

# Effective Strategies for Accommodating Diverse Needs of Students in the Secondary English Classroom

CDI, EDB  
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## How far do you agree?

- Learner diversity is mainly reflected in students' target language proficiency.
- All students should be expected to aim for the same level of achievement.
- Catering for learner diversity requires more lesson planning and more materials design.
- When catering for learner diversity, attention is often paid to the less-able students.



## Aims

- To enhance teachers' understanding of learner diversity in the development of language skills in the secondary English classroom;
- To introduce the use of effective strategies to cater for learner diversity; and
- To provide hands-on activities on developing relevant learning, teaching and assessment activities/materials to cater for learner diversity



# Outline

- **Part 1: Overview of key concepts**
- Part 2: Strategies to cater for learner diversity
- Part 3: Application

# What is Learner Diversity? In what ways do learners differ from each other?



interests

A diagram illustrating factors of learner diversity. It features seven colored ovals arranged in a loose cluster. The ovals are: a blue oval for 'interests', a pink oval for 'ability', a light purple oval for 'world knowledge', a yellow oval for 'learning styles', a green oval for 'parental support', a light purple oval for 'motivation', and an orange oval for 'learning pace'. A dark grey arrow points from the top left towards the text 'What is Learner Diversity?'. Several thin, curved lines extend from the left side of the slide, passing behind the ovals.

ability

world  
knowledge

motivation

learning  
styles

parental  
support

learning  
pace



## Understanding student needs

***“Teacher is telling me meaning but only one time.***

***It is go into my ears then fall out.***

***I try to pick up meaning but already fallen on floor.***

***I look under my chair, but teacher is punish me I don’t sitting.***

***Then I sitting and teacher is happy but my word falling on floor.***

***Maybe other student find it and pick up it and he can be happy but I never find it.***

***I think have many words messing in the floor.”***

# Common Student Opinions

I can't / don't want to do the task in this way!!

Process

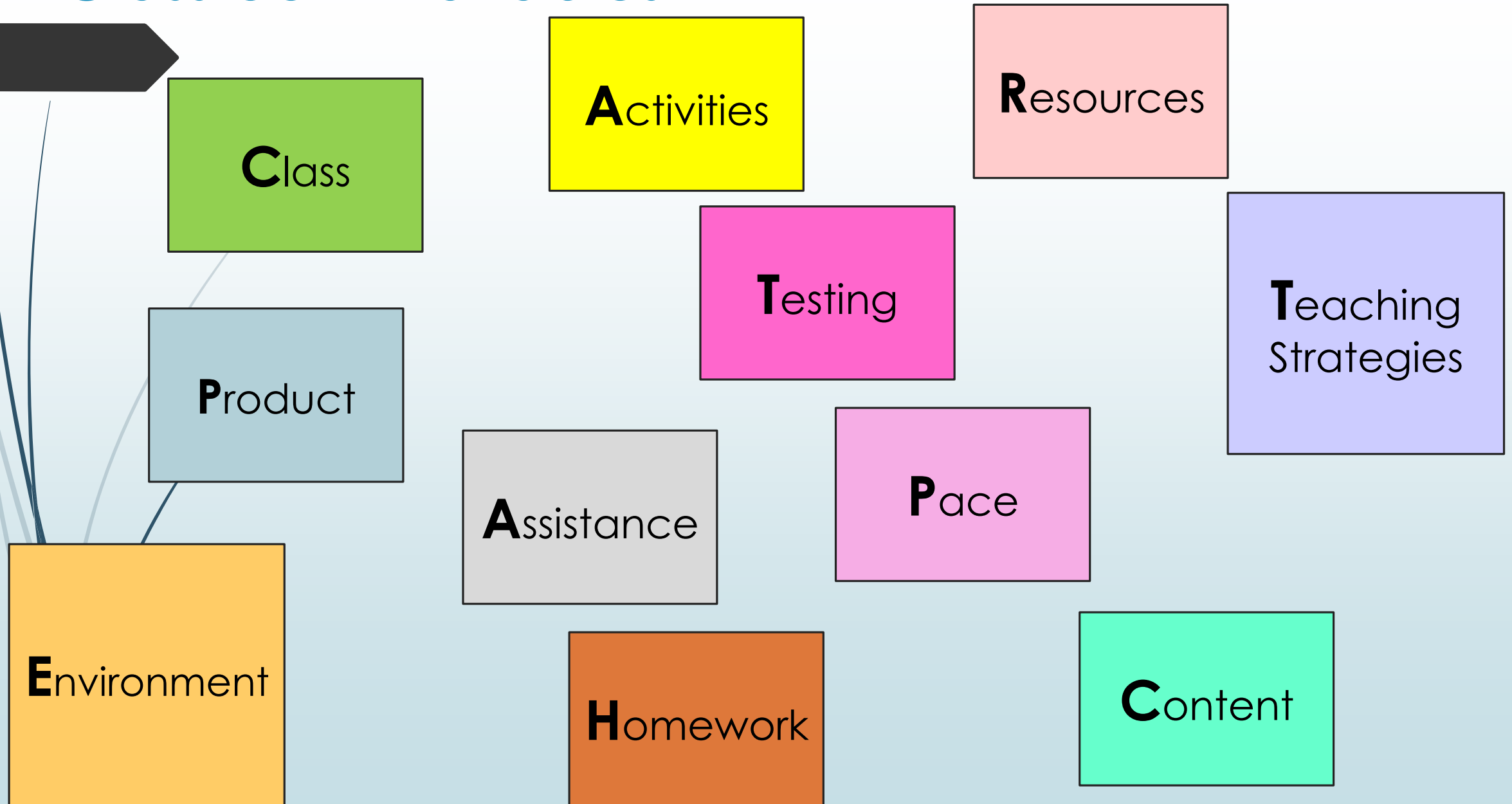
I can't / don't want to do this task!!

