



# Transactional Writing: Explanation

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii 2 3 4 5

## Having a Shower

### THE LEARNING CONTEXT

The teacher introduced explanation writing by encouraging the students collectively to ask and answer questions about the world around them. The focus was on discussion, as a class, in small groups and with buddies.

On one rainy, windy day she took them outside to ask as many questions as they could about the overcast conditions: “Why does it rain?”, “What happens when it rains?”, “Why are the clouds all dark?”, “Why are the trees moving?”, “Why are there worms in the puddles?”

They then attempted to answer the questions, and the teacher wrote some of their responses on the board. From the beginning, she included the word “because” to reinforce the concept that a “Why?” explanation needs to include a reason. She also introduced the notion of a consequence – what might happen if the reason is not carefully considered. As the teacher modelled, she also emphasised sound-letter relationships, including blends, and some high-frequency words.

The students spent three days responding to the “rainy day” questions, always with the teacher modelling first. By this time, they were quite clear about what was expected of them:

- make the explanation as honest to themselves as possible
- make it as clear as possible
- indicate a reason by using the word “because”
- include a consequence if the reason is not carefully considered.

The teacher then moved on to health-related explanations – “Why do we eat?” and “Why do we need to have a shower?” – and acted out a story of her showering in the morning.

The students then brainstormed a range of reasons why their teacher might need to shower and what she would be like if she didn’t shower. They enjoyed doing this! She selected one of these reasons and consequences, and modelled some writing around it. Each student then had to select a reason and consequence of their own and write about it.

Epifania enjoyed doing this so much that she rushed her first sentence off and was excited about conferencing with the teacher. A number of “next steps” had to be pointed out to her. After the conference, the teacher sent her back to prepare her writing for publication by editing and proofreading.

### Teacher-student conversations

Epifania finished her first draft with the words “to play with”.

Epifania: I’ve finished.

Teacher: That’s wonderful. I love the way you’ve used “because” and some other interesting words. But I think you could write a bit more. Let’s talk about it.

[Epifania read her text aloud.]

Teacher: What do you think would happen if you didn’t have a shower?

Epifania: I’d get stinky.

Teacher: Great. You go back and think about how you could write that.

Epifania then added the final sentence and looked back for some of the mistakes she might have made. It was at that stage she amended “because” and “stinky”.

### INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Opportunities should be sought in classroom reading programmes for students to respond to written and visual texts, identifying how processes or phenomena can be explained. Picture books with narrative text will be useful for this. Exposure to transactional texts will be essential. The “reading to” programme will give opportunity for discussing specific vocabulary, language features and diagrams, which may be transferred to student writing and drawing.

### WHERE TO NEXT?

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

Ideas

- explaining her reasons with greater detail.

Spelling

- paying particular attention to consonant blends at beginning of words (“sh”, “pl”).

Punctuation

- paying more attention to correct use of capital letters and full stops.

This could be done by:

- encouraging constant re-reading of texts as she writes
- modelling of writing using these strategies, and discussion about the process
- exploring models of writing which exemplify these strategies giving feedback against the criteria that have been set with Epifania.



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### CURRICULUM LINKS

*English in the New Zealand Curriculum*

#### Level 1: Writing Functions

**Transactional Writing:** Students should write instructions and recount events in authentic contexts.

#### 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.

**Processing Information:** Students should identify, retrieve, record, and present coherent information, using more than one source and type of technology, and describing the process used.

*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:** Epifania explains a personally significant process clearly. She provides a reason and a consequence to demonstrate her own important logic, which makes the reader smile.

Student's second draft

### Deeper features

#### Ideas

Supports ideas with a reason and consequence.

#### Structure

Begins to sequence ideas logically.

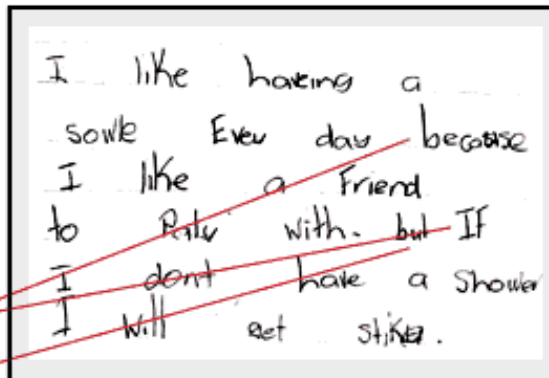
#### Sentences

Uses complex sentences with some confidence.

Uses some common conjunctions to link ideas.

#### Vocabulary

Uses key topic-appropriate words and some high-frequency words.



I like having a sowle Evey day because I like a Friend to Paly with. but IF I dont have a shower I will get stike.

[I like having a shower every day because I like a friend to play with. But if I don't have a shower I will get stinky.]

### Surface features

#### Spelling

Records most dominant sounds in order.

Spells some high-frequency words correctly.

#### Punctuation

Uses capital letters and full stops with support.

#### Layout

Leaves spaces between words.

Displays strong sense of directionality.



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