

# 1

## ‘Pen-to-Paper’ stories

The focus of this initial chapter centres on the notion of getting children across the early years (3–5) and primary age phases (5–11) to actually put ‘pen to paper’. Whilst many teachers use different strategies to stimulate potential stories in children’s minds (e.g. video footage, role play, speaking and listening opportunities, pictures and images, and music – see Wijaya and Tedjaatmadja, n.d.), it is important for children to be able to turn this ‘story potential’ into reality by making a record of their story, evidence of which is typically presented in written form but can also include drawings/illustrations and audio recordings.

This chapter presents a variety of Ideas to effectively motivate children into *wanting* to record their story in written form by focusing on two key considerations: *what* should children physically write their stories on, and *where* should they write? Children in classrooms today are faced too often with the same kinds of writing paper which they are expected to fill with a story – white A4 or lined paper in exercise books. The first half of this chapter suggests Ideas that make adjustments to the shape (*Shaped stories*), size (*Sized stories*), colour (*Colour stories*) and ‘feel’ of the paper that children work on (*Tactile stories*) in an effort to ‘hook children in’ and stimulate the stories that they write in the classroom. Innovative story writing is promoted by getting children to write stories which use their whole body (*Body stories*), not only as story stimuli but also as a human display board for the shameless self-promotion of their writing efforts!

The second half of this chapter focuses its attention on taking

story writing outside of the classroom and promoting its undertaking in the familiar setting of the home or place of residence, highlighting different 'spaces' where children can create, develop and present stories to family members or those close to the child (see *Bedroom stories*, *Bathroom stories*, *Kitchen stories*, *Living room stories* and *Garden stories*). The chapter offers teachers unusual, exciting and effective strategies and ideas which can be shared with parents and carers to promote story writing in different locations in the home/place of residence; do refer to Graham-Clay (2005), who offers a critical exploration of practical communication strategies which teachers can use to effectively share these writing strategies and ideas with parents and carers as stimulating Weekend Work (homework) for children.

### Taking a Closer Look at 'Blank Minds'

One of the initial points made in *Shaped stories* (p. 36) emphasises the fact that when they are asked to write a story 'some children[s] creative minds can be a little like [a] piece of paper: *blank!*'. This is commonly referred to as 'writer's block', which Rose (1984: 3) defines as 'an inability to begin or continue writing for reasons other than a lack of basic skill or commitment'. This highlights two important considerations for teachers when thinking about children's story writing:

1. Teachers are reminded that children's writing output is influenced by their age, their stage of writing development (see Introduction, p. 12), and whether they have any SEND which may contribute in some way to 'a lack of basic skill' noted in their written work (e.g. limited language proficiency or a physical disability). Teachers should ensure that they have *high* writing expectations of their children but that these should be *realistic* in relation to the children's *actual* capabilities. These expectations can be monitored through the use of regular assessment and 'next steps' targets (APP – see <http://tinyurl.com/d7vx65r>).
2. There are children in our classrooms who lack writing commitment; many teachers would suggest that this typically relates to boys in their class (Safford et al., 2004), particularly

in light of the results of national testing (see DfE, 2012c). Writing commitment is important for all writers, irrespective of their gender or age. There are numerous reasons why children may lack dedication to their writing; these include:

- having other curriculum strengths/interests;
- finding that they do not have enough time to actually write in class; or
- having too many distractions around them (e.g. their friends).

One of the key roles of a teacher is to promote and model practical strategies to help improve children's commitment levels to writing in the classroom. These include:

- Set writing targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related (SMART) for children to work towards and achieve (see <http://tinyurl.com/75uzh94> for information about the meaning and setting of SMART targets).
- Ensure that sufficient time is offered on the timetable for quality writing activity each day.
- Offer children a choice about their writing – what they are going to write *about*, what they are going to write *on* (paper, computers, acetates) and *where* they are going to write (inside, outside, on the floor, next to friends).
- Offer frequent and purposeful praise for both children's written *output* and their *efforts*.
- Use rewards to acknowledge children's increasing levels of writing commitment (see Cremin et al., 2006 and Nolen, 2007 for further ideas).

Smith (1982, cited in Cowie and Hanrott, 1984: 200) suggests that there are three main types of writer's block:

1. 'Procedural blocks [that] arise when the writer's mind has gone blank and it is not clear what should be written next';
2. Psychological blocks that occur when 'the writing task appears too difficult, or the audience is perceived as a threatening one'; and

3. Physical blocks that refer to ‘the sheer physical demands of the writing process [which] can inhibit the young writer from completing the task’.

An awareness of these different writing blocks can help teachers to select appropriate strategies to positively address these in the classroom. Select practical ‘encouragement’ suggestions are summarised in Table 1.1 to initially support teachers’ practice across the 3–11 age phase.

**Table 1.1** Practical ‘encouragement’ suggestions to help children combat different types of writer’s block

	<b>3–5 age phase</b>	<b>5–7 age phase</b>	<b>7–11 age phase</b>
<b>Procedural blocks</b>	Encourage children to repeatedly verbalise what they want to write down.	Encourage children to make use of writing prompts/ questions.	Encourage children to create a story plan before they initiate their writing.
<b>Psychological blocks</b>	Encourage children to mark-make as part of their play based activities, both indoors and outdoors.	Encourage children to work towards targets that are appropriate to their stage of writing development (see p. 12).	Encourage children to seek constructive criticism in both verbal and written form from different audiences to help alleviate the threat posed by them.
<b>Physical blocks</b>	Encourage children to engage in activities which develop both their fine motor and gross motor skills.	Encourage children to ‘use a writing style which is easier for them e.g. print vs. cursive’ (Sansosti et al., 2010: 96).	Encourage children to work on their stories over several sessions, ‘breaking up’ the writing into manageable ‘chunks’.

