

CRAFT OF WRITING RESIDENTIAL: STARTING POINTS FOR WRITING

Below we have created a summary of all the starting points used by Steve and Alicia, and provide some guidance on what the learning focus was and some thoughts for how to transfer them to the classroom. It's always important to remember that it is the *learning purpose* of these activities which is most important, not the activity itself.

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Starting Point	JUST WRITE: GATHERING INGREDIENTS
Writing Learning Focus	Just Write: free writing to liberate ideas and find out what you want to say
Description	<p>Give out a list of words/phrases eg:</p> <p><i>Early morning</i> <i>The storm</i> <i>Falling</i> <i>The seashore</i> <i>First kiss</i> <i>Something there</i> <i>Winning</i> <i>Losing</i> <i>The garden in summer</i> <i>Winter</i> <i>Embarrassment</i> <i>Anger</i> <i>Beginnings</i> <i>Gone forever</i></p> <p>Just choose one of these words/phrases and write it about it for 5 minutes – take your pen for a walk. Don't think about handwriting, spelling or anything like that, just write.</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be explicit about the term <i>Just Write</i> so that it becomes familiar – remind children that is about taking your pen for a walk, letting your ideas flow, and there is no need to think about how good it is, or spelling or punctuation etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Be alert to children who seem unable to do it – they may be too constrained by a need to get it right – perhaps get them to freewrite for just two or three minutes first. <input type="checkbox"/> Share your own freewriting, with its randomness. <input type="checkbox"/> If you any children who are not yet fluent writers (ie can't simply write freely), it is possible that freewriting may really help them. But if they are really unable to freewrite, think about providing a scribe, or allowing them to audio record.

Starting Point	JUST WRITE: SENTENCE PROMPT
Writing Learning Focus	Just Write – how freewriting can help to liberate thoughts and ideas.
Description	Just write – keep writing for ten minutes from the prompt - <i>She carried it with her always.</i>

From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be explicit about the term <i>Just Write</i> so that it becomes familiar – remind children that is about taking your pen for a walk, letting your ideas flow, and there is no need to think about how good it is, or spelling or punctuation etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Be alert to children who seem unable to do it – they may be too constrained by a need to get it right – perhaps get them to freewrite for just two or three minutes first. <input type="checkbox"/> Share your own freewriting, with its randomness. <input type="checkbox"/> If you any children who are not yet fluent writers (ie can't simply write freely), it is possible that freewriting may really help them. But if they are really unable to freewrite, think about providing a scribe, or allowing them to audio record.
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Starting Point	JUST WRITE: SENTENCE PROMPT
Writing Learning Focus	Just Write – how freewriting can help to liberate thoughts and ideas.
Description	<i>My mind is a house with cellars, closed doors and secret passageways.</i> Just write... take your pen for a walk
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be explicit about the term <i>Just Write</i> so that it becomes familiar – remind children that is about taking your pen for a walk, letting your ideas flow, and there is no need to think about how good it is, or spelling or punctuation etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Be alert to children who seem unable to do it – they may be too constrained by a need to get it right – perhaps get them to freewrite for just two or three minutes first. <input type="checkbox"/> Share your own freewriting, with its randomness. <input type="checkbox"/> If you any children who are not yet fluent writers (ie can't simply write freely), it is possible that freewriting may really help them. But if they are really unable to freewrite, think about providing a scribe, or allowing them to audio record.

Starting Point	JUST WRITE: STORY INGREDIENTS
Writing Learning Focus	How just writing can liberate ideas, and here how you can let your imagination run free with random starting points about character, objects and setting
Description	What comes into your mind when you think of 'Gothic'. Give out list of Gothic characters; places; objects. Choose one character, one place, one object. Just take your pen for a walk. 25 minutes writing time
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You could change the genre and choose ingredients from other genres (eg traditional fairy tales) or 'ingredients' from Harry Potter to create a new story <input type="checkbox"/> Children may try too hard with this – thinking too much about a story before they write. The real point here is the just write – let the ideas happen and it doesn't matter if not everything makes perfect sense! <input type="checkbox"/> Remember to silence your inner editor and critic , this is about generating ideas not yet evaluating them

Starting Point	CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT : 'AT GRANDPA'S'
Writing Learning Focus	Character Development: How specificity in choice of objects and images can help to create character
Description	<p>Read <i>At Grandpa's</i> and discuss it, drawing out responses and understanding of the poem. Note how the character is described through the things in the room. Read <i>at Aunt Jane's</i> (see in Additional poems)too or your own poem from Arvon.</p> <p>Think about someone you know well – think hard about the space you normally see them in, and the things that are in that room. Be very specific, instead of '<i>flowers on the windowsill</i>' you could say '<i>The wilted white lilies in the vase</i>'.</p> <p>Title of the poem is: <i>At xxxx</i> First line: It was the...</p> <p>Think carefully about the last line.</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You might need to model examples as Steve did, and discuss why the extra concrete detail conveys or implies character. Perhaps keep the examples displayed so they can be revisited. <input type="checkbox"/> It might be helpful to draw attention to the fact these are extended noun phrases so they don't dilute the detail by making them full sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> They might veer toward the adjective pile-up so be prepared to steer them towards extra description after the noun. Steve talked about 'the x with...' – adding prepositional phrases.

