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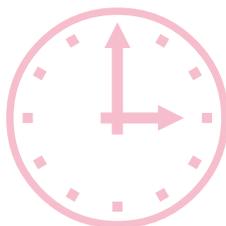
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Teaching grammar effectively in primary schools

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Grammar is the business of taking language to pieces, to see how it works.

David Crystal (*Rediscover Grammar*, 2000)

Introduction

Why teach grammar?

This might be re-worded as ‘why teach about the use of language?’ If any reader or writer is to have a reflective and properly critical view of texts, then knowledge of language and how it is organised to make meaning is essential. This book is about language and how it works. It is also about meaning. Knowing how language works means having choices about how best to get the message across. Teaching explicitly about aspects of grammar helps young writers to make those choices effectively: they can say what they want to say and write what they want to write. This book emphasises the importance of teaching about grammar, but first it’s worth making clear just what grammar is. When teachers have been asked: ‘What do you think when you hear the word ‘grammar?’ some see it as about spoken English and particularly about speaking ‘correctly’:

I’m not good at grammar - I don’t talk properly.

Or they may lack of confidence:

Oh, don’t ask - even though I’ve taught it, I’m not sure about subordinate clauses.

Or they may know something about grammar:

It’s about syntax - sentence structure.

When asked about being taught grammar at school, replies vary from:

No we didn’t do grammar at my school.

to:

Yes, we did do grammar but a lot of it didn’t make sense.

In reply to the question: ‘How did you learn about grammar?’ teachers often say something like:

I didn’t understand anything about grammar until I learned French.

and:

I learned most about grammar by teaching it.

Some teachers are lucky in having more positive experiences of being taught grammar well in their own schools, but hearing the word ‘grammar’ can evoke worries about ‘getting it right’.

This book aims to explain how best to teach grammar in the context of meaning.

Each case study or vignette begins with reading - even if it is just a fragment or a piece of film - to help see how language in different forms is used to express ideas. There are then examples showing how a particular grammatical element can be taught in context with suggestions for improving writing through exploration of that aspect of language. Most importantly, the examples aren’t about adding lots of adjectives, verbs or adverbs to writing. They are about achieving the effect that the writer wants. For example, in Tennyson’s poignant and moving poem ‘The Lady of Shallot’ when the poet wants to paint a picture of Lancelot, a dashing young knight, he uses ornate language:

*The gemmy bridle glitter’d free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon’d baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,*

*And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.*

The cumulative effect of: *glitter'd, stars, golden, blazon'd, silver* gives a glorious image of Lancelot as seen by the Lady, even if only in the mirror. To create this effect, Tennyson deploys adjectives, adverbs and highly active verbs to evoke a particular image of splendour. However, when the Lady decides she must see Lancelot in the flesh, and takes the consequences, Tennyson strips his language bare, using mostly single syllable words:

*She left the web, she left the loom
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom.
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.*

For the stark seriousness of this act, Tennyson uses simple language. The Lady sees just 'the helmet and the plume' - no adjectives. She 'made three paces' - no highly active verbs and no adverbs. He is also not afraid to use repetition; sometimes repetition is necessary to create the effect the writer wants. Tennyson, like all good writers, chooses language to evoke a particular mood or paint a precise picture in words. This is what all young writers should be encouraged to do, not pepper their work with unnecessarily decorative vocabulary or be taught 'rules' about 'good writing'. Good writing is what works to do the job the writer wants. And studying how language works - grammar - should help young writers to say what they want to say as effectively as they can.

What do we mean by grammar?

Grammar is the study of how we make sense in speaking or writing so that we can understand people who speak the same language as we do. It's no more mysterious than that. The trouble is that often grammar is taught by naming parts of speech: *noun, verb* etc which can in itself be misleading since the same word can be called either depending on how it's used. Take the word 'cheat' for example; in this sentence: *The ref called the footballer a cheat for diving* 'cheat' is a noun. But in this sentence: *I often cheat at cards* 'cheat' is a verb. So understanding grammar is more than a matter of learning just to name parts of speech; it's a matter of understanding how language works so that we can say (or write) exactly what we want to say as effectively as possible.

Before starting to teach grammar it's worth reflecting on how you were taught grammar, how successful it was and how confident you feel when you see lists of grammatical terms. If you feel confident, then it suggests that you were taught that knowing how language works, and the grammatical terms that describe that, will help you to make sense of language and shape language to make meaning. If you feel a tingle of fear when you hear particular terminology, then it suggests that you were only taught the names of grammatical parts, rather than how they work to create meaning.

