

**AGENCY IN A YEAR 4 *WRITING FOR PLEASURE* CLASSROOM: INFLUENCING
THEIR OWN INSTRUCTION AND CO-DEVELOPING PRODUCT GOALS FOR A
MEMOIR CLASS PROJECT**

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ABSTRACT

A mixed methods action research study in a year 4 *Writing for Pleasure* classroom explored the idea of increasing pupils' agency over assessment criteria and daily instruction. By co-developing product goals for memoir writing after a week of genre-study, pupils crafted their own memoirs over a period of 13 writing sessions. After each mini-lesson, pupils were invited to evaluate its usefulness and were given the opportunity to suggest the next day's mini-lesson through a daily-attitude survey. The project included mini-lessons derived from a broad range of writing craft areas such as *Generating Ideas, Clarity and Accuracy* and *Being Writers* and included strategies like *Memories that generate strong feelings, Getting it 'reader ready': how to use an editing checklist,* and *Choose something delicious from the publishing menu.* The results suggest that students were able to engage authentically and effectively to influence their own instruction, and produce memoir writing which replicated many of the strategies they had been taught. Final writing products displayed how children paid close attention to audience, purpose and reader treatment, attended to many of the textual features, and attempted several new writing techniques independently.

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List of abbreviations

AaL	Assessment as Learning
AfL	Assessment <i>for</i> Learning
CLPE	Centre for Literacy in Primary Education
DfE	Department for Education
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
FSM	Free School Meals
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
MMR	Mixed methods research
SEN	Special Educational Need
SRSD	Self-regulated strategy development
WfP	<i>Writing for Pleasure</i>

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1 Introduction

1.1 Context

The setting for this study is an inner-city primary school. School X is a mixed maintained community primary school catering to around 650 children from ages 3-11. It is situated in an area of high socio-economic deprivation with 30.2% (England average - 23%) of its pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). Pupils whose first language is not English is 43.1% (England average - 21.2%), and pupils with an SEN Education, Health and Care Plan constitute 4.5% of the pupil numbers (England average - 1.6%). In School X, I am a full-time classroom teacher and writing coach.

1.2 Problem statement

There are 16, 784 primary schools in England ([DfE, 2021](#)) each of them with the liberty to teach writing as they choose. However, as I will discuss in the literature review ([2](#)), many of the approaches being used are not based on effective writing research.

This research proposal comes at a time when pupils are emerging from a national period of extended lockdown which has seen a large majority of them being taught at a distance and typically online ([DfE, 2020](#)). The issues around low attainment (Ofsted 2012, DfE 2017) and lack of enjoyment of writing among primary-aged pupils (Clark, 2016; Clark & Teravainen 2017) before lockdown were already profound and are likely to have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic (DfE, 2021; [Weidmann et al., 2021](#)).

Recent surveys conducted by the National Literacy Trust (Clark, 2016, Clark & Teravainen 2017) demonstrate that this is not a recent anomaly, but is in fact a trend which has been evident for many years. According to the most recent survey, '*Children and young people's enjoyment of writing is at almost its lowest level in a decade*' ([Clark et al., 2020 p.1](#)). In addition, many children continue to closely associate writing with schoolwork and are less likely to pursue it just for pleasure (Clark et al., 2020). Despite initiatives to ameliorate the situation such as 'Free Writing Fridays' ([Clark, 2018](#)), there does not appear to be a radical shift in the day-to-day approaches being used in the majority of schools.

There may be a number of reasons why this situation persists: a weakness in writing coverage in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision; a declining level of experience in the classroom ([DfE, 2019](#)); low teacher knowledge and confidence around the teaching of writing; the political dominance of reading over writing in literacy discourse (Gardner 2018, Turbill et al., 2015); teachers approaching writing with a reading orientation ([Gardner, 2018](#); [Young, 2020](#)); high workload ([NEU, 2019](#)), or high-stakes accountability and accountancy culture (Alexander, 2008; [Au and Gourd, 2013](#); Moss, 2017), many of which I have alluded to in previous educational writings ([Hayden, 2020](#); [Hayden, 2020](#)).

The pedagogical debate seems to be dominated by a Department for Education (DfE) bent on pushing forward a functional, skills narrative ([Lambirth, 2016](#); [Gardner, 2018](#); [Taylor and Clarke, 2020](#)) about what writing is and privileging the work of certain researchers which meet government ideology (Gee, 2015; Cummins, 2016). What [Bearne \(2017, p.74\)](#) refers to as a '*tyranny of the technical*', has emerged from the National Curriculum changes first introduced in 2013 ([DfE, 2015](#)) leading to a 'schooling model' of literacy ([Meek, 1993](#)) and meaning substantial alternative conceptions and approaches have been sidelined (Dombey, 2013).

So it is hardly surprising that what has been criticised as evidence free policy (Cummins, 2016), has resulted in the proliferation in schools of what Young and Ferguson (2021) categorise as presentational and literature approaches. Yet, all this has occurred despite the two-pronged underlying message derived from large-scale surveys of pupil attitudes (Clark, 2016, Clark & Teravainen 2017; Clark et al., 2020) and the academic literature suggesting a different approach is necessary. One approach with considerable promise, known as *Writing for Pleasure (WfP)* (Young and Ferguson, 2019) may offer teachers a way out of the malaise. In the literature review, I will discuss these competing perspectives and their accompanying approaches to the teaching of writing ([2.2.1](#)).

Of course, while this is a national concern, a microcosm of this problem exists on a local level at my school; the pupils in my class have been taught writing through the literature approach commonly known as book-planning or novel study (Young and Ferguson, 2021). Yet, it fails to cater to their affective needs, and has little regard for teaching them about the writing processes (Young and Ferguson, 2021). After surveying my year 4 class and analysing the data using a pre-written survey designed to evaluate attitudes to

writing ([Young et al., 2020](#)), I discovered that, as a collective, they had either low or very low levels of enjoyment, self-efficacy, self-regulation, volition and agency as well as either negative, or very negative, levels of motivation and writer-identity. This was not particularly surprising because in this type of pedagogical environment, the pupils' negative writer identities become more entrenched as they move through school (Gardner, 2013). Through this research it is important that I explore how pupils' negative perceptions of themselves as writers can be remedied so that they might understand the role that writing and their development as writers might play in their future happiness and success.

In the literature review ([2.2.2](#)) I focus on one of these affective domains (the role of agency in the classroom). I also explore the concept of the 'mini-lesson', the co-construction of writing product goals and the role of assessment as learning (AaL) ([2.2.3](#)).

1.3 Overview of methodology

In the research design overview ([3.2](#)) section I will explain why I am approaching the study as an interpretivist and have chosen this as my paradigm. I draw attention to the critical paradigm as there is a strong transformational element underpinning the research through the exploration of a more democratic classroom, a strengthened pupil voice and increased agentic engagement (Freire, 1972; Kemmis, 1997; Lather, 2004; Creswell, 2013; Lukenchuk, 2013). This was a project aimed not only at a practical improvement of my own practice within the existing parameters, but with the ambition to contribute to the shifting of the boundaries of wider writing pedagogy itself (Zuber-Skerritt, 1995).

The project used a mixed-methods interpretative design and was conducted over a 3-week period in the context of a typical whole-class writing project (memoir writing) using Young and Ferguson's (2021) class writing projects model as a basis. Three research tools were developed for the purposes of data collection. Questionnaires were utilised to capture pupil views at two different stages of the project. In phase 1, a daily-attitude survey collected children's opinions about the mini-lessons while in phase 2, a post-project survey assessed pupil attitudes to the project as a whole.

To enrich the analysis of the surveys, a second tool (informal structured interviews) was employed in phase 2 in which a sample of four participants reflected on their role in evaluating the mini-lessons and what impact this had on the success of their writing products. Finally, four published writing samples were evaluated against the co-constructed product goals.

The dissertation culminates with an overall conclusion of the findings (5.1), a set of recommendations in relation to my own practice, but also with a reference to the wider debate around writing teaching (5.2), a consideration of the limitations of the study (5.3) and, finally, I will identify the areas of personal development (5.4).

1.4 Positionality

Even though there was a dominant qualitative seam running through my data, the objectivity appears in my analysis of the story of the environment I was researching (Mack, 2010). That analysis, however, was grounded in a critical approach I took to interrogating the data. Furthermore, in order to enhance both the validity and reliability of the qualitative data emanating from this research, it was essential to recognise and document any potential biases that may prejudice any fair analysis of the findings (Lyons and Coyle, 2015). Therefore, it is important to state that I am an advocate for a *WfP* approach and believe that it has rich potential for the development of children as writers.

1.5 Research questions

The principal aim of this study is to see what role a *WfP* pedagogy plays in supporting children's ability to influence the instruction they receive, and how it in turn affects the quality of their writing products. The two research questions were:

- How do children influence the instruction they receive in a *WfP* classroom and how does it affect their attitudes?
- How do children's writing products develop when they co-construct the product goals, and are then invited to try out one strategy per lesson (a mini-lesson) as opposed to being asked to include a whole range of strategies and techniques in their writing in a single sitting?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The first phase of the review will examine the literature around writing teaching and compare and contrast two of the more dominant approaches with a newly emerging conception known as *Writing for Pleasure* ([2.2.1](#)).

The second phase of the review will focus on the research questions of the study by reviewing the literature around: agency in relation to writing and over influencing instruction ([2.2.2](#)), and the teaching of mini-lessons, co-constructing product goals and assessment ([2.2.3](#)).

2.2 Review of literature

2.2.1 What are the dominant approaches to teaching writing and how do they compare to a *Writing for Pleasure* pedagogy?

It is difficult to ascertain an accurate breakdown of the exact make-up of the approaches to the teaching of writing being used in English primary schools as no organisation currently collects this data. However, a cursory search reveals a plethora of options available to schools (Table 1).

With the exception of Power English and The Writing for Pleasure Centre's Class Writing Projects which both follow the traditions of the writers' workshop and are community-based approaches, these iterations seem to be distinctions without much of a difference and, are at heart, variations on the same theme. The majority of the approaches seem to fall into two camps meeting the definitions of either 'presentational' or 'literature' orientations (Young and Ferguson, 2021).

Table 1: The most common schemes and approaches on offer for teaching writing in English primary schools

Big Writing	Power of Reading (CLPE)
Focus English: At the Heart of the Curriculum	Read Write Inc. (Literacy and Language)
Hamilton Trust (Hamilton Trust English)	Real Writing
HeadStart Primary (Children as Writers)	Resource Maze Writing
Literacy Counts (Read to Write)	Rising Stars (Read into Writing)
Literacy Shed Plus	Talk for Writing
No Nonsense Literacy	The Literacy Company (Pathways to Write)
Opening Doors to a Richer English Curriculum (Bob Cox)	The Literary Curriculum (Literacy Tree)
Pathways to Write	The Training Space (Jane Considine's English Unit Plans)
Pobble	The Writing for Pleasure Centre's Class Writing Projects
Power English (Pearson)	Twinkl Plan It Writing

The literature-based orientation

A literature-based orientation is when schools and teachers typically use a scheme of work to study high-quality literary texts which are presented as a model in terms of their literary characteristics (Young and Ferguson, 2021). Critics of this orientation have identified that it is overly analytical in approach and often requires a gruelling slog through the reading creating a paralysing effect (Grainger et al. 2005). It also strongly impacts on children's conceptions of what writing is, distorting the way they interpret the school's opinion of the relevance of their own cultures, ideas and interests in relation to the curriculum. (Young and Ferguson, 2021, Rosen, 2017).

A large proportion of writing time is spent manufacturing writing (Mason and Giovanelli, 2017) through arbitrary tasks and 'pseudo-authentic assignments' (Young and Ferguson, 2021, p.8). Children's language choices are cultivated through the filter of the scheme of work along with the teacher's conception of what is valuable becoming '*anaesthetised by*

the anodyne origins' (Hayden, 2020, p.5) of the tasks they are required to fulfill. Children don't construct their own meaning, but instead replicate the idea and voice of someone else (Dixon, 1967 and Subero et al. 2017).

This follows on from a necessarily long period spent on comprehension of the content of the book being studied which leaves little room for any teaching of how writers authentically use texts to develop their own ideas for pieces of writing (Graham and Harris, 2019). In this conception, writing is demoted to the lower ranks of the schools literacy curriculum (Shanahan, 2016). There is no place in this orientation for writing strategy development and pupil agency is not an important consideration. In fact, in common with a presentational orientation, apprentice writers are regarded as empty vessels (Rosen, 1989 and Freire, 1972) in need of filling up and the only valuable writing which can be produced must originate from a literary text.

The presentational orientation

Segueing from the literature orientation, Freire's (1972) banking concept provides a helpful model for what the presentational ideology looks like in a writing context. Critics argue that students are viewed as bringing nothing to school which would be of use in learning how to become a writer (Smith, 1988). It falls under many guises and many of these labels quickly identify the nature of this perspective. Kellogg (2008) refers to it as the immediate training for immediate performance approach; Gardner (2018) views it as the compliant scribe approach. Other labels are illuminating too such as: a worksheet curriculum ([Dahl & Freppon, 1995](#)); recite for writing and writing as a cognitive only matter ([Johnston, 2019](#)) to name but a few.

In this didactic orientation, there is a strong emphasis on writing products and a highly reductive, front-loaded conception of the teaching of writing as being purely about mastering complex cognitive skills (Gardner, 2018). Procedural instruction dominates and there is a lack of transferability to future writing endeavours (Paris and Winograd, 2003), with little or no attention given to writer development (Young and Ferguson, 2021) in what Wray and Beard (1988) forcefully dubbed the 'dead-dead-end approach'. Devoid of a say over what they are writing about, and asked to jump from one assigned task to another, results in many children having negative perceptions of the act of writing and themselves as writers. At the extremes, in some studies (Corden, 2003, p.24), children

have reported feeling 'physically sick' or 'being in mental agony' at the thought of being asked to create a piece of writing.

In common with National Curriculum changes introduced in 2014, this approach sees great stock placed upon the teaching of '*correct spelling, handwriting, punctuation, vocabulary, correct grammar usage, sentence combination, cohesive devices and the conventions of Standard English*' ([Lambirth, 2016](#); [Gardner, 2018](#); [Taylor and Clarke, 2020](#); Young and Ferguson, 2021, p.2). This has led to English lessons being governed by a perfunctory view of writing and this overfocus on the technical aspects of writing and the associated formal assessment arrangements (DfE, 2016) inevitably leads these approaches to ignore many aspects of what research indicates is necessary when developing young writers (Locke, 2015; Eyres, 2016).

Learning 'tasks' are often highly structured, contrived and seldom develop children's agency over product, process or instruction (Young and Ferguson, 2021) and teachers are more inclined to rigidly follow schemes of work which contain fragmented writing skills and a formulaic approach (Gardner, 2018). Owing to the uniformity of the stimuli, or origin of the task (normally the teacher's idea), teacher awareness of writer development is hampered by the similarity between the children's texts which inevitably occurs (Graham et al., 2013).

As a result of these limited tasks where the cognitive responsibility almost exclusively lies with the teacher, deep learning and higher order thinking skills cannot take place (Chuy et al., 2011; Allal, 2020) and the apprentice writer develops a defensive, short-term and 'single use' approach in order to be successful in meeting the multitude of do-or-die demands placed on them in such a high-stakes environment (Paris and Winograd, 2003; Kellogg, 2008).

