

# Study-work Literature



## Black Firs School

### Introduction

The curriculum is planned with literature forming the core of our Studywork approach. Texts are chosen carefully to provide threads which lead to further study in the foundation subjects. Literature provides the context for learning. This context is physical (*the internal provided environment*), intellectual and spiritual.

The physical context is important. In Key Stage One this involves a 'set induction' to facilitate structured play including role-play which relates to the text and elicits developmental writing. The creative teacher can devise specific scenarios to stimulate play and learning, for example by introducing, into the set context, situations through letters, concrete materials and problem-solving opportunities which demand responses from the children. The structured physical context is still important in Key Stage Two as it demands of the child a conscious response to and ownership of their own learning. The physical context is created through display drawn from the text. The visual stimulus is arresting and multi-sensory. It offers first-hand experience through a thoughtful grouping of resources. Children respond to a 'Still Life' of artefacts linked to an extract of text. To be most effective in motivating children's learning, the teacher needs to set up the display for the start of term. This acts as a 'set induction' to ignite children's interest and inspire their work.

The intellectual context is that of the cerebral, the cognitive, the conceptual. A literature study offers the teacher a series of 'chapel hat-pegs' standing out as obvious hooks on which to hang the children's learning across the curriculum. This is what we mean by the emotional relevance to learning.

The spiritual context is engendered through the shared experience of the literature and the sense of corporate consciousness. The sensitive teacher seizes moments of awe and wonder.

### Literature Study & Literacy Skills

Within our curriculum literature is used as an aid in developing the children's literacy skills. Each class teacher selects a work of literature for the term to stimulate oracy, reading, writing and grammar. Using the model of quality fiction as the backbone for language work provides the children with a familiar context in which they can learn new language concepts. Stories can create a shared experience, merging the private and public world and reading a book is like:

*"drawing the curtains or pulling the blankets around you in unfamiliar surroundings in changed circumstances reading can make you feel the same again; private though it is, it brings you close to the people who are reading with you"*

*L.M. Rosenblatt 1970*

Through a closeness with the text the teacher can develop within the children a personal and corporate sense of the deeper and more sensitive understanding of language and its many forms.

One of the main aims of using fiction as the starting point for language is to encourage the children to enjoy books and discover for themselves the world literature.

*"Childhood does not last forever, and if a book is not discovered at the appropriate stage it may never be read or seen at all."*

*Joan E Cass 1984*

For our less able children the 'Literature Study' approach to language enables them to encounter good quality fiction which they may not be able to read for themselves. Fiction allows our children to share in fundamental human experiences and emotions. They can project their own behaviour, their feelings of jealousy, fear, insecurity, envy, onto the appropriate characters in the stories they hear and so understand and come to terms more easily with reality. The children's response to fiction can take many forms, written, oral, dramatic or artistic.

Children are singularly at home in the world of fiction where they can deal with experiences and situations in their own way.

The enthusiasm generated by books carries over into all aspects of the children's work motivating them towards becoming fluent readers, writers and improving their vocabulary.

*"In listening to stories or reading them the child moves outwards from himself into a world of action or inwards into his thoughts and feelings"*

Margaret Meek 1978

The 'Literature Studywork' approach elevates the child's writing from the mundane to the extraordinary. It enables them to experience adventure, fantasy, it involves them in the impossible. Fiction can transport children to other times and places. Fiction allows the child to be a spectator and view ways of life beyond their own range. Powerful literacy brings to the young unbounded freedom, and can show the child how they too can become an author by writing stories to match those they read. Responding to fiction can help the child write personally in an almost confessional mode. [Don Graves](#) calls this writing with 'Voice' and without the voice of our children within their work, the writing becomes just 'words following words'.

Fiction helps us as teachers to develop a more creative approach to grammar which is not produced in isolated exercises, but bound closely with the literature the children are familiar with and so is more meaningful. Literature extends vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. It can provide the children with a bank of techniques which they will be able to use when they have a subject about which they really want to write. The Literature Study and related texts provide a rich bank of 'extracts' to model writing in the Literacy hour as access points to other areas of the curriculum.

Our 'Literature Studywork' approach to language encourages the children to become independent writers; it enables them to build a store of satisfying and enriching experiences so that they will have something to draw on as life goes on.

*"For we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative. In order really to live we make up stories."*

Margaret Meek 1978

## **Developing a Response to Fiction**

Ideas for use with Literature Study

1. Title. Write what they think the book will be about.
2. Personal writing - from ideas, descriptions, extracts, the text.
3. Interview a character for newspaper or radio.
4. Encounters - 'When I was with...' - 'When I met...'
5. Thoughts in the head... an inner monologue at a critical moment in the story.
6. Change around... rewrite the episode, change the setting... boy/girl
7. Empathy - I, he or she - write two versions; in the first-person; in the third-person.
8. Pastiche... write back at the text through another characters eyes.
9. News at Ten; Front Page - using information or background from the story.
10. Character Charts. Quotations or descriptions which capture the essence of a character. Begin after a few chapters and add to later. Possible drama child 'becomes' the character.
11. Ask a particular character for comments, suggestions, opinions.
12. Impressions of a character or an event in the form of a letter home.
13. Author Speaks. The real author! or teacher plays the role of the author; class ask questions about the book... the author must not reveal what happens next!
14. Dialogue/conversation. Working in pairs... before or after or in the middle of an important event
15. Grammar. Use the text as a basis for this.
16. Letter writing - Teacher writes as a character to stimulate a respond from the children in writing.

*"Delight in literature is more likely to be caught than taught."*

Belkin & Kelly 1987