

WEBSITE RESOURCE W15.4

Describing achievements in writing

Non-fiction

Chapter 12 outlines the ingredients for making progress in writing non-fiction texts as developing expertise in handling:

- the styles and structures of different non-fiction texts
- the typographical and layout features
- the process of gathering and organising material
- the process of composing and recounting, reporting, describing or expressing a personal and analytical view.

Using these as a guide, the Scale of Progression in Writing/Composition can be used to identify a young writer's achievements in non-fiction writing.

At 6, Sam is an 'increasingly assured and experienced writer'.

Sam shows that he is familiar with the style and structure of an instructional text:

- *Shows awareness of what the reader needs to know:* 'neatly paint', 'be careful not to rip it', 'WARNING!' and 'Finally enjoy your car'. Chooses to illustrate relevant stages of the construction of the car.
- *Composes accurate well-sequenced instructions with appropriate diagrams:* using time connectives to sequence the process and the illustrations of the different stages of the process of making a car and giving details in the illustrations of materials and tools needed.

Uses language and structures from instructional text as a basis for his own composition: with imperative verbs used consistently throughout: 'neatly paint', 'fold the box', 'saw your long dowel', 'stick the dowel through'.

How do you make a car??

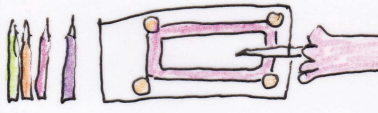
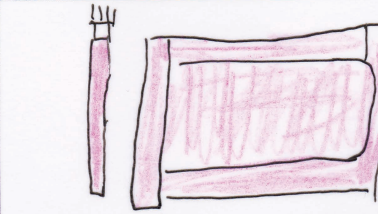
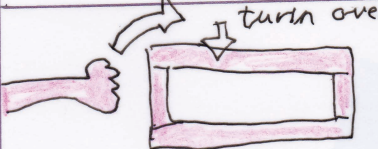

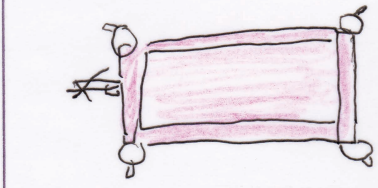

	<p>Firstly you do your design carefully on a sheet of paper</p>
	<p>Secondly neatly paint it and do it with bright colours keep going over it until its very bright</p>
	<p>Next fold the box when it's dried and be careful not to rip it.</p>
	<p>After that saw your ^{long} dowel so you can put wheels on. WARNING be careful ^{point} that it cut yourself</p>
	<p>Later stick the dowel through the ^{little} holes in the box and stick the wheels on.</p>
	<p>Finally enjoy your car play with it but be careful ^{if you dont} take care other wise it'll brake</p>

Figure W15.4.1 Sam's instructions

He uses typographical and layout features:

- *uses a range of organisational devices and diagrammatic text for presenting sequenced information:* arrows, the use of the hand in the diagrams, upper case letters for 'WARNING'.

He has gathered information by making the car before writing the instructions and organises the illustrative (pictures) and descriptive material (words) to make a full and coherent set of instructions:

- *uses time connectives to help structure text:* 'firstly', 'next', 'later', 'finally'.
- *makes secure choices of mode for specific readers:* the written instructions give details of the process and the illustrations give information about materials and tools, placing and orientation of the car as it is constructed.

Sam handles the process of composing well, correcting as he goes to make sure his instructions are clear and accurate:

- *spells familiar words correctly and independently applies a range of strategies in attempting spelling:* the whole piece is accurately spelt.
- *experiments with a range of punctuation:* using full stops, apostrophes, question mark and exclamation mark correctly.
- *can identify errors when proof-reading own text:* amends 'be careful not' to 'don't'; inserts 'long' and 'if you don't take care'.