Implicit knowledge about language

It's often best to start with what you know implicitly about language. Try filling in the gaps here (there are no correct answers):

I walked to the _____ and picked up a _____. It was _____ and _____.
Unfortunately, I _____ it. What could I _____ now?

In the first sentence, you might have chosen words like 'table' and 'book' or 'cupboard' and 'plate'. These are nouns. No other kind of word would fit. It just wouldn't sound right if you put 'lovely' and 'jumped' in either of those gaps. In the second sentence you may have put the adjectives: old/blue/china, and tatty/leather/fragile. It wouldn't have made sense if you had put 'tree' or 'car' there (try it). In the third sentence, you wouldn't have put the adjective 'yellow'. 'Unfortunately, I yellow it' just doesn't make sense but adding a verb such as 'dropped' or 'hated' would. And similarly, in the final sentence you wouldn't put a noun or an adjective but another verb like 'do' or 'say'. That shows your implicit knowledge of language and it's worth

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remembering that children will have implicit knowledge too. Knowledge about language, or grammar, means bringing what is under the surface - implicit - out into the open and making it explicit. And having a language to talk about grammar helps in this process. When it comes to teaching, it's easier to help children be more reflective readers and writers if teachers and pupils have a shared language to talk about language - a metalanguage.

Children's knowledge about language

With her Year 4 class on Tower Hamlets, London, Rachel Halstead planned a teaching sequence for English, specifically aimed providing her class with experience of making choices about how best to use language for purpose and effect. She planned a narrative writing project based on using authentic texts as examples and models to support children's writing choices. Most of her class are bilingual Bengali speakers. This extract from Tamid's final narrative shows that he has made clear decisions in terms of language and sentence structure to engage his reader:

Tabseen ~~was~~ crept into the classroom quietly ~~at~~ as he saw the glimmering light of the moon glowing on the corner of his eye. Tabseen came at this time to school because he forgot to take his book yesterday in the afternoon. ~~Until~~ When Tabseen took his book he noticed something very bizzare. That very strange thing was that there was a door. Not just a door. A magical door. So Tabseen carefully stepped in to this mysterious, enchanted door until his eyes were in pitch blackness.

Tabseen fell down, down and down until, he went to a very ~~bizzare~~ amazing enchanted and shocking place. My mouth was wide open. I couldn't believe how lovely this place was. I could see colossal, cosy clouds levitating amongst the tall houses. ~~Surprisingly~~ I smelt ~~yummy~~ mouth powering sweets beside many trees. Those trees were so tall they were as tall as mountains!

Fig 1 Tamid's story.

Tamid writes like a story teller, showing that he is a discriminating writer, able to choose when to use elaborate description and when simple, short sentences are better in creating tension, for example: 'Not just a door. A magical door.' and although he shifts from third to first person, he contrasts the short sentence 'My mouth was wide open.' with 'I could see colossal, cosy clouds levitating amongst the tall houses.' He also continues to re-read and improve his work as he writes, for example, instead of 'yummy' he decides on 'mouth powering' – a more precise description - to evoke the taste of the sweets beside the trees. He crosses out 'bizzare' and replaces it with 'amazing' because he notices that he has used the word before and doesn't want unnecessary repetition. However, he is aware that sometimes repetition can be effective, as in 'down, down and down' to express the depth of the blackness.

Tamid is not writing to a formula, simply copying the models he has read. His teacher has planned for her class to have rich reading experiences linked to specific language goals, reading and investigating a range of texts. These have been accompanied by explicit teaching about the chosen language feature(s). All the work is based on a good deal of discussion and experimentation – trying out ideas in their own writing so that the children can make controlled writing choices when it comes to writing independently (see page 14 REDM process). Research indicates that this kind of experience is the best way for children to get to grips with grammar and language use. The process of moving from reading to writing via discussion and giving children opportunities to try out their own ideas is a much more effective process than taking the class through a series of 'naming' parts of language out of context and completing decontextualised exercises.

This also means that children will also become familiar with appropriate terminology in engaging contexts of reading and writing and therefore be well prepared for doing well in the Year 6 test without having to spend time in separate grammar lessons which have no relevance or impact on their development as readers and writers.

