



# TEACHING THE CRAFT OF WRITING: INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION RESOURCE PACK

*All art is achieved through the exercise of a craft, and every craft has its rudiments that must be taught.*  
Fairfax and Moat (1998)



## INTRODUCTION: THE CRAFT OF WRITING PROJECT

The *Craft of Writing* project was a collaboration between the creative writing charity, Arvon, the Open University, and the University of Exeter. It built on a previous project *Teachers as Writers*, between these partners which had explored how a residential writing retreat, working with professional writers, might change teachers attitudes to, and teaching of, writing. As part of that project, we interviewed professional writers about their own writing and experience of being writers, and from that became very aware that these writers talked about writing as a craft, and could articulate their craft knowledge. And so, the *Craft of Writing* project (2018-2020) was born.

In the *Craft of Writing* project, teachers attended a writing residential at Arvon's Lumb Bank centre, which was composed of writing workshops and individual tutorials, led by professional writers, and plenty of time and space for writing. This part of the project focused on the teachers as writers themselves. In addition, they attended three Continuing Professional Development days, where the focus was on transferring the learning about the craft of writing to the classroom. In particular, these CPD days explored how writing is a craft, and like all crafts, it has to be learned, and can be learned from experts.

This booklet brings together some of the key pedagogical resources to help you think about the *Craft of Writing* in your own classroom practice, with the aim of creating classroom communities where children can grow and thrive as writers.

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## VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The *Craft of Writing* project drew on Arvon's fifty years of experience in leading creative writing courses, both with professional writers, and with teachers and students. The Arvon values underpin this project and reflect our collective views about creative writing. These values are reproduced below:

### THE ARVON VALUES

We believe creative writing can change lives for the better. Creative writing allows us to harness our imagination and find our voice. It creates new possibilities, new ideas, new futures. It unlocks our potential, our empathy and our hope. And we're keen to share this opportunity for transformation with as many people as possible.

**INCLUSIVE:** Everyone is creative. We make spaces that are open to all, where anyone, regardless of writing experience, feels welcome and included as part of a community of writers.

**INSPIRING:** Step away from the routine, be inspired by writers and our beautiful places and release your imaginative potential. Arvon is a place for contemplation, challenge and going beyond what you thought you were capable of achieving.

**SUPPORTIVE:** Creative writing is a craft that can be learnt, through guidance from experts, and through the peer support that comes from creative friendships with fellow writers. At Arvon, writers teach writers, and everyone encourages each other to become a better writer.

**TRANSFORMATIVE:** Immersing yourself in creative writing nourishes the imagination, can deepen the connection to self and to the world, and can lead to dramatic change and progress.

From these Arvon values and from contemporary research on the effective teaching of writing, we created a set of pedagogical principles to inform our thinking about, and planning for, the teaching of writing in this project:

- Create **inclusive classrooms** where children are given time and space to write, opportunities to write without being assessed, and to take risks and be experimental;
- Offer inspiring opportunities and starting points for writing, including writing from the heart and writing from experience so that children experience **being an author**;
- Support young writers in understanding and managing **the writing process** and being aware of the **reader-writer relationship**;
- Explicitly teach the **language and textual choices** students can make in their writing;
- Create **a community of writers** where writing is shared, critiqued and celebrated, where feedback is purposeful.

## THEORETICAL THINKING ABOUT WRITING AND WRITER KNOWLEDGE

Historically, writing has received much less attention in research than has reading, and what research there is has often approached the topic from very different disciplinary lenses. Cognitive psychology has focussed on the mental processes an individual draws on to create text; sociocultural research has addressed how writing is shaped by social and cultural practices, and the expectations of different communities of writers; and linguistics has considered structures and meanings in written texts. In other words, research has variously considered writing as being principally about the *individual* writer; the *social practice* of writing in a community; or the *textual* aspects of writing (Myhill and Newman 2019). As teachers, we need to address all of these simultaneously because the young people we teach are individuals, writing in different communities with different practices and expectations, and creating texts, governed by linguistic conventions and creative possibilities. So as teachers, what subject knowledge do we need to teach writing?

This question was not part of our original research questions, but has arisen through the interactions of professional writers with teachers, and teachers with young people. However, research in teacher education has long drawn attention to the importance of teachers' subject knowledge. The seminal work of Schulman (1987) and his theorisation of subject content knowledge (knowledge of an academic domain); pedagogical content knowledge (knowledge of how to teach that academic domain); and pedagogical knowledge (knowledge of how to teach in general) remains salient. But successive studies in this field have focused more heavily on subject and pedagogical content knowledge in Mathematics and Science (e.g. Rowland and Ruthven 2011; Loughran et al 2008) than has been the case for writing. There are no robust empirical studies which explore what might be the subject content knowledge teachers need in relation to writing; and what might be the corresponding pedagogical content knowledge for teaching writing.