As this is a single piece of work it is not possible to judge how well Sam works with others or how keenly he wants to write or any of the other features which depend on observing him as a writer. In addition, as this is a non-fiction piece of writing, it is not possible to comment on his narrative writing. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence in this one piece of writing to see that he fulfils a good number of the descriptive criteria for an 'increasingly assured and experienced writer' who is poised soon to become a 'more experienced and almost independent writer' who:

Use a colour for the coloured lines

- **spells familiar words correctly**
- **independently applies a range of strategies in attempting spelling**
- **experiments with a wider range of punctuation**
- is gaining speed and fluency in handwriting
- **can identify errors when proof-reading own text**
- uses reader response to help guide revisions of own text
- generates ideas/jots before writing
- finds and notes information from familiar text
- can use a variety of planning strategies
- summarises longer passages of familiar text
- chooses to work individually or in a team
- comments on and experiments with sound and visual effects in writing
- **usually makes secure choices of mode for specific readers/listeners/viewers**

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- wants to write to express personal meaning
- uses language and structures from different text types for own writing/composition
- uses sequenced plans to help shape writing
- writes consistently in the third person when narrating events
- can write a first-person sustained narrative, including dialogue
- uses known layout to write dialogue and playscripts
- uses language and story knowledge to create settings and character
- sustains stories, incorporating setting and characterisation
- shows some awareness of what a reader needs to know
- uses time connectives to help structure text
- uses paragraphs to organise material
- independently writes non-chronological report (at own level of experience) using information from texts read
- composes accurate well-sequenced instructions with appropriate diagrams/flowcharts
- uses a range of organisational devices and diagrammatic text for presenting sequenced information
- tries out different layouts and designs for poetry, fiction and non-fiction texts, using known software as appropriate

Narrative

In the same chapter, the ingredients for making progress in narrative writing were listed as writers developing:

- greater conscious attention about how to shape texts to suit their intentions as writers
- more awareness of how to engage and hold a reader's attention
- greater adeptness at handling the technical aspects and conventions of different kinds of narrative
- increasing facility in choosing language to create effects
- the ability to read their own writing with a reader's eye
- a repertoire of narrative forms to draw on.

With these in mind, the narrative descriptors from the Scale of Progression in Writing/Composition can be used to identify lyla (at ten years old) as 'an assured, experienced and independent writer'.

She shows that she can shape text to suit her intentions as she:

- *develops plot with clear events and resolution*
- *finds different ways to resolve the complication created in plot:*
Phillip's encounter with the Raven and his adventures beyond the oak door are clearly told with a hint of mystery at the end: 'From his position in the bed he could see the vague outline of a raven against the blue sky'.
- *varies sequencing to unfold a narrative, e.g. flashback:* lyla's story begins with a flashback which she returns to at different points in the narrative sequence.

The Secret Door

"Phillip! Phillip! Are you on a distant planet?" Phillip turned to see his older sister, Maria shaking his shoulders.

"Wait,..." he said slowly and turned back to the window. There was no mistake. The wall, with the strong, oak wood door that fit snugly inside it, had vanished into thin air.

The McMurphy family had been living in ^{the children's} Great-Aunt Griselda's ancient castle for less than, what felt like, the longest month in the year. There was no school for miles around and since the tutor was not due to arrive for a month, Maria and Phillip spent most of their time playing Ludo in one of their ~~careless~~ ^{careless} bedrooms. Phillip was thoroughly bored of Ludo, and so when our story begins he is staring out the window hiding from it.

A week later, Phillip had not seen even one splinter of the mysterious door. His birthday had come and gone with Maria giving him the rubbish present of a board game. He had hoped it wouldn't be Ludo; it wasn't. His parents, however, gave him a book called *The Secret Garden*. Phillip thought it was excellent. Sitting on the same window-seat ^{from} which he ^{first} saw the door, he became quickly engrossed in Mary's sad but fascinating story. He felt a bit like her, ~~he~~ trapped in a huge house with no entertainment. Mary wouldn't have even had Ludo. So absorbed in his story was he, that he almost didn't hear the soft 'caw' from the window-sill. The

window was partly open, to let in fresh air, and so when Phillip looked up, from his ^{adjectives/metaphor} book the raven outside wasn't half obscured by ^{the} musty, mildewed glass "Well?" ~~said~~ croaked the raven. "Are you going to let me in?"