Research on grammar

The explicit teaching and learning of grammar has been the subject of controversy for decades. The rationale for the teaching grammar in the 2014 English National Curriculum states:

Explicit knowledge of grammar is... 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. (DfE, 2013)

The emphasis here is on grammar teaching in context having a positive effect on the ability of children to make effective choices in spoken and written language. However, the introduction of a statutory grammar test for Y6 pupils in England in 2010 and the content of all subsequent test papers have a different emphasis. The majority of questions emphasise grammatical terminology for labelling and identifying. The high stakes nature of this test has led to significant time being spent in KS2 classrooms on labelling, identifying grammatical features in sentences in order for children to do well in the test. In many cases this takes place in separate lessons which have little connection with ongoing English teaching. However, research evidence is clear: teaching to this test will not help children make more informed and effective choices when they speak and write.

Two significant large-scale studies (Hillocks, 1986; Andrews *et al.*, 2006) found no evidence that formal teaching of grammar which labels and identifies items of language use has any beneficial effect on language production. Indeed until fairly recently there has been little published research carried out in primary classrooms about any positive impact of explicit grammar teaching on pupil outcomes, particularly in developing their response to and production of a range of texts.

Thankfully, there is now powerful research evidence that when relevant grammar is taught explicitly in context it can be very beneficial to young writers. A large-scale study from Exeter University (Myhill *et al.*, 2013) in secondary schools found significant positive effects for teaching grammar in the context of teaching about writing. Since 2017 this research has now been extended to primary pupils. See:

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/research/centres/centreforresearchinwriting/grammar-teacher-resources/> for research outline, findings and helpful resources.

The Exeter research team then teased out the practical implications for teaching, as follows:

- Always link a grammar feature to its effect on the writing
- Use grammatical terms but explain them through examples
- Encourage high-quality discussion about language and effects
- Use authentic examples from authentic texts
- Use model patterns for children to imitate
- Support children to design their writing by making deliberate language choices
- Encourage language play, experimentation and risk taking

Myhill *et al.* (2017)

These practical implications can be seen in the approach taken in this book.

Talking about grammar

Being able to use grammatical metalanguage allows for more succinct talk about grammar and discussion of function and effects. For example, in key stage 1, a focus on verbs might start with a picturebook about a child walking down the road. In role play children might be asked to think about different ways the child might be going down the road: *running, sprinting, trudging, gliding, scooting, skipping, dawdling...* Children enact these different verbs and discuss how they change the movement as well as suggesting the mood of the character. These insights can then be used to build vocabulary and offer choices for them to use in their own writing whilst developing their grammatical understanding of the function of verbs - that they are more than simply 'doing words'. Once children have got to grips with verbs they can think about how adverbials modify verbs - that is, add information about how, when or where the verb is

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carried out. For example, the child might trudge *slowly*, *unwillingly*, *yesterday*, or *along the pavement*. They may not immediately remember the grammatical terms, but they are likely to remember the way the language changes to suggest different effects because they have had experience of the effect of changing the verbs, experimenting practically with the grammatical feature and then applying the terms ‘verb’ and ‘adverb’ to talk about their experience and the effect of the different choices.

A note about vocabulary

A small number of the statutory statements in the English National Curriculum appendix 2 (see below) are focused explicitly on vocabulary development (rather than spelling elements, such as prefixes and suffixes, and how meaning and grammatical function changes when they are added to the root words) to increase the number of words in children’s spoken and written lexicon.

Two examples are prominent.

In Year 3:

Word families based on common words, showing how words are related in form and meaning [for example, solve, solution, solver; dissolve, insoluble]

And in Year 6:

The difference between vocabulary typical of informal speech and vocabulary appropriate for formal speech and writing [for example, find out – discover; ask for – request; go in – enter]

In this book we have included some activities related to these statements but have not gone into vocabulary teaching in depth. However, many of the activities are also helpful in developing a wider vocabulary.

