

Story-writing

SCAFFOLDS

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Story-writing scaffolds for Year 4

I N T R O D U C T I O N

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

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

THE PROGRAMME CONTAINS:

a teachers' book comprising:

- notes for teachers on the genres
- copies of exemplar stories together with teaching notes
- guidance on how to develop grammar skills in children's writing
- guidance on how to help children write in the particular genre

a resource book of photocopiable material comprising:

- illustrated versions of the exemplar stories especially produced for children
- notes for the children on understanding the grammar (optional reference material)
- photocopiable activity sheets to reinforce the grammar (optional)
- notes and tips for the children on writing stories (optional reference material)
- differentiated story scaffolds which enable them to choose the course of the story they are about to write
- vocabulary banks for them to use and add to.

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAMME

1. After examining examples of stories in the target genre by established writers, read and discuss the exemplar story with the children, using the notes in the margin to highlight the examples of the unit's grammatical teaching point and writing feature. The children should follow the story 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 orally together or independently on paper.
3. Then explain the 'Helpful hints' and 'Writing features' sections of the unit to the children.
4. Read through the story scaffolds with the children. Then give them the differentiated word banks and ask them to record their own vocabulary suggestions in the space provided.

Give the children time to plan, write and edit their stories. Each child can then store the best copies of their stories in a writing folder.

NOTES FROM THE AUTHORS

The activities in each unit, from reading the model story to composing a story 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 0107/2000). First the model story 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, story 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. As the grammar section contains examples from the story, all the children can access it at some level: it is not always necessary to understand the mechanics of the grammar in order to modify the examples for use in an individual story.

The units fulfil the text-level and sentence-level requirements of the NLS Framework for Year 4 and revise components from Year 3. The 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: historical stories

Grammar: verbs, verb tenses, powerful verbs (S2; S3)

Punctuation: commas (S5)

Writing feature: story settings; how the passage of time is presented (T1; T3)

UNIT 2

Genre: adventure stories

Grammar: adverbs (S4)

Punctuation: paragraphs (T15)

Writing features: narrative order (T4)

UNIT 3

Genre: Playscripts

Grammar: sentences (S?)

Punctuation: revision of capitals, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks (from Year 3)

Writing features: conventions of playscripts (T13)

TERM 2

UNIT 4

Genre: family stories

Grammar: revision of types of sentences – statement, question, exclamation

Punctuation: revision of speech punctuation

Writing features: collaborative writing and using plans; stories in chapters (T12)

UNIT 5

Genre: fantasy stories

Grammar: adjectives (S1)

Punctuation: contraction; apostrophe (S2)

Writing: expressive and descriptive language (T10; T13)

UNIT 6

Genre: science fiction

Grammar: word order (S3)

Punctuation: possession; apostrophe (S2)

Writing features: develop the use of story settings (T10)

UNIT 7

Genre: horror stories

Grammar: adverbs (S1)

Punctuation: how commas join and separate clauses (S4)

Writing features: creating a sense of fear and uncertainty

TERM 3

UNIT 8

Genre: stories that raise issues

Grammar: plurals (S1)

Punctuation: commas in adverbial phrases and clauses (S4)

Writing features: how issues affect characters (T11)

UNIT 9

Genre: story from another culture – Bahamian story

Grammar: sentence construction (S2; S3)

Punctuation: speech marks (S2)

Writing features: features of Bahamian stories (T2)

UNIT 10

Genre: story from another culture – Maori legend

Grammar: connectives (S4)

Punctuation: colons and semi-colons; parenthetical commas, dashes and brackets (S2)

Writing features: features of Maori stories (T2)

Historical stories

Writers of historical fiction aim to entertain their readers by describing the experience of imaginary characters at a certain time in history. In learning about the lives of these characters, the reader is acquainted with details of events and customs from that historical period.

If science fiction allows the writer tremendous freedom, as it is 'future history', then historical stories set in the past are restrictive in the sense that the experience of the characters and the twists of the plots should be representative of life at that particular point in history. It is important to impress on the children the need to avoid anachronisms; it seems inconceivable to many children that life was possible without television or computer games!

The children will probably produce a piece of work that seems more historically accurate if they employ a third person rather than a first person narrator. This removes the necessity of using antiquated language to recount the entire story. Instead they can work it

into the dialogue between the characters. If a first person narrator is selected by the child, standard English is safer than slang, which changes radically and rapidly over time.

In this unit the scaffolds are set in the Viking period; a popular history topic. Encourage the children to incorporate historical details that they know to be true in a subtle way, as integral parts of the plot rather than obvious 'add-ons' to show their knowledge.

The convention in historical fiction, whether historical adventure or romance, is that real historical figures should not feature as central characters.

The writers and readers of historical fiction have an advantage over the characters in the story in that hindsight gives us an understanding of a situation that may confuse them. They are also able to consider events from different angles while being sure in their knowledge of the outcome.

