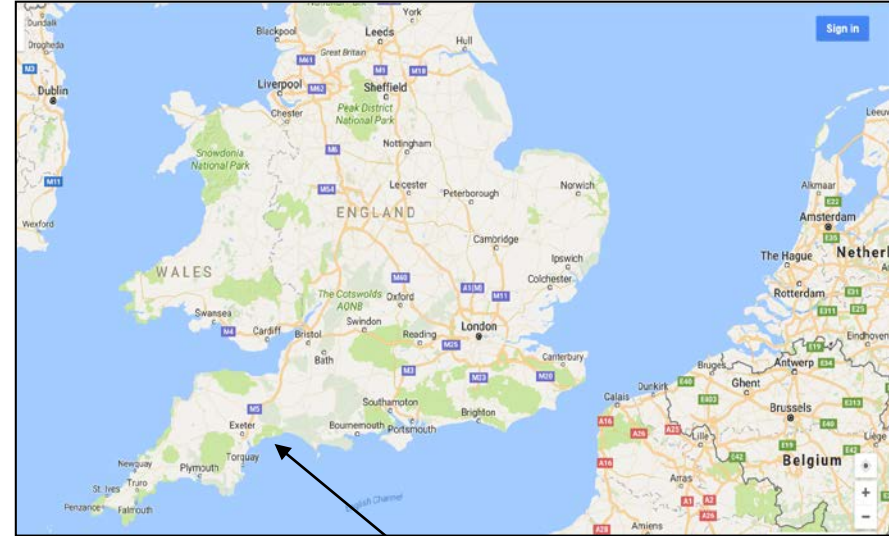




# Creative Grammar for Young Writers

Debra Myhill



Exeter



Hilsen frå  
Exeter





# Overview of Presentation

- ❑ Grammar in the Curriculum
- ❑ Research on the Efficacy of Grammar Teaching
- ❑ Theoretical Perspectives
- ❑ Our Research
- ❑ Understanding The Pedagogy
- ❑ Plenary



# GRAMMAR IN THE CURRICULUM

# Grammar in Anglophone countries

Dartmouth Conference (US) 1966: a seminal moment for grammar as it triggered a large-scale rejection of grammar teaching by educationalists and teachers.

Since then, for over 50 years, divided professional and policymaker perspectives:

- ❑ grammar does not help language users to use language better;
- ❑ grammar is about error correction and accuracy;
- ❑ grammar and creativity are opposed: grammar = rules; creativity = freedom;
- ❑ grammar is the cure for social ills!

Generally more polemic than informed debate.

*'Nothing helps your writing so much as ignoring grammar'*  
(Elbow 1981)

# National Curriculum: England

The grammar of our first language is learnt naturally and implicitly through interactions with other speakers and from reading. **Explicit knowledge of grammar is, however, very important, as it gives us more conscious control and choice in our language.** Building this knowledge is best achieved through a focus on grammar within the teaching of reading, writing and speaking. Once pupils are familiar with a grammatical concept [for example 'modal verb'], they should be encouraged to apply and explore this concept in the grammar of their own speech and writing and to note where it is used by others. Young pupils, in particular, use more complex language in speech than in writing, and teachers should build on this, aiming for a smooth transition to sophisticated writing.



# Grammar in the Curriculum

Why teach grammar?

- ❑ To understand the structure of your own language?
- ❑ To avoid making mistakes in speaking and writing your own language?
- ❑ To develop understanding about how texts work and make meaning?



# RESEARCH ON GRAMMAR TEACHING



# Research on Grammar Teaching

## Meta-analyses:

- ❑ Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer (1963): he argued grammar had '*a harmful effect on the development of original writing*' (1963:37).
- ❑ Hillocks (1984) and Hillocks and Smith (1991) reiterated the view that there was no evidence for a beneficial effect.
- ❑ EPPI 2004: no evidence of any beneficial impact.
- ❑ Graham and Perin 2007: a negative effect for '*the explicit and systematic teaching of the parts of speech and structure of sentences*' (2007:21)

## Empirical Studies:

- ❑ No positive benefit: Bateman and Zidonis (1966); Elley, Barham and Lamb (1979); Fogel and Ehri (2000)
- ❑ Fearn and Farnan (2007): positive effect when '*grammar and writing share one instructional context*' (2007:16).

# Research on Grammar Teaching

The body of empirical research is not strong and the same studies are often cited in each successive meta-analysis.

Weaknesses:

- ❑ The studies investigated teaching a grammar course and teaching writing separately
- ❑ The Bateman and Zidonis and Fogel and Ehri studies are very small scale.
- ❑ No studies, other than Fearn and Farnan, which investigated teaching grammar meaningfully in context of the teaching of writing
- ❑ No studies conducted in the UK educational context



# A THEORETICAL RATIONALE

# Prescriptive and Descriptive Models

- ❑ A **prescriptivist** theory of a grammar-writing relationship argues for the importance of grammar in securing correctness in written expression: how language *should* be used.
- ❑ A **descriptivist** theory of a grammar-writing relationship argues for the importance of investigating how grammar is used in different texts and contexts: how language *is* used.
- ❑ Accuracy in writing is necessary, but not sufficient to generate good writers.
- ❑ A descriptivist view illuminates how written text generates meaning in different contexts.

# Tacit and Explicit Knowledge

- ❑ Tacit knowledge is intuitive and not tangible or verbalisable: eg recognising from a facial expression that someone is anxious;
- ❑ Explicit knowledge is codified, recordable, communicable and verbalisable: eg knowing how to change a tyre on a car.
- ❑ Tacit grammatical knowledge is the most important for being an effective language user and we acquire substantial tacit knowledge as we learn to speak eg young children who over-learn past tense in English and say '*we goed*' instead of '*we went*'.
- ❑ Explicit grammatical knowledge is accessible and usable grammatical knowledge eg an adjective provides more information about a noun.
- ❑ Explicit knowledge is 'learning' knowledge: it can be used to develop greater understanding, to solve problems, to share thinking = pedagogically important.

# Functional Grammar

- ❑ Functional grammar enables us *‘to show the grammar as a meaning-making resource and to describe grammatical categories by reference to what they mean – an insightful mode of entry to the study of discourse’* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:10)
- ❑ Re-framing of grammar as more than a description of the structure of language but fundamentally as resource for meaning-making (Halliday 2003; 2004)
- ❑ *‘knowing grammar is knowing **how** more than knowing **what**’* (Cameron 1997:236)
- ❑ *How we write something is as important as what we write: making meaning.*

# Grammar as Choice

- ❑ Carter and McCarthy (2006:7) conceive of grammar as having two strands: **grammar as choice**, as well as a grammar of structure.
- ❑ We can '*make explicit how choices of visual and verbal resources privilege certain view points and how other choices of visual and verbal resources could construct alternative views*' (Unsworth 2001:15)
- ❑ '*The text itself is an instance: the resonance is possible because behind it lies the potential that informs every choice made by the speaker or writer*' (Halliday and Mathiessen 2004:63)

# Grammar as Choice

- *'The grammatical choices we make, including pronoun use, active or passive verb constructions, and sentence patterns – represent relations between writers and the world they live in. Word choice and sentence structure are an expression of the way we attend to the words of others, the way we position ourselves in relation to others. In this sense, writing involves cognitive skills at the level of idea development and at the sentence level'* (Micciche 2004:719).
- Showing learners the grammatical choices writers make, and the grammatical choices they can make as writers, can alter the way their writing communicates and their understanding of the power of choice.



# Metalinguistic Understanding

- ❑ Those moments when users *'shift their attention from the transmitted contents to the properties of language used to transmit them'* (Cazden1976:3).
- ❑ *'the ability to take language as the object of observation and the referent of discourse'* (Camps and Milian1999:6).
- ❑ *'the explicit bringing into consciousness of an attention to language as an artifact, and the conscious monitoring and manipulation of language to create desired meanings grounded in socially shared understandings'* (Myhill 2012:250).
- ❑ *'Metasemiosis is reflection on meaning making; it is 'meta' to processes of meaning-making and, to that extent, is always more or less abstract.'* (Macken-Horarik 20
- ❑ Pedagogical importance: explicit grammatical knowledge and treating grammar as a meaning-making resource develops learners metalinguistic understanding.