There has been much recent comment about the importance of vocabulary and the need to introduce children to an increasingly wide variety of words. Much of this comment is contextualised by the idea of ‘closing the vocabulary gap’. For example, Quigley (2018) writes:

By closing the vocabulary gaps for children in our classrooms with their peers, we can offer them the vital academic tools for school success, alongside the capability to communicate with confidence in the world beyond the school gates. (2018:2)

He adds: ‘there are no quick fixes when it comes to accumulating something like a 50,000 word vocabulary.’ (*ibid.* p.45). Quigley offers practical activities as well as useful word lists to develop a wide ranging ‘academic’ vocabulary. However, the same caveat applies to vocabulary teaching as it does to grammar – that teaching words out of context and in ‘one-off’ lessons will have little impact. As E.D. Hirsch comments:

‘Some brief word study in context ... can be useful when used strategically, but only 5 or 10 minutes a day. The fastest and best way to learn words is unconsciously and in context when learning about things.’ (Interview with E.D. Hirsch, *Education News*, January 25th 2013)

Testing children’s knowledge of grammar

Eleven year olds in England are now tested on their knowledge about grammar, punctuation and spelling. The tests are structured so that they can be easily marked online so the questions require simply identifying particular grammatical features. For example in the 2019 test the following questions were asked:

1. What word class is *him* in the sentence below?

Josef’s friends rushed to meet him, desperate to see if he had won.

Tick one:

a preposition

an adjective

a pronoun

a noun

1 mark

2. What kind of clause is underlined in the sentence below?

If they could afford to, the ancient Romans ate well.

1 mark (1)

In order to perform well in the test, children need to be familiar with the terminology and able to apply their understanding of grammatical terms in an unfamiliar and artificial context. The percentage of children in England reaching the ‘expected standard’ in the test has risen from 73% in 2016 to 78% in 2019. But even if they are successful at this, it tells us nothing about their writing ability or their ability to reflect on how authors make grammatical choices for effect. Although this book is not designed to help children practise for these kinds of test, it does set out to support children’s developing knowledge and understanding of grammar in context and enhance their ability to tackle tests like these successfully.

The structure of these materials

These materials cover the grammatical and punctuation features listed in the National Curriculum as sentence structure, text structure and punctuation. They also cover the word structure section with short ‘Vocabulary work’ activities for terminology related to spelling, for example, *singular/plural, suffix*.

There are also photocopiable materials in Section Six.

The National Curriculum in English

The chart below shows the extensive statutory requirements contained in the current National Curriculum in English which pertain to Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, including terminology the children should be introduced to in each year.

Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation – Years 1 to 6

Year 1	Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)
Word	Regular plural noun suffixes <i>-s</i> or <i>-es</i> including the effects of these suffixes on the meaning of the noun. Suffixes that can be added to verbs where no change is needed in the spelling of root words (for example, <i>helping, helped, helper</i>). How the prefix <i>-un</i> changes the meaning of verbs and adjectives (negation, for example, <i>unkind, or undoing; untie the boat</i>).
Sentence	How words can combine to make sentences. Joining words and joining clauses using <i>and</i> .
Text	Sequencing sentences to form short narratives.
Punctuation	Separation of words with spaces. Introduction of capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks to demarcate sentences. Capital letters for names and for the personal pronoun <i>I</i> .
Terminology for pupils	letter, capital letter word, singular, plural sentence, punctuation, full stop, question mark, exclamation mark

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Year 2	Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)
Word	<p>Formation of nouns using suffixes such as <i>-ness, -er</i> and by compounding (for example, <i>whiteboard, superman</i>).</p> <p>Formation of adjectives using suffixes such as <i>-ful, -less</i> (a fuller list of suffixes can be found in the Year 2 spelling section in English Appendix 1)</p> <p>Use of the suffixes <i>-er, -est</i> in adjectives and the use of <i>-ly</i> in Standard English to turn adjectives into adverbs.</p>
Sentence	<p>Subordination (using <i>when, if, that, because</i>) and co-ordination (using <i>or, and, but</i>).</p> <p>Expanded noun phrases for description and specification (for example, <i>the blue butterfly, plain flour, the man in the moon</i>).</p> <p>How the grammatical pattern in a sentence indicate its function as a statement, question, exclamation or command.</p>
Text	<p>Correct choice and consistent use of present tense and past tense throughout writing.</p> <p>Use of the progressive form of verbs in the present and past tense to mark actions in progress (for example, <i>she is drumming, he was shouting</i>).</p>
Punctuation	<p>Use of capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks to demarcate sentences.</p> <p>Commas to separate items in a list.</p> <p>Apostrophes to mark where letters are missing in spelling and to mark singular possessions in nouns (for example, <i>the girl's name</i>).</p>
Terminology for pupils	<p>noun, noun phrase statement, question, exclamation, command adjective, adverb, verb tense (past, present) apostrophe, comma</p>

Year 3	Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)
Word	Formation of nouns using a range of prefixes (for example, <i>super-</i> , <i>anti-</i> , <i>auto-</i>). Use of the forms <i>a</i> or <i>an</i> according to whether the next word begins with a consonant or a vowel (for example, <i>a rock</i> , <i>an open box</i>). Word families based on common words, showing how words are related in form and meaning (for example, <i>solve</i> , <i>solution</i> , <i>solver</i> , <i>dissolve</i> , <i>insoluble</i>).
Sentence	Expressing time, place and cause using conjunctions (for example, <i>when</i> , <i>before</i> , <i>after</i> , <i>after</i> , <i>while</i> , <i>so</i> , <i>because</i>) adverbs (for example, <i>then</i> , <i>next</i> , <i>soon</i> , <i>therefore</i>) or prepositions (for example, <i>before</i> , <i>after</i> , <i>during</i> , <i>in</i> , <i>because of</i>).
Text	Introduction to paragraphs as a way to group related material. Headings and sub-headings to aid presentation. Use of the present perfect form of verbs instead of the simple past (for example, <i>He has gone out to play contrasted with He went out to play</i> .)
Punctuation	Introduction to inverted commas to punctuate direct speech.
Terminology for pupils	preposition, conjunction word family, prefix clause, subordinate clause direct speech consonant, consonant letter vowel, vowel letter inverted commas (or 'speech marks').
Year 4	Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)
Word	The grammatical difference between plural and possessive –s . Standard English forms for verb inflections instead of local spoken forms (for example, <i>we were</i> instead of <i>we was</i> , or <i>I did</i> instead of <i>I done</i>).
Sentence	Noun phrases expanded by the addition of modifying adjectives, nouns and preposition phrases (for example, <i>the teacher</i> expanded to <i>the strict maths teacher with curly hair</i>) Fronted adverbials (for example, <i>Later that day, I heard the bad news</i> .)
Text	Use of paragraphs to organise ideas around a theme. Appropriate choice of pronoun or noun within and across sentences to aid cohesion and avoid repetition.
Punctuation	Use of inverted commas and other punctuation to indicate direct speech (for example, a comma after the reporting clause; end punctuation within inverted commas: The conductor shouted, "Sit down!") Apostrophes to mark plural possession (for example, <i>the girl's name</i> , <i>the girls' names</i>). Use of commas after fronted adverbials .
Terminology for pupils	determiner pronoun, possessive pronoun adverbial

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Year 5	Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)
Word	Converting nouns or adjectives into verbs using suffixes (for example, <i>-ate, -ise, ify</i>). Verb prefixes (for example, <i>dis-, de-, mis-, over-, and re-</i>).
Sentence	Relative clauses beginning with <i>who, which, where, when, whose, that</i> or an omitted relative pronoun. Indicating degrees of possibility using adverbs (for example, <i>perhaps, surely</i>) or modal verbs (for example, <i>might, should, will, must</i>).
Text	Devices to build cohesion within a paragraph, (for example, <i>then, after that, this, firstly</i>). Linking ideas across paragraphs using adverbials of time (for example, <i>later</i>) place (for example, <i>nearby</i>) and number (for example, <i>secondly</i>) or tense choices (for example, <i>be <u>had</u> seen her before</i>).
Punctuation	Brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parenthesis. Use of commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity.
Terminology for pupils	modal verb, relative pronoun relative clause parenthesis, bracket, dash cohesion, ambiguity

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Year 6	Detail of content to be introduced (statutory requirement)
Word	<p>The difference between vocabulary typical of informal speech and writing (for example, <i>find out – discover; ask for – request; go in – enter</i>).</p> <p>How words are related by meaning as synonyms and antonyms (for example, <i>big, large, little</i>).</p>
Sentence	<p>Use of the passive to affect the presentation of information in a sentence (for example, <i>I broke the window in the greenhouse</i> versus <i>The window in the greenhouse was broken by me.</i>)</p> <p>The difference between structures typical of informal speech and structures appropriate for formal speech and writing (for example, the use of question tags: <i>He’s your friend, isn’t he?</i> or the use of subjunctive forms such as <i>If I were</i> or <i>Were they to come</i> in some very formal writing and speech).</p>
Text	<p>Linking ideas across paragraphs using a wider range of cohesive devices: repetition of a word or phrase, grammatical connections (for example, the use of adverbials such as <i>on the other hand, in contrast, or as a consequence</i>) and ellipsis.</p> <p>Layout devices (for example, headings, sub-headings, columns, bullets or tables, to structure text).</p>
Punctuation	<p>Use of the semi-colon, colon and dash to mark the boundary between independent clauses (for example, <i>It’s raining: I’m fed up.</i>)</p> <p>Use of the colon to introduce a list and use of semi-colons within lists.</p> <p>Punctuation of bullet points to list information.</p> <p>How hyphens can be used to avoid ambiguity (for example, <i>man eating shark</i> versus <i>man-eating shark, or recover</i> versus <i>re-cover</i>).</p>
Terminology for pupils	<p>subject, object</p> <p>active, passive</p> <p>synonym, antonym</p> <p>ellipsis, hyphen, colon, semi-colon, bullet points</p>

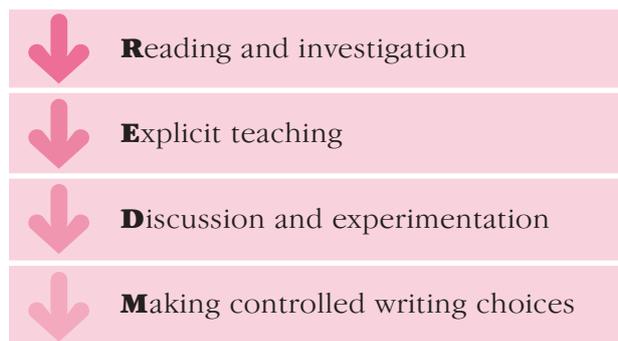
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335190/English_Appendix_2_-_Vocabulary_grammar_and_punctuation.pdf

As learning about language is a cumulative process, although case study examples and vignettes based on practice are attached to specific year groups, the rest of the material can be used with any year as appropriate. Certain aspects, for example, adverbials, will need to be revisited as children grow more experienced with texts, become more analytical about what they read and as they learn to refine the way they write. For this reason, the material does not strictly follow the sequence in the chart above.

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However, there is a common process underpinning the material and drawing on the work of Hillocks (1986) and Myhill (2017) we have based the material in the book on an underlying view of the importance of explicit teaching of grammar in context and of children being actively involved in investigating language in use. All the case studies, vignettes and ‘Quick and Easy’ examples begin with reading and investigation supported by explicit teaching of the specific language feature under consideration, then move through discussion about how this piece of language works, experimenting with it in use, and end in practising its use by making informed and controlled choices in writing. Drawing on the available research evidence and our own experience we have devised the following process for teaching grammar in context: the REDM sequence:



