



Poetic Writing: Character

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii 2 3 4 **5**

My Little Sister

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

Because The Learning Context and Integrating Reading and Writing sections for the character exemplars are so closely related, they have been combined in a shared introduction, which applies to all the character exemplars. It suggests the approach Thomas's teacher may have taken to working with the class on character writing. It also suggests ways in which teachers can integrate character writing with reading.

Teacher-student conversations

On several occasions Thomas and the teacher discussed his writing, particularly the language features:

Teacher: The similes you have used work well, and so does the metaphor about an angel. Remember how important vocabulary is in developing a character. Have a look at the nouns, verbs and adjectives you've used. Remember the ways for improving them that we talked about – like using a thesaurus so we don't repeat the same words all the time, or overuse certain words. Have a look at some of those language features – can you see how you could improve your vocabulary to describe your sister a bit more?

Thomas: Yeah, I could say more describing about her room and the way she talks to Mum.

Teacher: Who's Tako?

Thomas: Her cat.

Teacher: Do you think everyone would know that?

Thomas: Oh, right. I'd better change that then.

On a later occasion:

Teacher: How have you got on?

Thomas: I've done some more changes

Teacher: What have you changed?

Thomas: This bit about her sulking and some other places where I improved some of the sentences.

Teacher: Oh, yes, you've worked on the sentence starter there – what a good idea. "Watch TV" is an interesting way to get people's attention. They wouldn't be expecting it. And I can see other changes – that's good.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Thomas towards the next learning step, the teacher could help him focus on:

Ideas

- sequencing and developing supporting details, illustrations, interpretative comment, observations to support main ideas, e.g., hitting her brother "for no apparent reason".

Language features

- recrafting some of the language used for his character's actions so they are more effective or accurate, e.g., "with a sigh of relief".

Punctuation

- the student has been over-enthusiastic with commas. The teacher will need to spend time talking with him about the function and use of commas.

Contexts for such learning could include the teacher:

- demonstrating or modelling these points in group or individual learning sessions, which could include examples of how other writers have managed them
- continuing to give Thomas specific feedback on his success/next steps with these points.

CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Level 5: Writing Functions

Poetic Writing: Students should write on a variety of topics, shaping, editing, and reworking texts in an extended range of genres, selecting appropriate language features and using conventions of writing accurately and confidently.

Level 5 and 6: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should identify language features and their effects in a range of texts, and describe and analyse their relationship to meaning, purpose, and audience, adapting these features for different situations.

Thinking Critically: Students should discuss, interpret, and analyse spoken texts, identifying some attitudes and beliefs and relating them to personal experience and knowledge of other texts.

NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement)

Achievement Standard AS 90052: English 1.1 Produce Creative Writing.

www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ach/English/AS90052.doc
New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2001).

PDF: www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ach/English/as90052.pdf

Unit Standard 8813: Produce Poetic Written Text in Simple Forms

PDF: www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/units/pdf/8813.pdf
New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2001).

REFERENCE

Ministry of Education. (1994). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.



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WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Thomas explores his sister's character with humour and a strong personal voice. He draws considerably upon his experiences with her, developing a vivid picture. He engages the reader with a relaxed, conversational tone, as he discusses his sister's foibles and offers supporting detail to make his points. He also gives glimpses of the dynamics of their relationship.

Student's second draft

Deeper features

Impact

Engages the audience with the character.

Voice

Sincerity of voice sustained convincingly.

Ideas

Explores ideas that are significant – makes a personal response to a particular character.

Uses substantial illustrations, interpretive comments, evaluations, or observations to support the main points.

Structure

Shapes ideas for a particular effect.

Organises ideas into paragraphs.

Sentences

Uses a variety of structures effectively.

Vocabulary

Selects a range of vocabulary and phrases to suit the audience and purpose.

Language features

Uses images and other features to amplify the content.

Uses dialogue to enhance the telling.

My Little Sister

"It wasn't me mum honest," my sister pleads untruthfully. "It was Thomas she says with a sigh of relief. In public shes an angel, with her blonde hair gleaming like a halo and her mud brown eyes with that familiar glint of trouble in them. "Come on please let mum believe me," she wispers to herself in her squeaky little voice. "Thomas get down here!" I hear from my room.

Watch T.V., that's all my sister does on the weekend mornings. Rolled up in her duvet, remote clutched in one bony little hand and her eyes trained on the pictures flickering by. If we have to go out during one of her one hundred thousand favourite shows she will go and sulk somewhere, then when she's stopped sulking it takes her twenty minutes to get ready. During the week her favourite hobbies include: getting in her teacher's good books, playing with her kitten and tormenting me.

Moaning, is what my sister does the most apart from making my life a misery. She'll moan for hours if she dosen't get her way, even if she isn't allowed a sweet from the dairy she'll just moan about it for days.

What does she dislike me doing most? Simple, she hates it when I touch her cat, if she's around I can't even touch it with a ten foot pole without been hit by her. That's another thing, she hits me for no apparent reason then tells mum I hit her.

When ever I touch something it becomes acid to my sister's skin, she will not touch it until it has been 'sterilised'.

Though she may moan a lot when with her friends she will dance around like a drunken person, each day is like a T.V. drama about her social life, after school she'll tell us all about it, I'll get confused in the first five seconds about what is going on.

Her room, her moth ball stenchd room, cotains one perfectly made bed, one state of the art phone, three over stuffed pillows and sixty thousand soft toys. It is the one place I fear of most because it is so clean and tidy.

So this is my sister, my little sister Lydia. I have told you what to expect so be warned.

Surface features

Uses the writing conventions of grammar, spelling and punctuation with few intrusive errors.



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Student's second draft

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(continued over)



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Tough she may moan alot when with her friends she will dance around like a drunken person, each day is like a T.V. drama about her social life, after school she'll tell us all about it, I'll get confused in the best kind of ways about what's going on.

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