Starting Point	CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT : 'THE CHILD WITHIN ME'
Writing Learning Focus	Character Development: Considering the hidden or unveiled aspects of a character and describe these in order to 'narrow down' and offer detail of their views.
Description	<p>Read <i>The Nazi within me</i> Stephen Dobyns and <i>A Meeting</i> by Michael Laskey</p> <p>Offer the class 10 minutes to scope out some ideas</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invite the class to list different kinds of roles, jobs or dispositions e.g. Scientist, doctor, clown, optimist, pessimist, child, teenager <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to these and select one each, writing a few lines about what the optimist within me reveals, e.g. he believes there is nothing to be afraid of , that there is no global warming etc <input type="checkbox"/> Make a note of one line from each child. Read these back to the class creating a whole class poem.

Starting Point	ATTENTION TO DETAIL: CONTAINERS
Writing Learning Focus	The importance of detail: encouraging specificity rather than generalization; the concrete rather than the abstract
Description	<p>Write down a list of containers, things that you put things in: avoid parts of the body – keep writing the list, as many as you can think of.</p> <p>Now take three or four of them and write down what is in them: think about the detail, not just ‘biscuits’, but ‘a half-packet of fig rolls’.</p> <p>Look back at what you’ve written and decide which you liked best</p> <p>Scribble out all the containers and just keep the items inside; read them out with heading INSIDE MY HEAD.</p> <p>You could read <i>A Boy’s Head</i> By Miroslav Holub (see Additional poems) at the end of the activity.</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Help the children generate their list of containers by making some initial suggestions e.g. suitcase. Pencil case, bucket, cardboard box, <input type="checkbox"/> Focus here very much on moving from the noun to the expansion of the noun to capture the more detailed description. <input type="checkbox"/> Getting children to visualise their objects might help?

Starting Point	DEVELOPING A CHARACTER
Writing Learning Focus	<p>Character development: getting under the skin of a character and finding out who they are.</p> <p>Narrative development: allowing a storyline to evolve from the character description; finding a story.</p>
Description	<p>Invent a new character: guided fantasy:</p> <p>Picture your character who is standing next to the window:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> what can they see? <input type="checkbox"/> what can they hear? <input type="checkbox"/> what is the weather like? <input type="checkbox"/> what time of days is it? <input type="checkbox"/> time of year? <input type="checkbox"/> what happens? <input type="checkbox"/> your character has a bag – what kind of bag is it and what’s in it? <input type="checkbox"/> your character has a picture – what or who is it of? <input type="checkbox"/> what are they expecting? <input type="checkbox"/> what is your character worried about? <input type="checkbox"/> when did they last cry and why? <input type="checkbox"/> what is your character’s greatest fear? <input type="checkbox"/> somewhere there is a secret that this character knows or that someone knows about this character – what is it? <input type="checkbox"/> an object that is important to them - that they have got or lost? <input type="checkbox"/> a piece of music that is important to them? <input type="checkbox"/> what is your character’s biggest regret? <input type="checkbox"/> what’s does he really want and what is stopping him? {conflict: core of a story} <input type="checkbox"/> what’s your character’s name?

	<p>Read what you have written and think about the character that is emerging. Share it with a partner and invite them to ask questions about the character.</p> <p>What were they doing yesterday, a week ago; a year ago?</p> <p>For 5 minutes have a go at writing a scene for this character</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create a relaxed writing environment this where children understand there are no right answers to these questions but that they are building a character <input type="checkbox"/> Perhaps adapt the questions or reduce the number of questions – but don't 'dumb them down'

Starting Point	ATTENTION TO THE SENSES: EXPLORING OBJECTS
Writing Learning Focus	How focusing on an object can lead to using the senses to describe it. Time to Just Write.
Description	<p>Choose an object then look at it and feel it, explore it. Be completely immersed in your object. Start by looking really closely at your object – and think about it from the perspective of all five senses. Then let ideas flow – does it remind you of anything or make you think about anything? Give time to Just Write</p> <p>Sharing the reading of poems which describe objects , animals or plants in various ways <i>Anchor Riddle</i>; Chrissie Gittens <i>Adder, Bluebell, Lobster</i> (Otter-Barry Books, 2016) or <i>The Lychee</i> from Additional Poems.</p> <p>Give 15 minutes to try and write something from this.</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Find a poem to support you from Chrissie Gittens' book or of your own composed at Arvon. Don't worry if it doesn't use all the sense, this is not a model to mirror exactly <input type="checkbox"/> Remind each other of the five senses, and invite the class to generate a couple of lines for each sense <input type="checkbox"/> Make it clear this is not a full poem but a series of one liners that can be revisited, refined, deleted or selected later <input type="checkbox"/> Invite each child to read one or two of their favorite lines- naming their object

Starting Point	SHOW NOT TELL: THE FURNITURE GAME
Writing Learning Focus	How to describe something or someone by showing what they are like through careful discussion
Description	The Furniture Game: think of a character you know – a celebrity, a friend If they were a colour, what colour would they be? What Animal; flower; food; weather; music; water; game; disease?
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use this as a playful activity to encourage thinking differently, perhaps as a warm-up task before a more sustained show not tell activity <input type="checkbox"/> Stress that the colour, food etc are supposed to suggest something about the person: it's not about that person's favourite food, favourite colour etc <input type="checkbox"/> Perhaps model some examples first; or do this collectively about someone you all know.