What is a *Writing for Pleasure* pedagogy and why might it be effective?

Despite the dominance of the approaches described above, and notwithstanding the fact that a *WfP* pedagogy is a fairly recent incarnation, there is the potential for counter narratives to disrupt dominant ones (Foucault, 1977). There has been little direct research into its effectiveness as an approach however. In fact, I found only one research study: *What is it Writing For Pleasure teachers do that makes the difference?* (Young, 2019) and one masters dissertation: *Writing for Pleasure and the Teaching of Writing at the Primary Level: A Teacher Cognition Case Study* (Gusevik, 2020).

However, Young and Ferguson (2019) argue that a *WfP* pedagogy is only new in the sense that it succinctly articulates what the existing research has identified, over the course of many decades, as both effective and affecting practice. It has been gaining traction over the last few years with teachers (Hayden, 2020 and Hayden & Vasques 2020) and schools developing their approaches to teaching writing in line with the principles of the pedagogy and sharing their own practice via the [Writing for Pleasure Centre's action research platform](#).

There are other conceptions of writing for pleasure with Rosen (2017, p.9) defining it as a set of principles or processes which include, '*collecting, investigating, imitating, changing (or inventing) and distributing*'. Additionally, some presentational approaches, noticing the shifting sands, make a nod to writing for pleasure as a concept ([Corbett, 2017](#), [Literacy Tree, 2020](#)) without, however, making any adaptations to their existing models, or basing their assertions on what the existing literature reveals is effective practice. In fact, they make no reference to academic literature at all. In these examples, the organisations responsible for the approaches seem to have 'tacked on' the phrase 'writing for pleasure' as they desire some of the kudos which comes from identifying with it without providing any of the substance.

In arriving at a *WfP* pedagogy, Young and Ferguson (2021) carried out a review of eight large-scale meta-analyses which spanned several decades, and encompassed over 300 pieces of research, ranging from Hillocks (1986) to Wyse and Torgensen (2017). To mitigate against any weaknesses of the experiments contained within the meta-analyses, they also factored in nine separate case studies ranging from Medwell (1998) to Young (2019) in which researchers have closely observed the typical

classroom practices of ‘exceptional writing teachers’ (Young and Ferguson, 2021, p.76). Table 2 (reproduced with permission of the authors) shows a list of the most effective writing practices with effect size included to show the power of each practice. It shows that the use of a contemporary writing workshop approach which includes self-regulation strategy instruction (mini-lessons) scores extremely highly with an effect size of 1.75. Hattie (2009) indicated that an effect size of 0.4 or above is a useful benchmark when considering whether or not a strategy or intervention makes a powerful contribution to children’s learning.

Table 2: Writing practices and their effect sizes (Young and Ferguson, 2021)

Type of instruction	Effect size
Set writing goals	2.03
A contemporary writing workshop approach	1.75
Teach the writing processes	1.26
Pursue purposeful and authentic writing projects	1.07
Reading, sharing, thinking and talking about writing	0.89
Feedback from teacher and peers	0.80
Genre-study	0.76
Time spent revising	0.58
Time spent generating ideas and planning	0.54
Children writing in response to their reading	0.50
Functional grammar teaching	0.46
Formal grammar teaching	-0.41

From this review of the literature, fourteen enduring principles of effective writing teaching were deduced (Table 3), which make up a *WfP* approach. However, in contrast

to presentational and literature-based schemes, *WfP* also centralises the role of the [affective domains of writing teaching](#) (self-efficacy, self-regulation, agency, motivation, volition and writer-identity) ([Young and Ferguson, 2019](#)).

Table 3: The fourteen principles of effective *WfP* teaching

<u>BUILD A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS</u>
<u>TREAT EVERY CHILD AS A WRITER</u>
<u>READ, SHARE, THINK AND TALK ABOUT WRITING</u>
<u>PURSUE PURPOSEFUL & AUTHENTIC WRITING PROJECTS</u>
<u>TEACH THE WRITING PROCESSES</u>
<u>SET WRITING GOALS</u>
<u>BE REASSURINGLY CONSISTENT</u>
<u>PURSUE PERSONAL WRITING PROJECTS</u>
<u>BALANCE COMPOSITION & TRANSCRIPTION</u>
<u>TEACH DAILY MINI-LESSONS</u>
<u>BE A WRITER-TEACHER</u>
<u>PUPIL CONFERENCE: MEET CHILDREN WHERE THEY ARE</u>
<u>LITERACY FOR PLEASURE: CONNECT READING & WRITING</u>
<u>INTERCONNECT THE PRINCIPLES</u>

Criticisms of community-based approaches, of which a *WfP* pedagogy has many elements, do exist, with Lensmire (2000) highlighting the possibility that some writers may withdraw from some of the public aspects of the approach such as sharing and publishing. He further argued that some children’s writing voices and identities may not be validated in the writing community. With increased agency over idea generation, there is also the potential for children to select subjects for writing which could be deemed offensive or create tension in the classroom (Collier, 20210). Finally, Dobson (2016) argued that an approach which has a principle of producing authentic and purposeful texts could be seen as slightly utilitarian on the basis that it doesn’t encourage children to produce writing for purely decorative reasons.

2.2.2 Research question 1: How do children influence the instruction they receive in a Writing for Pleasure classroom and how does it affect their attitudes?

Unlike in the atomised and functional environments of writing teaching described earlier, agency is a central feature of *WfP* classrooms and plays a key emancipatory role in supporting teachers and learners in recognising themselves as social agents (Gardner, 2016). There are some clear academic benefits and improvements in writer engagement to be found by increasing pupil autonomy, particularly over the way in which they undertake their writing journey, and through having a feeling of personal investment in the ideas they generate (Turner and Paris, 1995; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009; Zumbrunn and Krause, 2012; Behizadeh, 2014). Agency over the co-development of class writing projects and product goals (as in research question 2) leads to higher academic achievement and more effective pieces of writing (Purcell-Gates et al., 2007; Flint and Fisher, 2014; Fletcher, 2016).

Similarly, inviting children to influence their own instruction encourages the reflective process for both teacher and learner and can enrich the teacher's actions. Also known as *agentic engagement* (Reeve, 2013; Reeve and Tseng, 2011), contributing to the stream of instruction with deliberate and constructive choices such as '*asking questions, giving opinions and communicating interests*' (Reeve, 2012, p.165), supports children to develop a metalanguage to discuss their own instructional needs, and is essential in developing knowledge transfer and long-term maintenance of gains made in writing quality (Corden, 2003).

This form of co-ownership of the learning process (Absolum et al., 2009) is a central component of what is defined as *Assessment as Learning (AaL)*; a type of formative assessment which enables students to blend the demands of the task and the learning process by incorporating both their criticality and reflectiveness (Dann 2014).

In this environment, children have the opportunity to strengthen their writer-identities by playing an active role in rich discussions about the writer's craft while requesting what they feel they need from their writer-teacher to help them both, develop themselves as writers, and to improve the piece of writing they are composing (Grainger et al., 2003; Chelsea and Snyders, 2014). What Dyson (1997, p.179) describes as a '*pedagogy of responsibility*' promotes children's independence heightening their sense of self-efficacy,

and is a form of '*dynamic interplay*' between the teachers and the students (Fletcher, 2016). However, the teacher must act as the filter through which the pupils' requests are expressed, and respond to the writerly needs of the class in a timely fashion through a mini-lesson or pupil-conference (Young and Ferguson, 2021).

Encouraging children to play an active role in determining their own instruction can have motivational benefits too as they already understand its importance and relevance having been instrumental in the discussion around the next day's teaching, and are more likely to 'try it out' even if it was not a strategy that they personally felt strongly about (Miller and Meece, 1999 and Brophy, 2008).

However, *agentic engagement* is not always effective and relies on the responsiveness of the teacher, and the learning environment more generally ([Reeve and Shin, 2020](#)). Critics also argue that AaL can play a '*procedural compliance*' role, is often superficial in nature and displaces actual 'learning' in the teachers' understanding of formative assessment (Torrance, 2007; Hume and Coll, 2009, p.270).

In classrooms where presentational and literature approaches are used, the teacher themselves often has very little agentic engagement with the material, or scheme from which they are teaching. Therefore, any attempts at AaL are rendered ineffective and meaningless because the pedagogies employed act as a formulaic firewall against many attempts at responsive teaching. In contrast, the environmental and pedagogical conditions are ripe in *Writing for Pleasure* classrooms for genuine developments of AaL as an authentic and useful approach (Young and Ferguson, 2021).

Additionally, caution should be exercised by the teacher when seeking to heighten pupils' agentic role, as many children who have long experienced these methods are likely to need a significant reorientation (Young and Ferguson, 2020) away from this form of writer's welfare and learned helplessness (Graves, 1983, Dweck, 1986; Saban and Tavsanlı, 2015). Furthermore, if children are being given agency over both purpose and audience, but then being taught about genre through an arbitrarily-conceived, school-based 'unit', then writing development will be hampered (Purcell-Gates et al., 2007; Flint and Fisher, 2014).

On a final note of relevance regarding the literature in this area, as Fletcher, (2015) argues, there is a disconnect between formative assessment research and that from the field of educational psychology encompassing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1973), self-regulation and agentic engagement (Reeve, 2012) leading to gaps in the research. This study, which seeks to create a process to guide the learners to participate agentially in a setting such as a *WfP* classroom (where self-efficacy, self-regulation and agency are already central considerations), might contribute something to the understanding in this area.

2.2.3 Research question 2: How do children’s writing products develop when they co-construct the product goals and are then invited to try out one strategy per lesson (a mini-lesson) as opposed to being asked to include a whole range of strategies and techniques in their writing in a single sitting?

What are mini-lessons and why might they be an effective form of instruction?

A review of the literature seems to indicate that the teaching of short, focused daily mini-lessons which cover a broad repertoire of the types of processes which writers typically enact are a highly effective approach to the teaching of writing. Mini-lessons *'help students acquire the range of complex skills required for effective writing'* (Alber-Morgan et al. 2007, p.116) and amplify children’s intrinsic vigour for creativity (Fletcher, 2017).

They are centred explicitly on the development of knowledge about writing (Cremin and Myhill, 2012; Graham and Perin, 2007; Young and Ferguson, 2021) and are brief periods (typically ranging from 5-15 minutes) of high-quality instruction which occur before pupils are given the opportunity to ‘try out’ the strategy in a sustained period of writing time (Paris and Winograd 2003; Presley et al. 2006; Hmelo-Silver et al. 2007; Young and Ferguson, 2021).

They are closely linked to the affective domains of self-regulation and self-efficacy because as Saddler and Graham (2017) point out, they develop young writers’ knowledge about writing, and being a writer, through a guided, ‘sharing of expertise’ approach (Pajares, 2003; Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007). Because the teaching contained within them has its origins in their own writer-teacher’s experience, they feel secure that it will lead to the production of a better text (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2007).

As discussed earlier, the type of writing instruction found in constrained classrooms where a presentational or literature-based approach is being employed, and where the stakes are high (Collier, 2010), leads to a common difficulty for many students: the ability to transfer and maintain skills they have been taught to other compositions, which may have an alternative purpose, and be presented in a different genre (Graham & Harris, 1989; Graham et al., 1992).

In contrast, mini-lessons allow young writers to gain access to a range of real strategies which can be far more easily transferred to multiple writing genres, can support children to develop a personal repertoire of strategies and techniques (Young and Ferguson, 2021), and is thought to be an effective practice in relation to text construction especially when children are afforded the time and space to try them out over subsequent days and weeks (Corden, 2003; Pressley et al., 2006; Alber-Morgan et al., 2007; Kellogg, 2008). In the same vein, mini-lessons can be crucial in addressing the problem of maintenance as they enable teachers to ground their instructional choices in broad areas of writing development. These strategies can then be successfully transferred and replicated in other writing compositions (Alber-Morgan et al. 2007; Dollins, 2016).

Such strategies might encompass: craft knowledge (including process knowledge, genre knowledge, goal knowledge, knowledge about their reader and knowledge about a writerly environment); transcriptional knowledge; knowledge of how writers use their reading; knowledge of technology and knowledge of the affective domains (Young and Ferguson, 2021).. Despite political posturing about the value of a knowledge-rich curriculum ([Gibb, 2021](#)), this breadth of instruction is virtually non-existent in almost all primary school classrooms.

Despite some of the studies cited here (Corden, 2003; Zumbrunn and Krause, 2012; Dollins, 2016) being relatively small-scale and sometimes lacking a control group, there is an overwhelming empirical basis in the academic literature around the teaching of mini-lessons. Commonly referred to as self-regulated strategy development (SRSD), they are an effective mode of writing instruction, especially in a contemporary writing workshop (like a *Writing for Pleasure* classroom) which significantly improves the writing of all writers, including those with learning disabilities (Danoff et al., 1993; McQuitty, 2014; Graham, 2006; Lane et al., 2010; Zumbrunn and Bruning, 2013; Young and Ferguson, 2020).

The relationship between mini-lessons, co-constructed product goals and assessment

Children's writing products develop best when the mini-lessons being taught are generated from the agreed product goals for the genre being studied (Zumbrunn and Krause, 2012; Bradford et al. 2016; Hayden, 2020). Product goals are formulated following a period of genre-study where mentor texts are analysed, discussed and returned to time and time again (Dorfman and Capelli, 2017) (see [Appendix A](#) for the product goals generated to evaluate the children's writing in this project). They communicate to writers what the ideal expectation is for each piece of writing (Gronlund & Brookhart, 2009; Koster et al., 2015; Dollins, 2016).

Giving students a precise understanding of the kinds of '*strategies, processes and literary and linguistic techniques*' (Young and Ferguson, 2021, p.192) required to create a successful writing product, acts as a mutually agreed fulcrum around which discussion and assessment of writing quality can take place. Furthermore, a perceived sense of a degree of control and influence over content (product goals) and performance (formative assessment based around the product goals) has a tendency to stimulate behaviours aimed at achieving those goals to a greater extent than students who have no say (Schunk, 1995; Schunk and Pajares, 2005).

This '*scaffolded collaboration*' (Zumbrunn and Krause, 2012, p.347) can also be used as a basis for an effective course of instructional action while leaving room for alternative needs to be addressed as and when they arise. It is thought to be highly effective if teachers can plan these mini-lessons, while allowing enough flexibility to incorporate their students' changing needs (this formed a key part of the design of this study). For example, it can be particularly effective if during a class writing project, mini lessons start out by supporting children to meet the expectations for certain agreed criteria, but are then adapted, when revising a text, by repeated revisiting of the same criteria (Beaglehole 2014; Dollins 2016).

As introduced in the problem statement ([1.2](#)) and discussed earlier in this review ([2.2.1](#)), in line with the various orientations of writing teaching, there are naturally competing approaches to the assessment of writing.

On the one hand, writing assessment should be utilised as a central part of a writing classroom for both teacher and learner alike; it is a positive pedagogic tool (Huot and Perry 2016; Smith 2016) and acts as an *'interface linking the functions of teaching and learning'* (Allal, 2021, advanced online publication; Allal, 2020). However, when used as a blunt instrument, its effect on teaching and learning is also dulled to the extent that learners become *'passive receivers of feedback'* (Winstone et al., 2016, p.18) and, therefore, go on to become dependent on others for assessment and fail to develop the self-regulation skills to carry out their *own* assessment of their writing products, those of their peers and even that of their writer-teacher (Butler and Winne, 1995). The current external performance descriptors (DfE, 2015) ignore notions of classroom judgements as valuable (James and Pedder 2006; Allal 2013) and have resulted in a narrowing of the writing curriculum (Harlen 2014; Wood, 2014).

