



# TEACHERS' PACK



*All art is achieved through the exercise of a craft, and every craft has its rudiments that must be taught.*

Fairfax and Moat (1998)

The *Craft of Writing* project is exploring how we can improve both children's enjoyment of being writers and how well they write. In particular, it explores how writing is a craft, and like all crafts, it has to be learned, and can be learned from experts. It draws on Arvon's fifty years of experience in leading creative writing courses, both with professional writers, and with teachers and students. The Arvon values underpin this project and are reproduced below:

### THE ARVON VALUES

We believe creative writing can change lives for the better. Creative writing allows us to harness our imagination and find our voice. It creates new possibilities, new ideas, new futures. It unlocks our potential, our empathy and our hope. And we're keen to share this opportunity for transformation with as many people as possible.

**INCLUSIVE:** Everyone is creative. We make spaces that are open to all, where anyone, regardless of writing experience, feels welcome and included as part of a community of writers.

**INSPIRING:** Step away from the routine, be inspired by writers and our beautiful places and release your imaginative potential. Arvon is a place for contemplation, challenge and going beyond what you thought you were capable of achieving.

**SUPPORTIVE:** Creative writing is a craft that can be learnt, through guidance from experts, and through the peer support that comes from creative friendships with fellow writers. At Arvon, writers teach writers, and everyone encourages each other to become a better writer.

**TRANSFORMATIVE:** Immersing yourself in creative writing nourishes the imagination, can deepen the connection to self and to the world, and can lead to dramatic change and progress.

From these Arvon values and from contemporary research on the effective teaching of writing, we have created a set of pedagogical principles to inform how we think about teaching writing in this project:

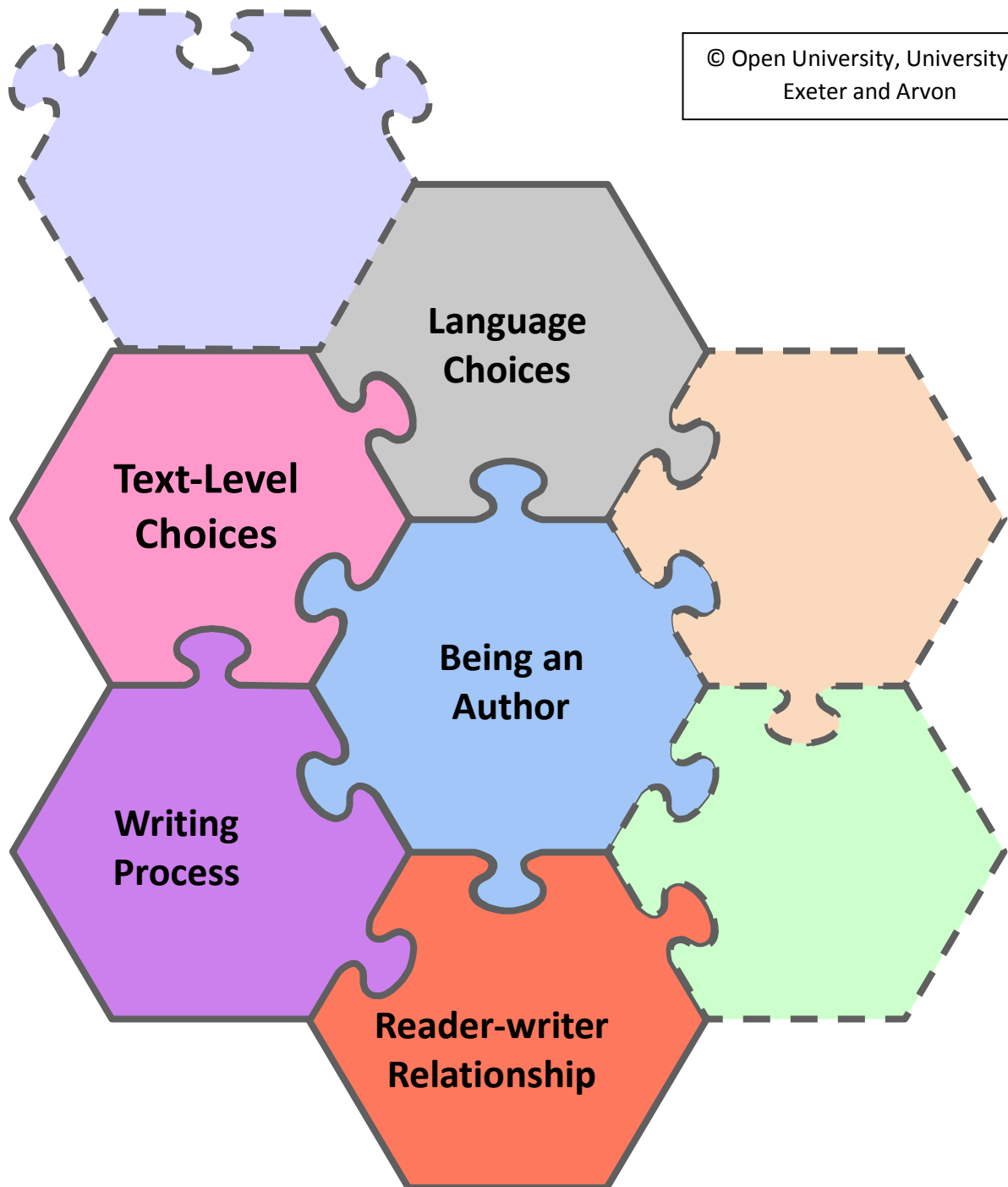
### Pedagogical Principles for the Craft of Writing project

