

A ROUTLEDGE FREEBOOK

IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES FOR LITERACY TEACHING IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

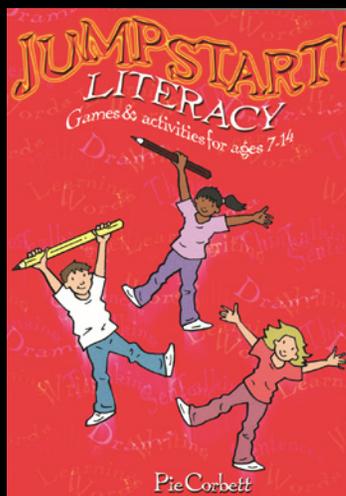
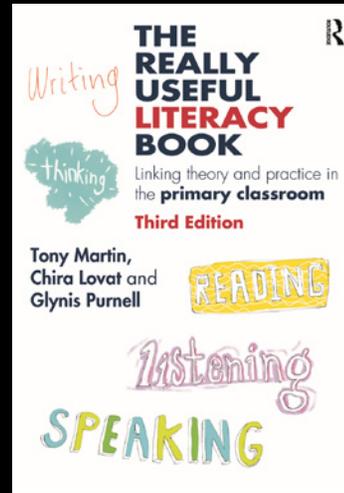
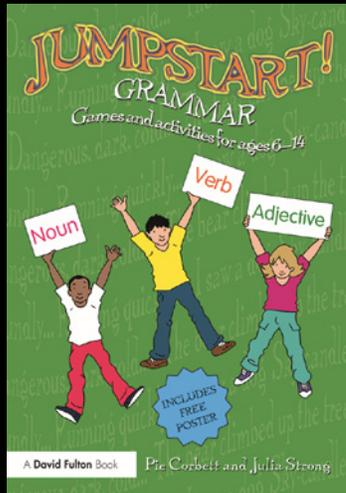




TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 04 :: INTRODUCTION
- 06 :: 1. THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS:
NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS
- 27 :: 2. SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS:
STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM
VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES
- 39 :: 3. JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING,
AND DRAMA
- 57 :: 4. BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH
DESCRIPTOSAURUS

HELP YOUR STUDENTS BUILD THEIR CREATIVITY AND CONFIDENCE WITH THESE TITLES



USE DISCOUNT CODE **LIT15** FOR 20% OFF THESE TITLES FROM ROUTLEDGE EDUCATION

ROUTLEDGE EDUCATION ARENA

Visit Routledge Education to browse our full collection of resources for practitioners and professors.

» [CLICK HERE](#)





INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Are you looking for ideas and activities to improve literacy in your primary classroom? Developing and improving literacy for primary-aged pupils is a key focus for many schools; both new and experienced teachers continue to look for new ideas or tips to support their literacy teaching practice. Drawing from the experience of key authors Pie Corbett, Julia Strong, Alison Wilcox, Tony Martin, Chira Lovat and Glynis Purnell, this FreeBook brings you ideas and activities for teaching grammar, poetry, speaking, listening and drama, and creative writing in the primary classroom.

The four chapters that make up *Ideas and Activities for Literacy Teaching in the Primary Classroom* contain a multitude of engaging and original ways for you to help your students expand their vocabularies while building creativity and confidence. In each section of this book you will find practical tips and suggestions for helping your pupils develop their language skills that you can easily implement in your own classroom.

We've designed this FreeBook in such a way that you can jump around between chapters and pick and choose the games and exercises that are best suited to your teaching objectives. Our hope is that *Ideas and Activities for Literacy Teaching in the Primary Classroom* will be an invaluable resource as you work with your students to develop their skills. And don't forget to check out these books in their entirety for an even greater selection of ideas and activities to work into your literacy teaching.

CHAPTER 1 – THE THINGS & THE ACTIONS: NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

Both teaching and learning grammar can be daunting tasks, but neither has to be. In this selection from *Jumpstart! Grammar*, authors Pie Corbett and Julia Strong make the study of grammar more fun and approachable for students and instructors alike by focusing on developing comprehension through hands-on application of grammatical rules and principles.

This chapter features a wealth of classroom exercises and activities designed to help students better understand how nouns, adjectives, and verbs function both on their own and in conjunction with each other. By taking the emphasis off of the rather dry process of simply naming parts of speech, Corbett and Strong turn grammar study into a series of games that will transform students into enthusiastic learners.

All the exercises in this chapter can be modified to accommodate a range of ages and abilities.



INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2 – SHAPELY POEMS & CALLIGRAMS: STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES

In this chapter from the third edition of *The Really Useful Literacy Book*, authors Tony Martin, Chira Lovat, and Glynis Purnell investigate the idea of “playing with words” to help students develop, expand, and explore their vocabularies. By incorporating a visual learning component into language work, the authors have found a way to get children to think differently about the ways in which they can express themselves.

The activities in this chapter are designed in such a way that teachers can easily tweak them and make any adaptations necessary to accommodate the students in their class, and can therefore be used with a broad range of levels.

CHAPTER 3 – JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

This chapter from *Jumpstart! Literacy* has Pie Corbett returning with ideas for activities that will get your students speaking and listening, and provide excellent warm-up exercises for reading, writing, and drama sessions. Just like the activities featured in chapter 1, these games will fully immerse children in the construction of rich sentences and stories, and prepare them for more complex assignments.

Pie Corbett’s emphasis here is on getting children to engage with each other and test their creativity with activities that have them progressing naturally from working with the spoken to the written word.

CHAPTER 4 – BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

In the words of author Alison Wilcox, *Descriptosaurus* is a “thematic expansion of a dictionary and a thesaurus.” This innovative model helps children work on building their command of both vocabulary and structure in order to use their creativity to its fullest extent. This chapter of *Ideas and Activities for Literacy Teaching in the Primary Classroom* begins with an introduction to the Descriptosaurus model, and then offers several examples of thematic groupings of words and phrases that will help children put together rich, descriptive sentences while getting a sense of how parts of speech work together.

In this chapter, you’ll notice references to resources such as Prompt Cards and Character Profile Cards. These are available in the full text of *Descriptosaurus, 2nd edition*, but are not included in this particular excerpt. The full text also comes packaged with a CD Rom that contains all the main elements of the book, making it even easier for you to incorporate these activities into your teaching.

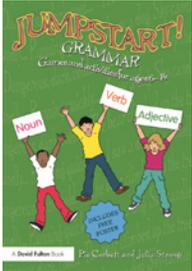


THE THINGS
AND THE ACTIONS:
NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS



The following is sourced from *Jumpstart! Grammar: Games and activities for ages 6-14* by Pie Corbett and Julia Strong. ©2014 Taylor and Francis Group. All rights reserved.

You can purchase a copy [HERE](#).

THE THINGS: NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

WHAT ARE NOUNS?

Use these games to draw out from the children that a noun is a word that labels or 'names' something. Nouns name things, objects, people or places. You can put *a*, *an* or *the* in front of them – *the **storm**, a **surprise**, the **fear**, an **umbrella**.*

Most nouns can be either singular (only one) or plural (lots of them) – ***cloud**, **clouds**.*

You can have an adjective before them – *the **white clouds**.*

A collective noun is a word that refers to a group – ***shoal**, **herd**.*

Proper nouns begin with capital letters and name people, places, organisations and unique things – ***Bob**, **London**, **Macdonalds**.* Days of the week and months should also begin with a capital letter – ***Tuesday**, **March**.*

All other nouns are called common nouns.

Concrete nouns are nouns that name people, places and things that can be experienced through the five senses – ***car**, **rain**, **bird**.* Abstract nouns name feelings, ideas and concepts – ***hate**, **anger**, **jealousy**.* A simple way to explain the difference between concrete and abstract nouns is to say that concrete nouns can be touched, like ***concrete*** whereas abstract nouns cannot be touched, like ***hunger**.*

I SPY

Play 'I spy'. Make it easy for very young children by suggesting that we only choose things that we can see. Vary this by inviting them to suggest things that you might see in different places, for example, a wildlife park, town centre, shopping mall, park. All the words they choose will be nouns.

MIME IT

Someone is selected and comes to the front. This person has to mime something (a noun) and everyone else has one guess. It can help children if you give them categories like animals, things you find in a kitchen, eating something, something you find in the town, something in the countryside, etc.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

THE 'DOES IT FIT?' GAME

This game is quite a useful way of helping children get a feel for the grammatical properties of a noun. Provide the children with these two sentences:

The x is great.

The x were great.

Then provide a bag of words and the children have to try and work out which can be nouns, which are not, and which can be used as a noun and something else. A basic test to see if something is a noun is to see if it will fit into either of the above sentences. Let us take the word 'green', which at first glance might appear to be an adjective. However:

The green is great.

This works as a sentence. This means that *green*, which is often used as an adjective, can also be used as a noun when it refers to the village green or a golf course or a colour itself. Here are some other words to test out:

fish, group, huge, stole, cars, question, branch, Susie (careful with this one as you need to drop the – 'Susie is great'), party, angry, hard, sun, laptop, potato, stars, shirt, shy, scissors, following, missing, bird, wave.

TEXT MARKING

Begin using the term *noun* when discussing reading and writing – use a colour to underline the nouns in a text and then another colour for the adjectives and another for the verbs. The basic tests for a noun are – can you have lots of them (singular/plural), can you put *a/an* or *the* in front of the word? Give children sentences or paragraphs so they can be 'noun hunters'. Can they find the nouns?

LABELLING

Everyone loves a Post-it note – and you can buy them in all sorts of colours, shapes and sizes. Play a simple labelling game, where Post-its are put on objects in the classroom and arrows are used to label objects in an image. The words are all called *nouns*. Nouns tell you the name of something.

Provide the children with a list of words on a board and get them to decide which are 'Post-it' words (nouns) and which are ones that tell us what something does (verbs):



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

cat, cup, jump, car, run, cow, walk, cap, tortoise, candle, hop, book, pencil, cheese, policeman, swim, guitar, computer

This is where grammar becomes tricky because you can never really tell what a word is until it is placed within a sentence. Most of us would say, at first glance, that *run, jump, walk* and *hop* are verbs. However, they can also be nouns – cricketers make a run; athletes might make a jump; most weekends we go for a walk; beer is made from hops!

I used a variation of the simple Post-it game with a Year 7 class several years ago. We wrote imaginative questions for the chosen objects and placed them around the room, leaving them there for future classes to look at and wonder:

Crack in the ceiling – are you a hiding place for spiders?

Light bulb – do you ever get tired of staring down at our whirring brains?

Dictionary – you have all the words but do you have any sense?

Door – you seem to be silent but do you really think that we have not heard your squealing?

MEMORY GAME

Everyone of a certain age remembers Bruce Forsyth helping winners in 'The Generation Game' trying to remember the items from the conveyor belt. Try your own version – playing the same memory game (known as 'Kim's game'). Place objects on a tray in front of children or use a collection of images on the interactive whiteboard (IWB). Give the class time to try and memorise the objects and then cover the tray or blank the screen. On their own, or in pairs, they can try and list the items on a whiteboard, draw them or just remember by memory.

Vary the game. For instance, you might select objects that are all one colour (red = adjective, a word that 'tells us what something is like') or for younger children use objects that all start with the same sound/letter.

ALPHABET RACES

These races practise the alphabet and encourage children to generate ideas as well as reinforcing the nature of a noun. Create a simple grid for the children with the alphabet down the left-hand side. The children then have 5–10 minutes to complete as much as possible. The easiest categories are 'girls' names' and 'boys' names'. Another fairly easy one is to list fruit and vegetables or food. You could also try other categories such as 'things you can see in the room', 'things you can see in the



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

countryside', 'things you can see in the town'. If you are engaged in a topic, then see if they can produce an alphabet of related words perhaps with glossary definitions.

TABLE 1 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

Alphabet	Girl's name	Boy's name	Fruit and veg
A	Alice	Ali	avocado
B	Beyonce	Bill	banana
C	Carly	Clive	cucumber
D	Danni	Duane	dates
E	Elif	Eddy	endive

LEAVE THEM OUT (CLOZE GAMES)

Nouns are crucial labelling devices – without them sentences collapse. Find a few sentences (maggie them from a book) or a paragraph and omit the nouns, creating a simple cloze procedure. Get the children to read the cloze procedure aloud so they can 'hear' how the keystones of a sentence are missing – the things/nouns.

TABLE 2 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

Cloze procedure	One possible answer
The ... wheezed past the old The ... tooted the ... and waited while the ... chugged along. Was it about to explode? After a while, a young ... came out and poured cold ... into the Everyone watched while it bubbled happily. ... hissed.	The car wheezed past the old garage. The driver tooted the horn and waited while the engine chugged along. Was it about to explode? After a while, a young man came out and poured cold water into the engine. Everyone watched while it bubbled happily. Steam hissed.

Ask the children to fill the gaps. Then ask them to explain what 'sort' of word was missing. What is the 'job' of that type of word?

REPLACE WITH FRUIT AND VEG (CLOZE GAMES)

Another version of cloze procedure involves taking out all the nouns and replacing them with a different word. This can produce much hilarity but is useful because it helps the children to revisit and deepen their 'feel' for the nature of the noble and humble noun – without which we do not know our surroundings. Try replacing nouns with fruit, vegetables or animals. Once again, begin by getting children to read aloud the text as this helps to draw their attention to the nouns that sound odd.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

TABLE 3 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

Cloze procedure version	One possible answer
As the banana chugged through the beans, she stared out of the cucumber. Tiny strawberries clung to the tomatoes and, in the melon, lemons grazed. A potato ran beside the lettuce, gurgling on its way to the radish. As she looked out of the cucumber, she noticed the dark pineapple drifting overhead.	As the train chugged through the valleys, she stared out of the window. Tiny houses clung to the hillsides and, in the distance, sheep grazed. A river ran beside the train, gurgling on its way to the sea. As she looked out of the window, she noticed the dark clouds drifting overhead.

Get children to prepare their own paragraphs using fruit or vegetables instead of nouns. They then swap their prepared paragraph with a partner.

SWAPPING

Another amusing game that focuses on nouns involves swapping them over in a text. You could do this yourself and provide the children with a paragraph or list of sentences with the nouns swapped and they have to sort it out. Once again, reading the text aloud is crucial. You may have noticed that if you are writing and a sentence doesn't seem 'quite right', you find yourself automatically reading aloud to 'hear' whether or not what you have written 'works' – grammar is not just knowing the function of the words in sentences but it is also about usage.

TABLE 4 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

The original	Swapped over text
Bees are famous for making honey. They live in hives and spend most of their time in the summer flying round looking for flowers that contain pollen.	Hives are famous for making bees. They live in honey and spend most of their pollen in the flowers flying round looking for summer that contain time.