Historical stories

Examples of historical stories

The Thieves of Ostia: The Roman Mysteries by Caroline Lawrence (Roaring Brook, 2002)

The Vicious Vikings: Horrible Histories by Terry Deary (Scholastic Publications, 2000)

The War and Freddy by Dennis Hamley (Scholastic Publications, 1999)

The Lost Diaries of Tutankhamun's Mummy (The Lost Diaries) by Clive Dickinson (Collins, 1997)

Historical Storybooks: Annie – the Story of a Victorian Mill Girl by Margaret Nash (Hodder Wayland, 2001)

(For Advanced Readers)

Cue For Treason by Geoffrey Trease (Puffin Books, 1973)

The Railway Children by E Nesbit (Penguin Popular Classics, 1994)

A Traveller in Time by Alison Uttley (Puffin Books, 1977)



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

Longboat Stowaways

The shadows from the flickering flames played across the weathered lines of the old skald's¹ face; his voice stole into every corner of the longhouse and mesmerised the listeners as they picked at the left-overs from the banquet scattered across the wooden table. In this Viking settlement of Oseberg, Norway, the storytelling was the highlight of Jolablot, the midwinter feast. Tales of the god Odin² and his wars against the Frost Giants of Utgard; the rainbow bridge, Bifrost, that stretched from earthly Midgard³ to the home of the gods at Asgard; these were the characters and places that made up the very fabric of Viking life over a thousand years ago.⁴

Gunneva⁵, the chieftain's daughter was startled from her poetic trance by the cold, clammy nose of her dog, demanding its share of the feast. As she secretly flicked a morsel from a wooden platter, the dull glint of gold winked at her from the rush strewn floor. In the time that she took to pat her dog, the find was secreted in the woad⁶ folds of her tunic.

Later, by the dim light of the glowing hearth, she studied her new-found treasure. The lucky charm – the hammer of Thor – lay⁷ heavily in her palm. She knew to whom it belonged – her father. She felt sure that he wouldn't miss it; he was a great warrior and trader who had returned from trips to Miklagard bearing silver, silks and exotic spices.⁸ He would never miss this small trinket! A sudden snoring from the sleeping platform made her start guiltily and she tied the charm around her neck with a piece of thread and burrowed into her bed of furs.

At last, winter slowly gave way to spring and, as the days lengthened, preparations were underway for the first of the overseas raids.⁹ The settlement was expanding and her father had decided that more slaves were needed to work in the fields.¹⁰ Gunneva was used to slaves doing the really heavy and dirty work around the farm and she had never really given much thought to where they had come from.

One day, Gunneva, bored with her task of spinning, ran off to find her best friend Eirik. He was practising his fighting moves with his scramasax and she watched him for a while as he thrust and parried with the single-edged knife.¹¹

'Come and see the longboat with me,' begged Gunneva. 'It is almost ready to sail!'

'Willingly!' gasped the exhausted Eirik.¹² 'This shield is so heavy.'

Together the children ran to the beach where the longboat was moored. It was a mighty wooden planked vessel with huge sails and hefty oars, enabling it to quickly overpower smaller boats or escape swiftly from danger.¹³ Neither of them had ever been allowed to go aboard.

Excited by the bustle of loading supplies and weapons, Gunneva felt that she wanted to be part of the adventure.¹⁴

'Let's have a closer look,' she urged. 'Bring your weapons so that we look as if we are helping.'

Everybody was so engrossed in their particular tasks that they did not notice the children scuttling up the gangplank. They hid themselves behind some sacks and watched the proceedings with interest.

- 1 A Viking poet, who would recite old and new poems at feasts. He would often be rewarded with jewellery.
- 2 Odin was the most important Viking god.
- 3 The Viking name for Earth.
- 4 The first paragraph sets the scene. It moves the reader from the poet's face, right out through Viking beliefs to the fact that this story is set a thousand years ago.
- 5 An old Norwegian name.
- 6 Blue dye from vegetable extract.
- 7 Thor was the most popular of Viking gods. He was big and strong and had a bright red beard.
- 8 The city we know as Istanbul was known to the Vikings as 'Miklagard'. The inhabitants traded furs, honey, beeswax and slaves for silver, silks and spices.
- 9 Commas are used to define the clauses in this long sentence.
- 10 Some slaves were made to work for the Vikings; others were sold in the slave markets in the Middle East.
- 11 The children are given 'gender appropriate' activities.
The scramasax was used in hand-to-hand fighting.
- 12 A male Viking name from which we get the modern 'Eric'.
- 13 The description of the longboat introduces the next setting for the story.
- 14 Gunneva's feelings draw the reader deeper into the story.

Understanding the grammar and punctuation

Understanding the grammar and punctuation enables children to control the language they use and therefore write more interesting and powerful stories.