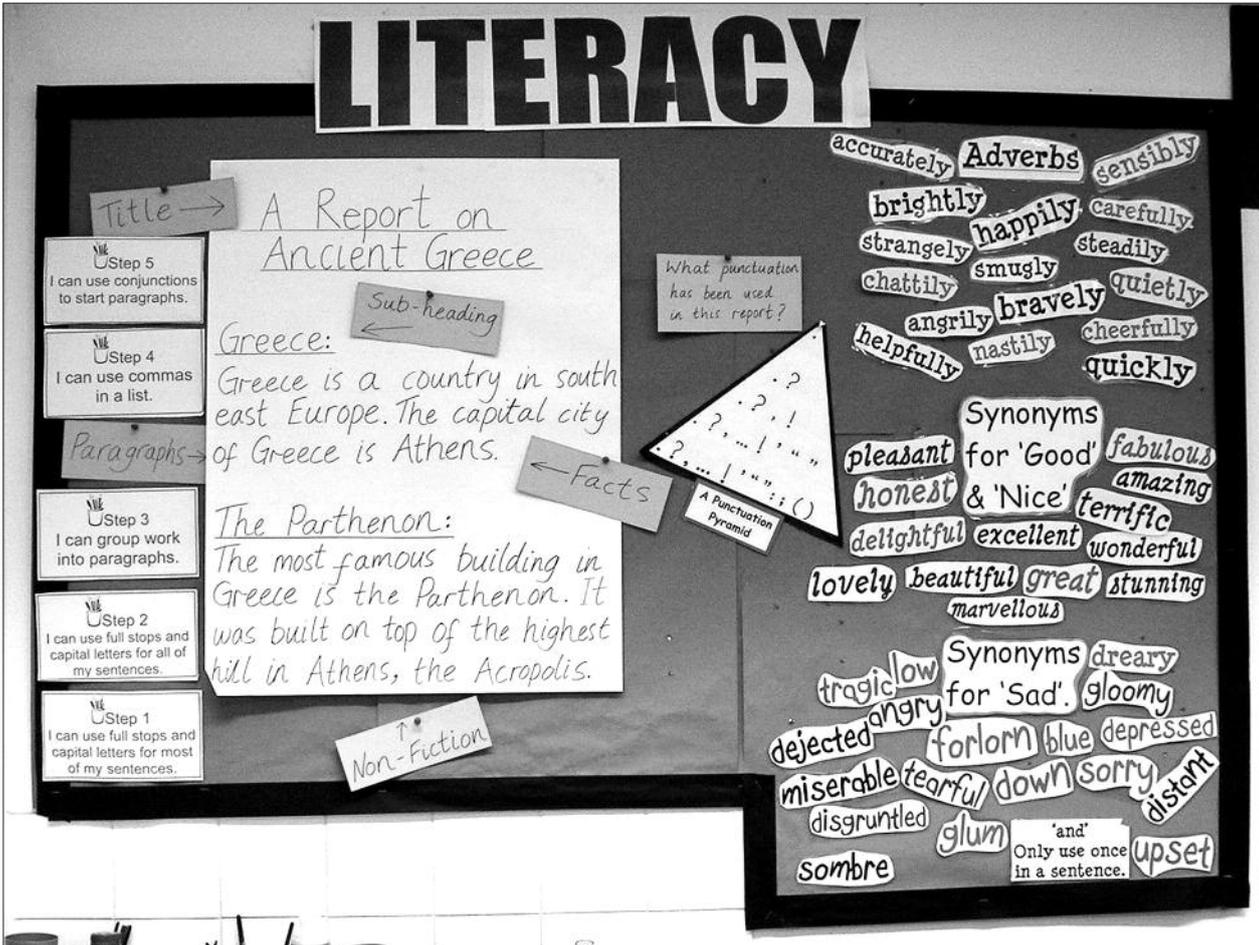
Throughout the material there are also handy terminology checks and there is a special section about tackling the Year 6 test. The final section contains photocopiable resources.

Notes

1. These are taken from the 2019 KS2 test for Grammar punctuation and spelling: Paper 1: questions. Available on: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/803816/STA198213e_2019_ks2_English_GPS_Paper1_questions.pdf (Accessed 31st July 2019)

Section One Words

Throughout this section there are suggestions for developing a working wall with examples and 'rules' for use.



Structural words and lexical words

As the Introduction shows, we're very familiar with sentences. We read and speak them all the time and can recognise the way they are strung together. It's rather like having a string of beads of different colours and sizes. Sentences are made up of different kinds of words. Some of them make the structure of the sentence, for example:

She _____ down the _____ .
pronoun _____ *preposition determiner*

These **structural words** (pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, determiners amongst other things) make it possible for you to imagine what words might be used to fill the blanks and give a precise meaning. **Lexical words** are the ones you would select from to fill the gaps: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs.

How do you know what kinds of words might fit? It's a matter of implicit knowledge. It's pretty clear in this sentence that 'She' has to do something - run, walk, dawdle (verbs) - down something - perhaps the road, path or track - (noun, indicated by the determiner).

Nouns and noun phrases

Nouns are words for things, people, animals, or states of mind or existence: *frog, wood, woman, tiger, toad, sorrow, fear, love, humility, hunger, coronation, palace, queen, envy, courage*. These are often referred to as common nouns. Proper nouns, which need a capital letter, are names of people, places, days and months, for example, *Anita, Birmingham, Friday* and *February*.

Compound nouns are made up of two or more words, sometimes an adjective and a noun or a noun and a noun which keep their original spelling when joined together:

whiteboard, rainfall, toothbrush.

Noun phrases enhance nouns: *a huge blue whale, a head of beautiful curls, the cottage, quiet and deserted*.

