



Writing and telling stories: what matters, why and what must teachers do about it?

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**Being part of a literate society is a
feeling as well as a fact**

Margaret Meek



Why stories matter

How many stories have you told/heard today?

How do you remember yesterday?

We tell stories to...

Remember stuff

Present ourselves to the world

Understand experiences, and ourselves

Understand the world

Make and maintain friendships

Aid emotional and social well-being

Narrative is a primary act of mind

Stories underpin all literacy

In conversational speech (the strategy) is to
'make the words fit the world'.

In stories, the strategy is to 'make words create a
world'. (Gordon Wells 1986 *The Meaning Makers*)



Stories help learning across the curriculum

Through story telling & writing, children:

Build their vocabulary

Build their knowledge of the world

Build their verbal reasoning skills

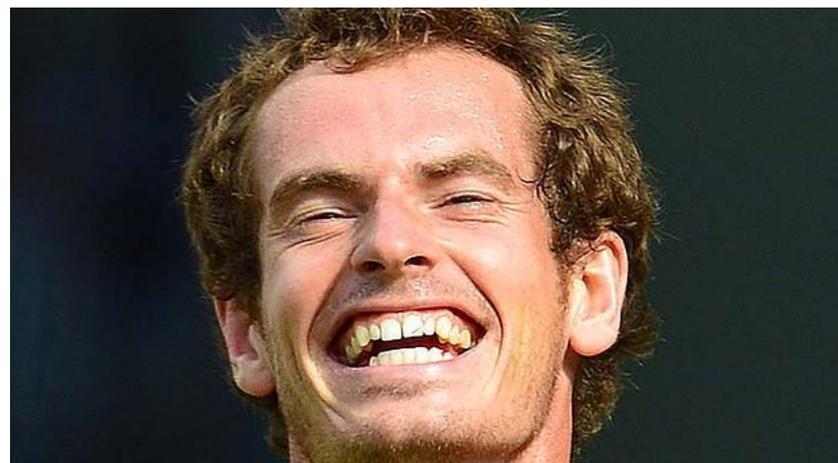
Build a strategy for remembering

Build understanding of the power of stories

Build their identity and confidence as a
literate person



The triumph smile



Powerful writers understand:

Writing as a:

- Way of capturing speech & making it permanent (**Code**)
- Way of communicating meaning (**Semantic**)
- Tool for getting things done, entertaining oneself, making friends, making an impact (**Pragmatic**)
- Source of power - to present self and one's topic (**Critical**)

Curriculum must target and develop all these elements

Often, policy only focuses on the first two

Sustainable development requires all

Teach through: experiences, modeling and explaining, practicing and applying many times in many ways, situations and contexts



Writing in early years should be

- Social
- A springboard for talk
- Enjoyable
- Playful
- Real choices, real purposes, real readers

It should develop children's:

- Independence
- Sense of self as an author - with something to say
- Self-efficacy (belief in ability to progress)
- Engagement
- Talk, language and social skills

Storybook publications task

Change ONE element of the story you have been given to make a possible story for a group of children to produce.

Children learn:

- Writing makes you feel good
- Writers make choices
- Writing can be social
- Writing can be playful
- Writers read their work aloud
- Writers share their work with many others, and learn from their reactions
- Writing offers a springboard for readers to talk



When do you tell stories?

I like to tell stories to...

I like telling them when...

I like telling stories about...

I don't like to tell stories to...

I don't like telling them when...

I don't like telling stories about...



If that is what **you** like...

- Are children different?
- What conditions do you need to provide in your classroom?
- How can you respond in ways that promote stories?



Find spaces in the day to create conditions for stories

- How can you create them?
- How can you respond in ways that promote storying?



Prompting stories and interactive writing to develop them

The children find a pile of seaweed in the classroom floor.

They clear it up.

The next morning, another pile is there. They wonder who left it.

Teacher scribes children's questions.

The next morning they are answered: Freddie the Frog visits at night to use the library.

He isn't sure which books are ones he will enjoy. The children offer suggestions and reasons...

And so the conversations develop...

What other characters and problems can visit when Freddie is called back to sort out a crisis in the pond...

Re-telling stories: talk as the first draft

1. Known story: A – B re-tell pairs, with prompts to elaborate
 1. Build classmates into your story
 - The hero of this story is xxx ...
 - Not many knew xxx had a secret magic power... To make the magic work...
 - Think overnight about a time when the magic was useful
 - A problem, an action, a reaction, a consequence, a resolution...
 3. Storyteller's Magic Chair, Story wands, Puppets, Play...
 4. Collaborative publications – colour poems
 5. Independent topic books e.g. spiders



Promote quantity and detail

Michael Rosen: “*Did I hear you write?*”

Writing as captured speech

Teachers ask the wrong questions

Not

- ‘How did you feel?’

But

- ‘What did you say to yourself?’

What did you hear others saying?

What did you say out loud?

Use parents for what they do best

Children share their writing at home to:

- Celebrate work and effort
- Talk about their ideas, understandings, reactions and actions
- Link school to home- parents know their child and their history
- Provide a 'safe' environment to generate and test ideas, talk about school work in a positive way...



Practice makes perfect: low-stakes writing throughout the day...

- Question and answer posts
- Writing table/ area/ box
- Post box in class
- Class message board
- Graffiti wall
- Co-creating displays with the children – labels, explanations, titles...
- Surprises, suggestions, comments and reminders in the teacher's book
- Class diary, newsletter, newspaper, information sheets
- Writing in play

Responding to writing

- Intervene to prevent Matthew Effects - “To him that hath ”
- Foster independence, social learning, apprenticeship models

To develop a child’s sense of self as an author:

- Delight in ideas and effort
- Take ideas seriously – respond thoughtfully
- Young writers need to hear their work read aloud
- They need to share and see how others react – and hear their questions
- Note what needs to be taught and teach it, but timing is all!!

Put yourself in their shoes...

Think about going on a date with one of Iceland's biggest stars.

How would you want people to respond when you tell them about it?

What type of response would make you write to them, or tell them about the next date?



Good teaching and learning requires good timing

What type of **feedback** will make Connor **want to write again**?

What will make him **avoid** writing?

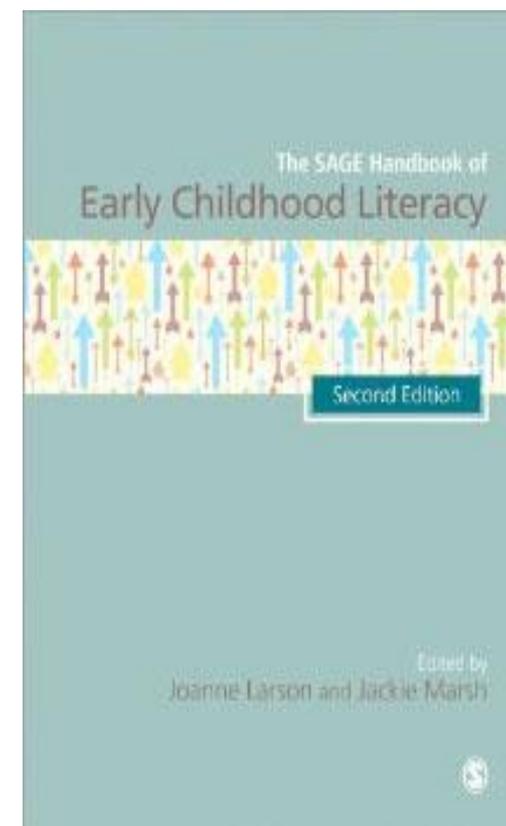
When is helpful advice most usefully given

- After a piece of writing?
- Immediately before the next piece of writing?



Kathy Hall - Highly effective literacy teachers:

- Prioritize it, time on task, communication
- do similar activities but more contextualised, clearer, precise explanations, links to pupils' out-of-school lives (& tailored literacy environments accordingly).
- Promote: 'masterful guardians, catching, cradling, and championing every child's discoveries about print'; repeat literacy experiences as necessary; inviting, print-rich, and home-like environments
- Teach: integrate and balance the codes with meaningful uses and purposes; varied learning experiences; responsive teaching; overt modeling; they coach-in-context, not tell.
- Work at a level of 'easy difficulty'; are flexible - seize the 'teachable moment'; provide instructional density' - multiple goals in a single lesson
- Well-planned but not bound by their planning; pupils are self-regulated and independent, using well-established routines





**How we treat people matters.
All education is about the sort of
human beings we want to create.**

If we don't allow children to make their own sense, then they may know that this is a spider which has 8 legs...



...

and then stamp on it.



References

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