series, Kingfisher, 1989) Includes a section on reporting.

The children's illustrated version of the report is on page 6 of the resource book.

A newspaper report

JP LIFTS THE CUP!¹

How did they do it? Read on!²

By Matt Jones³

Last Saturday, in biting, blustery⁴ conditions, on freshly-marked netball courts, the annual local tournament was won by John Parsons School, with an astounding total of 96 points. The school now reigns as this season's area champion.⁵

"This title – Worthshire Champions – is always a prized one, and must have brought special pleasure after the school's catastrophic sporting year. Their newly-appointed young, female,⁷ sports teacher, Miss Crumble, has been experiencing obvious difficulties;⁸ joint last in the under-11 football tournament in April;⁹ half a team left trampled underfoot¹⁰ at most of the winter's cross-country meetings;⁹ the worst ever¹¹ display of catching at July's rounders tournament;⁹ a cricket team that clearly relished the taste of duck;¹² and then there was netball. Those scores haven't been worth adding up!

However, all this changed on Saturday when the netball team beat all comers. Girls who didn't seem to be able to see the net all season¹¹ were suddenly firing balls home with pinpoint



The John Parsons School team hold up the Worthshire Champions cup

accuracy;¹³ passing was fast and flowing; footwork⁴ was sure; and teamwork was brilliant. What had happened?¹⁴

"Miss Crumble was employed as a sports teacher!" boomed¹⁵ Mr Rankle, the headmaster, to the local press. "She knew what was expected of her. My governors and I value sport. I simply explained¹⁶ to Miss Crumble the importance of today. The hosts never come last, and I didn't want to become the butt of the other heads' jokes."

For her part, Emma Crumble looked exhausted. "It's mainly relief I feel," she said. "I've been at school all hours coaching these girls. If they'd lost today, I dread to think what I'd have lost!"¹⁷

- 1 Headline grabs attention by its content and its bold, visual style. It is short enough for the reader to take in at a glance, and the exclamation mark hints at surprise and excitement to follow.
- 2 Sub head slightly smaller. It tempts the reader to read on; the use of an unanswered question helps.
- 3 Inclusion of the writer's name is usual at this point.
- 4 Alliteration – effective use of the same sound at the beginning of words.
- 5 The first paragraph contains the main facts about the event.
- 6 The writer moves to more detail about the event.
- 7 Such detailed information as this would have to be left out if there was a shortage of column space.
- 8 Colon used to introduce a list.
- 9 Semi colons used to separate items in list.
- 10 Hyperbole (light-hearted exaggeration).
- 11 Probably an exaggeration, but conveys the desired message.
- 12 Original and effective use of imagery. (Makes the connection between eating duck and scoring nought – a duck.)
- 13 An effective phrase.
- 14 An effective use of a question: the reader will want to discover the answer.
- 15 A strong verb (as opposed to just using 'said').
- 16 Is there a veiled threat to Miss Crumble's future employment contained in these two words?
- 17 A good example of implicit meaning – the reader understands that the dread is of losing her job, even though the writer does not state it.

Understanding the grammar and punctuation

Grammar pointers

Verbs

The verb is the essential word in every sentence. Defined simply, a verb is a doing or being word, but by this stage it is important to point out that more than one word may make up the verb. For example:

What had happened?

'Happened' is clearly the main action word or verb. Nevertheless, 'had' is part of the verb; it is called the auxiliary verb. The text contains numerous examples for the children to identify:

have brought

've been (short for 'have been')

'd lost (had lost)

These auxiliary verbs have been used to put the principal verb into the correct tense; in a report, the past tense is generally used.

Verb tenses

'Tense' means 'time'. Hence, verb tenses place the action in a timeframe. Essentially, there are three tenses: past, present and future. The mental addition of yesterday, today and tomorrow could be useful aids to the children's correct identification of tense. In a report such as the exemplar text, the past tense is usually used.

Punctuation pointers

Direct speech

This means writing down the actual words spoken. Only those precise spoken words are placed inside the quotation marks. Any sentence containing direct speech is subject to numerous rules of punctuation.

- ◆ If part of the sentence is spoken, and part of it not, the two parts must be separated, usually by a comma. For example:

"It's mainly relief I feel," she said.