Research has offered some limited insights into this question of subject knowledge for writing. The first cognitive model of writing (Hayes and Flower 1980) positions topic and audience and 'stored writing plans' as representing the *knowledge* for writing a writer brings to the task. Following this, models of writing have elaborated upon this idea of *knowledge* for writing. For example, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) distinguished between knowledge which relates to the content space - what to write, and to rhetorical space - how to write it; and Hayes (1996) drew attention to the place of linguistic and genre knowledge. However, this notion of the *knowledge* needed to write is poorly developed in cognitive models, and it is repeatedly assumed to be unproblematic. From a different perspective, functional linguistics has emphasised the importance of explicit genre *knowledge* (Halliday 2004; Martin 2009), and has made a significant contribution to re-thinking the teaching of writing with more attention to both language choices and the use of multi-modal resources in creating text (Unsworth, 2001). And, of course, what is valued as *knowledge* for writing is socio-culturally determined. In England, at present, we have a 'knowledge' curriculum, based on the ideas of Hirsch (2007), rooted in a rejection of so-called progressive educational thinking, and favouring traditional teaching, where *you will find children learning to read using traditional phonic methods, times tables and poetry learnt by heart, grammar and spelling rigorously policed, the narrative of British history properly taught* (Gove 2013: np). The current National Curriculum (DfE 2013) presents Programmes of Study for Writing with a heavy emphasis on 'knowing the rules of writing', particularly spelling, punctuation and grammar, and the word 'creative' does not occur anywhere in relation to writing. Yet the professional writers involved in our research projects offer a profoundly richer knowledge about writing, which does not reject the need for accuracy, but goes substantially

beyond this to include greater knowledge about authorship, about audiences, about the writing process, and which reflects a deep engagement with writing as a craft.

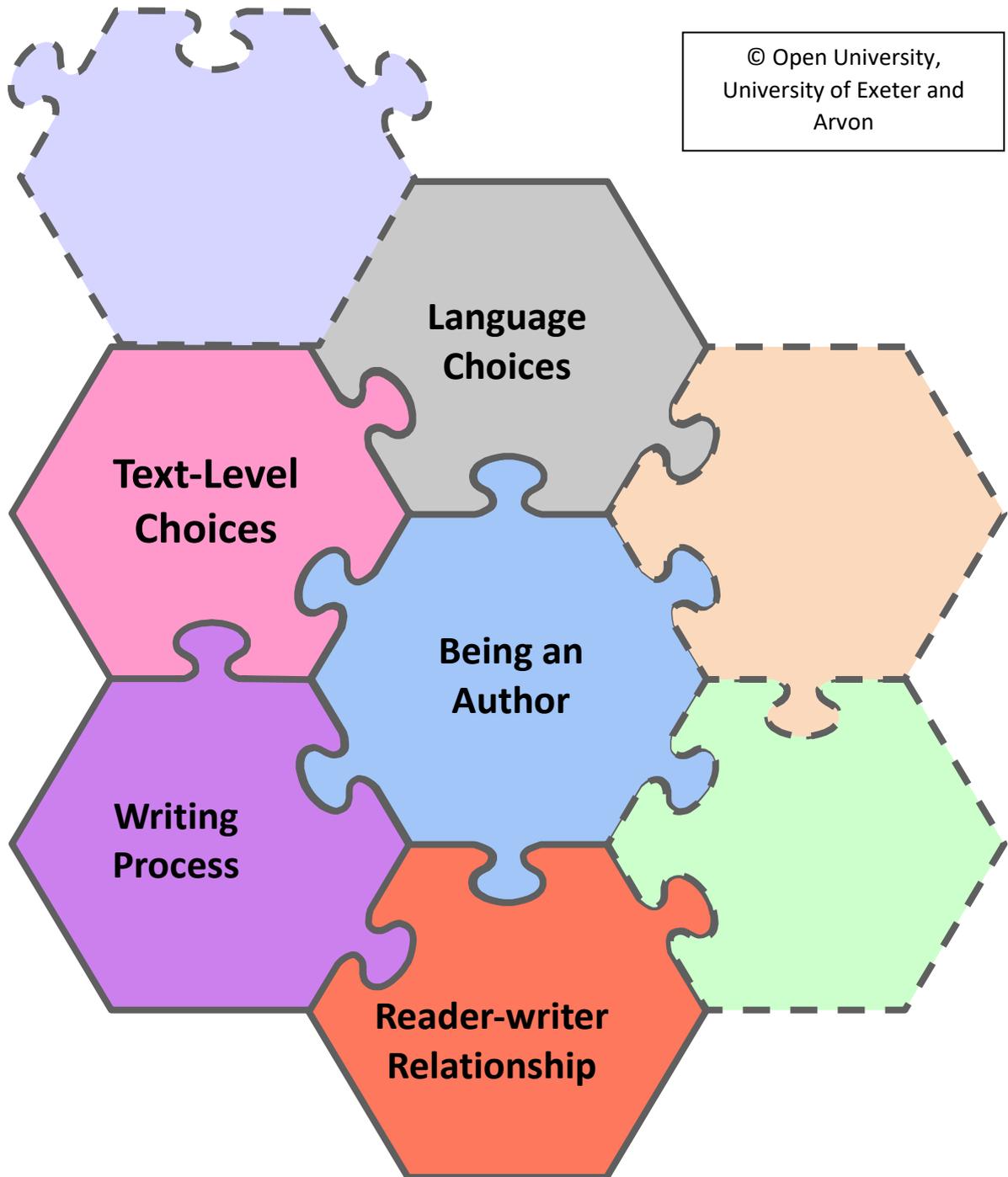
These research projects, *Teachers as Writers* and *The Craft of Writing* were predicated on the view that teachers and students have much to learn from professional writers. They were also designed in response to a systematic review of teachers as writers (Cremin and Oliver, 2016). This revealed international evidence indicates that many teachers express low self-esteem as writers, do not write for creative purposes, do not self-identify as writers, and have worryingly negative attitudes towards writing and teaching writing (Cremin and Oliver, 2016). In addition, it appears that teachers tend to hold narrow conceptions of what counts as writing or what makes a 'writer'. For several decades, researchers and teachers have debated the assertion that '*to teach writing, teachers of writing must write*' (Graves 1983:7). Indeed, there is a strong, arguably populist and even commonsense, belief that if teachers are offered opportunities to be writers and to develop their identities and expertise as writers this will lead to improved outcomes for young people's writing in school. To date, however, research into the relationship between 'teachers as writers' and student outcomes is sparse (Cremin and Oliver 2016). Nonetheless the review did highlight that programmes which engage trainee teachers and practicing teachers as writers can serve to widen their conceptions of writing and sense of self as writers. Findings suggest that sustained opportunities to reflect on personal writing histories, engage in writing, discuss textual processes and participate in a community of practice, can influence student teachers and practising teachers' self-assurance as writers and their pedagogical approaches.