Over recent years, assessment frameworks which take account of National Curriculum demands, but which also seek to go far beyond their narrow technical confines have been developed attempting to take into account multimodality (Bearne and Wolstencroft, 2007; Bearne, 2017) and the writer's intentions and personal experience (Gardner, 2012).

However, despite such moves, and the existence of well-established critiques about what they lack in terms of writer development, (D'arcy 1999; Ivanic 2004, Locke, 2015; Cummins, 2016; Eyres, 2017), functionalist approaches where narrow skills-based success criteria are generated by the teacher, or a distant scheme designer, and rarely originate from a class discussion still dominate. Lessons tend to be inflexible and overcrowded with both content and demands, and success criteria are often tokenistic, gimmicky providing few opportunities for genuine debate (Boyle and Charles, 2010; Crichton and McDaid, 2016). They are largely for the evaluative benefit of the teacher (Young and Ferguson, 2021), often mirroring the National Curriculum requirements for transcription and composition (DfE, 2016) and turn writing into a collection of *'mechanical and nonsensical procedures'* (Young and Ferguson, 2021, p.4) which according to Street (1995) decontextualizes both the writing and the writer.

In contrast, product goals can act as an evaluative pivot around which whole-class writing teaching can be built, but are also central in identifying *'teachable moments'*

(Shavelson, 2006, p.4) which can be woven into the formative pupil conferences that take place when monitoring progress during a project enabling specific and timely feedback (Perrenoud, 1998; Hattie and Timperley 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Young and Ferguson, 2021).

In a similar vein to Reeve and Tseng's (2012) concept of '*agentic engagement*', the co-development of a set of flexible product goals in relation to a writing project the class is working on, is likely to make '*proactive recipience*' (i.e. engaging with the feedback process more actively) far more likely ([Winstone et al., 2016](#)). An increased level of investment in the development of the product goals might avoid the problem of the '*invisibility*' of engagement in the assessment process (Price et al., 2011, p.882) and lead not just to improved writing products, but changes in pupil behaviour (Bounds et al., 2013).

Critics question the ability of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies to be effective as they are difficult to master, may not have a significant enough impact to elicit change in teaching practice, and rely heavily on the skill and knowledge of the teacher to adapt their teaching to meet pupil needs (Gardner et al., 2008; Shalveson, 2008). However, as discussed before, *WfP* classrooms are conducive to dealing with these demands as they are more likely to contain a writer-teacher predisposed to centralising agency and AaL strategies as key planks of their approach (Young and Ferguson, 2021).

2.3 Summary

Neo-behaviourist, highly-functional approaches which proffer bogus mastery learning (Allal, 2021) dominate the teaching of writing in English classrooms, but have little credible basis for pursuit, outside of narrowly defined assessment criteria, according to this review of the academic literature. In contrast, a *Writing for Pleasure* pedagogy with its capacity to promote effective daily instruction in the form of mini-lessons while embracing holistic, formative assessment strategies seems to have potential as a transformative pedagogy for both pupil and practitioner alike.

3. Methodology and research methods

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I give an overview of the design of the research (3.2) followed by an explanation of why I chose an action research model as opposed to a case study approach (3.3). What follows is a discussion around a mixed methods approach (3.4). This section concludes with the details of how data were collected and analysed in this study (3.5) and a discussion of the ethical considerations (3.6).

3.2 Design overview

I could not reconcile with using a positivist paradigm to inform my methodology as I struggle with objective epistemological concepts as applied in the social sciences. Primary school classrooms are complex and chaotic (in terms of their multi-layered interactions) in nature and so, in some sense, do not lend themselves to simple and concise explanations simply because there are far too many possible interpretations and perspectives (Mack, 2010). Moreover, practically, there was no way to accommodate a control group or any pre- and post-test assessment.

Therefore, in line with a subjectivist ontology, my research was reinforced by a *'researcher as a detective'* interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism accepts that reality is complicated, contains multiple points of view and is negotiated through the experiences and thoughts of human beings who construct meaning, knowledge and understanding (Check and Schutt, 2011; Cohen et al., 2018). There is also a critical, emancipatory and transformative element underpinning the research as a more democratic classroom, through a strengthened pupil voice and increased agentic engagement, will be a central element (Freire, 1972; Kemmis, 1997; Lather, 2004; Creswell, 2013; Lukenchuk, 2013). Perhaps, the blending of these two paradigms is reminiscent of Pine (2009) who argues that teacher research is itself a paradigmatic expression which operates between the lines of the traditional boundaries offered by the more established perspectives.

Using action-research methodology and a mixed methods research (MMR) approach, I collected data via daily-attitude surveys, a post-project survey and structured interviews to address the research questions. An analysis of 4 children's writing products was also undertaken.

3.3 Methodologies: case study or action research?

Despite there being competing definitions as to what constitutes a case study (Yazan, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018), it is frequently referred to as a complex, in-depth and multi-faceted exploration (Stake 1995; Tight, 2010) utilising multiple data collection methods to capture the essence of a case. Using real people in authentic contexts (Cohen et al. 2018), a case can take many forms (Pring, 2015) including the unit of study (the classroom) that I was seeking to research.

I thought a case study approach might have a number of advantages for my area of interest such as its capacity to support my pedagogical decision-making as a practitioner (Bassey, 1999), as well as providing the potential for transferability of my learning to other similar contexts (Newby, 2010). Another consideration was it offered the rigour I was looking for through the combination of multiple data sources full of abundant detail alongside a balanced voice allowing the data to speak (Geertz, 1973; Dyer, 1995; Robson, 2002).

However, I pursued an action research model because of the centrality of my role and my explicit participation as a researcher deliberately intervening to focus on the issue of agency in a WfP classroom (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; McNiff, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Denscombe, 2014). Moreover, since it sets itself apart not only through its methodology (collective participation) and outcomes (pupil and teacher voice), but its foci (in this case powerlessness in decision making and arguably student disaffection with a socially reproductive curriculum) (Cohen et al., 2018), participatory action research had the most potential to disseminate my findings to a wider network of practitioners (Kemmis, 2014).

The duality of action research seemed to cover both bases as it had the capacity to impact on pedagogical development and steer debate (Corey, 1953). It is simultaneously a self-reflective, cyclical, dynamic and hands-on strategy that can support the development of social justice as well as changing individuals, institutions and cultures (Grundy, 1987; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992; Gibbs et al., 2016).

Furthermore, having already undertaken some critical, publicly available and (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996) formative examples of action research ([Hayden, 2020](#); [Hayden,](#)

[2021](#); [Hayden and Vasques 2021](#)), I was already aware of the potential impact of situated learning on my overall professional development, subject knowledge, confidence, influence and reflectiveness alongside supporting the development of congruence between theory and my classroom practice (Ferrance, 2000).

Despite the opportunities for empowerment and collaborative learning for both researcher and participants, there remain issues around researcher bias in action research which can distort validity. However, similar arguments can be made in relation to case study research and bias is a perennial weakness of qualitative research in general (Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, in order to compensate for this issue, I undertook a critical and transparent process of research design and identified and discussed my own positionality ([1.4](#)) (Cohen et al., 2018).

3.4 Mixed methods research

In an attempt to blend the best of both worlds a mixed methods research (MMR) approach has developed which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods, but which can operate across all levels of a research project encompassing methodologies, paradigms and practice (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Indeed, the strength of their interconnectedness across a project can lead to strengthened benefits, and increased reliability and validity (Yin, 2006; Denscombe, 2014). Allowing the research question to lead the design of the research is central to an MMR approach because so many questions necessitate a pluralistic approach (Hesse-Biber and Johnson, 2013). However, the 'superiority' of MMR is not a settled debate as there are a number of issues around the emergence of newly formed biases, and the perception that 'non-triangulation' might equal inferior research (Symonds and Gorard, 2008).

However, all things considered, within this study, I chose an MMR approach because I wanted to create a more nuanced account of the complex behaviours in the classroom and it seemed to represent the transformative and democratic values I viewed as integral to the project (Greene 2008). Despite the interpretive leanings of my research, in some sense, there was a methodological pragmatism underpinning the design in that the research question was driving my research practice, influencing the design of the data collection methods (Hammersley, 2013). I needed the crude statistical judgement of each mini-lesson, and the qualitative reasoning to support my interpretation.

3.5 Data collection methods and analysis

3.5.1 Questionnaires

Daily attitude surveys

Utilising a multi-phase design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011), in Phase 1 (the teaching stage of the project), I collected both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously in the form of a daily-attitude survey to help answer research question 1. This *embedded design* (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011) prioritised the collection of quantitative data using a 4-point Likert-type scale, but had a subordinate qualitative element (a written justification for the score awarded and a request for future mini-lessons). I created a simple template (Figure 1) whose blended design was meant to compensate for one of the typical weaknesses of questionnaires (a lack of in depth reasoning and rigidity) (Krosnick and Presser, 2010; Denscombe, 2014). In doing so, I was able to ‘fuse measurement and opinion’ (Cohen, et al., 2018, p.481) by gathering a statistical verdict about the usefulness of the lesson itself, as well as gaining an insight as to why that response was given.

Using the options below, how useful did you find today's mini-lesson?			
Not at all useful	Only a little bit useful	Quite useful	Very useful
			
In a sentence, please explain your answer:			
What mini-lesson do you think you need next?			

Figure 1. Daily attitude survey template

There may have been issues of validity in terms of pupil understanding of the questions as the surveys were always self-administered to remove an element of researcher bias (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). However, to overcome this issue, the same format was used to evaluate all 13 mini-lessons, and a visual representation of the Likert scale was incorporated into the design of the survey in the form of a cup of water.

The question design was phrased in a neutral way free from persuasive bias (Oppenheim, 1992) and the wording and cup images were designed to create equal intervals between points on the scale (Friedman and Amoo, 1999). To further support participation, at this stage of the lesson, children were referred to the co-constructed product goals ([Appendix A](#)) to seek out their requests.

I was aware of survey fatigue by asking children to complete a written response every day (Denscombe, 2014). However, I attempted to mitigate against this by ensuring the survey could effectively be taken in less than two minutes.

As already partially discussed, Likert scales have weaknesses as a method of data collection as they are open to questions of interpretation with the potential for different meanings to be inferred by respondents (Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, I considered placing adjectives (useful-useless) at each end of a large numbered scale (7 points) (Osgood, 1957), but decided against this because of the lack of an 'anchor statement' at each point (Champagne, 2014). Even though a higher number of scale points tends to increase reliability (Krosnick and Presser, 2010), I opted for a 4-point scale as I was not seeking fine-grained responses, but more of a general impression. I also pondered whether or not to produce an odd or even scale by including a 'don't know' middle option, but also decided against this as I thought it might compromise the quality of the data through satisficing, lack of understanding and ambivalence (Champagne, 2014).

Post-project survey

For this survey I used a 5-point rating scale because here I wanted pupils to say to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a statement. On this occasion, I thought it better to include a middle '*it made no difference*' option because some children may have felt no change in attitudes as a result of the project.

Analysis

Qualitative data from the daily-attitude surveys (mini-lesson requests) were thematically analysed by craft area (Young et al., 2021) using the raw data, whilst the quantitative yield was analysed using descriptive statistical representation (Cohen et al., 2018) to generate a mean average score to measure overall usefulness. The post-project surveys were subjected to a basic analysis using the mode (most frequent value).

A Chi-Square test (Cohen et al., 2018) was considered to determine whether there was a significant statistical relationship between the observed and the expected values for both surveys. However, as some of the data sets, even when combined totalled less than 20% of the respondents, I decided it would not be a valid measure owing to the sample size (Cohen et al., 2018). All data were examined and compared side-by-side to bolster reliability, correlate themes, and generate more nuanced answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2014).

3.5.2 Pupil Interviews

In order to triangulate the quantitative data from the daily-attitude surveys and the post-project survey, qualitative data was obtained through logically sequenced, informal structured interviews ([Appendix C](#)) ensuring good coverage of the key topics. I used open-ended 'how' 'what' and 'when' style questions to promote a depth of response (Wright and Powell, 2006) while ensuring clarity and straightforwardness because these typically lead to more accurate responses (Krähenbühl and Blades, 2006). The interviews were not expected to be generalisable as the responses were unique to the individuals, and offered them a chance to express their interpretations in relation to the project (Creswell, 2014).

I used theoretical (purposive) sampling to select a quota of pupils for the interviews by looking at the existing writing attainment data for the class. Based on the size of each quota, 4 children were selected (one having been evaluated at below the expected standard, one at working towards the expected standard, and two at the expected standard).

I conducted the interviews one-on-one as I felt that, given the children selected, there might be a tendency for some to dominate the conversation (Denscombe, 2011) if I had

used a multi-participant, focus group-style option (Creswell, 2014). Because the interviewees were either 8- or 9-years old, I felt that participant inconvenience (Hochschild, 2009) could be avoided by structuring in a 'half-time' break (Denscombe, 2014) and ensuring the whole interview lasted no longer than 15 minutes. It was conducted in a comfortable and familiar setting (the classroom) during informal reading time (Leeson, 2014) to put the children at ease.

The literature consistently cautions against power imbalances particularly with children (Eder and Fingerson, 2003), innate in qualitative interviews, as they can lead to a falsification of responses (Cohen et al., 2018). As the class teacher, I had a natural rapport with the students and I felt that the potentially strange situation of an interview would not be daunting for them (Morrison, 2013) as they were used to being afforded the agency to comment on both my teaching and the set up of the classroom and, as indicated in the literature, always responded positively to requests of this type. I further reminded them that the reason for the interview was merely to gain a greater understanding of their opinions (Solberg, 2014).

There are concerns around reliability as I took notes rather than recording the interview. This was to put the children at ease as they may have felt intimidated by a recording device being used. Also, on a practical level, an audio recording may not have picked up the respondent's voice in the atmosphere of the classroom (Denscombe, 2014).

I tried to avoid the interviewer effect by remaining as neutral as possible and allowing the children to speak at length without rephrasing their words, or putting words in their mouths (Oppenheim, 1992; Creswell, 2014). Validity may be compromised and analysis hampered by researcher bias as I had knowledge of the topic and there was a lack of anonymity. However, validity should be strengthened by the triangulation of the interviews with my quantitative data yield (Denscombe, 2011).

Analysis

I wrote a summary of each interview directly from the notes, after having read each interview several times for meaning (Creswell, 2013), I selected important material directly from the original source including '*illuminative (diamonds!)*' verbatim quotes (Cohen et al., 2018, p.647).

I avoided an overly complex and formal codification of the data as I did not feel it would reduce the data very much, and I did not want to brutalise the words of the pupils preferring a more holistic and humanistic approach to pick up on the subtleties and nuances of their thoughts (St Pierre and Jackson, 2014). Instead, I opted for a pre-ordinate categorisation process whereby I ascribed a category label to each question meaning that each answer already made reference to the relevant theme (Gläser and Laudel, 2013).

3.5.3 Writing samples and product goals

At the completion of the project, four samples of writing were collected from the same four children who had also agreed to be interviewed (I have already explained how they were selected). I decided to use the writing samples from these children to maintain a degree of consistency as they had been selected to provide a broad range of writing attainment.

Analysis

Product goals are defined by Young and Ferguson (2020, p.42) as *'the intentions we have for our writing'* and should answer the question: what would make this an effective piece of writing? With this in mind, I evaluated each child's writing and assigned a binary (yes-no) judgement as to whether they had been successful or not (Table 5). A negative evaluation for any of the product goals did not only mean that the child had not attempted it; it simply meant that it had not been demonstrated well enough. The main purpose of the overview was to enable me to see which mini-lessons still needed to be taught again in future. A detailed analysis of each child's writing is found in the Appendices and the themes are presented and discussed in section [4.4.1](#).

3.6 Ethical considerations

As a piece of social science, this project aimed to follow the principles laid out by the Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS, 2015) and was conducted with integrity throughout with due consideration given to maximising benefit and minimising harm. Safeguarding and the well-being of the participants was paramount. Consent was continuously negotiated as written parental and participant permission had already been gained at the commencement of the project. As well as children giving their verbal consent at the start

of the interviews, they were also reminded of their right to withdraw at any point (Wax, 1982; BERA, 2018).

In advance of participation, the aims of the research, along with my personal motivations as the researcher, were shared with the participants and their guardians ([Appendix I](#)) (BERA, 2018). Furthermore, how data would be stored and findings would be published was also included. These aims were realised in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, 2016) and the Data Protection Act (2018).

Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic and the social distancing measures in effect in my setting, in order to aid comprehension, a face-to-face explanation was impractical, but guardians were offered the opportunity of an online meeting to ask any questions about the project to deal with the ethical implications raised by lack of comprehension (Wood and Smith, 2016).

In the presentation of the findings and their analysis, in order to establish anonymity, pseudonyms replaced the names of the children and the institution (Creswell, 2014).

4 Analysis of findings

4.1 Introduction

In this section I will present and analyse the data collected for each research question ([4.2](#) and [4.4](#)) in relation to the themes covered in the literature review followed by some concluding remarks ([4.3](#) and [4.5](#)). Pseudonyms have been used throughout to replace the names of the participants.

4.2 Research Question 1: Main Findings

How do children influence the instruction they receive in a Writing for Pleasure classroom and how does it affect their attitudes?

Being a practitioner-researcher with several years of teaching using a *WfP* approach to call upon, I had no strong expectation that this cohort of pupils would stand out in respect of utilising the increased levels of agency they were being afforded as I had only been teaching the class face-to-face for a period of three months prior to the study. However, an inductive stance was purposely adopted in relation to the study's qualitative elements, to allow for the richness of the situated findings to become clear. The data presented here is an analysis of the daily-attitude surveys and the post-project surveys. A detailed analysis of the interviews is not presented here, but may be referred to in discussion of the survey data. Images from the children's writing books are included throughout.

4.2.1 Pupils' opinions about the mini-lessons

The mean average for any mini-lesson was never less than **3** and the overall mean average score for all thirteen mini-lessons was **3.43** (Figure 2) (see [Appendix B](#) for a more detailed breakdown of pupil attitudes). Given that 4 was the value ascribed to 'very useful' and 3 to 'quite useful', these data suggest that the overall average usefulness of the instruction across the 13 mini-lessons was viewed positively by the vast majority of the pupils. A noticeable dip in usefulness did occur around the middle of the project (between Mini-lessons 6-8). This could be explained by the fact that at this stage some of the children were not 'in sync' with the instruction I was offering. This is not uncommon during class projects as children are encouraged to develop their own

personalised approach to the writing process which extends to where and when they try out mini-lessons. In fact, the data show that on several days a large proportion of children did not try out the lesson on the day I taught it. Rosie was one such child and she explained, '*When I was using the weather as a character (Mini-lesson 8: Setting description), I didn't try it out the day you taught it, but went back to the archive (a classroom collection of previously taught mini-lessons to support self-regulation and pupil independence) later*'.

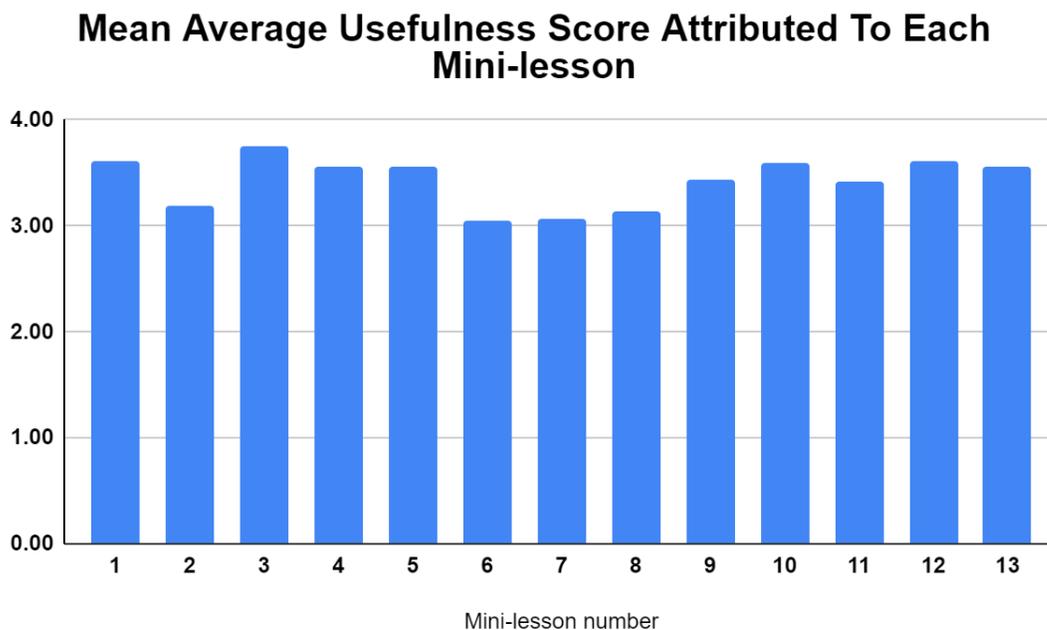


Figure 2. Mean average usefulness by mini-lesson

Unfortunately, the design of the study was not sophisticated enough to measure the opinions of these children if they did later try it out, but these examples are indicative of the approach of *WfP* teachers: a mini-lesson is an invitation to use a strategy or technique in that day's writing time, or whenever it may be relevant. Therefore, it was not surprising to see this happening as improvements in writer engagement also occurred in many other studies after increasing pupil autonomy, particularly over the way in which they undertake their writing journey (Zumbrunn and Krause, 2012; Behizadeh, 2014) and underlines that the children were confident enough with their own approach to the writing process to delay the instruction being given suggesting increased levels of self-efficacy and writer-identity (Grainger et al., 2003).

The pupils also demonstrated that they could be quite critical of the mini-lessons at times, but again with a good sense of logic behind the judgement. In reference to Mini-lesson 7 (*Using your 'trying things out' page*), Adam explained 'I think this is a good revising lesson more than planning/drafting and it's a little useful in drafting'. (Figure 3)

Using the options below, how useful did you find today's mini-lesson?			
Not at all useful 	Only a little bit useful 	Quite useful 	Very useful 
In a sentence, please explain your answer: <i>I think this is a good revising lesson more than planing/draft and it's a little useful in drafting</i>			
What mini-lesson do you think you need next? <i>I want to see show not tell examples</i>			

Figure 3. Adam's response to the daily-attitude survey for Mini-lesson 7 (*Using your 'trying things out' page*)

There were only three examples of children finding the lessons 'not at all useful'. One such example was Davina who provided an insight, 'I think I already know how to revise my opening,' after the Mini-lesson 10 (*Great openings (narrative)*). This could be because many of the mini-lessons are transferable across different genres, and memoir is a form of narrative. This lesson had been taught several months before during a short-story class project. Even though Davina found it unnecessary, I decided that for the whole class it was worth revisiting.

4.2.2 How did pupils feel about their increased involvement in the process of evaluation?

The quantitative data show (Figure 4) that children had very positive feelings overall towards being asked to evaluate each mini-lesson with no responses on the negative side of the Likert spectrum. Only 4 children answered that *'it made no difference'* to them with 22 children responding positively, 16 of them strongly so. One of them was Toby, a relatively new pupil, who showed positive feelings towards the process, and strong signs of agentic engagement explaining, *'I felt I could circle the option that I believed. I felt excited because in my old school they never asked me that. I felt satisfied and relaxed because I never knew there were mini-lessons'*.

Q1. Being asked my opinion about each mini-lesson made me feel valued as a learner.

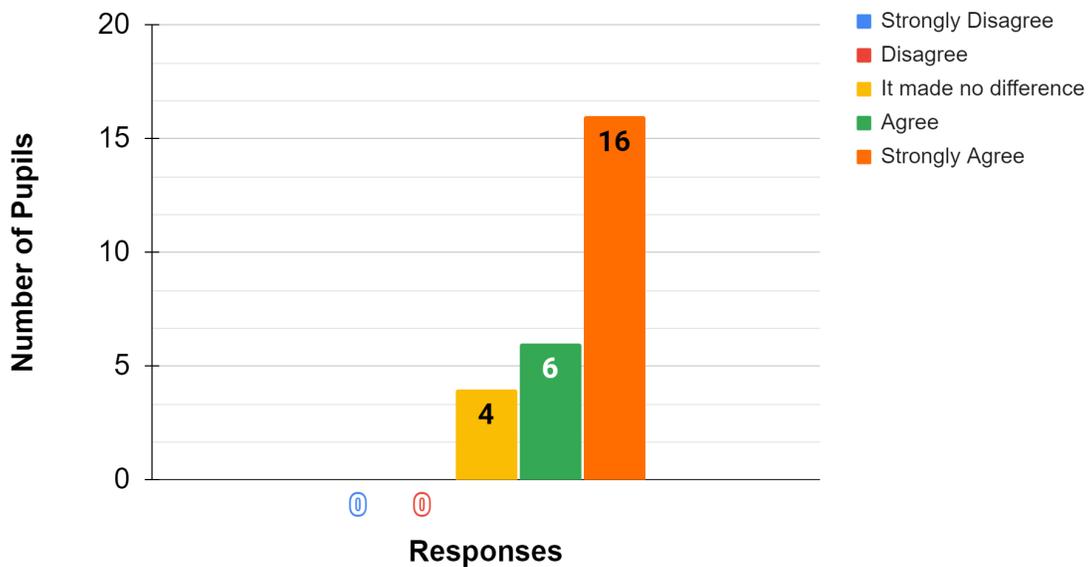


Figure 4. Pupil attitudes towards increased agency over their own instruction

There was no evidence of survey fatigue (Denscombe, 2014) in the interview responses with the exception of one comment from Joe who expressed some dissatisfaction with the process explaining that he felt, *'A little annoyed because once I've finished writing, I don't like to write more'*.

There was evidence from the interviews that children had a good understanding of the purpose of the survey. For instance, Summaya said, *'I felt happy we had this because now you know how we felt about the mini-lesson'*. Similarly, Rosie explained, *'I felt excited most of the time because I wanted to show you why I really liked it and how I found it useful'*.

4.2.3 What types of mini-lesson did pupils request and were they listened to?

Table 4: A breakdown of pupils' mini-lesson requests by craft area (most popular highlighted in yellow)

Mini-lesson number	Number of requests by craft area										Teacher Decision
	Being writers	Generating ideas	Organisation and structure	Fluency	Clarity & accuracy	Developing	Word choices	Spelling	No request made or absent	Total requests made (accounting for absentees)	
1	2	21	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	26	Generating ideas
2	0	19	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	25	Generating ideas
3	1	17	5	1	1	0	0	0	1	25	Generating ideas
4	4	3	13	2	1	1	0	0	2	24	Being writers
5	1	0	13	3	2	4	0	0	3	23	Organisation and structure
6	0	0	0	1	0	22	1	0	2	24	Developing
7	0	0	0	0	0	20	2	1	3	23	Developing
8	0	0	0	0	1	18	4	1	2	24	Developing
9	0	0	0	0	0	17	4	4	1	25	Developing
10	0	0	0	0	0	11	14	1	0	26	Developing
11	0	0	0	0	15	2	9	0	0	26	Clarity and accuracy
12	9	0	0	0	0	1	13	2	1	25	Being writers
13	18	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	23	Being writers

The mini-lesson request section of the daily-attitude survey, with its specific requirement that pupils tell me what they thought they needed instruction in, came to be an integral part of the teaching and learning cycle. The students' sense of agency and influence over their own learning was evident from the sheer number of requests made and there were no examples of children not making a request on any day of the project. This finding is similar to Dyson's (1997, p.179) '*pedagogy of responsibility*' idea whereby promoting children's independence heightens their sense of self-efficacy and, in this case, also their desire to inform their teacher.

There was no evidence of satisficing or ambivalence in the requesting section of the surveys (Champagne, 2014) which I suspected might happen. In fact, all of the requests were related to a precise aspect of the writing or writer development. The blended design of the survey seemed to fuse measurement and opinion and provided the in-depth reasoning I needed (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). It could be that because the children were motivated to see their compositions do well and had a responsive teacher, it led to them 'seeing the point' of completing the survey with accurate responses.

4.2.4 Burgeoning pupil confidence and a writer-teacher as the filter

Pupils requested a broad range of mini-lessons (Table 4), and as we progressed through the project, the types of request mirrored approximately the stage of the writing process where most children were. For example, at the beginning of the project, requests for mini-lessons in *Generating Ideas* dominated. Interestingly, after teaching Mini-lessons 4 and 5, the nature of the requests broadened.

One explanation for this may have been that at this stage of the project the synchronicity of collective writing processes began to fragment as children personalised their way of writing. However, when we reached the middle of the project and revision was a key consideration, processes converged again and requests for mini-lessons in *Developing* were very common. Then towards the end of the project, there were more disparate requests once more as children worked towards the final publishing deadline. Part of a *WfP* approach sees daily mini-lessons taught through a prism of opportunity with children being invited to 'try the strategy out' during that day's writing time. As a result, there are again echoes here of the studies of Grainger et al., (2003) and Chelsea and Snyders (2014) with children exhibiting independent and self-efficacious behaviours

which come from the confidence gained by a nourished writer-identity. They were pursuing their own writing processes recursively (Young and Ferguson, 2021) flitting between stages, and finding a platform to request what they needed to help them to be successful.

On most days, my decision as a teacher about what type of mini-lesson to teach mirrored the most popular area of need from the pupils. Occasionally, however, I had to overrule what the pupils were requesting and teach a mini-lesson based on what I had judged was necessary to balance the needs of the curriculum with what would be beneficial for either the current project, or their long-term development. Naturally, pupils did not always have their precise requests taught as mini-lessons, but something useful from the most requested craft area. However, the survey acted as an essential follow-up tool to be used during one-to-one pupil conferences to address these needs. Ella rated a *Generating Ideas* lesson (Mini-lesson 4: *Top fives and top tens*) as 'only a little bit useful' (Figure 5) as she was simply ready to move on from one process to another. She wrote, 'I need to start planning and start thinking about characters using a box-up grid'.

Using the options below, how useful did you find today's mini-lesson?			
Not at all useful 	Only a little bit useful 	Quite useful 	Very useful 
In a sentence, please explain your answer. <i>It was a bit useful because to me the first one was more useful</i>			
What mini-lesson do you think you need next? <i>I need to start planning and start thinking about characters using a box grid</i>			

Figure 5. Ella's response to the daily-attitude survey for Mini-lesson 4 (*Top fives and top tens*)

Bea agreed with her (Figure 6), stating, 'I need to know how to plan it'.

Using the options below, how useful did you find today's mini-lesson?			
Not at all useful 	Only a little bit useful 	Quite useful 	Very useful 
In a sentence, please explain your answer: I found it a little bit useful because I was thinking of the same.			
What mini-lesson do you think you need next? I need to know how to plan it			

Figure 6. Bea's response to the daily-attitude survey for Mini-lesson 4 (Top fives and top tens)

Additionally, Adam, after one *Generating Ideas* lesson (Mini-lesson 2: *Answering Michael Rosen's 4 questions*) explained that he wanted to return to do more genre-study and made reference to the product goals (Figure 7), 'I want to see more good examples and bad ones as well as a product goal list'.

Using the options below, how useful did you find today's mini-lesson?			
Not at all useful 	Only a little bit useful 	Quite useful 	Very useful 
In a sentence, please explain your answer: It's very useful because it makes me think of many conditions.			
What mini-lesson do you think you need next? I want to see more good examples and bad ones as well as a product goal list.			

Figure 7. Adam's response to the daily-attitude survey for Mini-lesson 2 (Answering Michael Rosen's 4 questions)

When I looked back at his book, I could see that he had been absent for a couple of sessions in the genre-study week and I was able to address this through several pupil conferences with him.

Finally, Summaya concluded that she was satisfied with the process despite not always having her mini-lesson request taught the next day, *'It made me feel kind of good because I knew that sometimes the thing I had chosen could be taught. When I looked at the options, I knew exactly which one to choose. Even though the ones you taught weren't the ones I requested, they were still helpful'*.

These four examples arguably contradict the findings of Torrance (2007) and Sadler (2007) with little evidence that the children were merely adopting a *'procedural compliance'* role (Hume and Coll, 2009, p.270). The findings from each day's round of surveys were highly informative and far from superficial which may in part be explained by my own responsiveness to the pupils' requests through mutual discussion, and the learning environment I had set up (Reeve and Shin, 2020). Even when children's requests were not taught, their level of engagement with the survey remained high.

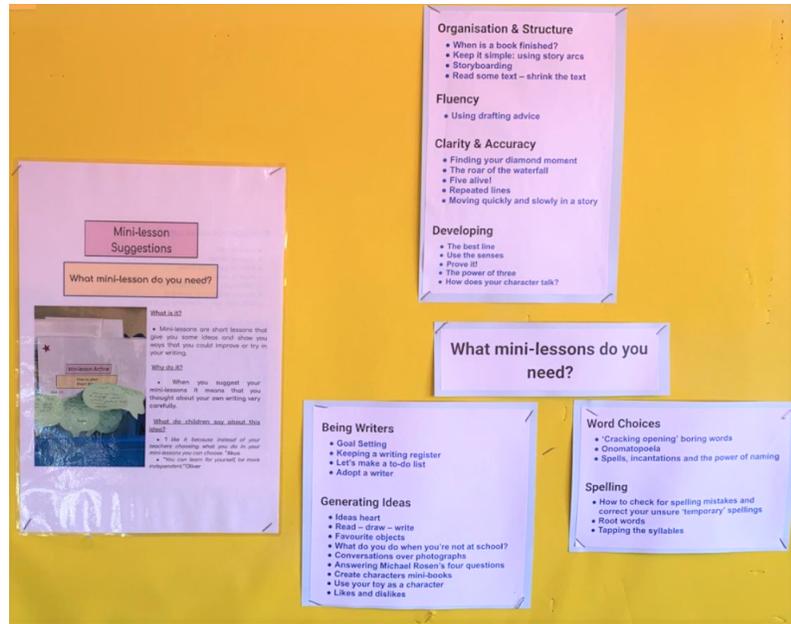
4.2.5 Developing craft knowledge: getting mini-lesson ideas from other sources

Using the options below, how useful did you find today's mini-lesson?			
Not at all useful 	Only a little bit useful 	Quite useful 	Very useful 
In a sentence, please explain your answer: <i>Because it was helping with revising but we do it on a different page.</i>			
What mini-lesson do you think you need next? <i>To try to get to the roof of the waterfall.</i>			

Figure 8. Davina's response to the daily-attitude survey after a revision mini-lesson

Interestingly, some pupils drew their inspiration for their requests from other sources such as displays around the classroom. Davina (Figure 8) wanted, 'To try to get to the roar of the waterfall' (a mini-lesson in *Clarity and Accuracy*). This mini-lesson was derived from the wall at the back of the classroom (Figure 9) where I had signposted mini-lessons that I thought the children may find useful throughout the term.

Figure 9. A classroom display highlighting useful mini-lessons by craft area



Using the options below, how useful did you find today's mini-lesson?			
<p>Not at all useful</p>	<p>Only a little bit useful</p>	<p>Quite useful</p>	<p>Very useful</p>
<p>In a sentence, please explain your answer: <i>Because it helped me reach my goal and I was able to extend something I never thought I would extend.</i></p>			
<p>What mini-lesson do you think you need next? <i>I need help with senses.</i></p>			

Figure 10. Toby's response to the daily-attitude survey

Some pupils made reference to their own personal writing goals in their feedback (Figure 10). In judging Mini-lesson 11 (*Best line*) as 'very useful', Toby provided this explanation, 'It helped me to reach my goal and I was able to extend something I never thought I would extend'. Like Davina, he also selected a request (*Use the senses*) from the classroom display.

4.2.6 What were pupil attitudes towards being asked to make mini-lesson requests?

The survey data show (Figure 11) that there was a strong connection between being invited to make mini-lesson requests and the desire to try out the instruction. Only 5 children answered that *'it made no difference'* to them and just 1 child disagreed. 20 children responded positively, 15 of them strongly so. Joe made clear that he simply felt, *'Better (about the process) because I could learn more mini-lessons that I needed'*.

Q2. Being invited to make mini-lesson requests made me want to try them out for myself.

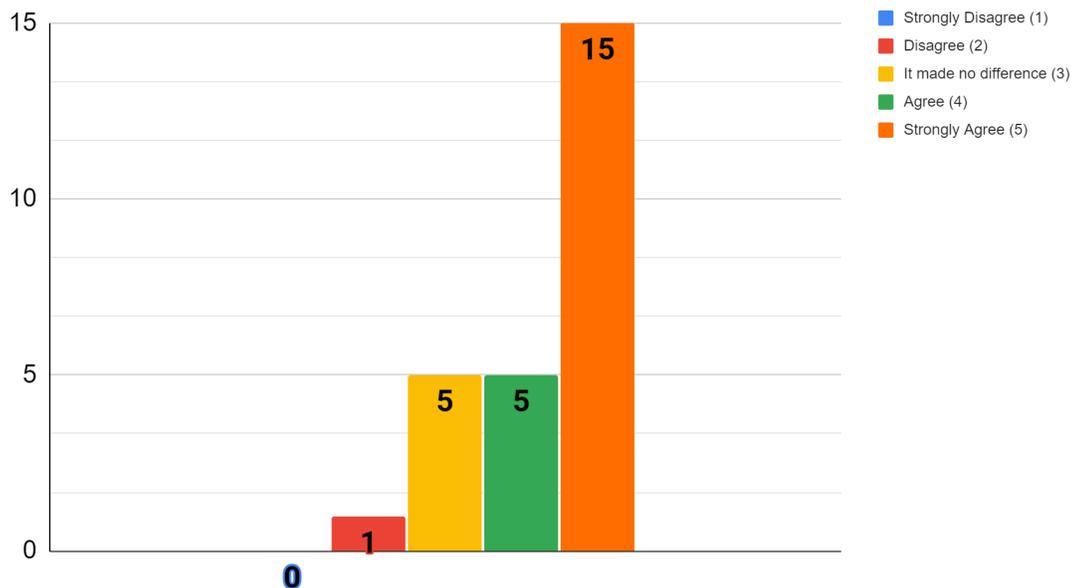


Figure 11. Pupil attitudes towards trying out instruction when playing a role in requesting it

Toby echoed this sentiment adding that he was, *'Relieved because I could tell you what I needed. So, if I needed a mini-lesson in sticky bits (a revision strategy), I could request it then learn more and evaluate it. Our product goals were a helpful guide'*. This is an example of a child who was lacking in self-efficacy having his needs attended to by the instruction I was giving.

Some children made repeated requests for the same type of mini-lesson on successive days. After finally being taught about *'Metaphor and simile'* in Mini-lesson 9, Joe wrote *'It*

was good since I finally know how to paint with words' (Figure 12). Having other avenues beyond whole class instruction available is an important aspect of a WfP classroom.

Using the options below, how useful did you find today's mini-lesson?			
Not at all useful 	Only a little bit useful 	Quite useful 	Very useful 
In a sentence, please explain your answer: <i>finally know it was good since I can paint with words.</i>			
What mini-lesson do you think you need next? <i>opening 9. I need to improve my</i>			

Figure 12. Joe's response to the daily-attitude survey for Mini-lesson 9 (Metaphor and Simile)

The other main options Joe could have used were: seeking a pupil conference with me (either by asking directly or by using the conference request postbox); using the mini-lesson archive to look for other examples of painting with words mini-lessons which had already been taught, and using his own reading to find examples used by other writers to try and adopt for himself. I would expect some children to take time to adapt to the routines and practices of a WfP classroom particularly when they have spent so many of their formative years with little emphasis being placed on the promotion of their independence and little exposure to self-regulatory strategies.

There were some misgivings which emerged from one of the interviews. Rosie talked about her mixed feelings when it came to being asked to request a mini-lesson, 'I felt stressed because I sometimes didn't know what I needed next. But usually, when you gave us time to look back at our writing, I got an idea for a mini-lesson. And the product goals actually did help me'. Like Joe, this suggests that Rosie was taking some time to adapt to the increased level of instructional demand being placed on her, but also reveals that the time spent developing a composition and the co-constructed product goals did act as supports to taking on this additional responsibility.

4.3 Summary

This study shows that improvements in writer engagement can be found by increasing pupil autonomy, particularly by creating a feeling of personal investment in the mini-lessons taught (Behizadeh, 2014). In the data set there is evidence that a *WfP* classroom provides fertile ground for rich interactions to take place between teacher and learner when making decisions around a writing community's instructional needs. Children are skilled in making accurate quantitative judgements about their instruction and clear, justified suggestions relating to their own needs covering a broad range of craft areas. Being invited to take part in this process had positive affective benefits in relation to children's sense of agentic engagement, self-efficacy and self-regulation as pupils exercised their autonomy in unique and logical ways. Interestingly, the writers with low prior attainment demonstrated that they could use revision strategies and the product goals in combination in order to make improvements to their writing.

This co-ownership of the learning process (Absolum et al., 2009) and the level of criticality and reflectiveness on display was certainly redolent of studies seen in the literature (Earl and Katz 2008; Dann 2014; Earl 2013). It enabled me to gain an extra piece of information that might be missing, or may never even be considered in classrooms where presentational or literature-based approaches are being employed, and goes way beyond what can be understood just by marking pupils' books after a lesson. The deliberate and constructive contributions to the stream of instruction (Reeve, 2012) I was obtaining from the surveys encouraged a much more reflective process. It was improving and enriching my practice (Sameroff, 2011) as I was more aware of what the class needs were than I would have been if we had had the usual class sharing time at the end of each session where I may have heard from just a handful of pupils.

Whether or not this process had an impact on children's writing products will be discussed in answering Research Question 2 (4.4).

4.4 Research Question 2: Main Findings

How do children's writing products develop when they co-construct the product goals and are then invited to try out one strategy per lesson (a mini-lesson) as opposed to being asked to include a whole range of strategies and techniques in their writing in a single sitting?

4.4.1 How successful were the children's writing products?

In this section I will evaluate the final writing products of four of the participants using the product goals ([Appendix A](#)) established during the genre-study week. A more detailed analysis of each piece of writing can be found in the Appendices ([Appendix E](#), [Appendix F](#), [Appendix G](#) and [Appendix H](#)). The findings are organised into five themes in line with the product goals. At the end of this section is an overview of the product goals and a binary judgement about how successfully each goal had been met (Table 5).

A detailed analysis of the interviews is not presented here, but may be referred to in discussion of the writing, and images from the children's writing books are included throughout. The writing is not evaluated with reference to any National Curriculum criteria for writing at Key Stage 2 because this was not a focus of the study.

Purpose and Topic

The children were using the *Generating Ideas* mini-lessons to come up with their memoir ideas. For instance, after Mini-lesson 3 (*Memories that generate strong feelings*) (Figure 13). Toby said, *'I wrote emojis in my book and then wrote memories that matched them. Then I thought of my brother being locked in the bathroom'*. All the children had a clear appreciation of why they had been 'moved' to write their piece (Young and Ferguson, 2021). There was also evidence of pupils engaging in dialogue, both at home and school, before deciding on their final idea. Summaya revealed that she knew people would like to read about her idea because, *'Lots of my friends really enjoy trampoline parks'*. Joe added, *'I asked my classmates and my parents to check if this was a good idea for a memoir'*. Finally, there appeared to be a good understanding of why they were undertaking the project, who the future audience would be, and how and where it would be published. Rosie wanted to laminate her writing and hang it in the school playground from a tree. She also cared about this topic stating in her interview, *'This day was the*

most fun I have had in Albania.' Joe's distant publishing goal was to hang his writing in the window of his house for passersby to read.

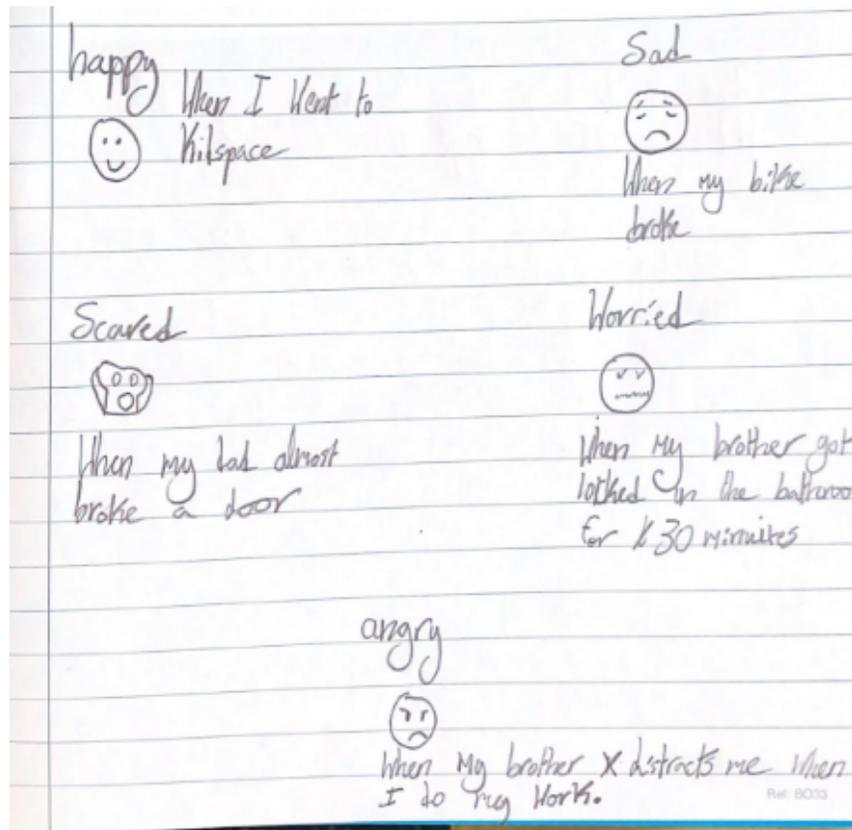


Figure 13. A page from Toby's writing book showing him trying out Mini-lesson 3 (Memories that generate strong feelings)

Audience/Reader Treatment

There was evidence of the pupils making decisions to affect the future readership with Toby wanting his readers to be '*entertained and feel a sense of excitement*' and Summaya declaring '*I wanted the readers to feel worried but also enjoy it*'. The texts were of a suitable length in that they were not too short to leave the reader in want of detail, yet not too long so as to 'waste words' and leave the audience feeling disinterested. Toby explained how he had attended to significant revisions and cut away some parts of his piece, and Summaya lengthened her piece after Mini-lesson 11 (*Best line*) where the children were invited to develop their best sentences into mini paragraphs. Images were also incorporated into the final published pieces which matched the narratives and often gave some visual representation of the setting. For

example, Rosie found some images of trampoline parks and a basketball hoop, and Joe added one image of Hampton Court Palace.