One woman moaned, "My child won't be coming here again."

- ◆ This comma may be replaced by a question mark or an exclamation mark. For example:

"Miss Rankle is supposed to be a sports teacher!" shouted Mr Rankle.

"Where's the rest of my team?" she asked nervously.

- ◆ The first spoken word in a sentence always begins with a capital letter. For example:

Looking furious, one of the parents asked, "May I have a word?"

An onlooker shouted, "Well done!"

- ◆ But be careful if the direct speech in a sentence is split up. For example:

"Miss Crumble came as a sports teacher," boomed Mr Rankle, "and I knew she'd get there in the end."

and does not require a capital letter because it is not the first word Mr Rankle said in the sentence.

- ◆ Finally, a new paragraph is begun whenever someone begins/finishes speaking. (Obviously, you don't begin the paragraph in the middle of a sentence.) For example:

Many of the spectators were looking fed up, and a few looked distinctly angry. Emma was praying that her team would at least do a little better than last time.

"What exactly do you teach them in the netball lesson?" came a sharp voice.

Emma turned her head to see a large, fear-inducing woman standing next to her. She gulped and tried to think of something to say.

"I just do my best," was the feeble reply.

*"Well it obviously isn't good enough!"**

*"I would like to do better."**

At that moment, a roar interrupted the tense conversation: John Parsons had actually scored! Emma's prayers had been answered.

- * The writer has no need to say who is speaking; starting a new paragraph makes it clear.

Note that writers adhere to these strict rules to a greater or lesser degree, so be prepared for exceptions when the children look for examples in books.

The children's version of these notes is on page 7 of the resource book.

The writing features of newspaper reports

Headlines

These obviously carry great importance and, when thinking about their composition, the writer should focus on:

- ◆ the need to attract attention;
- ◆ the selection of key words rather than lengthy sentences;
- ◆ the devices used to draw the reader into the article;
- ◆ details such as

1. the choice of construction; for example a question or a statement:

- *How did they do it?*
- *They did it.*

2. the choice of punctuation; such as the use of an exclamation mark instead of a full stop.

Style

Level of formality

Sport is an area in which most readers feel knowledgeable and on which they have their own definite views. They want to be treated as equals, feeling involved in the report, and not overawed by it. This means the tone should be exciting and fast-moving, never boring or over-technical. In the exemplar text we can feel that we are listening to Emma Crumble as she is interviewed. When the reporter writes 'What had happened?' at the end of the third paragraph in the exemplar report, he hopes that is exactly what the reader is thinking.

Tense

A report, whether sports or news, should generally be written in the past tense.

the annual local tournament was won by John Parsons School

that clearly relished

Emma Crumble looked exhausted.

Language

Vivid

Sports reporting tends towards the extreme. Here, strong adjectives are abundant.

'prized', 'catastrophic', 'exhausted', 'astounding', 'biting', 'blustery', 'pinpoint'

The impact of a report may be enhanced by putting adjectives beginning with the same sound in close proximity – alliteration.

biting, blustery conditions

fast and flowing

Hyperbole is a form of exaggeration that is not meant to be taken too seriously. It is a device whereby exaggeration creates the desired effect. Were the pupils really 'left trampled underfoot'? It's more likely that one or other just slipped. Was it 'the worst ever display of catching'? Probably not, but the words create a good visual image of an extremely poor team of fielders. 'Pinpoint' accuracy almost certainly overstates the girls' skill, but it emphasises their improvement.

Some individual words also overstate the facts, for example 'catastrophic', 'astounding' and 'brilliant', but the effect is good, the meaning clear and the language is what we expect. Ask the children to consider the literal meanings of these words. Is the reporter probably exaggerating? Which could be literally true? Such language is common in sports reporting, but can be over employed. Talk to the children about striking a balance between using language appropriate to that sport; for example:

He smashed home another of his great winners.

She shot with deadly accuracy.

and the clichés that have been used so often we all see them as a joke; for example:

Well, that football match was really a game of two halves.

A certain amount of originality will make a report stand out; the image of eating duck is effective hyperbole because it probably has to be thought about for a moment before its meaning is clear.

a cricket team that enjoyed the taste of duck

There are helpful hints for children on writing a newspaper report on page 10 of the resource book.