Alongside attention to teachers as writers, our work has documented the practices of professional writers, analysing for example their reading histories and composing practices in order that insights might be offered, at least potentially, to teachers and classroom practice (Cremin, Lillis, Myhill and Eyres, 2017). We have become aware that professional writers' knowledge and understanding of the craft of writing deserves increased practitioner attention. It has the potential to make a contribution to education, and to support teachers' understanding of being a writer and of how they teach writing. This in turn may impact upon young people's own identities as writers, their understanding of what it means to be a writer, and their attitudes to and outcomes in writing.

The Craft of Writing Framework is drawn from the *Teachers as Writers* project. In this writers engaged with teachers in two ways: as tutors during the week-long Arvon residential writing course and/or as co-mentors with partner teachers during a classroom-based scheme of work on narrative fiction. The writer sample comprised nine published authors, (6 male and 3 female), and included poets, novelists and playwrights. Two of these engaged with teachers as tutors during the residential and eight writers, (including one of the tutors), participated as co-mentors during the classroom phase. In total 63 writer conversations were audio-captured and later analysed using NVivo in order to discern what the writers revealed about the craft of writing when engaged in these ways and the key knowledge they identified for teaching purposes.

# THE CRAFT OF WRITING FRAMEWORK

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This Framework draws on interviews with professional writers and what they say about the craft of writing. It is not a rigid model, nor is it intended to be complete – it focusses more on narrative writing and poetry than other kinds of writing and would almost certainly have new hexagons if we looked at, for example, argument writing, or academic writing. So, the dotted hexagons represent new possibilities. The purpose of the *Craft of Writing* Framework is to begin to develop useful teaching and learning conversations about how to write – the craft of writing. In the tables below, we explain each hexagon, and the sub-themes linked to each one.

**BEING AN AUTHOR****Knowledge about the personal resources and intentions that authors bring to their writing.**

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Example from writer interviews</b>
Drawing on experience	Knowledge/awareness that writing leans on or builds from experience	<i>It starts as something in my life that's real and important to me</i>
Authorial intention	Knowledge/awareness that writers should start with having something to say and a sense of what they want to achieve	<i>You need to know whether you're going to build a shed or a cathedral before you start</i>
Emotional connection	Knowledge/awareness that writing is emotive	<i>Not just thinking about story as a technical thing...it's an emotional thing</i>
Authentic voice	Knowledge/awareness that writers have their own style/footprint	<i>Just allowing them to use their own voice and be authentic</i>
Drawing on reading	Knowledge/awareness that writing is shaped by reading	<i>The best way to learn how to write is to read other people and see what they're doing</i>
Ownership	Knowledge/awareness that the writer owns the writing – it is theirs	<i>Do whatever you like because that's your book, it's your writing</i>

**READER-WRITER RELATIONSHIP**

Knowledge about the interaction between reader and writer, and the ways in which readers become engaged in or affected by writing.

Sub-theme	Explanation	Example from writer interviews
Helping the reader understand	Strategies to ensure the reader is able to follow the text	<i>It's always about taking the simple way of getting to your reader</i>
Engaging the reader	Strategies to involve the reader and keeping them in the moment	<i>Make the reader feel like they're there</i>
Affecting the reader	Strategies to influence readers' feelings	<i>What is it you want your reader to feel when they close the book</i>
Reader-writer interaction	Comments about the collaboration between reader and writer	<i>The reader is as much a part of your piece of writing as you, the writer</i>

**WRITING PROCESS** Knowledge about the processes involved in writing, from activities involved in preparing to write to final proofreading. Recognition that the writing process is recursive not linear.

Sub-theme	Explanation	Example from writer interviews
Creative experiment	The processes involved in exploring textual possibilities	<i>It's giving yourself the time to explore and to play, to find out the things you really want to write about</i>
Drafting	The processes involved in actually generating text, committing to page or screen	<i>I think it's the discipline of doing it... the act of turning up that is quite important to this process</i>
Preparing to write	The processes involved in preparing or planning to write. It can involve incubating ideas and researching a topic	<i>Sometimes you plan it and it works really well. Other times...you have to find another way into the story</i>
Reviewing	The processes involved in evaluating text, making decisions as to what to keep, cut and alter	<i>It's about...being quite rigorous about what works and what doesn't</i>

Revision	The processes involved in improving and changing the text	<i>You go down level after level after level...restructuring, polishing, working on it as an object in itself</i>
Writing process as a whole	The nature of the writing process as a whole and ways of managing it.	<i>It's not that linear process of gathering, drafting, editing, finalising. It's a circular thing</i>

## LANGUAGE CHOICES

Knowledge about how language choices can alter the effect and how meanings are created. It is very much about choice at a *local* or *micro* level – a word, a phrase, a sentence. It connects with text level choices, which are about *global* or *macro* level choices.