Textual Features

Despite having quite diverse levels of prior attainment, most of the children had a good grasp of how to organise their information into chunks and often moved in quite sophisticated ways between paragraphs. For example, between paragraphs 4 and 5 Toby segues from an internal thought about his mum's reaction to his brother getting locked in the bathroom, 'Meanwhile my mum was busy studying away at college. What would she make of this? I thought to myself', to a change of mood when his dad became furious, 'My dad was furious by this time and all of a sudden he kicked the door twice then once more'. Rosie's control was less clear, but she showed signs of progress by creating four paragraphs out of her first draft which was originally a solid block of text. She spent some time organising this and seemed to understand that a change of time, place or mood usually signals a new paragraph.

Three of the four children worked hard on developing their openings recognising that it was an important aspect of their writing. Toby tried out several openings on his revision page (Figure 14), but eventually settled on a description-type opening for his published version. Summaya and Joe both opted for action-style openings putting the reader straight into the narrative. They both tried out a few different types on their revising pages before settling on the one they liked. Rosie didn't work on her opening much and gave priority to other parts of her composition. She recognised that it could be improved but ran out of sessions to work on it.

All the children experimented with their titles and changed them from their original choices. Joe started out calling his memoir *Hampton Court*. However, he was not satisfied with this and following a conference where I taught him about how I had generated different titles for my own memoir, he changed it to *Trouble Along The Tracks*. The endings are a little incomplete and don't explain to the reader what was learned from the experiences. One or two, however, do explain why it was important for the child to write the memoir.

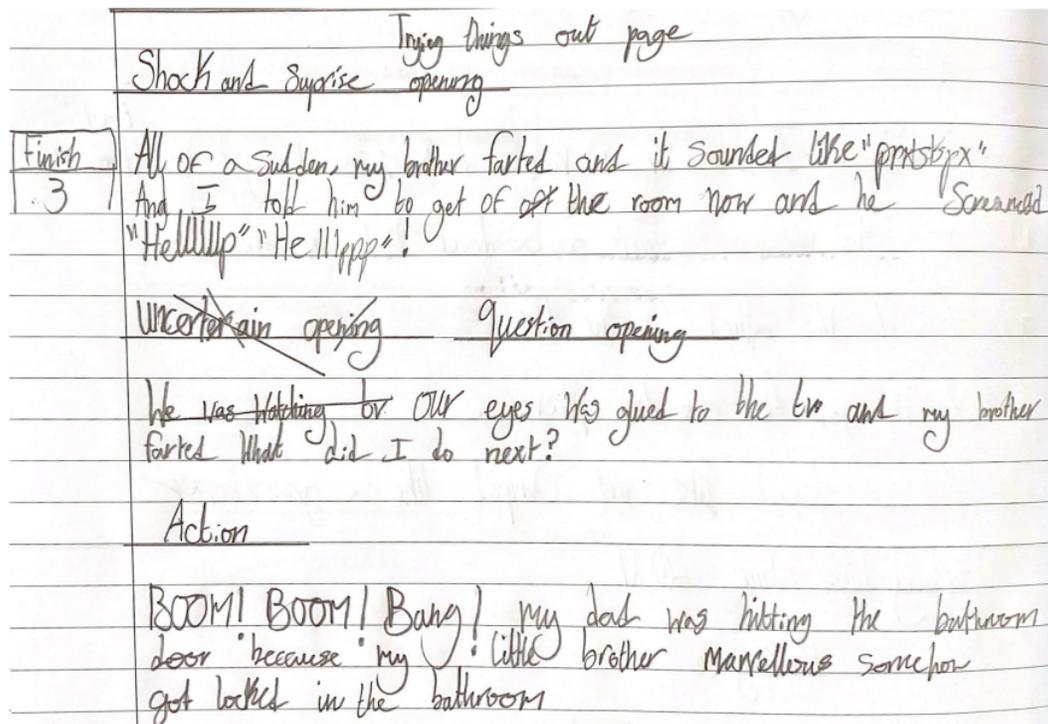


Figure 14. Toby's 'trying-things-out' page where he worked on the opening to his memoir

Writing Techniques

All four writing products contain elements of independent application of writing techniques related to what we termed 'painting with words'. Mini-lesson 9 (Metaphor and Simile) was taught deliberately to support the successful incorporation of one of these techniques into the children's writing. Toby used several similes such as 'Silent like a dead body in Among Us' and 'Jumped like a grasshopper'. He also used metaphor effectively to describe 'Being in a race' to get his dad's tools. As did Joe who came up with a lovely metaphor in describing the train station 'I saw the juicy newspapers spilling out information'. Summaya described how she chewed the ice in her coke, 'Like a hungry hippo' and Rosie included 'Everyone (including me) started bouncing and screaming like happy dogs!' and 'I started screaming like a dog chasing its tail'.

Attempts at exaggeration were harder to come by perhaps owing to the fact that this was not prioritised as a mini-lesson. Toby, in his interview, revealed that he had attempted some exaggeration (hyperbole) when revising his manuscript pointing out that he had returned to a passage in paragraph 3 and had added in another tool (the

hammer), which his dad had not actually used to try and get into the bathroom. He said he did this to add to the drama of the situation. Summaya revealed that she had tried out a bit of exaggeration, describing the DJ as being, '*On fire literally*'. She explained that she wasn't really sure whether she had been successful or not, but had wanted to try it out.

Language and Vocabulary

3 out of the 4 children made good use of time words to structure their narratives. Toby used a wide range to keep his moving such as, '*Afterwards*' twice, '*Finally*', '*First of all*' and several uses of '*Then*'. He also used '*All of a sudden*' several times as a dramatic marker to move the action forward. Rosie used time words sparsely, but accurately, to move the events of the day forward using '*After a while*' and '*Eventually*'. However, there was an overuse of '*Then*' with it being used twice in both paragraphs 2 and 4.

Inclusion of colloquial speech forms is rare as the incorporation of speaking characters is limited. However, where speech is utilised, there are one or two interesting remarks. Summaya for example uses a '*non-standard form 2nd person WAS*' in the final paragraph, which is a reflection of a language used in her local area ([Robinson, 2019](#)), when one brother says, '*Was you looking for mum this whole entire time?*'

Table 5: An overview of the four writing samples evaluated against the product goals

Evaluation of 4 participants' writing products against the product goals		Toby	Summaya	Joe	Rosie
Purpose & topic	Pick a good idea that other people will want to read. Have you surveyed the class about your ideas?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Make sure you have set your distant publishing goal. Where will your writing end up? Who will read it?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Choose something that is important for you to write about and you care about doing well.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Audience/reader treatment	Think about what you want people to feel when reading your memoir. What reaction do you want them to have? What narrative arc will you choose?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Don't waste any words and make sure you skip the boring parts. Don't write too little either. Aim for about 300 words.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Consider adding some pictures to your memoir. These could be hand drawn or photographs.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Textual features	Set the reader up for the experience at the beginning with a great opening. Have you tried out a few different types?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Have a good title. This could give a clue what the memoir is about, or not.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Write in paragraphs. Start a new one when there is a change of time, setting or perhaps mood.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	At the end, reveal why it was important to you to write about this event. Say what you learned from it.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Writing techniques	Try out some exaggeration (hyperbole) in your piece. It's okay to bend the truth a little bit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Describe your setting by making reference to: the historical time, the weather, the time of day and things you remember noticing.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Try painting with words using metaphor and simile.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Language & vocabulary	Use time words to move your writing forward (this helps with skipping the boring parts!).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Use colloquial language. Have you used the real words that the people actually said?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.4.2 What did pupils' think about only being invited to try out one strategy per lesson?

The quantitative data indicate (Figure 15) that a vast proportion of the pupils agreed (23/26), to some degree, many strongly so (17/26), that their chances of creating a more successful text were enhanced by the single strategy method employed in this study. There was some disagreement on this point from two pupils. Unfortunately, the triangulation of the qualitative data garnered via the pupil interviews was unable to detect any disagreement.

Q4. I felt more able to produce a successful piece of writing because I only had one strategy per lesson to try out.

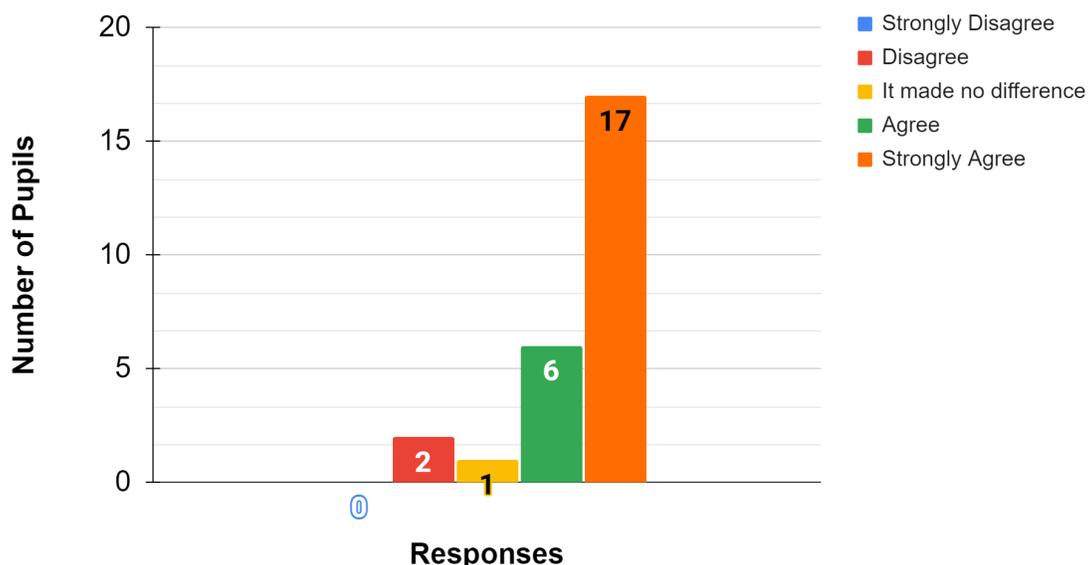


Figure 15. Pupil attitudes towards trying out one strategy per lesson

However, the literature in this area suggests that some pupils may struggle initially to cope with an increased agentic load based on the kind of pedagogical environments in which they have been raised (Saban and Tavsanli, 2015). This disagreement could be a hangover from these experiences given the pupils had only been taught using a *WfP* approach for about three months when the data were collected. Children who had felt confident and successful in following '*mechanical and nonsensical procedures*' (Young

and Ferguson, 2021, p.4) may have been in recovery from being decontextualised from the authentic activities of a real writer (Street, 1995).

When asked about trying out one strategy per lesson, Summaya alludes to this by mentioning the number of things she was accustomed to doing in her writing *'I always had to do more than one thing in my writing. Loads in fact! But when it's something new it can be tricky so I think it was good'*. Several other children made reference to the fact that they welcomed the sense of space and time to try out the strategies in their writing. Rosie said, *'I was used to it because that's how you (referring to her teacher) normally do it. It's easier when you get to choose to do it. Sometimes I was still drafting and you were showing us revising tricks'*. Toby added, *'It was fine for me. Some of the things were harder than others, but I liked having time to try it out'*. This is in accord with some of the findings in the literature particularly the studies of Kellogg (2008) and Ranker (2009).

Perhaps the overall positive response to this question can also be partly explained by the fact that the children were not being taught through an arbitrary 'unit', which as Purcell-Gates et al. (2007) and Flint and Fisher (2014) suggest, can harm writer development. Even though children's agentic responsibility was relatively quickly heightened over both purpose, process and audience, because the instruction occurred under a framework of an authentic project, it meant that they felt they could be successful.

4.4.3 What did pupils think about being involved in the co-construction of the product goals?

The quantitative data here, as before, demonstrate (Figure 16) that a vast proportion of the pupils agreed (**24/26**), a high proportion strongly so (**21/26**), that they felt more motivated to produce a more successful text because of their role in creating the product goals. There was some indifference towards this statement from two pupils.

Q3. I felt more motivated to produce a successful piece of writing because I had helped create the product goals.

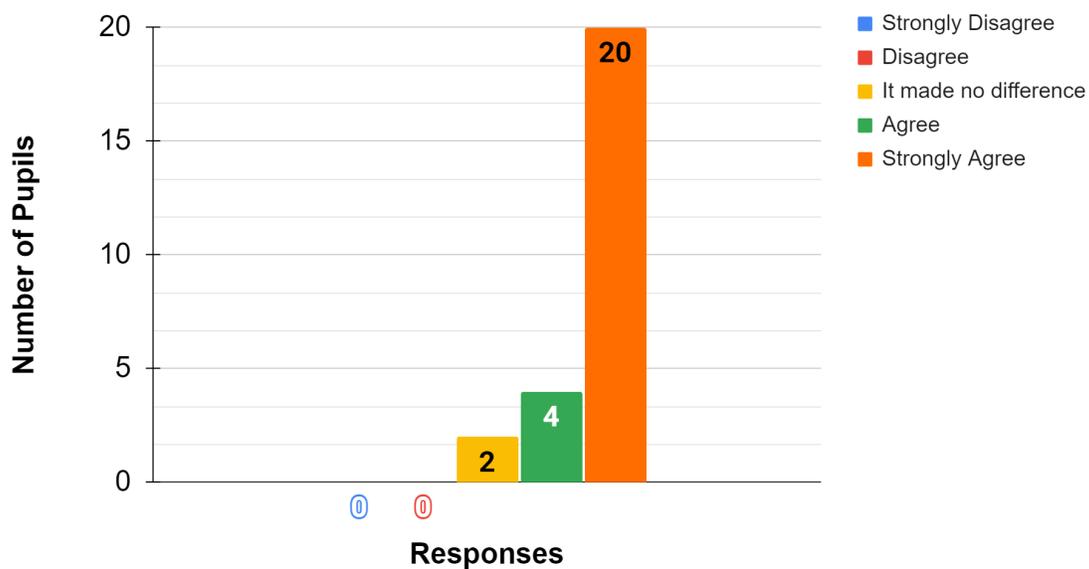


Figure 16. Pupil motivation and its relationship with co-construction of the product goals

The interview data indicate that the pupils perceived a sense of control and influence over the content (product goals) of their writing which seemed to stimulate behaviours aimed at achieving those goals (Schunk and Pajares, 2005). For example, Joe expressed feelings of investment over time and referred to the flexible nature of their production while also making a comparison with a previous different experience, *'It took a long time to come up with them and they kept changing, but in the end it was worth it. In my old school we never did that and I like that I get to decide'*. Toby also made reference to a past alternative approach and touched on the collaborative aspects through his dialogue with another pupil, *'I've only started doing that this year with you. I think it's really helpful for me to know what to do in my project. Even when I was talking with Adam, I knew how to help him'*.