Product

I can't / don't want to work in this atmosphere!!

Learning Environment

# Classroom Variables








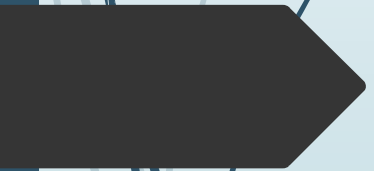
# Classroom Variables

Match the classroom variables with their respective descriptions.

Discuss whether you have adopted these strategies in your classroom.

- 
- Part 1: Overview of key concepts
  - **Part 2: Strategies to cater for learner diversity**
  - Part 3: Application

# Reading





# Computer-assisted instruction

[e.g. accelareader.com](http://e.g. accelareader.com)

- What record did he break?
- How did he travel?
- How long did the journey take?
- Who does “you” refer to in the last sentence?

**Students learning at their own pace**

# Tiered materials

- How are the two sets of text different from each other?

**Organisation**

**Density of  
information**

**Abstractness**

Students engaged in texts of different levels of complexity

# Colour coded reading

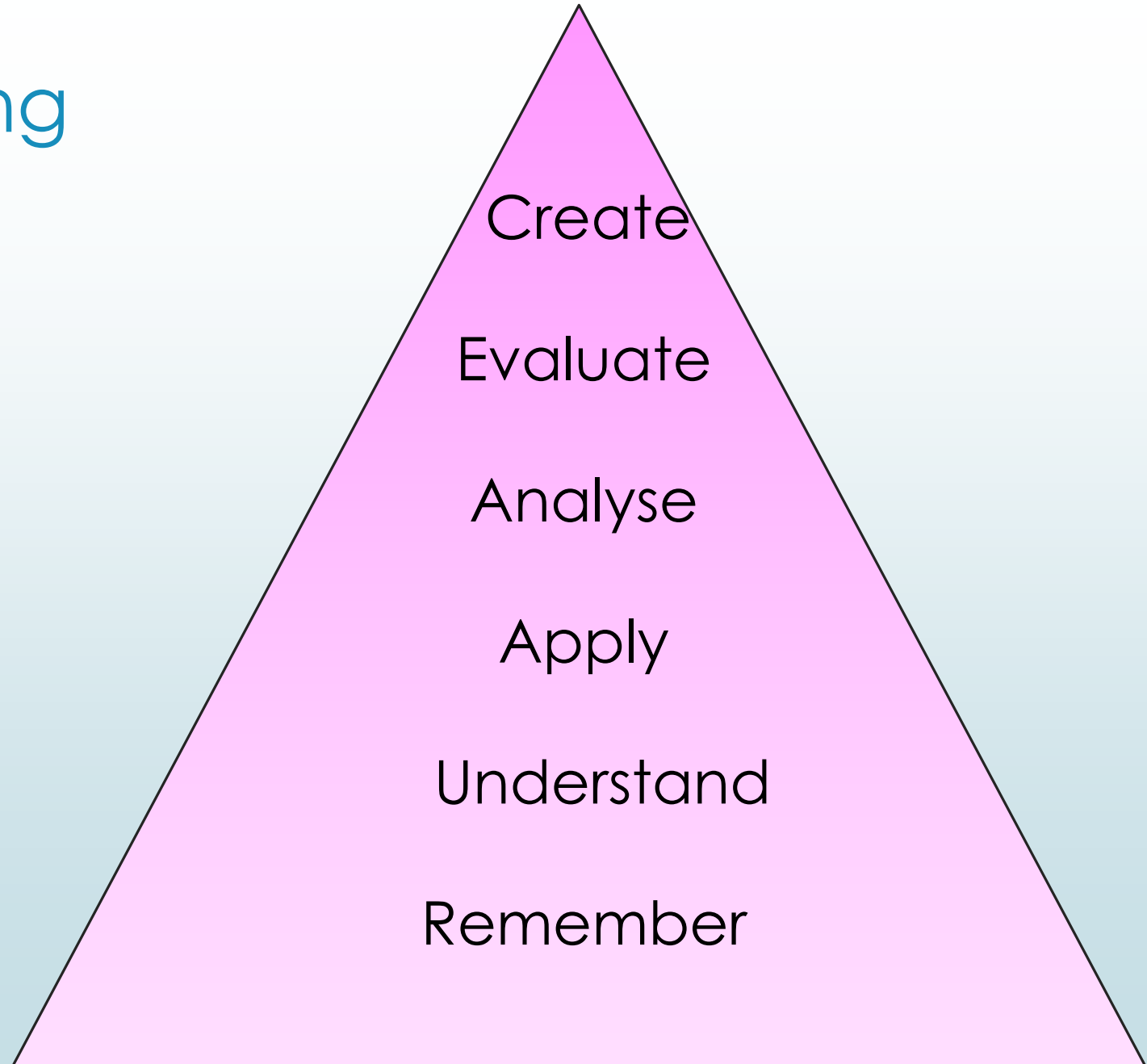
- ▶ Take any 4 colours and use them to underline parts of your text. Write your colour code on **the back** of your paper
  - Colour A: worried, concerned