- Create **inclusive classrooms** where children are given time and space to write, opportunities to write without being assessed, and to take risks and be experimental;
- Offer inspiring opportunities and starting points for writing, including writing from the heart and writing from experience so that children experience **being an author**;
- Support young writers in understanding and managing **the writing process** and being aware of the **reader-writer relationship**;
- Explicitly teach the **language and textual choices** students can make in their writing;
- Create **a community of writers** where writing is shared, critiqued and celebrated, where feedback is purposeful.

This booklet brings together some of the key pedagogical resources to help you think about the Craft of Writing in your own classroom practice, with the aim of creating classroom communities where children can grow and thrive as writers.

# THE CRAFT OF WRITING FRAMEWORK

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This Framework draws on interviews with professional writers and what they say about the craft of writing. It is not a rigid model, nor is it intended to be complete – it focuses more on narrative writing and poetry than other kinds of writing and would almost certainly have new hexagons if we looked at, for example, argument writing, or academic writing. So the dotted hexagons represent new possibilities. The purpose of the Craft of Writing Framework is to begin to develop useful teaching and learning conversations about how to write – the craft of writing.

## BEING AN AUTHOR

Knowledge about the personal resources and intentions that authors bring to their writing.

Category	Explanation	Example	Prompt
Drawing on experience	Knowledge/awareness that writing leans on or builds from experience	<i>It starts as something in my life that's real and important to me</i>	<i>You've been in a situation like this. What details do you remember about it? Can you think of a situation where something similar to this has happened to you? How did it make you feel? What did you decide to do?</i>
Authorial intention	Knowledge/awareness that writers should start with having something to say and a sense of what they want to achieve	<i>You need to know whether you're going to build a shed or a cathedral before you start</i>	<i>How do you want to make your reader think or feel when they read this?</i>
Emotional connection	Knowledge/awareness that writing is emotive	<i>Not just thinking about story as a technical thing...it's an emotional thing</i>	<i>How did writing this make you feel?</i>
Authentic voice	Knowledge/awareness that writers have their own style/footprint	<i>Just allowing them to use their own voice and be authentic</i>	<i>This part reminded me of the last piece you wrote because it also [...e.g. used repetition; had a strong sense of rhythm]. You are developing your own style! Don't worry if your writing is different from other people's - authors each have their own special voice.</i>
Drawing on reading	Knowledge/awareness that writing is shaped by reading	<i>The best way to learn how to write is to read other people and see what they're doing</i>	<i>This reminds me of a book [...] - i'll dig it out for you. Let's look at how some other authors have [... e.g. written about this; used the past tense like this; chosen very specific words to describe this...]</i>
Ownership	Knowledge/awareness that the writer owns the writing – it is theirs	<i>Do whatever you like because that's your book, it's your writing</i>	<i>This is your writing so you have to make the decisions. I would like it if you shared your work with me, but you don't have to if you don't want to yet.</i>

## WRITING PROCESS

This relates to knowledge about the processes involved in writing, from activities involved in preparing to write to final proofreading. Recognition that the writing process is recursive not linear.

Category	Explanation	Example	Prompt
Creative experiment	The processes involved in exploring textual possibilities	<i>It's giving yourself the time to explore and to play, to find out the things you really want to write about.</i>	<i>Experimenting is a very important part of the writing process. When we are experimenting, we are finding ideas and trying them out, to see where they take us. We are not worried about whether the ideas are good or not or about spelling or punctuation. We'll think about those things later.</i>
Drafting	The processes involved in actually generating text, committing to page or screen	<i>I think it's the discipline of doing it... the act of turning up that is quite important to this process.</i>	<i>Now we have our ideas, we have to get them down on the page. Write the next bit – just keep going...</i>
Preparing to write	The processes involved in preparing or planning to write. It can involve incubating ideas and researching a topic	<i>Sometimes you plan it and it works really well. Other times...you have to find another way into the story.</i>	<i>Could you try to plan out [...e.g. the order in which things happen in your piece of writing...] Is there anything you need to find out about xxx at this stage in the writing process? How could you research [...]?</i>
Reviewing	The processes involved in evaluating text, making decisions as to what to keep, cut and alter	<i>It's about...being quite rigorous about what works and what doesn't</i>	<i>Which words/sentences/sections are you happy with and which do you think [...could be cut; need revising]? So let's look at how you have used [... e.g. repetition; detail; tense; structure; viewpoint...]</i>
Revision	The processes involved in improving and changing the text	<i>You go down level after level after level...restructuring, polishing, working on it as an object in itself</i>	<i>So we want to improve this word/sentence/section? Lets try thinking about what changes will [... e.g. show not tell; be really concise; help the reader understand...].</i>
Writing process as a whole	The nature of the writing process as a whole and ways of managing it.	<i>It's not that linear process of gathering, drafting, editing, finalising. It's a circular thing.</i>	<i>What part of the writing process would you like to use now? Would you like to experiment more with your ideas? Or plan the whole piece? Or would you like to do some drafting? Are you finished reviewing and revising or would you like to revise again? Is it time to edit your piece for spelling and punctuation?</i>

## LANGUAGE CHOICES

This relates to knowledge about how language choices can alter the effect and how meanings are created. It is very much about choice at a *local* or *micro* level – a word, a phrase, a sentence. It connects with text level choices, which are about *global* or *macro* level choices.

Category	Explanation	Example	Modelled Feedback
Word choice	The power of word choice	<i>I explained what a shroud was ... if you were describing snow as a shroud, what atmosphere would it create?</i>	<i>I really like the way that word suggests xx – it makes me feel xxx.  What would happen if you changed that word to another word? Play around with some different choices and see what you think.</i>
Being concise	The importance of clarity, and avoiding redundancy	<i>How can I make that clearer and how can I make that more specific and how can I say more by saying less.</i>	<i>That's a lot of adjectives in a row – can you think of one noun that might do all that description; or perhaps just one adjective and noun?</i>
Detail	The significance of detail and precision in description	<i>... the importance of specificity. So rather than just saying the house, let us see what the house is, give us a certain particular description of a certain thing that helps them see that it's not just any old house for instance</i>	<i>OK – so what kind of shoes would she wear? And would they be shiny and clean or scuffed and scruffy?</i>
Sentence structure	The structure and syntax of sentences	<i>Our job is to, you know, structurally, technically work with them on, "Actually that sentence would be better like this".</i>	<i>When I read this sentence, I see the mountain first and then the polar bear – was that what you wanted me to see? If not, how can you move things around so it is the polar bear I see first.</i>
Technical aspects	Accuracy in spelling and punctuation	<i>Two 'p's' in Tupperware</i>	<i>Read that sentence again – do you think you need a comma or a full stop there?</i>
Avoiding cliché	The need to avoid phrases that sound 'a bit romantic' or 'clichéd'; '	<i>That is a bit clichéd compared with the rest of it</i>	<i>That's fine, but saying 'as green as grass' is something we hear or read lots so it doesn't create a strong image. What kind of green is it? What do you want to make your reader see, or hear or feel? Can you think of a simile for green that will be fresher and more original?</i>

Rhythm	The sound of language and strength or consistency of rhythm.	<i>It's got a very kind of strong sense of rhythm. You probably felt it when I was reading it. You know that whole 'the elders knew a time when springtime blossomed and the world sprang into life' has got a lovely kind of rhythm to it</i>	<i>I love the way that the two halves of that sentence balance each other – it gives the sentence a lovely balanced rhythm. Read it aloud – can you hear it?</i>
Tense	Tense choices.	<i>They're thinking about tense ...they're playing with that idea of I want to do something in present tense maybe</i>	<i>What would happen if you rewrote that paragraph in the present tense? What would change about how your story is being told?</i>
Repetition	The value of repetition and its use for structural purposes.	<i>'It follows me, hisses it's not fair, whispers, it's not fair' and you might even have 'it's not fair' again.</i>	<i>Let's listen to those three sentences – the repetition of 'I am' at the beginning of each one makes me feel I am right alongside your character.</i>
Rhyme	The negative effect of banal rhyme, but also the value of internal rhyme	<i>If the rhyme begins to take over then you lose something...  You've got a little rhyme in there 'clanging and jangling,' so you've got that kind of very lyrical sense of language.</i>	<i>Do you think the rhyme helps the poem to say what you want it to say, or have you had to choose words that you don't really want to fit the rhyme?</i>

## TEXT LEVEL CHOICES

This relates to knowledge about how language choices can alter the effect and how meanings are created. It is very much about choice at a *local* or *micro* level – a word, a phrase, a sentence. It connects with text level choices, which are about *global* or *macro* level choices.

Category	Explanation	Example	Modelled Feedback
Narrative structure	References to the narrative elements that support good story structure	<i>You've got the main elements ... the character, the main character, the setting and the ending</i>	<i>When I read the first page of your story, I was wondering what's the story problem here? What needs to be sorted as the story develops?</i> <i>I really enjoyed your ending: it took me full circle right back to the lost girl in your opening, only now she's not lost anymore.</i>
Characterisation	References to the techniques used to develop character	<i>Show your reader what this person like ... adding layers, adding details and just fleshing the character out</i>	<i>Let's look at this paragraph here describing the dragon. In the first part of your story, you described him as a dragon who didn't like fire. I really liked that because it was so odd! But here, he seems to be back to being a 'normal' dragon – how could you develop that idea of a dragon who doesn't like fire?</i>
Viewpoint	References to importance of viewpoint as the 'filter' through which a reader experiences events	<i>She got us writing from the point of view of an animal, and that was incredibly liberating</i>	<i>What would happen if, instead of you telling the story as a narrator, you told it from the father's point of view?</i>
Show not tell	References to the importance of revealing information through portrayal rather than direct explanation	<i>Instead of telling us about the fear, show us what the fear feels like and how it works</i>	<i>I'm really interested in your cat character, Grimble. You tell me he is grumpy and bad-tempered. I wonder if you can think of a way to describe Grimble that will show me he is grumpy and bad-tempered? Perhaps you could describe a situation where he shows his grumpiness?</i>
Dialogue and tone	References to the role of dialogue and tone in narrative and poetry	<i>Dialogue can really bring a piece alive</i>	<i>You have a really long section of dialogue here – almost a page. What do you want the dialogue to reveal or explain in terms of your story? Do you think you could do that in just two or three exchanges of dialogue?</i>
Poetic structure	References to techniques which help to structure a poem	<i>The structure might be internal rhyme, you know, or assonance</i>	<i>Read this one aloud so we can hear if it has the rhythm of a limerick.</i>



## READER-WRITER RELATIONSHIP

Knowledge about the interaction between reader and writer, and the ways in which readers become engaged in or affected by writing.

Category	Explanation	Example	Prompt
Helping the reader understand	Strategies to ensure the reader is able to follow the text	<i>It's always about taking the simple way of getting to your reader</i>	<i>You helped me understand why this happened. I think it's because [ e.g. you showed the reader what your character is like so they could understand why she acted like this...] I didn't completely understand what was happening here. Perhaps we could work on [...e.g. the structure of the story; how to make the sentences more concise...]</i>
Engaging the reader	Strategies to involve the reader and keeping them in the moment	<i>Make the reader feel like they're there</i>	<i>I was really gripped by what you wrote here. Perhaps it was because you [...e.g. included these details so I could really imagine what it looked like; used short sentences to build up a sense of anticipation...]. I was less gripped by this part of what you wrote. Perhaps we could look at how to [... e.g. add in some dialogue to really bring the scene alive; use a different tense, like the present tense...]</i>
Affecting the reader	Strategies to influence readers' feelings	<i>What is it you want your reader to feel when they close the book</i>	<i>When I read this I felt [...e.g. sad, scared, amused...]. Perhaps that's because you [...e.g. 'show not tell' the reader how the character feels by describing...] I wasn't sure how to feel when I read this part. Perhaps you could try [... e.g. writing from the viewpoint of the character; thinking more about the words you are using...]</i>
Reader-writer interaction	Comments about the collaboration between reader and writer	The reader is as much a part of your piece of writing as you, the writer	<i>What do you expect your reader to know/understand about what is happening in the story at this point? Are there any places where you feel you are successfully grabbing the attention of the reader? How do you want your reader to feel at this moment? What can you do to make them feel...?</i>

