

Writing Genres

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Children develop concepts, dispositions and skills in relation to:

- Motivation and choice
- Conventions of print and sentence structure
- Purpose, genre and voice
- Writing process
- Response and author's intent

Key points on teaching a new writing genre

- Children should have a clear understanding of the purpose of a genre
- Engage in free writing
- Writing opportunities through play
- Creating an audience and purpose for writing
- Children discover framework/structure of a genre
- Teach key features of a genre through mini-lessons
- Teacher modelling writing genre
- Shared writing with the children
- Guided writing using a framework or guide
- Independent writing - Using the writing process through the writing workshop
- Children don't need to re-edit every piece
- Enable children to assess their own writing

Introduction

Children need to write for many different purposes and audiences, for example, writing a shopping list, presenting information on an animal, composing a recipe, recounting an experience or entertaining an audience with a story. As adults we may rarely write a short story yet we persuade, inform, recount and discuss on a weekly basis. Often a child who may be reluctant to write a narrative could be very eager to write a report on an animal. The various writing genres can be taught using the writing workshop, described

previously. The specific genre instruction can form the content of a mini lesson. It is important that teachers use the right terminology for each writing genre.

Free writing

This is a powerful way to allow children the freedom and time to write without constraints. This can form part of the activity or play centres in the morning. From junior infants children should have time to free write every day. This may take the form of a simple drawing, labelling their drawings, teacher scribing using children's language to the stage where children are independently writing. Free writing samples can be a very useful assessment and planning tool.

Writing and play

Wonderful opportunities for writing can happen through the natural play of children. Play provides an authentic purpose. For example children playing the optician have a chance to write a prescription for glasses, fill in a form with information for the optician and write a sign with the opening and closing times. Drawings and approximate spelling are all a valid part of this. Providing various writing materials can motivate the children in the play situation.

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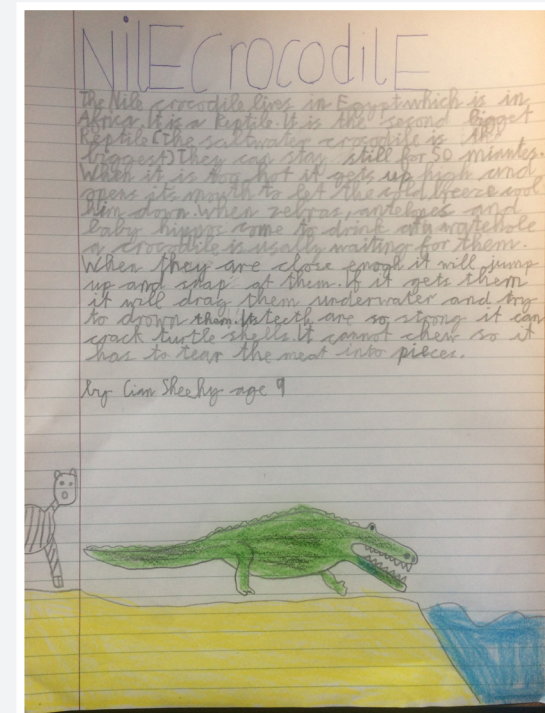
Infants writing based on their play

Reading and Writing

Development in reading and writing can be reciprocal. Good readers and good writers can have a pleasant symbiotic relationship.

When planning to teach a particular genre to children include samples of that genre in reading time. This will have many benefits. Children will experience good quality reading materials. They will develop reading and comprehension skills in that genre. This will in turn influence their writing and use of language. For example when reading an information text on a country the teacher could teach how to extract important information. This will benefit the children's writing when they are researching information in SESE for their own report. Before any

writing experience ensure children have time to discuss and develop speaking and listening skills in that genre. Therefore by linking speaking, listening, reading and writing in the same genre children will have an integrated and meaningful experience. This can be incorporated across the curriculum in many subject areas.



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Different writing genre

For the purpose of this support material we will examine six main writing genres. The same approach can be adopted for any writing genre.

- Recount: the purpose is to retell events. Main features of a recount include events in time order, linking words to do with time, simple past tense.
- Narrative: the purpose is to entertain. A narrative tells an imaginative story (some can be based on facts). Main features of a narrative include defined characters, a setting, problem or complication, descriptive language and are usually in the past tense.
- Procedure: the purpose is to tell the way to do things. Main features of a procedure include stating the goal of the procedure, materials, method, evaluation, tense is timeless and use of linking words.
- Report: the purpose is to present factual information on a person, place, animal or thing. Main features of a report include classification, description, summary, subject specific vocabulary and objective language.
- Exposition: the purpose is to persuade. Main features include arguments for/against, evidence, conclusion, mainly timeless present tense and use of passives.
- Explanation: the purpose is to explain how something came to be. Main features include a definition, description of various parts, how or why it works and summary.