# Grammar and Writing

The demands of writing for 'less novice' writers:

- ❑ *'as writers mature and gain expertise, they invest more effort and reflective thought in the task'* - from knowledge-telling to knowledge-transforming requires a *'shift to more effortful writing'* (Kellogg 1994)
- ❑ *'a strategic writer has to be both a thinking planner, a coherent organiser, a careful reviser and an audience sensitive message sender'* (Alamargot and Chanquoy 2001)

The difference between learning to talk and learning to write:

- ❑ Talk (in L1) is acquired naturally through immersion and social interaction
- ❑ Writing is a more learned than acquired (though acquisition does have a part eg the learning about writing acquired through reading)
- ❑ Although in English, patterns of language in speech have many similarities with written text, there are many differences to be learned. Writing is not speech written down.

# Grammar and Writing

The challenge of learning to write and be an effective writer requires increasing metalinguistic understanding about writing, yet:

- ❑ research has scarcely addressed **metalinguistic understanding in the context of writing** (except in relation to early years writing development);
- ❑ there is limited understanding of how **older writers**, beyond the early years, develop metalinguistic understanding about writing;
- ❑ there is limited investigation of how **teachers** foster metalinguistic understanding for writing and the instructional interactions which facilitate this.

# Repertoires of Infinite Possibility

- ❑ Writing is always an act of decision-making and making choices (Kellogg 2008)
- ❑ Decisions about storyline, argument, character, title, structure, message, phrasing, words, font, layout...

Our research:

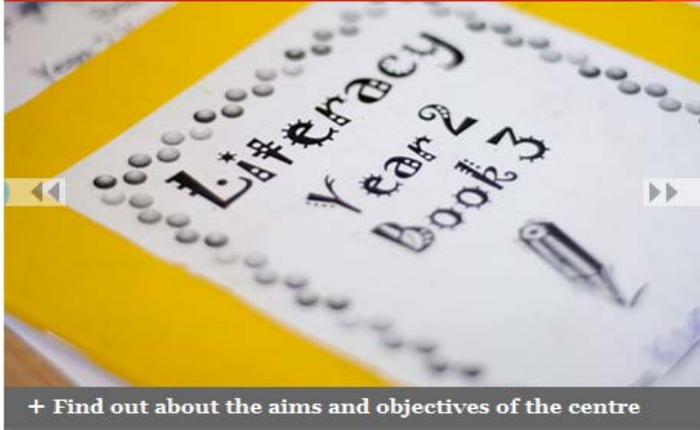
- ❑ focuses on the *language choices and decisions* writers make.
- ❑ emphasises how choice develops *independence and autonomy* as a writer
- ❑ develops an awareness that writers have access to '*a repertoire of infinite possibility*'



# OUR RESEARCH

# Our Research

## Centre for Research in Writing



The Centre for Research in Writing has been established to promote writing research which crosses boundaries – disciplinary, methodological, philosophical and contextual. This Centre provides a forum for the sharing, development and interrogation of inter-disciplinary perspectives on writing.

+ Find out about the aims and objectives of the centre

### + News and events



#### News

'Making Poetry Happen' co-edited by Anthony Wilson shortlisted for award

MBE in Queen's Birthday Honours list for Centre Coordinator, Professor Debra Myhill, for her leadership of the Centre for Research in Writing and the Secondary PGCE programme

#### Events

### + Projects



Our research is not only concerned with writing but also with all aspects of language and literacy. Visit our projects page for details of current and past projects.

New projects include **Innovation Schools** funded by the Youth Sport Trust and **Growth in Grammar: A multi-dimensional analysis of student writing between 5 and 16** funded the by ESRC.

### + Who we are



The Centre is comprised of a diverse range of people, both within the Graduate School of Education and from the wider field. The Centre is run by a **core team** from the School, in collaboration with a number of **International Affiliates** and supported by current **Doctoral Students**.

### + Join us on Facebook

A different perspective:

- ❑ A fully theorised rationale for grammar in the curriculum
- ❑ A corresponding pedagogical model
- ❑ Founded on robust empirical studies



# Our Research Context

- ❑ A cumulative series of studies on the teaching of grammar to support writing development: from randomised controlled trials to qualitative longitudinal studies, showing evidence of positive impact on student attainment;
- ❑ The goal is to develop explicit metalinguistic understanding about writing and being a writer: explicit knowledge which can be internalised
- ❑ The research also looks at implementation: how teachers adopt the pedagogical approach and the challenges they face.

# Our Research Evidence

- ❑ Study 1: Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) with 12-13 year old students: significant positive effect;
- ❑ Study 2: Quasi-experimental study investigating the approach with 12-13 year old weak writers: positive effect
- ❑ Study 3: Quasi-experimental study, with 14-15 year olds, investigating the reading-writing link: positive effect
- ❑ Study 4: RCT with 9-10 year olds: small positive effect
- ❑ Study 5: RCT with 9-10 year olds: positive effect;
- ❑ Study 6: Longitudinal study over 3 years of how students develop metalinguistic understanding: conceptual development; application in writing; relationship between teaching and student learning



# Our Conclusions

- ❑ drawing attention to grammar-meaning relationships at relevant points in the teaching of writing is an effective way to improve student outcomes
- ❑ it seems to be generalisable across multiple groups, but there are factors which affect its success or otherwise:
  - Teachers' grammatical subject knowledge
  - Teachers' capacity to see how texts work grammatically
  - Teachers' confidence in managing high-quality talk about writing



# UNDERSTANDING THE PEDAGOGY

# The Exeter Pedagogy

A creative grammar-writing relationship

- ❑ Explicit teaching of grammatical points **relevant to the learning about writing**
- ❑ Developing young writers' knowledge about language in the texts they read and **how language choices shape meaning**
- ❑ Developing young writers' understanding of the **language choices they can make in their own writing**



Repertoires of possibility

# Four **LEAD** Pedagogical Principles

**L****INKS**: make a **link** between the grammar being introduced and how it works in the writing being taught;

**E****XAMPLES**: Explain the grammar through **examples**, not lengthy explanations;

**A****UTHENTICITY**: Use examples from **authentic texts** to links writers to the broader community of writers;

**D****ISCUSSION**: Build in **high-quality discussion** about grammar and its effects.

# An Illustration

Authentic text

And out of the mists came a **figure** in flowing green, walking across the water.

- Read this sentence aloud – where will you put the emphasis?
- What possibilities are there for re-ordering this sentence?
- How does this change the emphasis?

Links between  
grammar and  
meaning

A **figure** in flowing green, walking across the water, came out of the mists.

- Read both these sentences aloud – how do they portray this moment in the plot differently? How might you film these two sentences?
- What do you think is the effect of moving the adverbial 'out of the mists' to different places in the sentence?
- What do you think is the effect of the putting the subject (a figure) after the verb (came) in the first sentence ?

Discussion

Examples

# Four **LEAD** Pedagogical Principles

**LINKS:** make a **link** between the grammar being introduced and how it works in the writing/text being taught:

- ❑ To establish a learning relationship between a grammar structure and how it creates meaning in a particular text or context;
- ❑ To make tacit knowledge explicit, or to create new explicit knowledge which can be internalised;
- ❑ To develop knowledge about how texts work.

# Four **LEAD** Pedagogical Principles

**E****XAMPLES:** Explain the grammar through **examples**, not lengthy explanations:

- ❑ To foreground the learning emphasis on how texts work, not on grammatical labelling and identification;
- ❑ To support grammatical learning through seeing grammatical examples in context, and hearing the grammatical metalanguage;
- ❑ To avoid using grammatical definitions which are not very accessible to learners.

# Four **LEAD** Pedagogical Principles

**AUTHENTICITY:** Use examples from **authentic texts** to link writers to the broader community of writers:

- ❑ To foreground the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing, and between being a reader and a writer;
- ❑ To analyse language in context;
- ❑ To avoid 'fake' examples or formulaic approaches to teaching writing.