  - Colour B: cautious, sensible
  - Colour C: excited, amazing
  - Colour D: humble, modest
- ▶ Swap texts with another group and try to work out their code.

Students engaged in a text at a level they are ready for

# Pyramid reading

- Answer the questions in the pyramids.
- If you can't answer a question, write another question to replace it in the pyramid.

Varying the activity





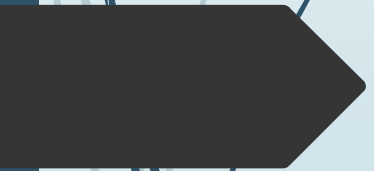
# Transparency reading

- Underline 3 key ideas in your text on the transparency and add some notes next to each idea.
- Remove the transparency, turn over the text and rewrite/paraphrase the ideas you underlined.
- Use your transparency as notes to tell others what you have learned from the text.

**Students engaged with a different level of language in their work**



# Listening





# Podcasting

- [The English We Speak](#)
- [Elementary Podcasts by the British Council](#)
- [Better at English](#)
- [Culips](#)
- [VOA](#)

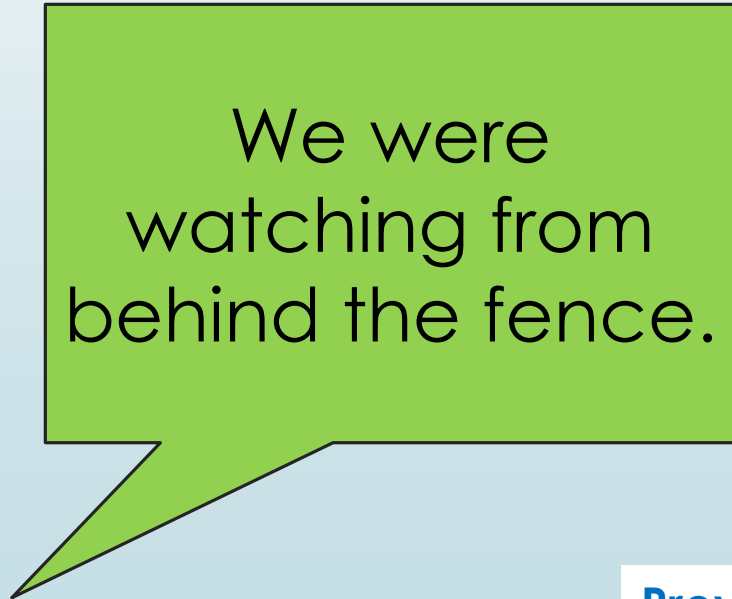
**Students learning at their own pace**

## Prediction tasks – pre-watching

- Look at the following expressions and predict what the video might be about.



