

Linking Reading to Creative Writing

Level: Primary 3

Purpose:

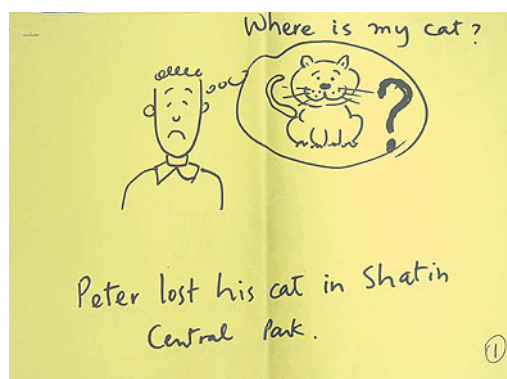
- ✓ To extend a reading section in the textbook to other language activities
- ✓ To link reading to creative writing
- ✓ To encourage personal responses to characters and events in a story

Challenge:

- Students had never done any free writing. Their written work had always been structured and controlled. Writing a story of their own was therefore a new experience and a challenge.
- Students were not used to working in groups. They lacked the skill of working together on a group project.

What teachers did to reduce risks:

- Teachers started with the story "Supergirl's adventure" in the textbook. Students listened to the story and talked about it with the help of the teacher. More language-focus work and reading aloud practice followed. After that students role-played the dialogues in pairs.
- Meanwhile teachers prepared a big book on a story that had a similar structure and theme to that in the textbook. They took care to make the language comprehensible to the Primary 3 students and the content appealing to their imagination.
- After the textbook-based lessons were done, the teacher introduced the self-made big book. Students enjoyed reading the new adventure of Supergirl.



- At a point when the teacher was certain that the students were ready for the challenge, she told them that they were going to work in a group and create their own story about Supergirl's rescues.
- Students were given clear instructions about what they had to do. They were encouraged to choose their own characters and tell an interesting story. At the end they were to publish their own story books, similar to the one they had just read.

How students reacted to the task:

- Students were delighted and excited. They all wanted to write something original. They talked about using new characters and new plots. There were as many variations as there were groups in the class. The heroes took the form of Superboy, Supercat, Supermouse, etc.
- Sharing a common goal of creating a good story, students worked well together in their groups. Teachers noted that even the weaker ones contributed to the plot and had fun doing the illustrations.
- Students made good efforts to activate their prior knowledge in language use. However, they were limited by their English as they tried to innovate in writing the story. They came to the teacher for help and were happy to learn new words and phrases.
- When the work was completed, students became proud owners of the published books. The stories were read in class for each other's enjoyment, and then at home to the delighted parents.



The impact on learning and teaching:

- Students were clearly motivated to do the task. Their motivation was the result of combining challenge and support.
- By opening up space for students to write creatively, teachers challenged them to take risks and use all their resources for the job.
- The challenge went hand in hand with ample support. Teachers carefully scaffolded the learning experience through diverse, comprehensible inputs and by engaging students in an array of activities using integrated language skills.
- The teachers acted as facilitators during group work. They provided the on-the-spot support and feedback necessary for the work to progress. This accounted for the high level of task commitment and quality in students' products.
- Teachers learnt valuable lessons about student-centred learning. They witnessed the eagerness of students to innovate and do their best. They were also reassured that students could learn from each other in a group.
- Teachers realized that they had to use different criteria for judging creative writing, and they took a more liberal view of students' inaccuracies in language. However, in view of the relatively few errors in students' stories, students had obviously adopted a caring and self-editing attitude during the writing process. When students care about what they do, teachers' work will be so much easier.

Source of information: Ma On Shan Methodist Primary School
(Formerly Shatin Methodist Primary School A.M.)