'DEAD COMMON' OR 'NICE AND PROPER'?

Present children with the list of words below. Can they sort the words into two groups and say what the difference might be? Don't prompt the children at all – see if they can notice the difference – and then explain the rule.

dog, Richard, cow, Leeds, cat, chair, December, frost, egg, Wednesday, donut, dust, Thames, sand, Folkestone, flea, Asda

What sorts of words in sentences have a capital letter and why? The key ones are months, days of the week, names of people, organisations and places.

In addition, capital letters are used to start the first word in a sentence and for the word 'I'.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

THE PROPER NOUN ALPHABET RACE

Hold an alphabet race in pairs – giving a common and a proper noun for each letter, as well as using alliteration:

A is for Archie, an amiable ant.

B is for Boris, a beautiful bear.

One way to play the game is for partner a to say the first part (A is for Archie) and partner b to add on the animal plus adjective (an amiable ant). Which pair reaches the end of the alphabet first?

THE PROPER NOUN POEM

Provide the class with a simple pattern that involves a day of the week, a month, a name and a place. Give a few minutes for them to create a simple 'day of the week' list poem. In pairs, let the children 'police' each other's sentences, checking for correct use of capital letters ... and of course full stops, for example:

On Monday in December, Ayse swam seriously to Swindon.

On Tuesday in January, Nick trotted timidly through Grantham.

On Wednesday in February, Tina tiptoed tenaciously by the Thames.

NAME IT

One of the key things that children need to consider about nouns is the impact they make on the reader. Show the children these two sentences and ask them which one creates a stronger picture and why.

The man came into the building with the dog.

The policeman came into the school with the poodle.

In the second sentence, the nouns are more precise so that the reader can build a stronger picture. Now compare these two sentences and discuss the impact on the reader:

The policeman came into the school with the poodle.

The policeman came into the school with the Rottweiler.

What sort of picture and what effect are created? To me, the idea of a policeman with a poodle sounds silly. However, the Rottweiler sounds like serious business.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

Choosing nouns with care can help to build a picture for the reader. Now ask the children to consider the following. If you are writing about a character who is swimming and meets a fish, what do the following words suggest? What mood is created? What might the reader think?

He could just make out a cod swimming towards him.

He could just make out a shark swimming towards him.

He could just make out a sardine swimming towards him.

Try the same thing with these sentences.

Gary stared up at the tree. There was a budgie in it.

Gary stared up at the tree. There was a bird of paradise in it.

Gary stared up at the tree. There was a vulture in it.

When writing, encourage children to choose nouns with care so that they 'name it'. It is not a cat – it is a Siamese. Nouns create pictures and also may have implications. If a shark is swimming towards the main character, then a sudden dash is called for! If it happens to be a sardine, we can relax. Try a game in which you provide a list of nouns that children have to 'name' in order to make them more specific. I have provided some suggestions.

TABLE 5 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

dog	Alsatian
cat	Burmese
bird	eagle
fish	salmon
animal	tiger
tree	oak
flower	primrose
car	Mercedes
man	Mr Jobson
woman	Miss Welcome
vegetable	marrow



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

Try this paragraph below. The children have to underline the nouns and then 'name it' by changing the nouns to make them more particular. Point out that 'the girl' could become 'Beyoncé' or 'the man' might be turned into 'Harold'.

The girl, who came from a planet, soon reached the town and found the street. The school was empty except for the boy who was climbing a tree in the playground. They made their way to the market and wandered past stalls selling fruit, vegetables and sweets. They bought a fruit to eat and wandered to the shop. Inside there were cages. In one, a dog sat watching them. In another, a cat lay asleep. Insects swarmed in a small glass cage. On top of the counter was a huge tank where a fish swam round. The girl chose an animal to buy. Outside, a strange bird swooped overhead. A car pulled up. Inside, they could see a pile of glittering jewels.

You might want to share my version for their comments.

Jasmine, who came from Xargon soon reached Salford and found Cherry Tree Avenue. St Peters Primary was empty except for Jason who was climbing an oak tree in the playground. They made their way to the Carswell Market and wandered past stalls selling water melons, potatoes and liquorice. They bought an apple to eat and wandered to Pets "R" Us. Inside there were cages. In one, a poodle sat watching them. In another, a Siamese lay asleep. Locusts swarmed in a small glass cage. On top of the counter was a huge tank where a goldfish swam round. Jasmine chose a gerbil to buy. Outside, a strange hawk swooped overhead. A Mercedes pulled up. Inside, they could see a pile of glittering diamonds.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

WHAT ARE ADJECTIVES?

Use these games to draw out from the children that an adjective is a word that describes somebody or something, adding extra information to a noun or completing a verb. Adjectives are placed before the noun: *The **red** flower.* But, when they complement a verb, they come after it: *The flower is **red**.* (Verbs such as *to be, to look, to get, to seem* need to be completed to make sense.) Adjectives refer to the qualities that something or someone might have. They tell you what something is like. This is often referred to as 'modifying' the noun because an adjective changes the meaning of the noun slightly – it modifies what the noun is like. Sometimes I talk about how the adjective snuggles up to the noun.

You may need to use an adjective to compare things – *That dog is **taller** than my dog.* Generally, this is done by adding *er* onto the adjective – *small, **smaller**,* though sometimes for longer words you can use the word *more* – *that one is **more** amazing.*

If you are comparing more than two things, then you need a superlative which may well end in *est* – *My dog is tall and your dog is taller but that dog is the **tallest**.* Again, for longer words, you can use the word *most* – *That handbag is expensive but this one is **more** expensive, and Jo's is the **most** expensive of all.*

It is worth noting that the position of the adjective in an English sentence is different to many other languages. This means that when teaching, it is important to use colourful, human sentences and words on cards to make the position clear for those learning the English language.

SPOT THE ADJECTIVE

Write up a few sentences and the children have to underline the adjective. Some are in front of the noun but others are complements so they come after the verb they complete. They all *add* to the noun.

Fred had a red hat and blue shoes.

Lilly's scarf was blue.

Mrs Snaggenose picked up the broken box, the damp coat and the dusty cloak.

Gavin stared at the watery painting and gave a deep chuckle.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

BRAINSTORM

A simple way into understanding adjectives is to brainstorm possibilities. It can help if you use an image of an animal and then list as many describing words as possible. Begin by brainstorming as a class. Then choose another image and challenge the children – who can list the most in one or two minutes? This sort of activity helps children get a feel for the job of the adjective – to describe, to add new information and build a picture, etc. With younger children, you may find this works best if you use real objects. Obviously, this sort of game acts as a good precursor to writing. It is useful before describing characters or building up a setting in a story.

A variation of this game is to provide an object or image and a list of possible adjectives and ask which ones would work well and which would not. For instance, if you had on the screen an image of a lion roaring, which of these adjectives would work and which would not?

savage, hungry, desperate, cruel, gentle, friendly, frightening, comfortable, happy, whispering, roaring, singing, sleepy

WHAT IS THE JOB? SPOT THE ODD ONE OUT

This is a handy game to play because you ask the children to work out what the underlined words have in common – what is their job? Can they explain their function? You have also included an ‘odd one out’. Which is it and why? (*limped* – because it is a verb.)

Then something reared up in front of Tom. Its huge, leathery wings flapped like mighty sails. He stared up into its scarlet eyes and shuddered. Quietly, it placed an enormous claw in front of Tom and he could see that a golden ring was biting into the soft flesh of its lower leg. The dragon took a step nearer and limped. A vast tear splashed down its scaly cheek....

FILLING THE GAPS (CLOZE GAMES)

The simplest adjective game is to provide a cloze procedure in which the adjectives have been missed out. But remember – it is worth discussing a few choices to consider which adjectives work most effectively and why. Here are some sentences to get you started. I have played this differently where I have just used the word ‘nice’ as an adjective each time.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

The _____ dog barked at the _____ cat.

The _____ snake slipped through the _____ grass.

The _____ wall crumbled under the _____ weight of the _____ giant's _____ foot.

Mrs Snagglesworth rode her _____ bicycle through the _____ market.

She passed _____ stalls of _____ apples, _____ pears and _____ pineapples.

ADJECTIVE RIDDLES

This is a simple enough game. Play it with the class and then children can play in pairs or in a group. They have to guess the noun – and you provide clues – which are all adjectives.

TABLE 6 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

This is -	These are -
alive,	white
silent,	or black
slim,	soft
cold,	distant
scaly... (snake)	cold
	damp... (clouds)

THE ADJECTIVE GENERATOR

This is a quick-fire game that provides a variety of nouns while the children have a limited time – a few minutes – in which to list as many adjectives as possible. The ability to rapidly generate language is a crucial writing skill, otherwise children have limited choice – and writing is about selecting the right word for the job. Here are some common, proper, abstract and collective nouns to use.

cat, snake, tree, computer, bus, taxi, London, Paris, Betty, Bill, fear, greed, anger, hope, curiosity, swarm, flock, crowd, shoal



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

SWAPPING OVER (CLOZE GAMES)

In this game, you provide a sentence or paragraph that is muddled. The adjectives have all been swapped round. Give a time limit to see who can sort them out into their rightful places. Hear several examples as there may be different ways to reorganise the adjectives that work equally well. Start with a few sentences such as these and work on them together before letting the children loose on a paragraph. I have provided the originals.

Original

Sian paused at the wooden door and peered into the dark room. In the sunlit corner, she could see the cowardly prince wearing his silky shirt and holding the rotting apple.

Swapped version

Sian paused at the cowardly door and stared into the rotting room. In the silky corner, she could see the wooden prince wearing his sunlit shirt and holding the dark apple.

Provide more extended examples to work on, for example:

Original

The crumbling walls were covered with wooden shelves that bowed under the stupendous weight of glittering crowns, steep piles of golden coins, rusted keys and gleaming bracelets. Wonderful strings of pink pearls and glowing necklaces of glistening jewels hung from carved hooks. Sitting on an empty shelf was a white owl. Suddenly, it blinked at her and muttered, "Don't stare!"

Swapped version

The wonderful walls were covered with glowing shelves that bowed under the pink weight of empty crowns, carved piles of rusted coins, gleaming keys and steep bracelets. Crumbling strings of golden pearls and glistening necklaces of white jewels hung from stupendous hooks. Sitting on a glittering shelf was a wooden owl. Suddenly, it blinked at her and muttered, "Don't stare!"



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

As you can see from the above example, there are many ways to reorganize the adjectives and sometimes the more unlikely combinations are the most interesting. All of this play with language provides children with a feel for the function and effect of the adjective. The games are not just about labelling and identifying but also about how adjectives can be used to achieve different effects.

REPLACING

In this game, remove the adjectives from a piece of writing and replace them with the names of sweets. Here are some names of sweets I have culled from my memory.

toffee, colabar, mint, chocolate, wine gums, marshmallows, jelly baby, aniseed ball, chewing gum, liquorice, loveheart, sherbet, nougat, gob stopper, butterscotch, shrimps, fudge

Can the children work out what the original might have been? Begin by reading the text aloud so the children can hear what it sounds like. There will be, of course, a variety of possible solutions. However, I am providing the original as a matter of interest.

TABLE 7 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

Using sweets as adjectives	Original version
But at that moment, she noticed a fudge door that led into a spearmint room. She was standing in what she imagined was a toffee room in a gob stopper palace. Butterscotch curtains cut out the nougat daylight, sherbet candles flickered and the jelly baby carpet was a mint, chocolate colour. In a caramac corner, stood a fruit gum suit of liquorice armour.	But at that moment, she noticed a silver door that led into a darkened room. She was standing in what she imagined was a perfect room in a fairytale palace. Silk curtains cut out the bright daylight, slender candles flickered and the ancient carpet was a soft, red colour. In a dusty corner, stood a metallic suit of shiny armour.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

One purposeful approach to adjectives is to collect ones that would be useful when building a character description or a setting. These could be stored in children's writing journals. The simple idea is that everyone brainstorms possible adjectives that might be useful when writing.

Eyes – cruel, mean, sly, sharp, bright, red, yellow, green, thin, dangerous, dark, cold ...

Hands – old, gnarled, withered, wrinkled, twisted, soft, gentle, creased, lined, knobbly, tough, strong, hairy ...

Mouth – thin, mean, cruel, hard, bitter, swollen, tense ...



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

JABBERWOCKY

Read, enjoy and learn by heart this wonderful poem which you can download from the internet. Ask the children to underline the adjectives in one colour. What do you think they mean? Create dictionary definitions.

Vorpal – dangerous, with a sharp and deadly edge that is guaranteed to slice through even the toughest of metals. Looking vicious.

Frabjous – joyous and fantastic. Often used to describe an event or time which demands celebration.

Tulgey – a place that is difficult to navigate through because the area is overgrown to the point where no one can pass through unless very strong.

INVENTED ADJECTIVES

Building on the previous Jabberwocky investigation, write a simple piece but instead of using real adjectives invent some of your own. This can be made quite simple by putting halves of two real words together.

There are three wontastic reasons for believing that generating power from the sun is a favourable idea. First, it will be worthwhile for the environment.

Provide definitions for the invented adjectives.

Wontastic – wonderful and fantastic at the same time. Sometimes used as an exaggeration.

Favourous – said to be favourable and tremendous. Often used to persuade others to a viewpoint.

Worthsome – will do good and be beneficial. Used when referring to ecological aspects of life.

TRIM

If you have children who tend to use too many adjectives, then play a simple game in which they have to 'trim back' an overwritten sentence, deciding how many adjectives to keep. Generally, if you use too many, they tend to clash against each other, reducing the impact through a conflict of description. Ask which adjective should be used – if any. Get the children to read aloud so everyone can hear their ideas – and then ask them to justify their choice.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

The slim, graceful, elegant flamingo slipped through the fence.

The tired, weary, exhausted giant slumbered.

The scared, frightened, worried, anxious goblin shivered.

Adjectives have to earn their place and should not be just chucked into sentences. This leads to overwriting. A well-chosen adjective will add something new that the reader needs to know. For instance, big giant is rather silly as the word giant means big. However, a shy giant is something that the reader could not possibly know and may well influence or explain what will happen next.

THE ACTIONS: VERBS

WHAT ARE VERBS?

The games below should help you draw out from the children that a verb is **a doing word that shows what someone or something is, has or does**: *It **is** hot today. He **has** a dog. She **walks** to school.* Verbs are like the engine of a sentence – they get things going. The activities help children understand that often several words form a verb phrase: *is leaving, was running, were waiting* etc and that verbs can be altered to show the time when the action took place. *I **run*** (present tense); *I **ran*** (past tense) etc.