# Four **LEAD** Pedagogical Principles

**DISCUSSION:** Build in **high-quality discussion** about grammar and its effects.

- ❑ To draw on the substantial body of research emphasising the importance of talk for learning;
- ❑ To acknowledge that '*writing floats on a sea of talk*';
- ❑ To develop verbalisable explicit knowledge about the effects created by particular grammatical choices;
- ❑ To support learner independence and autonomy

LINK

- showing learners how grammatical choices create different effects in different texts

EXAMPLES

- showing learners real examples of grammatical choices making particular effect

AUTHENTIC  
TEXTS

- showing learners how grammatical choices are made in particular contexts

TALK

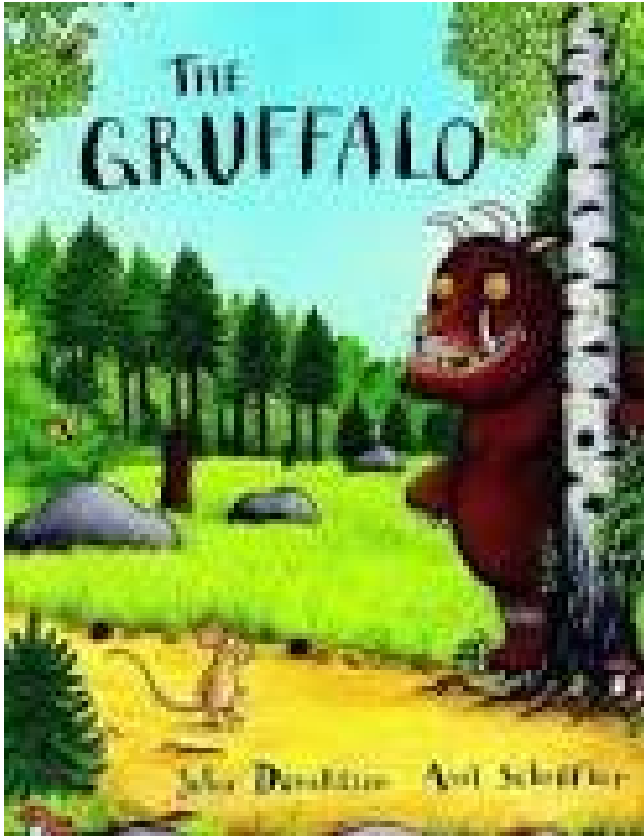
- helping learners verbalise the relationship between grammatical choices and their effects in particular contexts

Metalinguistic  
Understanding:  
explicit  
knowledge  
about language



# LEADing Young Writers

- ❑ Create a habit of noticing: attention to language
- ❑ Generate opportunities to play with language, including lexical and syntactical units
- ❑ Use discussion to talk explicitly about language choices and how they help us see, feel or think
- ❑ Use grammatical terminology incidentally and at a level relevant to the learners



*through the deep dark wood*

*by this lake*

*by these rocks*

*in my underground house*

*by this stream*

*in my treetop house*

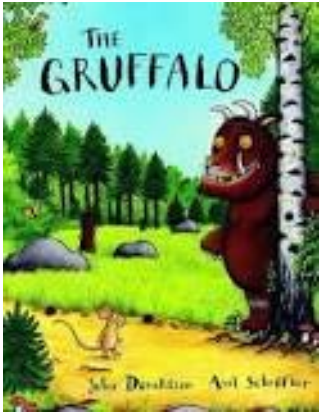
*over his back*

*in my log pile house*

*in the leaves*

*at the end of his nose*

Noticing a language pattern: how prepositional phrases in 'The Gruffalo' are used to describe the setting – where the animals live; or to describe the Gruffalo.



Authentic text

through the deep dark wood

by these rocks

by this lake

by this stream

in my underground house

over his back

in my treetop house

in the leaves

on the end of his nose

in my log pile house

Examples

### Prepositional phrases to describe a setting in narrative:

- Create a display of some common prepositions eg: *with; by; near; for; in; of; under*
- Give children in groups a pack of cards with all the prepositional phrases in *The Gruffalo* printed on them. Ask them to sort the prepositional phrases into two piles: those that describe the place and those that describe something else.
- Discuss how some prepositional phrases tell us where the animals live.
- Create a new animal character for the story and write an extra section for the story including new prepositional phrases eg *under a shiny black stone; in my riverbank house*

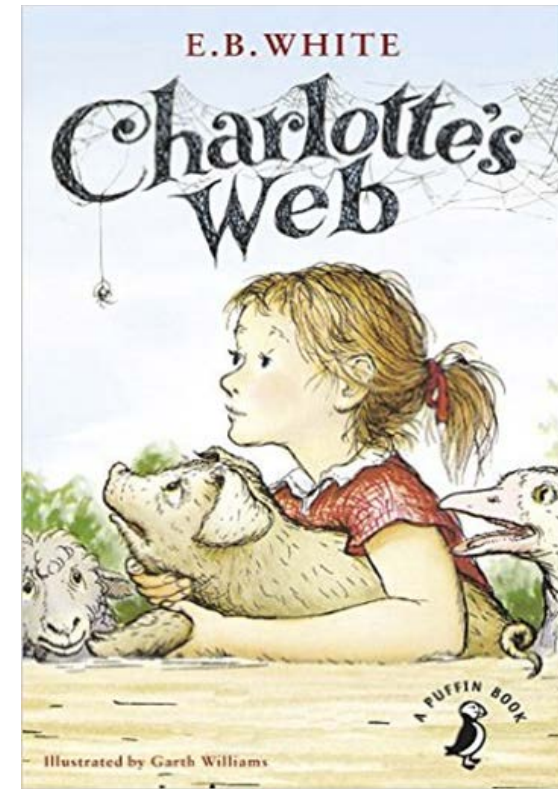
Links

Discussion

# Noticing Patterns in a Text

Authentic text

The next day was rainy and dark. Rain fell on the roof of the barn and dripped steadily from the eaves. Rain fell in the barnyard and ran in crooked courses down into the lane where thistles and pigweed grew. Rain spattered against Mrs Zuckerman's kitchen windows and came gushing out of the downspouts. Rain fell on the backs of the sheep as they grazed in the meadow. When the sheep tired of standing in the rain, they walked slowly up the lane and into the fold.



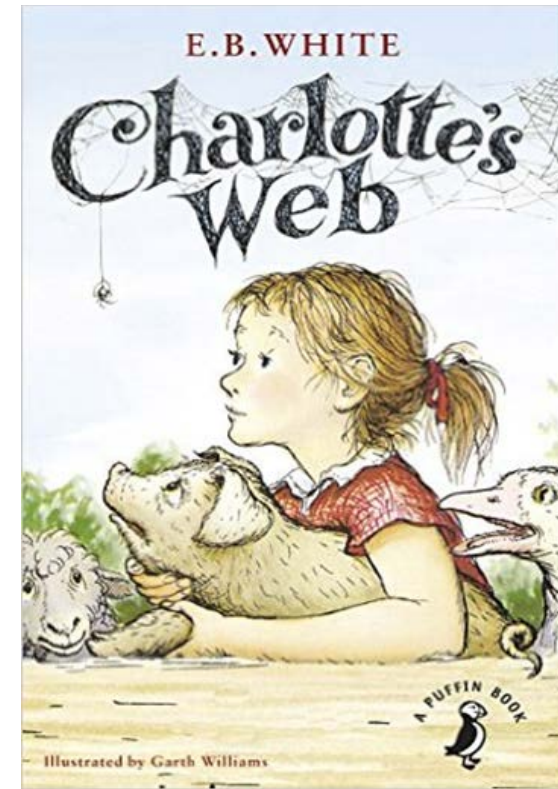
Discussion

If you were painting this scene, what would you include in your picture?

# Noticing Patterns in a Text

Authentic text

The next day was rainy and dark. Rain fell  
and dripped steadily . Rain  
fell and ran down  
where thistles and pigweed grew. Rain  
spattered  
and came gushing out . Rain fell  
as they grazed .  
When the sheep tired of standing , they  
walked slowly and .