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Supporting children with their writing

The teacher should plan to explicitly teach a writing genre over approximately 6-8 weeks. Using the writing workshop as an instructional method, the key elements of a genre can be taught in mini lessons (see previous section on writing workshops).

Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983) is an effective method to introduce a new genre.

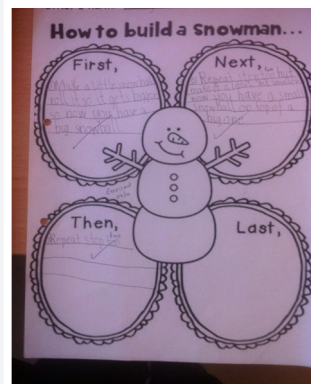
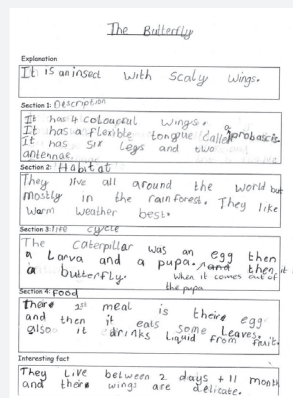
During Reading workshops the teacher should plan to read examples of the genre before examining it in writing workshops. The learning objective may be for the children to write explanations on how a volcano erupts. In reading workshops good examples of explanations can be read and examined. Word work and comprehension skills such as scanning and skimming for subject specific vocabulary or synthesising information could be explicitly taught. Discussion of the language features of an explanation piece can be central to reading mini- lessons. The reading text can naturally integrate with SESE. .

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model begins with **modelled writing** where the teacher has responsibility for the writing. This responsibility is gradually reduced while supporting and guiding the children to the independent writing stage.

The teacher can choose to model an example of a report. Modelled writing is always beneficial for every age. During modelled writing the teacher writes and thinks aloud as

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modelled writing the teacher writes and thinks aloud as he/she is writing. This demonstrates the thought processes during writing. During the writing workshop the class can **discover the key features** of the report writing e.g. classification of the animal, habitat, interesting features etc. Next the children might join in and help with a **shared writing** of a report. Shared writing includes the children's ideas and thoughts. The teacher can scribe this on board or flipchart, again drawing the children's attention to key language features or structure of the genre. Slowly the children are taking more responsibility for the writing experience. **Collaborative writing** in pairs using a **guide**, visual aid or **framework** can be very beneficial. This gradual release of responsibility will empower and enable the children to **write independently** in the new writing genre.



An element of choice is important here. Allow the children time and space to choose their own animal to write about. Conferencing the children will help improve the children's writing and help support all writing levels in the class. Conferencing is a focused conversation between teacher and child/children. There is a key teaching point as part of the conversation and affirmation on their writing to date.

The more time that can be given to this on a daily basis the better the progress. Developing the children's language around the genre can benefit greatly. Speaking and listening activities can be planned based on the genre e.g. when teaching report writing the pupil can present information to a partner orally based on mystery animal and the partner has to guess the animal.

When children are discovering the framework of a genre allow that to develop over time, as they read more examples in reading workshops they can add to the text features and language features of the framework. These 'magic ingredients' of a particular genre can be discovered in reading, taught in writing mini lessons, discovered and highlighted in shared writing experiences.

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Examples how a genre can be incorporated in to reading, writing, speaking and listening

Exposition writing- 2nd class

Speaking and Listening: Topic 'Should we have more time for sport in school?'

Walking debate as a class and pair debate.

Be the expert in a particular topic of choice and present this to the class.

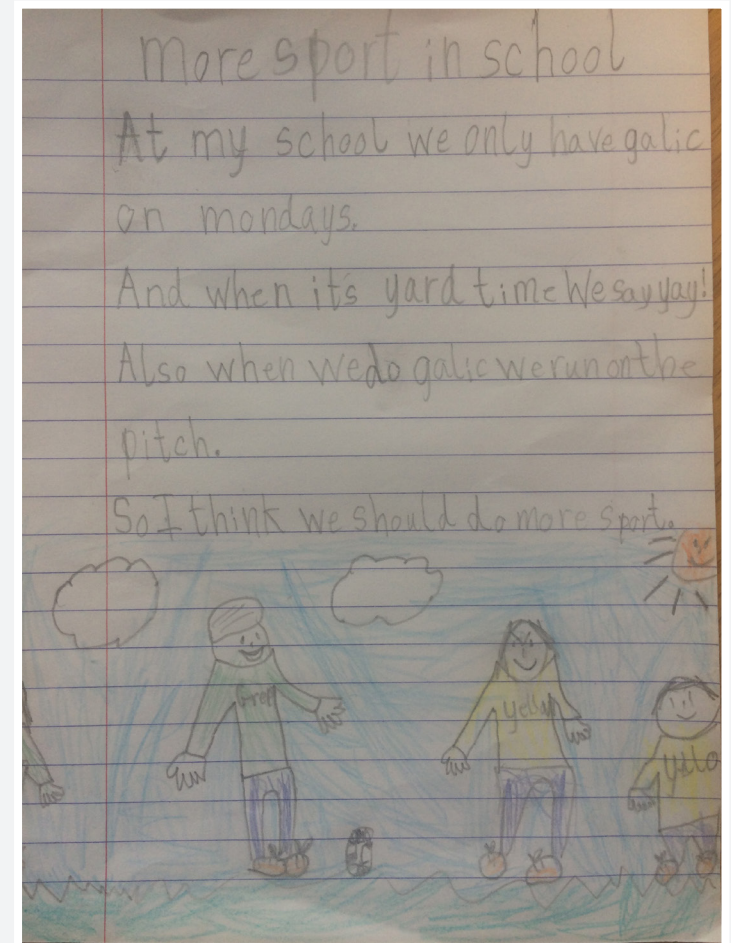
Reading: read a sample of a discussion on the topic of sport.

