

## Helping Able Writers at Key Stage 2: Enhancement Strategies

In order to meet the needs of able writers a range of organisational responses can be applied. In this essay 'in-class' approaches will be discussed. We will not be considering approaches such as acceleration and the provision of out-of-school activities (both of which can be valid in terms of assisting able writers) but rather will focus on everyday provision in the typically diverse Primary classroom.

The two keys to effective provision for able writers are,

- A. Enrichment: widening the opportunities for writing and the forms that such writing takes.
- B. Enhancement: adding extra tiers of challenge to activities, in order to appropriately differentiate class / group writing activities for the more able pupil.

In this article enhancement strategies will be considered.

### 1) General Enhancement Strategies

If able pupils are to realise their potential as writers, they need to be motivated. To a large degree the appropriateness of the task is a prime factor in determining their levels of motivation. Other methods of 'raising the challenge' can be used by the busy classroom teacher –

- Numeric Challenge
  - Can you use more than ten conjunctions in this story?
  - Can you find more than five ways that the author has attempted to capture the interest of the reader?
- Time - related challenge
  - This approach can best be summarised as 'doing with deadlines'. Short burst (5 - 10 minute) challenges help to focus able pupils.

### 2) An enhancement strategy for 'quick finishers'

Many able pupils complete writing activities far quicker than other children. One way of ensuring that 'filler activities' are avoided when this situation occurs is the application of the 'Lipogram challenge'.

A lipogram is a piece of writing that omits a specific letter of the alphabet. If an able pupil finishes quickly, they can be asked to rewrite the last ten lines / last paragraph (etc) as a lipogram. Rewriting without a particular vowel proves the most successful although the teacher should be aware, that if the letter 'e' is banned, the rewrite will be particularly difficult.

This activity helps to widen the pupil's vocabulary and gives a real reason for using both a Dictionary and Thesaurus.

### 3) Enhancement strategies and poetry writing

A simple method of increasing the challenge, when writing poetry with pupils, is to adapt the form. Although this does not necessarily result in a 'better' poem it certainly heightens the complexity.

#### a) Rhyming Poetry

When rhyming poetry is being developed a more able pupil could focus on 'Start-of-line' rhyme, as opposed to the typical 'End-of-line' rhyme. In 'Start-of-line' rhyme the rhyming words open (rather than close) each line:

##### End-of-line rhyme

I was walking down the street one day  
I'd just collected my weekly pay  
I did not know what I would do  
Don't laugh mister, neither would you

##### Start-of-line rhyme

Day after day I watch the sea  
Pay me for my time  
Do you know what I am?  
You might have guessed - I'm a coastguard!

#### b) Syllabic poetry

Syllabic forms can also be made more challenging. When some pupils are writing Haiku (3 line poetry form): 1st line - 5 syllables/2nd line - 7 syllables/3rd line - 5 syllables) a more able pupil could work on:

1. A Tanka: 5 line poetry form - 5 / 7 / 5 / 7 / 7 syllables
2. A Naga - Uta: a syllabic poem of any length written with alternating 5 and 7 syllable lines then ending with two 7 syllable lines.
3. Hendecasyllabics: A poem made up of lines, all of which are 11 syllables in length. Roman poets, such as Catullus, used this form.

### 4) Enhancement strategies and Narrative writing

A useful approach to increasing the level of difficulty of story writing is through application of the 'Rashomon Effect' i.e. a story written from multiple viewpoints. As an effective story writer is able to assume alternate frames of reference, the activity is particularly useful in developing story writing ability.

If pupils were writing a story entitled 'The Train Crash' a 'Rashomon Effect' approach could result in a story with the following structure.

Chapter 1: The Driver's Story

Chapter 2: The Passenger's Story

Chapter 3: The Crash Investigator's Story

Chapter 4: The Relative's Story

Starts and endings of stories also need attention. A challenging method of opening a story is the '3 question start'. Three possibilities are set up. These are then negated in a fourth sentence that opens the story. The form is best illustrated by example.

1. Is the alien planet the one with rivers of chocolate?
2. Is the alien planet the one with the three suns always shining?
3. Is the alien planet the one with the smiling aliens?
4. No, it's the one with the killer aliens and they're approaching my spacecraft now!

If 'endings' are being taught, cliché can be avoided through direct teaching of more complex conclusions such as 'End with a question'. This leaves the story open for a sequel.

## **5) Enhancement Strategies and non – fiction**

As text organisation remains (more or less) consistent in non - fiction text forms (regardless of the complexity) the teacher can easily make activities more appropriate for able pupils by increasing the complexity of the language in modelled examples shared with pupils.

Maintaining motivation and maximising challenge is an everyday aspect of a teacher's job. The practical suggestions made in this article should assist teachers in addressing the issue of how they might make appropriate provision for able writers at Key Stage 2.

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