Other strategies are available to help children cope with and overcome writer’s block; these include:

- Where possible/appropriate, encourage children to ‘step away’ from the writing, doing some physical exercise or a different activity and then coming back to the writing later on (3–7).

- Reduce the amount of distractions around the child so that they can devote their attention to the writing of their story (3–11).
- Suggest that children read something, as it may offer them some story inspiration. Do ensure that this is not used as an opportunity for children to plagiarise others' work! (5–11).
- Encourage children to adopt some self-belief by telling themselves that they *can* write and that they *can* write well (3–7).
- Advocate that children just get something (*anything!*) down on paper, irrespective of whether it is good or 'not so good'. Robertson (cited in Tanner, 2011) calls this the 'Dump Version': 'It's sort of diarrh[o]ea on the page – get it all out in concrete words, ignoring order and mechanics and cohesion. Literally dump it on the page.' If children 'dump' their words on whiteboards using dry wipe pens it is easy for them to revise and edit their story with the simple wipe of a dry wipe board rubber.

To further support teachers, quality readings and websites that advocate a wealth of additional strategies to help children overcome writer's block are offered below:

- **Website:** *Writers Block in Elementary-Aged Children from an OTs Perspective* by Schulken (2008) – available at <http://tinyurl.com/chq3za4>. A smashing collection of ideas across the primary age phase from an American occupational therapist's perspective.
- **Book:** Bowkett, S. (2013) *Get Them Thinking Like Writers!* London: Continuum. See section 1.
- **Website:** *Writer's Block* – available at <http://tinyurl.com/c6v4gjp> – useful for parents and carers.

**Table 1.2** Recommended readings associated with 'Pen-to-paper' stories

<b>Books</b>	<p>National Writing Project and Nagin, C. (2003) <i>Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Our Schools</i>. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.</p> <p><i>This stimulating book 'examines the myths and realities surrounding the teaching of writing in schools' in the USA. It 'reveals how kids learn to write, what schools need to do to teach writing effectively' and 'shows that effective writing teachers address more than content and skills' (quotes taken from inside dust cover). Consider how subject knowledge from this book can be used to inform your practice and enrich children's 'Pen-to-paper' stories.</i></p> <p>Cleaver, P. (2006) <i>Ideas for Children's Writers</i>. Oxford: How To Books.</p> <p><i>This book, whilst being written for adults wishing to write for children, is a 'comprehensive resource book of plots, themes, genres, lists, what's hot &amp; what's not' (book's subtitle) in the world of children's story writing. The book is full of brilliant lists, ranging from Colours (and variations) of the Rainbow to Ranks in the Armed Forces which can be used by teachers to help children enrich their 'Pen-to-paper' stories.</i></p>
<b>Research journal articles</b>	<p>Bearne, E. (2007) <i>Writing</i>. ITE English: Readings for Discussion. [Online]. Available at: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/chbw5em">http://tinyurl.com/chbw5em</a> (Accessed: 7 April 2012).</p> <p><i>This fascinating paper explores, amongst other things, young writers' perceptions of writing, writing as both a process and product, and the range of purposes and readers for writing. Consider how the findings from this paper compare to the views of children in your class (where appropriate) in relation to the aspects identified above.</i></p> <p>Giles, R. M. and Wellhousen Tunks, K. (2009) Putting the power in action: Teaching young children 'how to' write. <i>Texas Child Care</i>. Fall. [Online]. Available at: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/d7ayw6c">http://tinyurl.com/d7ayw6c</a> (Accessed: 14 April 2012).</p> <p><i>This interesting article advocates an 'I do, we do, you do' model to introduce children to writing by providing strong support initially and gradually encouraging more independence as they gain the basic skills. Consider adopting this approach when engaging children with 'Pen-to-paper' stories.</i></p>

