

Introduction

Welcome to S.P.O.O.C.S – the literacy unit that gives children opportunities to write for real purposes and real audiences.

We have been writing literacy programmes for over ten years and hold the firm belief that offering children a range of writing activities within a lively, interesting context not only supports their writing development but also enthuses them as writers. S.P.O.O.C.S has been written for Year 6, or Scottish Primary Year 7, classes. The unit can be used as preparation for national assessment tasks in this year group, or as an integrated themed literacy unit. The length of time it takes to deliver S.P.O.O.C.S is very much up to you. You may wish to dip in and out of the unit, or you might like to follow every step through to the final celebration.

S.P.O.O.C.S is set in the context of a haunted Tudor house where the hauntings have got out of hand. The unit starts with a TV news report in which Caesar Goole, spokesperson for S.P.O.O.C.S (The Society for the Prevention Of Occupancy of Castles and Stately homes), appeals for interested viewers to apply to join the organisation. As the children in your class apply for the position of ghost hunters, they are embarking on an exciting writing journey that takes them through a host of non-fiction, fiction and play script writing activities. The children are in constant contact with Y (head of S.P.O.O.C.S) as she sets them specific writing tasks via video conferences. The story gradually unfolds and eventually the ghost hunters are approached by the legendary film producer Hal B Rich III. He has heard of the children's exploits and wants to make a film about them. However, in order to do this, he needs information about the setting, the characters, the story of their exploits and ultimately a play script. The unit ends with an Oscar nomination and a subsequent invitation to a celebratory party. The overview on p10 summarises the writing activities in S.P.O.O.C.S, identifying the purpose, audience and format of each piece of writing.

As you can see from the overview, the unit starts with non-fiction, moves into fiction and ends with play script writing. Every piece of writing has a specific purpose and audience. Each time the children start a writing activity, they are helped to identify these two elements and then to consider the text type and the format for their writing. The chart on p8&9 gives a comprehensive guide to each of the six main non-fiction text types, including a list of the typical structural and linguistic features and examples of formats in which each text type can be found.

S.P.O.O.C.S is based on the concept of experiential learning and its successful delivery hinges on willing suspension of disbelief

on the part of the children. This can be enhanced by the development of a creative and supportive learning environment. Turning the classroom into S.P.O.O.C.S headquarters or an area in Tudor House will enrich the children's experiences. Equally, it is important for you, and other adults working in the classroom, to enter into the spirit of the unit. This might involve you in some role play scenarios and will definitely involve you in playing along with the concept.

The S.P.O.O.C.S resource consists of The Manual (which you are currently reading) and a DVD. In The Manual you will find notes to support the teaching of each writing activity, model texts, activity sheets, word and sentence level activities and a list of suggested texts for whole class reading. More information on each of these elements is detailed below. The DVD contains the stimulus material for each writing activity in the form of video conferences, ghostly images captured on surveillance cameras, emails and letters. The Manual is also on the DVD, should you wish to print further copies of it or to show a model text or activity sheet on the IWB. All of the DVD content can be accessed from the main menu which appears automatically once the DVD is loaded.

Model texts are provided for every writing activity (see the section starting on p63). These can be used as exemplars, for analysis of typical structural and linguistic features and as the basis for the development of writing frames. The model texts are all set in the context of the traditional tale of Red Riding Hood – with a twist. There are a number of reasons for this: the content is fairly familiar to most children so they don't have to grapple with new concepts; there is a common thread running through the model texts; the content is light-hearted and fun – unlike some non-fiction which can be rather worthy and heavy.

The activity sheets (see the section starting on p79) engage the children in meaningful activities that will support their understanding of the text types that they are writing. They include text reconstruction, identification of strengths and weaknesses in texts, making improvements to pieces of writing and role play prompts.

There are various word and sentence level activities interwoven through the writing activities, particularly in the sections that explore the typical language features of texts. However, some children may well need more support in these aspects of their writing. You can select from the host of word and sentence level activities in the section starting on p95. These can be taught as part of the writing activities or delivered as discrete teaching sessions.

In the section starting on p117, you will find suggested titles for whole class reads. These have been chosen for a number of reasons: they are appropriate for Year 6 children in terms of interest; they tie in with the S.P.O.O.C.S theme; some are novels, others are short stories – which in themselves are ideal models for the children’s own stories – particularly in terms of structure and length. You may well be aware of other suitable stories, in which case we would encourage you to add these to the list.

The teaching notes for each of the writing activities are all organised under the same headings. Each set of notes starts with *Getting into the spirit*. This identifies the DVD content that is linked to the writing activity, the purpose of the writing, the audience and format. The notes then follow the sequence *Review – Teach – Write – Review*. Obviously if some children in the class are already familiar with a particular aspect of the writing activity then it is not necessary for them to follow every step of the sequence. This is why we haven’t broken the teaching sequence down into days or lessons, therefore giving you flexibility in delivery of the unit.

In the initial *Review* section in each writing task, the children’s knowledge of the focus text type or genre is activated. It is suggested that together you create a poster that summarises their knowledge and understanding of the purpose and, where appropriate, the typical structural and linguistic features of the text type. This is then displayed on a ‘working wall’ in the classroom and is referred to and added to during the writing task. The working wall, an area dedicated to the focus of the writing task, is very much a ‘work in progress’ display. The model texts, drafts of writing produced during shared, guided and independent writing, finished pieces and vocabulary banks can all be added to the working wall. Reference is made in the teaching notes to displaying visual representations of non-fiction text types on the working wall. These are *Skeletons*, available from TTS (www.tts-group.co.uk), and *Infoticons*, produced by Philip & Tacey. The ‘story maker’s gloves’ on Activity Sheet 14 (p92) support children in including the five key ingredients of stories (plot, structure, characters, setting and style) in their fiction writing and in structuring their stories. These visual representations are useful prompts for organising pieces of writing – particularly for children who are visual learners. Once the writing task has been completed, the materials on the working wall can be collected together in a folder or made into a big book for children to refer to during other writing activities.

In the *Write* section of the notes, the children revisit the opening stimulus, purpose, audience and format of the writing task. There then follows a focus on a specific aspect of the writing task, for example the effective use of connectives. The children then revisit the structure of the piece of writing by looking at the

model text, writing frame and visual representation as a reminder of how to organise their writing. There is a suggestion that you then ask the children to do 'quick-fire' planning, choosing a planning format that they find particularly helpful and making brief notes in preparation for writing. Once they have completed their writing, there is the opportunity to carry out peer reviews using the prompts on Activity Sheet 15 (p93). It is up to you to decide which aspect the children should focus on and asking them to concentrate on one or two will have more impact than trying to cover all of them.

At the end of the *Teach* section of each set of teaching notes, it is suggested that you develop three success criteria with the children against which their pieces of writing will be evaluated. It is important that the children are involved with the development of the success criteria, rather than being presented with them, as then the criteria will be more meaningful.

Included in the teaching notes are a variety of suggestions for speaking and listening activities. These range from paired and group discussion, role play, word games and activities to oral rehearsal in preparation for writing. All of these activities support children in preparation for writing and help them to think through particular elements and aspects of the writing activity.

We hope that you and your children enjoy using S.P.O.O.C.S as much as we enjoyed creating it. Happy ghost hunting!