Sub-theme	Explanation	Example
Word choice	The power of word choice	<i>I explained what a shroud was ... if you were describing snow as a shroud, what atmosphere would it create?</i>
Being concise	The importance of clarity, and avoiding redundancy	<i>How can I make that clearer and how can I make that more specific and how can I say more by saying less</i>
Detail	The significance of detail and precision in description	<i>... the importance of specificity. So rather than just saying the house, let us see what the house is, give us a certain particular description of a certain thing that helps them see that it's not just any old house for instance</i>
Sentence structure	The structure and syntax of sentences	<i>Our job is to, you know, structurally, technically work with them on, "Actually that sentence would be better like this"</i>
Technical aspects	Accuracy in spelling and punctuation	<i>Two 'p's' in Tupperware</i>
Avoiding cliché	The need to avoid phrases that sound 'a bit romantic' or 'clichéd'; '	<i>That is a bit clichéd compared with the rest of it</i>
Rhythm	The sound of language and strength or consistency of rhythm.	<i>It's got a very kind of strong sense of rhythm. You probably felt it when I was reading it. You know that whole 'the elders knew a time when springtime blossomed and the world sprang into life' has got a lovely kind of rhythm to it</i>
Show not tell	References to the importance of revealing information through portrayal rather than direct explanation	<i>Instead of telling us about the fear, show us what the fear feels like and how it works</i>
Rhyme	The negative effect of banal rhyme, but also the value of internal rhyme	<i>If the rhyme begins to take over then you lose something...  You've got a little rhyme in there 'clanging and jangling,' so you've got that kind of very lyrical sense of language</i>

<b>TEXT LEVEL CHOICES</b> Knowledge about text structure and organisation, and those features which contribute to crafting writing at a global or macro level.		
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Example</b>
Narrative structure	References to the narrative elements that support good story structure	<i>You've got the main elements ... the character, the main character, the setting and the ending</i>
Characterisation	References to the techniques used to develop character	<i>Show your reader what this person like ... adding layers, adding details and just fleshing the character out</i>
Viewpoint	References to importance of viewpoint as the 'filter' through which a reader experiences events	<i>She got us writing from the point of view of an animal, and that was incredibly liberating</i>
Dialogue and tone	References to the role of dialogue and tone in narrative and poetry	<i>Dialogue can really bring a piece alive</i>
Poetic structure	References to techniques which help to structure a poem	<i>The structure might be internal rhyme, you know, or assonance</i>
Tense	Tense choices.	<i>They're thinking about tense ...they're playing with that idea of I want to do something in present tense maybe</i>
Repetition	The value of repetition and its use for structural purposes.	<i>'It follows me, hisses it's not fair, whispers, it's not fair' and you might even have 'it's not fair' again</i>

### **Commentary on the sub-themes**

The value of the sub-themes for each of the five *Craft of Writing* Framework themes is that they begin to provide a language to talk about writing, and a framework for thinking about how you might plan for teaching writing.

None of the sub-themes represent rules for what must be done in writing; rather they represent ways of thinking about writing and being writer, and they open up possibilities for addressing writing as a craft.

## PROVIDING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK ON CHILDREN'S CREATIVE WRITING

One thing that became evident during the CPD days was that teachers were very reluctant to provide feedback, other than bland praise, on students' creative writing. This was partly due to a worry that they might upset the children, and partly due to a lack of confidence in precisely what to say in response to creative writing. The project teachers were not alone in this, as research has shown that there is often anxiety in giving feedback to creative work (Myhill and Wilson, 2013). To an extent, creative writing is put on a pedestal, where it is perceived as too precious or too personal to touch or comment on. However, we routinely give feedback to other kinds of writing in the curriculum. All writers, including young writers in our classrooms, need feedback on their creative work too, and this is crucially important for developing writers.

Ironically, during the residentials, the teachers themselves had received intensive and often challenging feedback on their own writing from the professional writers. The Arvon residential experience created rich creative spaces for writing (through the workshops and the time and space for writing), but the tutorials offered space for constructive and critical feedback. Creative writing, as much as any other writing, deserves constructive, critical feedback. Children's author, Tim Bowler (2002), draws attention to the importance of both the creative and the critical in the writing process:

*Why is writing so tricky? Because it requires mastery of two conflicting skills: a creative skill and a critical skill. The former is of the imagination, the latter of the intellect, and they come from different brain hemispheres. To write well, we have to employ both to maximum effect.*

(Tim Bowler 2002)

Effective feedback on creative writing develops children's critical capacities, their understanding of how to discuss and improve their own writing. It is hard to revise writing if you have no real sense of how to judge what you have written, or how to change what you have written. Critical feedback generates a shared vocabulary and language to talk about writing, but this, in turn, demands subject knowledge of the craft of writing. Such feedback needs to encompass attention to the young author's intentions for their writing, respect their ownership and link to the reader-writer relationship. As the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education argued, '*Creativity is not simply a matter of letting go*': rather genuine creative work '*relies on knowledge, control of materials and command of ideas*' and involves not just innovation, but also knowledge and skills (NACCCE, 1999: 6).

The *Craft of Writing* Framework offers a shared way of thinking about writing. So, in order to support teachers in developing greater assurance in giving feedback, we created some examples of feedback for each of the *Craft of Writing* sub-themes. This proved enormously successful. The teachers made a lot of use of this resource and also gave it to classroom assistants to use too. Of course, the examples are models of possibilities and we hope they will give you the confidence to generate your own feedback along these lines.

## BEING AN AUTHOR FEEDBACK

Knowledge about the personal resources and intentions that authors bring to their writing.