I SPY ACTION

Once children have played *I Spy* to identify nouns (see page 7), ask them to choose things that they can see in the room (the nouns) and make each noun do, have and be something in turn – *The table **stands** on the floor. The table **has** four legs. The table **is** small.*

You could then suggest they look out of the window and carry on – *The tree **looks** beautiful. The tree **has** green leaves. The tree **is** very tall.* You may want to list the verbs they have chosen – stands, looks, has, is etc to help the class understand that doing words show what someone or something is, has or does and are called verbs.

Build on this by inviting them to suggest things that they might see in different places (the local town centre, shopping mall or park etc) and make these things do, have or be something. Help them see that all the things that they choose will be nouns but what the things do, have or are will be verbs and begin using the term verb when discussing reading and writing.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

NOW TEDDY IS ...

This simple game involves any cuddly toy beloved by the class, eg a teddy. Make teddy move and get the class to tell you what teddy is doing. Then flip-chart all the actions they have identified and help the class to understand that action words are known as verbs.

SPOT THE ODD ONES OUT

This game helps children become confident at identifying verbs. The more the children are put in teacher role and have to talk about which words they have selected, the more confident they will become with grammar.

Choose the opening of any story that the class already knows well so that they are very familiar with the language they will be analysing. Highlight all the verbs (as illustrated below) but also highlight two or three different types of words that aren't functioning as verbs within the story (in this example, *your*, *square*, *but*). The class works in pairs/small groups to identify which highlighted words aren't verbs and how they know this.

LITTLE CHARLIE

Once upon a time there **was** a little boy **called** Charlie who **lived** on the edge of a big city.

Early one morning, when he **woke** up, his mother **said**, "**Take** this bag of goodies to **your** Grandma's." Into the bag she **put** a slice of cheese, a loaf of bread and a square of chocolate.

Next he **walked**, and he **walked** and he **walked** till he **came** to a bridge. There he **met** a cat – a lean cat, a mean cat.

"I'm hungry," **said** the cat. "What **have** you **got** in your bag?"

TEDDY...



...is walking.



...is running.



...is lying down.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

THE MISSING VERB DETECTIVE (CLOZE GAME)

This game helps children see that verbs are key to understanding what is happening – without them meaning begins to collapse.

Find or write a paragraph related to a current class topic and omit the verbs, creating a simple cloze procedure. The children work in pairs or small groups to fill the gaps – the discussion around what words would fit is key here. Remind them that it is not a question of coming up with exactly the same choice of words as in the original, but of making certain that the words they choose make good sense. The children decide what ‘sort’ of word was missing and what is the ‘job’ of that type of word.

TABLE 8 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

Cloze procedure	One possible answer
Mr Wiggle and Mr Waggle	Mr Wiggle and Mr Waggle
Once upon a time there ... two friends - Mr Wiggle and Mr Waggle. Mr Wiggle ... in this house and Mr Waggle ... in that house.	Once upon a time there were two friends - Mr Wiggle and Mr Waggle. Mr Wiggle lived in this house and Mr Waggle lived in that house.
Early one morning, Mr Wiggle ... to ... and ... Mr Waggle. So he ... up the door - eeeeeee! - ... outside - POP! and ... the door - eeeeeee!	Early one morning, Mr Wiggle decided to go and visit Mr Waggle. So he opened up the door - eeeeeee! popped outside - POP! and closed the door - eeeeeee!

MAKE IT HAPPEN NOW

Nouns are easier to pin down than verbs, which keep altering because they can change tense. Help children become more confident with tense by asking them to change the tense. Revisit a text you have already worked on to identify the verbs, for example *Little Charlie* (see above), but now ask the children to make it happen in the present.

Initially, it is probably best to model this as a whole-class activity. Through shared analysis, book-talk style, help the class to tell you that you can’t begin a story in the present with the words *Once upon a time* because this immediately places the action in the past. Get them to tell you that the words actually spoken in a story (the direct speech) have to stay in the tense they are in for the story to make sense. Once you have worked together on the opening lines, as illustrated below, ask the class in pairs or small groups to finish recasting the story into the present tense. Then invite one group to come out and explain the changes they have made to the whole class.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

LITTLE CHARLIE

There is a little boy **called** Charlie who **lives** on the edge of a big city.

Early **in the** morning, when he **wakes** up, his mother **says**, “**Take** this bag of goodies to **your** Grandma’s.” Into the bag she **put** a slice of cheese, a loaf of bread and a square of chocolate.

Next he **walked**, and he **walked** and he **walked** till he **came** to a bridge. There he **met** a cat – a lean cat, a mean cat.

“I’m hungry,” **said** the cat. “What **have** you **got** in your bag?”

SPOT THE IRREGULAR VERB

Children like spotting the verbs that don’t follow the regular pattern, for example, *I go = I went* (not *I goed*); *I run = I ran* (not *I runned*). If the local dialect in your area uses a different version of a verb, for example, *go/goed*, explain that this is fine for informal speech but that they must use the standard form for formal speaking and writing, and recast their verbs for them so they practise using Standard English. You may want to explain that a form of south-eastern dialect became Standard English because it was the English used locally when the printing press was first developed in England. Challenge the class to see how many irregular verbs they can come up with. Create a poster of these and build them up as the children find them in their reading.

TABLE 9 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

Irregular verbs	
Present	Past
I go	I went
I run	I ran
I do	I did
I have	I had

RHYMING IRREGULAR VERBS

This game helps older children remember irregular verbs and can also be a good source of words for a nonsense rhyme. As illustrated below, provide the class with a list of irregular verbs, a matching list of regular verbs that rhyme with the irregular ones in the present tense, and the present tense of the regular verbs. Ask the children to work out what the past tense would be if it rhymed with the past tense of the irregular verb and place the made-up word in a sentence, modelling what to do for the first few verbs.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

TABLE 10 ● JUMPSTART! GRAMMAR

Irregular verbs		Regular verbs that happen to rhyme with the irregular verb		
Present	Past	Present	Past	Made-up past
bleed/s	bled	need/s	needed	ned - I ned to go home.
blow/s	blew	glow/s	glowed	glew - It glew in the dark.
catch/es	caught	hatch/es	hatched	haught - It haught out of the egg.
deal/s	dealt	heal/s		
dig/s	dug	rig/s		
eat/s	ate	heat/s		
fall/s	fell	call/s		
freeze/s	froze	breeze/s		
get/s	got	jet/s		
make/s	made	fake/s		

ALPHABET ACTION RACES

Help extend the children's vocabulary by setting an alphabetical alternative-words-for-x challenge. Use common verbs in the past tense like *said* or *walked* and set a short time limit. You may want to turn the children's words into posters, display them and then add to them later by asking the children to raid their reading and writing over the next few weeks and see if they can add to the lists.

THE A-Z OF ALTERNATIVE WORDS FOR SAID

- A – asked; added; answered
- B – begged; booed; butted in
- C – cried; cheered; chattered

MAKE THE VERBS WORK

This game helps children consider the impact well-chosen verbs can have on the reader as well as helping build their vocabulary, so it makes a good follow-up activity to the alphabet game. It shows the children how choosing verbs with care can help the reader or listener build a picture and can be more powerful than adjectives or adverbs.



1 :: THE THINGS AND THE ACTIONS

NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND VERBS

Take any everyday, much-used verb like *walked* or *said* and write your chosen word in the middle of your flip chart. Use the corners and the space above and below the word to draw out different shades of meaning, as illustrated below. Then model how to build alternatives showing how you can refine your choice of alternative word so that the verb chosen does the describing for you.

THE ALTERNATIVE VERBS FOR 'SAID'

Loud alternatives

- shouted
- yelled

Quiet alternatives

- whispered
- muttered

Everyday alternatives

- talked
- spoke

Said

Questioning

- questioned

Replying

- replied

Happy alternatives

- laughed
- cheered

Sad alternatives

- cried
- sighed

An alternative way of presenting this is to ask the children to place the words on a graph.

The alternative words can then be displayed to sharpen up the children's use of verbs in a wide range of writing activities. Add verbs to the lists from their reading and writing. Such posters could begin simply and be developed across a year and then go up the school with the class so that, term-on-term and year-on-year, they are building their vocabularies.



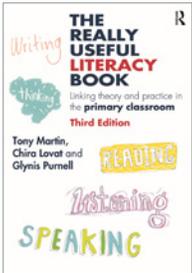


SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS

STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM
VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES



2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES



The following is sourced from
*The Really Useful Literacy Book:
Linking theory and practice in the
primary classroom, 3rd edition*
by Tony Martin, Chira Lovat and
Glynis Purnell.

©2012 Taylor and Francis Group.
All rights reserved.

You can purchase a copy [HERE](#).

This chapter uses an approach based on 'playing with words'. Here language and vocabulary acquisition and exploration are developed into visual and sound patterns so that children create shape poems.

It is clear here then that we want to tap into children's creativity. Without entering into the complex debate about what exactly constitutes 'creativity', it seems obvious that there are different aspects of creativity, and that the way into writing poetry in this unit provides for this. In making shape poems in this unit, the creativity emerges in the witty interplay between design and language use. Here we won't use reading text as a starting point. To develop writing creatively here, we need to provide scaffolding so that children play with language and visual elements.

This chapter develops approaches that will encourage children to think and learn in a range of different ways. Starting from visuals, because it is different, will enable children to make and develop different types of connections in literacy learning.

Talk strategies and thinking skills are going to be really important in this unit of work. Children love to talk! They enjoy using a variety of speaking and listening strategies – in itself, talk makes them active as learners.

WHAT WAS IN THE TEACHER'S HEAD WHEN PLANNING THIS WORK? THE WHAT AND THE HOW OF TEACHING

We imagine a teacher sitting down to plan a unit of work for her class. What exactly will she be thinking about? Certainly she will want to be clear about what she wants the children to learn but she will also be grappling with how she might engage them with the work. Planning for creative literacy lessons means being clear about what we want children to learn (the objectives) and then really focusing on how to engage them with this learning (the art of teaching).

We recognise that in a class there will be children working at age-related expectations in terms of their literacy attainment but also children working below and some above age-related expectations. Teachers take account of this in planning so that they can:

- ensure progression both in terms of a child's progress and the progression of knowledge and skills through a school;
- differentiate between children of different abilities;
- focus on assessment for learning, being clear where a child is coming from and where the child next needs to go.



2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES

With these important factors in mind, we know that teachers will take the sequences of teaching from the chapters in *The Really Useful Literacy Book*, tweak them, add to and subtract from them depending on their own ways of working and the children in their class.

CONTEXTS AND COHERENCE

This unit can be embedded in practically any curriculum area.

- I can use contexts that are familiar or unfamiliar to children
- I can use subject-related visual aids (photos, artwork or drawings) and develop subject-related vocabulary from this (linked to any scheme of work), photographs of a landscape, a historical scene or artefact, a piece of technology or a scientific diagram. This will provide a coherence by linking literacy learning with cross-curricular learning
- I can start with some subject-specific vocabulary such as the mathematical language of shapes, together with an aerial photo of a cityscape or piece of artwork that will provide a context for the use of this language.

MOTIVATION

- Children enjoy drawing. Here they can combine this with the fun and cleverness of noticing and creating cartoons, calligrams and shape poetry.
- Children enjoy thought-provoking and novel ways of presenting their ideas in writing.
- Children love it when they are asked to produce only small amounts of carefully thought out writing.
- Children enjoy language play and word games – this is a good way in to vocabulary development with them.

CONTENT AND PROCESS

- Start by using subject-related visual aids (see the 'Contexts and coherence' section above), modelling how to develop some language with a visual resource, to begin to write some shape poetry.
- Support children as they develop some collaborative strategies to find and collect the vocabulary they need to compose their own shape poems.
- Link this to thesaurus and dictionary work.
- Find opportunities for children to use and apply newly encountered vocabulary.



2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES

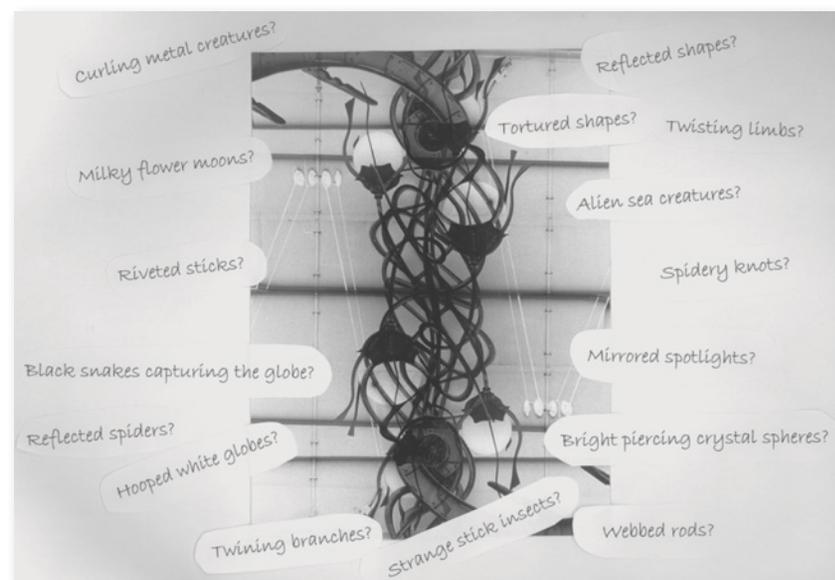
- Lead an investigation into the various types or categories of published shape poems.
- This investigation can feed into evaluative discussions about how the poetry 'works' – perhaps in shared, guided and independent reading time. Ideas from this may be used to develop the writing by 'redesigning/redrafting' previously written poems.
- Focus on finding ways to generate and refine language to describe and represent the visual images.
- Demonstrate how to think divergently rather than narrowly, and integrate this with developing alternative drafts.

STARTING POINT: THE FRIDAY BEFORE THE MONDAY

The unit creates opportunities for making 'unexplained' displays. The purpose of these is to create a sense of mystery and excitement. If children always know what they will do before they do it, there is no need to wonder or speculate. Having to work it out is a useful and brain-friendly way to engage children's attention. If they come to know that these teacher-staged puzzles or mysteries are followed by enjoyable, active learning experiences, their anticipation of this will feed into the process of motivating children.

With this in mind, on Friday, some themed vocabulary around a painting, illustration or photograph is displayed. This could be on any subject or theme which children will find interesting, evocative or puzzling. Each word could be followed by a question mark (see Figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1 ►





2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES

Children can be given opportunities to experience and browse through shape poems, so they can enjoy and 'explore' this genre. On Friday afternoon, a box of 'special poems', all available single and multiple copies of shape poems that can be begged, borrowed or reproduced, is added to the resources for a quiet book-sharing session. (Any children's work from previous years makes an excellent additional resource.)

