



LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

My First Try

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

This teacher introduced personal experience writing by sharing three pieces of writing that she had collected from former students. She focused on the beginning of each. One had a strong personal voice (“I’m nervous and I don’t want to do athletics. I’m worried that people will laugh at me when I run”). The second began with dialogue (“‘Get up’, yelled Mum. ‘It’s your birthday’”). The third began with the description of a scene.

In groups, the students then discussed:

- What makes a good beginning?
- What types of openings capture your interest?

They all reported back and discussed these issues as a group.

The class then brainstormed a list of “memorable moments” and put them into categories, such as “sad”, “happy”, “embarrassing”, and “scary”. The teacher asked the students to each close their eyes and picture their memorable moment, with the teacher “walking and talking” them through this experience, asking:

- What was in front of you?
- How did that make you feel?
- Which part is most significant? Why?

The students then jotted down everything they had seen and felt. The teacher asked them to discuss their moment with a writing partner.

To steer the students away from lengthy accounts lacking appeal, the teacher asked them to “zoom in” on the part that would interest their audience the most. She introduced the use of similes and metaphors to the class and provided models.

She gave the students individual feedback on ways to improve their writing, particularly on providing a great beginning and maintaining a relationship with the audience.

Teacher-student conversations

After Taka’s first draft (first topic)

Taka: This is a bit boring [first day at school].

Teacher: Look, if you’d like to change your topic, what moment would you prefer to capture?

Taka: It was cool when I scored my first try.

After Taka’s first draft (on a new topic)

Teacher: This is good. What were you thinking about when you were writing this?

Taka: Thinking about the moment, picturing myself.

Teacher: I’m having some difficulty picturing you. What could you do to help me picture this in my head?

Taka: I could write about the crowd and the people watching – what sort of morning it was. Yeah, feelings and thoughts.

Teacher: Do you mean like the atmosphere?

Taka: Yeah, I’ll brainstorm that. I could start with that.

Teacher: Yes, great idea. Remember our focus is on getting that great beginning.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Teachers can seek opportunities in close and personal reading for students to:

- discuss meanings and ideas in written texts and relate them to their personal experiences; (*This could include independent reading of personal experience writing.*)
- explore vocabulary models and how published authors elaborate and provide detail;
- explore the use of language features (for example, imagery, metaphor, and dialogue); (*How have authors managed to use these and maintain an honest voice?*)
- become familiar with a variety of reading terms (for example, interaction, dialogue, pace, and structure).

WHERE TO NEXT?

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

- ideas: adding substantial detail and comment, linking ideas, and comparing published texts with his own;
- vocabulary: extending his confidence in using vocabulary appropriate to the audience and the purpose;
- structure: organising more detailed ideas into paragraphs.

The teacher could nurture these language skills and strategies in writing by modelling them and by regularly conferencing with Taka on ways to use them.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Level 3: Writing Functions

Poetic Writing: Students should write on a variety of topics, shaping, editing, and reworking texts in a range of genres, and using vocabulary and conventions, such as spelling and sentence structure, appropriate to the genre.

Levels 3 and 4: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should identify, discuss, and use the conventions, structures, and language features of different texts, and discuss how they relate to the topic.

Thinking Critically: Students should discuss and convey meanings in written texts, exploring relevant experiences and other points of view.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35–36

LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

My First Try

STUDENT’S FIRST DRAFT

The Moment I scored

My first try

1 The crowd is roaring, you can feel their eyes
 5 watching your every move, like eagles watching
 24 their prey with that glimpse of intrigue. I
 2 feel the encouragement from the crowd, to use
 all my skill to perform to my greatest height ever

3 Wait a minute, there's a fumble by the other team.
 I'm so excited I've never had this opportunity
 before. I feel the adrenaline rushing through my
 veins. Kick. There goes the ball. Kick there it goes
 again. I'm running as fast as I can go. I'm winning the
 → chase one more kick I say to myself and... now kick
 I'm running, running, running and the try time.



Poetic Writing: Personal Experience

LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

What the Work Shows

Taka successfully engages the audience with a fast-paced and honest “slice of life”. His use of the present tense and of a variety of sentence beginnings, within a relatively short piece of writing, helps to maintain the momentum.

STUDENT'S FIRST DRAFT

DEEPER FEATURES

Ideas

Develops personally significant thoughts, feelings, and ideas, adding detail and comment.

Structure

Attempts to shape ideas. Demonstrates logical organisation, which leads to a satisfying conclusion.

Sentences

Uses a variety of sentence structures, with some short and punchy, reflecting Taka's inner monologue, and with others containing more complex observations.

Vocabulary

Takes risks with vocabulary and phrases.

Language features

Uses images and word pictures.

Uses first-person narrative.

The Moment I sco My first Try

The crowd is roaring, you can feel their eyes watching your every move, like eagles watching their prey with that glimpse of intrigue. I feel the encouragement from the crowd, to use all my skill to perform to my greatest height ever.

Wait a minute, there's a fumble by the other team. I'm so excited I've never had this opportunity before. I feel the adrenaline rushing through my veins. “Kick”. There goes the ball. “Kick” there it goes again. I'm running as fast as I can go. I'm winning the chase one more kick I say to myself and now “Kick” I'm running, running, running and try time.

SURFACE FEATURES

Punctuation

Punctuates with increasing independence, for example, experimenting with ellipsis.

Grammar

Uses most conventions of grammar correctly.

Spelling

Spells a wide range of content and high-frequency words correctly.

REFERENCES

The first page of this exemplar has been slightly shortened to fit. To see the fuller version, go to www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng/