

**Session Report:NLS/Ks3 Teaching and assessing writing skills.**  
**17.10.02**

Writing as an activity is often dependent on the other three elements of English: Speaking, listening and Reading. However it is important to remember that there are many situations where writing can be used to support effective speaking, listening and reading. For example prompt cards to be used in an oral presentation or a class writing down their first impressions of a new novel.

In the English National curriculum programmes of study for speaking, listening and reading are often supported by writing activities. In En2 literature pupils are expected to consider poetic forms and their effects and so arises the opportunity to write a critical piece on a poem they have been reading.

During the session we were shown how to take a poem and turn it into an English lesson. We were reminded of the importance of having clear and precise objectives for the lesson. The first poem we looked at was 'Beside The Riverside' by Philip Gross. One approach to get the class to read the poem several times over is to cut out the key words in the poem and asking the class to fill in the blanks with their own ideas. It is important to read the poem to the class with blanks so they get a feel of the shape of the poem first. After a strict time limit of say six minutes ask the class to read out their own version of the poem-being strict about how many can read theirs out as there won't be time for all of them. As the poems are read out key words can be written up on the board eg: onomatopoeia, metaphor and rhyme. Now the full version of the poem can be given out to the class and discussed.

Possible activities for the class to do with the poem include: writing a small account of what happened before the events in the poem took place, or discussing the way Gross has taken a moment in time and made a narrative from it. The class could try and write their own kind of moment as a narrative but this would depend on the ability of the class.

In the next part of the session we looked at formal and informal writing. In the English National curriculum pupils are expected to: Use formal and impersonal language and concise expression, and develop logical arguments and cite evidence.

We looked at two formal letters and discussed how it is important for the pupils to see the models of formal writing like these. (keep all your Oxfam letters for lessons). By studying these models pupils could then draft their own formally argued letter to a broadsheet newspaper and one to their local newspaper perhaps with a more rational tone. Each activity must be modelled for the pupils before they can be expected to complete a task. At this point the poem 'Beside The Reservoir' could be brought back to use in a lesson and an activity where the characters in the poem are considered. The pupils could be

asked to write an informal letter to the daughter of the couple in the poem describing what they have seen.

To conclude from just one poem we have come up with a whole lesson or more of writing activities to teach a class and at the same time covered certain requirements from the reading side of the curriculum.

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### References

English National Curriculum: pp25=37  
Learning To Teach English in The Secondary School: chp 7 pp125=126