THE LITERACY DECISION

In this unit the literacy decision is to go through a series of steps which looks something like this:

1. Check that the children understand all of the words and phrases.
2. Use the thesaurus to find synonyms they like.
3. Arrange the list in a different order, to exaggerate patterns of sound.
4. Develop artwork for some of the words or phrases.
5. Chosen words and phrases could be linked to music and poems could be performed with musical accompaniment.
6. Arrange the words or phrases into a design which is suitable for the meaning of the poem; develop the design layout to enhance the effectiveness of the language.
7. Use other pictures and objects (with or without words and phrases provided) to build and improve on some original combinations of descriptions and ideas. Use the shapes within the stimulus as starting points for designing a layout.
8. Investigate a range of shape poems to find different layouts and designs.
9. The children make their own shapely poems about anything they choose.

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING DECISIONS

These are to get the children into some meaningful talk activities very early on so they are all quickly engaged.

A WHOLE-CLASS SHARED TEXT SESSION

Give out A4 photographs of the night sky on Bonfire Night, filled with different sorts of fireworks. It is more effective to do this immediately after Bonfire Night if we are to use and build on children's own strong sensory experiences. Ask children in pairs to think of words and phrases which describe what the fireworks are doing in the photos. (Their lists could be extended in various ways by changing the groupings, for example by joining pairs to fours or envoying.) Collect the words and phrases children



2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES

have come up with, making a flipchart list. Add enough of your own to create an interesting selection. This will be added to as the unit goes on and the thesaurus is used to generate synonyms.

Once some sort of list is written on the flipchart, there are various activities we can do with it to build skills for writing. This introductory session creates and explores the vocabulary with the following activity. Children explore the meanings of the words and phrases, using musical instruments. Each pair or small group is given a share of the phrases, about four or five per group, and each child has an instrument. The groups work for a few minutes around the classroom, working to represent or accompany the words in the phrases. The value of this activity lies in children's attempts to reach an understanding of the language then transform this into some musical phrasing. (What would crashing spears sound like? What sorts of musical sounds would suggest that? How is that different from crackling stars?) Pairs could then perform and compare their musical pieces. This could be done with or without telling the other pair the phrases they were working on!



SPOTLIGHT: USING THE THESAURUS TO PLAY WITH WORDS

Children are being shown by the teacher how to use a thesaurus to build on the ideas from the first list of words and phrases. The idea is to add to the bank of ideas already generated. Because the writing is figurative, alternative words gathered in this way are likely to work quite well. So, if the thesaurus is used to find synonyms for crash (as a verb), words like collide, collapse, dive, fall, plunge and topple will be discovered. Any of these would sound effective attached to a noun like stars or crystals.

The teacher explicitly models how to try these out to see the tunes and effects of the phrasing:

- 'I like the sound of screeching spears better than crashing spears because the sound patterns of the initial "s" and long "ea" phoneme sound good together.'
- 'Does plunging stars or colliding stars sound better? Or should we keep both?'
- 'What about "the collapsing crystals fall to earth"?''

Once this has been modelled for them, children go off to find their own synonyms and create new phrasings of their own. Ideas are shared between pairs, added to and changed. Children make various illustrations at this stage to capture their interpretations of the language they are using.



2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES



SPOTLIGHT: GUIDED READING – INVESTIGATING HOW WRITERS USE LAYOUT TO APPEAL TO READERS

The objectives here are about how different texts appeal to readers and how writers create that appeal.

This session begins by the words from a published shape poem being put into a simple list (this needs to be prepared beforehand). By comparing the rewritten words arranged in a list with the same words arranged into a design, the impact of that design can be brought into sharp relief. Children begin to comment on the effects of the design as distinct from the words. (This can also be done by rewriting a calligram in a plain font.)

The teacher then poses the following questions: 'How has the writer of this poem made it more exciting by laying it out in this way?' and 'Do we all like the same ones best?' Shape poems are investigated. Children are invited to describe how different shape poems are laid out and why they think the writer chose to do it in that way. This can be organised so that children are given examples of two (or three) types of shape poem so that different ways of doing it are easy to spot; some could be calligrams, some could represent the actual shape of the subject of the poem, some could suggest aspects of the subject, e.g. the way it moves. This leads into a discussion about how the layout of different types of shape poem in the collection work to enhance the meaning.

There are decisions which need to be made about how to work with different guided groups in relation to this investigation, especially if the guided group is doing the same task as the rest of the class.

- Should work be done with a low-ability group, looking at two calligrams and shape poems and supporting their discussion so that they come up with an A1 display of the examples of the two categories of shape poem? This activity could be used to raise their self-esteem by being presented to the rest of the class.
- Would it be useful to complete a similar task with a more confident middle-ability reading group? Perhaps choosing to extend their explanation skills by asking each member of the group to complete their own notes about the categories, so that each one can go to another small group in the plenary to explain what they found out?
- Could an abler group of children be challenged by giving them a less deliberately chosen collection of poems and inviting them to find their own groupings for them? The teacher's role here is to help them find several ways to do it, challenging their thinking.



2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES



SPOTLIGHT: INDEPENDENT AND GUIDED WRITING – USING THE READING INVESTIGATION TO ENHANCE AND DEVELOP CHILDREN'S FIRST DRAFTS

Children's first drafts for layout are built upon. The shared session has looked at problems that have arisen, analysing what the difficulties were. The class is now producing more polished versions for a class collection. Various techniques have been explained and demonstrated by children and the teacher.

Some children are using a combination of calligrams and shape poems, carefully making letters which symbolise the firework ideas, then putting these within other shapes. The teacher sits with a guided group who need to work hard at producing *careful* final drafts. She has decided that it is at this stage in the writing process that guidance and support need to be put in. Children think about the needs of the audience and the importance of layout design and styles of lettering.



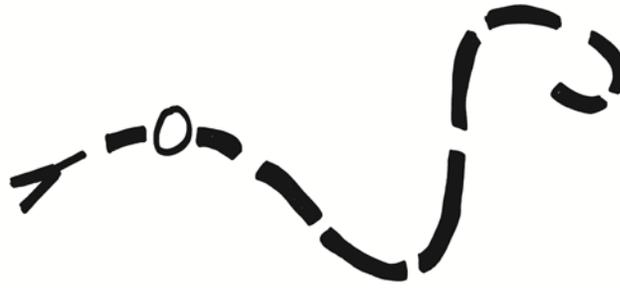
SPOTLIGHT: OTHER IDEAS WHICH FOCUS ON THE LANGUAGE, LAYOUT AND DESIGN OF SHAPE POEMS

- Children are using a shape poem with the actual words blocked out. This leaves only a suggestion of the shapes and language, which children could rework, almost like a puzzle (Figure 9.3). They are deciding what the subject of the original poem was, and selecting words to put in each blank. Later they will compare their own versions with those of other children and with the original. Some children develop this by 'extending' the original using linked ideas and connections.
- All of the words have been taken out of the shaped layout of a shape poem (Figure 9.4). Children are putting them into new shape designs, then comparing them with each other and the original (Figure 9.5). The intention in both of these activities is to value diverse and different ways of completing the activities. Creativity requires divergence and values originality. For children to become risk takers, diversity and difference in approach need nurturing.



2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES

Figure 9.3

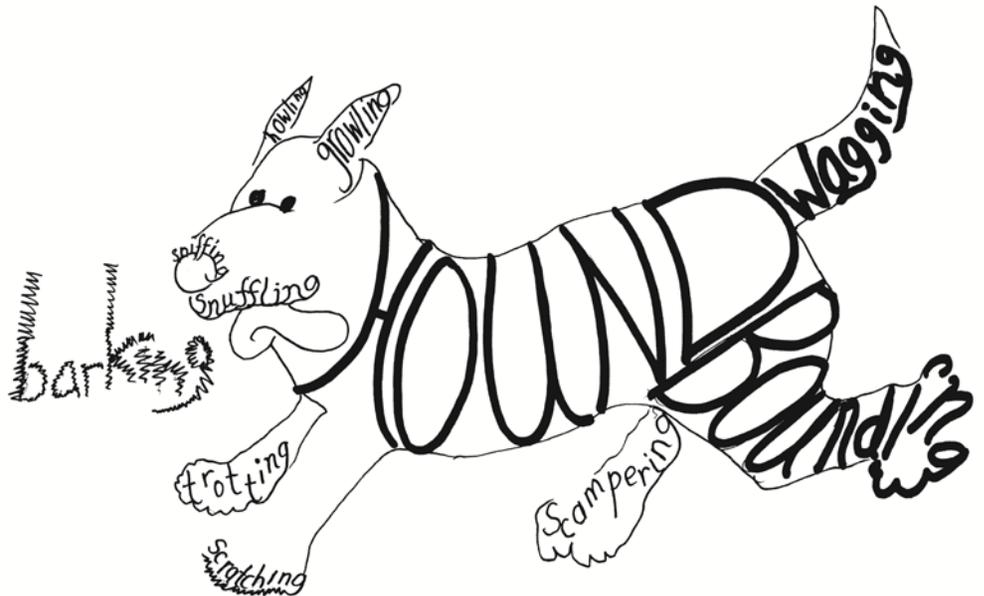


spitting out
poison
swallowing
gliding gracefully
slithering silently, silkily
coiling
cruelly

Figure 9.4

sniffing
snuffling
wagging
bounding
barking
trotting
scratching
scampering
growling
howling
hound

Figure 9.5





2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES



SPOTLIGHT: VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT: FINDING WORDS WHICH USE THE PREFIXES UN-, DE-, DIS-, PRE-, RE-

The teacher has presented a flipchart list of real and made-up words with the above prefixes. Pairs of children are using dictionaries to find out which is which. After a class discussion, 'real' words have a tick put beside them and invented words have a cross.

Next, working in pairs using their spelling logs, children write down and learn to spell the list of 'real' words. They help each other to:

- check the spelling accuracy of the 'real' words they copy into the log
- notice which words they can spell easily
- think of a way to remember the words they find most difficult.



SPOTLIGHT: INVENTING NEW WORDS TO REINFORCE VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

Children are inventing their own new word using the prefixes and some of the new vocabulary they have acquired using thesauruses. The pairs have to invent some 'meanings' for their words and write these in their spelling logs.



SPOTLIGHT: WRITING A RANGE OF SHAPE POEMS ON OTHER TOPICS

Children are writing poems independently, mostly in pairs, in a range of ways about a range of topics. They are applying what they have learned about shape poems, making poems to add to the class anthology. There is a lot more freedom here about what children write. Children are exploring the genre in a less structured, more open-ended way. Exploration takes time, so a number of sessions are allocated to this writing.

A few children still lack ideas. They are provided with a choice between two prompts:

- *Starting with language.* A list of nouns and adjectives about an animal with instructions about using the thesaurus to change and add to the list. Ideas about selecting the best parts and transforming these into the shape of the animal they represent.
- *Starting with a picture.* A photocopied aerial photograph of a cityscape is used as a stimulus. Children gather some phrases together to describe and represent what they see in the photo. They alter and extend the language using each other's ideas and a thesaurus, then add this to the photocopy. If all the words and phrases are word-processed, printed and cut out, Blu-Tack can be used to draft and redesign a satisfying layout.



2 :: SHAPELY POEMS AND CALLIGRAMS STARTING NOT FROM TEXT BUT FROM VOCABULARY AND VISUAL IMAGES

WITHIN THE UNIT: ALTERNATIVE STARTING POINTS

Two other ways of starting this unit could have been as follows:

- Show an evocative picture or object, one where there is uncertainty about what it might be or mean – a sculpture, a photograph, an historical artefact or a reproduction of a painting. Ask children what they think the mystery picture or object is. This tunes children in to the possibilities, gets them speculating and hypothesising – possibly in a very divergent and imaginative way. The idea here would not be to solve the puzzle, but to enjoy asking questions and suggesting answers that relate to the puzzle.
- Display a print or photo with a list of words and phrases. Don't say anything about it, and if asked refuse to let on. Children will be left wanting to find out.

BEYOND THE UNIT: KEEP ADDING TO THE ANTHOLOGY DURING THE YEAR

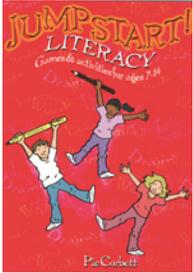
- Do this with lists of topic words from any subject to reinforce the subject vocabulary in an imaginative way.
- Try it with topic-related visual images which children create, alter, then add some writing.



JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA



The following is sourced from *Jumpstart! Literacy: Games and activities for ages 7-14* by Pie Corbett.

©2004 Taylor and Francis Group.
All rights reserved.

You can purchase a copy [HERE](#).

All these games involve children in speaking and listening. Many would make good warm-ups for drama, but are just as useful as a lively way into reading or writing sessions. They typically demand full participation, concentration and the use of the imagination to enter the worlds of the drama. Often they test the children's ability to think rapidly on their feet, inventing as they go along. Nearly all have an element of paired or group work and get the children used to articulating their ideas and feelings, or dramatically creating a role. Talking can be a helpful precursor to writing as it allows children the chance to rehearse ideas. Some of the games are also forms of dramatic comprehension which demand that the children imaginatively enter the world of the story that is being studied.

JUST A MINUTE

You will need: a container (e.g. a box, tin, bag, hat, etc.), small cut up pieces of paper.

This could be used as a precursor to a topic—to see what is generally known, or just after it—to gauge levels of understanding. Alternatively, it could be used just for fun—to see who can talk on any topic without hesitation, repetition or deviation. Either way it's a great opportunity for children to practice speaking audibly, clearly and with confidence, and it is also useful for reinforcing turn-taking skills.

- Ask the children to write possible topics on a piece of paper. Put them in a container (a hat, a box, etc.) and then select at random!
- Tell them that they will have a minute to talk on the topic they've chosen, during which time they must not hesitate, repeat or deviate otherwise they are out of the game.
- Taking a few minutes to rehearse in pairs can be helpful—if any of the children get stuck, their partners can make suggestions relevant to the topic.

ANIMAL, VEGETABLE OR MINERAL

This is a fun game that encourages participants to ask relevant and appropriate questions to clarify understanding.

- A volunteer comes into the 'hot seat' and thinks of an object or thing. The person tells the class whether it is animal, vegetable or mineral.
- The class ask questions to which the answer can only be 'yes', 'no' or 'maybe'. Can they guess what the mystery thing is within 20 questions?



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

DO EXACTLY AS I SAY

The focus of this activity is on choosing the precise words needed to persuade someone to carry out an action. As well as exploring the best ways to persuade and explain things to others, the children also have to think about the order in which they give instructions.