Sub-theme	Feedback Example
Drawing on experience	<p><i>You've been in a situation like this. What details do you remember about it?</i></p> <p><i>Can you think of a situation where something similar to this has happened to you? How did it make you feel? What did you decide to do?</i></p>
Authorial intention	<p><i>How do you want to make your reader think or feel when they read this?</i></p>
Emotional connection	<p><i>How did writing this make you feel?</i></p>
Authentic voice	<p><i>This part reminded me of the last piece you wrote because it also [...e.g. used repetition; had a strong sense of rhythm]. You are developing your own style!</i></p> <p><i>Don't worry if your writing is different from other people's - authors each have their own special voice.</i></p>
Drawing on reading	<p><i>This reminds me of a book [...] - i'll dig it out for you.</i></p> <p><i>Let's look at how some other authors have [... e.g. written about this; used the past tense like this; chosen very specific words to describe this...]</i></p>
Ownership	<p><i>This is your writing so you have to make the decisions.</i></p> <p><i>I would like it if you shared your work with me, but you don't have to if you don't want to yet.</i></p>

<b>READER-WRITER RELATIONSHIP FEEDBACK</b> Knowledge about the interaction between reader and writer, and the ways in which readers become engaged in or affected by writing.	
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Feedback Example</b>
Helping the reader understand	<p><i>You helped me understand why this happened. I think it's because [ e.g. you showed the reader what your character is like so they could understand why she acted like this...]</i></p> <p><i>I didn't completely understand what was happening here. Perhaps we could work on [...e.g. the structure of the story; how to make the sentences more concise...]</i></p>
Engaging the reader	<p><i>I was really gripped by what you wrote here. Perhaps it was because you [...e.g. included these details so I could really imagine what it looked like; used short sentences to build up a sense of anticipation...]</i></p> <p><i>I was less gripped by this part of what you wrote. Perhaps we could look at how to [... e.g. add in some dialogue to really bring the scene alive; use a different tense, like the present tense...]</i></p>
Affecting the reader	<p><i>When I read this I felt [...e.g. sad, scared, amused...]. Perhaps that's because you [...e.g. 'show not tell' the reader how the character feels by describing...]</i></p> <p><i>I wasn't sure how to feel when I read this part. Perhaps you could try [... e.g. writing from the viewpoint of the character; thinking more about the words you are using...]</i></p>
Reader-writer interaction	<p><i>What do you expect your reader to know/understand about what is happening in the story at this point?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any places where you feel you are successfully grabbing the attention of the reader?</i></p> <p><i>How do you want your reader to feel at this moment? What can you do to make them feel...?</i></p>

**WRITING PROCESS FEEDBACK**

Knowledge about the processes involved in writing, from activities involved in preparing to write to final proofreading. Recognition that the writing process is recursive not linear.

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Feedback Example</b>
Creative experiment	<i>Experimenting is a very important part of the writing process. When we are experimenting, we are finding ideas and trying them out, to see where they take us. We are not worried about whether the ideas are good or not or about spelling or punctuation. We'll think about those things later</i>
Drafting	<i>Now we have our ideas, we have to get them down on the page. Write the next bit – just keep going...</i>
Preparing to write	<i>Could you try to plan out [...e.g. the order in which things happen in your piece of writing...] Is there anything you need to find out about xxx at this stage in the writing process? How could you research [...]?</i>
Reviewing	<i>Which words/sentences/sections are you happy with and which do you think [...could be cut; need revising]? So let's look at how you have used [... e.g. repetition; detail; tense; structure; viewpoint...]</i>
Revision	<i>So we want to improve this word/sentence/section? Lets try thinking about what changes will [... e.g. show not tell; be really concise; help the reader understand...]</i>
Writing process as a whole	<i>What part of the writing process would you like to use now? Would you like to experiment more with your ideas? Or plan the whole piece? Or would you like to do some drafting? Are you finished reviewing and revising or would you like to revise again? Is it time to edit your piece for spelling and punctuation?</i>

## LANGUAGE CHOICES FEEDBACK

Knowledge about how language choices can alter the effect and how meanings are created. It is very much about choice at a *local* or *micro* level – a word, a phrase, a sentence. It connects with text level choices, which are about *global* or *macro* level choices.

Sub-theme	Feedback Example
Word choice	<i>I really like the way that word suggests xx – it makes me feel xxx.  What would happen if you changed that word to another word? Play around with some different choices and see what you think.</i>
Being concise	<i>That's a lot of adjectives in a row – can you think of one noun that might do all that description; or perhaps just one adjective and noun?</i>
Detail	<i>OK – so what kind of shoes would she wear? And would they be shiny and clean or scuffed and scruffy?</i>
Sentence structure	<i>When I read this sentence, I see the mountain first and then the polar bear – was that what you wanted me to see? If not, how can you move things around so it is the polar bear I see first.</i>
Technical aspects	<i>Read that sentence again – do you think you need a comma or a full stop there?</i>
Avoiding cliché	<i>That's fine, but saying 'as green as grass' is something we hear or read lots so it doesn't create a strong image. What kind of green is it? What do you want to make your reader see, or hear or feel? Can you think of a simile for green that will be fresher and more original?</i>
Rhythm	<i>I love the way that the two halves of that sentence balance each other – it gives the sentence a lovely balanced rhythm. Read it aloud – can you hear it?</i>
Show not tell	<i>I'm really interested in your cat character, Grimble. You tell me he is grumpy and bad-tempered. I wonder if you can think of a way to describe Grimble that will show me he is grumpy and bad-tempered? Perhaps you could describe a situation where he shows his grumpiness?</i>
Rhyme	<i>Do you think the rhyme helps the poem to say what you want it to say, or have you had to choose words that you don't really want to fit the rhyme?</i>

**TEXT LEVEL CHOICES FEEDBACK**

Knowledge about text structure and organisation, and those features which contribute to crafting writing at a global or macro level.

