



# Poetic Writing: Personal Experience

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

## There's an Eagle Ray in the Bay

### THE LEARNING CONTEXT

Over two weeks, the teacher discussed features of effective personal writing and brainstormed possible scenarios from their everyday experiences with his class. The students and teacher jotted down possible ideas for writing. Then the teacher discussed these ideas with each student individually to focus his or her attention on the need to expand and describe them. The teacher presented an oral recount about one of his experiences and, in pairs, the students took turns to recount one of their own experiences. The next day, the teacher wrote a full draft of his experience, and the students wrote their drafts.

The following day, working on part of his draft, the teacher modelled how to “zoom in” or achieve a closer focus on detail. Before writing their next drafts, the class discussed what language features they would need to develop so as to achieve detail and elaboration.

In the next lesson, the teacher modelled: recrafting sentence structures, adding imagery, improving the choice of vocabulary, and proofreading. The students followed this process to recraft and proofread their drafts.

Finally, the teacher published his draft, modelling an error-free, finished product. The students then published their own work.

### Teacher-student conversations

After the first draft, Joshua and the teacher discussed Joshua's use of imagery:

Teacher: I love this imagery. Can you develop the middle more? Can you give the sea a life? Does it give you an image of an animal? Are there sounds and feelings?

Joshua: It's like a monster roaring.

Teacher: When you think of the forest, what do you see in your mind?

Joshua: It's like witches waving their wands.

### INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

As part of a programme of shared, guided, and sustained silent reading of personal experience texts, students can explore, discuss, and experiment with the skills and strategies appropriate to writing about personal experience. They will need access to a variety of published texts and shorter samples of writing, particularly from the *School Journal* and the Journals of Young People's Writing. The students could be asked to:

- find examples of the effective use of imagery or of vocabulary that enhances the impact of the text
- explore how other authors demonstrate a personal voice.

### WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Joshua towards the next learning step, the teacher might help him to focus on:

#### Vocabulary

- exploring a wider range of nouns, verbs, and adverbs.

#### Language features

- developing succinct, pertinent use of imagery for impact.

#### Grammar, punctuation, and spelling

- giving attention to editing so that a reader sees few intrusive errors in the published text.

Contexts for such learning could include:

- a class guided reading programme that identifies and explores how published authors use particular language skills and techniques
- the teacher modelling for and discussing with the class how to use language skills and techniques in writing
- class or group exploration of short pieces of writing exemplifying the skills and techniques the students need to develop
- regular conferencing.

### CURRICULUM LINKS

*English in the New Zealand Curriculum*

#### Level 1: Writing Functions

**Poetic Writing:** Students should write on a variety of topics, shaping, editing, and reworking texts in a range of genres, expressing ideas and experiences imaginatively, and using vocabulary and conventions, such as spelling and sentence structure.

#### Levels 1 and 2: Reading and Writing Processes

**Exploring Language:** Students should be able to 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 be able to discuss and convey meanings in written texts, exploring relevant experiences and other points of view.

*English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, pages 35-36

### REFERENCE

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



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**WHAT THE WORK SHOWS:** Joshua sustains a strong personal voice in recounting a memorable and significant experience. The writing is characterised by the effective use of similes and metaphors to describe the setting and reinforce the mood. A succinct (somewhat understated) conclusion contrasts with the descriptive style used, for example, in paragraph three.

Student's second draft

### Deeper features

#### Sentences

Uses a variety of sentence structures for effect.

#### Ideas

Explores ideas that are significant in the writer's life.

Focuses on developing the main points and specific events of interest.

#### Structure

Shapes ideas for a particular effect.

Organises ideas into paragraphs.

#### Vocabulary

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

#### Language features

Uses imagery to amplify the content or engage the audience.

#### Voice

Sustains personal voice.

The new years celebration had just come to an end. The champagne had only one drip left but every one was still wide awake. Philis had just asked us to go down to the beach and catch some foudler for supper. It was the perfect time to go catch flounder.

We set off down to the beach but in order to get there we had to go through a dark spooky School and woods. We Only had one torch which was at the front All the older guys kept on telling scary stories like the blare witch project and scream 1 2 and 3.

Then we walked into the woods trees were like Witches waving their wands, and the sea was a roaring monster crashing against the sand and the long grass is like a ton of snakes hissing. We finally reach the water mouth. The sand was damp and cold like ice. The roaring monster is tucked up in his bed of sand and the flounder have come out to play in the shallows.

We unpacked our spears and flo nder lights then we waded out up to our knees. The cold realy started to go to the girls so me and my brother Rick told them that me and him (Rick) will take them back to the batch.

It was far too scary to go back through the woods without a torch so we went the longer way by taking the back streets which was kind of spooky because there were no cars no trucks or taxis just me,Rick,Nichola and Maree.the street lights were guard guarding every corner.you could even hear a pin drop 20 metres away.

We finally got back to the batch to find that brad Nick and joel were already there it turned out that they were attacked by an eagle ray the size of a BBQ table.

### Surface features

#### Grammar

Uses most grammatical conventions correctly. However, inconsistent use of tense in places.

#### Punctuation

Uses appropriate punctuation independently.

#### Spelling

Demonstrates a good understanding of all basic sounds and patterns.



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THERE'S AN EAGLE RAY IN THE BAY



Student's second draft

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We unpacked our spears and flounder lights then we waded out up to our knees. The cold really started to get to the girls so me and my brother Rick told them that me and him (Rick) will take them back to the batch.

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