Stop  
fighting!!



We were  
watching from  
behind the fence.



Definitely  
don't try this.



# Prediction tasks – sound off

- Watch the [video](#) (0:00-1:00)
- What did the expressions refer to?
- Prediction –
  - ? Who is this man?
  - ? Where is he?
  - ? Why does he have this relationship with the lions?

# Physical response tasks

- Divide your cards into positive, negative and neutral.
- Looking at your cards, what do you think the rest of the video will tell us about?
- Watch the [video](#) (0:00-2:16).
  - Put the cards in order while you watch.
  - You will be assigned three cards. Raise your hand when you hear your expressions.

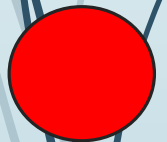


## Follow-up questions

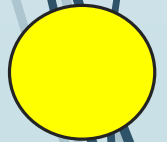
1. Why are the lions so friendly with this man?
2. How does the reporter feel during this interview?
3. What is the man's attitude towards the danger he is in?
4. Do you think it is a good idea to treat animals like this?
5. Would you like to have this kind of relationship with lions?
6. How do you think we could better protect the species?

# Traffic light listening

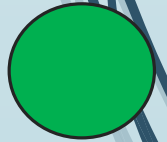
- How much do you know about the topics already? Colour the traffic light.
- Listen to the audio ([my weekend](#)) and make notes. Then change the colour of your traffic lights if you want to.
- Now answer the questions on the worksheet.



➤ I don't know anything about this topic.



➤ I think I know something about this topic already.



➤ I know a fair bit about this topic already.

Varying the activity



# Differentiated support

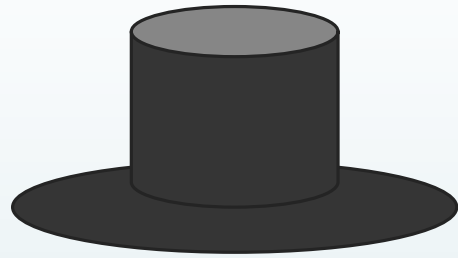
- Listen to the audio clip – [My Hero](#) (0:00 – 1:40)
- Which language support cards were you given?
  - ✓ Key words from most sentences
  - ✓ Key verbs from some sentences
  - ✓ The people mentioned in the audio
  - ✓ Exact expressions you will hear in the listening but not the whole audio script
- Compare your cards together and discuss how the different cards can support different students.

**Varying the support provided to students**

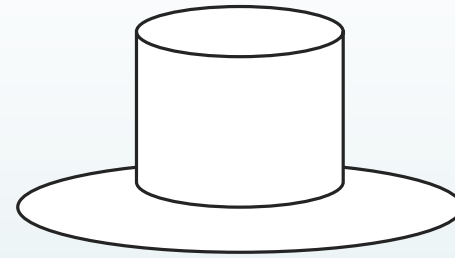


# Cooperative listening

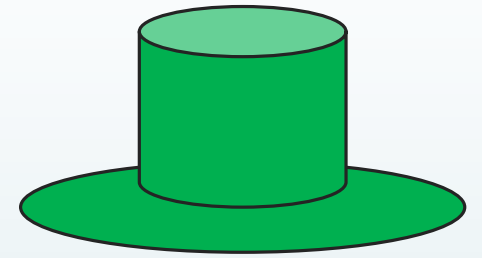
## Thinking Hat (De Bono)