Phillip stared. Suddenly, he heard footsteps on the landing. "Quack!" hissed Phillip. "Can you fly up to my room? ~~I think my dad's coming~~ ^{flapping} Do you know where my window is?"

The ~~raven~~ raven gave him a ^{sympathetic} ~~sympathetic~~ look "Phillip, what I know about you would fill volumes I'm afraid. Ah well. See you there" And with that he flapped off. Phillip flapped off too Except for the fact ~~that~~ he couldn't fly. He just ran.

Don't use

A very out-of-breath Phillip met a not-very-out-of-breath raven at the window of Phillip's bedroom.

"So" announced Phillip, as he sat on the bed with the raven next to him on the bedpost. "I believe you owe me some explanations"

"Ah" ^{mused} ~~mumbled~~ the raven "I do. Well I'm Ravid. And that counts as one explanation. But the next will be much, much longer"

And ~~so~~ thus he launched his tale.

Long, long ago, there were no humans and animals ruled the Earth. But then the humans and made the animals into slaves, or ~~worse~~ worse their meals. So the animals grouped together and built a magic door, which opened onto a

wonderful new world with no humans. All the ^{animals} slithered, skipped, slunk, slomped, scuttled and scampered through the door and closed ~~the door~~ it on the humans' world. But now," concluded Ravid, "A powerful, magical storm threatens the safety of our hidden world. That is why I have come out of it to request ~~your~~ your help."

"But..." Philip was frowning. "I'm a human!"
 "Oh, sure," said the raven offhandedly, "But all your favourite books have talking or all-knowing animals in them don't they? The Secret Garden, Narnia, Harry Potter... and you believe?"

Just then, Phillip heard his mother call.
 "Phillip! Lu-unch!" The ~~raven~~ ^{Ravid} flew swiftly to the window-sill.
 "Some place, hour's time," he croaked, and flew off.

Phillip almost didn't make the hour. After lunch, his mother and father fell to chatting about redecorating the library and kept asking his opinion of carpet colour and whether they should have stained glass windows or not. Then Maria challenged him to a game of ~~Backgammon~~ Backgammon. Phillip hadn't even got around to opening ~~the box~~ ^{her present} because by ~~now~~ ^{then} he preferred books to board games. He managed to get away in time, by saying that an idea had just popped into his head for ~~his~~ ^{the} story that he was writing. Out of breath for the second time that day, Phillip arrived in his bedroom. He checked his ~~wrist~~ watch. Bang on time. But Ravid was no-where to be seen.

Afterwards Phillip could not remember how it had happened. He had closed his eyes to think; maybe Ravid had said something about being late? When he opened them he was down in the garden in front of a mysterious door. Phillip thought at first, that he had never seen it before but then he wasn't sure.

"Well" ~~he~~ mused a familiar voice "I ~~know~~ know you would

find a way.

They Phillip and Ravid entered the secret world silently and, in Phillip's case, full of awe.

"Humph! Kenneth's late!" Ravid grumbled. No sooner had he said this, than a horse galloped up.

"Phillip, Kenneth, Kenneth, Phillip," said Ravid in the same disapproving tone. "Do you know how to ride a horse? Not you, Kenneth."

"I, I can try," said Phillip timidly. He was still intimidated by the horse.

"Don't be scared," said Ravid, much more kindly. "Now hop on, and off we go!"

The hours passed in a misty haze of bliss. It was a splendid sight, a boy, a raven, a horse. Without warning however, a thunder-clap sounded, loud and mighty. The horse turned and dashed back to the wall. The three stood, bracing themselves for what was to come. The boy had spread his arms across the door that had stood for centuries to protect the talking animals. The storm raged around them, but against their will, to no effect.

"Amazing!" exclaimed the doctor, who was bending over Phillip's bed. "No damage. Being out in a storm like that, but, there you are." He straightened up and dusted off his hands. "Well, I'll be off now. Nice meeting you." He winked at Maria who blushed. Phillip's father got up to shake the doctor's hand. His mother moved over to his bedside.

"How're you feeling?" She asked concernedly in a concerned way.

"Oh fine" replied Phillip. He grinned at Maria. "Fine enough for a game of Backgammon..."

From his position in the bed, he could see the vague outline of a raven against the blue sky.

She is very aware of the needs of a reader and:

- *begins to use implication and allusion to draw a reader into the narrative:* At the beginning of the story she hooks the reader in: 'There was no mistake. The wall, with the strong, oak wood door that fit snugly inside it, had vanished into thin air.' And directly addresses the reader: 'So when our story begins, he is staring out of the window . . .'

lyla handles the technical aspects of writing well:

- *independently drafts, edits and proofreads:* lyla self-corrects as she writes but also, as she re-reads her work, she adds words for clarification or greater effect; prompts herself to find better vocabulary; deletes sections she thinks are unnecessary.
- *revises structure of text with purpose and readership in mind:* lyla's annotations show that as she re-reads she considers ways of improving the story to make things clearer for the reader as she amends 'living in Great Aunt Griselda's ancient castle' to 'living in the children's Great Aunt Griselda's ancient castle'. Her suggested annotation to add adjectives/metaphor might not actually improve the narrative but she is clearly trying to make her story as engaging for the reader as she can.

Her use of language is impressive as she:

- *shows awareness of different aspects of character, using language to evoke sympathy or dislike:* 'Phillip, what I know about you would fill volumes, I'm afraid.' 'He winked at Maria, who blushed.'
- *uses evocative language to create mood/atmosphere:* 'The hours passed in a misty haze of bliss, It was a splendid sight, a boy, a raven, a horse.'
- *uses action, direct description or dialogue and indirect suggestion to show character and motivation:* 'He became quickly engrossed in Mary's sad but fascinating story. He felt a bit like her, trapped in a huge house with no entertainment.'

Again, a single piece of writing, even one as extensive and complete as lyla's, does not allow for comment on her ability to use a repertoire of narrative forms but in this piece she directly quotes examples of fantasy narratives, showing a good grasp of the genre. Equally, it is not possible to comment on her non-fiction writing, nor her behaviour as a writer, but she certainly meets a good number of the descriptive criteria of 'an assured, experienced and independent writer' who:

- independently drafts, edits and proofreads
- revises structure of text with purpose and readership in mind
- makes decisions about when to handwrite and when to use digital technology
- works collaboratively in groups for a writing outcome
- uses notes, charts, other planning devices to gather ideas
- independently organises writing
- uses reflective writing to note personal ideas
- comments on style and language features in own and other writing/composition

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- experiments with language, particularly in poetry: sound, shape, rhythm, rhyme and figurative language
- uses collaboration and response to further own writing
- develops plot with clear events and resolution
- finds different ways to resolve the complication created in plot
- uses evocative language to create mood/atmosphere
- shows awareness of different aspects of character, using language to evoke sympathy or dislike
- uses action, direct description or dialogue and indirect suggestion to show character and motivation
- varies sequencing to unfold a narrative, e.g. flashback
- begins to use implication and allusion to draw a reader into the narrative
- constructs coherent multimodal text
- writes clear and concise non-chronological texts, including relevant detail
- takes account of reader when informing, explaining and presenting ideas/information
- writes to persuade the reader by providing examples/reasons
- writes reports balancing two opposing sets of ideas
- can use a variety of applications of digital technology to present non-fiction texts, e.g. databases and graphics
- uses digital technology for all stages of the writing process, making discriminating choices about modes, language and effects for communication