Grammar pointers

Help the children to be aware of the following when writing their historical story.

Verb Tenses

A verb is an action word: it describes a happening or a state of being. Every sentence requires a verb.

The tense of the verb indicates when the action happened, either in the past, present or future. The past tense of most regular verbs is created by adding 'ed' to the base form of the verb. For example:

She secretly flicked a morsel of food from a wooden platter.

If the verb ends in 'y', the 'y' is replaced with 'i' and then 'ed' is added. For example:

She studied her new found treasure.

Irregular verbs form the past tense in a number of different ways. For example,

His voice stole into every corner of the longhouse.

The present tense of a verb is usually the base form of the verb. If the subject is he, she or it, or a singular noun, 's' is added. For example:

Gunneva begs

He helps

The future tense is shown by adding 'will' or 'shall' to the base form. For example:

I will take the charm back to my father.

Powerful Verbs

Explain to the children that powerful verbs give extra meaning to their writing. They can describe a character's personality or mood and add to the atmosphere of a story setting. For example,

'Willingly!' said the exhausted Eirik.

can be replaced with:

'Willingly!' gasped the exhausted Eirik.

Ask the children to make a list of some common verbs and then think of some more powerful verbs to replace them. Explain how to use a thesaurus efficiently and encourage them to refer to it whilst writing their story.

Punctuation pointers

Commas

Remind the children that a comma is a punctuation mark that helps the reader make sense of the text, by demarcating different parts of a sentence. It can also indicate a pause in speech or add emphasis to a particular clause in the sentence.

Commas are used to separate items in a list but not before 'and'. For example,

The Viking warriors carried spears, daggers, axes and shields.

The monastery had been looted, the fittest folk captured and the food stores and animals rounded up.

Commas are also used to enclose additional information about the rest of the sentence For example,

Gunneva, the chieftain's daughter, was startled from her poetic trance.

The children's version of these notes is on page 9 of the resource book.

Writing features

Story settings and passage of time

Story settings

Explain to the children that one of the most important elements of their story, along with the plot and the characters, is the setting. It is the setting that creates the mood for the story.

In historical stories, the setting is dictated by the characteristics of the era in which the story takes place. There are several ways in which the children can make their story all the more realistic.

- ◆ Identify when the story takes place. They could incorporate elements such as newspapers, letters and proclamations or other appropriate ways, to give such information. Flashbacks are an effective way of handling the passage of time. They allow the reader to follow the sequence of events through the story.
- ◆ They should describe the appearance of the location or locations in the story and include details about the sounds, smells, tastes and sensations that the characters encounter.
- ◆ They should be sure to choose a setting that they are familiar with. It is better to write vividly about something we know, than to spoil an exotic setting with a lack of realistic detail.
- ◆ One way to add intrigue to a story is to describe the setting in such a way that questions are raised in the mind of the reader. For example:

Together the children ran to the beach where the longboat was moored ... Neither of them had ever been allowed to go aboard.

The reader wonders why the chieftain's daughter has not been allowed on the longboat. Surely she would have special privileges?

- ◆ It is important for the setting of the story that the characters are given names that match both the period in history and the geographical location. 'Gunneva' and 'Eirik' are both Norwegian names. Likewise, 'Oseberg' is a real place.
- ◆ Attribute the male and female characters in the story with roles that are gender-appropriate for the period when the story is set. For example, Gunneva is busy spinning, whilst Eirik is practising his fighting skills.

- ◆ Another effective way of enhancing the realism of a setting is to ascribe beliefs to characters that were commonly held at the period in history in which they lived. For example, Viking warriors believed that if they died in bed, they would be taken to a place called Niflheim in the centre of the Earth; in a boat made of toe-nail clippings!

How time passes in the course of stories

Some stories are told chronologically, with a beginning, middle and an ending. Others start with a particular event and then describe what led up to it. This is called 'flashback'. *Longboat Stowaways* begins in part with a flashback. The first paragraph sets the scene for the story. It takes the reader back a thousand years and embeds them in the Viking system of belief.

The story then moves into chronological narrative, with the progress of time marked by the time adverbials that begin subsequent paragraphs. In *Longboat Stowaways*, seasonal changes are indicated by phrases such as:

At last winter slowly gave way to spring... ;

the passing of days is expressed quite simply as:

One day...;

and the passage of hours as:

Hours later...

The immediacy of a moment is highlighted with words such as, 'Suddenly...' and 'All at once...':

Sometimes the passage of time is made evident through the thoughts or feelings of the characters. For example,

The stowaways lost track of time but their limbs grew stiff and their bellies empty.

Here the reader is told deliberately that it is not known how much time has passed: to gauge the time frame, they are expected to draw on their own experience of feeling hunger and discomfort.

There are helpful hints for children on writing an historical story on page 12 of the resource book.