Helping Able Writers at Key Stage 2: Enrichment Strategies

All young writers need a broad range of writing opportunities. A consideration of enrichment strategies (methods of widening the writing experience / increasing the opportunities for writing) will help to ensure that writing activities are as richly varied as they should be. This will also help to counter a diet of 'more of the same' which will merely ensure that able pupils are kept busy; a far less beneficial situation than being actively and enthusiastically engaged in the writing process. Enrichment opportunities are manifold; in this essay strategies, which have proved successful to the author, will be explored.

A. BROADENING THE AUDIENCE

A simple way of enriching the writing experience is through a broadening of the audiences for whom pupils are writing. This can be a great motivator and will help to ensure that feedback to the pupil originates from a wide range of sources. Potential audiences (beyond the teacher) include,

1) **Younger children**: The author asks able Key Stage 2 pupils to use appropriate vocabulary in order to write at an appropriate readability level for Y1 -Y2 pupils. A numeric challenge such as '9 out of every 10 words in your story should be taken from the word list' (the word list can be created by the teacher or taken from any relevant scheme) will focus able pupils and help to ensure that the end - product is suitable for the intended audience. If the pupils read their stories to the intended audience then feedback can be used to inform a second draft.

2) **A writing buddy**: The 'buddy / partner' is usually a member of the same class. Upon completion of a piece of writing the two partners swap work and edit each other's writing. The advantage of this kind of peer - group editing is that pupils learn from each other. The editing process should, however, be controlled so that more able pupils don't find 'too many' faults in their partners work, thereby damaging their self - esteem and motivation. A simple mechanism for controlling this is to ask each partner to comment on: Three things you really liked about your partner's work and one thing you'd make even better (with details as to how you would make it better)
This approach ensures that the positive is accentuated!

3) **A different teacher in the school**: Once again, the variety maintains pupils' motivation. By defining criteria which the 'other teacher' will be ' looking for' pupils' prior learning can be reinforced.

4) **Competitions**: Although these are frowned upon by some, pupils enjoy entering competitions and once it has been explained that many successful writers have drawers full of rejection slips, then 'not winning' will be less of an issue (an important life skill in its own right!). Many organisations run competitions for young writers; details can be found online. Local competition details are often displayed within libraries (assuming your local library hasn't been closed due to funding cuts!).

5) **The entire world**: Use your school website to showcase children's writing. Many schools already do this within their local context requiring parents/carers to log in, but why not make them publicly accessible (taken appropriate safeguarding measures, of course)

B. SUSTAINED WRITING PROJECTS

The 'space' to write a developed piece of writing can easily be lost in the drive to cover objectives, and yet the production of a sustained/weighty writing project can be a satisfying one for the pupil. The author has used diary writing as a method of producing a sustained piece of writing over time. The Diary of Ann Frank fascinates many pupils and excerpts from Pepys diary (particularly the dramatic moments such as the Great Fire of London!) can be a useful stimulus. Pupils can then EITHER write their own diary OR if this becomes repetitive an 'In role diary' can be an exciting alternative.

Research based pamphlets/booklets can also provide an interesting project. This is not dissimilar to the 'Self Directed Topic' so familiar to Upper KS2 Teachers, thirty years ago! The advantage nowadays is that pupils have access to the Internet. Whilst use of the Internet is undoubtedly beneficial, pupils need to be explicitly taught how to rework and synthesise material as opposed to just downloading 'chunks' of text to form 'their' booklet. (Introducing the concept of copyright can be a meaningful way of opening a discussion about plagiarism)

Research projects can also be initiated by pupils and even if the titles become clichéd (Animals & Football!) an input on text organisation and an analysis of the layout of professional publications can be most useful.

A final suggestion worth considering at a MAT/Local Authority wide level is an 'e-pal project' whereby a class in one school links up with a class in a different school. It is worth discussing aims and objectives prior to setting this up. If pupils are also involved in the initial planning stages ('What would you like to write about / find out about?) then ownership will help to ensure that interest doesn't wane. Catering for the needs of able writers is not elitist but rather, is an aspect of the Inclusion agenda. By ensuring that the cognitive demand level is appropriate more able writers will remain stimulated and motivated. It is an entitlement of able pupils that the provision they receive is sufficiently challenging and exciting.

Alan Peat (revised April 2024)

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