In line with what Gronlund & Brookhart (2009), Koster et al. (2015) and Dollins (2016) found, Summaya recognised the ideal expectations for her writing and was aware that she should try them out, *'It was good because I knew some of the things that other children and writers did and their ones were good, so I knew I should do some of those things too'*. Similarly, Rosie noticed the value of the period of genre-study and her role in building up the product goals, *'Well, when we were doing the genre-study, I liked reading lots of examples and especially the ones you and Sonia (a pupil from a previous class I taught) wrote. I noticed loads of good things in them and that's what I put on the post-it notes. So, yeah I liked it'*.

4.5 Summary

There is good evidence in the children's final writing products to suggest that the process of scaffolded collaboration (Zumbrunn and Krause, 2012) of the product goals at the beginning of this project was successful in communicating to the children what the ideal expectation for each piece of writing was (Gronlund & Brookhart, 2009; Dollins, 2016). They wrote products which were of a good length, coherent, contained points made on topic and which compared well against the stipulated goals for memoirs (Zumbrunn and Bruning, 2013).

Moreover, I was able to concentrate carefully on what the children were telling me they needed through the daily-attitude surveys, and factor that information into the instructional decision I made for each day's session. Indeed, the product goals were flexible, and were both added to and adapted during the project. For example, we added in the goal relating to *setting description* in response to a large number of children requesting this mini-lesson. I found this to be a particularly effective way, in line with Beaglehole (2014) and Dollins (2016), to respond to the changing needs of the class and to demonstrate to the children that I was listening to them and modifying my teaching accordingly.

Even though some of the children's writing products did not contain a full range of all the elements contained in the product goals, this did not come as a total surprise. Because I was attempting to give the students a balanced diet of the kinds of *'strategies, processes and literary and linguistic techniques'* (Young and Ferguson, 2021, p.192) which can be

usefully applied across future writing endeavours, it also meant that some of the mini-lessons were not derived from the product goals themselves, but were designed to attend to other craft areas such as Mini-lesson 5 (*Adopt a writer*) (Table 6). This lesson didn't relate specifically to the class project, but I felt it was necessary at that time to support their other writing projects (personal projects can run simultaneously in a *WfP* classroom), and help them make links to their volitional reading.

In any normal year to ameliorate this situation, I would have spent the first few weeks reorientating the children away from presentational approaches (Young and Ferguson, 2020); however, this year, I inherited my new class in January and only began face-to-face teaching with them in late March. Therefore, opportunities to broaden their development as writers had to be balanced with the attention being given to the class projects.

Table 6: Mini-lesson titles (the process and craft area to which they relate) and the order in which they were taught

Mini-lesson title	Mini-lesson number	Process	Craft area
Choose something delicious from the publishing menu	1	Publishing	Being writers
Answering Michael Rosen's 4 questions	2	Idea Generation	Generating ideas
Memories that generate strong feelings	3	Idea Generation	Generating ideas
Top fives and top tens	4	Idea Generation	Generating ideas
Adopt a writer	5	Any process	Being writers
Keep it simple: using story arcs	6	Planning	Organisation and structure
Using your 'trying things out' page	7	Drafting/Revising	Developing
Setting description	8	Revising	Developing
Metaphor and simile	9	Revising	Developing
Great openings (narrative)	10	Revising	Developing
Best line	11	Revising	Developing
Getting it 'reader ready'. How to use an editing checklist	12	Editing	Clarity and accuracy
Book making	13	Publishing	Being writers

5 Conclusions, recommendations and limitations

5.1 Conclusions

What are the implications and benefits for other practitioners?

This study adds to the literature in the areas of mini-lessons, SRSD, pupil agency, AaL, co-constructing product goals and *WfP* pedagogy in general. It might benefit other practitioners who are seeking to reevaluate their approaches to teaching writing, or more established self-identified *WfP* teachers seeking to develop this aspect of their approach. The evidence lends weight to the idea that pupils do have a voice, and can use it effectively to influence their own instruction in quite sophisticated and subtle ways.

Since pupil agency is a *sine qua non* of *WfP* classrooms, the positive findings of this study may in part owe something to the overall pedagogical context rather than solely this intervention. This has particular implications for practitioners who align themselves with more presentational and literature-based orientations. They should be wary of attempts at increasing pupil voice which are simply grafted on to an existing scheme of work; instead agency must be central to the ethos and values of the classroom and be woven into the pedagogical fabric. For example, if pupils have some influence over instruction, but no say over any other aspect of the writing process then it is unlikely to have any significant or lasting impact.

Overall, this project goes some way to exposing the fallacy of a 'knowledge-rich' curriculum for what it is: a pseudo-rich veneer on the surface of learning which blisters when exposed to the depth and ambition of a real writing apprenticeship provided in a *WfP* classroom. Gardner (2018) argues practitioners should exploit the fissured discourses of education: this study might indicate there is one crevice that can be prised open to explore the benefits of democratic and effective classrooms, and overthrow the grim dictatorship of the technical once and for all.

5.2 Recommendations

As part of this project it was necessary for me to evaluate the nature of the various approaches being used across English primary schools to teach writing. This was based on my reading of the literature and emerged as I could find no such tool, or existing study, which seeks to explain the relative merits and demerits of each approach.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Department for Education's (albeit in a previous guise) contributions ([DfE, 2012](#)), ultimately, the current DfE and Ofsted offer no fair guarantee as arbiters for enlightenment in this area, and they are unlikely to be the catalysts for an honest interrogation of the available research. However, if the trend of curriculum design being premised solely upon politically prudent motives where skills and 'standards' trump pedagogy in the discussion (Alexander, 2008) is to be bucked, then at the very least, the leading literacy organisations and prominent educational research centres should play a key role in helping teachers and schools understand the nature of the approaches they are using. This should be based on the available up-to-date literature in relation to effective writing practices, and should also centralise the affective behaviours of learners.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has conducted evidence reviews ([Slavin et al., 2019](#)), and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) ([CLPE, 2017](#)) produced a document highlighting many aspects of what the literature reveals about effective writing teaching. However, many of these reports are esoteric by nature, and seldom make the explicit link (or lack thereof) with the schemes and approaches which are popular in many classrooms. Some of them even contradict, to a large extent, other practices being promoted by the same organisations as is the case with the [CLPE's Power of Reading](#). It is a literature-based approach and seems to prioritise the long-distance packaging of quick-fix, diminished-thinking planning resources over the responsive, agentic role of the teacher, and pupil, in the design of their writing projects.

Further research into the ways in which children can contribute to the conversation around their own writing instruction is essential. However, as a starting point, it is important that teachers critically discuss the pedagogical realms in which they are

seeking to nurture apprentice writers, and evaluate what space exists to develop a writing curriculum of shared responsibility.

5.3 Limitations of the study

While this study was happening, I was still adhering to all the other *WfP* principles such as pupil-conferencing, setting writing goals, and teaching the writing processes to name just three. These principles were interconnected and already deeply woven into my practice and the routines of the classroom, and may have had some influence over the findings from this research. Therefore, this has implications for transferability of this project to another setting. Additionally, there may have been some satisficing in the responses to the questionnaires as the daily attitude surveys were necessarily not anonymous. However, given that there were many examples in the data yield of children being critical of the instruction, this may not have been a dominant factor.

Finally, as a data collection method, the process of completing each daily attitude survey was reasonably time efficient (typically taking two to three minutes); however, the analysis of each lesson, and the categorisation of the requests into craft areas took a considerable amount of time and may not be practical on a day-to-day basis. Instead, this approach could be utilised periodically across the course of a class writing project and be interspersed with a dialogic analysis of the class' needs during the typical rituals of the classroom (E.g. during the whole class sharing time/author's chair).

5.4 Personal development

During the course of this research project I have developed both my understanding and application of different research methods, how to coordinate and deliver a project and, although I was a lone researcher, my interpersonal skills through discussion with close colleagues, my supervisors, and the pupils and parents involved in the study. Furthermore, despite having some previous experience of the process of collaborating on a piece of classroom-based action research, I have learned more about the process of disseminating a more comprehensive piece of research by making contact with opinion leaders and experts in the field to act as potential project champions at the [Writing for Pleasure Centre](#), and [English 4-11](#) (a publication aimed at those with an interest in primary school literacy).

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7 Appendices

APPENDIX A: Product goals for memoir writing

	Product Goals for Memoirs
Purpose & Topic	Pick a good idea that other people will want to read. Have you surveyed the class about your ideas?
	Make sure you have set your distant publishing goal . Where will your writing end up? Who will read it?
	Choose something that is important for you to write about and you care about doing well.
Audience/Reader Treatment	Think about what you want people to feel when reading your memoir. What reaction do you want them to have? What narrative arc will you choose?
	Don't waste any words and make sure you skip the boring parts. Don't write too little either. Aim for about 300 words.
	Consider adding some pictures to your memoir. These could be hand drawn or photographs.
Textual Features	Set the reader up for the experience at the beginning with a great opening. Have you tried out a few different types?
	Have a good title. This could give a clue what the memoir is about, or not.
	Write in paragraphs. Start a new one when there is a change of time, setting or perhaps mood.
	At the end, reveal why it was important to you to write about this event. Say what you learned from it.
Writing Techniques	Try out some exaggeration (hyperbole) in your piece. It's okay to bend the truth a little bit.
	Describe your setting by making reference to: the historical time, the weather, the time of day and things you remember noticing.
	Try painting with words using metaphor and simile.
Language & Vocabulary	Use time words to move your writing forward (this helps with skipping the boring parts!).
	Use colloquial language. Have you used the real words that the people actually said?

APPENDIX B: Breakdown of the usefulness rating of each mini-lesson

Mini-lesson title	Mini-lesson number	Not at all useful (1)	Only a little bit useful (2)	Quite useful (3)	Very useful (4)	Mean average score for each mini-lesson	Total number of children who evaluated each mini-lesson
Choose something delicious from the publishing menu	1	0	4	18	72	3.62	26
Answering Michael Rosen's 4 questions	2	0	6	45	32	3.19	26
Memories that generate strong feelings	3	0	0	18	76	3.76	25
Top fives and top tens	4	0	8	6	68	3.57	23
Adopt a writer	5	0	8	6	68	3.57	23
Keep it simple: using story arcs	6	1	8	18	28	3.06	18
Using your 'trying things out' page	7	0	6	24	16	3.07	15
Setting description	8	1	6	27	32	3.14	21
Metaphor and simile	9	1	0	18	36	3.44	16
Great openings (narrative)	10	0	2	18	52	3.60	20
Best line	11	0	4	21	40	3.42	19
Getting it 'reader ready'. How to use an editing checklist	12	0	4	21	40	3.61	18
Book making	13	0	4	18	60	3.57	23

APPENDIX C: Interview proforma

Q.1 How did you get your idea for your memoir and how did you know people would be interested in reading it?
Q.2 What was your distant publishing goal and why did you choose it?
Q.3 What did you want your reader to feel when they were reading your memoir?
Q.4 What did you think about only being invited to try out one thing in your writing each lesson?
Q.5 What did you think about helping to create the product goals for this piece of writing?
Q.6 How did you feel about being asked to evaluate each mini-lesson?
Q.7 How did you feel about being asked what you needed a mini-lesson in next?

APPENDIX D: Post-project survey data

Q1. Being asked my opinion about each mini-lesson made me feel valued as a learner.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	It made no difference	Agree	Strongly Agree	
0	0	4	6	16	
0	0	12	24	80	4.46

Q2. Being invited to make mini-lesson requests made me want to try them out for myself.					
Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	It made no difference (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	
0	1	5	5	15	
0	2	15	20	75	4.31

Q3. I felt more motivated to produce a successful piece of writing because I had helped create the product goals.					
Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	It made no difference (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	
0	0	2	4	20	
0	0	6	16	100	4.69

Q4. I felt more able to produce a successful piece of writing because I only had one strategy per lesson to try out.					
Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	It made no difference (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	
0	2	1	6	17	
0	4	3	24	85	4.46

APPENDIX E: Toby's final writing product and evaluation

The Unexpected Scream

It was Wednesday afternoon, about 4:30pm after school and we were in my messy bedroom watching our 45 inch tv. It was the only tv in our room and it was really sunny and blazing hot. It was 30 degrees and the sun was like a nuke (big fire rocket) coming to the earth. It was 2021, a new year but really sad because of the coronavirus since 2020 in February. Me and my brother Marvellous were glued to the tv in our room and all of a sudden Marvellous farted "PRRTP! RRTTP!" and I told him "Ewww! Get out of the room please!" He came out of the room and disappeared into the bathroom.



Afterwards he slammed the door and it was as loud as a hammer hitting the ground. Then he was really silent like a dead body in Among Us. Then he tried to open the door, but it didn't open so he tried again and again and again. Then Marvellous screamed "H-E-L-P ...H...E...L...P! H-E-L-P!" I hurried downstairs and told my dad and he skipped some steps while running up the stairs. I told him what happened and I replied "I think Marvellous is locked in the bathroom!!!".

Dad told me to bring a hammer, pliers and a screwdriver. The intensity was high. I whizzed up the stairs. I was in a race to get the tools and put them on the floor next to the bathroom door. First of all my dad started with the screwdriver and he unscrewed the handle of the door from his side but not my brother's side and he also used his palm and tried to push the door open. It didn't work. He brought the crocodile pliers...

Hitting the door with the pliers, he tried to unscrew the bolts and then he brought out the brown wooden hammer, bashed the door, then shouted. I felt scared. I thought that my dad was going to break the door down or call the police to break the door down and I saw he was frustrated. Meanwhile my mum was busy studying away at college. *What would she make of this?* I thought to myself.

My dad was furious by this time and all of a sudden he kicked the door twice then once more. "HOORAY!" We shouted. The door was finally open and we all celebrated. We couldn't believe my brother was locked in for about 30 minutes. We were all wondering what was stopping the door from opening. Finally, we realised that it was a silly little screw and that was the thing that was stopping the door from opening all along. Could you believe that?

Afterwards, mum was back at 5 o'clock and we told her the news. She was shocked and jumped like a grasshopper, but then calmed down. We all lived happily ever after. I wrote this memoir because I want to entertain just like tv shows.

Toby had a prior attainment of *working at the expected standard* in writing as assessed using the Year 4 writing framework (National Curriculum, 2016). This assessment took place just before the project commenced.

Purpose and Topic

The idea for this piece of writing was generated after a mini-lesson titled *Memories that generate strong feelings*. Toby said, 'I wrote emojis in my book and then wrote memories that matched them. Then I thought of my brother being locked in the bathroom'. This piece was written because of a need to entertain, 'Just like in TV shows' and the distant publishing goal was, 'To hang it up in my window for people to read'.

Audience/Reader Treatment

Toby explained that he wanted his readers to be entertained and feel a sense of excitement at the events he was describing. He wrote a text which was 493 words in length which was beyond the suggested length in the product goals. However, Toby had been careful not to 'waste any words' and had worked on cutting away some parts he had deemed unnecessary after conferring with fellow writers. He added one generic image of a bathroom he found through an internet search.