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Feedback Example</b>
Narrative structure	<p><i>When I read the first page of your story, I was wondering what's the story problem here? What needs to be sorted as the story develops?</i></p> <p><i>I really enjoyed your ending: it took me full circle right back to the lost girl in your opening, only now she's not lost anymore.</i></p>
Characterisation	<p><i>Let's look at this paragraph here describing the dragon. In the first part of your story, you described him as a dragon who didn't like fire. I really liked that because it was so odd! But here, he seems to be back to being a 'normal' dragon – how could you develop that idea of a dragon who doesn't like fire?</i></p>
Viewpoint	<p><i>What would happen if, instead of you telling the story as a narrator, you told it from the father's point of view?</i></p>
Dialogue and tone	<p><i>You have a really long section of dialogue here – almost a page. What do you want the dialogue to reveal or explain in terms of your story? Do you think you could do that in just two or three exchanges of dialogue?</i></p>
Poetic structure	<p><i>Read this one aloud so we can hear if it has the rhythm of a limerick.</i></p>
Tense	<p><i>What would happen if you rewrote that paragraph in the present tense? What would change about how your story is being told?</i></p>
Repetition	<p><i>Let's listen to those three sentences – the repetition of 'I am' at the beginning of each one makes me feel I am right alongside your character.</i></p>

## STARTING POINTS FOR WRITING

Below we have created a summary of all the starting points used by the professional writers in the workshops at Lumb Bank, and provide some guidance on what the learning focus was and some thoughts for how to transfer them to the classroom. It's always important to remember that it is the *learning purpose* of these activities which is most important, not the activity itself.

Starting Point	JUST WRITE: GATHERING INGREDIENTS
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	Just Write: free writing to liberate ideas and find out what you want to say
<b>Description</b>	<p>Give out a list of words/phrases eg:</p> <p><i>Early morning</i>  <i>The storm</i>  <i>Falling</i>  <i>The seashore</i>  <i>First kiss</i>  <i>Something there</i>  <i>Winning</i>  <i>Losing</i>  <i>The garden in summer</i>  <i>Winter</i>  <i>Embarrassment</i>  <i>Anger</i>  <i>Beginnings</i>  <i>Gone forever</i></p> <p>Just choose one of these words/phrases and write it about it for 5 minutes – take your pen for a walk. Don't think about handwriting, spelling or anything like that, just write.</p>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be explicit about the term <i>Just Write</i> so that it becomes familiar – remind children that is about taking your pen for a walk, letting your ideas flow, and there is no need to think about how good it is, or spelling or punctuation etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be alert to children who seem unable to do it – they may be too constrained by a need to get it right – perhaps get them to freewrite for just two or three minutes first.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share your own freewriting, with its randomness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you any children who are not yet fluent writers (ie can't simply write freely), it is possible that freewriting may really help them. But if they are really unable to freewrite, think about providing a scribe, or allowing them to audio record.</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>JUST WRITE: SENTENCE PROMPT</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	Just Write – how freewriting can help to liberate thoughts and ideas.
<b>Description</b>	Just write – keep writing for ten minutes from the prompt - <i>She carried it with her always.</i>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be explicit about the term <i>Just Write</i> so that it becomes familiar – remind children that is about taking your pen for a walk, letting your ideas flow, and there is no need to think about how good it is, or spelling or punctuation etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be alert to children who seem unable to do it – they may be too constrained by a need to get it right – perhaps get them to freewrite for just two or three minutes first.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share your own freewriting, with its randomness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you any children who are not yet fluent writers (ie can't simply write freely), it is possible that freewriting may really help them. But if they are really unable to freewrite, think about providing a scribe, or allowing them to audio record.</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>JUST WRITE: SENTENCE PROMPT</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	Just Write – how freewriting can help to liberate thoughts and ideas.
<b>Description</b>	<i>My mind is a house with cellars, closed doors and secret passageways.</i> Just write... take your pen for a walk
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be explicit about the term <i>Just Write</i> so that it becomes familiar – remind children that is about taking your pen for a walk, letting your ideas flow, and there is no need to think about how good it is, or spelling or punctuation etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be alert to children who seem unable to do it – they may be too constrained by a need to get it right – perhaps get them to freewrite for just two or three minutes first.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share your own freewriting, with its randomness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you any children who are not yet fluent writers (ie can't simply write freely), it is possible that freewriting may really help them. But if they are really unable to freewrite, think about providing a scribe, or allowing them to audio record.</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>JUST WRITE: STORY INGREDIENTS</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	How just writing can liberate ideas, and here how you can let your imagination run free with random starting points about character, objects and setting
<b>Description</b>	What comes into your mind when you think of 'Gothic'. Give out list of Gothic characters; places; objects. Choose one character, one place, one object. Just take your pen for a walk. 25 minutes writing time

