

ISBN EPUB 978-1-909315-39-6

ISBN AER 978-1-909315-40-2

ISBN ONL 978-1-909315-41-9

ISSN 2041-935X (Print)

ISSN 2050-9030 (Online)

This practical booklet has inspired and supported teachers attending courses at CLPE to create contexts for children to write from their own interests and in ways that they have chosen.

Sue McGonigle,
Senior Adviser, CLPE

The new edition of this popular mini-book provides practical and proven guidance by and for teachers on how writing journals can stimulate children to write, to find their voice and delight in the process.

Sally Wilkinson,
Primary Partnership Adviser, Suffolk County Council

Introducing writing journals to our children had a huge impact on their attitudes to writing. For many of them, it was the first time that they discovered a personal voice, along with an understanding of the power of the written word. Seven years after we first introduced the journals, this writing session is still one of the most popular activities in our school day.

Eileen Mumford,
Headteacher, Kemsing Primary School, Kent

UKLA Minibook Series

Series Editor Rachael Levy

Past Editors Eve Bearne, Alison B. Littlefair, Bobbie Neate, Ros Fisher, Susan Ellis

Minibooks in print

Literature Circles:

Better Talking, More Ideas

Carole King and Jane Briggs

Storyline - Promoting Language

Across the Curriculum

Steve Bell and Sallie Harkness

**Classroom Action Research in Literacy:
a Guide to Practice**

Eve Bearne, Lynda Graham
and Jackie Marsh

**Active encounters: Inspiring young
readers and writers of non-fiction 4-11**

Margaret Mallett

Poetry Matters (revised second edition)

Andrew Lambirth

**Dyslexia and Inclusion: supporting
classroom reading with 7-11 year olds**

Rosemary Anderson

**Practical Bilingual Strategies for
Multilingual Classrooms**

Tözün Issa and Alayne Öztürk

**Tell Me Another: Speaking, Listening
and Learning Through Storytelling**

Jacqueline Harrett

**Drama: Reading, Writing and
Speaking Our Way Forward**

Teresa Grainger and Angela Pickard

**Reading Magazines with a Critical Eye
in the Primary School**

Carolyn Swain

Talk for Spelling

Tony Martin

Miscue Analysis in the Classroom
(Third Edition)

Robin Campbell

The Digital Literacy Classroom

Glenn Stone

Making Reading Mean
(Revised Edition)

Vivienne Smith

Issue number 35

Children's Writing Journals

(Revised Edition)

Lynda Graham and Annette Johnson

Published 2012

UKLA is willing to allow UKLA members to make multiple copies of up to 10% of this work for distribution within an educational institution or a local authority. Permission need not be sought for such copying.

Published by **UKLA**

United Kingdom Literacy Association,

University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH

www.ukla.org

© *United Kingdom Literacy Association*

Children's Writing Journals

Contents

Introduction	Where we started	5
	The writing journal model	6
	Update from Annette	7
	Genre of the child	7
	Creating a writing community	9
Chapter 1	Why writing journals? <i>Annette Johnson</i>	11
	Children's reading and writing histories	11
	Children's own writing language	12
	Beginning writing journals	13
Chapter 2	What I found <i>Annette Johnson</i>	14
	Placing yourself within the text	15
Chapter 3	Organising writing journal sessions <i>Lynda Grabam</i>	17
	The teacher's role	18
	What did the children do?	19
	Mutual trust and respect	22
Chapter 4	Writing like writers <i>Lynda Grabam</i>	23
	Revisiting ideas <i>Joanne, Reception</i>	23
	Superheroes and friends <i>Hassan, Reception</i>	25
	Exploring enthusiasms <i>Tim, year 1</i>	26
	The importance of presentation <i>Susie, year 1</i>	27
	Gaining confidence <i>Jordan, year 2</i>	28
	Social writing <i>Massimo, year 3</i>	29
	Learning and fun <i>Himani, year 5</i>	31
	'You can just relax and write' <i>Tyronne, year 5</i>	32
	Sustaining writing <i>Lucy, year 6</i>	33
	Finding a writing voice <i>Adam, year 6</i>	35
	The worlds of the children	36
Chapter 5	Case studies of classroom practice	37
	'If children enjoy something they work harder on it.'	37
	Writing alongside the children	39
	Personal purposes for writing	40
Conclusion	The community of writers <i>Eve Bearne</i>	42
References		44

Acknowledgements

The following teachers took part in the Writing Journal Project 2001-2002:

Carol Domingo, Vivienne Esparon, Joanne Greenhalgh, Sarah Hayward, Kim Lawrence, Jenny Llewellyn, Irene Napier, Linda O'Callaghan, Pat Parlour, Gaynor Talley. We thank them for their enthusiasm and thoughtful research.

