

Sensory Poetry Unit Plan



The Writing For Pleasure Centre

- Promoting research-informed writing teaching

Poetry: the best words in the best order

– Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Why write poems about the senses?

All poetry is in some way sensory, and much narrative text is sensory too. Writers use the senses to express a feeling that is very personal. The feelings may be quite specific but are often also universal in that others will recognise them and relate to them. Writers might draw on their senses as they reflect on objects that bring back hidden memories. They might use their senses to bring nostalgic moments to mind. The senses can also be used to evoke a mood, to deliberately show things, or to explore experiences in different ways.

This poetry project will give children opportunities to practise using sensory description; showing, not telling; observing and expanding on small yet significant details; making comparisons; and painting with words for the pleasure of the artistry.

As this writing project is similar to a writing exercise, it will help children to see the benefits of techniques that writers often practise and use. Children will absorb these techniques as part of their repertoires and will be able to draw on them again in all kinds of future writing.

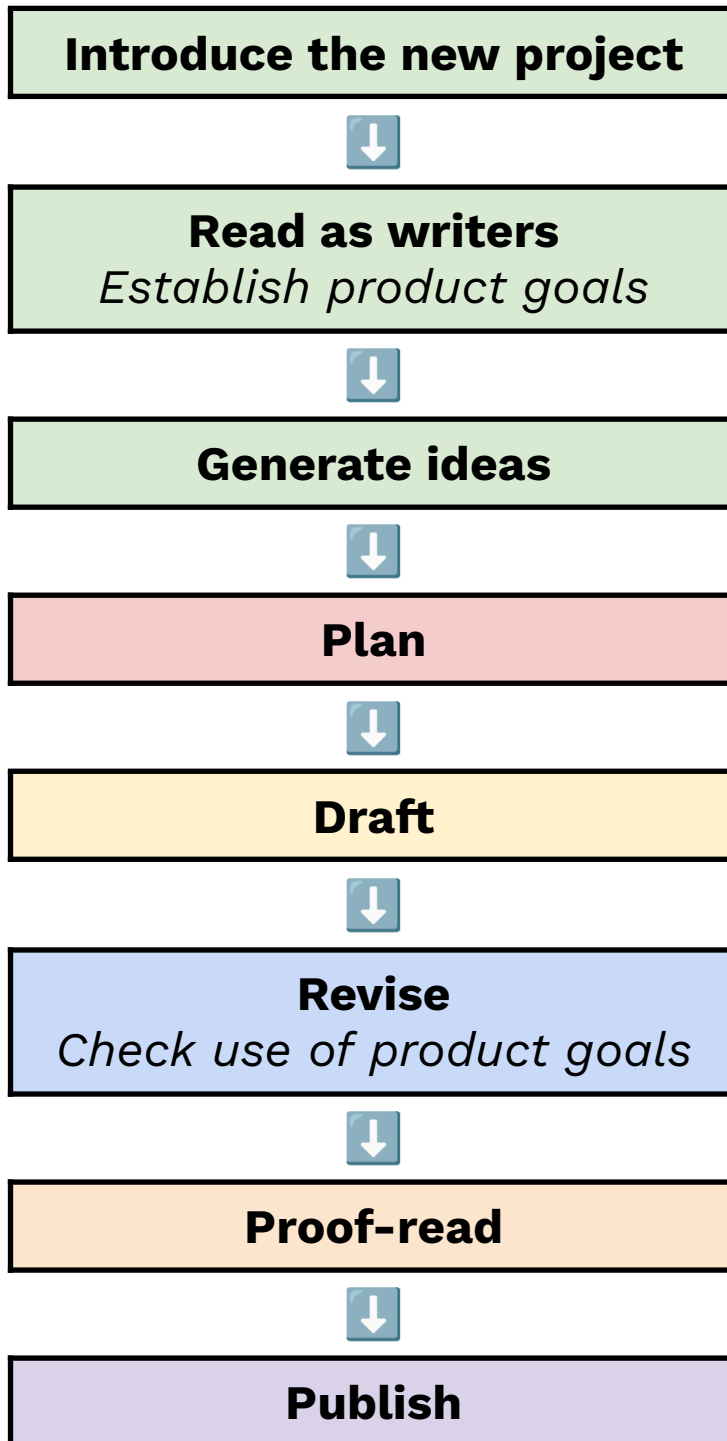
Things to bear in mind

- The anthology *Sensational*, compiled by Roger McGough, includes many excellent examples of sensory poetry that will inform and inspire children, with sections that focus on each sense.
- It may be best to start with free-verse poems. These don't need to have a regular rhythm, line length or rhyme. Best of all, you can play around with words and put them together in any way you like. You can also play around with punctuation if you like. There are no rules!
- In your mountain of an idea, find that one special diamond moment and focus on it. It's your reason for writing the poem. Treat it with care, think about it a lot and make it shine.
- Remember that the senses can include seeing, noticing, smelling, tasting, hearing, touching, thinking and feeling.
- Show, don't tell. Sometimes cut out words like *is*, *was*, *are* and *were* as these are 'telling' verbs, and replace them by showing your readers what is happening instead.
- Give your reader tiny details – little things that only you have noticed.
- Compare a person, place or thing to something else. Pretend that a place or a thing can behave like a person.
- Replace some of your nouns with ones that are more precise and so pack more meaning into a small space, for example:
 - people – strangers
 - light – glare
 - beach – the water's edge

- Sharpen what you actually mean when you use a verb by being utterly precise, for example:
 - broke – shattered
 - hug – clutch
 - pushed – jostled

- Give a specific image of something rather than a general one:
 - Picture a cat.
 - Now picture a black cat.
 - Now picture a black cat with shiny silver paws.

The journey of a class writing project



Example project plan

Day 1	Introduce the new project - establish/share publishing goal - share what their texts are going to look like
Day 2	Begin reading as writers, studying mentor texts, and establishing product goals
Day 3	Continue to read as writers and set product goals
Day 4	Finalise the product goals for the project
Day 5	Generate ideas by having an <i>Ideas Party</i>
Day 6	Take the <i>Writing Register</i>
Day 7	Mini-lesson on using a planning technique - children plan using the technique
Day 8	Continue planning if required
Day 9	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children draft their first poem
Day 10	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children draft a second poem or revise an earlier poem
Day 11	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children draft a third poem or revise an earlier poem
Day 12	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children draft a fourth poem or revise an earlier poem
Day 13	<i>Drafting</i> mini-lesson - children draft a fifth poem or revise an earlier poem
Day 14	<i>Revision</i> mini-lesson - children 'try it out'/revise the mini-lesson into their piece
Day 15	<i>Revision</i> mini-lesson - children 'try it out'/revise the mini-lesson into their piece
Day 16	<i>Revision Checklist sessions</i> - children check their writing against the class' product goals
Day 17	<i>Revision Checklist sessions</i> - children check their writing against the class' product goals
Day 18	<i>Revision Checklist sessions</i> - children check their writing against the class' product goals
Day 19	Capitalisation - 'proof-reading for capitalisation' mini-lesson
Day 20	Capitalisation - 'proof-reading for capitalisation' mini-lesson
Day 21	Use of vocab 'proof-reading for tense use' mini-lesson
Day 22	Use of vocab 'proof-reading for tense use' mini-lesson
Day 23	Use of vocab (synonyms) - 'cracking open boring words' mini-lesson
Day 24	Punctuation - proof-reading mini-lesson
Day 25	Punctuation - proof-reading mini-lesson
Day 26	Spelling (common words) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 27	Spelling (class' tricky words) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 28	Spelling (temporary spellings) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 29	Spelling (temporary spellings) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 30	Spelling (temporary spellings) - children correct any misspelt words
Day 31	Publishing - write out their favourite poem - mini-lesson & pupil-conferencing focuses on handwriting instruction
Day 32	Publishing - write out their favourite poem - mini-lesson & pupil-conferencing focuses on handwriting instruction
Day 33	Publishing Party!

Important! Please read!

- This is just an *example plan*. Therefore, you should use your own professional judgement to plan your own class writing projects. For example, you should either add or remove sessions based on your own class' needs and the amount of time you want to spend on the project. For more information, download our eBook *How To Teach Writing* ([LINK](#)). To create your own unit plan, you can download a blank version of the proforma used on the previous page [here](#).
- Remember, you should plan your mini-lessons based on the product goals your class comes up with when you're *reading as writers*. For more information on how to do this, download our eBook *How To Teach Writing or Reading In The Writing Classroom* ([LINK](#)).
- Whenever children have completed the process goal set for that day's writing time, they should work on their personal writing project for the rest of the lesson. For more details, see [this article](#).
- We can recommend devoting a number of lessons to having 'revision checklist sessions'. This allows you to meet with your class in small groups and give them quality verbal feedback on their compositions. The rest of your class work on their personal writing projects.
- Make sure you break your proof-reading lessons down into small manageable chunks over a number of days. This allows children to achieve a high level of accuracy. These sessions don't take children very long. Once they've completed their proof-reading for the day, they can work on their personal writing projects. We provide far more information and lessons on proof-reading in our eBook: *No More: 'My Pupils Can't Edit!' A Whole-School Approach To Developing Proof-Readers* ([LINK](#)).
- The more time spent on a project, the better the final outcomes will be. If you rush a project, you get rushed outcomes.
- It's important to remember that this is not the only writing children should produce. Children should also have their personal writing project writing, their writing in the wider curriculum subjects, and the writing they produce in their reading lessons.
- Finally, for our poetry projects, we always recommend that children write a whole variety of poems and work hard to revise their favourite ones. This as opposed to writing a single poem. To find out more, read this article by writer-teacher Sam Creighton ([LINK](#)).

Publishing goal lesson

A great publishing goal for this project is to show your class a poetry anthology and explain that the class is going to make their very own (top tip: keep a copy of this so you can show your new class the following year!). Share this goal with your class at the beginning of the project. We can definitely recommend getting in touch with your local library too and asking them if they will stock a copy of the anthology in their poetry section.

Another idea is for children to gift their best poem to someone they know who would appreciate it the most. You could even invite them to write a dedication at the publishing stage. You might even want to do something I've seen writer-teacher Jon Biddle do. He invited his class to deliver a poem through the post to the houses in the local community. You could attach your name and school email address to these and invite people to write in with their reviews for the children. Lovely!

Alternatively, the children can come up with their own publishing goal for the project. For more information on how to do this, download our book *How To Teach Writing* ([LINK](#)).

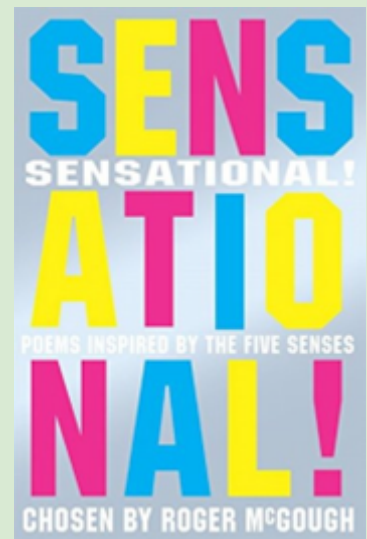


Reading as writers and establishing your product goals lessons

When undertaking *reading as writers* sessions, we can recommend having a collection of poems for the children to read. Make sure children get to read some poems you and your colleagues have written and make sure you have a collection of mentor texts (texts which realistically match what you expect the children to produce). For advice on how to write your own poems and see the mentor texts we wrote for this project, see the paid version of this planning [here](#).

Finally, it's important that children get to see examples of high-quality texts too. We can certainly recommend *Sensational* by Roger McGough which is full of poems. However, you notice that you can take poems from almost any anthology you have in your school library.

While undertaking your *reading as writers* sessions, you are going to want to establish your product goals (success criteria) for the project. For more information on how to do this effectively, download our book *How To Teach Writing* ([LINK](#)).



Have an Ideas Party

This is one of my favourite sessions. As a whole class, in small groups, on flipchart paper, come up with as many ideas as you can. The children can work in teams at their desks and you can spend time with each group and take part too! At the end of the session, individual children can circle their favourite theme or idea. Children like to go home and will often continue to think of ideas for the project too. Let them. As long as they know what their final writing theme is going to be by time you take the *Writing Register*.

Taking a *Writing Register* lesson

This is a nice session. While the children are working on their personal writing projects, go round the class and ask them what theme they are going to base their poems on and think of a working title for their own anthology. Write this down on your *Writing Register*. At the end of the writing lesson, you can share this register with the children and have a chat about which anthologies people are most looking forward to reading.

Teaching a planning technique lesson

It's important to teach children a planning technique. It's even more important that you show children the planning technique you used when you wrote your poems. Teach them the technique and show them your plan before inviting them to use the technique for themselves that day.

If you need more help with this, download our eBook: *No More: My Class Don't Know What To Write Next...* ([LINK](#)). It has loads of great planning techniques in it.

Teaching your drafting lessons

At this point in the project, you are going to want to teach and model one *craft move* from your product goal list before inviting the children to use the move for themselves that day in the poem they are writing. Of course, these craft moves can be grammar or sentence-level moves. To see examples of what these lessons can look like, consider downloading the paid version for this planning [here](#).

Teaching your revision lessons

Now the children have drafted their writing, you can teach them more sophisticated *craft moves*. They can try the craft move out on their 'trying things out page' and if they like what they've crafted, they can add it into one of their drafted poems. These sessions are really interesting because the children feel free to take risks and enjoy playing around with these more advanced techniques. Remember, model one craft move before inviting the children to use the technique for themselves that day. For examples of what these lessons can look like, consider downloading the paid version for this planning [here](#).

Revision checklist sessions

These are lovely sessions. Meet with your children in small groups. Make sure everyone has a copy of the product goals you established at the beginning of the project. With the group, check whether people have used and/or considered the *craft moves* for the project. Any children that haven't, can be invited to show how they might use the craft move on their 'trying things out page'. If they like what they have crafted, they can include it in one of their poems. If they don't want to - that's fine. You still have evidence in their books. This also shows that the children are being discerning - one sign of a greater-depth writer.

When undertaking these sessions, the rest of the class can be working on their personal writing projects. For more information, download our eBook: *How To Teach Writing* ([LINK](#)).

Proof-reading sessions

We can highly recommend breaking proof-reading down into small manageable chunks. Over a number of days, you can proofread for *CUPS*. This stands for *Capitalisation, Use Of Vocabulary, Punctuation and Spelling*. For more information on how to conduct these sessions, download our eBook: *No More: My Class Can't Edit!* ([LINK](#)).

These sessions don't take the children long. Once finished, they can work on their personal writing projects.

Publishing party

The project is now coming to an end. It's time for the children to choose their favourite poem and write it up in neat for inclusion in the class anthology. This is a great opportunity to teach handwriting in context and give children live verbal feedback and additional individualised handwriting instruction. We can recommend doing this over a couple of days, particularly if children have longer poems.

You can download a more detailed version of this planning which includes individual lessons plans, resources and mentor texts [here](#).

Remember, all our planning is FREE for our members. To become a member, sign up [here](#).