Discussion

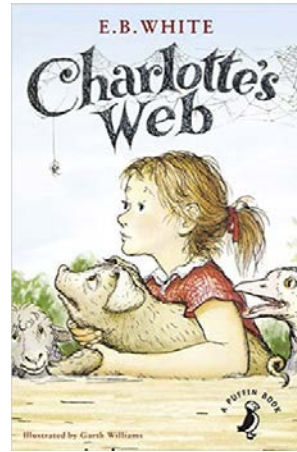
If you were painting this scene, what would you include in your picture?

# Noticing Patterns in a Text

Prepositional phrases can be used in a narrative to create visual description.

Examples

Links



The next day was rainy and dark. Rain fell on the roof of the barn and dripped steadily from the eaves. Rain fell in the barnyard and ran in crooked courses down into the lane where thistles and pigweed grew. Rain spattered against Mrs Zuckerman's kitchen windows and came gushing out of the downspouts. Rain fell on the backs of the sheep as they grazed in the meadow. When the sheep tired of standing in the rain, they walked slowly up the lane and into the fold.



# Writers' Choices

One way to create a strong visual description of a narrative scene is to use precisely-chosen prepositional phrases.

- ❖ The aim is not to highlight and correct error, the aim is to highlight how grammar choices shape meaning
- ❖ The aim is to make explicit how different grammatical constructions offer the writer choice and control

# Noticing patterns in text: Your turn!

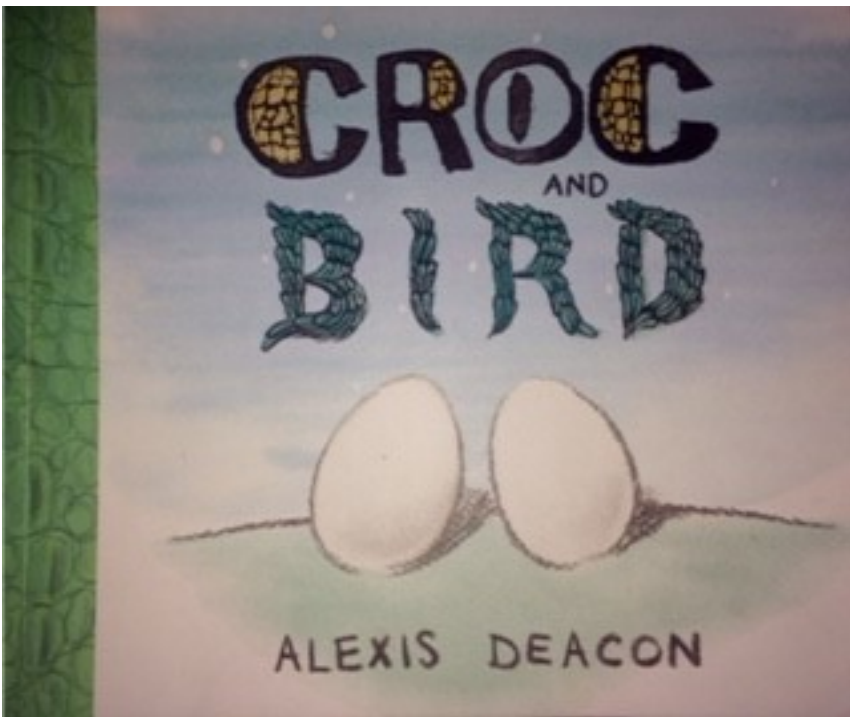
*On Saturday, he ate through one piece of chocolate cake, one ice-cream cone, one pickle, one slice of Swiss cheese, one slice of salami, one lollipop, one piece of cherry pie, one sausage, one cupcake, and one slice of watermelon.*

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar – Eric Carle*

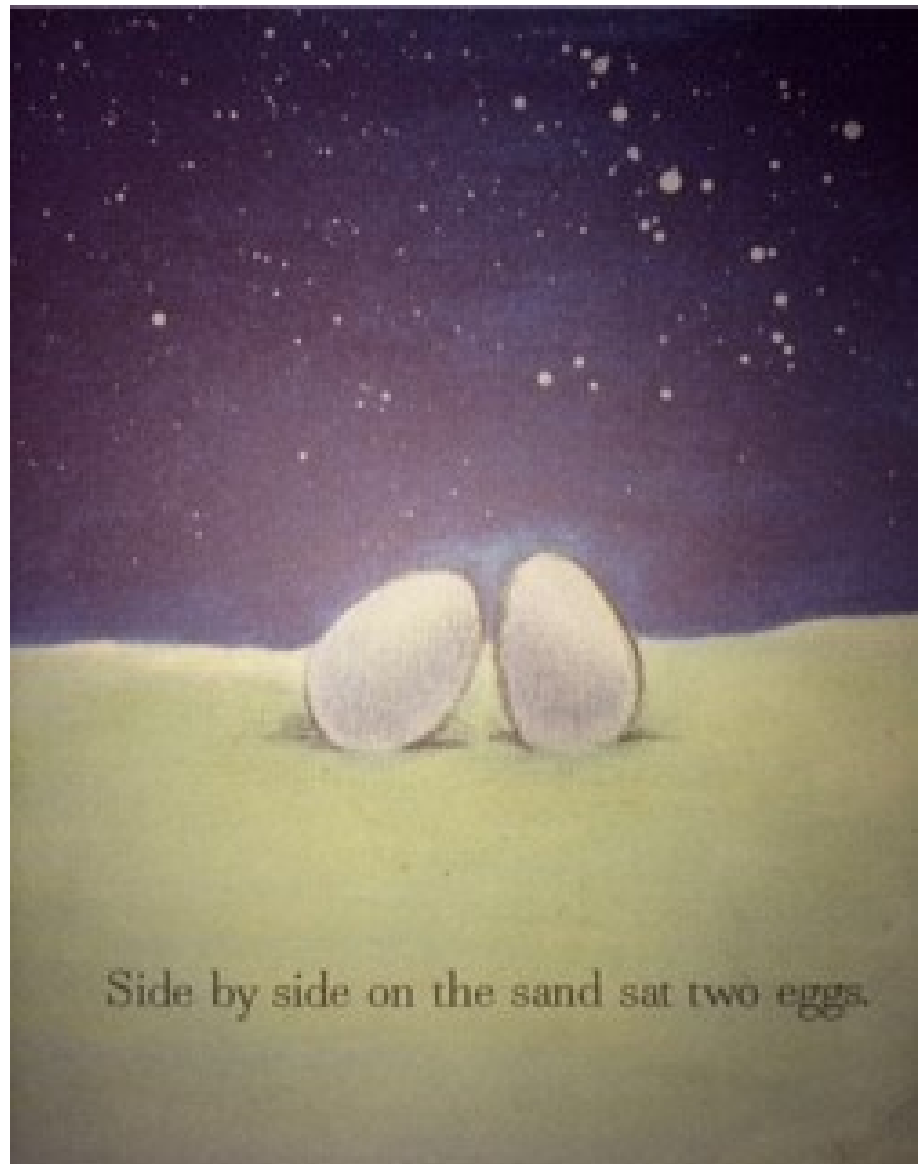
*Then Mr Gumpy and the goat and the calf and the chickens and the sheep and the pig and the dog and the cat and the rabbit and the children all swam to the bank and climbed out to dry in the sun.*

*Mr Gumpy's Outing – John Burningham*

Why do you think Eric Carle chooses to use commas to separate his long list of noun phrases and John Burningham chooses to use 'and'?



Side by side on the sand sat two eggs.



# Playfulness with Language

Authentic text

What might this story be about?  
What do you think the author has written in the box?

sat

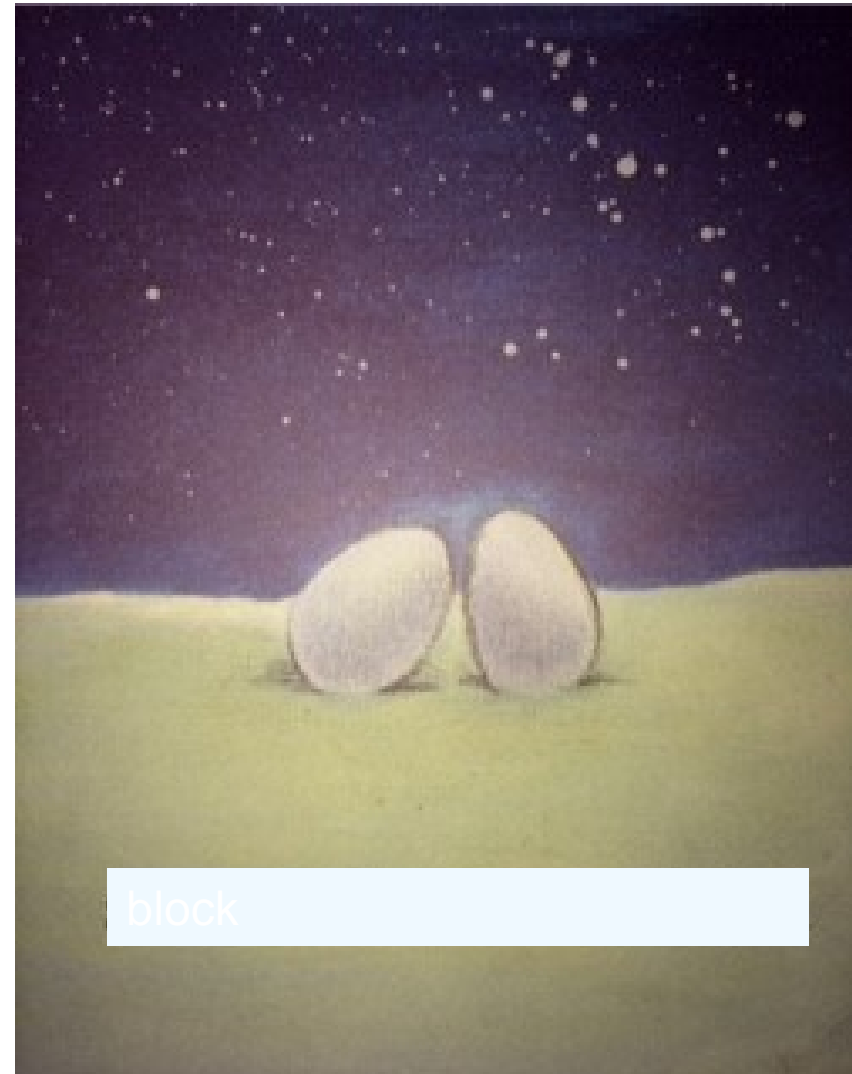
side by side

two eggs

on the sand

How many different ways can you arrange these words to make a sentence?

Discussion



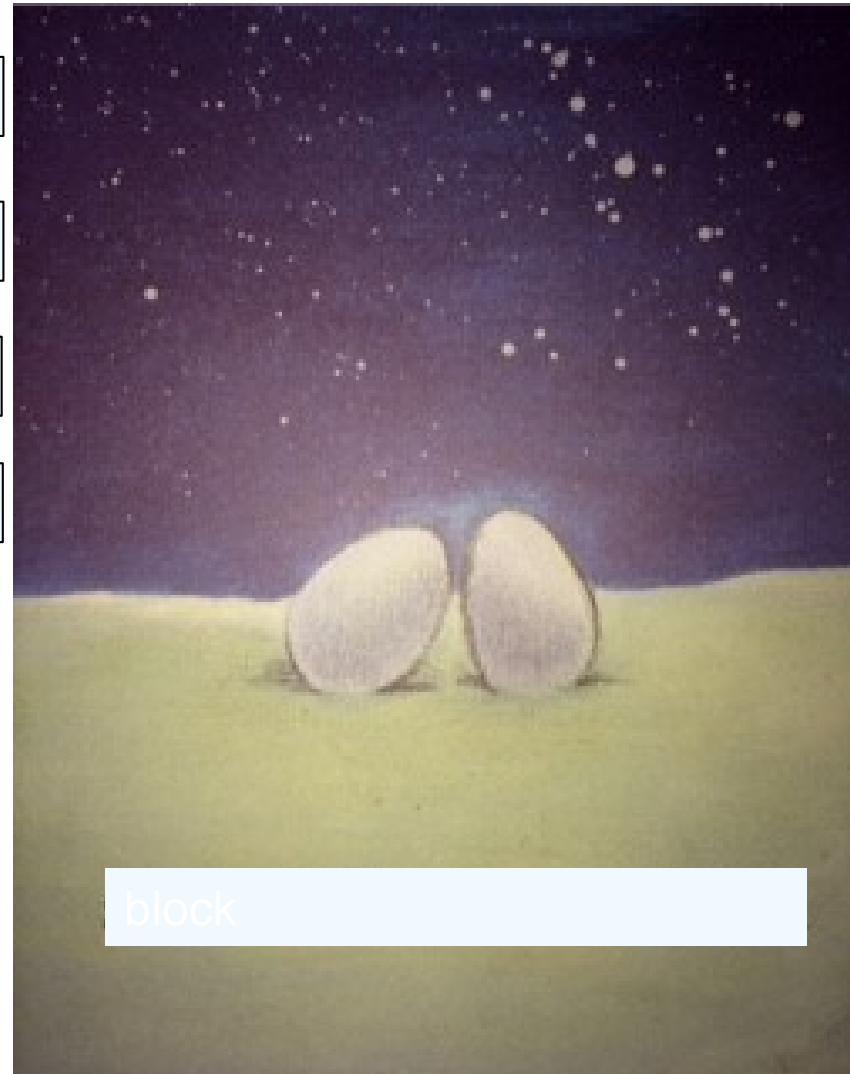
# Playfulness with Language

two eggs sat side by side on the sand

two eggs sat on the sand side by side

on the sand sat two eggs side by side

side by side on the sand sat two eggs



# Playfulness with Language

Authentic text

Discussion

Why do you think the author tells us about the eggs last of all?  
What is the first thing the author tells us?

