

OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

**FINAL REPORT ON THE OTLA PHASE 7 (ENGLISH) PROJECT –
BENEATH THE TREES: FROM ACORNS OF IMAGINATION TO A
FOREST OF CREATIVITY**

City of Wolverhampton College

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Final report - Beneath the Trees: From acorns of imagination to a forest of creativity

City of Wolverhampton College

The title of this report is taken from Chuck Berry's famous song, "Johnny B. Goode", which featured as a resource in our project [see Appendix 3]. The expression "Beneath the Trees" is both a homely image of security and safety and a metaphor for growth and aspiration. Similarly, this project aimed at taking our learners further along their journeys towards realising their potential with regard to creative writing skills [N.B. henceforth we will be using the term 'Imaginative Writing' instead of the more generic expression, 'creative writing', as it conforms to Edexcel's GCSE specifications].

Summary

At the City of Wolverhampton College, the GCSE English Language provision is delivered across three sites: Metro Campus, Paget Road Campus and Wellington Road Campus. Each site serves the needs of different vocational areas. Learners had three hours of English lessons per week in 2020/21. However, the format of the lessons and their mode of delivery had to be modified as the year unfolded in accordance with COVID restrictions.

The Imaginative Writing task accounts for around a quarter of the marks in the GCSE English Language exam. Due to the abstract and open-ended nature of 'imagining', students often find these tasks daunting and inhibiting, resulting in a difficulty 'getting started' on this task, especially under exam conditions. Our project was designed to overcome this apparent 'writer's block'. We aimed to develop strategies for making the 'abstract' process of imagining more 'concrete' and accessible for our learners.

At any given stage in the project there were least four members of staff actively involved, including teachers from the English Department and various 'Learning Innovators' from the Quality Team. Some staff participated by way of suggesting alternative approaches or by adapting resources. The Learning Innovators contributed primarily in an advisory capacity on matters such as Growth Mindset, strategies for giving feedback and using online tools. Most importantly, this project helped to nurture innovation with respect to teaching imaginative writing and more generally on useful classroom techniques. Approximately 200 learners were intermittently involved.

Rationale

Ultimately, the rationale behind our project was to address the very real issue that the Imaginative Writing task can be a real stumbling block for many learners retaking GCSE English Language in FE. It is a problematic area for many reasons. However, since exams operate under strictly timed conditions, our main area of concern is

getting learners to be imaginative and to write creatively against the clock. The exam expects learners to be spontaneous in their Imaginative Writing task. This throws up a potential paradoxical issue - is it possible to practise spontaneity? Our project sought to do just that. We set out to devise a set of tasks that would initially be heavily scaffolded in the form of stimulus materials, but as we got nearer to the exam, the scaffolding would gradually be removed, so that by the time the learners sat the end-of-course exam, they would have developed habits to enable them to approach typical Imaginative Writing tasks.

In order to make the abstract procedure of imagining more concrete for our learners, our strategy involved using cultural artefacts as stimuli for planning their imaginative writing. In the first stage of the project [in November], we used Chuck Berry's well-known rock 'n' roll ballad "Johnny B. Goode" to stimulate ideas to help the learners respond to an imaginative writing task based around 'an unexpected visitor' (see Appendix 3). In the second stage (in February) we used Carel Weight's portrait, "Miss Orovida Pissarro" from the Ashmolean's collection of online zoomable portraits to help the learners respond to a piece of Imaginative Writing based around the theme of 'forgetting something' [see Appendix 6]. The tasks which the learners were responding to were both Edexcel-style Imaginative Writing tasks.

Approach

Our project consisted of two distinct stages, each of which resulted in a piece of writing for the Imaginative Writing task. The lessons relating to the first Imaginative Writing task (in November) consisted of one classroom-based input session and one asynchronous online session for drafting (and redrafting) (see Appendices 3, 4 and 5). The lessons relating to the second Imaginative Writing task (in February) consisted of one online synchronous input session and one asynchronous drafting session (see Appendices 6, 7, 8 and 9).

In short, both pieces were taught and completed under significantly different circumstances, using qualitatively different stimuli. The earlier 'blended' approach in November fortunately eased the learners into the habit of accessing the online tools, such as Google Classroom. Therefore, by the time we did the second stage of the research, the learners were used to working with these tools.

At the drafting stage, learners used their 'toolbox' of strategies to help them get started (see Appendix 12). Below is an example of the use of the 'toolbox' of strategies. Learners chose three language and three structure techniques that they felt would be useful in their written work. Then they thought of examples of each technique that could be used in their draft. This example is of a learner's 'toolbox' from the second piece of writing, based on forgetting something. Further examples are in Appendix 12.

Language techniques:

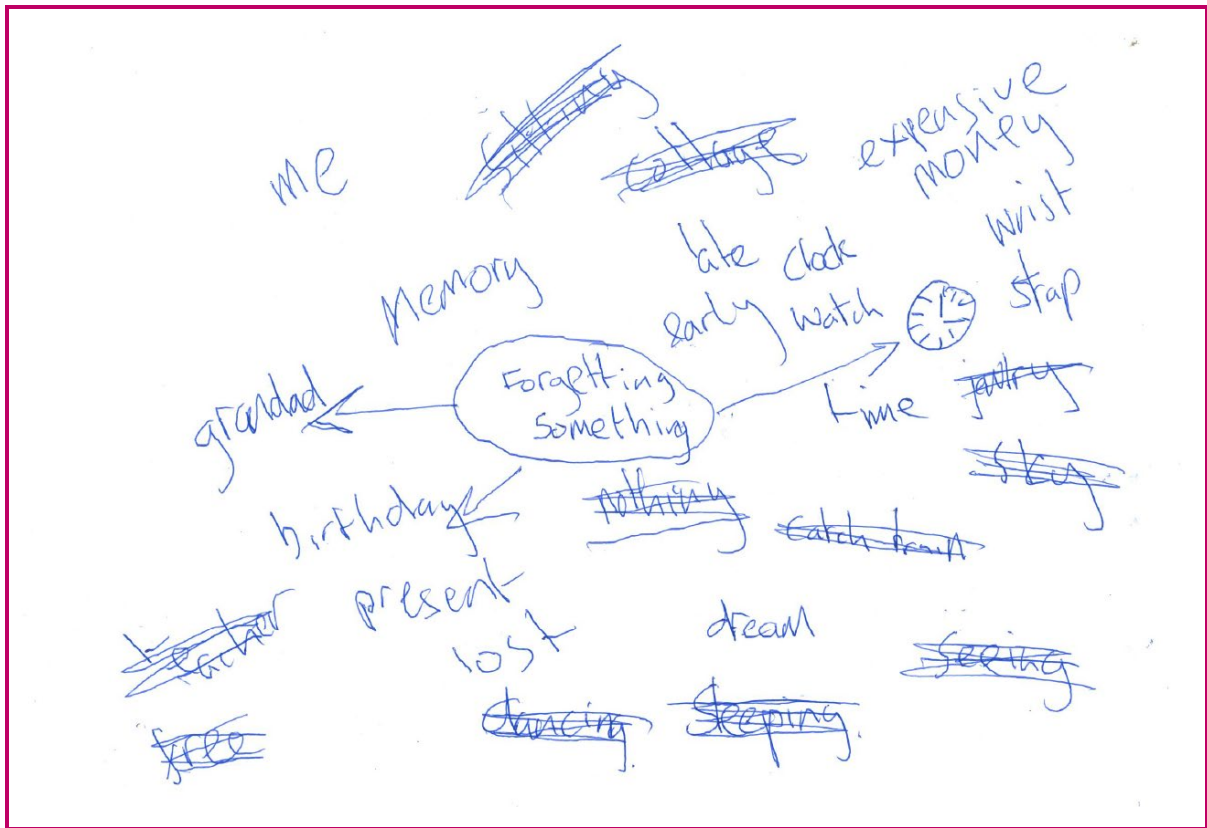
Structure techniques::

Language and structure techniques

Examples:

Examples:

In the February stage of the project, a lot of the earlier scaffolding was removed. For example, the stimulus material was an image, which contained a range of objects of significance in the life of the subject of the portrait. There was no explicit narrative structure to the portrait. However, there were implicit back stories to all the objects in the portrait. The learners had to choose one object and infer a back story, which could eventually be used in their draft. Also, at the planning stage, learners used a blank piece of paper for their plans. They were asked to write down whatever came into their heads regarding the set creative writing task. This strategy was in line with the free association 'clustering' approach (see Appendix 20). Below is an example of a learner's 'clustering' in action. As we can see from the example, the learner wrote down ideas, some of which were retained and some were eliminated. The learner used the very loose plan as a prop for talking the teacher through the initial ideas for the piece of imaginative writing. In the example below, the learner said that he wanted to write about forgetting his grandad's birthday and that he had wanted to buy his grandad a watch. This formed the basis of his imaginative writing. We were able to use the plan as a springboard for discussing feelings and mood which the characters might exhibit in the story.



Further examples of clustering can be seen in Appendix 20.

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices

As a consequence of taking part in this project, we have been reflecting on what is meant by creativity, both in terms of our specific project and in terms of the learner journey. Creative activities seem to be a quick-win way of generating a sense of 'ownership' among learners of their achievements - and with a greater sense of ownership comes a greater sense of fulfilment and pride, which in turn raises the level of engagement. This is certainly something that we noticed with participating learners. It is, however, important to follow up this raised level of engagement with tasks that keep the learners on board. This is why we introduced an element of interleaving and spacing between the two stages of our project, so that learners could revisit skills and build on them.

As so much of our project hinged on the learners' imagination(s), we read around different ways of interpreting what could be meant by 'imagination' and consequently how learners might 'imagine' differently. We were particularly drawn to Liam Hudson's ideas concerning the classification of 'convergent' and 'divergent' thinkers (Hudson, 1968). 'Convergers' are particularly good at putting ideas together, whereas 'divergent' thinkers are particularly good at exploring new and interesting avenues of enquiry.

We have also recently been reflecting on possible cognitive processes involved throughout the whole process of the Imaginative Writing task. The cognitive aspects of learning have been given extra prominence in the last few years, especially in the

form of Cognitive Load Theory (Paas, Renkl and Sweller, 2003; Chen, Castro-Alonso, Paas and Sweller, 2018) and our institution's 'Composite Learning Model' (see Appendix 19), which seeks to break down the curriculum into constituent elements, which are analogous to the gradations of skills within Bloom's Taxonomy. (Bloom, 1956).

This project has highlighted the fact that more time, attention and scaffolding is needed when presenting learning with tasks in the early months of an academic year. When tasks are revisited scaffolding can be removed to varying degrees, depending on individual learners' abilities. We also found that leaving a few months between each imaginative writing task helped us to gauge progress in that particular skill area.

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

The college has recently appointed a team of Learning Innovators. We felt it was important to involve as many of them as possible, as this would help us to ensure that our research gelled with cross-college approaches. We consulted the Learning Innovators regarding how the project fitted in with Cognitive Load Theory; the use of online tools; the incorporation of feed-forward strategies; and the application of 'Growth Mindset' (Dweck, 2006).

'Creativity' is sometimes seen as one of a range of '21st Century [transferable] Skills'. In this respect, there seems to be some potential for raising the profile of imaginative writing across the college, possibly in the form of cross-college competitions or interdepartmental collaboration on project-based learning.

The underlying idea of our project was to use sensory stimuli, such as music, pictures, realia and artefacts to generate ideas for the Imaginative Writing task. This generated some discussion and innovative practices within the English Department regarding the application of this general idea. Additional differentiated resources were created for the Imaginative Writing task. There were also innovative approaches regarding using music and images to enhance reading skills.

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression

We can see discernible patterns of progress across participating classes, especially related to planning. It would be fair to say that learners are now generally much more confident about the prospect of engaging with an imaginative writing task. The approaches to planning their writing, which they have gleaned from the research tasks, have given them coping strategies for 'getting started'. After all, 'getting started' is often cited by learners themselves as the main issue. In this sense, our approaches fit within a wider framework of a 'Growth Mindset' approach.

Another 'pattern of progress' is the level of complexity of their writing, especially with regard to language and structure techniques. The 'toolbox' of strategies had a positive impact on learners' progress. Participating learners are generally more aware of what constitutes a good piece of writing, and more importantly they know

what a writer needs to do to improve a piece of writing – this is largely attributed to the ‘toolbox’ and the implementation of a ‘feedforward’ approach (see Appendix 12).

The learners expressed a greater sense of ownership over their work, which had a positive motivational impact on their future learning. This was particularly the case in the second stage of the project when they were working via Teams during lockdown. Student A summed up her experiences of completing this task: ‘The story felt very personal. It meant something special to me.’ (See Appendix 15 for further comments.) Both stages of the project helped to widen the learners’ horizons in terms of imparting cultural capital, as our stimulus materials were borrowed from cultural spheres which were beyond their immediate experience.

The ultimate test of success was whether our interventions had any meaningful and lasting impact on performance under exam conditions. This came in May when the learners did their final assessments and was an opportunity to assess the impact of our interventions. As stated earlier, Student A interpreted the task almost as a piece of speculative commentary about the future, which restricted her performance, as she wasn’t able to use the full range of techniques that we had practised in the project (see Appendix 10). Student B, however, interpreted the task in terms of writing a story, so he was able to incorporate more of the techniques from the project (see Appendix 11). This flagged up a very real issue that exam-style questions can often be open to a wide range of interpretations, which lend themselves to a variety of possible responses. In terms of passing the exam, learners need to interpret tasks which optimise their chances of showcasing their best written work.

Learning from this project

In the second stage of the project, we encouraged learners to use ‘clustering’ for planning their work. Some learners, however, still needed a more structured approach at the planning stage.

We found that once learners had planned their work, they were increasingly proficient in vocalising their ideas. This involved talking us through ‘settings’, ‘characters’, ‘back stories’, ‘plot lines’ and so on. The persistent difficulty of getting ideas onto paper still prevailed. We navigated this obstacle by encouraging the learners to focus their writing on a moment in time rather than to try to tell the whole story. This helped a lot, especially in terms of ‘getting started’.

This brings us neatly to ‘code switching’ from the spoken word to the written word, especially within the context of the Imaginative Writing task. For example, in the process of ‘code switching’ from the spoken word to the written word some naturalistic language patterns were lost, which often resulted in less complexity.

When learners are in the early stages of learning the craft of imaginative writing, we found that there is a real need to have support structures in place such as scaffolding and bespoke feedback. Learners also benefit from redrafting their work, as it gives them the opportunity to improve. As we approached the final assessment, we found that it was better to loosen or remove the scaffolding, as we wanted learners to work more independently. However, we still retained redrafting

and feed-forward, as they helped to support revision and keep skills fresh in the learners' memories.

Finally, this project made us reflect on exactly what is meant by 'progress' both as an abstract idea and in terms of how it is constituted. It seems that there are various 'patterns of progress' when it comes to written work. These patterns are exemplified in learners' ability to manipulate language and structure techniques as a way of drafting a piece of engaging writing which considers audience, purpose and form. In this respect, the 'toolbox' of ideas has had a positive impact on the general trajectory of the learners' progress with regard to the actual composition of their written work over the course of the academic year (see the 'Approach' section and Appendix 12 for examples of the use of the 'toolbox' of ideas).

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Appendix 1 – The project team

Project Role	Name	Job Role
Project Lead	Ray Truby	English Lecturer
Deputy Lead	Robert Hale	English Lecturer
Project Team	Paul Smith	Head of English, Maths and ESOL
	Rowena Tooth	Curriculum Manager for English
English Team at CoWC:	Jo Mason	English Lecturer
	Hayley Jarman	English Lecturer
	Gavin Perry	English Lecturer
	Kathryn Watkiss-Rooney	English Lecturer
	Joanne Robinson	English Lecturer
	Tammy Vaz	English Lecturer
	Maureen Gallacher	English Lecturer
	Charlotte Price	English Lecturer
	Gemma Adams	English Lecturer
	Marie Middleton	English Lecturer
Quality Team participants	Wendy Harris	Quality Manager
	Carl Brown	Learning Innovator
	Jack Arnold	Learning Innovator
	Dan Rose	Learning Innovator
Project Mentor	Catriona Mowat (ccConsultancy)	
Research Group Lead	Bob Read (ccConsultancy)	

Appendix 2 – Pen Portraits of Student A and Student B

Student A has had a varied educational experience, both in the UK and abroad. Although she enjoys learning per se, she says that she didn't enjoy maths and English when she was at school. This seems to be related to having a lack of confidence in her ability in these subjects, almost akin to maths and English anxiety. She enjoys being at college and has enjoyed her experience of English so far. Based on a piece of free writing done at the start of the term, it seems that one of her biggest obstacles when she started the course was developing ideas in her written work. Sentence structures and vocabulary needed to be developed. However, her use of punctuation and her spellings were quite accurate. In other words, the project seemed to be almost designed for her, as it focused on developing the imaginative component of her written work.

She is very focused in terms of career goals, so she doesn't lack motivation. Throughout the course she has responded positively to feedback, especially in terms of returning to her work to make improvements. The following piece of free writing gives an indication of Student A's writing skills prior to the project in September 2020.

Free Writing Task

Tell me about yourself!

My school experience was good but i will not say it was the best part of my life because studying in a school that was not really well equip was not really good. I had to deal with a lot of things. I studied in nigeria, I got my result from nigeria. Studying in nigeria was not really fun because I did not know what they were doing but i hope to gain what i can to earn then and gain knowledge from the course I am in now.

My maths and english experience are not really good but i am trying my best to sit up well and listen to stay on the right tack and get work done to get good grades and be able to do well in the future.

My career aim and ambition is to finish my college education with good grades so that i can be able to move to the next step in my career.

My hobbies are dancing and singing. And my interests are listening to music and training my voice.

The things i enjoy or like doing are singing, dancing and using my phone. They help me to reduce my stress and using my phone helps me get to be familiar with the internet.

My lockdown experience was so boring i was always busy with school work and domestic chores alone. I had to wash plates like five times a day I did not have much fun.

Coming to college was a good idea, and was also a good experience. My friends are helpful. They help me go to the right track when I am not getting what the tutors are saying. The tutors are always helpful for them having the time to explain over and over again just for me to get what they are saying is really good. And I think choosing to go for a college is a good thing for me and going for a course in this college is going to help me a lot.

My expectations this year are to have good grades out of college. And be able to do well in maths and English.

Student B is a male in his forties and is a native speaker of English. He has lived for all his life in the Wolverhampton area. He wished to achieve the best grade possible in his GCSE for career advancement, motivated by a strong personal interest in the subject. He has dyslexia, but this has not deterred him from joining the course and being an avid reader in his free time. He is confident as a person. However, due to extraneous factors during his formative school years, his confidence in academic pursuits is rather low by his own admission.

His free writing activity in the initial session was exemplary in terms of quality, whereby he acknowledged the factors which had caused him difficulty in his academic progression. He has a sense of humour, which comes through in both his written work and spoken contributions to discussions.

Additional Commentary: Both students enjoyed taking part in the project and felt that the experience was a rewarding one, as they were able to see tangible results. They were also able to gauge real and meaningful progress in their written work by having the opportunity to look back over the tasks they had completed at different stages in the course. There are discernible improvements to Student A's written work, especially when the piece of free writing from the start of the course is compared with the written work produced as a result of participating in this project. The most striking areas of improvement include additional details, more figurative language and more purposeful use of punctuation. (See Appendix 15 for comments from two of the participating learners).

Appendix 3 – Final comments from participating staff

Paul: Many of our GCSE students arrive at college to be told that they need to continue with GCSE English, after receiving a grade 3 or below. For many students, this has affected their confidence in their abilities. Through projects like this, we hope to instill a growth mindset in the students and develop their resilience, so that they can use their previous experiences of English to enable them to progress. This project in particular has highlighted a new approach for students to grow their creative writing techniques, enabling them to overcome barriers created by previous educational experiences.

Rowena: Imaginative writing is a highly underrated, yet key, transferable writing skill. In employment, it influences, for example, customer service: vocabulary choice befitting purpose. It is this aspect in our curriculum that enables students not only to expand their vocabulary but also offers the chance for them to express themselves; a lifelong skill that enriches lives.

Ray: At the start of our project, we were searching for possible theoretical frameworks which could inform or structure our research. As so much of our project hinged on the learners' imagination(s), we were particularly drawn to Liam Hudson's ideas concerning the classification of 'convergent' and 'divergent' thinkers. (See report section: 'Professional Learning').

After some reflection, we felt that this project had elements of both modes of thinking. On the one hand we were encouraging learners to 'think outside the box' during the planning stage of their writing. This was tantamount to divergent modes of thinking, where they are being encouraged to take their imaginations in all sorts of directions. On the other hand, at the writing stage, the students had to develop strategies for reining in the best elements of what they had imagined and thereby synthesise them into a coherent piece of writing (Hudson, 1968).

It is plausible that many students find imaginative writing difficult because the craft of writing imaginatively requires both convergent and divergent approaches. For this reason, we divided our mode of delivery for each task on the research project into two halves. The first half focused primarily on divergent modes of thinking - i.e. the initial stages of planning in response to the initial stimulus materials, namely, the song and the portrait. The second half focused on the nuts and bolts of drafting and redrafting their pieces of writing, incorporating key language and structure techniques - i.e., convergent thinking.

This project was, of necessity, heavily reliant on a 'blended' approach, which clearly worked for some learners who were comfortably in the habit of accessing the online tools, such as Google Classroom. However, we acknowledge that whilst the 'blended' approach worked with our relatively small sample of learners, we recognise that it would be stretching it a little if we made generalisable knowledge claims, suggesting that this approach works for everyone. Some learners across the provision did find online learning challenging. This was due to multifarious factors,

which go beyond the scope of our project. We were fortunate in that we were working with learners who warmed to the idea of working remotely and online, but we recognise that this isn't necessarily universally true.

Both stages in the project were ultimately focused on addressing the requirements of the exam. However, we wanted to broaden the scope of the lessons to include a 'fun element'. We were cautious in how we approached this idea as we wanted to ensure it would be purposeful, varied, accessible and inclusive. We also wanted it to guide the learners towards new approaches in their imaginative writing. These activities hinged on two stimulus materials: a song in the November activity and a portrait in the February activity. On reflection, we both feel that we made the right judgement in our choice of stimulus materials, in as much as both the song and the portrait stimulated avenues of thought, which even we, as teachers, didn't predict. This is one of the joys of teaching – when the learners surprise us with their creativity with respect to the Imaginative Writing task.

Consequently, we have been reflecting on what is meant by creativity, both in terms of our specific project, but also in terms of the learner journey. There are 'creative' aspects to most courses across our provision. However, we wanted to single out some common ground that these aspects might have. One area of common ground that is essential in terms of nurturing and maintaining learner engagement is that creative enterprises represent a significant range of experiences over which learners can have 'ownership' of their learning - and with a greater sense of ownership comes a greater sense of fulfilment and pride, which in turn raises the level of engagement. This is certainly something that we noticed with participating learners. It is, however, important to follow up this raised level of engagement with tasks that keep the learners on board. This is why we introduced an element of interleaving and spacing between the two stages of our project, so that learners could revisit skills and build on them. Naturally, in order to build a culture of greater engagement through creativity, this approach, or at least similar approaches, would need to be scaled up and rolled out across the whole provision.

We have also recently been reflecting on possible cognitive processes involved throughout the whole process of creative or imaginative writing. The cognitive aspects of learning have been given extra prominence in the last few years, especially in the form of Cognitive Load Theory and our institution's 'Composite Learning Model', which seeks to break down the curriculum into constituent elements, which are analogous to the gradations of skills within Bloom's Taxonomy.

With cognitive processes in mind, we had theorised earlier on in the project about divergent and convergent modes of thinking, and consequently, we put activities in place which were designed to address these modes of thinking. For example, at the planning stage the learners were encouraged to think outside the box [divergent thinking] or later on use the toolbox of strategies [convergent thinking]. However, this presented us with a problem – namely, it may have been our intention to nurture and make optimal use of different modes of thinking at different stages in the writing process, but how could we know for sure how these modes of thinking were being

instantiated at the various stages in this process, over and above looking at what the learners had *written down*, either on paper or via Google Classroom?

One possible solution, which we had originally considered way back in August 2020, was to get the learners to complete a summary or statement at the end of the task(s), possibly in the form of a reflective journal. However, we realised that these kinds of introspective / retrospective analytical tools can throw up inaccuracies, as they are, at least in part, dependent on memory. There are also in-built biases to this approach, as learners tend to write what they think we want to see. There is also a bias towards recency, as they also tend to focus in their reflective journals on the most recent thoughts they have had. Therefore, we opted for a kind of informal 'protocol analysis' of the learners' thoughts as they worked through their writing tasks. In other words, we had periodic and brief chats with the learners as they were on each stage of the process. They were then able to talk us through their 'real-time' thinking there and then. It also afforded us the opportunity to intervene with tips and advice at key stages in the process. This 'protocol analysis' approach was pursued more in the lockdown lessons over Teams than in the classroom-based lessons. After all, it goes without saying that social distancing in a classroom situation made one-to-one feedback much more difficult. In Teams we were able to use the break-out rooms to get learners to talk us through their ideas at each stage in the process.

For practical purposes, the 'protocol analysis' approach simply consisted of the teacher asking the learner to engage in an open-ended discussion during which they could talk through the thinking behind what they had written. By airing their thoughts, we were able to get a general impression of their line of thinking. Admittedly, it wasn't 'protocol analysis' in the strictest sense. However, it was a mechanism by which we could gauge the direction of flow with concerning the ideas the learners had in mind. Perhaps, most importantly, this approach enabled the teacher to facilitate the learning in a meaningful and purposeful way, whilst at the same time gather impressionistic qualitative data for our project, so in this respect, it suited the parameters of our action research project.

In order to maintain a 'blended learning' approach - even throughout the lockdown, we always encouraged the learners to have a pen and paper at hand, if only for 'jotting'. In this increasingly digital world, it is very easy to lose sight of the importance of physically writing something down. In this respect, I have always felt that a pen/pencil and a piece of paper are some of the best 'thinking tools' ever invented. There is also extensive literature suggesting that there is a greater likelihood of remembering something, if it is written down (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014). Therefore, for both pieces of writing we asked learners to 'plan' their writing on paper. However, we took two significantly different approaches to the way the learners planned their work. In the November work, we asked the learners to plan using a structured 'mind map'. However, in the February work, we got the learners to plan using the 'clustering' approach, which follows no pre-set structure and builds up by 'free association'. We found that the second approach lends itself more to the Imaginative Writing task, as it promotes 'divergent' thinking, which was exactly what we were aiming for. The Imaginative Writing pieces which resulted from the 'clustering' approach were definitely more 'creative' and scored on average higher on

'AO5' [Assessment Objective 5] when compared with earlier attempts at imaginative writing. The 'clustering' approach was less inhibitive or constraining in this respect.

On reflection, we are glad that we did the writing tasks in the order that we delivered them – namely, the highly structured task in November, and the more loosely structured task in February. This loosening of the reins, so to speak, guided the learners towards greater independence, which was, after all, one of the original aims of the project.

In terms of gauging the impact of the interventions which were instigated by this research, we can see discernible patterns of progress across participating classes. One 'pattern of progress' is related to planning. It would be fair to say that learners are now generally much more confident about the prospect of engaging with an imaginative writing task. The approaches to planning their writing, which they have gleaned from the research tasks, have given them coping strategies for 'getting started'. After all, 'getting started' is often cited by learners themselves as the main issue. In this sense, our approaches fit within a wider framework of a 'growth mindset' approach, which is something that our Head of Faculty, Paul, has been promoting over the years.

Another 'pattern of progress' is the level of complexity of their writing, especially with regard to language and structure. The 'toolbox' of ideas has had a positive impact on the general trajectory of the learners' progress with regard to the actual composition of their written work over the course of the academic year.

Participating learners are generally more aware of what constitutes a good piece of writing, and more importantly they know what a writer needs to do to improve a piece of writing – this is largely attributed to the 'toolbox' strategy (see Appendix 12). In short, it seems that creativity with regard to the Imaginative Writing task thrives on having a skill set (i.e. strategies for planning and drafting) and a knowledge base (i.e. life experience and proficiency at using the appropriate tools from the toolbox).

Although our research was primarily with regard to nurturing coping strategies for approaching the Imaginative Writing task, we can also see an impact on the learners' performance in other skill areas, such as their ability to analyse a text according to the writer's use of language and structure. This is an apt reminder that language and literacy skills don't exist in isolation from each other, but they actually feed into each other. Therefore, there is a tendency for participating learners to score generally higher marks in some key reading questions now in comparison with earlier in the academic year. However, we do tread carefully in this claim, as improvements in their reading skills may be due to other extraneous factors, which we haven't considered. (This could form the basis of any future research project – namely, to gauge the extent to which interventions addressing writing skills can have an 'impact' on key reading skills, and vice versa).

We also wanted to gauge the impact of our project in terms of whether the learners enjoyed the experience. This was in line with our holistic approach to the tasks. We didn't want to confine the tasks just to the exam task as the end-product. We wanted to make the process an enjoyable one which broadened horizons. I am sure,

or at least hope, that the learners weren't just being polite what they commented without prompting that they enjoyed the experience of using cultural artefacts from the world of music and the fine arts.

As a result of carrying out this project, it is more than apparent that the Imaginative Writing task potentially covers a much broader remit than relating accounts of fictional or non-fictional events or experiences. It potentially also has a speculative aspect. Speculative writing adds another layer of imaginative thinking to the task. It would be fair to say that time and opportunities for practice really need to be set aside to cover this field of imaginative writing in any given programme of study.

This project flagged up the very real issue that 'code switching' from the spoken word to the written word can often be difficult, especially within the context of the Imaginative Writing task. For example, the learners' written language is often much less complex and naturalistic than their spoken language. Many linguistic forms are dropped in the code-switching process, possibly due to a lack of confidence or a lack of practice. Consequently, this results in a loss of complexity in the final draft of writing. The issue of 'code switching' was raised towards the end of the project and we are aware that it is such a large issue that it probably warrants a research project in its own right, so we didn't just want to tag it onto the end of this project.

Bob: As Ray mentioned above, this research has afforded us the opportunity to reflect on 'creative' pursuits as a way of engaging learners in terms of giving them ownership over their work. However, we have also begun to think more broadly about 'creativity' as a distinct entity. 'Creativity' has been cited by various commentators as one of a range of '21st Century Skills'. It is clearly more than a buzz word; it is one of many skills, abilities or dispositions, which can promote (and be promoted by) cross-curricular collaboration. Creativity, in a general sense, is only acquired in a piecemeal fashion, if delivered in isolation. Therefore, in an FE setting a consistently collaborative approach across curriculum areas would optimise the development of creativity with our learners. There are creative components or elements within vocational areas which share common ground with the GCSE English Language provision. If links between the vocational subjects were made explicit and overt to the learners as and when they occurred, it would enable the learners to see the interconnectedness of their learning and would be of mutual benefit to English Language delivery and to the learners' main subjects - everyone's a winner! This thematic approach to cross-college collaboration applies to other subset skill areas within the English Language provision, such as analysing and evaluating, both of which feature highly as component skills on vocational courses.

One strategy for making the relevance and applicability of transferable skills overt and explicit to learners could be through a project-based approach. This is an idea which I have been thinking about for some time, especially regarding a possible future research project on project-based learning within an FE setting.

The toolbox of ideas allows the learners to be scaffolded to the exam specification, whilst still using their creative freedom as to which components they will use. (See Appendix 12).

Student B demonstrated considerable progress throughout the course in terms of his confidence. He is a working-class male in his mid-forties. As is typical of many learners in his position after so many years outside of an educational setting; citing having had negative school experiences and work colleagues telling him that he 'rambles on' in emails, he is prone to doubting his own academic abilities and syntax proficiency. Part of his inspiration for taking GCSE English at our institution was so prove to himself that he could do this.

Regarding the growth mindset and the motivation of Student B, I would summarise that he began the year quite concerned about his abilities, but through lots of positive reinforcement and encouragement he soon began to appreciate that he could indeed do well, and that he should not be so harsh on himself. His second piece of Imaginative Writing showed the impact of his own prosopagnosia in a real-life scenario. It was pleasant to see that although he finds it challenging in life, he saw the potential to apply this to his exam question.

Student B showed wonderful exam resilience under assessment conditions. He afterwards told me that as he had been nervous about the assessments (as is perfectly normal for anyone, but for adults like him it can be particularly discomfiting due to flashbacks of negative past experiences), the frequency with which we had practised past exam questions in class had prepared him to the point that "I knew the procedure to expect, Bob, and that really calmed my nerves under the timed conditions" (see Appendix 15).

Collaborative working with Ray and the rest of the team has been a delight. We found that sharing the same resources and lesson plans was highly advantageous in terms of impact control and allowed for consistency in our findings. It was reassuring to find that we encountered many similar comments and points made during our classes. I think that doing this project as a collaborative exercise proved more beneficial than trying to do it alone.

Looking at ways to tackle the Imaginative Writing question was one of the things the group Student B (and many others in the class) wanted help with. As there is a lot of ambiguity in the wording of the two options (Q5 or Q6, depending on which one they feel is better suited to their strengths), Student B found it highly beneficial to look at imaginative techniques which loosely related to the question.

Hayley: I taught the analysis of language and structure with a song by using a selection of songs to introduce figurative devices. At first, we looked at the lyrics to see if we could identify any imagery. I played the song several times so the students could listen to the language. They then spent some time in small groups discussing the effects of the imagery which evoked some intelligent conversation.

I played an instrumental version to encourage students to discuss the impact of the melody and how it contributes to the overall image. Students were able to talk confidently about tone and mood just by listening to the melody. While there was a debate about the imagery evoked from the lyrics. All students agreed with the tone presented from the melody.

Another task was to initiate a piece of creative writing using an image of objects such as a teddy bear (see Appendix 16). Students were told their stories had to respond to 'something they have lost' and they may or may not use the bear. However, all students used the bear. What was interesting about this task is that in all the stories, the protagonist reverted to a younger version of themselves. While the bear played a varied significance amongst the stories, they all addressed the theme of attachment and declared some feelings towards the object. None of the stories seemed to describe the bear to any great extent, but there were feelings attached to it, nonetheless. All of the teddy bear stories showed a positive attachment to the bear. It was unsurprising that the students reverted to a younger version of themselves in their stories since they were all written in first person and would have naturally been the last time they associated with their teddy. Most of these stories had the theme of 'lost and found' where they misplaced the bear at some point, and the story resolved in their finding the bear or being reacquainted with it. It was nice to see that the students naturally included a conflict and resolution in their stories without being prompted. This is something that is usually missing from their stories.

Overall, the creative writing component of the GCSE assessment is a weakness for many learners. It seems that basic grammatical accuracy can be lacking in native speakers of English. Despite their ability to tell a story with grammatical accuracy, when they try to transcribe this a lot of this is missed. Their ability to code switch seems impaired. It would be an interesting avenue to explore in future research: whether vocalising a story and then transcribing it would assist the student's ability to write with coherence.

Kathryn: I use a lot of stimuli for engaging students in creative writing. I have found using quirky objects (old photos, a music box, a gas mask, an old case, opera glasses, just to name a few!) extremely good at sparking interest and discussion.

I have attached questions to the objects, such as: Describe the object: What is it? Who owned this? Why was it left abandoned? Describe the owner, name, etc.

In terms of resilience, I give the students a different paragraph each as a starting point and they add another paragraph. This helps with reluctant writers as they know that they only have to write a small amount.

One-hundred-word stories are a great way to build confidence and the first few are not marked for SPaG, just read for enjoyment.

Another strategy that I have used, has been to use music videos, song lyrics and clips from films, but these activities need to be scaffolded for our learners with a clear structure given: the more thought provoking the lyrics, the better.

Overall, it's also important for the students to see that we struggle with the writing process too. I will write as they are writing to show that it's a process that involves practice and patience.

Wendy: This year it has been like no other and all staff across the College have faced many difficulties during the pandemic, supporting their students and switching to online sessions. It has been great to see so many staff working together to support

Ray and Bob in their project. The learning innovators at the College work across a variety of different vocational areas, both in teaching and supporting staff, so to see the implementation of ideas across the project has been fantastic. It is positive that we can see so many departments benefiting from this excellent practice.

Jack: The impact of COVID-19 has had a negative impact on all forms of life, especially within education during the early stages of the pandemic. However, within adversity we can find strength and we have been able to find strength and still educate using forms of technology.

Technology within education has enabled us to teach, assess, educate, and enable learning through a simple click of joining a meeting. Effective use of technology can ensure the education of a young person within face-to-face sessions as well as online sessions and can support those with SEN needs with simple adaptations such as an immersive reader. As modern society embraces technology and its capabilities, we as educators must also embrace its use and implement it the best we can.

Carl: Learners who value effort and perseverance when faced with adversity can be seen as possessing traits of a growth mindset. This project implemented a growth mindset approach which provided those involved with opportunities to develop and grow in confidence.

Dan: As I am a mathematics lecturer, discussions with Ray and Bob around retrieval practice led to comparisons between maths and English. It was interesting that we agreed on the importance of retrieval practice in both subjects, especially considering the assessment structure of our courses leading to summative exams. I presented my practices of retrieval which take the form of a topic-based approach, whilst in English retrieval practice features a much more as skills-based approach. In both instances, though, it was useful to make retrieval explicit both in how we presented the connections during a lesson and using practices diagnostically at the start of sessions to inform our formative assessment activities. Most of our students are ineffective at revising, being unfamiliar with strategies to monitor their own revision; therefore, the majority of retrieval occurs in our classrooms. Frequent testing or retrieval practice activities in class led students to space their study effort with the aim of improving their recall overtime which appears to be reflected in the cases presented within the report.

Appendix 4 – Materials used in the November stage of the project

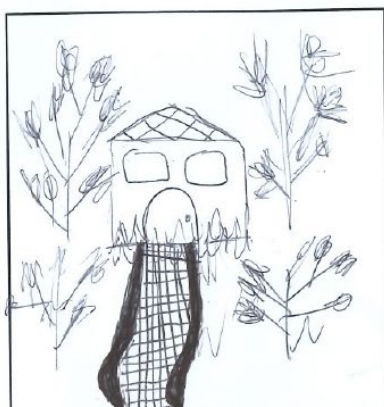
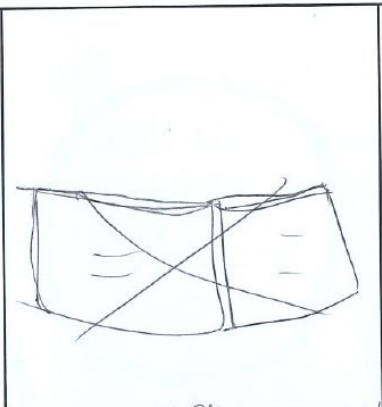
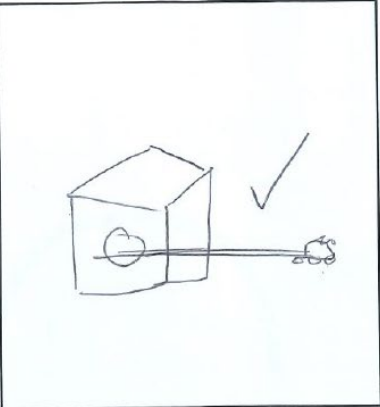
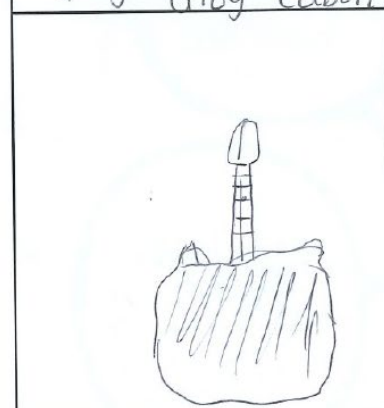



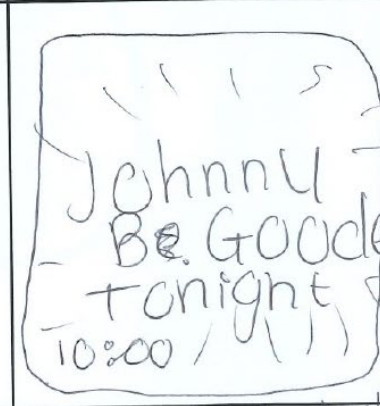
Chuck Berry, Johnny B. Goode (music and lyrics)

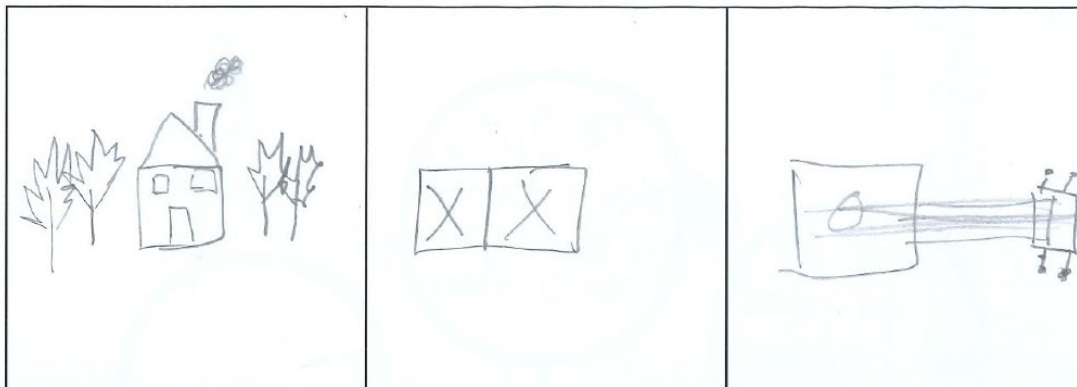
Storyboard template for breaking down the narrative structure of 'Johnny B. Goode'

The image shows a storyboard template for the song 'Johnny B. Goode'. It consists of a 3x3 grid of empty rectangular boxes. Each box is intended for a panel of a storyboard. Below each box are two horizontal lines for writing.

Exemplars of completed storyboard templates for breaking down the narrative structure of 'Johnny B. Goode'



		
<p>evergreens there stand a log cabin</p>	<p>never ever learned to read or write</p>	
		
<p>carry his guitar in the a gunnysack</p>	<p>sit beneath the tree</p>	
		
<p>His mother</p>	<p>people coming from miles around</p>	<p>Maybe some-day your name will be in lights</p>



way back in the wood
stood a log cabin.

He never learned
to read and write

He could play the
guitar.



Carrying his
guitar in a ~~gunny~~
gunny sack

Johnny sitting
beneath the tree

People passing
pass him listening to
his guitar.

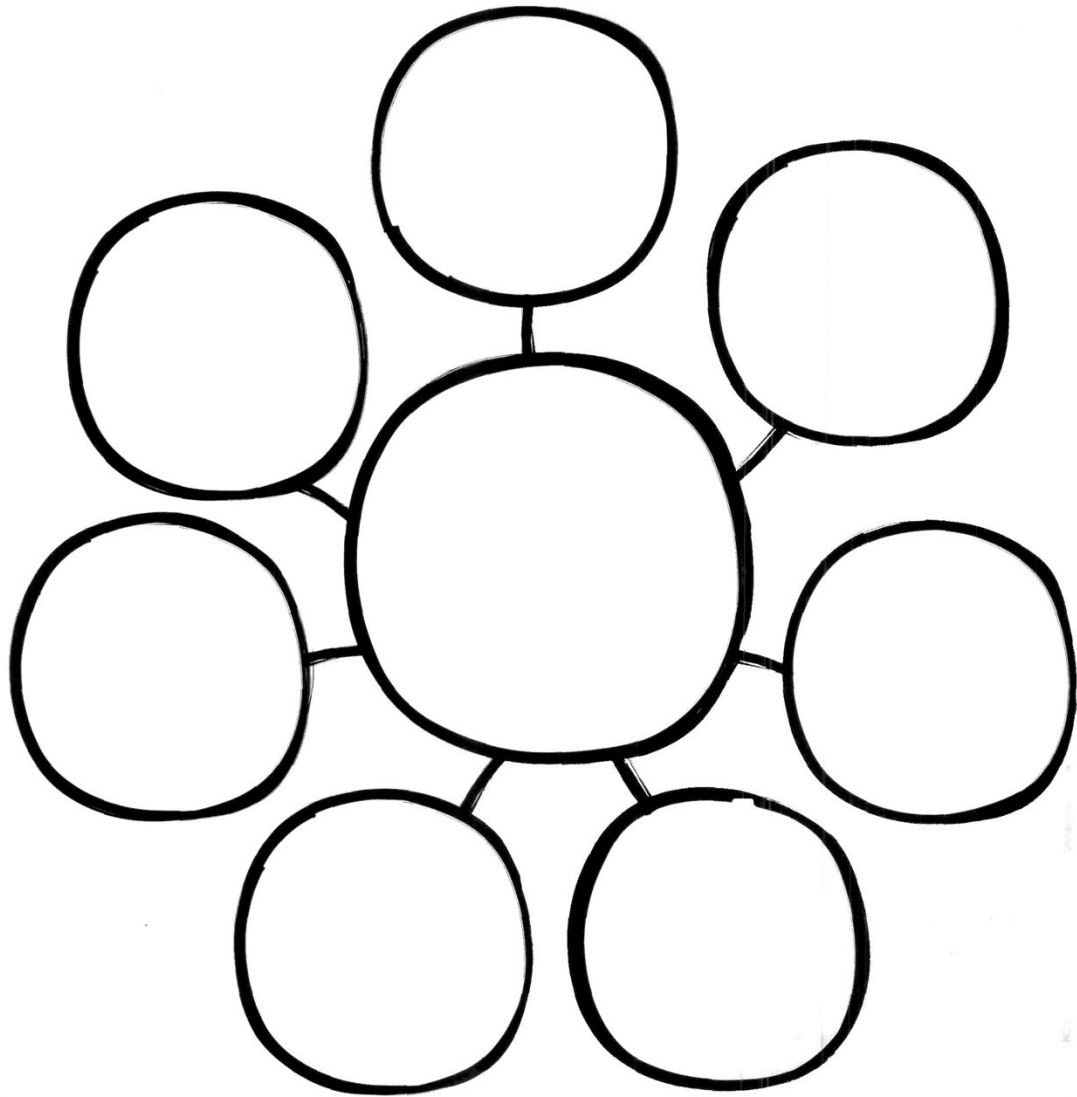


His mother was
believing that
he could play the
guitar.

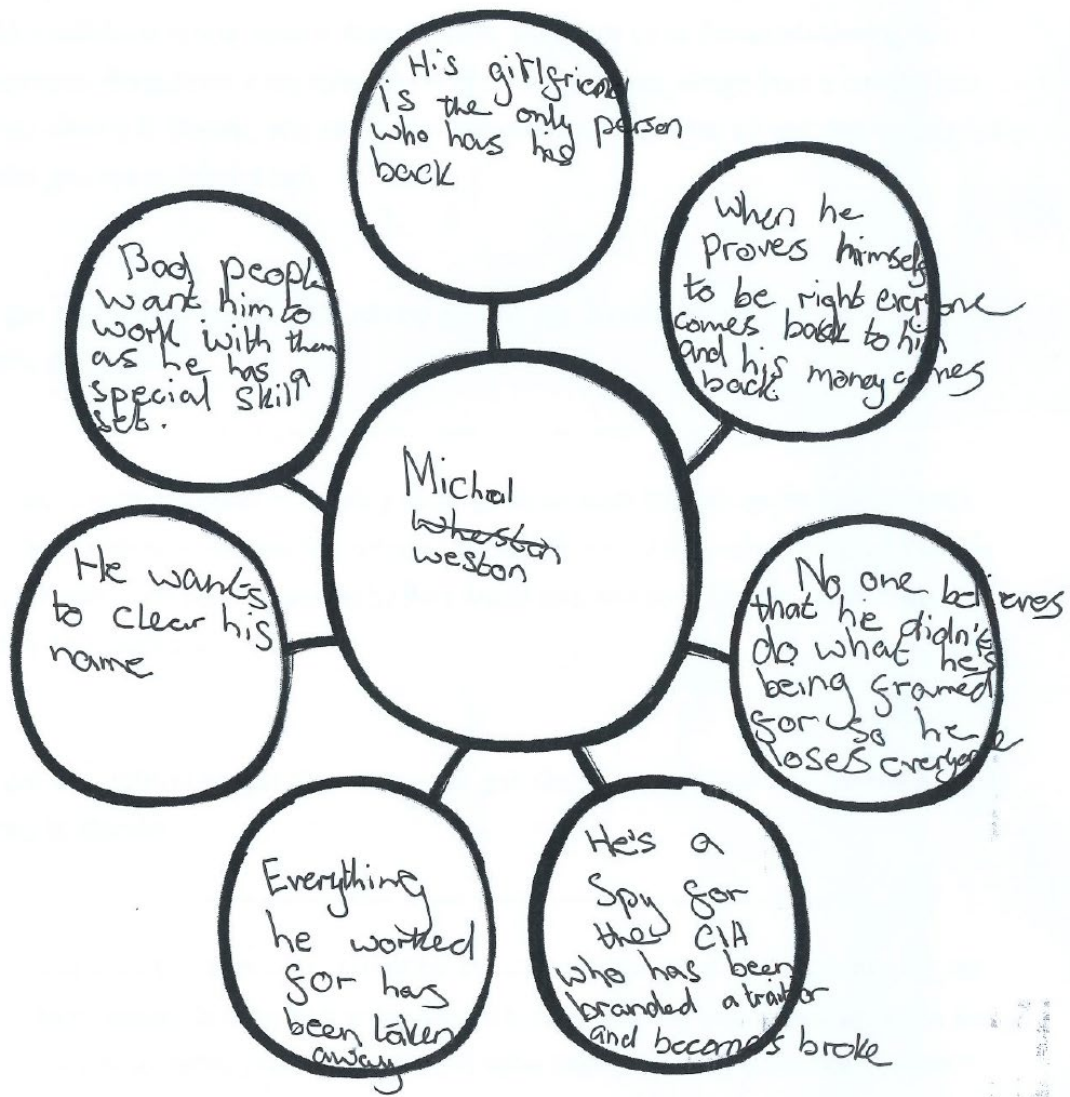
People come from
miles away.

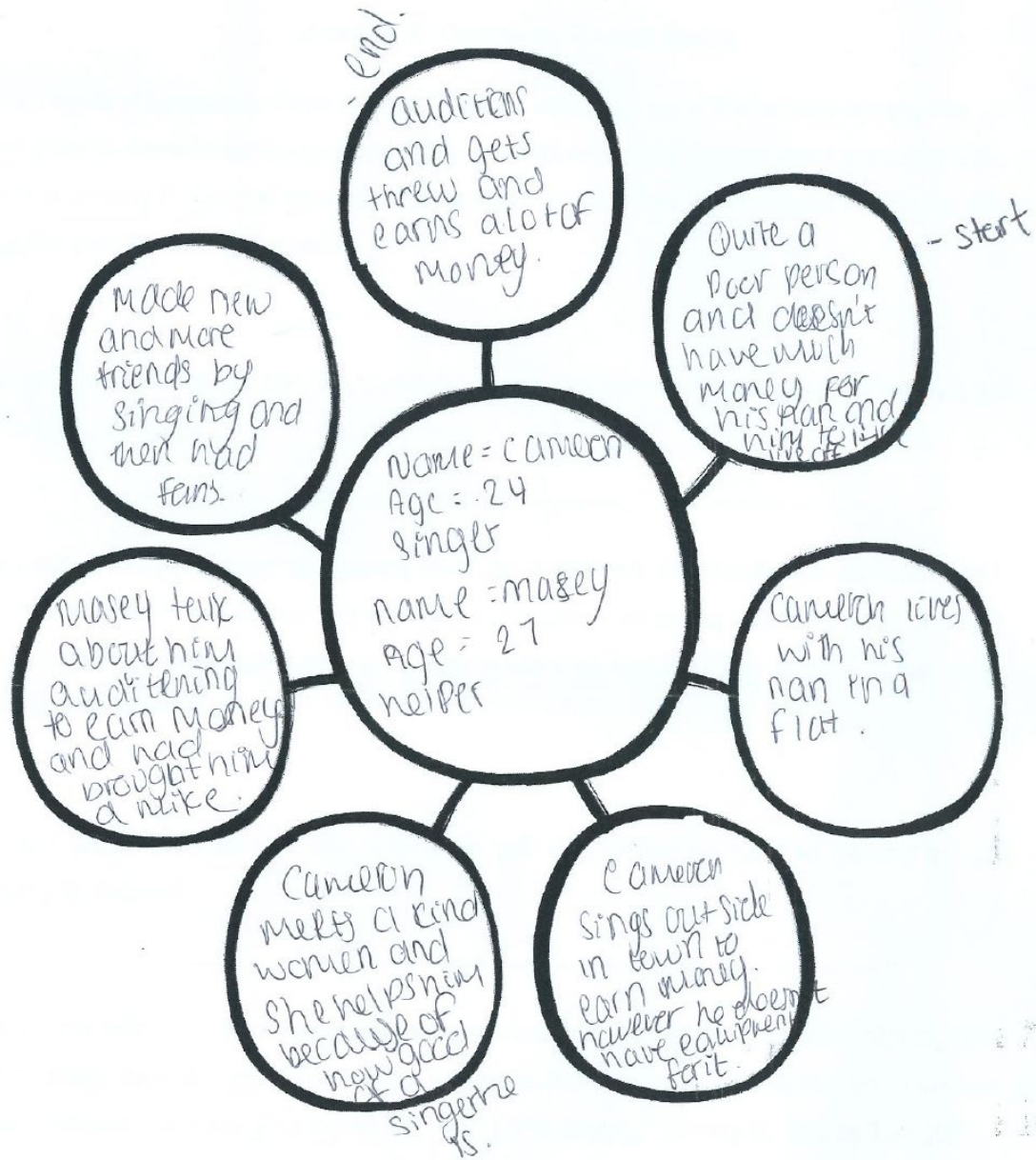
People will be
shouting your
name.

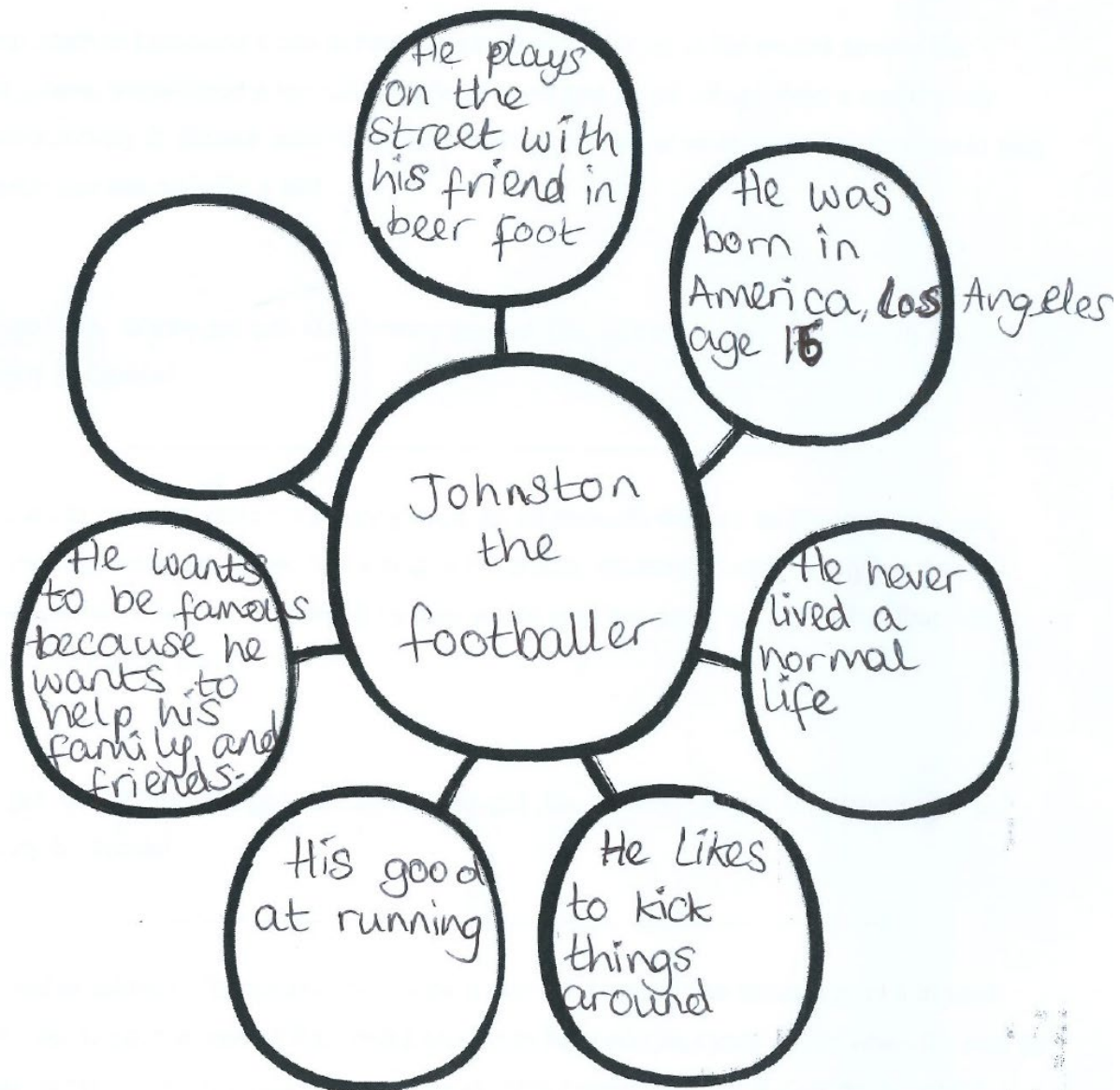
Spider diagram template for planning:



Exemplars of completed spider diagram templates for planning:







Commentary: In the November stage of the project planning, drafting and re-drafting were heavily scaffolded. The stimulus material was Chuck Berry's popular song "Johnny B. Goode" which, by virtue of being a ballad, contains a ready-made 'rags-to-riches' narrative structure. There are also ready-made themes and ideas contained within the song, such as, the value and meaning of 'ambition', 'perseverance', 'talent' and so on. After listening to the song and discussing it, learners became familiar with its narrative structure by story-boarding the story within the song. Three boxes were assigned to each verse, so that learners had to pick out the key moments in each verse. Learners were reminded that the story-boarding activity was not meant to be an art class. The object of the exercise was not to produce wonderful drawings; the exercise was primarily intended as a way of getting learners to look at the narrative structure of the song. If they wished, they could add a short description below each picture to jog their memories.

After the story-boarding exercise the learners either planned for a piece of writing which followed a similar narrative structure, or for one which picked up on one of the themes raised in the song. Those who opted for the thematic approach were given structured mind-map templates to plan their writing; those who wanted to follow a similar narrative structure were given blank story boards for their planning. With hindsight, we found that the mind-map was quite constraining, as there was a general tendency for learners to feel that they needed to fill every bubble. This had the unintended consequence that learners became more fixated on filling bubbles and lost sight of the whole point of the exercise: planning their first drafts. This didn't necessarily mean that the exercise wasn't purposeful. However, we were aware that some learners got easily side-tracked. Fortunately, we were able to revisit the activity in the following week, when the learners started their first drafts.

At the drafting stage, learners were given tips which they could add to their 'toolbox' of strategies to help them get started. These tips included starter sentences, lists of descriptive words and some pointers regarding linguistic or structural devices that they could use in their writing (see Appendix 12). The 'toolbox' of strategies functioned as a mechanism to help them get started and to stay on track.

Appendix 5 - Imaginative Writing [Nov 2020] First Draft: Student A

Write about a time when you, or someone or know, had an unexpected visitor.

Your response could be real or imagined. (40 marks)

An unexpected visitor
imaginative writing: Wednesday 11th November 2020
"jessy!"

I turned around to see who was calling my name, it was Mr Thomas. I haven't seen him in years, I thought to myself. Walking towards him made me remember the first time I met him and how he turned my life into a better one.

Meeting Mr Thomas was ~~an~~ unexpected, I did not thought I would see someone like him, it all happened ~~then~~ in 2012 when Mr Thomas came in my village church for a program, at that program I was called to sing in the service I did not know that ~~was new~~ ~~and~~ could sing that much, because I had no training I started singing in churches ~~been~~ for payment because I had little siblings to take care of as an uneducated person I had to do what I know how to do best to earn little money to help my family in ~~the~~ to any way I could.

I was called by a member at that church and he/she told me about what ~~the~~ Mr Thomas said concerning that way I sang the other days hearing this made me happy.

relaxing at home, I had a door knock, I was ~~was~~ wondering who could that be because it was very early in the morning, I walked towards the door it ~~was~~ and I opened it, ~~and~~ it was Mr Thomas in a stocking turned a happy tone. I let him in, we started a discussion that changed my life to a better one, he gave me a paper that contained a scholarship into a school of music, "wow!" I said with excitement. ~~This~~ ~~was~~ oh a day I will never forget.

Commentary: This was Student A's first attempt at imaginative writing this year. She decided to follow a similar theme to the 'Johnny B. Goode' narrative. However, the content and setting of her story was different. Although the piece was a little on the short side, there was an attempt to use the 'toolbox' of strategies by including a range of linguistic and structural features, such as direct speech and inner monologue. She also gave her story a sense of natural closure.

Appendix 6 - Imaginative Writing [Nov 2020] Final Draft: Student A

Write about a time when you, or someone or know, had an unexpected visitor.

Your response could be real or imagined. (40 marks)

“Jessy!”

I turned around to see who was calling my name. It was Mr Thomas. “I haven’t seen him in years,” I thought to myself. Walking towards him made me remember the first time I met him and how he had turned my life into a much better one.

Meeting Mr Thomas' visit was unexpected, but a very welcome miracle. When i was younger I had never thought, or even dreamt, that i would ever meet anyone like this wonderful man in my life. It all happened in 2012 when Mr Thomas came to my town for a programme, the programme was for the youths, and all the youths were to show what they could do. It Was a talent show and also a youth seminar, and Mr Thomas was one of the invited guest speakers.

At the programme I was called to sing in the church service. I did not know I could sing that much, because I had no training. I was so nervous due to the fact that it was my first time seeing a man like him and also other rich people in my church. I had to calm myself down by drinking a lot of water, and I also asked for a chair to sit at first, So that I could calm my head down.

I then started singing in churches for payment. After all, I had little siblings to take care of. As an undergraduate I was studying Mass Communication in the Auchu Polytechnic. Singing was not what I was studying, it was just what I had as a natural gift, so I had to do what I knew best to earn a little money to help my family in any way that I could.

I was called by the head of the church, and he told me about Mr Thomas's offer concerning the way I sang. Hearing this made me happy, I was jumping with joy because I had never taught that anyone might have any interest in the way I sing, as I only had experience of singing with the use of YouTube. In fact I made use of YouTube most of the time. I normally watched and copied the singers. That was how I learnt how to sing a little bit. This made me happy, because I thought to myself that the offer was a very good beginning for a girl like me, and it would give me more opportunity to earn better money to help my family in the future. With joy in my heart I could not stop myself from smiling throughout that day.

Relaxing at home, I heard a knock. I was wondering who that could be, because it was very early in the morning. I walked towards the door and I opened it. It was Mr Thomas in a stocking and a happy tone, I let him in. We started a discussion that changed my life to a better one. He gave me a paper that contained a scholarship into a school of music. “Wow!” I said with excitement. Oh, a day I will never forget!

Seeing Mr Thomas in good and healthy life made me feel so incredibly happy, I was delighted to see him again after three long years.

Commentary: There is a definite improvement in the redrafted piece. This was in response to 'feedback' which followed the 'feedforward' model, i.e. by emphasising scope for improvement in order to take the learning forward. The areas for improvement focused on accuracy with respect to capitalising words appropriately; structural features, such as a more purposeful use of paragraphs and punctuation; interjections and fillers to give the language a more naturalistic feeling; and a greater use of adverbs, adjectives and adverbial phrases to add an extra layer of description.

Appendix 7 - Materials used in the February stage of the project

Zoomable Portrait: 'Miss Orovida Pissaro', Painted by Carel Victor Morlais Weight (1908 - 1997)

Planning was based on free association clustering techniques as featured in the following book:

G.L. Rico, (2000). *Writing The Natural Way: Using Right-Brain Techniques to Release Your Expressive Powers*. Penguin: Random House.

Commentary: The lessons related to the February stage of the project were delivered via two main platforms: Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom. Learners had links to the zoomable portrait via Google Classroom. It involved using a chosen object from Carel Weight's portrait, 'Miss Orovida Pissaro' (from the Ashmolean's collection of **zoomable portraits**) as stimulus material for a piece of imaginative writing based on the theme of 'forgetting something'. This theme was lifted straight from one of Edexcel's exam-style practice questions.

In line with a 'blended learning' approach, the learners first planned their writing at home on paper. Learners wrote the name of their chosen item in the centre of a piece of blank paper. They were then given just over ten minutes to 'cluster' ideas around their chosen item. This was to encourage the learners to think 'outside the box' by using Gabriele Rico's 'clustering' technique. Learners were encouraged to write down any thoughts whatsoever that they associated with their chosen item. (N.B. This was a qualitatively different approach from the 'mind-mapping' strategy that we used at the planning stage of their first piece of imaginative writing in November. The 'mind-mapping' strategy was designed to get learners to sort out ideas, placing them in categories, related to character, setting, emotions, the five senses, and so on. The 'clustering' technique is much freer in the sense that no ideas are off the table at the planning stage, as ideas are accumulated by free association. In this regard, it is much less inhibiting or constraining).

After the learners had had some personal thinking time via the 'cluster' approach, we were able to come together as a class on Teams. The smaller class sizes over Teams afforded us the chance of discussing possible strategies and directions that the writing might take. This pre-draft discussion helped to 'get learners into the zone' in terms of organising their ideas on their respective clusters. The whole-class discussion also afforded learners the opportunity to discuss things that they have forgotten in the past in their own lives. They also thought about what turns a mere incident into an engaging story.

The zoomable portrait was ideal for an online lesson, as the learners could easily interact with it. It features Orovida Pissarro sitting in an armchair, surrounded by objects which had a special significance in her life. The **teacher notes** were a good starting point for organising our thoughts as to how we would use this portrait. Learners were asked to choose an item from the portrait. After they had completed the clustering activity, they were invited to think of why or how their chosen item is so significant, i.e. to come up with a plausible backstory, which would be the starting point for their imaginative writing. This was great material for an open-ended discussion.

We wanted to develop strategies that encouraged thinking outside the box, but not drifting so far away from the box, that the learners' work loses structure and coherence, especially at the crucial planning stage. Some of the learners who still required a little scaffolding at the planning stage used calligrams instead of clustering as a planning tool. The idea is that once the learners had chosen an object featured on Carel Weight's portrait, they were encouraged to create a calligram of words, ideas, expressions and phrases related to their chosen object. They were able to use these words later in their writing. The calligram helps them to stay focused on the object itself, so that their plan results in a piece of writing that leans more towards descriptive depth rather than superficial breadth. The process of using the calligram approach to planning is that learners will come up with more 'expressive' language to use in the drafting stage. The calligram is also a kind of controlled clustering, so it allowed for differentiation. (N.B. any Google search will show a wide range of ready-made cat calligrams, or alternatively, the learners can create their own by using an outline drawing as a template).

Appendix 8 - Imaginative Writing [Feb 2021]: First Draft Student A

Write a story about a time when you, or someone you know, forgot something.

Your response could be real or imagined. Your writing must include one of the items from the portrait we studied. (40 marks).

How I lost my wrist watch forever.

I can never forget the terrifying day when I lost my expensive antique watch. It was made in Switzerland. It was a digital watch, circular in shape. Its circular shape reminded me of it was like a close and dependable friend; it never let me down; it always kept the correct time; it showed the days as well as the dates; it had three hands, the minute-hand, the hour-hand and the second-hand. Its dial was very pretty to look at, it had some glowing diamonds stones around it. People always used to make awesome compliments, whenever I put it on. Its case made of ever bright, sparkling, stainless steel. Its elegant strap was made of luxurious Spanish leather.

I used to wind it up, whenever I was listening to the morning news on the radio. Winding up my watch and listening to the radio went together like apples and pears, it made me so punctual. It also regulated my habit literally like clockwork. I was never late for school, especially since getting this wonderful watch. It was very dear to me, as it was given to me by my grandma, who is unfortunately no longer here.

It was a Sunday evening and my friends came around. I didn't want to go out because my mummy was preparing my favourite meal, but I had to go out with them anyways. I went out with my friends one disappointing and dreadful evening, and we were playing when it slipped off, never to be seen again. It was as if a part of me had disappeared forever, when I realized that it was lost, I searched for it everywhere, but it was of no use - my fruitless efforts were all in vain. Tears rolled down from my eyes - tears of despair, tears of sadness, tears of loss. My friends tried to cheer me up, and we began our deep

search. This search was like a quest for a lost treasure. Finally, I found it near the road, but it had already been cruelly crushed by a car that had crunched it into oblivion. That was the worst thing that had ever happened to me. However, it taught me an important albeit costly lesson. From then on, since that tortuous day I have learned how to handle all my things carefully, and also to keep an eye mostly on things that have been given to me by anyone. When we receive a gift from anyone, it is as if a part of the giver resides within the gift, so if we lose it, it is almost like losing a part of that person. I learned this lesson the hard way.

It was an awful situation, and it made me feel bad anytime I thought about it, because it was a gift which I was careless about and I will not get it back.

Commentary: This first draft was done after looking at the portrait of 'Miss Orovida Pissarro' from the Ashmolean's online collection of zoomable portraits and then doing the clustering activity. All activities related to this work, including the drafting, were done via Teams and Google Classroom due to the lockdown situation. Student A was clearly making a conscious decision to use engaging language, especially through the use of adjectives and similes. She was also using slightly more experimental phraseology compared with earlier on in the year.

Appendix 9 - Imaginative Writing [Feb 2021] Final Draft: Student A

Write a story about a time when you, or someone you know, forgot something.

Your response could be real or imagined. Your writing must include one of the items from the portrait we studied. (40 marks).

How I lost my wrist watch forever.

I can never forget the terrifying day when I accidentally lost my expensive antique watch. It was made in Switzerland. It was a watch, circular in shape. Its circular shape reminded me of my old bowl that was made in China. It was like a close and dependable friend; whenever I looked at the face of my watch, it was almost as if it was smiling back at me, calmly and sincerely announcing the time; it never let me down; it always kept the correct time; it showed the days as well as the dates; it had three hands, the minute-hand, the hour-hand and the second-hand. Its dial was very pretty to look at. It had five glowing diamonds around it. People always used to make awesome compliments, whenever I put it on. They used to say, "Wow! What a great watch!" or "That is such a cool watch. I wish I had one like that" or even "I can't take my eyes off that watch. It's so elegant!" Its case was made of a very bright, sparkling, stainless steel. Its elegant strap was made of luxurious Spanish leather.

I used to wind it up, whenever I was listening to the morning news on the radio. Winding up my watch and listening to the radio went together like apples and pears. It made me so punctual. It also regulated my habits literally like clockwork. I was never late for school, especially since getting this wonderful watch. It was very dear to me, as it was given to me by my grandma, who is unfortunately no longer here.

It all happened one Sunday evening. It was a Sunday evening just like any other Sunday evening - namely, the evening when my friends usually come around. And sure enough, at precisely 7:00 pm the doorbell rang. It was them, expecting to go out. I didn't really want to go out, because my mummy was preparing my favourite meal, but for

some reason, against all of my inner intuitions, I felt that I had to go out with them, even though something felt wrong. So, I eventually got my coat on and I went out with my friends on what was to become a disappointing and dreadful evening. We were playing by the roadside when my precious watch slipped off, never to be seen again. It was as if a part of me had disappeared forever. When I realized that it was lost, I searched for it everywhere, but it was of no use - my fruitless efforts were all in vain. Tears rolled down from my eyes - tears of despair, tears of sadness, tears of loss. My friends tried to cheer me up, and we began our deep search. This search was like a labyrinthine quest for a lost treasure. Finally, I found it near the road, but it had already been cruelly crushed by a car that had crunched it mercilessly into oblivion. That was the worst thing that had ever happened to me. Time itself seemed to stop momentarily, just as it had done so for my precious watch. However, life, just like time itself, moves on, and it taught me an important, albeit costly, lesson. From then on, since that terrible and tortuous day, I have learned how to handle all my things carefully, and also to keep an eye mostly on things that have been given to me by the people who are nearest and dearest to us. When we receive a gift from anyone, it is as if a part of the giver resides within the gift, so if we lose it, it is almost like losing a part of that person. I learned this lesson the hard way.

It was an awful situation, and it still makes me feel bad anytime I think about it, because it was a gift which I was careless about and I will not get it back.

Commentary: The feedback for the second draft focused primarily on looking for opportunities to improve. In other words, seeing where a metaphor could be extended or whether some purposeful repetition might enhance the mood of a paragraph. We also looked at strategies for giving the piece natural closure. Student A decided to add a moral to the story, which helped to add another layer of meaning to it. Student A was also making more purposeful use of much more varied punctuation in the redraft, which made the piece much more engaging.

Since we were working over Teams, I was able to set up breakout rooms for the purpose of giving feedback. I also wanted to get some idea of the learner's own thoughts were as the piece was unfolding, so asked learners to talk me through what they had done so far and where they wanted to take the work. This enabled me to give a 'rolling feedback' [see Appendix 13 for my final thoughts, especially concerning 'protocol analysis']. The breakout rooms were an invaluable facility for this approach.

Appendix 10 - Imaginative Writing [Feb 2021]: Final Draft Student B

Write a story about a time when you, or someone you know, forgot something.

Your response could be real or imagined. Your writing must include one of the items from the portrait we studied. (40 marks).

-PLAN-

Item - book

- General audience
- Narrative
- Light fiction

Meet a famous person after a conference thing? Can't remember their name, so ask them to sign a copy of their book (joint author?) and trying to read the signature while talking to them and not letting on that you've forgotten their name, turns out they're not the author but someone else you know well.

TITLE (working - will probably change it) "you're who now?"

It had been a long three days of conferencing, the most renowned specialists in their field had been enthusing their subject into the audience letting new ideas and notions spread out and mingled with the young energetic minds. Several of the specialists had performed breakout sessions focusing on the nuances of their particular field and I had attended as many of these as I could.

In all, I had maybe four hours sleep over the three days, so it's possible that the tiredness had added to my absentmindedness, but on leaving the conference to go and meet up with some friends, I spotted a face I recognised. It was one of the specialists who had mentioned a new and exciting theory on the properties of some subject I was becoming interested in.

I couldn't quite remember his name but all the same, I jogged over to where he was without much clue as to what to say to this new idol of mine.

"That was such an interesting and inspirational speech" was my opening line. OK, I admit that I was now a little unsure if this was my new idol, but he was certainly one of the specialists and they were all as inspirational as each other.

"Yeah, it was good" he replied without even stopping to engage me, hum, bit rude but maybe he's not good with having fans. I noticed a small collection of books and papers under his arm, they must be some of the reference materials they were using on stage, and they've probably got his name on them so I fell into step beside him and tried to nonchalantly read the titles and look for clues.

Not wanting to sound like an idiot for getting the wrong specialist, I carried on fishing with open statements that could have applied to any of the guest speakers “there were some great ideas thrown around” I said, hoping he would maybe react when I mentioned his particular idea “lots of ideas to go and develop” - nope, still nothing.

Then I caught a fraction of one of the papers ‘presented by chri...’ - ah, got it, it’s Christopher... Chris, ahm, is he a doctor of something? What was his surname? That’s when the thought came to me that if I asked him to sign the conference guide, it would clear up this embarrassing situation and I’d be able to thank him by his proper title, he won’t go off thinking I’m a weirdo and if we ever meet again he won’t go to lengths to avoid me.

“Look, I know it’s a bit odd, but would you mind signing my book” I asked, throwing in a good deal of innocence and some helpless eyes, “it’s for my friend” I followed up with, trying to deflect the weirdness of the request.

The man stopped, abruptly. I had to turn right around to see him. I was already getting the conference book out of my bag when I saw his face, it was questioning me directly. “Dave, why do you want me to sign that?” he asked.... ‘Dave’ he knows my name... then the penny fell. So this new idol of mine was actually one of the group I had come to the conference with, more than that, he was Craig, one of my long time friends who I had known for over ten years now.

I looked at him shaking my head and exuding embarrassment, “I am so sorry” I began, it was clearly obvious that I had not recognised him, but before I could go on he was already laughing. This was not the first time I had forgotten a face, he knew it and I knew it, and we both knew it would not be the last time.

Commentary:

Student B produced a wonderful piece of work here that reflected his own condition of prosopagnosia (impaired ability to recognise familiar faces).

The task took place during lockdown in February 2021 and was conducted using Google Classroom with Teams to interact. When the class were on task, I proceeded to chat to everyone via the breakout room function. The areas for discernible improvement involved the lack of strategies from the toolbox being utilised in the work in progress. The dialogue between Student B and myself circled the importance of using language and structure techniques within the narrative (please see Appendix 12). After this chat, he worked fastidiously to incorporate these techniques and resultantly, improved the quality of his response. By using protocol analysis during our conversation, student B told me that he wanted to reflect on his condition of prosopagnosia, which he finds immensely challenging in his everyday life. He could, however, appreciate the funny side of certain scenarios in which he has found himself. It was pleasant to see this light-hearted but also very personal approach being taken in his writing.

Appendix 11 - Imaginative Writing assessment [May 2021]: Student A

*6 Look at the images provided.



Write about 'one day in the future'.

Your response could be real or imagined. You may wish to base your response on one of the images.

**Your response will be marked for the accurate and appropriate use of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar.*

(Total for Question 6 = 40 marks)

A DAY IN THE FUTURE

Times are changing along with the people, life-styles, occupations, careers, cultures and everything that normally makes up our world. We can never know or predict what the future brings or where we are headed. So what does the future have for us.

There are going to be more change. Our population will increase a lot of various things will change. Our world will give a pollution on an uncontrolled level. It

It has been predicted that there will be more use of ~~the~~ technology. A lot of things like cars will be programmed and auto, when you will get in and tell your car where to go, and it will drive you there. You won't even have to lay a finger on it.

At any rate we need to start preparing and working, doing things now to start the future in a good way. We are the future they only ones who can make it a good and a better place to live.

A lot of people are not sure if the future can beat the present, is there even anything left to invent, is there any new invention that is going to be improvements to existing ones? Like robots as we know them were created in the early 1950s. As they world grows so new things happens. There will be more ~~inventions~~ invent things that will save our planet (earth) what we do need all inventions to save people lives, save cultures. There will be ~~a~~ a lot of things that will be created over time hopefully.

This world is much, much smaller than we thought it was to be. We go through a mass of various moments. The world is so little so fragile. Yet the future of a world depends

on ~~the~~ our actions and how active we
are working hard to ~~keep~~ keep it
moving. This world is in our hands
now. What are going to do to help
it grow and not let it ~~die~~ die
in our generation.

The future goes one day at a time.
So we have to make use every ~~the~~
~~next~~ moments. The way we show up
for our lives today and tomorrow has
an enormous effect on who we will
be and what we will be ~~experiencing~~ exp-
erencing years from now. If we
can remain fully engaged by the day
at hand, enjoying it ~~at~~ and what
it has to offer and putting more en-
ergy to it into make most of it, we
will find out that we perfectly re-
ady and capable to handle our future
and whatever it brings.

And ~~we~~ actions, work, energy brings
they power ~~and~~ ~~for~~ to move well in
life.

Commentary: This piece was written under timed conditions, as it was one of the May assessments that we used as part of our grade allocation process. Student A has interpreted the task almost as a piece of journalistic commentary on what the future holds for us. Whilst this is in itself quite an imaginative interpretation of the task, her choice of format didn't really capitalise on her strengths (as exemplified in earlier work done throughout the year). Her piece was full of interesting insight and content, but it didn't showcase her ability in using language and structure to engage the reader.

Appendix 12 - Imaginative Writing assessment [May 2021]: Student B

*6 Look at the images provided.



Write about 'one day in the future'.

Your response could be real or imagined. You may wish to base your response on one of the images.

**Your response will be marked for the accurate and appropriate use of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar.*

(Total for Question 6 = 40 marks)

"one day in the future"

Elizabeth opened her eyes, and her perception of her surroundings was blurred, fuzzy, as if she was looking at the world from under water. She does not move until she could focus her vision, and she found that she could not move, though

if that was from restraints or her own inability she could not say.

Memories came flooding back to her, she was on a boat, there had been some sort of light in the sky, like the Aurora she had once seen, but much more distinct, intense, so vivid even in her memory.

Her vision was slowly getting better and now she could hear noise, a whisper, slightly muffled as if ~~by~~ she ~~was~~ had her headphones in.

Another memory pushed its way forward, headphones she had been listening to someone talking on her headphones, but as quickly as it arrived the memory slipped away again.

"hello" in her head she had said it loudly, clearly, but the muffled reality sounded barely audible, broken and feeble.

"hello, is anyone there" she tried again, by now her sight was clearer and she was starting to be able to feel her body, fingers, arms, toes, legs, they all felt odd, cold but with no external sensation to judge how cold and paralysed.

Panic suddenly took over, the adrenaline rushed through her clearing her hearing and vision completely, but she couldn't move a muscle below her neck, 'my broken my back' she thought, she could hear a beeping next to her getting quicker, see partial colours and smell the cleanliness, she was in a hospital with a broken back and absolutely no recollection of how she got there.

~~She could~~

There was no sensation of any straps holding her limbs down, and she could not see any restraints.

When she lifted her head her arms were above the bed covers, she was in a room on her own, there was a window, some monitors and the beeping she assumed was representative of her heart rate, she tried lifting her right arm, her brain was willing it to lift but the dead weight did not move.

She cleared her ~~throat~~ throat and shouted, this time with the clarity and volume she intended. "hello, help me"

Suddenly the door into the room was pushed open and a young woman in a blue gown rushed in.

"Elizabeth, its ok, you're ok, just try to stay calm"

the young woman said rushing over to the bedside.

She picked up Elizabeth's left hand as if it weighed

nothing, but when she let go, instead of falling to the bed as Elizabeth thought, it remained exactly where the young woman had left it. Even if Elizabeth had control of her arms it would have been impossible to hold it that still in that unusual position for more than a few seconds.

The panic escalated when Elizabeth tried to put her arm down, but her muscles simply did not move.

"What's happened to me, why am I here?" she asked with panic in her voice.

"Please be calm, I assure you everything is ok but you need to calm down" the young woman said while she pressed buttons on some equipment behind the bed.

"I can't move anything" Elizabeth said with tears welling in her eyes. "Am I paralysed?" she asked.

"No, you're just immobilised like an artificial paralysed."

Elizabeth saw the name badge on the young woman's uniform. 'Helen Price' it read, 'at that moment another person entered the room, a old man, frail and thin but walking fully upright and oh so strangely funny, he had a look of kindness about him and smiled warmly when Elizabeth saw him.

"What's the last thing you can remember?" Helen asked in her while she continued working on the equipment.

"I think I was on a boat" Elizabeth said, she closed her eyes momentarily as if to clear her mind, as "we

were watching the Aurora" she continued, but less sure of the accuracy of her memory. "There was a man saying something

"we were on a cruise" the old man said softly walking to the other side of the bed, still smiling like he had

met a long lost friend. "we were on a cruise in the med when the incident happened."

"What incident, and who are you, I recognise you but don't know who you are" Elizabeth replied, she could

almost feel the warmth radiating from the old man.

"It me" he replied. "It's Peter"

Elizabeth almost gasped, it was him, but he was only 22, a year younger than Elizabeth, her fiancé.

"How can it be" she asked, confusion seeping in. "How can you be my Peter"

She looked at her hand still suspended in mid air, it was her hand as she remembered it, no lines or

aging, no signs of wrinkles as she hadn't been in a coma

Peter took her other hand gently, he gazed into her eyes, eyes he had last seen open 68 years before on a cruise boat off the coast of Italy. She didn't look a day older, her soft skin with slight freckles, her brown eyes framed beneath a black fringe, she was still 23 and still as Peter remembered her all those years ago. "Do you know where you've been Lizzy?" he asked, "do you know what happened?"

Peter sat and filled Elizabeth in on what he could, they had been on a cruise, a storm had struck and the boat ~~wasn't~~ had been lost, there were 15 survivors including Peter, but no wreckage had been found over the past ten years, the missing had started to reappear, none of them had aged, they would turn up on the beaches of Italy or if they had washed up, but they showed no signs of being in the water, they all remember seeing a light like the Aurora, though none of them remember the storm.

As he spoke, Helen busied herself, returning Elizabeth's arm to their resting place by her side, she pressed a button somewhere and suddenly Elizabeth could move her muscles again. "You might get a tingling sensation for a while," she said while Peter continued telling Elizabeth of the missing years. "There is no explanation as yet," he said, the puzzle of the missing passengers was a world wide phenomenon with massive interest everywhere a new service came back.

Commentary:

In this piece, Student B interpreted the task as a narrative set in an imagined future. Since he took this approach, it allowed him to implement strategies which we had practised by virtue of participating in this research project. Consequently, the most striking feature of this piece is the varied and complex nature of the language and structure he has used in comparison with his work earlier on in the year (see Appendix 14).

The context of this activity took place during a face-to-face session under exam conditions as it constituted his main assessment. His favoured technique of dialogue features heavily and is utilised purposefully to progress the storyline.

Appendix 13 – Toolkit of Language and Structure Strategies

Language techniques:

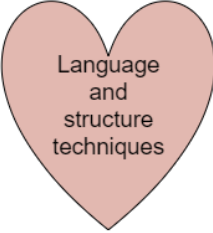
1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____

Examples:

1 _____

 2 _____

 3 _____



Language
and
structure
techniques

Structure techniques::

1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____

Examples:

1 _____

 2 _____

 3 _____

Exemplars of completed 'toolkit' sheets

Language techniques:

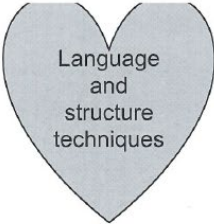
1 *metaphor*
 2 *simile*
 3 *hyperbole*

Examples:

1 *Time flies*

 2 *Time passes like the wind*

 3 *I told him a million times*



Language
and
structure
techniques

Structure techniques::

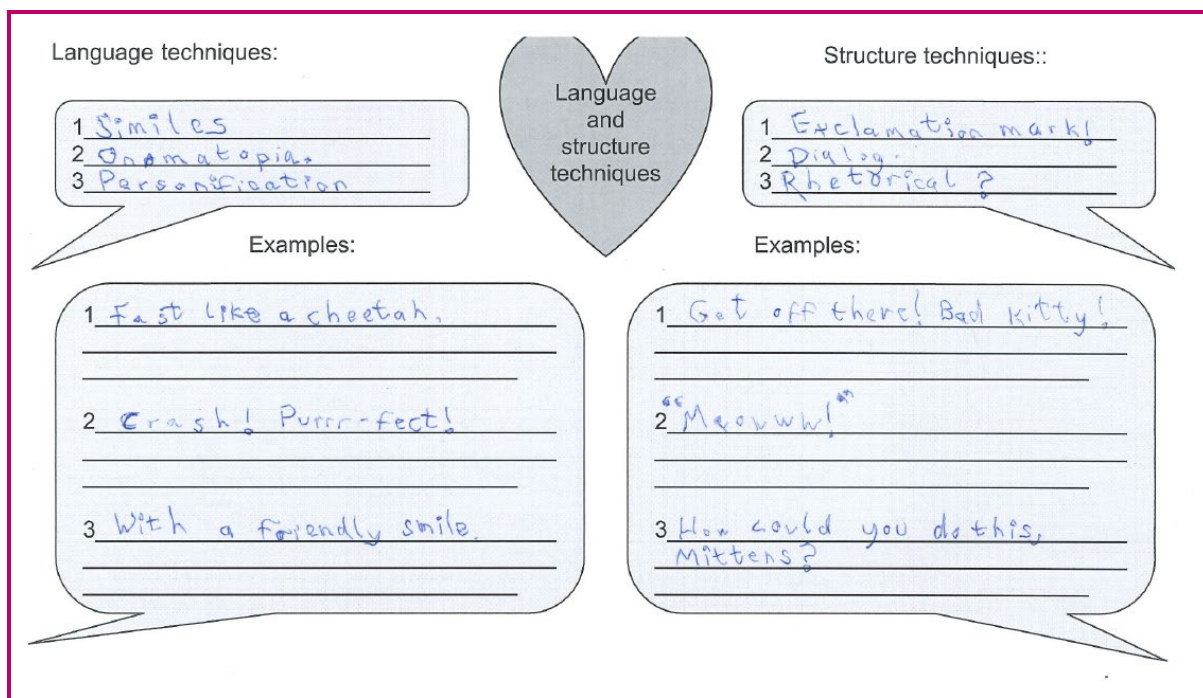
1 *Question rhetorical*
 2 *Dialogue*
 3 *Short sentences*

Examples:

1 *What are you looking at ?*

 2 *“Where is it?” I asked.*

 3 *Stop!*



Commentary:

This is the toolbox of strategies which we used with our learners. We used this with all of our groups as it is not prescriptive and allows them to recall previous techniques they may or may not have some familiarity with. It also allows an element of ownership for the learners, allowing them to collate their ideas with this worksheet. The students are familiar with the symbolism of the heart and it reinforces the importance of considering language and structure together as in item, as stressed in both the Reading and Writing sections of the examination as stipulated by exam boards.

Regarding context, we used this in our sessions at the initial stage of the year. It worked well in terms of both a face-to-face classroom and during online sessions. The learners chose three language and three structure techniques that they wanted to use in their drafts. Then they thought of examples which followed the theme of their intended stories. The exemplars above are from the second stage in the project, when learners planned and drafted pieces of imaginative writing based on items from the portrait and the theme of forgetting something. The idea was that learners would think of techniques in advance and then incorporate their ideas into their drafts. We only wanted the learners (at least initially) to use three language and structure techniques, as this would be a manageable number for the learners to cope with.

Appendix 14 - Imaginative Writing [Nov 20] First Draft & Final Draft: Student B

Write about a time when you, or someone or know, had an unexpected visitor. Your response could be real or imagined. (40 marks)

First Draft

"It's been a long time" Johnny looked up from his guitar and studied his friend's face. Dixon was older, his eyes were lined with the years, and his beard was peppered with white.

"Did you ever think we'd make it this far?" Johnny asked.

"I knew we had something special, you had something special" Dixon replied in his mid-western drawl.

"Man, I never thought we'd be here" Johnny continued "my ma did, she used to tell me that one day I'd be here with my name in lights"

It had been 15 years since he had left his small town with his band, and as he thought back over the time he considered how far they had come, professionally and personally.

"You ready to do this" Dixon asked, he stood up and moved towards Johnny resting a hand on his shoulder, Johnny looked up at him, "Dixon, I was born ready" he said with a smile and jumped off the stool, his guitar pushed around to his back.

'Did we really do it? Did we really change the world?' Johnny looked at his band and pride burst through him, the past 15 years had been a succession of highs and lows with ever changing fortunes but one thing had been consistent all that time, his belief in his music.

The band were on the stage, a galaxy of spot lights had converged on the mic in the center where Johnny stood, along amongst a vastness of backlit faces waiting expectantly for the music that had changed their world. Johnny held the pick ready to start, he could feel the anticipation as his band stood ready to take his cue, this was the moment he loved, this was the place he belonged, he savoured the moment as he strummed the first note and the audience burst into applause.

Final Draft

"It's been a long time" Johnny looked up from his guitar and studied his friend's face. Dixon was older, his eyes were lined with the years, and his beard was peppered with white.

"Did you ever think we'd make it this far?" Johnny asked.

"I knew we had something special, you had something special" Dixon replied in his mid-western drawl.

"Man, I never thought we'd be here" Johnny continued "my ma did, she used to tell me that one day I'd be here with my name in lights"

It had been 15 years since he had left his small town with his band, and as he thought back over the time he considered how far they had come, professionally and personally.

"You ready to do this?" Dixon asked, he stood up and moved towards Johnny resting a hand on his shoulder, Johnny looked up at him, "Dixon, I was born ready" he said with a smile and jumped off the stool, his guitar pushed around to his back.

He picked up his Stetson and rested it on his head and caught sight of himself in a mirror, he still saw a boy, a boy who was playing the part of a man. He looked closer and could see the wrinkles on his forehead and the lines forming around his eyes and mouth. He absentmindedly touched them and was aware of the coarseness of the skin on his fingers from a million strums of the guitar strings, and for a moment he realised he was older now, he wasn't the boy playing ideally under a tree to the rhythm of the Louisiana railway anymore.

He followed Dixon out of the dressing room and down towards the stage. He could hear the ebb and flow of the audience eagerly waiting for their idol to come on stage. Anyone who could handle a guitar could play his music, and since his arrival in the music scene, lots had tried to copy him. But only Johnny could make the guitar sing and dance in the way that electrified the crowd, causing dance moves to explode into being and taking control of their arms and legs like a frenzied puppet master, and they craved it.

Commentary:

Student B has provided a solid basis for a reimagining of Johnny B. Goode's narrative.

He broke down the sections into certain areas of techniques and crafted the dialogue purposefully to the development of the narrative. He uses description well, but does have a distinct lack of adverbs and adverbial phrases when describing dialogue. This was highlighted as an area of improvement when the student agreed to.

Appendix 15 - Comments from participating learners

Student A: *'The story felt very personal. It meant something special to me.'*
(Commenting on the November task).

'I liked writing the story about the lost watch, because there were lots of emotional moments.' (Commenting on the February task).

'I found writing about the future difficult, because it's really hard to think about what the future might be.' (Commenting on the timed assessment).

'A very big thank-you to Ray.'

'I enjoyed the process. I feel that I have improved over the year.'

Student B: *'I knew the procedure to expect, Bob, and that really calmed my nerves under the timed conditions.'* (Commenting on the timed assessment).

Appendix 16 - Hayley's visual prompts for teaching imaginative writing

In your paper 1 exam, there is an opportunity to write an imaginative story by using images given to you. This task is to develop those skills.

You only need to choose ONE of the following. Using the images to prompt you. Write about a time when...

1. You found a secret door. You may use ideas from real life, or this can be completely made up.



2. Something unusual happened. You may use ideas from real life, or this can be completely made up.



3. You lost something important. You may use ideas from real life, or this can be completely made up.

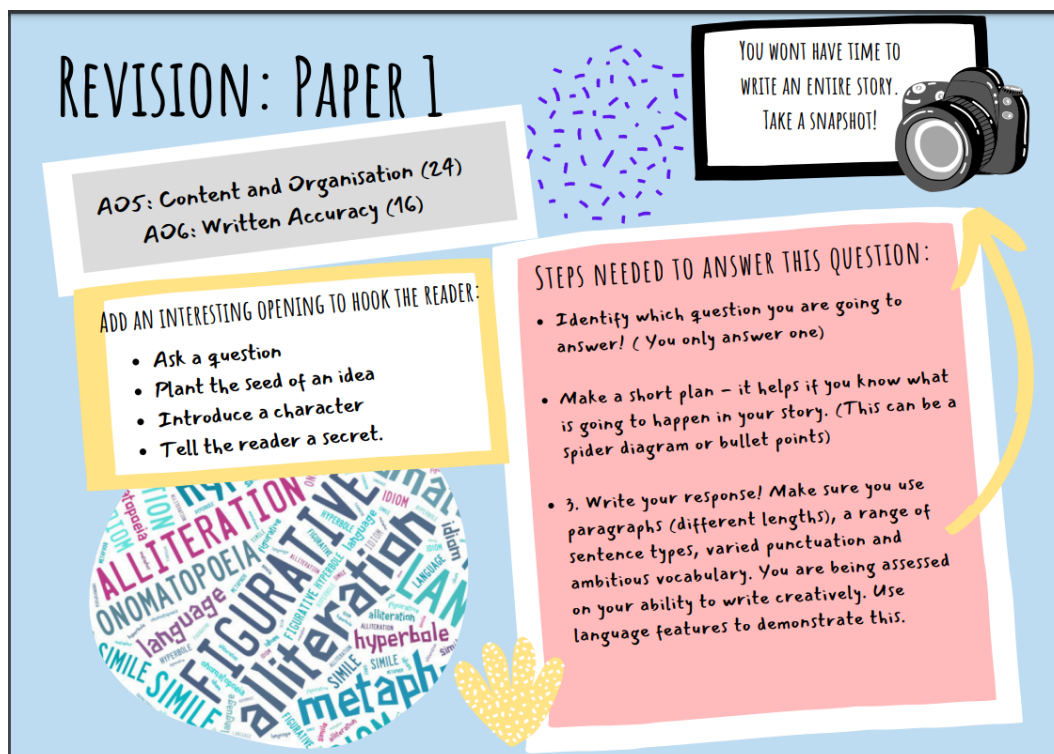


4. You went on a journey You may use ideas from real life, or this can be completely made up.



Commentary: Students were told their stories had to respond to 'something they have lost' they may or may not use the bear. However, all students used the bear. What was interesting about this task is that in all the stories, the protagonist reverted to a younger version of themselves. While the bear played a varied significance amongst the stories, they all addressed the theme of attachment and declared some feelings towards the object. None of the stories seemed to describe the bear to any great extent, but there were feelings attached to it, nonetheless.

Appendix 17 - Hayley's cribsheet to support imaginative writing



Commentary: The crib sheet proved to be a useful tool for some students, but I found that an overwhelming majority of students could not access the crib sheets without support. The sheets were designed to be used in the students' coursework assessments as a part of scaffolding to support them. I introduced them to my learners a week earlier to familiarise themselves with them and explain how they could use them alongside their tasks. This worked well within class and the students recalled expectations of each exam question using the crib sheets to help them. For example, one student suggested it was a good idea not to try and tell an entire story. However, when the students were in an exam-style environment, their confidence in using the crib sheet diminished. Despite pointing out that they may refer to the crib sheet for guidance, very few did. Instead, they were used as a distraction. Some students drew on them. Some used them as a fan. One student used it to collect pencil shavings. The students who did access them tended to follow the loose guidance which was shown in their stories. In class discussion afterwards, a few students admitted to forgetting what they were supposed to do with the crib sheet.

Appendix 18 - Hayley's 'writing from a stimulus' task

Write a story - this story can be about anything, but I want you to use the stimulus below to inspire your story.

Remember to include:

Characters

Imagery (metaphors, similes, sensory language)

A beginning, a middle, an end.

You will also be assessed on your spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

There are 4 options for you to base your story on.

OPTION 1: Listen to the following soundtrack:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exbm01uDMbM>

What kind of story does this inspire?

OPTION 2:



What kind of story does this inspire?

OPTION 3:



Watch this short clip showing a common object: <https://youtu.be/6CkGlmeTbSA>

What kind of story does this inspire?

OPTION 4:

Listen to the following soundtrack:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzLhXesNkCI>

What kind of story does this inspire?

Commentary: I set up a 'writing from a stimulus' task, but I didn't get any responses from the audio clips and object (ballerina box) they all chose the image. I had various stimuli which I wanted them to use to inspire a story. We briefly explored ideas from each option. There were two audio clips, one quite jarring and one quite sombre. We talked about the possible genres these stories might take. I also chose an object: a ballerina musical box. which played Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. We talked about characters and what kind of character might own a ballet box. This opened up the idea of speculative fiction as we explored the idea that the ballerina in the box was the protagonist and somehow she had become trapped inside this. Sadly, nobody pursued this idea. The final option was an image of a young girl swimming under water with a lamp. All the responses used this image and several students introduced 'magic' in some way. It was surprising that students didn't choose music or an object to base their stories on.

Appendix 19 - Composite Learning Model at CoWC



The Composite Model

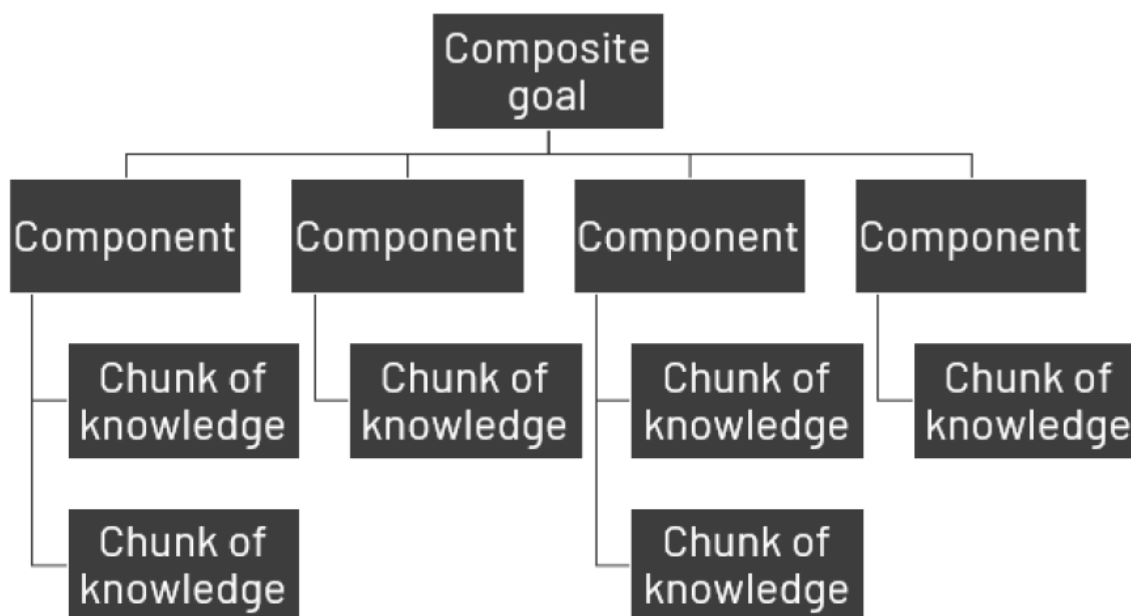
This page aims to give guidance on creating and using the composite model.

The composite model does not replace our other planning documents, but works along side them to support deeper learning.

What is composite learning?

Composite learning is chunks (components) of learning that needs planning, applying, recalling and assessing to support retention in long-term memory.

This knowledge then supports problem solving and helps the student to achieve their goals.

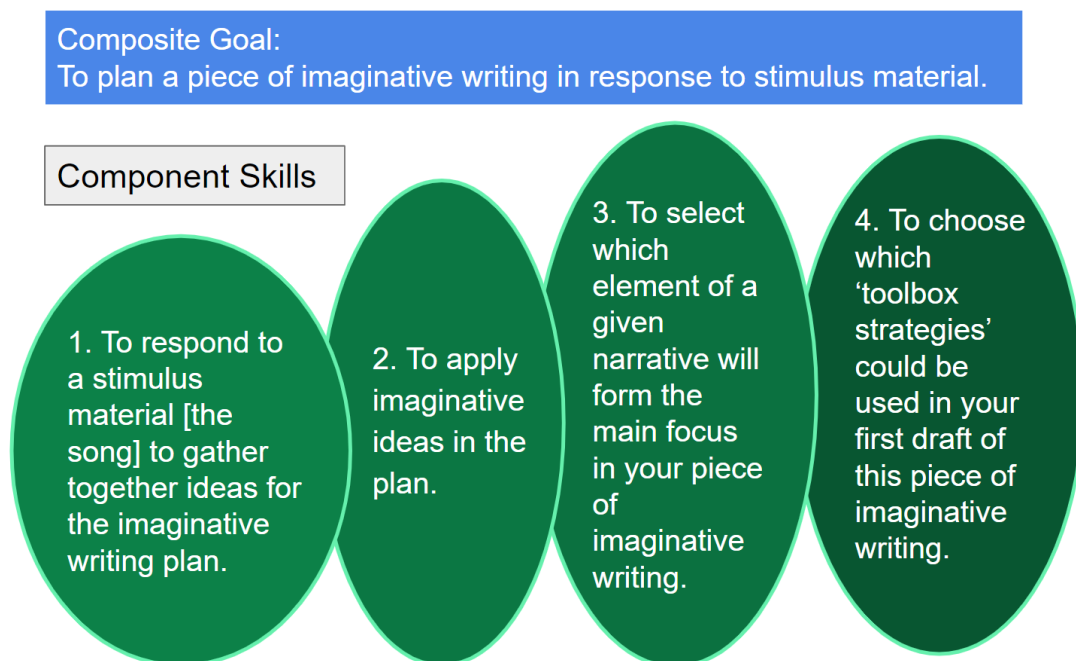


The composite model displays required knowledge and skills in a hierarchy.

The composite goal is your overall aim of the learning episode and it is positioned at the top. This is then followed by the components which contribute to achieving that goal. Each component is then further broken down as a chunk of knowledge and these are display vertically below each component.

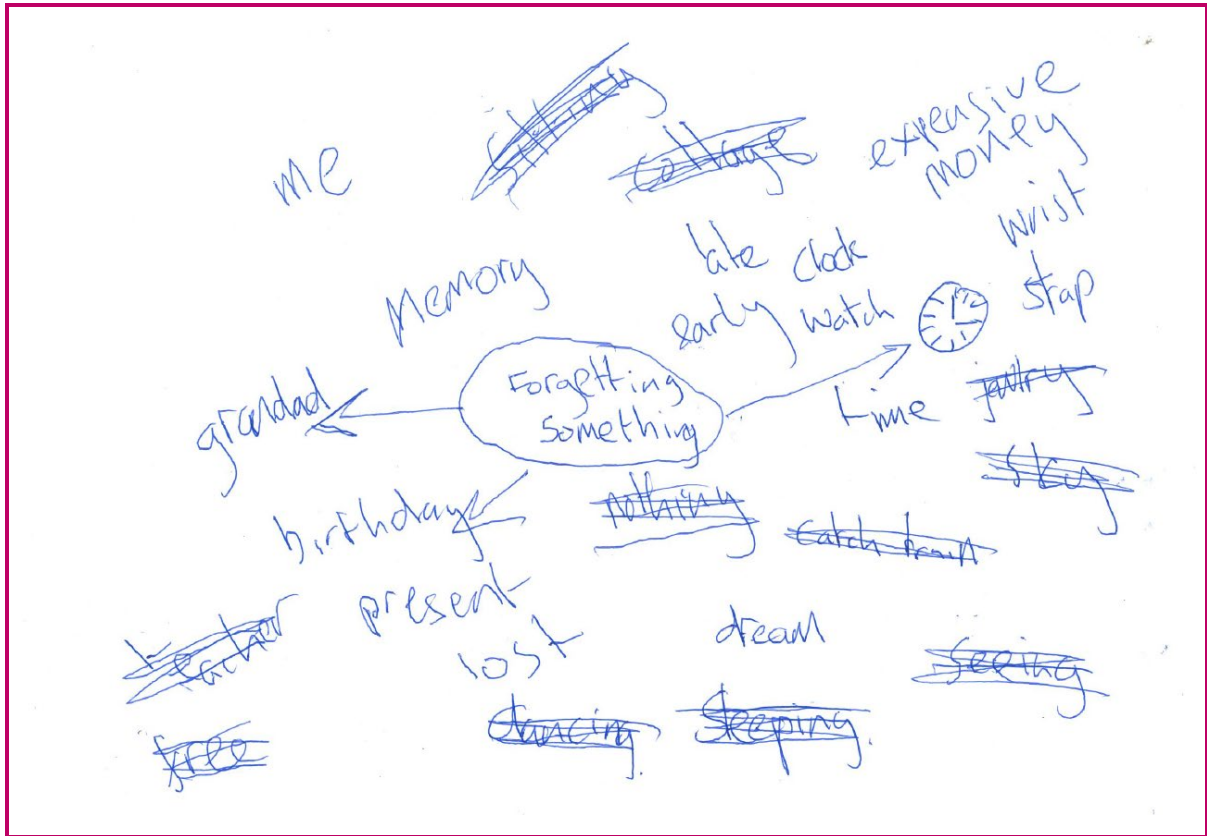
A well designed composite model will provide a clear sequence to support achieving the composite goal.

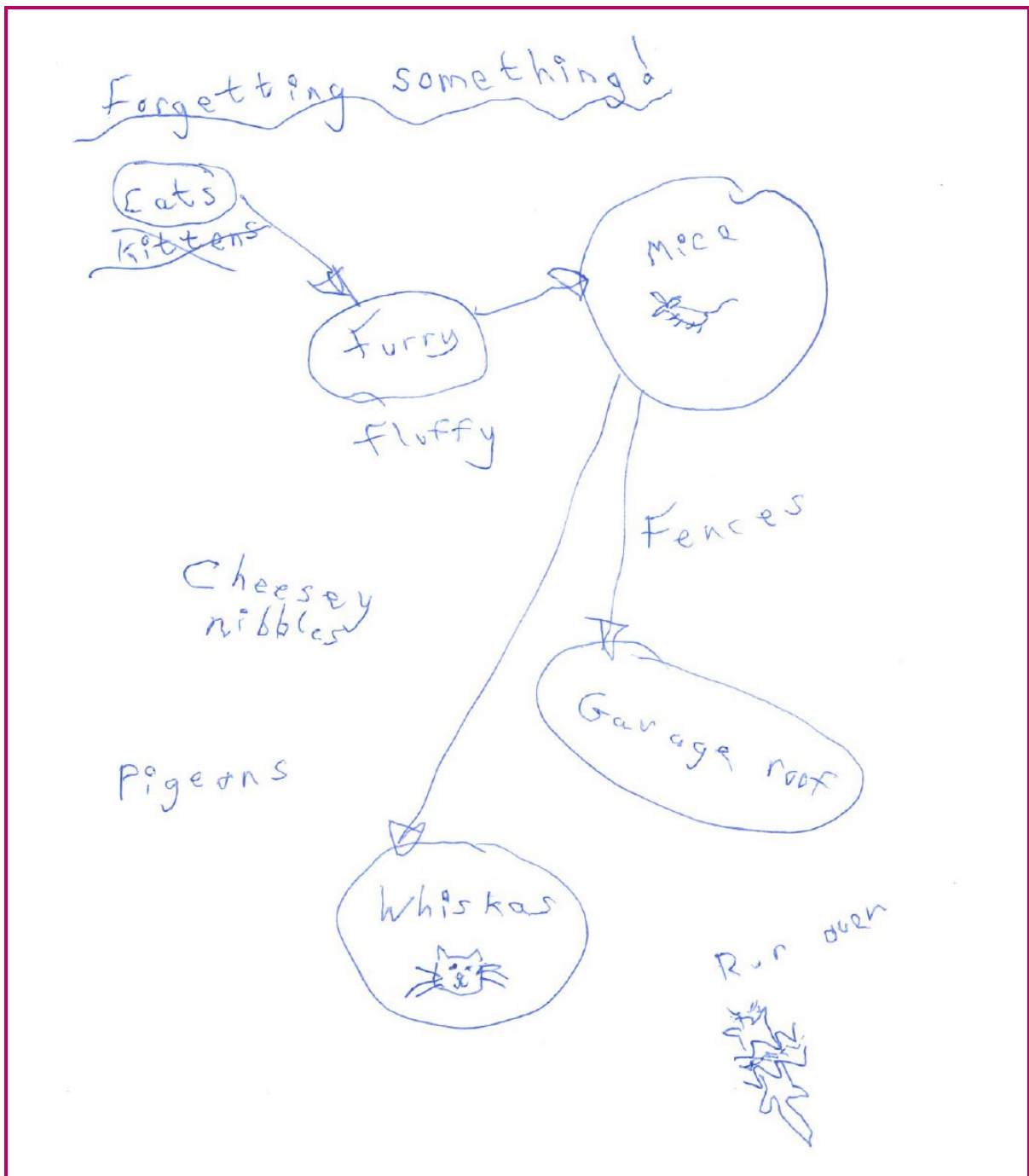
Commentary: The composite learning model has proved to be a workable way of sharing lesson objectives with the learners. By breaking large tasks down into their constituent parts, it enables the learners to gain a better understanding of what is required of them. They are also able to see the direction that the lesson will take and how the subset tasks relate to the overall task. Below is an example of how we shared our objectives with the learners using the composite learning model.



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Appendix 20 - Exemplars of free association / 'clustering' plans





Commentary: The 'clustering' approach to planning follows a 'free-association' approach. Learners were given five minutes to write down whatever thoughts came into their heads. We then spent a further two minutes crossing out words and ideas that might not be useful and drawing lines to connect up ideas to form the basis of a story. Learners were then given the chance to talk through their ideas, making slight modifications as they went along. Although these 'clusters' can give the appearance of being a little jumbled or messy, they are a great way of getting conversations started with learners about their ideas for stories.

The learners did these 'clusters' on paper at home whilst on Teams. They were given the opportunity to talk through their ideas in 'break-out' rooms before starting their first drafts on Google Classroom.

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