Textual Features

Toby tried out several openings on his revision page, but eventually settled on a description-type opening for his published version. He experimented with several titles before selecting one which gives a clue to the reader about what the content of the memoir might be. He has written in paragraphs and demonstrates a good understanding of when writers typically begin a new one. For instance, between paragraphs 4 and 5 he segues from an internal thought about his mum's reaction to his brother getting locked in the bathroom, 'Meanwhile my mum was busy studying away at college. *What would she make of this?* I thought to myself', to a change of mood when his dad became furious, 'My dad was furious by this time and all of a sudden he kicked the door twice then once more'.

Writing Techniques

Toby experimented with many writing techniques throughout his piece including several attempts at what was termed *painting with words* (Young and Ferguson, 2019) through

his use of simile in paragraph 2, 'Silent like a dead body in Among Us' and paragraph 5, 'Jumped like a grasshopper'. He also used metaphor effectively to describe '*Being in a race*' to get his dad's tools. Toby, in his interview, revealed that he had attempted some exaggeration (hyperbole) when revising his manuscript pointing out that he had returned to a passage in paragraph 3 and had added in another tool (the hammer) which his dad had not actually used to try and get into the bathroom. He said he did this to add to the drama of the situation. Following a mini-lesson on setting descriptions, there was an attempt to revise the opening of his text by incorporating some extra detail into his original description-style opening. He makes reference to the historical time, '*It was 2021, a new year but really sad because of the coronavirus (sic) since 2020*' and adds further details showing the time of day, '*It was Wednesday afternoon, about 4.30pm after school*' and the weather, '*It was really sunny and blazing hot*'.

Language and Vocabulary

Toby used a range of time words to help keep his narrative moving such as, '*Afterwards*' twice in paragraphs 2 and 6, '*Finally*' in paragraph 5, '*First of all*' in paragraph 3 and several uses of '*Then*' in paragraph 2. He also uses '*All of a sudden*' several times in paragraphs 1 and 5 as a dramatic marker to move the action forward. There are few examples of speech in this memoir and nothing in the way of dialogue between characters. Where speech does occur, there is perhaps one example of a colloquialism in the form of, '*Ewww!*' in paragraph one. This product goal was not focused on as a mini-lesson which may explain the lack of attention given to this by Toby in his piece.

APPENDIX F: Summaya's final writing product and evaluation

The Terrific Trampoline Adventure

We ran across the road without stopping in excitement then I was at a trampoline park and my brothers were there so we played loads of games. They even had a really cool DJ. He was on fire literally and a smoke machine and a see through ball pit nearly sunk into it. It was like an endless ball pit. It was fun then I got a coke and they gave me an ice block in it so I drank all the coke and chewed the ice like a hungry hippo until I got LOST! I was terrified. I started doing heavy breathing and searching all around the trampoline park but I couldn't see because I was blinded by all the smoke.



I couldn't find my brothers or my mum. It was like they had disappeared it was so terrifying until I fell in the endless ball pit "THERE" I shouted. I found my brother in the endless ball pit. It was a miracle i asked him "where is mum" I asked "i don't know" replied my brother we searched all over the trampoline park we couldn't find mum so we went outside to the car park and looked in the car but no one was in there except the cloths we hm wore before putting on our trampoline cloths we checked round the back even tho it stinked we still we back there.



We still checked but no one was there except for a homeless man begging for money as usual we went back in and we saw my other brother called Ellis he was my favorite brother because when i lost something he would always find it and yes my other brother is shaun. We asked Ellis "where is mum" me and my brother said "was you looking for mum this whole entire time she is just over there" said Ellis pointing at Mum. "Mum," I shouted . I ran towards her and gave her a ginormous hug and squeezed her tight I let go then we got home later. The End...

Fact

A trampoline is a device consisting of a piece of taut, strong fabric stretched between a steel frame using many coiled springs. Not all trampolines have springs, as the Springfree Trampoline uses glass-reinforced plastic rods. People bounce on trampolines for recreational and competitive purposes.



Summaya had a prior attainment of *working below the expected standard* in writing as assessed using the Year 4 writing framework (National Curriculum, 2016). This assessment took place just before the project commenced.

Purpose and Topic

Summaya confirmed in her interview that she had selected this idea after overhearing another child discussing their idea. The setting of a trampoline park helped her make a connection with a strong memory of her own. She revealed that she knew people would like to read about her idea because, '*Lots of my friends really enjoy trampoline parks*'. Summaya had the intention to publish her work and share it with a wider audience by, '*Hanging it up on a lamp post on her road*'.

Audience/Reader Treatment

Summaya chose a fall-rise narrative arc to help with the structure of her piece. She made this clear in her interview as well as drawing a small picture in her book to indicate this. She said, '*I want the readers to feel worried but also enjoy it*'. She wrote 347 words and made several revisions to lengthen certain parts of her narrative in response to feedback from her peers. This was particularly evident after a mini-lesson titled *Best line* where the children were invited to develop their best sentences into mini paragraphs where they thought they could say more. Images were included to show the name of the venue, a picture inside of the trampolines and a picture of a ball pit. These images matched the narrative.

Textual Features

Summaya opted for an action-style opening putting the reader straight into the narrative. She tried out a few different types on her revising page before settling on this one. She also experimented with several different titles changing it from *The Horrifying Midnight Park* to *The Terrific Trampoline Park* before finally settling on *The Terrific Trampoline Adventure*. Summaya uses 3 paragraphs to tell her story with each one seeming to represent a change of mood. The first sees her set the scene and introduce the problem (getting lost); the second sees her reunited with her brother before finally finding her mum in the final paragraph. Summaya neglects to explain why it was important for her to write about this event or whether or not she learned anything from it. Instead, she chooses to finish with a fact about trampolines.

Writing Techniques

Summaya revealed in her interview that she had tried out a bit of exaggeration when in paragraph 1 she described the DJ as being, '*On fire literally*'. She explained that she wasn't really sure whether she had been successful or not, but had wanted to try it out. The historical time is not made clear, nor is the time of day. There is no reference made to the weather; however, there are several details of things Summaya remembered noticing such as, '*A smoke machine and a see through [sic] ball pit*' and '*A homeless man begging for money as usual*'. Summaya makes one clear attempt at a simile when she describes how she chewed the ice in her coke, '*Like a hungry hippo*'. There were no obvious attempts at metaphor.

Language and Vocabulary

Summaya's memoir has very few if any clear attempts at the use of time words to signal to the reader when the action is taking place. While this gives the writing a somewhat breathless exciting quality, it does make it a little difficult to follow at times. While it was not apparent that the whole class needed a mini-lesson in this convention, Summaya would have benefited from a personal mini-lesson via a pupil conference to address this issue. There is one example of an attempt at including a colloquial verb form (non-standard form 2nd person WAS) in the final paragraph which is part of the local dialect where Summaya lives ([Robinson, 2019](#)) when one brother says, '*Was you looking for mum this whole entire time?*'

APPENDIX G: Joe's final writing product and evaluation

Trouble Along The Tracks

This is when the 18th May 2018 decided to betray me:

I rapidly rocketed down to the living room only to see my family **STILL** eating biscuits and drinking their daily tea. I shouted, "HURRY UP! You guys are taking forever to eat your breakfast." I thought *if they can't eat quickly, how will they get ready quickly to go to Hampton court?* (It's not a court by the way, it's a palace). Then they **FINALLY** decided to get ready and get inside the car to go to Romford Station. And it was so hot for me that I was gonna die.

When I was inside the station it was hotter than before. On the other hand, the train arrived just in time. After a while, my parents decided to **SWITCH** trains even though our destination was 2 stops away. When I finally entered the colossal station the hot sun got reflected by the glass. I saw the juicy newspapers spilling out information and the unoccupied shops. But I also overheard my mum talking with the reception of the station and they said that the train to Hampton Court was cancelled due to the radar signal.



After a while, the derelict wheels screeched on top of the train tracks creating tiny yellow sparks. When the train arrived me and my family were getting on it but just before I entered, the train doors **SLAMMED** shut, I was stuck in the doors!

Wiggling, I tried to get free but the pressure was like a 50 metre wall collapsing on a bowling ball. All of a sudden, my mum pressed the emergency button and I ran into the train quickly.

I wrote about this since it was a scary moment of my life.

Joe had a prior attainment of *working at the expected standard* in writing as assessed using the Year 4 writing framework (National Curriculum, 2016). This assessment took place just before the project commenced.

Purpose and Topic

Joe confirmed in his interview that he got the idea for his piece of writing following an idea generation mini-lesson titled *Answering Michael Rosen's 4 questions*. He also demonstrated that he had consulted others to understand the level of interest in his idea saying, *'I asked my classmates and my parents to check if this was a good idea for a memoir'*. His distant publishing goal was to hang his writing in the window of his house for passersby to read.

Audience/Reader Treatment

Joe said, *'I wanted to generate a feeling of being there and excitement in my memoir'*. He identified he was using a fall-rise narrative arc. He wrote 291 words and made some revisions to lengthen his draft after reviewing this particular product goal. There are several places where the reader might be left wanting to hear more. For example, the ending is a little abrupt. He added one image of Hampton Court Palace (the destination in his memoir).

Textual Features

Joe tried out multiple openings before selecting an action-style type. Several titles were considered with the original being *Hampton Court*. However, he was not satisfied with this and following a conference where I taught him about how I had generated different titles for my own memoir, he changed it to *Trouble Along The Tracks*. Joe has written in paragraphs. He used a new paragraph to show a change of setting moving the action from home to the station. He then uses two short paragraphs to show a change of mood when the train approaches and he gets stuck, followed by a concluding paragraph showing how he escaped the situation. He explained why it was important for him to write about this moment, but doesn't say if he learned anything from the experience.

Writing Techniques

Joe did not try out any exaggeration. He worked on his setting by making some revisions to make reference to the historical time in his opening line, *'This is when the 18th May*

2018 decided to betray me:'. He also described in some detail the weather and made clear the time of day. He included some details of what he remembered noticing about the setting, for instance, *'The hot sun got reflected by the glass'*. There were several attempts to paint with words by using metaphor, *'I saw the juicy newspapers spilling out information'* and simile *'The pressure was like a 50 metre wall collapsing on a bowling ball'*.

Language and Vocabulary

Joe moves the narrative forward by using a range of time words using *'Then'* in paragraph 1 and *'After a while'* twice in paragraphs 2 and 3. He also uses a dramatic phrase, *'All of a sudden'* to introduce the resolution of the problem in the final paragraph. There is not much speech in this narrative, but Joe does attempt to talk to the reader in a colloquial style on one occasion writing, *'It was so hot for me that I was gonna die'*.

APPENDIX H: Rosie's final writing product and evaluation

Trampoline World

I was in Albania and at my cousin's house. We went to their house to pick them up to go to Latitude. It was hot as Venus we were sweating already.

FINALLY they got in the car and we started singing some nice songs. And my sister (**The SNITCH**) kept asking are we there yet which was really annoying. When we got there, everyone opened the door and ran out of the car to the entrance and everyone (including me) started bouncing and screaming like happy dogs!



I started screaming like a dog chasing its tail. Then I quickly stopped as I felt dizzy. Then we finally got in there. We had to wear socks that were like football shoes because they had some circles which was really uncomfortable, but as time passed on I got used to it. The first thing I was trying to do was to get the basketball in the hoop on the trampoline.

After a while, I went on to the zipline in the queue but I went out of it because it was so long. Eventually, I went to this bit where you have a balloon and one person has a red block at each end and the other has the same but blue blocks. And me who kept falling by my cousin actually got my cousin out.



Then I went to play dodgeball with my dad and random strangers and they were teenagers. And I lost many times because they kept catching my throws and I actually got one person out but obviously lost because there were like three of them. We had to stop because other people wanted to play so we left. Then I went upstairs and had water and some ready salted crisps then we had to go.

I wrote about this because if anyone is bored they could go there and enjoy it too.

Rosie had a prior attainment of *working towards the expected standard* in writing as assessed using the Year 4 writing framework (National Curriculum, 2016). This assessment took place just before the project commenced.

Purpose and Topic

Rosie got her idea from a mini-lesson called *Top fives and top tens* during which she made lists about the funniest things which had happened to her. She asked some of her peers about her idea and several of them told her they would like to read about it. She wanted to laminate her writing and hang it in the school playground from a tree. She cared about this topic stating in her interview, "*This day was the most fun I have had in Albania.*" She also claimed, "*I wrote this because if anyone is bored they could go there.*"

Audience/Reader Treatment

Rosie wanted to convey the excitement of the day and show that a memoir doesn't have to be about anything going wrong, but can just be, "*All about a happy time in your life*". She wrote 315 words and made efforts to cut out any parts that she deemed to be boring or unnecessary. She found some images of trampoline parks and a basketball hoop to include in her published version which match the events being described.

Textual Features

Rosie didn't work on her opening much and gave priority to other parts of her composition. She recognised that it could be improved but ran out of sessions to work on it. She played around with her title switching from *Summer Holiday* to *Trampoline World*. She created four paragraphs out of her original draft which was originally a solid block of text. She spent some time organising this. She seems to understand that a change of time, place or mood usually signals a new paragraph. She reveals at the end why it was important for her to write about this day, but does not say if she learned anything from the experience.

Writing Techniques

Rosie did not explain where she had tried out any exaggeration in her memoir. She did not really develop some aspects of the description of her setting as it contains no reference to the historical time or the time of day. However, there is one reference to the weather on the day, '*It was hot as Venus we were sweating already*', and there are some

details of what she remembers noticing, '*We started singing some nice songs*' and '*My sister (The **SNITCH**) kept asking are we there yet [sic] which was really annoying*'. There were several attempts at *painting with words* in paragraphs 1 and 2, '*Everyone (including me) started bouncing and screaming like happy dogs!*' and '*I started screaming like a dog chasing its tail*'.

Language and Vocabulary

Rosie uses time words sparsely but accurately to move the events of the day forward using '*After a while*' and '*Eventually*' in paragraph 3. However, there is an overuse of '*Then*' with it being used twice in both paragraphs 2 and 4. There is no speech from any of the characters included in the memoir which makes it hard to evaluate the final product goal of the use of colloquial language.

APPENDIX I: Consent letter to parents

Dear parents/carers,

I am conducting an action research project in school as part of a dissertation I am writing for a Masters in Education. The project is being undertaken with the permission of the headteacher and is being supervised by the University of East London.

Why Is The Research Being Conducted?

We know from research that children who enjoy writing, achieve better results. I want to find out:

- If giving children a say over what they are taught influences their attitude to their instruction;
- If their writing products develop when they try out one strategy per lesson.

What Will I Be Doing Whilst I'm In Class?

I will be taking part in lessons as normal and with your permission, I would like your child to complete a quick anonymous questionnaire at the end of the research project. A small selection of children may also be interviewed about their experiences of the project. These interviews will be conducted by me and will be very brief.

Handling Data

I will not require any of your child's personal information. Any responses your child gives will remain anonymous and once the data has been analysed - it will be destroyed. The final report will be made available to the school and to you too if you wish to read it. It may also be published to a wider professional audience. For example, in a primary English teaching magazine like *English 4-11*.

Finally, I would just like to say how much I'm looking forward to conducting this research. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to discuss them with me.

Best wishes,

Mr Hayden

I give permission for my child to take part in this research.

Signed: _____