Links

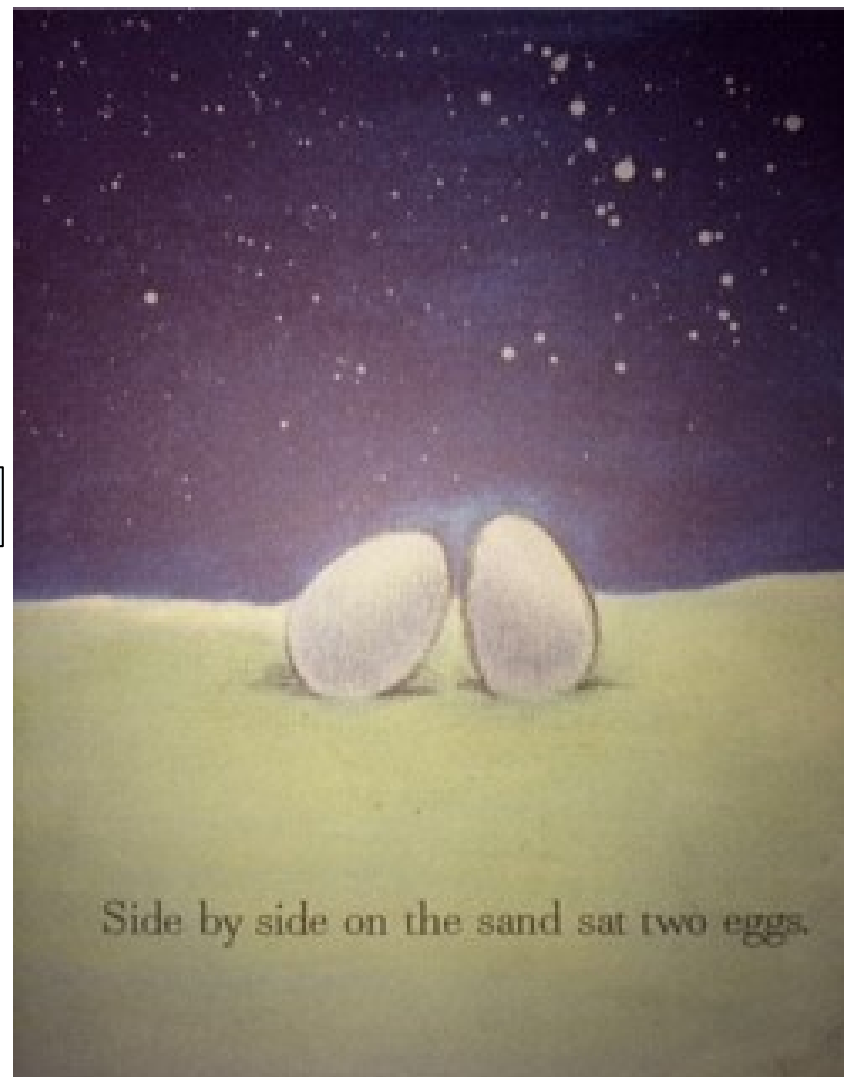
side by side

on the sand

sat

two eggs

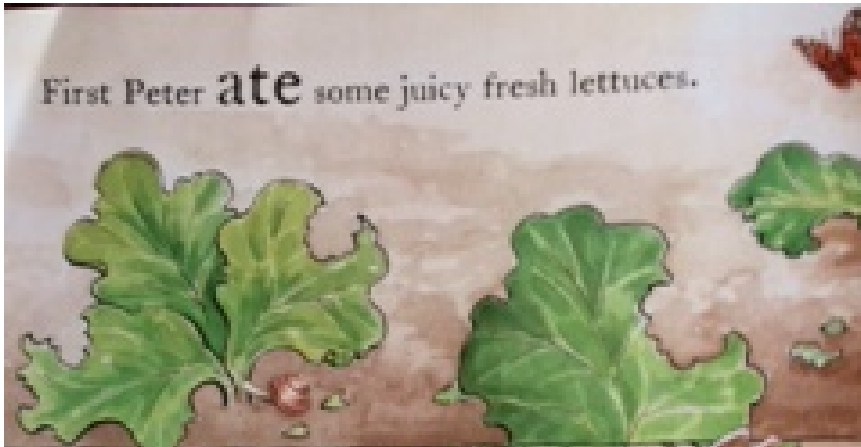
Examples



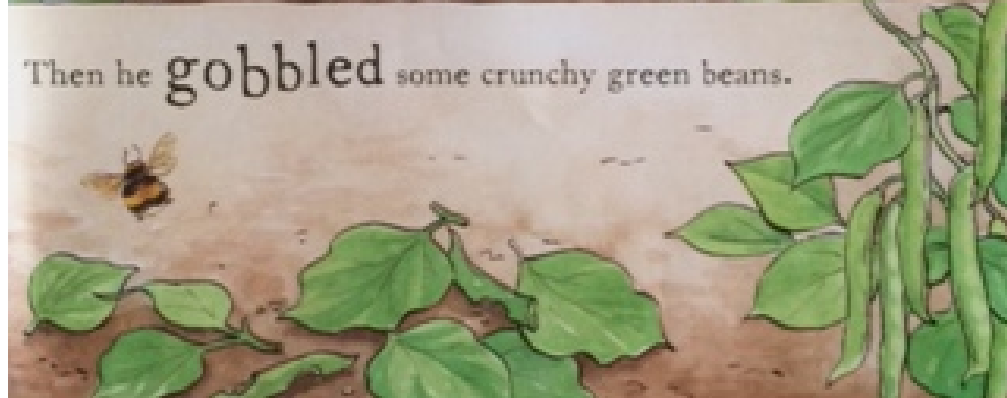
Side by side on the sand sat two eggs.

# Choosing Verbs

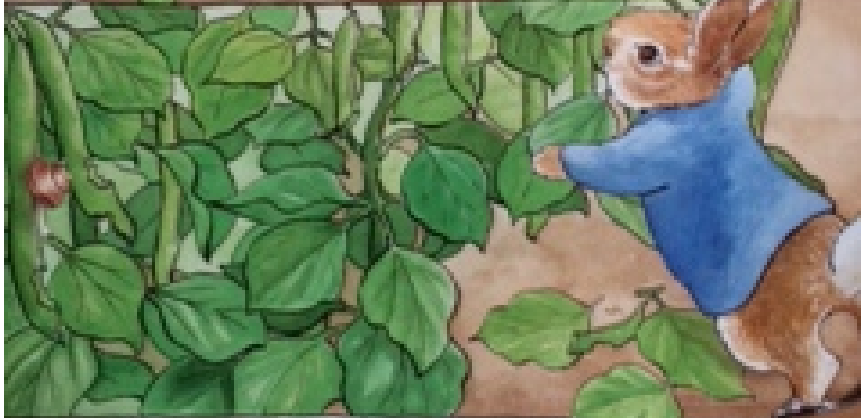
First Peter **ate** some juicy fresh lettuces.



Then he **gobbled** some crunchy green beans.



Then he **nibbled** some spicy red radishes.



ate nibbled gobbled

# Choosing Verbs

Authentic text



ate nibbled  
gobbled

Examples

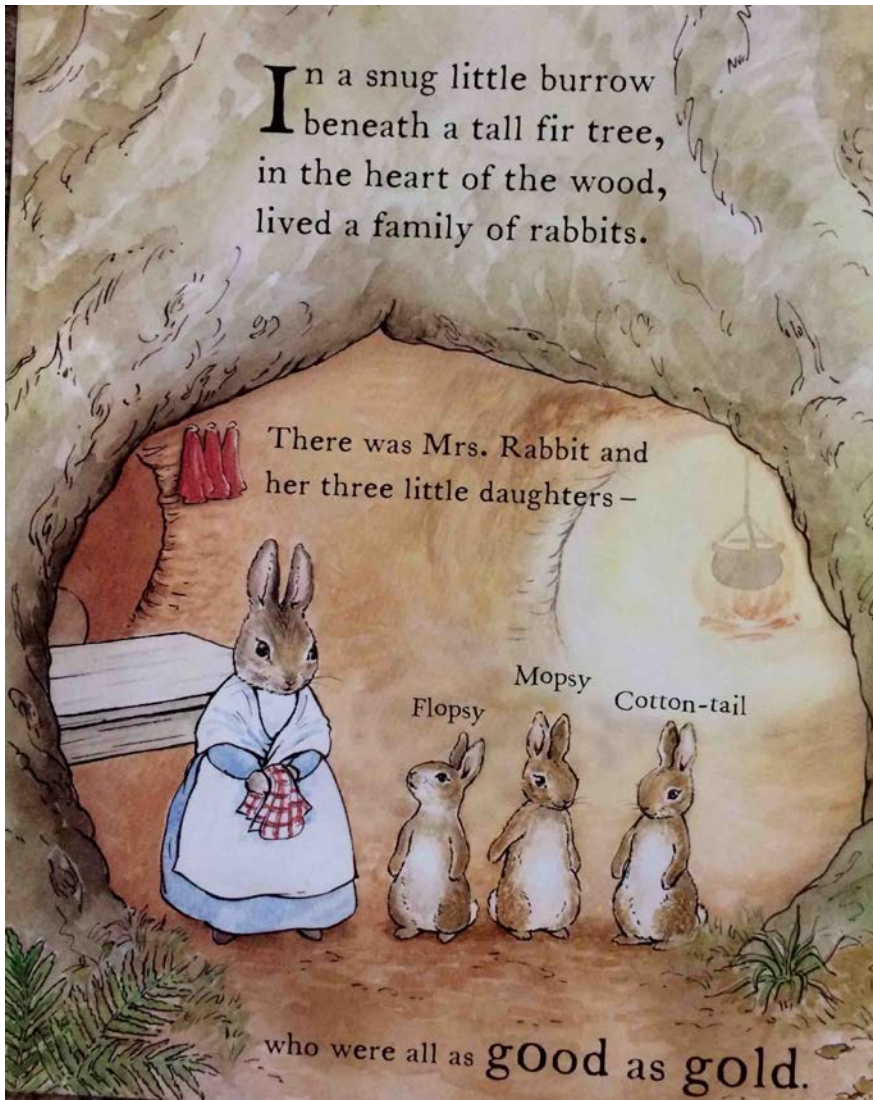
Discussion

Build children's vocabulary by looking at alternative synonyms/antonyms:  
**BUT ALWAYS** discuss the different nuances of meanings the verbs convey and how they relate to character or plot development.

Links



# Imitating Patterns



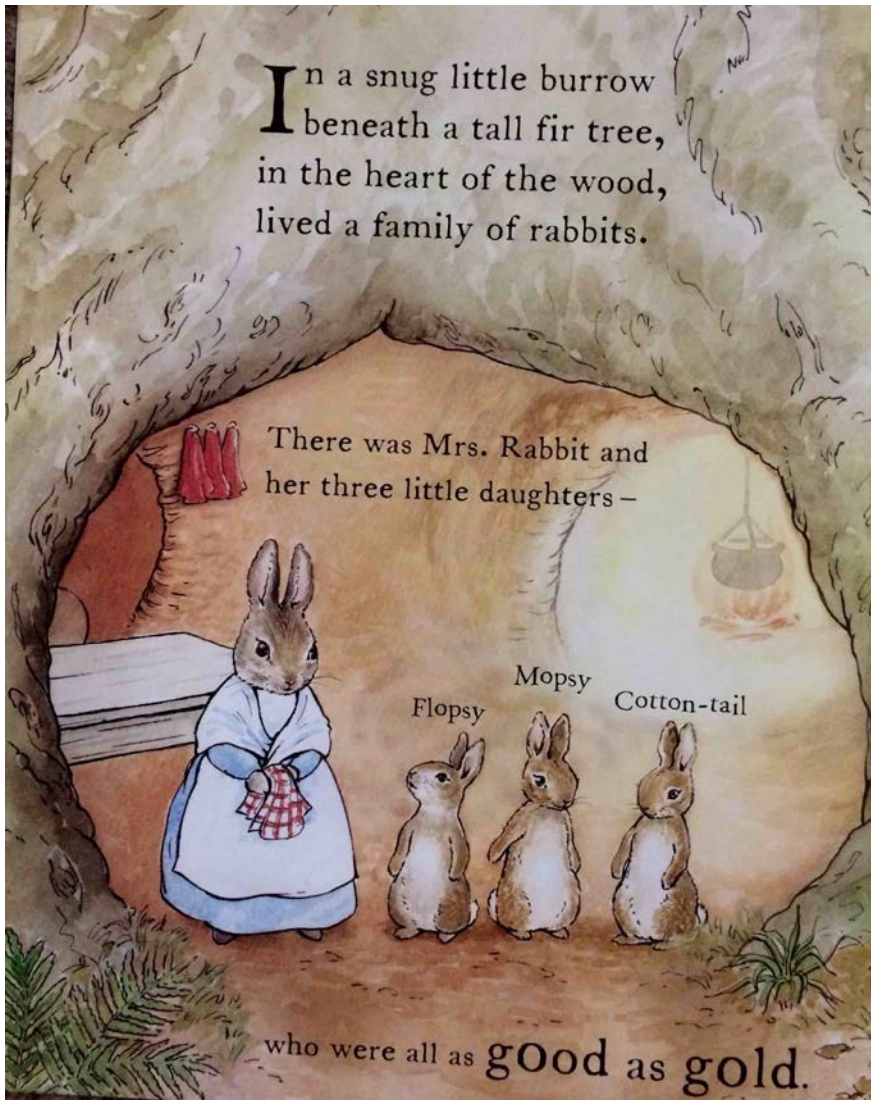
In a snug little burrow beneath a small fir tree, in the heart of the wood, lived a family of rabbits.

.....  
stood a row of giants.

.....  
swam a pod of dolphins.

# Imitating Patterns

Authentic text



In a snug little burrow beneath a small fir tree, in the heart of the wood, lived a family of rabbits.

Examples

What are the 'chunks' of the sentence that you are playing with?

What is the effect of putting the subject after the verb?

Discussion

Links

# Let's Investigate! Creative Clauses



1. *Snow Leopard purred richly at the changes.*
2. *Crisp snow sparkled in icy stars beneath her huge paws and all the while she sang.*
3. *And back in the mountains, the young Snow Leopard looked up at the stars, heard the whisper – and began a new song.*

**Where are the main (lexical) verbs in each of these sentences?**

# Let's Investigate!



1. Snow Leopard **purred** richly at the changes.
2. Crisp snow **sparkled** in icy stars beneath her huge paws and all the while she **sang**.
3. And back in the mountains, the young Snow Leopard **looked** up at the stars, **heard** the whisper – and **began** a new song.

There is a verb at the heart of a clause.

# Let's Investigate!



1. Snow Leopard **purred** richly at the changes.

one  
clause

2. Crisp snow **sparkled** in icy stars beneath her huge paws and  
all the while she **sang**.

two  
clauses

3. And back in the mountains, the young Snow Leopard **looked**  
up at the stars, **heard** the whisper – and **began** a new song.

three  
clauses



Mentor Text: *The Snow Leopard* by Jackie Morris

Authentic text

Writing Type: Fictional Narrative

Learning Focus: how the pattern of three co-ordinated clauses (with comma and 'and') can describe a sequence of actions in a narrative event and create rhythm.

Links

Talk: read these sentences aloud – can you hear the rhythm of the verbs?

Discussion

... and the cat **stirred, rose** and **leapt** up to the high wild mountains with the Child clinging tight on her back.

And back in the mountains, the young Snow Leopard **looked** up at the stars mirrored in her blue cat's eyes, **heard** the whisper – and **began** a new song.

Examples

# Plot Rhythm – Patterns of Three

... and the cat **stirred**, **rose** and **leapt** up to the high wild mountains with the Child clinging tight on her back.

And back in the mountains, the young Snow Leopard **looked** up at the stars mirrored in her blue cat's eyes, **heard** the whisper – and **began** a new song.  
The Snow Leopard – Jackie Morris

Golden Lion Tamarin forced the trees to form a cunning cage to protect the heart of the forest; the magical, black diamond. She **wrapped** the trees in loving leaves, **crowded** creatures onto the tropical trees and **gave** the plants the sun and water they needed.

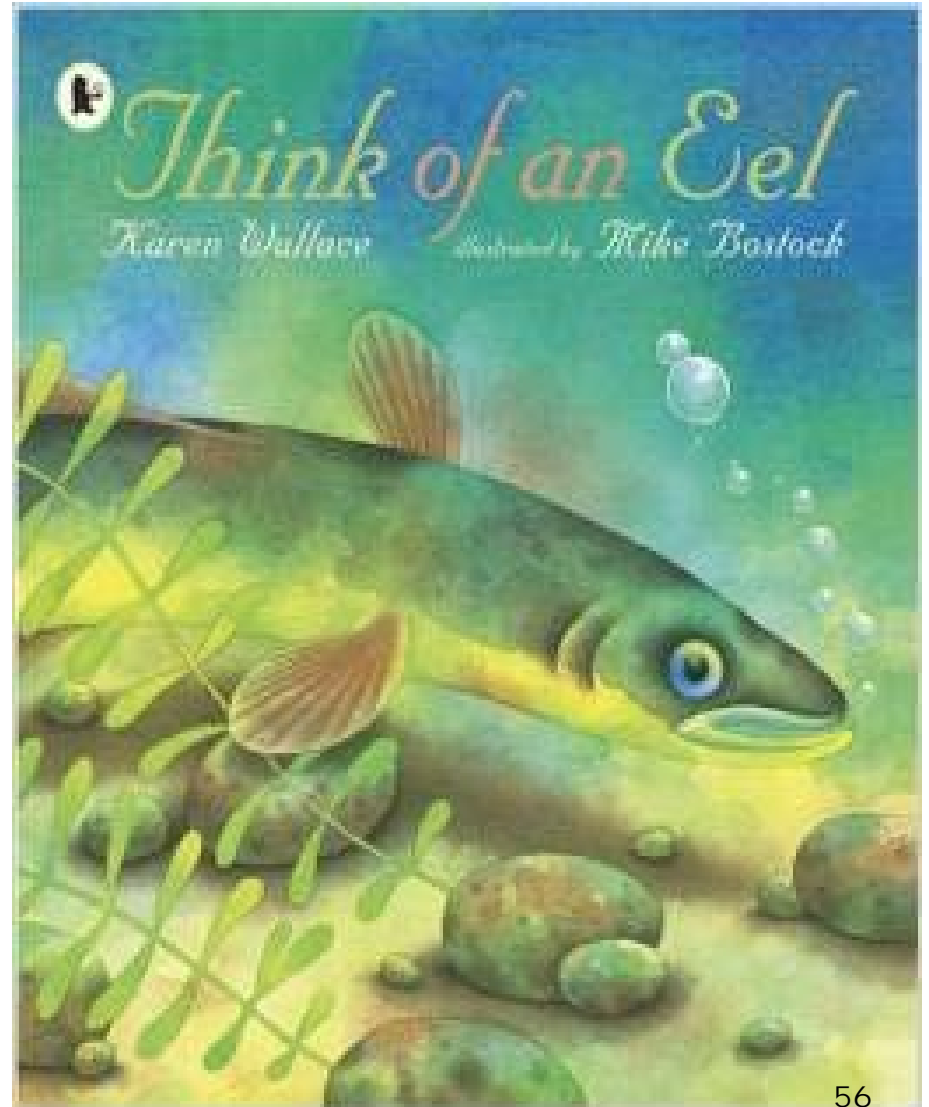
Year 6 – able writer

At first peak of light, over the ever green mountain, the bald eagle **raced** to create the wind, **soared** through the secret forest to awaken all animals and **squawked** over the green ocean canopy to make the mystical mist.

Year 6 – weak writer

# Writing like a Scientist

Dual text:  
Science text  
Poetic text





# Writing like a Scientist

Around a drowned oak stump,  
through twisting green weeds,  
a mudhole is hidden.



*Mudholes, burrows and cracks in the  
river bed are all homes for eels.*

Eel knows without thinking  
it's what he's been seeking.  
He slips through the ooze.  
This hole is his home.

Poetic text:  
main clause delayed with  
two foregrounded  
prepositional phrases;  
descriptive detail

Scientific text:  
Subject start to sentence  
= more direct; shorter  
sense; precise detail –  
'burrows', 'cracks';  
prepositional phrase  
specifies 'in the river  
bed'

# Writing like a Scientist

There's eel-tomb and eel-cradle  
in the weedy Sargasso.

After eighty days' swimming,  
not eating, not sleeping,  
eel's long, winding body  
is worn out and wasted.

He spills the new life  
carried deep in his belly,  
then sinks through the sea  
like a used silver wrapper.



*The male eel's sperm fertilizes  
the female's eggs in the water.*

Poetic text:  
long sentences; use of  
metaphor and simile;  
expanded noun phrases;  
emotive engagement with  
subject 'worn out'. More  
indirect communication –  
inference needed.

Scientific text:  
shorter sentence; subject  
start; expanded noun  
phrase provides scientific  
detail; use of scientific  
vocabulary. More direct  
communication – no  
inference

# Writing like a Scientist

Authentic text

*After eighty days' swimming, not eating, not sleeping, eel's long, winding body is worn out and wasted. He spills the new life carried deep in his belly, then sinks through the sea like a used silver wrapper.*

Examples

Rewrite this paragraph as a scientific text.

*After eighty days' swimming, without food or sleep, the eel's long body is exhausted. The male fertilizes the female's eggs, and then dies.*

What changes have you made to alter the lyrical description into a scientific description?

Links

Could any other changes be made?

Discussion

# Writing Argument

Copyrighted Material

THE DAY the  
CRAYONS QUIT

By DREW  
DAYwalt



from the illustrator of STUCK  
and THIS MOOSE BELONGS TO ME  
Copyrighted Material

Dear Duncan,

As Green Crayon, I am writing for two reasons. One is to say that I like my workloads of crocodiles, trees, dinosaurs and Frogs. I have no problems and wish to congratulate you on a very successful "colouring things GREEN" career so far.

The second reason I write is for my friends, Yellow Crayon and Orange Crayon, who are no longer speaking to each other. Both crayons feel THEY should be the colour of the sun. Please settle this soon because they're driving the rest of us CRAZY!

Your happy friend, Green Crayon



# Writing Argument

Dear Duncan,  
As green crayon, I am writing for two reasons. One is to say that I like my workloads of crocodiles, trees, dinosaurs and frogs. I have no problems and wish to congratulate you on a very successful "colouring things GREEN" career so far.  
The second reason I write is for my friends, Yellow Crayon and Orange Crayon, who are no longer speaking to each other. Both crayons feel THEY should be the colour of the sun. Please settle this soon because they're driving the rest of us CRAZY!  
Your happy friend, Green Crayon

Question for Teachers:

What might you draw attention to grammatically in this text as an example of an argument text?

# Writing Argument

Authentic text

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As Green Crayon, I am writing for two reasons. One is to say that I like my workloads of crocodiles, trees, dinosaurs and Frogs. I have no problems and wish to congratulate you on a very successful "colouring things GREEN" career so far.  
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Your happy friend, Green Crayon

Examples

1. **Highlight** all the formal language in red and all the informal language in blue. What is the effect of this mix of formal and informal language in this argument?
2. **Underline** where Green Crayon signals the structure of his argument.
3. **Circle** where Green Crayon uses an imperative verb to express what he wants as an outcome from his complaint.

Discussion

Links



# Writing Argument

Dear Duncan,  
As Green Crayon, I am writing for two reasons. One is to say that I like my workloads of crocodiles, trees, dinosaurs and Frogs. I have no problems and wish to congratulate you on a very successful "colouring things GREEN" career so far.  
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Your happy friend, Green Crayon

Think of a new crayon colour and what the crayon's complaint might be. Write a new letter to Duncan outlining your complaint.

Think about how to make a strong argument. You could consider:

- signposting the structure of your argument;
- using a mix of formal and informal language to create a relationship with your reader
- using an imperative verb to signal what outcome you want.



# PLENARY



# Planning for Explicit Teaching

- ❑ Consider the **types of writing** and the **texts** you will be using with your classes this term
- ❑ Consider the children you will be teaching and **what they need to learn** about their writing



- ❑ What **grammar** might be embedded into your teaching units to support this learning?



- ❑ Metalinguistic understanding

# Theoretical Conclusions

- ❑ Explicit teaching of grammar which makes connections between grammatical choices and meaning-making develops metalinguistic understanding about writing
- ❑ A view of grammar as choice helps writers understand that every act of writing is an act of decision-making and some decisions are linguistic
- ❑ Our evidence indicates that explicit teaching of grammar as a meaning-making resource is effective, but teaching is a multi-faceted complex activity realised in the moment – teachers' grammatical subject knowledge and capacity to manage effective dialogic metalinguistic talk needs development.

# Further Resources

Resources for Teachers:

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/research/centres/centreforresearchinwriting/grammar-teacher-resources/>

Cybergrammar: [www.cybergrammar.com](http://www.cybergrammar.com)

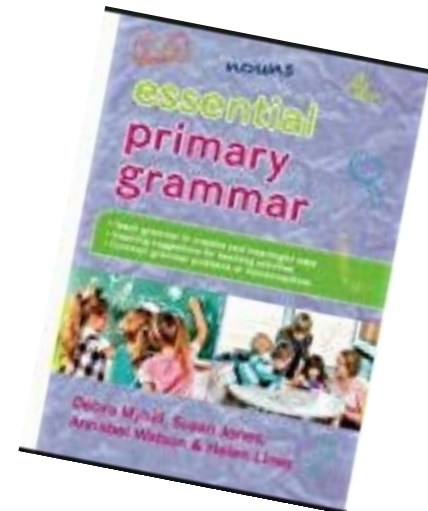
No Nonsense Grammar: Babcock LDP Literacy Team, Raintree (2016)

<https://babcock-education.co.uk/ldp/grammarandpunctuation>

<https://babcock-education.co.uk/ldp/textsthatteach>

Essential Primary Grammar

<http://www.mheducation.co.uk/essential-primary-grammar>



# Our Research

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