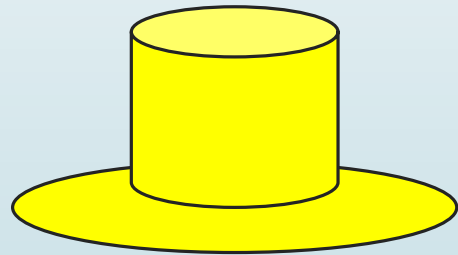
difficulties, risks,  
weaknesses



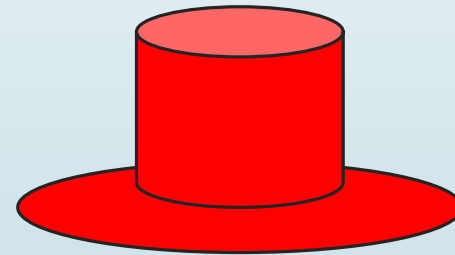
facts, data



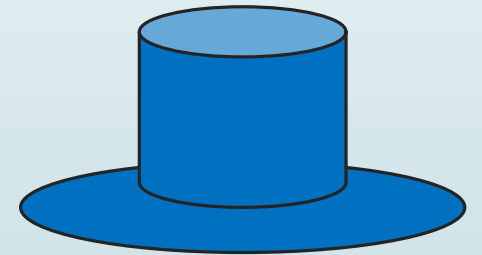
creative ideas,  
solutions



benefits,  
positives

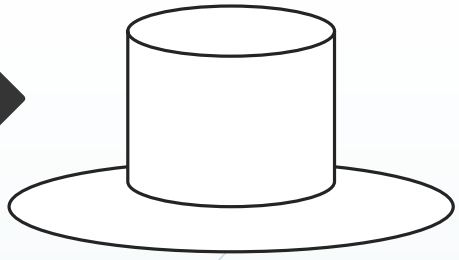


feelings,  
emotions



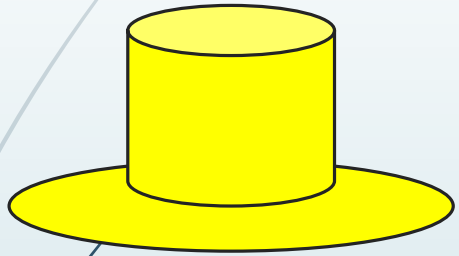
focus, summary

**Students expected to engage with a different level in their work**



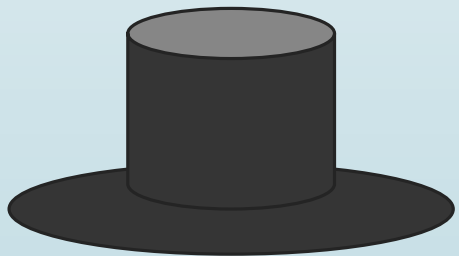
facts, data

How old was Mary Anning when she discovered the first dinosaur skeleton?



benefits,  
positives

Why did Charles Dickens say Mary Anning has won a name for herself?



difficulties, risks,  
weaknesses

Name 2 difficulties Mary Anning encountered on her road to fame.



# Speaking

# In the context of speaking, what learner diversity do you observe?

**Product**

**Process**

**Learning Environment**

different  
amounts of  
world  
knowledge

different  
learning  
pace

mixed ability  
(in each  
different  
skill)

different  
interests

What is learner  
diversity? In what ways  
do learners differ from  
each other?

different  
learning styles

different  
amounts of  
parental  
support

different  
levels of  
motivation

**Content**

**Activities**

**Resources**

**Product**

**Environment**

**Teaching strategies**

**Pace**

**Assistance**

**Testing**

**Class**

**Homework**

# Speaking Activities: Differentiated Support & Activities

Discuss how different abilities and learning styles can be accommodated in speaking activities:

- **Cooperative** learning
- **Visuals** and **creative** tasks
- Missing information/**picture hole task** to generate curiosity
- **Jigsaw picture** (a picture cut into 4 pieces); one for each student in the group to describe without showing it and the whole group establish together what the whole picture is

## Speaking Activity: Going Places

Speaking Task:

Research and share findings on a place in a different country of your choice.

- Geographical location
- Attractions: cultural heritage, scenery, history, amusement
- Adventures / Food / Cultural experience for tourists

# Speaking Activity: Visiting Unusual Places

**Adapt activities to include high-interest & authentic tasks**

Research and share findings on **an unusual place**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yE82Pxo5dJg>

- Geographical location
- **Attractions: rich cultural heritage, natural scenery of wonder, history, impressive amusement**
- Adventures / Food / Cultural experience for tourists

# Speaking Activity: Visiting Unusual Places

**Generating curiosity & tapping into prior knowledge**

## Picture hole task

1. Look at your picture. Where do you think it is? What do you think is in the hole?
2. How are the pictures connected?
3. What is each of the constructions made of?
4. Before watching the video of living bridges, guess what the numbers represent?
  - 10 years
  - 50 people
  - 500 years
5. Watch the [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yE82Pxo5dJg) and check your ideas
6. Is the living bridge a good choice for an unusual place? Why/why not?



