

LEVEL **l ii** 2 3 4 5

On My Own

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

This teacher initiated a group discussion about playing, focusing on co-operative play. The following day, she shared a story about a child who has a tea party in a treehouse. She then led a group discussion in which she asked her students:

- Who likes hiding?
- Who likes playing by themselves? Why?
- Who prefers to play with others? Why?

The teacher shared a childhood memory of sitting alone on the back steps of her house. It was her own special place. She invited the class to ask her questions about this memory in order to gather more detail. She then modelled the beginning of a story about this memory. She explained: “We need to start with an interesting sentence to capture our readers’ attention. We want them to like our beginning and read on.” This became the students’ criterion for success.

In pairs, the students talked about places they enjoyed, asking each other questions. Some of these conversations were shared with the teacher. The students then began to write independently. The teacher reminded them to “remember that interesting beginning”.

Vincent wrote most of his piece independently. The teacher conferenced with him, and then he looked for word sources in the classroom. The teacher suggested some edits on Vincent’s draft.

Teacher-student conversations

Before conferencing

Teacher: Where’s your special place?

Vincent: In my bedroom, because I can shut myself in.

Teacher: I wonder if you can use this idea for an interesting beginning.

During conferencing

Teacher: Why don’t you like your brother to be in your room?

Vincent: Because he’s annoying.

Teacher: Would you like to write about that?

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

The teacher could use a guided and shared reading programme to get the students to explore:

- a variety of stories based on personal experiences;
- stories where people are discussing favourite places, particularly hideaways.

In addition, the teacher could encourage the students to:

- share their own stories with a partner and ask them to comment;
- publish their stories for display and make them into a class book;
- read and respond to work on display.

The teacher could also highlight the features of personal texts and share them in discussion.

WHERE TO NEXT?

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

- audience: developing his awareness that he is writing for others;
- ideas: elaborating on ideas without teacher prompting (for example, painting a more detailed picture of his bedroom);
- spelling: proofreading for errors.

The teacher could nurture these skills in a rich language environment where reading and writing are supported by discussion. Specific skills could be taught in the reading and writing programmes, especially in modelling and feedback sessions.

CURRICULUM LINKS



Level 1: Writing Functions

Poetic Writing: Students should write on a variety of topics, beginning to shape ideas.

Levels 1 and 2: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should explore choices made by writers, and identify and use the common conventions of writing and organisation of text which affect understanding.

Thinking Critically: Students should identify and express meanings in written texts, drawing on personal background, knowledge, and experience.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35–36

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STUDENT’S FIRST DRAFT



I ^{always} ^{keep} ^{my} ^{door}
 shut when I'm in
 my bed room it is
^{all} ^{private} ^{private} with my
 brother not being
^{able} to get in. He
 is an ^{annoying} annoying brother.



Poetic Writing: Personal Experience

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What the Work Shows

Vincent has elaborated on a simple idea that is obviously important to him. The piece has a strong personal message that is conveyed clearly.

STUDENT'S FIRST DRAFT

DEEPER FEATURES

Voice

Includes a personal response.

Ideas

Expresses ideas clearly.

Sentences

Varies sentence beginnings ("I always ...", "He is ...", "It is ...") and lengths.

Vocabulary

Attempts to write high-frequency and personal content words.

SURFACE FEATURES

Spelling

Spells some high-frequency words correctly.

Identifies dominant sounds in words and generally records these accurately.

Attempts vowels.

Punctuation

Attempts capitalisation and full stops with support.

Grammar

Attempts at complex sentences include errors.

I olwas cep my dor shut when lm in my bed room it is ol privit with my brother not being abl to get in. He is an anaweing brother.

[I always keep my door shut when I'm in my bedroom. It is all private with my brother not being able to get in. He is an annoying brother.]