Explicit teaching of language features of a discussion-

Arguments for and arguments against, research and conclusion

Examining emotive language in advertisements

Writing: independently writing a discussion on a topic of their choice



A discussion on sport

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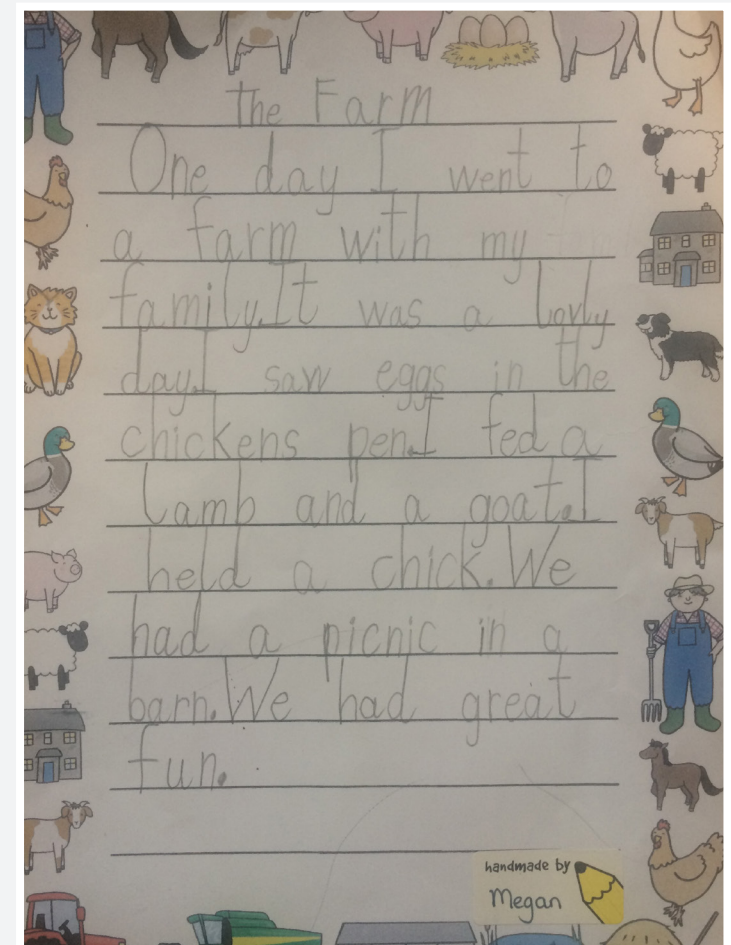
Recount writing- Junior Infants

Speaking and Listening: using a framework of who, what, where, when and why

Recount an experience to their partner using think, pair, share.

Reading -reading a shared writing script from language experience approach and focusing on past tense used in recounts.