<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You could change the genre and choose ingredients from other genres (eg traditional fairy tales) or ‘ingredients’ from Harry Potter to create a new story</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Children may try too hard with this – thinking too much about a story before they write. The real point here is the just write – let the ideas happen and it doesn’t matter if not everything makes perfect sense!</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Remember to silence your inner editor and critic , this is about generating ideas not yet evaluating them</li> </ul>
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<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT : ‘AT GRANDPA’S’</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	Character Development: How specificity in choice of objects and images can help to create character
<b>Description</b>	<p>Read <i>At Grandpa’s</i> and discuss it, drawing out responses and understanding of the poem. Note how the character is described through the things in the room. Read <i>at Aunt Jane’s</i> ( see in Additional poems )too or your own poem from Arvon.</p> <p>Think about someone you know well – think hard about the space you normally see them in, and the things that are in that room. Be very specific, instead of ‘<i>flowers on the windowsill</i> ‘ you could say ‘<i>The wilted white lilies in the vase</i>’.</p> <p>Title of the poem is:                    <i>At xxxx</i>  First line:                                    It was the...</p> <p>Think carefully about the last line.</p>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You might need to model examples as the professional writer did, and discuss why the extra concrete detail conveys or implies character. Perhaps keep the examples displayed so they can be revisited.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It might be helpful to draw attention to the fact these are extended noun phrases so they don’t dilute the detail by making them full sentences.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They might veer toward the adjective pile-up so be prepared to steer them towards extra description after the noun. Steve talked about ‘the x with...’ – adding prepositional phrases.</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT : ‘THE CHILD WITHIN ME’</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	Character Development: Considering the hidden or unveiled aspects of a character and describe these in order to ‘narrow down’ and offer detail of their views.
<b>Description</b>	<p>Read <i>The Nazi within me</i> Stephen Dobyns and <i>A Meeting</i> by Michael Laskey</p> <p>Offer the class 10 minutes to scope out some ideas</p>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Invite the class to list different kinds of roles, jobs or dispositions e.g. Scientist, doctor, clown, optimist, pessimist, child, teenager</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Listen to these and select one each, writing a few lines about what the optimist within me reveals, e.g. he believes there is nothing to be afraid of, that there is no global warming etc</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make a note of one line from each child. Read these back to the class creating a whole class poem.</li> </ul>
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<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>ATTENTION TO DETAIL: CONTAINERS</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	The importance of detail: encouraging specificity rather than generalization; the concrete rather than the abstract
<b>Description</b>	<p>Write down a list of containers, things that you put things in: avoid parts of the body – keep writing the list, as many as you can think of.</p> <p>Now take three or four of them and write down what is in them: think about the detail, not just ‘biscuits’, but ‘a half-packet of fig rolls’.</p> <p>Look back at what you’ve written and decide which you liked best</p> <p>Scribble out all the containers and just keep the items inside; read them out with heading <b>INSIDE MY HEAD</b>.</p> <p>You could read <i>A Boy’s Head</i> By Miroslav Holub (see Additional poems)at the end of the activity.</p>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Help the children generate their list of containers by making some initial suggestions e.g. suitcase. Pencil case, bucket, cardboard box,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus here very much on moving from the noun to the expansion of the noun to capture the more detailed description.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Getting children to visualise their objects might help?</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>DEVELOPING A CHARACTER</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	<p>Character development: getting under the skin of a character and finding out who they are.</p> <p>Narrative development: allowing a storyline to evolve from the character description; finding a story.</p>
<b>Description</b>	<p>Invent a new character: guided fantasy:</p> <p>Picture your character who is standing next to the window:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what can they see?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what can they hear?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what is the weather like?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what time of days is it?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> time of year?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what happens?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> your character has a bag – what kind of bag is it and what’s in it?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> your character has a picture – what or who is it of?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what are they expecting?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what is your character worried about?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> when did they last cry and why?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what is your character’s greatest fear?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> somewhere there is a secret that this character knows or that someone knows about this character – what is it?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> an object that is important to them - that they have got or lost?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> a piece of music that is important to them?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what is your character’s biggest regret?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>what’s does he really want and what is stopping him?</b> {conflict: core of a story]</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> what’s your character’s name?</li> </ul> <p>Read what you have written and think about the character that is emerging. Share it with a partner and invite them to ask questions about the character.</p> <p>What were they doing yesterday, a week ago; a year ago?</p> <p>For 5 minutes have a go at writing a scene for this character</p>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a relaxed writing environment this where children understand there are no right answers to these questions but that they are building a character</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Perhaps adapt the questions or reduce the number of questions – but don’t ‘dumb them down’</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>ATTENTION TO THE SENSES: EXPLORING OBJECTS</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	How focusing on an object can lead to using the senses to describe it. Time to Just Write.
<b>Description</b>	<p>Choose an object then look at it and feel it, explore it. Be completely immersed in your object. Start by looking really closely at your object – and think about it from the perspective of all five senses. Then let ideas flow – does it remind you of anything or make you think about anything? Give time to Just Write</p> <p>Sharing the reading of poems which describe objects , animals or plants in various ways <i>Anchor Riddle</i>; Chrissie Gittens <i>Adder, Bluebell, Lobster</i> (Otter-Barry Books, 2016) or <i>The Lychee</i> from Additional Poems.</p> <p>Give 15 minutes to try and write something from this.</p>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Find a poem to support you from Chrissie Gittens’ book or of your own composed at Arvon. Don’t worry if it doesn’t use all the sense, this is not a model to mirror exactly</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Remind each other of the five senses, and invite the class to generate a couple of lines for each sense</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make it clear this is not a full poem but a series of one liners that can be revisited, refined, deleted or selected later</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Invite each child to read one or two of their favorite lines- naming their object</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>SHOW NOT TELL: THE FURNITURE GAME</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	How to describe something or someone by showing what they are like through careful discussion
<b>Description</b>	The Furniture Game: think of a character you know – a celebrity, a friend If they were a colour, what colour would they be? What Animal; flower; food; weather; music; water; game; disease?
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use this as a playful activity to encourage thinking differently, perhaps as a warm-up task before a more sustained show not tell activity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stress that the colour, food etc are supposed to suggest something about the person: it's not about that person's favourite food, favourite colour etc</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Perhaps model some examples first; or do this collectively about someone you all know.</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT : 'WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD CARRY'</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	How to develop a stronger sense of your character by exploring what they carry with them, literally ( concrete) and emotionally/metaphorically (reference to abstract ) and what this reveals about their character
<b>Description</b>	<p>Shared reading of Maura Dooley 'What Every Woman Should Carry' ( cutting parts as appropriate) and discussion of it, noting how she combines concrete objects and abstract ideas.</p> <p>Alicia reads two poems by children with the same model structure: <i>What every superhero needs</i> and <i>What every teenage girl needs</i></p> <p>Write your own poem in this style.</p>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use this as an activity to encourage further focus on their chosen character , perhaps as a follow up task</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stress that the contrast between the abstract and the concrete is the key focus</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Perhaps model some examples first; or do this collectively about a fictional character in the class novel.</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>SHOW NOT TELL: AN ABSTRACT IDEA AND THE FIVE SENSES</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	Show not tell: how abstract ideas and feelings can be expressed by describing them metaphorically, using the five senses
<b>Description</b>	<p>Think of an abstract noun: eg sadness; hope; frustration</p> <p>If you were filming your abstract noun what would be the opening shot, the opening images?</p> <p>What does your abstract noun smell of? Taste of? Feel like? Sound like? What is its voice and what does it say?</p> <p>Shared reading of Carol Ann Duffy <i>A Worry</i> and <i>Grief</i> by Stephen Dobyns or <i>Anxiety</i> (see Additional poems)</p> <p>Allow 10 minutes to work on a poem using the five senses</p>