- One child takes off a pullover or coat. The others take it in turns to give an instruction which the listener must follow literally. The aim of the game is to get the volunteer to put the item of clothing back on—not as easy as it sounds! For instance, an instruction to ‘put your arm into the sleeve’ might lead to a left arm being placed in a right-hand sleeve so the coat is on back to front!
- Explain to the children that their instructions need to be as specific as possible, e.g. ‘Turn the jumper round so that the hole for the head is at the top’ and so on.
- A simpler version of this game is to try to get someone to move from their seat to the class door.

GOOD MORNING, YOUR MAJESTY

You will need: a blindfold (e.g. a scarf or similar piece of material).

This game is very handy for those odd five-minute slots that occasionally appear, or as a warm-up for a drama session. It involves being able to listen very carefully. Children love it!

A volunteer sits in the ‘hot seat’ and is blindfolded. The teacher points to someone else, who creeps up to the person sitting in the ‘hot seat’ and disguises their voice to say, ‘Good morning, your Majesty’. The blindfolded person has to guess who it is. They swap over when the blindfolded person guesses incorrectly.

MIRRORS

This game makes a very useful warm-up for drama. It involves concentrating, imitating and working closely with a partner.

Both children face each other. One leads and the other follows. The follower is the mirror and has to perfectly copy the leader’s body movements and facial expression. After a few minutes, they swap over.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

ANECDOTES

In this game the children share anecdotes. The exercise gives them the chance to speak confidently about a topic of their choice. We are all experts on our own experience. This can act as a potent source for talk.

- It can be handy to begin such a 'recount' session by telling a few anecdotes of your own—choose interesting and unusual experiences that will appeal to the children. These could be based around three topics:
 1. Places—best and worst, dreadful holidays, secret hiding places, etc.
 2. People—weird, unusual, most frightening, old relatives, etc.
 3. Events—most memorable, favourite and worst, moving home, etc.
- Ask the children to tell their anecdotes to one another in pairs. Then swap partners. This provides a chance to retell the original anecdote, or to retell their friend's.
- You can now pause and talk about how the second telling might be orally revised—maybe using a sharper opening or clearer ending? Anecdoting is an excellent way into writing short recounts or narratives.
- An extension of this is for children to take the role of a character from a fairytale and to come up with an anecdote that tells their story.

WALKING

Try this game as another way to begin a drama session, or when moving into writing about character. It concerns adopting the character or 'mantle' of another person or creature and thinking carefully about how movement reflects or suggests personality.

- Divide the class into small groups and give each one an instruction to walk in a certain way, e.g. 'like an animal', 'like someone who's lost', 'as though you're upset', 'like a King' and so on.
- Explain that each group in turn is going to wander about in a walk appropriate to the instruction they have just been given, e.g. like a monkey, backwards and forwards looking confused, head hung low and shoulders hunched, majestically, etc. The other children must guess what the group is trying to show.
- An alternative exercise is for one person to walk round the room with a slight exaggeration, e.g. raising and lowering a shoulder. A second child joins behind and exaggerates further, e.g. lifting one arm up and down. A third joins in and exaggerates even more, e.g. swinging both arms from side to side. Try to give the children as much space as possible to do this in—playing it in the hall or playground is best.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

IMPOSSIBLE ACTIONS

When I was a child we spent hours trying to pat our head with one hand and rub our tummy with the other. This game is a version of that. It makes a good warm-up as it involves concentration and trying to make the brain do two very distinctly different actions at once! This would be handy in drama, but don't be afraid to try these games at the start of other sessions as a way of firing up the brain and tuning the class into concentrating.

Challenge the children to draw a cross with one hand and a circle with the other simultaneously on their mini-whiteboards. When they have finished get them to swap hands and try again!

PASS A RHYTHM

This whole-class activity is a handy way to tune children into concentrating and listening carefully. Some storytellers use this sort of game at the start of a session, just to engage everyone's close attention.

Sit with the children in a circle. Explain to the group that you are going to clap a simple rhythm which you'd like them to take it in turns to repeat. The rhythm is clapped and passed rapidly round the room. When it gets back to you, choose another person to start the group off with another simple rhythm.

PARTY GAME

This mime-based activity is a real favourite with adults and children alike. Participants take it in turns to guess the roles of other group members simply by watching them mime. No verbal cues or questioning are allowed—it's very challenging and very exciting!

- Divide the children into groups of four. One person plays the party host while the other three take the role of guests.
- Each guest chooses a role (e.g. ballerina, secret agent, someone scared of tables, etc.) and is welcomed into the part. The guest then mimes the person they have chosen to be and the host has to guess who they are.
- Keep reminding the children that miming doesn't involve speaking. Encourage them to think carefully about their movements, gestures and facial expressions.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

MONOLOGUES AND DUOLOGUES

You will need: photocopies of the poem 'The Wolf's wife speaks' (see below; enough for each child).

This activity is a great confidence builder and is designed to give all children a chance to make a contribution in drama sessions. It works well because children are great at chatting—and that is the main skill needed!

- Use 'The Wolf's wife speaks' as a monologue to be learned and/or performed, or as a duologue with two children taking alternate verses. Encourage the children to put lots of expression into it. See if they can vary their tone, gestures and facial expression depending on what they are saying. They should also think about pace (which bits are slow or quick), where to leave pauses, changing volume (loud, soft, whispered), using expression (angry, sad, etc.). Effective speaking aloud involves varying how you speak in relation to the meaning. So—think 'vary it'!
- Alternatively, ask the children to choose a traditional tale that they know well. Get them to think about minor characters, or to invent characters who do not appear in the actual tale. In pairs, they should 'gossip' or 'think aloud' about what has happened in the story.

THE WOLF'S WIFE SPEAKS - Pie Corbett

He was always out and about.
First on the block
To be up at the crack of dawn
Sniffing the morning air.

Of course,
Pork was his favourite.
I tell you, he would go a long way
For a nice bit of crackling,
Or to catch a tasty piglet or two.

But in the end
It all got too much—
All that huffing and puffing
Up and down the den,
Muttering in his sleep
That he would blow the house down!

Something was wrong,
I could tell—
Something had put his nose
Out of joint.

He'd come home full of bravado,
Swaggering into the den,
Flashing me that wolfish grin—
All teeth and tongue—
Then he'd set about boasting,
Full of big talk about
Blowing up another building.
It cut no ice with me.

The tell-tale signs were there—
Some days he'd get back
Covered in straw,
Hardly able to draw breath.
What he'd been up to,
Lord alone knows...

Well it all came to a head,
When late one afternoon
He shot back in,
With his fur singed.

I had to laugh—
He looked so funny,
Stood there with his bare bottom
Red as a radish.
Talk about coming home
With his tail between his legs!
Where he'd been—I can't imagine.
He never said.

He stays more at home now.
Well, he's prone to bronchitis—
This time of year
You can hear him coming,
Poor old thing
Wheezing and puffing,
Hardly able to draw breath.

We don't talk about it—
And he's right off pork!
If you ask me,
It's all been
A bit of a blow
To his ego.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

INTERVIEWS

Interviewing children in role is an excellent strategy for delving into a character's mind, motives and feelings. There is no pre-planning required—children sit in the 'hot seat' and take on the role of a character from a storybook or fairy tale, e.g. the woodcutter who saw Red walking towards Granny's house.

You might also use interviews in a more creative and imaginative way. How about interviewing Granny about her forthcoming role in a Steven Spielberg film—her life and ambitions? Or, maybe, interview Ron Weasley about his future life as a Quidditch world champion, or the hobbit Bilbo Baggins about his journey, his freelance life as a burglar on hire to dwarves seeking lost treasure.

WORKING AS JOURNALISTS

This game sees the children working in role as journalists and as characters from a story. To carry out the game successfully, they have to gather clues from the story about what has happened and move into role. It exercises oral skills such as questioning, explaining and describing. Children love it because it imitates a medium with which they are familiar—the TV!

Put children into small groups to work as journalists. They could prepare questions and interview a panel of characters from storybooks they've read. They could present 'the Six O'clock News'—complete with an outside broadcast, interviewing characters in the midst of the story. For instance, this might involve interviewing Ron and Hermione about recent events at Hogwarts, or the soldiers and Tim, the ostler, after the Highwayman's death.

DEBATES AND TRIALS

When stories have a major dilemma at their heart or characters who are faced with big decisions, they can be a valuable source for debates. Should 'The Iron Man' be destroyed? Should the Trunchbull be employed as Head teacher in our school?

An even more engaging idea is to take a dodgy character and put them on trial. For instance, the Wolf from *The Three Little Pigs* could be arrested and face trial. What about putting Boggis, Bunce and Bean on trial for attempted murder of foxes? Would there be a defence? After all, the fox does steal from them...



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

IF ONLY THE MIRROR COULD SPEAK

This is an interesting game which demands that the children have thought carefully about what has happened in a story. In a way, it is a form of comprehension! It involves digging under the skin of a character's motives, thoughts and feelings. It helps the children to stand outside of a text almost like an observer and begin to think about and comment on what is happening. Children enjoy the game because it involves a dramatic element.

- To play this game you need to start reading a story together as a class and then stop at an interesting moment.
- A group of four children sit in a square, facing inwards. Each member of the group is a mirror on the wall of a room.
- One at a time you choose other members of the class to walk into the square, introducing themselves as a character from the story.
- Remind the children of what was happening in the story when you stopped reading it. Tell them that you are now in a frozen moment when time has stopped and that you now have an opportunity to take a closer look at what is happening.
- The four children who are playing the mirrors take it in turns to talk about what is going on in the story. This could involve:
 - o Giving advice to the character standing in front of them
 - o Saying what might happen next
 - o Speaking the character's thoughts
 - o Commenting on what has happened.
- Each mirror could adopt a different stance, e.g. one might be sympathetic while another acts like a disapproving aunt.

ROLL ON STORY!

You will need: dice (enough for one between two), exercise books.

The random nature of this game means that all sorts of unlikely possibilities can be thrown up. This often triggers a new story idea rather than regurgitating something already written. The dice-rolling element appeals to children's love of games, and especially to those reading fighting fantasy books or who play Warhammer games.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

- In this game children (in pairs) are given a selection of characters (goodies and baddies), feelings, opening settings, and main action locations (six of each) and use a dice to choose one from each of them. They use the information to plan a story which they then tell to their partner.
- Start by writing the following six headings on the whole-class board:
 - o Goodies
 - o Baddies
 - o How the goody feels
 - o How the baddy feels
 - o Where the story starts
 - o Where the action takes place
- Write down six examples under each heading, numbering them 1 to 6. An example has been provided for you below. (An interesting alternative is to let the children write their own list of goodies and baddies—the results can be spectacular!)

Goodies	Baddies	Where the story starts
1. Prince	1. Dragon	1. Cottage
2. Princess	2. Wolf	2. Market place
3. Farmer	3. Giant	3. Pool
4. Woodcutter	4. Goblin	4. Hillside
5. Dog	5. Queen	5. City street
6. Cat	6. King	6. Farmyard

How the goody feels	How the baddy feels	Where the action takes place
1. Clever	1. Cruel	1. Tower
2. Excited	2. Greedy	2. Dungeon
3. Adventurous	3. Spiteful	3. Crumbling bridge
4. Brave	4. Jealous	4. Cave
5. Strong	5. Bad tempered	5. Forest
6. Kind	6. Mean	6. Lonely path



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

- Taking a category at a time, the children roll their dice and look to see which element corresponds with the number they've rolled, e.g. if they were choosing a goody and they rolled a five, their hero would be a dog. If they then moved onto choosing a baddy and rolled a three, the villain of their tale would be a giant. Ask them to list the components of their story in their exercise books.
- When they have rolled the dice six times and listed the elements, the children should plan their story. Since they will be telling their story aloud to their partner, encourage them to jot down some notes that will act as memory-jogger when the time comes to relate their story.
- Once the children have heard their partner's story and told their own, see if any of them want to share their tales with the whole class. Obviously, this method of generating a story can lead from telling into writing.

FREEZE FRAME

This is a set of games to use at interesting moments in a class story. To play the games the children have to have listened carefully to the story and think about how characters are feeling, their motives and what might happen next. The games encourage the children to empathise with others' emotions and situations. The games also contain an element of discussion that centres around social and moral dilemmas with a chance to share opinions and work out problems together.

THE STORY SPY

1. Stop at an interesting moment in a story.
2. Working in pairs, one child is a spy who has been 'eavesdropping' on what has just happened. The eavesdropper tells their partner (a friend) the gossip. They can both then decide what to do.

ROLE SWAPS

1. Stop at an interesting moment in a story.
2. Working in pairs, one child is in role as a main character in the story. They are telling their partner (a friend) about what is happening, and explaining how they feel. The friend is very sympathetic.
3. After a few minutes signal to the children to swap roles.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

AGONY AUNT

1. Stop at an interesting moment in a story.
2. Working in pairs, one child is a character in difficulty—perhaps with a choice to make about what to do—or maybe who is behaving foolishly. The other is an ‘agony aunt’. The main character is visiting the agony aunt to talk about what is going on. The aunt has to offer advice.

RUMOURS

1. Stop at an interesting moment in a story.
2. Working in pairs, one child is in a role as a character from the story. The other spreads a rumour about another character. This might be true or false. The character either is taken in by the rumour and can move on to elaborate and spread the rumour further, or argues against the rumour, explaining what actually happened.

PHONE A FRIEND

This game is excellent for putting children in a position where they have to summarise what has happened in a story, discuss the plot and predict what will happen next. It is an active, comprehension activity that helps children enter the world of the story imaginatively.

1. Sit the children in pairs, back to back.
2. They get out their mobile phones (pretend) and one phones the other.
3. They talk—this is excellent if one is in role as a character from a book, telling the other about what has just happened, e.g. Red phoning home from Granny’s house. Alternatively, they could be given a scenario, e.g. they have just witnessed a robbery.

PIP, SQUEAK AND WILFRED

This is guaranteed to give your class a great physical warm-up. It’s a fast-moving activity designed to raise energy levels, and is a real favourite with children. You’ll need as much room as possible to play it in—the hall or playground is best.

- Stand with the children in a circle. One child is chosen to be Pip and another is selected as Squeak.
- When you shout ‘GO!’ Pip runs round the outside of the circle in one direction and Squeak runs round in the opposite direction. After a few seconds you call out ‘Home’ and they both have to return to where they were originally standing as quickly as possible without changing direction.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

- Once the children have got the hang of the game, introduce a third person as Wilfred. Wilfred has the advantage of being able to run randomly in either direction. Play the game again and see if this makes a difference!

