# Practical strategies for teaching writing

*(Manuel and Carter, 2015)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Writing/Focus</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Skills and Resources</th>
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<td><strong>Descriptive Writing</strong></td>
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| a) People             | Describe people: teacher, doctor, plumber, baker, footballer, broker, painter, musician. Describe the person sitting next to you in the bus/train. Describe your favourite or least favourite ad, TV character, website, song. Describe your favourite animal. Make jottings about a character you have imagined. | Use models, e.g.:  
  ➢ Ted Hughes’ poetry  
  ➢ Dickens  
  ➢ Hardy  
  ➢ Browning’s poetry  
  ➢ Pictures  
  ➢ Music  
  ➢ Postcards  
  ➢ Film excerpts  
  ➢ Documentaries  
  ➢ Paintings  
  ➢ Webpages |
| b) Places             | Describe a scene in a painting, postcard, drawing to capture its essence. I am a giant octopus carried out into the sea that is too cold. I am a creature from Jupiter. I’ve landed near the sea. Describe the view from your bedroom window, early morning in summer, dusk in winter, twilight in autumn. | Observation  
  Recognition of uniqueness, differences, contrasts. Surface and symbolic characteristics. Description and evocation. Aims at sharp detail and accuracy. Use as a basis for story writing and other imaginative writing. Develops language skills and recognition of differences between literal, abstract, emotive, rhetorical, sensational and figurative language. |
| c) Objects/Sounds     | Write the script for an ad for a potato, a new suntan lotion, new no-burn candles. Describe your mobile’s ringtone without others being able to hear it. Describe the impact of your favourite song or piece of music on you. | |
| **Activities/Emotions** | Describe someone who is angry, shy, embarrassed, delighted, afraid, miserable, enthusiastic, excited (what are the features of these emotions?) Describe what it feels like to ski, float, take off in a plane, ride a bike through the sand, eat ice-cream, shape clay. Describe what it feels like to be late, early, stuck, betrayed, cheated, surprised. | Memory and observation. Honing skills of defining and evoking, showing rather than telling. Use photographs and pictures as stimulus. |
| **Fantasy**           | Describe life in a world without paper, electricity, mobiles, clothes, McDonalds. | Developing concept of fantasy. Allow scope for representation. |
| Use Picasso and Dali paintings as a stimulus to describe a dream  
What is your ideal day?  
Who is your fantasy friend?  
Take extracts from fantasy fiction and recast it in another form | Link to popular media representations |
|---|---|
| **Narrative**  
Word cache and writing derby – free-write for 1, 2 or 3 minutes on a person, place, experience, thing (from own experience of from a text)  
Use titles, pictures, photos, music, book covers, ads, opening sentences of novels, opening lines of poems or songs, headlines etc as stimulus  
Take an actual incident and turn it into a story (Kelly gang, war, news items, mystery)  
Spontaneous memory monologue technique  
Use flashback, stream of consciousness  
• Finishing stories read in class  
• Creating ghost chapters, missing chapters, new endings | Developing confidence in writing through memory, observation, experience  
Stress origins, derivations, intertextuality, form, organization of ideas |
| **Argument/Exposition**  
Prepare a for/against list on the topic of censorship, stem cell research, cloning  
Create a dialogue between two people with opposed points of view about a text or topic  
Write a newspaper editorial or blog on a controversial topic or issue  
Contribute to a web discussion or blog on a topical issue  
Use the Benton advertisements to debate issues such as media censorship | Stress on structuring ideas, distinguishing between fact and opinion, sequencing ideas, using evidence and shared conventions |
| **Creative**  
Stimulus from pictures, music, objects, characters, topics, experiences, guided experiences, literature, film, media  
Stimulus by models – poems, stories, plays, media, etc  
Interview other writers  
Spontaneous Memory Monologue (Reflect on something in the landscape that triggers memories)  
Symbols – rocks, plants, gloves, sticks, etc  
Imagine you are ... a piece of fruit, a force of nature, a season, a body of water, a landform, a tree, a building, a coin, a musical instrument, a car, a country, etc  
Find a photo or photos from stages in your life. Using the poem "The Album", use this photo to reflect on the what, where, when, how, why of that picture  
Draw a silhouette of your friend’s face and vice-versa. Use this to stimulate writing about ‘you’, also using the poems as a stimulus if you wish .. create your own poem with visual images  
Write interview questions for interviews with characters from texts  
Speak for the city street, speak for the still lake, your bedroom, your dog  
Translate a known work into another form – a poem into a news story, a news story into a poem, a dialogue into a poem ...  
Change the ending of a text | Allow for lots of choice and scope in substance and form. Lots of pre-writing talk, time for revising, opportunities for discussion of writing process, publication  
Develops confidence and control over language  
Values the capital that students bring to the classroom in terms of memory, experience, observation  
Experiential, student and learning centred approaches  
Workshop approaches  
Students’ literature and texts valued as part of the continuum of all texts |
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Task Description</th>
<th>Core Skills</th>
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| **Factual**  | Write a report on media events  
             Compile lists and catalogues  
             Describe an experience or event from history  
             Take a picture and present a point of view, or argue for an ad/film being (un)censored  
             Instructional writing – giving directions, describing an object to the class without them being able to see it  
             Examine propaganda posters and materials – identify how facts have been distorted.  
             Rewrite the material to provide a more factual representation  
             Detail a scene or an object as a forensic investigator for use as evidence in a case  
             Statement of family background, family tree  
             Inventory of advertising on tv, radio, print, web  
             Present the relevant facts about a fork, a sock, a cricket ground  
             Factual report on a dog’s life, teenagers, house next door  
             Write a classified ad for something you want to sell on E-Bay                                                                                                     | Distinguishing fact from opinion.  
             Recognising the role of factual writing in communicating ideas  
             Is there such a thing as fact?                                                                                                                                       |
| **Point of view** | Interview people on a topic/issue  
             Express a point of view in response to an article in the paper  
             Give opinions on crime, drugs, public education  
             Write a day in the life of someone you know  
             Write a report on an incident from two points of view  
             Tell the story of a Sunday morning spent by an old man, a baby, a child, a journalist, a surfer                                                                 | Developing an understanding of the concept of ‘voice’ and the organization of ideas for public contexts |
| **Transactional** | Plan an itinerary for a dream holiday – send emails, letter to hotels, postcards to friends                                                                                                                      | Conventions of letters, emails, reports, forms, workplace texts etc                                                                                         |
Send an email to all your friends breaking to them some important news
Write a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper
Post a comment on an on-line at a news site
Apply for a job
Write to an author

References: