

Creative English Activities Book 1

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Writing about small things

Teacher page only

For: individual writing

Skills: text type writing; lateral thinking

Requirements: none

Procedure

These writing topics can be used in any way over the year, as you wish.

- Creature** You are about to go up the skateboard ramp on your new skateboard when you feel something tapping on your ankle. It is a small person about as large as your big toe. 'Can I ride with you?' it says. Tell what happens next.
- Postage stamp** Measure the exact size of a large postage stamp. Write a poem that would fit onto it. Then design and colour in the stamp with your poem printed in the middle.
- Mouse rules** Write a story about how a small computer mouse is taking over the world. This computer mouse is slowly influencing people to change from being 'couch potatoes' who watch television all day to 'mouse potatoes' who play on computers all day.
- Shrunk** You found an unusual bottle in the fridge and drank what was in it. It made you shrink to 25 cm tall! You saw the cat stroll in meowing like a lion ... you had to duck a giant spider under the table ... Baby Brother was huge ... you tried to hide in the dishwasher ... what else happened until you found an antidote?
- Small complaints** Write an amusing argument about small annoyances the world could do without. Some things you could write about might be zippers that stick at awkward moments; cling wrap that has fights with your fingers every time you use it; styrofoam cups that leave teeth marks when you drink from them; sticky tape rolls you can't find the beginning of; telemarketers who ring up just when you are starting your tea.
- Tiny clone** One morning when you woke up you found a tiny person in your shoe. The person looked, acted and spoke exactly like you in every way except for being so much smaller. 'I've come for a week's holiday,' the person said to you in your own voice. Describe the week you had with your tiny clone.
- Research** See how many 'little people' from stories and folklore you can research. Write a short report on each. For example, gnomes, leprechauns, trolls and Tom Thumb.
- Vocabulary** Using a dictionary and a thesaurus, make a list of words that mean the same as small. For example, little, petite ...

Starting a narrative

Student page: Starting a narrative (p. 8)

For: individual writing

Skills: imaginative writing

Requirements: none

Procedure

The first lines on the student page can be copied, cut up and handed out, or students can be given a choice. They use the line either as the opening line *or* somewhere in the first paragraph. Continuing to write a full story is optional. For a whole-class lesson, discuss what a good story beginning has. Tell the class:

It is important that the first paragraph of a story gets your reader's attention and makes them want to read the rest of the story. This is called the *orientation*. You can't write a beginning unless you have an idea of what your story is about. So it is a good idea to think about what is going to happen in the story and make a plan first. Here are some things the first paragraph should do:

- put the reader in the right mood for the story
- introduce the main character (so they know whose story they are following), eg 'Once there was a tiny pig call Eggbert ...'
- introduce the setting, which is the place where it happens, eg 'He lived in the big pigsty at the back of a large farm.'
- suggest what the conflict or problem in the story will be, eg 'Eggbert was so small he couldn't reach the trough were all the other pigs ate.'

It is best to learn the straightforward way of writing a narrative first. If students want to do something different, unusual or puzzling at the beginning, the reason for this must be clear. Exceptionally good writers can break the general rules above. They might jump straight in and start writing the action then ask, 'What is this *mainly* about?' The answer should suggest what to put in their opening, which they might then rewrite.

Although not strictly necessary, a preliminary reading of first lines or paragraphs from books can inspire students. Some books with good openings are listed in *Creative English Activities for Primary: Book 2*.

Further activities

Ask students to write out the first line of a book, as well as the title and the author, from the class or school library and practise reading it aloud. Class audience must guess which book it is from.

Starting a narrative



1 Charlie pulled the most horrible face.

2 One robot was fine but once we put two together there was chaos.

3 A scrumptious yellow cake sat on the counter of the shop.

4 The friendly duck came paddling over to us.

5 In the middle of busy traffic, the bus stopped suddenly.

6 The bird was grey with blue tail feathers, unlike any I'd ever seen.

7 There were exactly eighty steps leading up to the stone house.

8 A grey taxi pulled up outside.

9 You could say he really is a Superman.

10 Long, long ago there lived a king and a queen.

11 Bluey's Beach was closed because of dangerous surf.

12 That meal tasted better than any meal I'd ever eaten.

13 My fat Burmese cat was always getting lost.

14 It looked like a sword, but it could be used for other things too.

15 The largest lion was a real show off.

16 The door of the house was wide open.

17 The penguin turned around and looked at all the people.

18 A yellow watering can was lying next to the plants.

19 I thought birds were boring pets, but Perky proved me wrong.

20 Inside the mall I noticed a small, strange shop I hadn't seen before.

21 There wasn't much to do at the local shopping centre.

22 "Get out!" we all screamed.

cont.

How would you manage? – on-the-spot reaction

Student page: How would you manage? (p. 46)

For: individual talks, class discussion

Skills: oral, quick thinking, moral issues, explanatory

Requirements: none; links with safety and first aid lessons

Procedure

Students take turns to read out the questions in audible but dramatic way. The speaker (take turns) must listen carefully, then say quickly what he or she would do in this situation. Most situations will lend themselves to an amusing answer so allow students to use exaggeration while remaining reasonable.

Depending on time available, discuss alternate ways of handling the situations.

At the end, if you wish the class audience can vote on which speakers are likely to handle themselves best in an emergency.

Writing option

Distribute topics to students randomly. They write up to one page of clearly expressed explanation stating what they would do if they were in this situation.

Further activities

There are several adult books on survival in difficult situations. For example, *SAS Survival Guide* by John Wiseman (Collins) is a comprehensive reference. One of the best, although hard to find now, is *The Book of Survival* by Anthony Greenbank (Wolfe Publishing Ltd, 1967).

Investigate services that help in a crisis, such as the State Emergency Services (SES), the Red Cross or the Volunteer Bushfire Brigade, on-call foster parents, hospital casualty staff, poison information service, 000 phone calls.

See if a member of one of the above groups, or perhaps a parent who works with them, will send a guest speaker to the class. Don't forget to have an introducer, a thanker and someone to present a small gift.

How would you manage?

- 1 You arrive home. You find that there is a large red bellied snake across your pathway just near your front door. You hate snakes!
- 2 Oops! You've dropped a bottle of bright red ink on the new concrete driveway that was just put in last week. Your parents will be furious.
- 3 You are surfing. A child on an inflatable boat drifts out past his standing depth. Then the boat suddenly deflates.
- 4 You've been asked to go to a party and don't want to go but don't want to be rude.
- 5 A wave dumps a body surfer near to shore and you notice the surfer now appears hurt.
- 6 A friend wants to borrow your guitar but last time they did they broke a string and did not buy you a new one.
- 7 At lunchtime, you come across two younger children playing with matches behind the demountable classroom.
- 8 You are on stage in front of a large audience. Half way through your most important speech you suddenly you feel are going to be sick.
- 9 You arrive home to find a small brown and white puppy you have never seen before barking madly in your front garden.
- 10 A friend gives you a gift that you *know* for sure has been stolen.
- 11 You are in the park with your cousin, who falls off a swing. There is blood everywhere.
- 12 The pet ferret next door got out and vomited all over the project you spent months doing in all different colours.
- 13 A strange woman starts shouting at you in the street for no reason.
- 14 The cat has come in from outside and is covered in ticks!
- 15 A friend borrowed your best jacket and returned it all dirty. You have to wear that jacket today.
- 16 Through the side window of your house you see a burglar creep in through next door's window. The neighbours are away.
- 17 Magpies fly down and pull your hair whenever you go outside to play.
- 18 When you are walking home, you find two four year old children who are crying because they are lost.
- 19 You can't turn off the tap in the kitchen and the water is making a huge mess all over the floor.
- 20 You are cooking chips when the fat flares up and sets fire to the curtains.
- 21 The shop assistants keep serving older people and you are in a desperate hurry.
- 22 A toddler wanders very close to the edge of a swimming pool. No adult is in sight.
- 23 You have chosen a good birthday present for your friend. The sales assistant has just gift-wrapped it when you realise you've left all your money at home.
- 24 It is the night before your project is due. You spent a long time writing it onto the computer. Just as you go to print it out the computer freezes and nobody can fix it.
- 25 You thought the shirt for Dad's birthday was \$17 but it's \$117 and the shop assistant is putting it through the cash register.
- 26 You are in a department store. Your friend touches the red button on the escalator that makes it stop. A loud alarm rings. Everyone is pointing at *you*.
- 27 The wild bull from the property down the road is out and is storming towards your house.
- 28 You have to feed the neighbour's fish while they are away. One morning you go in and find all the fish dead in the fish tank.
- 29 The book you borrowed from the library was really exciting. Then you get to the last chapter and find all the pages torn out.
- 30 When you are cycling quite fast down a steep hill, your brakes suddenly fail.
- 31 Crash! When you are walking to the party, you drop and break the glass picture frame you bought for your friend's birthday present.
- 32 The drink machine only takes coins and all you have is a \$10 note.

Father Christmas Olympics – factual report

Student page: Father Christmas Olympics (p. 53)

For: individual work

Skills: imaginative text type writing, lateral thinking

Requirements: none

Procedure

The student page is self-contained but can be developed into a whole-class project in many ways as suggested below. The extra task on the student page is optional.

Further activities

- Design posters or billboards advertising the games.
- Plan a Santa Olympics to be held in the southern hemisphere. They could be held in winter or summer in any city.
- Produce a radio program with different announcers describing different events.
- Create a play for shadow puppets about what happened at the Santa Olympics.
- In Poland, children are given gifts by Mother Star. Draw your idea of what Mother Star would look like and under the drawing describe her personality.
- If you are doing *Couplets Using Hyperbole* from the Poetry section of this book, have a look at the couplets in Clement Moore's *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*, beginning: 'Twas the night before Christmas ...' It sounds great read aloud. (More on couplets in *Creative English for Primary: Book 2*.)
- Set a maths challenge: Get a copy of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. Begin with a partridge taken twelve times (on each of twelve days). The last will be the 12 drummers once. How many gifts were there in total? Answer – 364.
- Set a geography challenge: Students copy a map of Northern Europe and fill-in the countries mentioned in the student page report.

Books to read

Hans Christian Andersen, *The Fir Tree*

Raymond Briggs, *Father Christmas* and *Father Christmas goes on Holiday*

Jean Chapman, *Mooneyes*

Paul Gallico, *The Small Miracle*

Rumer Godden, *The Story of Holly and Ivy*

Thomas Hardy, *The Oxen* (poem for better pupils)

Geraldine Kaye, *Nowhere to Stop*

Jenny Overton, *The Thirteen Days of Christmas*

Barbara Robinson, *The Worst Kids in the World* (sometimes called *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*)

Alan Snow, *How Santa Really Works*

Paul Theroux, *A Christmas Card*

Father Christmas Olympics

Read the following report carefully.

The tradition of children receiving gifts at Christmas from Father Christmas, later called Santa Claus (from Sante Klaas) in America, is an old one. Some say it began with St Nicholas, a bishop who lived in the 4th century in Myra, in Asia Minor. His special day was December 6th. He especially cared for children. The custom grew up that he was always dressed in red and visited children giving them gifts. In some places, a monster dressed in shaggy clothes called Hans Muf or Bartel went with him. Sometimes it was a boy called Black Peter who punished naughty children.

Modern Santa Clauses from across Europe will compete soon in the annual *Santa Winter Olympics*. The games are taken very seriously by all the participants. This year they will be held in Sweden, in the town of Gellivare, from the 19th to the 21st of November. They will be organised by Silvert Svensson, a Santa from Sweden. The Santa Clauses will take part in many different events. Some of these are chimney-climbing and reindeer-driving. Father Christmases from Sweden, Spain, England, France, Estonia, Denmark, Russia, Finland, Norway and Iceland will take part in the games.

Questions

You are the chief organiser for the Father Christmas Olympics this year. Use your imagination to answer the questions below.

- 1 How would you organise the chimney-climbing competition so it was fair to everyone taking part?
- 2 What music would you use for the opening ceremony of Santa Olympics?
- 3 Who do you think should open the games?
- 4 What other events could the Santas could take part in, besides those mentioned in the article?
- 5 Give an outline of what might happen in the closing ceremony. Include clothes worn, lights or displays, dances or marches, songs to sing and music to play.
- 6 Write a newspaper report for *The Iceland Times* about what might have happened during one of the Olympic events mentioned in the story.
- 7 Design the gold, silver and bronze medals (with ribbons) to be given to the Santas who come first, second and third in Olympic events.
- 8 What food might the Santas enjoy at an after-games party? Write the menu.
- 9 Choose one of the countries in the games. Design a uniform for their Santas to wear to the games.
- 10 Write a Father Christmas Olympics song that all the Santas could sing at the end of the games.

Extra task

Imagine that each of the Santas is responsible for giving Christmas presents to people from stories or movies. Write out some sample lists suggesting presents they could give to characters such as: The Ugly Stepsisters, Cinderella; Spiderman (or any other popular hero); Jack Spratt and his wife; Three Little Pigs; Rapunzel; Hercules; Aslan or any other book character. Design a suitable card to go with each gift.

Mimes for whole class – facial expression

Teacher page only

For: whole class

Skills: listening, concentration, vocabulary

Requirements: bell and stopwatch useful

Background

Mime is a form of drama using gesture, facial expression and bodily posture, but no words. Point out to students that skill in mime is a crucial part of acting and can make an otherwise flat scene come alive. Older students may appreciate that the imaginative skills developed by mime can be useful as a relaxation method.

Procedure

These mimes can be used for whole-class exercises with everyone changing expression at once or individually in turn. Selecting students to read out a situation loudly and clearly gives extra reading practice. The mimers must react spontaneously in whatever style they choose, such as serious or humorous. Appoint a timer to ring a bell after 30 seconds, when the person acting must conclude the mime.

Individual mimes for face and upper body

Everyone can participate in the following mimes. They can be performed by all the class together with students sitting at their desks, each person doing the actions in his or her own way as you read the instructions.

Teacher instruction: *Act as if you are a person who has just seen something that is ...*

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----|---------------------|
| 1 | about to explode | 21 | out of place |
| 2 | amazing | 22 | peculiar |
| 3 | beautiful | 23 | poisonous |
| 4 | boring | 24 | really odd |
| 5 | a tricky puzzle | 25 | quite ridiculous |
| 6 | chilling | 26 | sad |
| 7 | confusing | 27 | shocking |
| 8 | cute | 28 | spooky |
| 9 | dazzling in colour | 29 | surprising |
| 10 | dull and uninteresting | 30 | terrifying |
| 11 | enjoyable | 31 | totally fascinating |
| 12 | extremely amusing | 32 | unbelievable |
| 13 | frightening | 33 | ugly |
| 14 | fun | 34 | useful |
| 15 | ghostly | 35 | useless |
| 16 | horrible | | |
| 17 | intriguing | | |
| 18 | moving (causing emotion) | | |
| 19 | mysterious | | |
| 20 | nerve racking | | |

Seasonal poem

Student page: Writing about the seasons (p. 90)

For: individual work

Skills: research, imaginative writing

Requirements: none but walk around a garden first is desirable; a display board with pictures of the seasons and a garden or plant guide useful

Procedure

The student page is self-contained. If used for a whole class exercise, take students for a walk to see the street or school gardens with a notebook and two pens (in case one runs out). They should jot down names of trees, flowers and bushes, as well as details of the weather and how people are dressed. Then talk about what happens in other seasons. It helps to have classroom display boards with pictures of each season. Make a chart of tricky spellings such as *daffodil*, *frangipani*, *jacaranda* (take it with you on the walk). A plant guide is useful.

Publication: Have students write their best poems on a shape suitable to the season, for example sailing boat, sled, autumn leaf shapes. An alternative is to write poems underneath original photographs or sketches.

Further activities

Involve students in the following activities:

- Discuss how often the weather comes into ordinary conversations and why. Collect and explain sayings such as: to sail too close to the wind; it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good; a storm in a teacup; it never rains but it pours; a breath of fresh air; red sky at night the shepherd's delight, red sky in the morning the shepherd's warning.
- Tally the square metres of open green space in your area that people can use for leisure activities. Do you think this is enough?
- Write a letter to the parks and gardens authority or the local council to praise something in a public park *or* identify a problem and suggest improvements.
- Visit a local florist or nursery or botanical gardens. Many have free talks and activities for schools. Invite a guest speaker from either of these.
- Create a class garden plot using native plants.
- To link with geography work, research weather and weather hazards around the world. Show films of national parks.
- For music, listen to some of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. *The Moldau* is a musical interpretation of a river running through composer Bedrich Smetana's home country. Music students might like to discuss the images created.

Recommended reading: *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

Writing about the seasons

Your task is to write four different poems, each about the *same* place seen at a *different* time of the year.

Step 1: Do some research

Visit a park or a garden. If you can't do this, find a picture of a place you know, or shut your eyes and remember one. Make notes on what you see. Be specific: for example, *cherry or peach blossom* is better than *tree*. Get exact names of flowers, trees and bushes. Describe weather, people and what they are wearing, animals or insects. Include all sounds. Notice smells, not just of flowers but in the air, such as bonfires made by gardeners or food at kiosks. If you can, take a photo or draw sketches.

Step 2: Put your notes in order

Rule two pages into four wide columns. At the top of them put four headings:

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter.