We would also like to thank headteachers from the following schools for their support and encouragement for the Writing Journal Project teachers:

Paul Matthews (Byron primary), John white (Cypress junior), Michael Brockett (Downsview primary), Sally George (Ecclesbourne junior), Jill Hamilton (Gilbert Scott infants), Evelyn Armstrong (Gresham primary), John Robinson (Howard primary), Susan Bain (Purley Oaks primary), Margaret Liddiard (St. Chad's R.C. primary), Susan Powell (St. John's C of E primary), Ann Pendry (St. Mary's R.C. junior).

Finally, we thank the following children for permission to use their work:

Daniel Bhairam, Fabio Carter, Lily De La Haye Earl, Seb Evans Thornton, Joe Foot, Georgia Heffernan, Esme Lewis, Caroline Locke, Omar Ouda, Ayushi Patel, Shailen Patel, Ishmael Roberts, Raymond Ssekalongo, Sophie Wells, Dwayne Williams, James Zhu.

In the 2012 edition we also thank:

Annette Johnson, David Livingstone primary school and head of school Clare Slade; Anne Forsyth, Edmund Waller primary school; Alex Gwynne, St. Mary's primary school, Woodbridge, Suffolk; Muslimah Khanom, Arnhem Wharf primary school; consultants Sally Wilkinson (Suffolk) and Sue McGonigle (CLPE, London) who introduced teachers to writing journals on inset courses.

Introduction

Where we started

Children's Writing Journals was first published in 2003. In this revised edition we describe the original Croydon Writing Journals project, and also include a rationale for writing journals from Annette who has now used them for 11 years and case studies from teachers introduced to writing journals on inservice courses in London and Suffolk.

For a number of years now, primary teachers in Croydon have engaged in collaborative action research projects about teaching reading and writing. In the first year of the writing project one of the teachers, Annette Johnson, created and introduced a social model of writing journals in her year 6 classroom (Johnson, 2000). The children in Annette's class achieved remarkable success as writers. At the end of the two-term research module all children (including formerly inexperienced writers predicted a level 2/3) achieved at least a level 4 in their English SATs and a significant number achieved a level 5 (including many who had been predicted level 4). Inspired by this success, a number of writing project teachers also chose to introduce a similar model of writing journals in their classrooms. In some classes the journals became central to children's development as writers. In others they did not, and teachers found writing journals difficult to manage in the classroom. Because of these different responses we decided to set up a specific project about writing journals.

We invited experienced teacher researchers from former action research projects in the borough to join us, and were pleased to find that our volunteers ranged from teachers of Reception to year 6. This allowed us to study writing journals across the age range. The Writing Project teachers were: Carol Domingo, Irene Napier, Sarah Hayward, Gaynor Talley, Joanne Greenhalgh, Pat Parlour, Linda O'Callaghan and Annette Johnson. The research period was two terms. Each teacher kept a reflective journal and made observations of four carefully chosen children.

The writing journal model

The key features of Annette's model of writing journals (Johnson, 2000) are:

1. Time is allocated within the school day for all the class to work in journals. Teachers plan two or three whole class sessions a week each lasting 20-30 minutes. Although in some classes children also choose to take journals home, regular whole-class time is central to the success of writing journals.
2. Children choose what to write and draw in their journals.
3. Children are invited to choose where to sit and are encouraged to work with friends if they wish.
4. Children decide whether to share journal entries with the teacher and other children. Many choose to do this, but some entries are private, and this privacy is respected.
5. Children themselves take responsibility for their journal entries. The journals are not written dialogues between teacher and pupil. Teachers do not respond with written comments nor do they mark journal entries. This is in contrast to models of reading journals described by Street and Barrs (1998) and writing journals described by Hall (1989) and the National Writing Project (1990).
6. At the end of each writing journal session, time is given for volunteers to share work with the class. This is central to the success of writing journals. Ideas for journal entries spin across the classroom, and children develop a real sense of themselves as writers in a community of fellow writers.

In Reception, Carol Domingo adapted Annette's model by inviting children to draw, not write, in their journals. Each journal session began with a story read aloud. Children were then invited to draw this story, or choose their own focus. Influenced by the work of Carol Fox (Fox, 1993) Carol Domingo found a way of bringing children's oral storytelling skills into the classroom by scribing the stories the children created from their illustrations, covering every child over two or three sessions.