<b>Websites</b>	<p>Anonymous (2012) <i>Ideas for Developing Writing in Your Setting</i>. [Online]. Available at: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/bqdcaho">http://tinyurl.com/bqdcaho</a> (Accessed: 14 April 2012).</p> <p><i>This website has a valuable PDF that offers a wealth of practical ideas linked to resources and practice to promote writing in the classroom and in other 'spaces' in the early years setting (3–5). Consider integrating ideas from this PDF into your learning and teaching as children engage in select 'Pen-to-paper' stories.</i></p> <p>Parents in Touch (n.d.) <i>Help Your Children 'Have fun with writing' . . . using imagination and creativity!</i> [Online]. Available at: <a href="http://tinyurl.com/cbfglmp">http://tinyurl.com/cbfglmp</a> (Accessed: 14 April 2012).</p> <p><i>This website offers a comprehensive 'parent friendly' handout to help their children overcome spelling issues, difficulties with handwriting, and having a lack of imagination and creativity. Further ideas are also offered via active web links. Consider integrating ideas from these web links into your learning and teaching as children engage in select 'Pen-to-paper' stories.</i></p>
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<b>Idea 1.1: Shaped stories</b>	<b>Suggested age group:</b> 3-year-olds to 11-year-olds
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Many children are regularly faced with a blank piece of white rectangular paper which teachers ask them to ‘fill’ with a story. For some children their creative minds can be a little like the piece of paper: <i>blank</i>! <i>Shaped stories</i> not only help to kick-start children’s imaginations, they are also very effective in helping to motivate children to <i>want</i> to put pen to paper. This Idea offers children paper which is cut into a variety of stimulating and interesting shapes, e.g. <i>crowns, dinosaur feet, dolls, iPods and cricket bats</i>. Children can either write on lines drawn <i>across</i> the shape or <i>in parallel to each side</i>; this encourages children, particularly those aged 5+, to think about the sentences they are writing, i.e. <i>will my sentence fit on one line or will I need to carry it on to the start of the next line?</i></p>	
<p><b>The cross-curricular benefits of shaped paper:</b></p> <p>Jeppson and Myers-Walls (2010) suggest that working on shaped paper helps to build on children’s skills and learning acquired from early play-based activities with shapes. Use <i>Shaped stories</i> to thus use and strengthen the mathematical knowledge in those children you teach.</p>	
<p><b>Shaped story suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories about <i>sports</i> (circular shaped paper to represent footballs, tennis balls and baseballs).</li> <li>• Stories about a <i>warning</i>, e.g. a storm, traffic, people, or a haunted house (triangular paper to represent a warning road sign).</li> <li>• The <i>rainy day</i> (cloud/raindrop shaped paper. An alternative could be an umbrella).</li> <li>• ‘<i>Being a Star for a Day</i>’ (star shaped paper).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Varying the shape:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer regular 2-D shaped paper for children to write on, e.g. <i>crosses</i> (a ‘bad day’ story), <i>octagons</i> and <i>hearts</i> (a love story).</li> <li>• Suggest irregular 2-D shapes for children to create themselves, e.g. ‘<i>splats</i>’, <i>foot/paw prints</i> and <i>puddles</i>.</li> <li>• See Appendix 1 (p. 207) for some interested shaped ideas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shaped stories – practical recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage children to shape the paper themselves with hand-drawn lines, rulers and snips/scissors (as appropriate) to develop and hone their fine motor/manipulative skills (3–11).</li> <li>• Provide writing guidelines if you do not want children to draw their own lines on their shaped paper (3–7).</li> <li>• Offer larger line-spacing on <i>Shaped story</i> papers for children aged 3–5 to mark-make on.</li> <li>• Save <i>Shaped story</i> paper offcuts and use as ‘jotter’ paper for children’s story ideas, attempts at difficult spellings and bookmarks (7–11).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Useful ‘shaped’ websites:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For some useful ‘time-saving’ shaped pages, visit <a href="http://tinyurl.com/d7rpax8">http://tinyurl.com/d7rpax8</a></li> <li>2. *To help children aged 5–11 overcome ‘writer’s block’, offer them writing prompts that are available from <a href="http://tinyurl.com/crfj5j">http://tinyurl.com/crfj5j</a>, e.g. ‘[w]rite a story about something that has been recycled, like a can . . . or plastic bag, and its adventures along the way’, shaping the paper as appropriate.</li> </ol>	

<b>Idea 1.2: Sized stories</b>	<b>Suggested age group:</b> 3-year-olds to 11-year-olds
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>As has been previously highlighted in <i>Shaped stories</i> (p. 36), children are often presented with A4 pieces of plain paper on which they are to record their stories. <i>Sized stories</i> adapt the Idea of <i>Shaped stories</i> by altering the <i>size</i> of the paper that children are asked to write on. Both teachers and children can be creative with the dimensions of the paper – <i>from the long and narrow to the short and broad!</i> In fact, by combining <i>Shaped stories</i> with <i>Sized stories</i>, teachers have access to a potential wealth of story possibilities to help children unlock their writing creativity!</p>	
<p><b>Types of Sized story:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Long stories</i> – involving characters with long parts of their body (think <i>Mr. Tickle</i> by Hargreaves, 1971), e.g. legs/arms (3–7); stories of a substantial length over several chapters (7–11).</li> <li>• <i>Thin stories</i> – stories involving one small story plot (5–7); short stories that compel children to write sentences which are formed over a number of lines (7–11).</li> <li>• <i>Big stories</i> – stories with an ensemble of characters that are located in different settings and are involved in a number of different storylines (7–11).</li> <li>• <i>Wide stories</i> – written on wide pieces of paper which encourage a number of sentences to appear on one line (5–7); stories with titles that have a ‘wide’ range of ways that the story could develop and progress, e.g. <i>Freddy’s Magical House Move</i>; <i>The Silent Singing Competition</i> (7–11).</li> <li>• <i>Broad stories</i> – mark-making on large sheets of thick paper/card with ‘broad’ (thick) felt-tip pens (3–5); stories involving strong, muscular or ‘bulky’ characters – think <i>The Hulk</i> (5–11).</li> <li>• <i>Tiny stories</i> – simple, short stories (e.g. <i>My Pets</i>) for the younger reader written by the younger writer (3–7).</li> <li>• <i>Slim stories</i> – stories written on narrow pieces of paper with fine (thin) pencils/pens (7–11).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Capturing the process and product of children’s story writing:</b></p> <p>Children aged 5–11 are likely to be encouraged to plan out story ideas, produce story drafts, test out spellings and then produce a ‘final version’ of their story using different writing books, jotters or separate pieces of paper. Consider offering children a large A2/A3 sheet of paper that they can use to work on their <i>Large story</i>; this will allow them to capture both the <i>process</i> and the <i>product</i> in one informative document, which can be useful for assessment purposes (both formative and summative).</p>	
<p><b>Stimulating Sized story titles:</b></p> <p>Fagerlie (1975) claims that brand names help to stimulate children’s story writing. Consider integrating these into <i>Sized story</i> titles to inspire young writers, for example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Long John Silver’s enormous rocket ride adventure to the planet <i>Nike</i>!</li> <li>2. Tiddly Tom’s gone and lost his tiny <i>Disney</i> voice!</li> <li>3. Wendy’s wide <i>McDonald</i> mouth!</li> <li>4. Captain Sam’s skiing holiday on the huge slopes of <i>Ugg</i>!</li> <li>5. Harry the hamster’s new <i>Mattel</i> activity wheel!</li> </ol>	

**Idea 1.3: Colour stories****Suggested age group:** 5-year-olds to 11-year-olds**Explanation:**

Personal observations of writing practice in primary schools highlight that most children are used to writing stories on white paper. *Colour stories* make one small yet significant change to this paper provision by giving children the opportunity to record their stories on paper of different colours. Not only is this considered to be ‘visually stimulating’ for both the writer *and* the reader, but the choice of colour can influence the *type* of story the children write (see table below) and *what* they actually write\*.

**\* Colours, what they symbolise and associated story genres/age bandings:**

Colour	What the colour symbolises	Associated story genres	Age
Red	Action, confidence, courage	Adventure, suspense, fantasy	7–11
Pink	Love and beauty	Fairy tale, fantasy, romance	5–11
Brown	Earth, order and convention	Stories from other cultures	5–11
Orange	Vitality and endurance	Classic, inspirational, nature, drama	7–11
Yellow	Wisdom, joy and happiness	Traditional, humour	5–11
Green	Life, nature and well-being	Historical, western, truth, country life	7–11
Blue	Youth, truth and peace	Myths, personal, realistic	7–11
Purple	Royalty, magic and mystery	Fantasy, mystery, science fiction	7–11

(Information adapted from Emily Gems, n.d.)

**Using colour to stimulate stories:**

- Possible *Colour stories* children could write include ‘The day the world turned blue’; ‘My big red balloon’; ‘An orange envelope for me?’; ‘Sam and his multi-coloured rabbit’ (5–7).
- For children aged 7–11 *Colour story* possibilities include extended stories about events in characters’ lives over the four ‘colourful’ seasons, stories where characters decide to inject some ‘colour’ (excitement/adventure) into their lives, or stories which include ‘colourful’ idioms, for example *see red* and *tickled pink* (see Townend, 2012).
- Encourage children (7–11) to think about colours when describing characters, e.g. the colour of their eyes (*piercing blue*), their teeth (*yellowing*), their hair (*bright orange*), their clothes (*jet black*) – how do these colour choices shape the way readers perceive them as characters?
- Bolton (in Bolton et al. 2006) advocates getting children to ‘[w]rite a blue, purple or yellow thought’ with coloured paper and pens as a writing warm-up activity. Encourage children (9–11) to use these as the thoughts of different characters in their *Colour stories*.

**Colour stories considerations:**

1. *Colour stories* may pose some difficulties for children who have dyslexia, e.g. issues with paper glare and the ‘dazzling’ effect of certain colours. The use of pastel colours not only supports these children, but they are also seemingly of benefit for *all* children as they are considered to be ‘less distracting to the mental concentration of each stage of [children’s] development’ (Steiner, cited in Atkinson, 2004).
2. Think about children who are colour-blind or who have other eyesight difficulties such as Meares-Irlen syndrome/scotopic sensitivity (visual stress). Consult with parents/carers and the children themselves to identify appropriate coloured resources to support their writing, e.g. coloured overlays and glass lenses. See <http://tinyurl.com/cu522w7> for further information.

<b>Idea 1.4: Tactile stories</b>	<b>Suggested age group:</b> 3-year-olds to 9-year-olds
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Teachers, particularly those working with 3–5-year-olds, would agree that children learn through activities that involve ‘touch’. Popular children’s story books by Carle (1969; 1984), Campbell (1984; 2009) and Emberley (1992) are attractive to young children because they have sensory features. <i>Tactile stories</i> aim to offer children the opportunity to write ‘sensory stimulating’ stories in an effort to maintain young writers’ motivation levels and engage their readers, particularly those who are reluctant readers or those who are visually impaired.</p>	
<p><b>Writing Tactile stories (3–5):</b></p> <p>Young children will feel empowered as writers if they are able to adapt stories that have a strong structure. Stories such as <i>Are You My Mother?</i> (Eastman, 2006) and <i>‘I Don’t Care!’ said the Bear</i> (West, 1997) have predictable repetitive content and use recurring words to make the text memorable and easy to comprehend. Help young children to identify these functional carrier phrases in simple stories, e.g. ‘I see a _____ looking at me’ (<i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?</i> Martin, Jrn. 1995), using these as a frame for their own writing e.g. <i>I see a hen looking at me.</i></p>	
<p><b>Tactile stories and ‘tangible’ vocabulary (5–9):</b></p> <p>The writing of <i>Tactile stories</i> offers children the opportunity to extend their vocabulary and vary their starter sentences. Sensory boxes, feely games and handling textured objects/materials will help children to develop an understanding of tactile adjectives which they can use, e.g. ‘Harry’s dad has a fuzzy chin’; ‘Doggy put his wet nose on Bethany’s foot’ (5–7). Tactile adverbs can also be used to begin sentences, e.g. ‘Roughly, David dried himself’; ‘Softly, Gemma crept down the stairs’ as opposed to children’s sentences typically starting with the names of people, things or places (7–9).</p>	
<p><b>Tactile stories and the importance of illustrations:</b></p> <p>For a <i>Tactile story</i> to be effective they need to ‘feature illustrations that can be explored and perceived . . . through touch. Tactile elements [should] allow . . . children to feel, stroke, pull, lift, shake, rattle and squeak their way through a story’ (Clearvision, 2006). Practical ways to achieve this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Layering materials to emphasise thickness.</li> <li>• Using real life objects.</li> <li>• Offering raised outlines using pipe cleaners or wool.</li> <li>• Cutting out textured silhouette shapes.</li> <li>• Filling an outline with a ‘dotted’ surface using small paper balls or holes poked through the back of card.</li> </ul> <p><i>Top tip!</i> Visit <a href="http://tinyurl.com/6v36t5a">http://tinyurl.com/6v36t5a</a> for a wealth of downloadable ‘tactile’ ideas.</p>	
<p><b>Making Tactile story text tactile:</b></p> <p>Not only are there ways to make story illustrations tactile but also the story text that children write. Practical ways this can be achieved include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very thick paint.</li> <li>• Words made out of yarn.</li> <li>• Felt-tip pen lines on sponge paper.</li> <li>• Glitter mixed into thick glue.</li> <li>• Sandpaper letters (derived from the Montessori Method – see <a href="http://tinyurl.com/7zcnrcn">http://tinyurl.com/7zcnrcn</a>).</li> </ul> <p><i>Read it!</i> See <a href="http://tinyurl.com/7ajdwct">http://tinyurl.com/7ajdwct</a> for a wonderful PDF on making tactile books.</p>	

<b>Idea 1.5: Body stories</b>	<b>Suggested age group:</b> 5-year-olds to 7-year-olds								
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Many of the stories that children write are unfortunately ‘locked away’ in their literary books. This means that opportunities for their work to be read and reviewed by others is limited to when teachers mark their work, parents/carers scan their books at Parents’ Evening, or when children flick through their book to start work on a ‘clean page’. <i>Body stories</i> not only use the body as ‘story stimuli’ (Buttery and Reitzammer, 1987), but also use different body parts as a living ‘display board’ on which children’s written stories can be worn. This not only promotes the purposeful exposure of children’s story writing but offers opportunities for others to read and comment on what they have read to the author in an effort to raise writers’ motivation* levels!</p>									
<p><b>*The importance of motivation for young writers – key findings from academic research:</b></p> <p>Reilly and Reilly (2005: xvi) suggest that ‘the best way of motivating children to write is to . . . encourage them to share their writing with others’. <i>Body stories</i> actively promote this sharing of children’s writing by using the author as the promoter<sup>†</sup>!</p> <p>Pudewa (2008: 1) argues a reader’s reaction to a piece of writing has a direct impact on the writer: ‘a positive response . . . will motivate the writer to continue presenting his words . . . to his audience’. It is therefore suggested that children who receive encouraging feedback from others about their story writing are more likely to want to write <i>more</i> stories. Consider the value of using <i>Body stories</i> in an effort to keep young children writing.</p>									
<p><b>†Promoting <i>Body stories</i> – ‘display board’ possibilities:</b></p> <p>There are various items children can make and wear to display their <i>Body stories</i>; these include <i>sashes, hats, wristbands, belts, ankle bracelets, headbands</i> and <i>necklaces</i> (discuss with children appropriate materials to make these out of). Allow children to see how much physical space they have to write their <i>Body story</i> on so that they can think about the length of story they can write, as this will influence the number of characters they can have in their story and the complexity of the plot.</p>									
<p><b><i>Body stories</i> and real life experiences:</b></p> <p>Children experience life through their bodies, e.g. <i>feeling poorly, taking part in running races, breaking bones, dancing at a disco, picking up heavy boxes, swimming 25 metres, grazing one’s elbows/knees</i>. Through speaking and listening opportunities invite children to contribute to whole class/group discussions about favourite body parts or <i>what makes my body special</i> in an effort to stimulate <i>Body story</i> thinking.</p>									
<p><b>Various story titles to stimulate <i>Body stories</i>:</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1. Bethany’s bulging biceps save the day!</td> <td>5. Abdulmalik’s <i>huge</i> headband!</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Little Rabbit Foo Foo’s talking foot!</td> <td>6. Cinderella’s amazing knees!</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. King Rollo’s mighty BTM (<i>bottom</i>)!</td> <td>7. The Money Monster’s purse nose!</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Calvin and his wibbly wobbly tummy!</td> <td>8. Helen’s hollow legs on Halloween!</td> </tr> </table>		1. Bethany’s bulging biceps save the day!	5. Abdulmalik’s <i>huge</i> headband!	2. Little Rabbit Foo Foo’s talking foot!	6. Cinderella’s amazing knees!	3. King Rollo’s mighty BTM ( <i>bottom</i> )!	7. The Money Monster’s purse nose!	4. Calvin and his wibbly wobbly tummy!	8. Helen’s hollow legs on Halloween!
1. Bethany’s bulging biceps save the day!	5. Abdulmalik’s <i>huge</i> headband!								
2. Little Rabbit Foo Foo’s talking foot!	6. Cinderella’s amazing knees!								
3. King Rollo’s mighty BTM ( <i>bottom</i> )!	7. The Money Monster’s purse nose!								
4. Calvin and his wibbly wobbly tummy!	8. Helen’s hollow legs on Halloween!								

<p><b>Idea 1.6: Bedroom stories</b></p>	<p><b>Suggested age group:</b> 3-year-olds to 11-year-olds</p>
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>A child's bedroom is <i>the</i> place where many 'authors of the future' are exposed to a wealth of different stories in written, verbal and pictorial form; Heath (1982: 51) supports this, describing bedtime stories as 'a major literacy event' in children's lives. <i>Bedroom stories</i> are designed to emulate a similar level of importance in relation to getting children writing. <i>Bedroom stories</i> not only offer children a productive space at home for them to think and write in, they also offer a wealth of story possibilities for writing activities in the classroom!</p>	
<p><b>Bedrooms as <i>the</i> writing space for authors:</b></p> <p>Smedley (2011) argues that 'you write best where you're most comfortable':</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Former Children's Laureate Michael Morpurgo (<i>Private Peaceful</i>) states that he writes his 'scribbly script' in a 'writing bed' in his 'storyteller's house' (see <a href="http://tinyurl.com/6ddzfqs">http://tinyurl.com/6ddzfqs</a> for more information).</li> <li>2. During his early years, Robert Louis Stevenson (<i>Treasure Island</i>) spent much of his time in bed as a result of tuberculosis, and there composed stories <i>before</i> he had learned to read.</li> </ol> <p><i>Try it!</i> Offer children blankets, pillows and teddy bears during literacy activities/sessions to nurture/improve stories written in the classroom and in the outdoor play area/playground (3–7).</p>	
<p><b>Story stimulation in the bedroom:</b></p> <p>A child's bedroom offers some cracking stimuli for fuelling story writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The bed</i> – who's underneath it? What's hidden under the mattress/pillow? What's inside that dusty old box/chest at the bottom of it? Who sleeps in it during the daytime? Why?</li> <li>• <i>The wardrobe</i> – who lives in it? What's stored in it? What's behind it? Who do people see when they look in the mirror attached to the wardrobe (think <i>Snow White</i>)? Where does it lead to if you stepped into the wardrobe (think <i>The Lion, the Witch &amp; the Wardrobe</i>)?</li> <li>• <i>Teddy bears</i> – which of them can talk? Who is the friendliest/meanest (think <i>Toy Story</i>)?</li> <li>• <i>Clothing</i> – which pieces give you special powers when you put them on? Do you have any magical footwear like Dorothy's ruby slippers (from <i>The Wizard of Oz</i>)?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Addressing the issue of reluctant writers:</b></p> <p>Many teachers work with children across the 3–11 age range who write the bare minimum or will only write their <i>Bedroom story</i> (as an example) when a teacher/parent/carer is next to them. Graham (2010: 206) claims that there are two reasons why young writers behave like this: 'anxiety about getting it wrong and a shortage of ideas'. Ways to positively address this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage children to just 'HAG it' – <i>Have A Go</i>.</li> <li>• Use computers/tablets as a writing incentive.</li> <li>• Set small 'challenges', e.g. <i>write two sentences in three minutes . . . GO!</i></li> <li>• Encourage children to talk about what they are going to write <i>before</i> they put pen to paper.</li> <li>• Maintain high writing expectations.</li> <li>• Encourage peer reviewing of children's writing.</li> <li>• Offer literacy aids, e.g. spelling books, scribble pads, alphabet strips or key word cards for support.</li> </ul>	

<b>Idea 1.7: Bathroom stories</b>	<b>Suggested age group:</b> 3-year-olds to 11-year-olds
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Children get so used to mark-making/writing stories at school they sometimes think that this is the <i>only</i> place where they can/should write stories. Many authors, however, write at home; novelist Julia Green, for example, admits to moving her laptop around her house and ‘writ[ing] in different rooms’ (Cyprus Well, 2010). <i>Bathroom stories</i> embrace this practice by offering children a stimulating opportunity to use the bathroom as an unusual yet interesting place to write their stories in and present them for other family members to read!</p>	
<p><b>Creative story writing opportunities in the bathroom:</b></p> <p>There are a number of ways children can become creative story writers in their bathroom at home:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Writing on steamed-up mirrors using their fingers as their writing tool (ensuring that the mirror is positioned low and poses no threat to the child’s safety) to continue rhyming strings, e.g. <b>wet</b> – get – let – set – pet – met – bet – jet – net (3–7).</li> <li>2. Pasting moist paper with stories written on them onto the bathroom tiles with water (5–7).</li> <li>3. Taping written stories to the inside toilet lid so that male family members have something to read. For the ladies in the house stories can be taped to the back of the bathroom door (7–11).</li> <li>4. Laminating stories for different family members to read whilst they have a bath (5–11).</li> <li>5. Using foam/sponge letters to create simple words/sentences on the inside of the bath (3–5).</li> <li>6. Hanging small self-made story books off bathroom hooks/rails so that bathroom users have something to read as they wash themselves (5–11).</li> <li>7. Mark-making/writing stories on old shower curtains* (3–11).</li> </ol> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>It is acknowledged that there are a number of health and safety considerations linked to the ideas presented above which need to be effectively managed to ensure that children do not come to any harm. Do make parents/carers aware of these when proposing <i>Bathroom stories</i> as Weekend Work (home tasks/homework) for children.</p> </div>	
<p><b>Useful online ‘bathroom-linked’ stories to stimulate <i>Bathroom story</i> discussions (7–11):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7–9: <i>Nasty bathrooms</i> by Josie – available at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/78ptofw">http://tinyurl.com/78ptofw</a>.</li> <li>• 9–11: <i>Fancy Nancy and the Bathroom Plant</i> by R. Craft – available at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/87mhbpz">http://tinyurl.com/87mhbpz</a>.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Stimulating <i>Bathroom story</i> titles to spark children’s imaginations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Duncan’s fallen down the plughole, Mum!’</li> <li>• Suzie and the talking toilet!</li> <li>• The Super Seven’s battle of the baths!</li> <li>• My <i>hundreds and thousands</i> shower!</li> <li>• Monica’s mirror-less reflection!</li> <li>• The secret sink ride to the South Pole!</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Top Tips!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage children to think carefully about the best time to use the bathroom for their writing ventures – first thing in the morning and last thing at night are usually busy times!</li> <li>• *‘Be sure to test . . . dry-erase marker[s] on any new surface you intend to mark with [as] some surfaces don’t erase very well’ (Wax, 2011).</li> </ul>	

<b>Idea 1.8: Kitchen stories</b>	<b>Suggested age group:</b> 3-year-olds to 11-year-olds
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The role of the kitchen in modern households today is very different to that of kitchens 20 or 30 years ago; in years gone by kitchens were the ‘hub’ of activity, and stories were shared freely with family members/carers and friends in verbal form during meal times. This Idea strives to support children in appreciating the wealth of stimulating possibilities that the kitchen can offer their story writing when in class and at home.</p>	
<p><b>Developing the Idea of <i>Kitchen stories</i> for children aged 3–5:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage children to physically write stories through ‘marks that have meaning’ (Hallissy, 2010: 3), e.g. marks made by fingers in salt (Marquess, 2011), flour or seeds which are sprinkled over the kitchen table at home. Alternatives to using the kitchen table include a food tray, a place mat or a marked area of the floor.</li> <li>• Suggest children use their kitchen table at home as their ‘special’ story writing space.</li> <li>• Ask children to tell stories through pictures/marks that can be presented on paper placemats for parents/carers to read/discuss at mealtimes where possible/appropriate.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Ways of ‘promoting’ <i>Kitchen stories</i> at home for children aged 5–7:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage children to display their written stories on the fridge with magnets for parents/carers and other family members to read and comment on.</li> <li>2. Suggest that children glue/paste their story writing efforts on the side of cereal boxes and soap-powder packets for heightened exposure.</li> <li>3. Don’t forget the kitchen memo board for a quick five-minute story!</li> </ol>	
<p><b>‘What if . . .’ <i>Kitchen stories</i> and inspiring appliances for children aged 7–11:</b></p> <p>There are many kitchens appliances which offer valuable plot stimulation for children’s (7–11) story writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Microwave</i> – what if the microwave is a time machine? What if it could talk/sing?</li> <li>• <i>Cooker</i> – what if the cooker is a porthole to the Ribbon Dimension? What if the cooker is a house for a ‘googly’ alien? What if the cooker is a secret Transformer?</li> <li>• <i>Washing machine</i> – what if the washing machine could turn soap powder into sweets?</li> <li>• <i>Kettle</i> – what if the kettle had legs? What if it had hidden rockets which propelled it into the air when someone wanted to make a cup of tea? What if it uses steam to write words in the air with (think of the Hookah-Smoking Caterpillar in <i>Alice In Wonderland</i>)?</li> <li>• <i>Ironing board</i> – what if it can ‘morph’ into a surfboard? What if it could shrink and fit in a child’s pocket? What if it behaved like a scared cat? What if it could play the piano?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Wonderful <i>Kitchen story</i> website:</b></p> <p>Visit <i>The Story Kitchen</i> by Van Patter (available at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/ccvpsnn">http://tinyurl.com/ccvpsnn</a>) – children aged 5–11 can virtually ‘cook’ together a hero, a place and a villain to generate the opening to a story. But they do not get the complete story – <b>they have to write the ending!</b></p>	

<b>Idea 1.9: Living room stories</b>	<b>Suggested age group:</b> 7-year-olds to 11-year-olds
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>Many children use their living room/communal area at home as a place to ‘chill’; a place where they can listen to music, read or watch TV. Some living rooms, however, have become excessively ‘active’ with the introduction of <i>Wii</i>s, dance mats and other gaming consoles (Sall and Grinter, 2007). <i>Living room stories</i> introduce children to the idea of using their living room as both a place to write <i>about</i> and to write <i>in</i>. <i>Living room stories</i> promote the switching off of radios, CD players and computers, and encourage children to use the living room environment, both real and imagined*, as stimuli to fuel their story writing.</p>	
<p><b>* Different types of living room environments:</b></p> <p>There are many different types of living rooms which can offer stimulation for children’s story writing (9–11). Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Modern</i> – what makes it modern? Who lives in it? Are they young? What do they do in it?</li> <li>• <i>Cluttered</i> – what different things are ‘hoarded’ by the character whose living room it is?</li> <li>• <i>Old fashioned</i> – why/how is it old fashioned? How old is the person/people living in it?</li> <li>• <i>Small</i> – is <i>everything</i> small in the living room? Is this a problem for the main character?</li> <li>• <i>Art nouveau</i> – what design is on the stained glass windows? Which flowers are on the walls?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>A rather ‘novel’ idea:</b></p> <p>Many teachers and children (7–11) are aware of Reading Groups or Book Clubs – groups of people who get together to talk about a book they have all read (O’Donnell-Allen, 2006). The <i>Story Club</i> is an adaptation of these gatherings where family members/carers can get together in their living room or communal space and talk about the stories that children have written.</p>	<p><b>Stimulating story titles for <i>Living room stories</i>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A snowman came for morning coffee!</li> <li>• The attack of the killer armchairs!</li> <li>• The Sunday dinner mash-up!</li> <li>• ‘Henry’s lost the TV remote!’</li> <li>• The ‘living’ room coffee table!</li> <li>• The vocal living room carpet!</li> </ul>
<p><b>‘Getting started!’ Using story spinners:</b></p> <p>Overcoming the initial writing hurdle of ‘getting started’ can be difficult for children when they are asked to write a story such as a <i>Living room story</i>. Story spinners are an active and quick way to offer children some initial ideas to work with. The spinners are simply pieces of hexagonal shaped card with a pencil or piece of dowel pushed through the centre*. On each spinner is written a collection of different ideas related to a key element of a story, e.g. ‘main characters, setting[s], problem[s] . . . [and] ending[s]’ (Baumann and Bergeron, 1993: 413). See Appendices 2 and 3 (p. 208 and 209) for examples of different spinners for children aged 5–7 – the spinners should be laminated for durability. A blank template is also offered Appendix 4 (p. 210) for children/teachers to photocopy to create their own.</p> <p>*<i>Top Tip!</i> As an alternative, spin a paperclip (acting as a ‘pointer’) around a pencil/piece of dowel which is positioned over the centre of the story spinner.</p>	

<p><b>Idea 1.10: Garden stories</b></p>	<p><b>Suggested age group:</b> 3-year-olds to 11-year-olds</p>						
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>An interesting place for children to write and get inspiration for their story writing is the garden (Babauta, 2012); according to James (2010), Roald Dahl wrote his stories in a shed at the bottom of his garden! <i>Garden stories</i> offer children plenty of exciting choices to make about their story, e.g. shall I set my story <i>in</i> or <i>under</i> a garden? What kind of characters will be in my <i>Garden story</i> – <i>humans? Animals? Plants? Personified garden tools?</i> What is the theme of my <i>Garden story</i> to be – <i>growth? Beauty? Circle of life? Man against nature?</i> Opportunities for children to 'sit and ponder' in their garden* will help them to get 'closer to nature' (London, 2004: 41) and give them time to make these choices!</p>							
<p><b>* Key consideration for <i>Garden stories</i>:</b></p> <p>It is acknowledged that some children may not have a garden where they live. This certainly does not preclude them from having access to 'garden-like' environments – visits to the local park, woods or nature park offer valuable alternatives. Small-world garden play, story books set in gardens (e.g. the BBC's <i>In the Night Garden</i>) and garden role-play areas can be found/used in classrooms for 3–7-year-olds; window boxes, school allotments and access to non-fiction books and images from the Internet offer alternatives for children aged 7–11.</p>							
<p><b>'Planting the seeds' – questions to stimulate <i>Garden stories</i>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Flowers</i> – what if the flowers can talk? What language would they speak? Do they have names?</li> <li>• <i>Shed</i> – what if the shed was a <i>Shardis</i> (a combination of a <b>shed</b> and Doctor Who's <b>Tardis</b>) – where might it take the travellers?</li> <li>• <i>Soil</i> – is there anything buried under the soil? Who lives <i>in</i> the soil? What's lurking deep <i>within</i> the soil?</li> <li>• <i>Pond</i> – why are there no fish in the pond? What's hiding at the bottom of the pond?</li> </ul>							
<p><b>Useful online/paperback <i>garden</i>-related stories (5–11):</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="306 1384 1286 1563"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="306 1384 796 1435">For the 5–7 age range</th> <th data-bbox="796 1384 1286 1435">For the 7–11 age range</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="306 1435 796 1514"><i>The Butterfly Garden</i> by Margaret Mahy – available at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/7lt52jy">http://tinyurl.com/7lt52jy</a></td> <td data-bbox="796 1435 1286 1514"><i>Millie's Garden</i> by Pam Zollman – available at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/773rqew">http://tinyurl.com/773rqew</a></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="306 1514 796 1563"><i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> by Potter (1991)</td> <td data-bbox="796 1514 1286 1563"><i>The Secret Garden</i> by Burnett (1994)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		For the 5–7 age range	For the 7–11 age range	<i>The Butterfly Garden</i> by Margaret Mahy – available at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/7lt52jy">http://tinyurl.com/7lt52jy</a>	<i>Millie's Garden</i> by Pam Zollman – available at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/773rqew">http://tinyurl.com/773rqew</a>	<i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> by Potter (1991)	<i>The Secret Garden</i> by Burnett (1994)
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<i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> by Potter (1991)	<i>The Secret Garden</i> by Burnett (1994)						
<p><b>'Steps in the garden' – the Story Stepper planner:</b></p> <p>The Story Stepper is a personal adaptation of Corbett's (2003) story mountain. A Story Stepper is a visual planning aid which helps teachers and children (5–11) to consider the 'goings-on' in their stories (their <i>Garden story</i> being a prime example). On each step children can write a word, a phrase, a sentence, a short paragraph or a drawing/sketch to help them work out the sequence of events in their story. Alternatively, Post-it® notes can be used to temporarily fix ideas to the planner. See Appendix 5 (p. 211) for an example of a <i>Garden story</i> based Story Stepper (5–7 and 7–11); Appendix 6 (p. 212) offers a blank template for teachers and children to photocopy and use.</p> <p><i>Suggestion!</i> Encourage children to create their own Story Steppers using freehand or ICT software.</p>							