



# Leading Literacy

CPD for excellence in English

## Success In Reading and Writing: Greater depth story writing - how to get there

This course builds on the Planning for Success in Story Writing unit, so we recommend this is viewed first.

### Key points to take away:

The best writers – young and old – have heads full of stories they have read or had read to them. By far the best way of improving children’s story writing is to expose them to more high-quality stories.

Narrative sequences planned tend to be built around one core story that teachers show children how to adapt, borrow from or rewrite. The best writers in our classes go beyond this, and (probably unconsciously) draw on story language from a wide range of sources, as this language has been stored away in their mental library over time.

Our approach is to explicitly show *all* children how to borrow story language from great writers by.

*a) putting appropriate rich extracts in front of them, and*

*b) using the shared writing process*

*to show them how to adapt this to the story currently being written.*

The rich extracts chosen as models may be completely unrelated to the main story you are using: they simply exemplify language structures and literary techniques used by a skilled author – for example, to give backstory to a character, to convey pace in an action scene or to illustrate the relief felt by a protagonist at the end of a story.

It is important to note that the collaborative composition process is not considered ‘independent writing’. By teaching these story writing techniques and language structures explicitly – using shared writing that draws explicitly on rich models – children will internalise the language and will, over time, be able to apply them in their own independent writing.

Never let children think they should stick rigidly to the text models shown; ensure they consider the effect(s) they wish to create and always encourage them to draw on their own ever-expanding mental libraries.



## Question for you and your team

What – if any – are the barriers to using this technique in your class / school?

Do you / your colleagues invest time in building up a shared bank of wonderfully-written children's literature from which to draw appropriate extracts?

How might such extracts be sourced and shared within and beyond your school?

## Putting it into practice

When reading children's literature (to yourself or the class), notice when you encounter brilliantly written scenes that capture adaptable aspects of a story, such as a character or setting description, a discovery, a chase scene, a revelation, a sense of relief, and so on. Capture these (e.g. take a photograph or screen capture of the extract) and save under an appropriate heading in a shared drive.

Encourage other colleagues to do the same. This will work particularly well the more people become involved. It can work across federations, trusts, academies and so on. Children, parents and carers can also be involved, of course!

Bank all of these in a shared drive and have appropriate headings, so that when colleagues need an extract for a particular kind of scene, there is a good chance they can find one.

When actually using an extract for this purpose, try it out first (as with standard shared writing); you don't want to find that it doesn't really work when you are working with the class!

Have available at least one copy of the text(s) from which the extract(s) have come from. We have seen this approach to writing greatly improve children's enthusiasm for reading!