CROSSING THE BORDER

You will need: a chair, a blindfold (e.g. a scarf or similar piece of material).

This game is very handy for settling a class and helping them to listen carefully. To play this you will need total silence and concentration. It makes an excellent warm-up to drama or maybe a session on suspense writing.

- Sit everyone down at the side of the hall. Blindfold a volunteer who will act as the guard, and guide the child over to the middle of the room.
- Select another who starts to walk from one end of the hall and has to cross the imaginary 'border', which the first child is guarding, to a fixed point at the other end of the hall (e.g. a chair).
- The guard moves from side to side and tries to capture the other child by touching them. Everyone else has to keep really quiet—they mustn't give the game away to the guard!
- If anyone manages to 'cross the border', they take over the role as guard.

ACT A HAT

You will need: as wide a selection of hats as possible (e.g. top hat, flat cap, rain hat, cycle helmet, baseball cap, etc.)

This is an excellent jumpstart to working on characterization in narrative. Children are invited to put on a hat and then speak in the role indicated by the type of hat they have chosen. The same game works well with other items of clothing (e.g. a cloak or shawl, a pair of shoes, a tie, etc.) or selected props (e.g. an umbrella, a handkerchief, a diary, etc.).

- Bring in a selection of hats and lay them out on a table. One at a time the children come forward and put on one of the hats.
- They then have a minute or two to talk in the manner they think that character would talk. You might need to provide a scenario to start the child off, e.g. the character has to walk into a shop and buy a pint of milk.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

SWAP!

In this small group activity, children act and speak in character and after a short time swap roles with their partners. This gives them the chance to experience different perspectives and to see both sides of an argument.

- Choose two or three children to improvise a role, e.g. Mum and Dad are watching telly. Their child arrives back home late.
- Explain to the class that you will shortly be pressing the 'freeze-frame button', at which point they must freeze and swap roles with one of their partners.
- After a short while call out 'freeze'—the actors freeze and swap roles. On the words 'action' they start again, picking up from where the scene left off, but in a different role.

TRIANGLE SCENES

This is a really good game for getting ideas flowing and for strengthening the imagination. It is based on a form of brainstorming, and involves setting and improvising a scene. This makes an interesting precursor to writing and emphasizes an important point about story writing—if you don't know what to do next, introduce something new to shift the plot in a different direction!

- Pick out three people. They sit in a triangle. Point to each in turn. The first has to choose a setting, 'We are in a wood'. The second decides on a scenario, e.g. an alien has just found a dog. The third chooses the three characters they will play, e.g. the alien, the dog and a policeman.
- Now they improvise the scene. Everyone else sits round in a circle—goldfish bowl style.
- Bring characters in and out. Freeze action if the children stumble or the pace drags. Ask the class to suggest how the action could be moved forwards. This may be by introducing something new—a phone call, letter, new character, or a sudden turn of events.

BEAT THIS!

This idea works in a similar way to the 'Boasting' game (see p. 74 of *Jumpstart! Literacy*) as the children pass ideas backwards and forwards, constantly trying to outdo each other. It takes some skill if it is to work well as they have to gradually build up their ideas.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

- Divide the class into pairs. The first child says something fairly mundane, e.g. 'I've found £5'. Their partner takes the idea but exaggerates it, e.g. 'I've found a nugget of gold', and always adds 'but don't tell anyone' onto the end of the sentence, e.g.

Child 1: I've found £5.

Child 2: I've found a nugget of gold, but don't tell anyone.

Child 1: I've found a gold bar, but don't tell anyone.

Child 2: I've found a sack of diamonds, but don't tell anyone.

Child 1: I've found a chest of priceless treasure, but don't tell anyone.

- The exaggerations can pass back and forwards, gradually outdoing each other. It works well if the couple build up the exaggerations bit by bit.

RESET IT

This activity is ideal as a warm-up to a writing session where you intend to talk about different genres. Before playing the game it might be handy to write a list of different genres on the whole-class board, e.g. mystery, detective, sci-fi, fantasy, school, ghost, etc. Under these brainstorm stock characters, settings and events. This information will be handy when playing the game.

- Select a setting, e.g. in an office. Have two or three characters improvising a short scene. You may need to provide a prompt to the action, e.g. a phone call comes through to say that the business is going to be sold and they might lose their jobs.
- The scene is enacted for a short while, e.g. a minute or two. Then it has to be re-enacted as if it was in a different genre, e.g. a children's comedy, a soap, a sci-fi film, a horror story, etc.
- At the end of the game, return to the brainstorm and add any ideas that arose during the drama. It may be useful, for instance, to write down any typical words or phrases that were used, gestures, etc. It is also worth discussing which genre was the easiest to work with and why.

GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS

This is a game that the whole class play together. Not only will it reinforce children's turn-taking skills, but it is also a great way to encourage the children to concentrate and listen. It also lends itself to an element of 'wit' which always goes down well!



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

Start the game off with a piece of good news, e.g. 'The good news is that tomorrow is a holiday for the school'. Then choose a child to offer a piece of bad news, e.g. 'The bad news is that you have been selected to help clean up the playground'. To keep children on their toes, select randomly whose turn it is next. They alternate with good news and bad news, e.g.

Teacher: The good news is that tomorrow is a holiday for the school.

Child 1: The bad news is that you have been selected to help clean up the playground.

Child 2: The good news is that there will be a free lunch.

Child 3: The bad news is that it consists of onions.

Child 4: The good news is that the onions are sprinkled on a pizza...

COME WITH ME

This is another simple yet effective game which encourages youngsters to listen attentively to one another. The aim of the activity is for children to guess what type of character a volunteer is playing (e.g. bossy, shy, miserable, etc.) by listening to a few words spoken by the child. It would make a handy warm-up for any session where you are looking at characterization—in reading or writing.

Children take it in turns to say 'come with me' in different ways. Others have to guess the character type—bossy, shy, aggressive, miserable, lonely, etc., or job, e.g. ballet dancer, teacher, soldier, doctor, etc. It may be worth pausing the children and discussing the need for clarity as well as expression when speaking—especially when performing. Tease away at the use of facial expression and gestures to add emphasis and character. The children should think about how these can be added to writing, e.g. *his face twisted as he spat out the words...*

WINK

This is an old favourite that children love to play. It makes a great drama warm-up as it requires concentration and participation from the whole group. Children adore the secret element.

- The class sit in a circle and you choose a 'detective'. This person is sent out of the room.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

- Everyone else closes their eyes and you tap one of them on the back. This person is the 'murderer'.
- The 'detective' re-enters the room and sits in the centre of the circle. Everyone looks at each other. The 'murderer' has to wink or blink at the other children to 'kill' them without being seen by the 'detective'.
- The 'murdered' child leans forward and plays dead until a new game starts. The 'detective' can challenge the 'murderer' if they think they know who it is. If they guess incorrectly three times, a new game begins.
- You could add a further dimension to the game by letting the children 'die' more dramatically, or by choosing more than one 'detective' and/or 'murderer'.

NURSERY RHYMES AND FAIRY TALES

You may find that you have to begin this series of jumpstarts by reminding the children of some well-known nursery rhymes and fairy tales. The beauty of these is that there is such a rich variety to choose from. They can be used as the basis for all sorts of different activities that never fail to get the brain buzzing!

Rhymes and stories are brought to life in the games below, with the help of dramatic techniques such as hot seating, role-play, improvisation, etc. Enjoy!

HOT SEATING

Take a character from a nursery rhyme and 'hot seat' them, e.g. put Humpty Dumpty on a chair and question him as a class:

Why were you sitting on the wall?

Were you pushed or did you fall?

Did you notice anyone looking suspicious before you were pushed?

Why did you disobey your mother's warning about sitting on the town wall?

Whoever is chosen to sit in the 'hot seat' must answer as their character would.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

GUESS WHO?

Someone role-plays a character from a nursery rhyme or fairy tale and the class have ten questions to find out who they are. The children will need to think hard about what questions are most likely to help them guess who the mystery character is.

RETELL

This is a real brain-teaser which is harder than you might think! The children have to retell/rewrite a well-known rhyme without using the letter 'e', e.g.

Jack and Jill ran up a hill
To buy a spot of nosh;
Hitting a patch of oil, poor Jack
Took flight and split his squash.

THOUGHTS IN THE HEAD

Someone walks up to the front of the class and pretends they are the main character in a nursery rhyme or fairy tale. They retell what happened using the first person, as if they were gossiping after the event. You might like to start them off by taking on the role of the character yourself, e.g.

My name's Cinderella and I've just come back up to my room after a wonderful night at the ball, where I was the guest of honour! (I can't wait to get these shoes off—I've been on my feet all night.) I haven't always lived in a palace you know—I've had it rough over the years. I used to live with my evil stepmother and ugly sisters who bossed me about and treated me like a slave.

That was until my Fairy Godmother appeared and changed my life! She lent me a lovely dress and glass slippers, and a carriage to take me to a ball that the charming Prince was holding. When the magic ran out at Midnight and I had to leave the ball in a hurry, he found my slipper and didn't stop until he had tracked me down. It was so romantic! And when the slipper fit, no-one could believe it! Even in my rags, the Prince said I was his princess. Somehow, I don't think anyone will be calling me Cinders again.



3 :: JUMPSTARTING SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND DRAMA

STORYBOARD

Draw a simple storyboard on the whole-class board showing the key events in a nursery rhyme or fairy tale. These can then be used for retelling it. A refashioned Jack and the Beanstalk might look something like this:

1. Jack leaving home, leading cow.
2. Jack being given magic bean.
3. Plants bean in window-box.
4. Jack climbs bean through clouds.
5. Emerges onto a sunny beach.
6. Dons sunglasses, licks ice-cream.
7. Stands on rocks talking to mermaid.
8. Gets her an ice-cream.
9. She gives him a large shell.
10. Climbs back down with shell.
11. Explains to mother—if you put your ear to shell you can hear the future...



BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS



The following is sourced from *Descriptosaurus: Supporting creative writing for ages 8-14*, 2nd edition by Alison Wilcox.

©2013 Taylor and Francis Group. All rights reserved.

You can purchase a copy [HERE](#).

WHAT IS A DESCRIPTOSAURUS?

Descriptosaurus is a new and innovative model of creative writing that is a thematic expansion of a dictionary and a thesaurus.

To be creative when writing, it is first necessary to have the requisite knowledge and skills: the vocabulary to describe and the structure to organize ideas.

Descriptosaurus provides children with a comprehensive resource to help them expand their descriptive vocabulary, experiment with language and sentence structure and build up narratives based around the following areas:

- Settings – landscapes, settlements and atmosphere
- Characters – appearance, emotions and personality
- Creatures – appearance, abilities and habitats.

A dictionary teaches children the meaning of words and a thesaurus expands their vocabulary. *Descriptosaurus* teaches them how to describe a setting using their senses; how to describe a character using expressions, voice and movement; to add detail, depth and colour to their writing.

It positions the words – whether for appearance, expression, landscape, smell or sound – classifies them as nouns, adjectives and verbs, zooms in to examine their meaning and then expands them into phrases and sentences. It shows how they can be used and provides alternative sentence structures.

The model was created as a result of feedback from children about the resources they required to inspire and assist them with their writing. For reluctant writers or those faced with 'blank page syndrome', *Descriptosaurus* provides invaluable starting points to encourage putting pen to paper.

Alison Wilcox has extensive teaching experience in schools in England and Scotland. Colleagues describe her methods as 'innovative and inspirational to even the most reluctant of writers'.

WHY IS DESCRIPTIVE WRITING IMPORTANT?

The importance of children being able to express their ideas using good descriptive language is widely accepted, not just for creative writing, but also for non-fiction.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

Developing descriptive language to communicate effectively is an essential tool across the curriculum. History is concerned not merely with dates and facts, but with describing and interpreting past events. In Geography, children need to be able to describe the world around them. In Science, they need to observe carefully and then be capable of describing what is happening in an experiment. In all areas of the curriculum, children need the vocabulary to enable them to describe and interpret.

To be able to describe effectively, we first need to be taught how to look and listen. We need to learn the vocabulary to use in order to express our ideas. As well as encouraging children to use interesting language, *Descriptosaurus* aims to improve children's observation skills, both in their own environment and their reading.

We describe sights and events differently because we see and interpret things differently. To any situation or piece of writing we bring our own personality, experiences and imaginations. As educators, both parents and teachers, we need to open children's eyes to the world around them, stimulate their imaginations and sow the seeds of effects that can be achieved in their writing. With the vocabulary, knowledge and understanding of how to use language to achieve depth and colour in their writing, children will grow in confidence and motivation to experiment, find their 'voice' and develop their own style of writing.

WHO SHOULD USE *DESCRIPTOSAURUS*?

Although the age range for *Descriptosaurus* is 8–14, it is beneficial for older children, or even adults, who need assistance with vocabulary or those who suffer from 'blank page syndrome'.

WHERE CAN *DESCRIPTOSAURUS* BE USED?

Descriptosaurus is a resource that can be used at home or school by pupils, parents and teachers. Although consideration has been given to specific curricula, *Descriptosaurus* is a general tool applicable to any creative writing syllabus in any territory where there is a desire to improve descriptive writing.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

IDEAS FOR TEACHERS

PLANNING

When planning a piece of creative writing, use planning sheets, mind maps etc. to collate words and phrases to answer the questions:

- Who (appearance, personality and emotions – expressions, voice, body language)
- Where (senses – sights, sounds, smell, touch)
- When (atmosphere – time of year or day, weather)

USE TRADITIONAL STORIES, MYTHS OR LEGENDS

Take a traditional tale, such as 'Red Riding Hood', in which the structure is already in place and get the children to fill in the descriptive detail.

Myths and legends can be used in much the same way; for example, the journey through the tunnel to meet the Minotaur.

'I SPY'

The alternative version of 'I Spy' on the CD [that accompanies *Descriptosaurus, 2nd edition*] is a great, fun way of improving children's vocabulary.

'I CAN'

Playing 'I Can' helps improve children's understanding of how using senses in their descriptive writing can dramatically improve the quality of their work.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

Use a sentence from the Prompt Cards section for a game of 'What happened next?' or 'Where is it?' Children can also be encouraged to create their own Prompt Cards and questions.

Prompt Cards are designed to stimulate and aid creative writing, and encourage the inclusion of a range of senses in description. The questions scaffold the structure and description. The benefit of the Prompt Cards is that they can be used as a quick-fire verbal planning burst, or for modelling, but also as a piece of descriptive writing, poem or to scaffold a story.

