



Poetic Writing: Personal Experience

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii 2 3 4 5

The Rope

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

During six lessons over two weeks, the class focused on writing about personal memories.

Hera spent one session developing this piece of writing, which she drafted on the computer.

She was first asked to brainstorm: What makes a good story? In response, she developed a mind-map that included conflict, humour, a point of view, action, mental pictures, personality, elements of anticipation, and surprise.

The teacher asked: What is needed to convert a remembered experience into a good story?

After choosing a memory and telling a partner about it, the student was encouraged to approach the story in a lively way by starting in the middle of the action and freeing herself from the facts. Suggestions included using a wide range of vivid images and vocabulary, and writing in the third person.

When she had completed the draft, she peer-edited with a student of similar ability before publishing her work.

Teacher-student conversations

After Hera's second draft was completed:

Teacher: Are you happier with this piece of writing?

Hera: I think so.

Teacher: Why?

Hera: I think I've created the mental picture that I want to and I've got all the action in.

Teacher: I think you have too. I love some of your images. Let's go through the criteria and see how it fits.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Through both guided and sustained silent reading programmes of texts by both adults and young people, students could explore a range of personal experience writing skills and techniques.

Students could focus on the relationship between the writer and the reader, and on the use of imagery and other language features. They could be encouraged to recognise the author's message and relate it to their own experiences.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Hera towards the next learning step, the teacher might help her to focus on:

Ideas

- further development, such as expanding the middle paragraph.

Sentences

- exploring variety in sentence beginnings: six of the first seven sentences begin with "The ..."

Surface features

- encouraging her to proofread further to remove minor spelling and punctuation errors.

Contexts for such learning could include:

- continuing to expose her to a wide range of published texts
- modelling language and discussing its use
- regular conferencing on the above skills and techniques
- planning ways to enable sustained narrative through topic choice and/or elaboration



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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.

Levels 5 and 6: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should be able to describe, discuss, analyse, and apply the distinctive conventions, structures, and language features of a range of texts, using appropriate terminology, and explain how they suit the topic and purpose.

Thinking Critically: Students should be able to interpret, analyse, and produce written texts, identifying and discussing their literary qualities, and explore and identify attitudes and beliefs in terms of personal experience and knowledge of other texts.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35–36

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.

www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/explore/domain.do?frameworkId=973

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2002).

PDF: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/units/pdf/8813.pdf>

REFERENCE

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



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WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Hera vividly describes the details of a playground accident. She maintains momentum and pace through precise imagery and vocabulary.

Student's second draft

Deeper features

Ideas

Develops and sustains a strong central idea.

Provides substantial illustrations.

Structure

Conveys a sense of wholeness.

Experiments with structure – the foreshadowing in first sentence and sense of closure in final sentence.

Sustains excitement throughout.

Language features

Uses imagery for impact, e.g., metaphor ("kaleidoscope"), and sound devices, e.g., onomatopoeia, ("cracking" "whipping").

Vocabulary

Selects carefully to maintain interest, e.g., precise verbs, words which echo each other, adjectives and adverbs.

The rope was cracking sharply against the wet jagged asphalt. the cold washed through the playground and Amber hugged her cardigan tighter, her plaid skirt riding in the wind. the school was filled with chattering and laughter.

The rope beat harder, faster whipping the puddles and splattering rainwater. Amber ran swiftly towards the chewed plastic rope. Suddenly she stumbled. The rope twisted around her ankle, claspng her leg tightly and drawing her towards the cracked concrete. The playground fell into a kaleidoscope of Grey. Amber's world was twisting and spinning as she tumbled slowly towards the swirling concrete below. All of a sudden it came to an abrupt end and fresh blood slowly trickled down the concrete stairs. The world seemed to pause momentarily. Then it all came into focus, the skipping rope, concrete and warm blood trickling from the freshly cut wound. A soft wail slowly pierced the air.

The barrier broke and the playground was riddled with confusion and laughter. teachers' parents and admin ran to fetch paper towels rang parents and bustled the intent audience away. The noise slowly numbed and the world became hazy as amber slowly let herself slip into darkness.

Surface features

Grammar, spelling, punctuation

Uses these with confidence, although there are some intrusive errors.



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Student's second draft

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