First fill in the column for the season it is right now, using your notes. For the other three seasons you must use your imagination. Mention these things for *each* season:

- 1 **Flowers and bushes.** Name some that are different in each season and say how they change. Some you might know already. For others, you might need to look in a gardening book or plant guide.
- 2 **Items of clothing.** Be specific. For example, do not write 'costume' or 'gloves,' put 'blue Speedo swimming costume' or 'mohair gloves.'
- 3 **Activities people do.** These could be picnics, playing cricket, snowboarding or jogging on a fitness track (even if you can't do them where you live).
- 4 **The weather** you might expect.
- 5 **Dangers or hazards associated with each season.** What if it is too windy? Or there are bees?
- 6 **What you might hear or smell** if you visited the garden at different times.
- 7 **Add things from your imagination.** It is more interesting to imagine a river, a dam or a pond in the park even if there wasn't one. Then you can say how the water will be different colours at different times. Activities on the water will be different, so will the animals or insects. Look at books for ideas, but don't overdo it or your writing won't sound fresh.

Step 3: Write the final form

Take the things you like best from each column and write four poems, one for each season. The poems should have the same number of lines and have a similar form.

When you are happy with the poems, write each out on a cut-out shape suitable for that season (such as a snowman or surfboard) or illustrate with photos or drawings.

Researching for information and explanation

Student page: Looking up references (p. 104)

For: individual work

Skills: using references/internet, collating information, factual text writing

Requirements: good encyclopaedias, either books or internet; suits library lesson

Background

The topics on the student page can be used for a whole-class assignment. They are spread through different letters of the alphabet so students won't need the same encyclopaedia volume at the same time. The purpose is to give practice in reading information and picking out key points in answer to a question.

Procedure

Copy and cut up the topics on the student page. Allocate one to each student. Tell them that they must look up the key word, which is the *first* word listed. When they find something about it they should read the information through, then write an answer to their set question in one paragraph only. They should not write down irrelevant information. If students love a subject, suggest they do a separate assignment on it.

This can be linked with work on writing information reports or writing explanation by selecting relevant questions. For example, for explanation: *What causes frostbite?* If revision is needed, go over the following features:

Information reports

- The purpose is to record information on a topic.
- The language will be factual, with precise words and true statements.
- It may use descriptive words, but not imaginative language.
- It will probably have technical language suited to that particular subject: eg *cardiac* or *octave*.
- It may classify, use subheadings or divide the topic into aspects (eg sizes, shapes).
- It does not use the first person (eg *I*, *we*).

Explanation

- Explanation tells why things are as they are or how things work.
- Begin with a general statement about what is going to be explained.
- Next show the sequence of how something works or happens.
- Link the ideas (with causal and/or temporal conjunctions).
- Keep it in logical order and in the present tense.
- Summarise in a concluding statement.
- Do not use personal or emotive words.

Alternative presentation method: Form students into groups with each compiling a selection of 'interesting facts' on a large poster and illustrating for the classroom wall.

Extra resource: A set of telephone directories can be useful for practising looking up words in alphabetical order. Explain guide words at top of pages, indexes, abbreviations and the guide to them, use of Mc, Mac etc.

Looking up references

Archerfish. How does an archerfish catch flies and insects to eat?

Archery. Find three interesting expressions used in archery and explain them.

Artesian. What exactly is an artesian well?

Bat. Find out two interesting facts about bats.

Bears. Name two kinds of bear. What does a bear do when it hibernates?

Cathedral. What is a cathedral and how is it different from a church?

Crete. Where is Crete and what ancient remains are found there?

Demeter. What did this goddess look after and what was her Roman name?

Downing Street. Where is this famous street and who lives there?

Everest. Where exactly is Mount Everest and why do people try to climb it?

Flags. Draw and label the national flags of three different countries of the world.

Fighting. What is most interesting about fighting fish?

Frostbite. What causes frostbite and how do you treat it?

Grace. Who was W.G. Grace and what did he look like?

Great. How long is the Great Wall of China and when was it started?

Hyena. How many species of hyena are there and what do they do at night?

Iliad. Who wrote the Iliad and what was it about?

Iguassu. Where are the Iguassu Falls and how high are they?

Istanbul. What was the original name of Istanbul and where is it found?

John Dory. What shape is this fish and how does it catch its prey?

Jazz. Where did jazz begin and who was a famous jazz musician?

Koala. How long does a baby koala stay inside its mother's pouch?

Komodo Dragon. What does this dragon look like and where does it live?

Lantern Fish. Where would you find lantern fish and how do they get their name?

Leech. What peculiar characteristics do leeches have?