They are designed to stimulate children's imaginations by getting them to consider a number of different settings and atmospheres – use their senses to build a detailed



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

picture of the setting and create different scenarios and characters that could apply to the sentence prompt. If the children need help with ideas or vocabulary, they can use the main *Descriptosaurus* text to assist them.

CHARACTER DETECTIVES

Pick a sentence from the Character Profile Cards. Centre it in a mind map and develop a profile.

WHERE AND WHEN PAIRS GAME

Give the children a number of setting and atmosphere cards. Challenge them to arrange them in pairs by matching a setting card with an atmosphere.

STORY SEQUENCING

The Prompt Cards can be combined with the Character Profile Cards and used in a warm-up activity. Divide the class into groups and give each group a number of cards.

Set the children the challenge of organizing the cards into a story and using the connectives to link the descriptions.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

The cards can also be used for an activity for examining sentence structure and punctuation.

For example:

- varying the length of the sentences to build tension
- changing the sentences so that the children make a series of simple, compound or complex sentences
- changing the order of the sentences.

CHARACTER CHARADES AND 'DON'T MOVE!'

We continually reinforce to children the need to 'show, not tell' when developing their characters. These are two easy and fun games that can be used to get the children to really think about character traits and use speech, tone of voice, expressions and movement to describe their characters, but also to devise situations where the character's reaction and interaction with other characters clearly demonstrate the character's personality. There are six levels, and the characters and vocabulary get



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

progressively harder. The children may need to look up some of the words in a dictionary to find the meaning and an easier synonym. The games, therefore, also work as vocabulary builders.

LOCATION POSTERS

These can be completed in groups for different settings and displayed as prompts; for example, forests, mountains, beaches, islands, water (sea, river, waterfalls), cities, towns, villages.

- A-Z lists of nouns, adjectives and verbs. The work on 'I Can' can be recorded and used to produce these posters.
- Senses mind map (sight, sounds, smells, touch). The work on the Prompt Cards can be used as planning sheets for this activity.

WANTED POSTERS

Use the Character Profile Cards to produce a:

- Missing Person poster for a missing hero/heroine
- Wanted poster for a dangerous criminal.

Challenge the children to describe the personality, abilities and exploits of the characters to explain why they need to be found.

Extension: The characters are in disguise. The children now need to think of distinguishing features, voice, movements and gestures in their description.

ADVERT FOR A HERO/HEROINE

The task for the hero/heroine can be linked to an historical topic. For example, join an expedition to search for an Egyptian tomb. It can also be linked to a study of legends, where the children can first analyse the personality, abilities of the hero/heroine in the legend and use this information to develop their advert.

Challenge the children to describe the task and the characteristics required to secure the job. They should also include a description of the setting and the perils likely to be encountered.

Extension: Write a Curriculum Vitae and an accompanying letter asking to be considered for the expedition, task or job.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

TRAVEL BROCHURES, ADVERTISING PAMPHLETS

Collect photos, postcards, leaflets, cuttings from newspapers, magazines, brochures and store in a Setting/Character file.

Make a travel brochure/advertising pamphlet for:

- an adventure holiday
- a relaxing beach holiday
- a ghost-hunting expedition.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 1: CITIES, TOWNS, AND VILLAGES

WORDS

Nouns

Cafes, restaurants, shops, malls, stalls, markets, art galleries, museums, skyscrapers, offices, hotels, factories, houses, flats

Streets, alleys, lanes, arcades, squares, centre, parks, village green

Graffiti, rubbish, smoke, fumes, soot, smog, damp, mould, grime, waste, chemicals, pollution

Adjectives

Small, little, big, large, huge

Busy, lively, bright, colourful, exciting, vibrant, electric, dynamic, cosmopolitan

Quiet, sleepy, quaint, leafy, picturesque

Crowded, cramped, empty, deserted

Old, ancient, new, modern, Victorian, Georgian

Dark, black, grey, ugly, dirty, stinking, polluted

Run-down, crumbling, rotting, decaying, ruined, haunted

Verbs

Lived, built, constructed

Spread, sprawled, huddled, nestled, hidden, shadowed, overlooked

Buzzed, bustled

Covered, painted, sprayed, blackened

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- Busy, colourful city
- Bustling market town
- Quaint fishing village
- Sleepy little village
- Small, quaint town on the coast
- Old market town
- Sprawling concrete jungle
- Ruined ghost village
- Stinking, polluted place
- Run-down part of the city
- Cobbled squares and arcades
- Wide, tree-lined streets
- Leafy lanes
- Warren of narrow, twisting alleys
- Labyrinth of secret, underground tunnels and cellars
- Scores of shops, art galleries and museums
- Shopping malls
- Pavement cafes
- Market stalls
- Georgian buildings
- Victorian cottages
- Modern skyscrapers
- Big, ugly factories
- Towering chimneys
- Blocks of flats
- Red-brick houses
- White houses with brightly coloured doors and shutters
- Houses with thatched roofs
- Vibrant, cosmopolitan atmosphere
- An exciting mix of smells and sounds from around the world
- Haven from the noise and pollution of the city
- Houses built from cardboard
- Empty shells
- Pile of stones and shattered walls
- Boarded-up windows
- Empty, gaping window frames
- Crawling damp and mould
- Black veil of smoke
- Soot and smog
- Rotting rubbish and broken glass
- Plastic bags, crisp packets and empty drink bottles



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

PHRASES – VERBS

- Lived in a run-down part of the town
- Spread out before him like a concrete jungle
- Surrounded by gentle hills and leafy lanes
- Huddled around the village green
- Overlooked the sea
- Nestled at the foot of the mountain
- Seemed an unlikely place for...
- Bustling with tourists
- Buzzing with pavement cafes and street musicians
- Alive with smells from the food stalls
- Sprayed with graffiti
- Wood covered the windows
- Lined with rotting rubbish
- Grime and pollution clung to the houses
- Blackened by soot and smog
- Smoke spewed from the factories
- Waste pumped and dumped into the river

SENTENCES

It was a quaint town, with narrow, cobbled streets.

The picturesque market town was surrounded by gentle hills and leafy lanes.

The sea-side town was a small, enchanting haven from the polluted city.

Ahead of him on the rocky coast was a quaint fishing village.

The ancient town was a warren of tunnels and narrow, twisting alleys, and a maze of buildings.

It was a colourful, cosmopolitan city. The street markets filled the air with an exciting mix of smells and sounds from around the world.

The wide, tree-lined streets were bright and cheerful, lined with pavement cafes and alive with the sounds of street musicians.

The city was bustling with tourists, eager to explore the scores of shops, art galleries and museums.

Nestling around the village green, the sleepy village seemed an unlikely place for an adventure.

The village was no more than a pile of stones and shattered walls.

She lived in a run-down part of the city. Wood, not glass, filled the windows. Graffiti covered the walls. Rotting rubbish and broken glass lined the streets.

Plastic bags and crisp packets flapped like streamers from the trees. Empty drink bottles rattled in the gutter.

They could see the city spread out before them, with its black veil of smoke and towering chimneys.

Most of the houses had been built from cardboard, or anything that could be rescued to provide shelter.

The houses were crowded together and blackened by soot and smog.

It was a ghost town of deserted houses crawling with mould and damp – empty shells with gaping windows like haunted eyes.

Years of grime and pollution clung to the houses, spewed from the big, ugly factories that shadowed the streets.

A warren of secret, underground tunnels and cellars was used to move around the city and to hide from invaders in times of danger.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 2: TIME OF DAY • SECTION 1 – DAWN

WORDS

Nouns

Sky, horizon, sun, moon, rays, beams, darkness

Grass, trees, branches, bushes, hedges, leaves, water

Mist, dew, clouds, frost

Birds, song, chorus, alarm call, echo

Adjectives

Pink, yellow, orange, red, gold, bright

First, eastern

Black, dim, inky, grey, silver, colourless, ghostly, eerie

Verbs

Dawned, burst, exploded, blazed

Warmed, bathed, shimmered, glittered

Welcomed, rustled, echoed

Rose, crept, clung, spread, covered, shrouded

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- Dawn's first rays of sunlight
- Rim of pale pink on the eastern horizon
- Glorious explosion of pink and yellow
- Pink clouds like candy floss
- Millions of sparkles like diamonds
- Dew-soaked leaves
- Gleaming frost
- Crystal patterns on the icy windows
- Echo of the dawn chorus
- Dying moonlight and rising mist
- Ghostly, silver light
- Bushes were still inky black
- Rising sun like the mouth of an enormous, blazing tunnel
- Clinging dew like a shimmering spider's web

PHRASES – VERBS

- Dawned fine and bright
- Sky changed to orange and then to red
- Exploded in a blaze of pink and gold
- Forest bathed in dawn's first rays
- Sun burst onto the water
- Light stroked the hedges
- Glittered on the leaves
- Warmed the air
- Birds rustled in the treetops
- Nature came to welcome the new day
- Time of day when nothing moves
- Things crept out of the darkness
- Washed with a ghostly, silver light
- Horizon was aflame with the rising sun
- Clinging dew bent the blades of grass



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

SENTENCES

A rim of pale pink had formed on the eastern horizon.

The first rays of morning sunlight were an alarm call for the forest.

The sky changed to orange and then red, and the sun rose in a glorious explosion of pink and gold.

The morning light stroked the hedges and glittered on the dew-soaked leaves.

Crystal patterns frosted the early morning windows and glittered like starlight on the roofs.

As the sun rose, millions of sparkles like diamonds burst out onto the water, making it dance and shimmer.

Birds moved in the treetops, branches swayed and leaves rustled as nature greeted the sun and the new day.

As the first calls of the dawn chorus echoed across the land, the eerie, damp gloom of the night was replaced by the soft light of dawn.

The next morning dawned misty and damp.

The dawn streets were washed in a ghostly, silver light.

The clinging dew bent the shivering blades of grass.

The dew spread from blade to blade, clinging to the grass and hedges like a shimmering spider's web.

It was that dim, grey hour when things were just creeping out of darkness, the bushes still inky black, and the sky colourless and cheerless.

Just visible on the eastern horizon, the rising sun was like the mouth of an enormous blazing tunnel.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 2: TIME OF DAY • SECTION 2 – DAY

WORDS

Nouns

Sun, sunlight, haze, rainbow
Clouds, rain, gale, thunder, squall

Adjectives

White, blue, amber, brilliant, wispy, fluffy
Grey, silver, black, gloomy, grim, dim, crimson
Thick, dense, heavy, swollen, stormy, ominous, malicious, menacing

Verbs

Drifted, travelled, glided
Rushed, scudded
Lit, blazed, tinted, dotted
Covered, blanketed, drowned

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- Clear, blue sky
- Shimmering blue sky
- Cloudless sky
- Wispy white clouds
- Clouds like fluffy cotton balls
- Glorious rainbow
- Golden haze
- Grey thunder clouds
- Dense, black rain clouds
- Swollen and an ominous black
- Clouds like a torn veil
- Great crumpled mountains of cloud
- Dark and threatening a gale
- Screaming frenzy of rain and thunder
- Angry crimson lines like wounds in the sky
- Sun was a dim, pale eye, behind a socket of grey haze

PHRASES – VERBS

- Grey of dawn replaced by a clear, blue sky
- Clouds drifted slowly across the sky
- Sun blazed beneath the clouds in a golden haze
- Lit by a glorious rainbow
- Clouds scudded over the mountains
- Distant squall blanketed the sun
- Moon swung between light and an eerie gloom
- Clouds rushed at him like the crest of a killer wave

SENTENCES

Wispy white clouds dotted the vivid blue sky.

Clouds, like fluffy cotton balls, drifted slowly across the sky.

Beams of light tinted the clouds with blazing colours of red and amber.

The rain had passed and the grey sky was lit by a glorious rainbow.

Great, icy grey mountains of cloud glided like mist over the ground.

The sky was as grey as a thunder cloud and grim with the menace of rain.

The moon swung between light and an eerie gloom, as the dense, black rain clouds drifted across the sky.

The clouds had swollen and grown an ominous black, rushing at him like the crest of a killer wave, threatening to drown him in their stormy embrace.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 2: TIME OF DAY • SECTION 3 – NIGHT

WORDS

Nouns

Sky, moon, twilight, stars, clouds
Curtain, blanket, shadows, beams, torch, candle
Buildings, hedges, trees, branches
Creatures, predators, bats

Adjectives

Black, velvet, dark, inky, grey, dull, gloomy, moonlit
Ghostly, eerie, silent, nocturnal
Red, fiery, dangerous, menacing, malicious
Amber, golden, bright, sparkling, blazing
Warm, humid, balmy, chilly

Verbs

Lit, bathed, washed, drenched, painted
Glowed, sparkled, shimmered, flickered
Faded, sunk, fell, cascaded, disappeared
Watched, waited, hid, lurked, huddled, glided, quivered, flitted

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- Last rays of the sun
- Hazy, golden mist
- Soft, fading light
- Black, velvet sky
- Blazing stars like heavenly fires
- Warm breeze
- Night air like a warm blanket
- Warm and humid
- Gloomy, ghostly grey
- Eerie, silver light of the full moon
- Dark and eerily silent
- Darkness on either side of the torch was like a wall
- Chilly, black wave of darkness
- Leafy shadows
- Branches like thrusting limbs
- Tree trunks like prison bars
- Invisible predator
- Secretive, nocturnal creatures

PHRASES – VERBS

- Dusk was falling
- Splashed with a gentle light
- Painted the hills
- Sparkled like a diamond necklace
- Glittered in the sky
- Lit up the sky
- Darkness fell like a curtain
- Stretched around and above him
- Steeped in darkness
- Like a blanket putting out a candle
- Inky fingers of darkness clung to his ankles
- Moon was drowned in heavy clouds
- Cast leafy shadows on the ground
- Bathed the land in a ghostly reflection of daylight
- Only a fleeting glimpse of the full moon to guide them
- Hid what might lay behind the trees, watching and waiting
- Full of dangerous, flitting shadows
- Branches whispered in the silence
- Bats flitted in the moonlight
- Shimmered in the distance like ghostly eyes
- Air quivered with anticipation
- Brought the fear of the invisible predator
- Imagined all sorts of terrors lurking in the misty night



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

SENTENCES

The moon washed the land in a gentle light.

The last rays of the sun painted the hills with a hazy, golden mist.

The stars glittered like a diamond necklace in the black, velvet sky.

The night was pierced in thousands of places with sparkling, rainbow-coloured light.

The day had been hot and the night sky lay like a warm blanket over the land.

There was no moon, but the sky was lit up by the blazing stars cascading out of the night sky.

Although the sun had gone and dusk was falling, there was still some heat left from the day and the forest glowed with a gentle warmth.

The moon was drowned in heavy clouds.

The ground was full of dangerous, flitting shadows.

The trunks of the trees were framed against the moon like the bars of a prison.

The approach of dusk brought the secretive, nocturnal creatures gliding into the night.

The sun fell like a sinking stone and a black cloak was drawn across the sky.

The moon glowed behind the clouds and bathed the land in a ghostly reflection of daylight.

There was a small circle of light from the torch, but either side was like a wall of darkness.

The shadows of the trees seemed to lean towards each other, whispering in the silence.

The trees stood silent and dark, hiding what might lay behind, watching and waiting.

They only had a fleeting glimpse of the moon to guide them as it scudded across the horizon, appearing briefly from behind the dark clouds.

The air seemed to be quivering with anticipation as a curtain of darkness was drawn across the sky, bringing with it the fear of an invisible predator.

The beam from the light cast a thin strip of flickering light in front of him, whilst behind the inky fingers of darkness clung to his heels.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 3: EXCITED, HAPPY • SECTION 1 – EMOTIONS

WORDS

Nouns

Happiness, joy, delight, elation
Excitement, eagerness, anticipation
Heart, pulse

Adjectives

Happy, jolly, pleased, delighted, thrilled, overjoyed, elated, ecstatic
Bubbly, fizzy, lively, buzzing, animated, radiant
Eager, excited, enthusiastic

Verbs

Beat, raced, pounded, throbbed
Tingled, shook, trembled, shivered

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- On top of the world
- Over the moon
- Bubbly like a fizzy drink
- Buzzing with excitement
- Glow of happiness
- Sense of elation
- Unbearable gurgle in his stomach

PHRASES – VERBS

- Heart pounded
- Pulse raced
- Shivered with eagerness
- Body tingled with excitement
- Hands shook with anticipation
- Could hardly contain his excitement

SENTENCES

His elation was an almost unbearable gurgle in his stomach.

He was buzzing with excitement and couldn't help breaking into a wide grin.

She felt as if she was on top of the world and a glow of happiness spread through her.

His pulse was racing and he took a deep and loudly enthusiastic breath.

With heart pounding and hands shaking, she tore open the envelope.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 3: EXCITED, HAPPY • SECTION 2 – EXPRESSIONS

WORDS

Nouns

Look, grin, smile, laughter

Mouth, lip, laughter lines

Adjectives

Wide, broad, huge, eager

Toothy, cheeky, impish, comical, humorous

Verbs

Grinned, smiled, laughed, gazed

Lit, shone, glowed

Broke, flashed, flickered

Adverbs

Happily, comically

Eagerly, excitedly, enthusiastically

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- Broad grin
- Toothy grin
- Impish grin
- Wide, excited grin
- Grin as broad as his face
- Beaming smile
- Wide, gap-toothed smile
- Wide, eager smile
- Amused expression
- Eager expression
- Look of eager anticipation

PHRASES – VERBS

- Cheeks glowed
- Gazed eagerly
- Laughter shone in his face
- Face lit up in a wide smile
- Grinned like a Cheshire cat
- Broke into a broad grin
- Flashed her a warm smile
- Flickered across his face
- Waggled his eyebrows comically
- Nibbled at her lower lip to hold back a smile
- Laughter lines at the edge of her eyes deepened

SENTENCES

She looked up with an amused expression on her face.

His face was lit up by a huge smile as broad as his face.

She was thrilled to be chosen. Her cheeks glowed with excitement and her face broke into a wide, beaming smile.

With an impish grin, he gazed eagerly up at his mother.

He nibbled at his lower lip to hold back the laughter that was threatening to erupt.

As her face lit up in a wide grin, her eyes disappeared in deep wrinkles.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 3: EXCITED, HAPPY • SECTION 3 – EYES

WORDS

Nouns

Humour, joy, delight, laughter, amusement

Interest, eagerness, excitement

Gleam, glint

Adjectives

Wide, bright, glittering

Verbs

Shone, beamed

Laughed, danced, sparkled, twinkled

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- Bright, twinkling eyes
- Wide with excitement
- Bright with interest and excitement
- Gleam of humour in her eyes

PHRASES – VERBS

- Danced with laughter
- Twinkled with amusement
- Laughter shone in her eyes
- Shone like beams from a torch
- Burned with excitement
- Sparkled with eagerness

SENTENCES

Her bright eyes danced with laughter.

She looked down at him with laughter shining in her eyes.

She leaned forward, her blue eyes bright with interest and excitement.

His eyes burned with excitement and he kept shifting from one foot to the other.

The delight shone from his eyes like beams from a torch and he clenched his fist and punched the air.

As he burst into the room, his eyes were wide with excitement.

Even though she was not smiling, there was a glint of humour in her eyes.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 3: EXCITED, HAPPY • SECTION 4 – VOICE

WORDS

Nouns

Laugh, giggle, chuckle, squeal, snort, gurgle
Shriek, guffaw, roar

Adjectives

Low, little, big, loud, high-pitched
Hearty, manic, raucous, devilish

Verbs

Giggled, chortled, snorted, laughed
Shook, trembled, cracked
Let out, stifled, blurted, exploded

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- Big, hearty laugh
- Loud, raucous laughter
- Piercing shriek
- Devilish roar of glee
- Squeal of delight
- Stifled snort
- Low, wheezing chuckle
- Excited gasps

PHRASES – VERBS

- Shook with laughter
- Giggles bubbled at the back of her throat
- Blurted out a little laugh
- Chortled at the look on her face
- Let out a peel of manic laughter
- Exploded into loud guffaws
- Rose with excitement into a piercing squeal
- Words tumbled over each other in a high-pitched gabble
- Words came in excited gasps

SENTENCES

He laughed a big, hearty laugh that echoed around the room.

She let out a squeal of delight and hopped up and down on the spot.

He threw back his head and exploded into loud guffaws of laughter.

Kitty tried to smother her laughter, but it exploded as a snort.

His voice cracked with loud, raucous laughter and tears poured down his cheeks.

She pressed her lips tightly together to smother the giggles that were bubbling in the back of her throat.

Robert let out a peel of manic laughter and held his sides.

As the laughter exploded in his throat, his shoulders shook and his body convulsed helplessly.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 3: EXCITED, HAPPY • SECTION 5 – MOVEMENT

WORDS

Nouns

Arms, hands, palms, fist

Verbs

Skipped, hopped, jigged, pranced, danced

Leapt, sprung, jumped, bounced

Rubbed, clapped, pumped, punched, clenched

Hugged

PHRASES – VERBS

- Walked with a bounce in her step
- Jumped up and down
- Leapt in the air, screaming with excitement
- Hopped up and down on the spot
- Skipped along the pavement
- Jigged around the room
- Threw her arms around his neck
- Clenched his fist and punched the air
- Rubbed palms together with excitement
- Clapped hands and squealed with delight
- Pumped each other's hands frantically

SENTENCES

She threw her arms around his neck and shrieked with joy.

She dropped the phone and leapt into the air. Screaming, she pumped the air with her fist.

He walked with a bounce in his step and a wide, eager grin on his face.

She skipped along the pavement, grinning from ear to ear.

He burst into the room, laughing madly and clapping his hands with delight.

They were shivering with excitement and pumped each other's hands enthusiastically.

His whole body tingled with anticipation and he kept patting his plump hands together like an excited child.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 4: PARTS, SIZE, SHAPE, COLOUR AND COVERING • SECTION 1 – TYPE AND BODY PARTS

WORDS

Nouns

Head, body, torso, wings, tail

Arms, hands, fingers, talons

Legs, feet, toes, hooves, claws

Mammals

Human, monkey, ape, gorilla

Cat, tiger, lion, leopard

Dog, wolf, hyena, jackal, coyote

Tapir, pig, hog, boar, ram, goat, bull

Horse, donkey, deer, camel

Racoon, weasel, badger, beaver, hedgehog, rabbit

Rat, mouse, gerbil

Reptiles

Crocodile, alligator, lizard, iguana, gecko, snake

Tortoise, turtle

Birds

Vulture, buzzard, eagle, hawk, gull, raven

Albatross, swan, emu, ostrich, peacock, pelican

Turkey, rooster, chicken

Insects

Fly, wasp, bee, cockroach, beetle

Arachnids

Spider, scorpion

Fish

Shark, eel, barracuda, piranha

Molluscs

Snail, slug, octopus

Mythical

Dragon, griffin, phoenix, unicorn, werewolf, centaur, Cyclops, boggart, banshee

Dwarf, elf, goblin, leprechaun, genie, giant, ogre, troll, gorgon, harpy

Ghost, tree spirit, death spirit, water spirit, household spirit

Adjectives

Colour

Black, inky, blue, purple

Grey, silver, pale, white

Golden, yellow, bronze, red, crimson, scarlet, brown, copper

Green, bright green, slime green, poisonous green

Size

Small, little, tiny, minute, elfin, short

Large, enormous, gigantic, immense, colossal, massive, mammoth

Shape

Narrow, thin, slim, slender

Wide, broad, stubby, stocky, squat

Round, oblong, square, serpentine, stretched, flattened

Character

Ugly, vile, hideous, monstrous, repulsive, ghastly, grotesque

Fierce, brutal, savage, violent, vicious, menacing, merciless, venomous, malicious, ferocious, fiendish, malevolent, frightening, terrifying, petrifying

Sly, crafty, cunning



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- Half-human, half-hyena
- Part ape, part scorpion
- Slime green body of a lizard and the head of a badger
- Hideous, red creature with eight legs, the head of a fly and a snake for a tail
- Ferocious, rooster-like animal
- Tiny, vicious goblin with a scarlet rat's tail
- Savage spirit that looked like a rooster from behind, but had the front of a hyena
- Terrifying, eight-legged monster with chicken feet and the tusk of a rhino
- Vicious spirit in the shape of a gerbil
- Grotesque yellow badger, with a hawk's head at either end
- Human above the waist, a leopard below and an enormous shell on its back
- Large, winged creature
- Enormous silver hog's body
- Colossal, eight-foot camel
- Massive purple iguana
- Short, trunked creature
- Squat creature with six legs
- Ugly little creature
- Tiny, elfin body
- Minute goblin
- Narrow body of a wolf
- Wide, six-legged creature
- Painfully thin deer, with spider's legs and a bulging stomach
- Hedgehog-like creature, stretched and flattened into the shape of a crocodile
- Huge, round-bodied raven
- Venomous, serpentine creature

SENTENCES

The wasp's head was attached to a black, porcupine-like body.

Scuttling towards him was a huge bronze scorpion.

A hideous creature crawled out from behind the tree. It was part ape and part scorpion.

It had the body of a lizard and the head of a badger.

A winged creature, with a terrifying, demonic face, swooped down from the tree.

The island was guarded by a fierce sea monster with an enormous, humped, serpentine body and a hideous cockroach head.

The three-legged bird had the huge wings of an albatross, the claws of an eagle and hog's tusks.

The vile creature was so terrifying that anyone who looked at it died instantly.

It looked as if there were two creatures twisted together, but as it moved its huge slime green body, Robert could see that it was actually a two-headed monster, with a raccoon head at the front and a beetle head at the back.



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

THEME 4: PARTS, SIZE, SHAPE, COLOUR AND COVERING • SECTION 2 – COVERING

WORDS

Nouns

Skin, hide, feathers
Spikes, spines, quills, arrows
Studs, horns, plates, lumps, armour
Scales, tentacles, spots, warts
Fur, hair, whiskers, mane, beard, tussocks, locks
Plants, leaves, grass, vines, seaweed

Adjectives

Hairy, woolly, furry, white-furred
Bare, hairless
Fleshless, loose-fitting
Metallic, leathery, scaly
Slippery, wet, moist, clammy
Dry, soft, silky
Long, thick, huge, enormous, trailing
Sharp, stiff, bony, pointed, stinger-tipped
Straight, triangular
Untidy, wild, matted, tangled, torn
Living, bristling, hissing, flicking
Venomous, poisonous

Verbs

Covered, grew, clung
Hung, drooped, trailed, flowed
Stuck up, jutted, sprouted
Wrinkled, polished, glistened, glinted
Oozed, bulged

PHRASES – NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES

- Bronze-skinned
- Skin was black and hairless
- Pale white skin
- Bright, poisonous green skin
- Ill-fitting skin
- Hard, leathery skin
- Dirty, tangled hide
- Bare skin around its face and neck
- Skin as slippery as polished leather
- As wrinkled as a prune
- Furry body
- White-furred wolf
- Furry, brown creature
- Thick, fleecy coat
- Hairy body
- Long black hair
- Long, thick, flowing hair
- Locks of fiery red hair
- Matted, woolly hair
- Thick tussocks of hair
- Hair of living, venomous snakes
- Lion's mane
- Billy-goat beard
- Beard like a dragon
- Hairy whiskers
- Mane and beard like a bison
- Scaly body
- Snake scales
- Scaly, clammy skin
- Dry, scaly skin
- Scales as soft as silk
- Bird feathers
- Feathers the colour of copper
- Gleaming feathers of scarlet and gold
- Mane of thick, black feathers
- Ring of crimson feathers around its neck
- Spikes along its back
- Stiff quill feathers



4 :: BUILDING CREATIVITY WITH DESCRIPTOSAURUS

- Porcupine quills
- Body armour with spikes on its shoulders

- Tough, armour-plated skin with pointed, bony plates
- Triangular plates round its neck

- Enormous tortoise shell
- Stinger-tipped tentacles

PHRASES – VERBS

- Ran from its head to the tip of its tail
- Ran the length of its body
- Drooped in loose folds
- Hung loosely on its skeletal body
- Clung to its fleshless skeleton
- Flowed to her feet
- Stuck up along its spine

- Sprouted from its body
- Jutted out of its back
- Covered in inky, black fur
- Covered in heavy scales
- Covered in sharp, metallic feathers
- Dressed only in leaves
- Hair and beard made from living grass and vines

- Covered in studs, spikes and horns
- Covered in sharp quills
- Studded with bony lumps
- Bulged with green spots that oozed a yellow liquid
- Glistened like wet leather
- Glinted red and gold

SENTENCES

It had thick red feathers around its neck.

Porcupine quills ran the length of its body.

Its hairy whiskers were long, purple and twitching.

It was half-human, half-hyena, with long, wild green hair.

The sun glinted on the sharp spikes sprouting from its legs.

The five-headed, monstrous beast was covered in bulging, green spots.

No-one dared to go near the caves, which were guarded by vicious female monsters, with boar tusks and hair of writhing, hissing snakes.

Below the waist, it was covered in black fur, and above, stinger-tipped tentacles hung from its body.

Grinning maliciously at him was an ugly little goblin, with a sly face and hard, leathery skin covered in warts.