<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Find another example of a poem which does this which is accessible to Year 5, or share your own as a model, or write one together as a collaborative composition first;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Draw out the idea of how the concrete shows the abstract.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Invite the children to read aloud their selected lines which achieve this, discuss the children's examples and why the chosen concrete image reflects the abstract idea</li> </ul>
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<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>SHOW NOT TELL: DESCRIBING A BARN</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	Show not tell: how you can convey (show) feelings and perspectives through description of settings, or through other concrete descriptions, rather than by literally describing how a character feels (telling)
<b>Description</b>	<p>Write the sentence '<i>I am happy</i>', then cross out happy and write something real in its place.</p> <p>Can you show <i>it was hot</i> in a different way eg <i>The chair was uncomfortable</i></p> <p>Read extract from '<i>Charlotte's Web</i>', (EB White) the point where Charlotte dies – where the description of the taking down of the fair creates the sadness/emptiness of Charlotte's death, something coming to an end.</p> <p>Write a description of a barn from the perspective of a man who has just lost his son in the war but you cannot mention the war or the son.</p>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The activities with re-writing '<i>I am happy</i>' etc in a different way are really helpful for playing with this show not tell strategy.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you don't want to give away the ending of the story, choose a different extract which does the same thing.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You can play with a different scenario : a description of a bedroom from the perspective of a mother who is angry with her son, but you cannot mention the mother or the son. A description of a playground from the perspective of a child who is moving away and obliged to leave school and their friends, but you cannot mention the impending departure or their friends.</li> </ul>

<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>PLAYING WITH WORDS: VERB CHOICES</b>
<b>Writing Learning Focus</b>	How different verb choices can create different images/impressions; and how you can be very creative with the kinds of verbs you choose
<b>Description</b>	<p>The train arrived at the station</p> <p>How many different words for 'arrived'?</p> <p>You can use unusual or surprising verbs eg 'married'</p>
<b>From Arvon to the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Another playful activity to encourage lateral thinking. Encourage playfulness with the verb choices, moving beyond the literal choice of verbs of motion. Push for unusual ones that might make people laugh/think</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take it in turns to go round the class and share these. Decide on those that stand out and discuss why</li> </ul>

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Drawing on the craft knowledge deployed by professional writers, *The Craft of Writing* Framework represents an empowering pedagogic tool for teachers. It not only offers the profession the knowledge and awareness to support the effective teaching of writing, it can support their own **and** their pupils' sense of identity as writers. If you choose to use it, we suggest you begin by engaging reflectively as a writer yourself, writing, considering the experience and processes involved and sharing your writing with others. Change needs to start with student teachers and practising teachers seeing and representing themselves as writers and being supported in the process. You might like to keep your own writing journal for a period of time, writing both in your own time and alongside young people in school, considering:

- ❖ what you are learning about being a writer;
- ❖ what you are learning about being a teacher of writing;
- ❖ your critical reflections on the practical experience of using *The Craft of Writing* Framework in the classroom.

Through reflecting in this way, you will begin to appreciate the value of the interlocking strands of *The Craft of Writing* Framework: the salience of your authorial intentions, a sense of the reader-writer relationship and the iterative writing process, as well as an increased awareness of the text and language choices you are making as an author. Your craft knowledge and understanding will help as you seek to teach writing effectively, drawing children's attention to the Framework and ensuring time is set aside for small group or one to one feedback conferences. Such conferences and whole class teaching can enable children to consider their own writing and improve it. As two of the teachers involved observed:

*Children make more of their own choices as engaged authors now, for themselves, not as pupils 'doing writing for school'.*

*One thing I have taken successfully is helping the children think about their choices to create a desired effect and revising those choices.*

*Children now consider how they want to make the reader feel more, as opposed to trying to hit the Year 5 Writing Targets.*

Utilising *The Craft of Writing* Framework supports teachers and young people to meet curricular requirements, but in a richer, more meaningful and purposeful way than simply engaging in imitating de-contextualised text extracts. It has the scope to expand both teachers' and pupils' repertoires and understanding of writing, and of themselves as writers.

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## **FURTHER READING**

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