Starting Point	CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT : 'WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD CARRY'
Writing Learning Focus	How to develop a stronger sense of your character by exploring what they carry with them, literally (concrete) and emotionally/metaphorically (reference to abstract) and what this reveals about their character
Description	<p>Shared reading of Maura Dooley 'What Every Woman Should Carry' (cutting parts as appropriate) and discussion of it, noting how she combines concrete objects and abstract ideas.</p> <p>Alicia reads two poems by children with the same model structure: <i>What every superhero needs</i> and <i>What every teenage girl needs</i></p> <p>Write your own poem in this style.</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use this as an activity to encourage further focus on their chosen character , perhaps as a follow up task <input type="checkbox"/> Stress that the contrast between the abstract and the concrete is the key focus <input type="checkbox"/> Perhaps model some examples first; or do this collectively about a fictional character in the class novel.

Starting Point	SHOW NOT TELL: AN ABSTRACT IDEA AND THE FIVE SENSES
Writing Learning Focus	Show not tell: how abstract ideas and feelings can be expressed by describing them metaphorically, using the five senses
Description	<p>Think of an abstract noun: eg sadness; hope; frustration</p> <p>If you were filming your abstract noun what would be the opening shot, the opening images?</p> <p>What does your abstract noun smell of? Taste of? Feel like? Sound like? What is its voice and what does it say?</p> <p>Shared reading of Carol Ann Duffy <i>A Worry</i> and <i>Grief</i> by Stephen Dobyns or <i>Anxiety</i> (see Additional poems)</p> <p>Allow 10 minutes to work on a poem using the five senses</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Find another example of a poem which does this which is accessible to Year 5, or share your own as a model, or write one together as a collaborative composition first; <input type="checkbox"/> Draw out the idea of how the concrete shows the abstract. <input type="checkbox"/> Invite the children to read aloud their selected lines which achieve this, discuss the children's examples and why the chosen concrete image reflects the abstract idea

Starting Point	SHOW NOT TELL: DESCRIBING A BARN
Writing Learning Focus	Show not tell: how you can convey (show) feelings and perspectives through description of settings, or through other concrete descriptions, rather than by literally describing how a character feels (telling)

Description	<p>Write the sentence '<i>I am happy</i>', then cross out happy and write something real in its place.</p> <p>Can you show <i>it was hot</i> in a different way eg <i>The chair was uncomfortable</i></p> <p>Reads extract from '<i>Charlotte's Web</i>', (EB White)the point where Charlotte dies – where the description of the taking down of the fair creates the sadness/emptiness of Charlotte's death, something coming to an end.</p> <p>Write a description of a barn from the perspective of a man who has just lost his son in the war but you cannot mention the war or the son.</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The activities with re-writing '<i>I am happy</i>' etc in a different way are really helpful for playing with this show not tell strategy. <input type="checkbox"/> If you don't want to give away the ending of the story, choose a different extract which does the same thing. <input type="checkbox"/> You can play with a different scenario : a description of a bedroom from the perspective of a mother who is angry with her son, but you cannot mention the mother or the son. A description of a playground from the perspective of a child who is moving away and obliged to leave school and their friends, but you cannot mention the impending departure or their friends.

Starting Point	SHOW NOT TELL: TELLING THE OPPOSITE
Writing Learning Focus	Show not Tell: this plays with idea of show not tell by looking at how telling the reader one thing is showing that the opposite is true
Description	<p>Shared reading of '<i>Not an Ending</i>' by Andrew Waterhouse.</p> <p>Write your own poem/story extract where what you write is the opposite of what you mean.</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> This activity may well need some scaffolding: it would be great to find a poem suitable for year 5 that might work for this or use one you wrote, or write a playful one on chocolate for instance! <input type="checkbox"/> Perhaps you could start by creating a set of statements about a character or a situation which are true, and then invite students to create some contrary ones.

Starting Point	PLAYING WITH WORDS: VERB CHOICES
Writing Learning Focus	How different verb choices can create different images/impressions; and how you can be very creative with the kinds of verbs you choose
Description	<p>The train arrived at the station</p> <p>How many different words for 'arrived'?</p> <p>You can use unusual or surprising verbs eg 'married'</p>
From Arvon to the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Another playful activity to encourage lateral thinking

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Encourage playfulness with the verb choices, moving beyond the literal choice of verbs of motion. Push for the unusual ones that might make people laugh/think❑ Take it in turns to go round the class and share these. Decide on those that stand out and discuss why |
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