Writing -modelled and shared writing of a class experience



Recount

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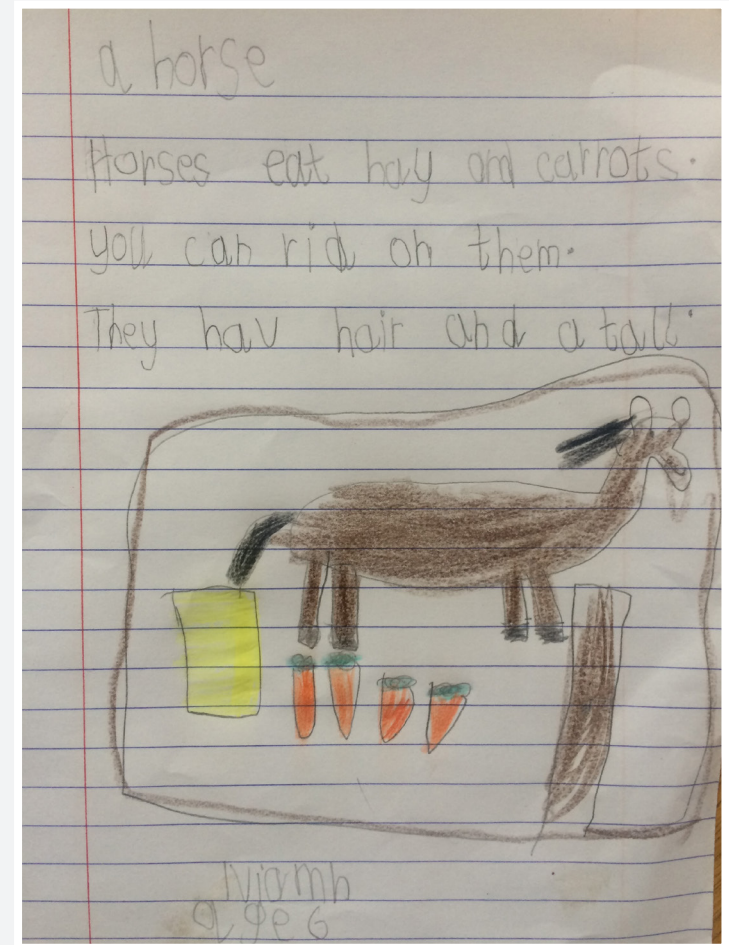
Examples how a genre can be incorporated in to reading, writing, speaking and listening

Report writing -Senior Infants

Speaking and listening: Orally telling about their favourite animal, pick a mystery animal from a bag describe to partner and child has to guess the animal.

Reading: reading reports about animals in SESE.

Writing: children choose an animal to write about *Amazing Fact Book* on animals.



Report on animals

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Examples how a genre can be incorporated in to reading, writing, speaking and listening

Explanation writing- 1st class

Speaking and Listening: Orally explain to a partner how to make different colours using paint, how to brush your teeth.

Reading: modelled and shared reading of an explanation focusing on determining importance and action verbs.

Writing: shared writing of an explanation with teacher scribing.

Procedural writing -1st class

Speaking and listening: Orally telling a partner how to play new game in PE

Reading: recipes on how to make a sandwich

Writing: writing a procedure based on new game in PE or a science experiment in SESE through pictures and text.

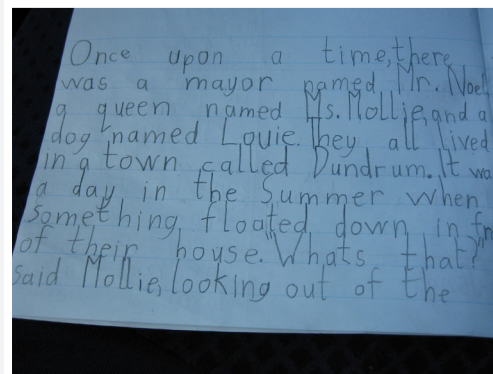
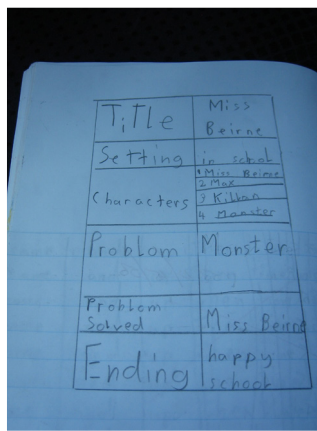
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ICT Support for Writing:

<http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/>
<https://storybird.com/>
<https://www.mystorybook.com/>
<http://www.crickweb.co.uk/>

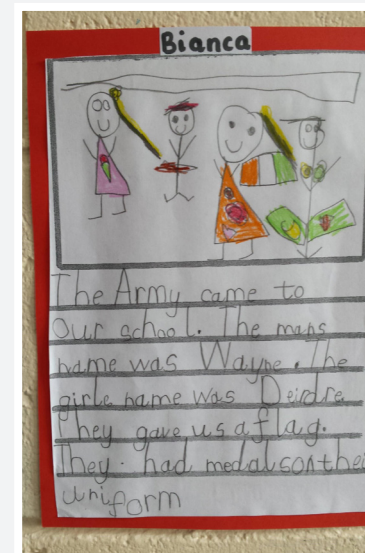
A Whole School Approach

Schools could plan to explicitly teach all writing genre over the course of infants to 6th. While all genres can be introduced based on children's needs and interests, a school should ensure that all will be explicitly taught over the 8 years.



Assessment of writing:

Let the children design a writing rubric or checklist based on the framework they have discovered in mini-lessons. This rubric or checklist can be used as a tool to self-assesses and peer assesses their writing. The writing continua or a map of development can be a useful assessment tool. Dating the children's writing and storing it in a portfolio either electronically or in hard copy can be evidence of the development in each genre.



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