Vignette Year 1 Proper nouns

This Year 1 teacher started work on nouns by talking about the names of the children in the class. She wrote some on the board using lower case letters and asked the children if they were correct. The children soon spotted that the names needed capitals so she corrected them and wrote the school name and address on the board with lower case letters for volunteers in the class to amend with the capitals in the right places. To consolidate the idea of choosing capitals for names and using lower case for common nouns, the teacher wrote *chicken, hen, duck, turkey* and *fox* on the board but didn't say anything more about the list of words. She then told the children the story of Chicken Licken. She chose not to include Goosey Loosey because she wanted to use the nouns as an example of adding 's' to make the plural of regular nouns and 'goose' has the irregular plural 'geese'. As she told the story she added actions, sounds and different voices:

Chicken Licken

Chicken Licken lived in a farmyard and liked to wander about finding nice seeds to eat. One day when she was pecking about in the field, under a tree, an acorn fell on her head.

Chicken Licken looked up but couldn't see anything. "Oh, dear!" she said, "The sky is falling. I'd better tell the king."

She was running back to the farmyard where she met her friend Henny Penny.

"What's the matter?" asked Henny Penny.

"The sky is falling. We must tell the king!" clucked Chicken Licken.

"I'm coming with you," said Henny Penny.

Chicken Licken and Henny Penny were rushing off to tell the king when they met Ducky Lucky.

"What's the matter?" asked Ducky Lucky.

"The sky is falling. We must tell the king!" clucked Chicken Licken.

"I'm coming with you." said Ducky Lucky.

Chicken Licken, Henny Penny and Ducky Lucky were rushing off to tell the king when they met Turkey Lurkey.

"What's the matter?" asked Turkey Lurkey.

"The sky is falling. We must tell the king!" clucked Chicken Licken.

"I'm coming with you." said Turkey Lurkey.



Chicken Licken, Henny Penny, Ducky Lucky and Turkey Lurkey were rushing off to tell the king when they met Foxy Loxy.

“What’s the matter?” asked Foxy Loxy.

“The sky is falling. We must tell the king!” clucked Chicken Licken.

“Well, just come with me. I am walking that way so I can take you to the king.” Foxy Loxy was thinking that he was about to have a very fine dinner.

Chicken Licken, Henny Penny, Ducky Lucky and Turkey Lurkey followed Foxy Loxy into the dark forest.

Foxy Loxy was just getting ready to gobble them up when suddenly a tiny acorn dropped from the tree.

Foxy Loxy looked up but couldn’t see anything. “Oh, dear!” he said, “The sky really is falling. I’d better tell the king.” And he ran off and was never seen again.

The birds were very relieved and decided that if Foxy Loxy was going to tell the king they needn’t bother ... so Chicken Licken, Henny Penny, Ducky Lucky and Turkey Lurkey all went home.

When the children had all understood the story, they re-told it as a class, joining in with the repeated sections.

To make the difference between proper and common nouns clear, alongside the list *chicken, hen, duck, turkey* and *fox* the teacher wrote the names of the characters using capitals: *Chicken Licken, Henny Penny, Ducky Lucky, Turkey Lurkey* and *Foxy Loxy*. She asked the children why she had put capitals for the names and not for the list of animals. The children were quickly able to tell her that it’s because these are characters so need capital letters but that everyday nouns don’t. She confirmed this by using the terms proper and common nouns but noticed that one or two children hadn’t quite got the idea so she decided to give them extra support in group time.

The teacher then used a role play activity to teach about adding ‘s’ to common nouns to make plurals. She asked the children to work in groups of four, each being one of the birds, to re-enact the story up to where Foxy Loxy arrives. They rehearsed as a class what the characters say and she asked them to stop just before the fox arrives. At that point she asked them to change groups so that all the chickens were together, and all the hens, ducks and turkeys. On the board, next to where she had written *chicken, hen* etc, she wrote the plurals and asked the children what they noticed about how you make the plural of the nouns, explaining that ‘plural’ means ‘more than one’ – as they were more than one hen etc.

To consolidate the work, she chose some common regular nouns from the classroom (using the term ‘noun’): *book, table, chair, coat, window* and asked the children to make the plurals of these nouns by adding ‘s’. Volunteers then wrote these on the Word Wall, with the ‘s’ in a different colour, as a reference point.

Vocabulary work Nouns (Year 2)

You may want to spread these activities out over different days.

Syllables

This can be a very quick activity but is needed before looking at adding the suffix *-ness*. Using your own name, clap the number of syllables. Ask the children to clap the number of syllables in their names. Just to check that everyone is clear about what a syllable is, ask volunteers to clap the syllables in things around the classroom: *window, dictionary, table, computer...* Consolidate this as the children read and write over the next few weeks.