# Speaking Activity: “Three to Twelve” Activity

**Differentiating process: allowing student engagement at varied degrees of sophistication/with varied amount of peer support**

What comes to mind when thinking about these **living tree bridges**?

Provide justifications as a group if other groups consider the words not sufficiently related.

— — — —  
R u r a l

— — — — —

— — — — —

— — — — —

— — — — —

— — — — —

S u s t a i n a b l e

— — — — —

— — — — —

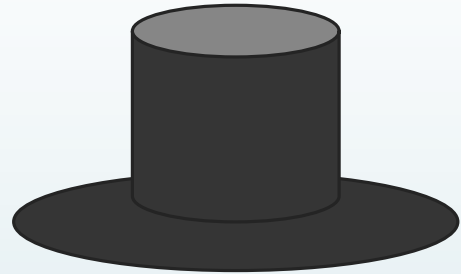
# Speaking Activity: Thinking Hats / Cooperative Controversy

**Differentiating process: allowing student engagement at varied degrees of sophistication/with varied amount of peer support**

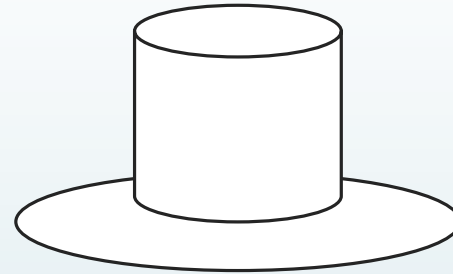
Answering  
questions  
based on a  
video/

Preparing  
questions for a  
tree expert

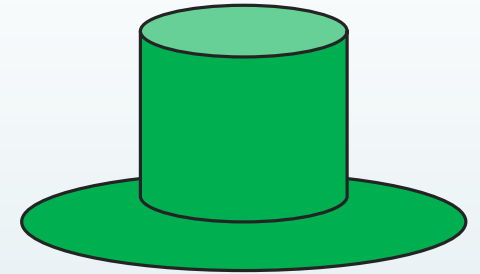
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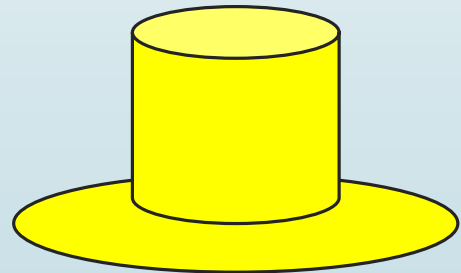
difficulties, risks,  
weaknesses



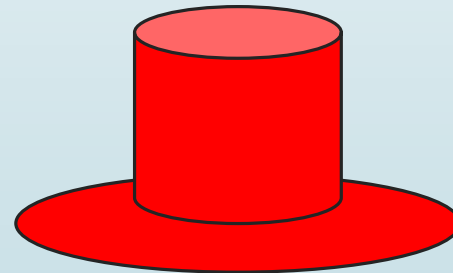
facts, data



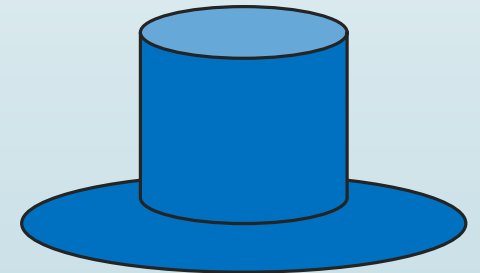
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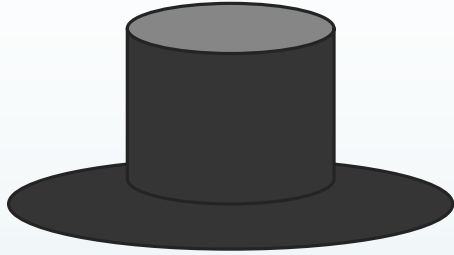


feelings,  
emotions



focus, summary

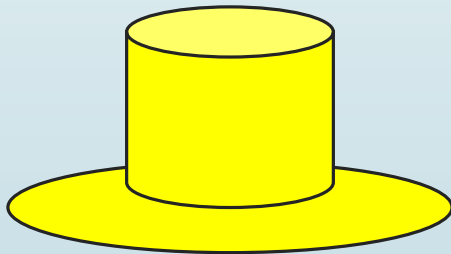
# Speaking Activity: Thinking Hats / Cooperative Controversy



difficulties, risks,  
weaknesses

Why do you think there aren't more living bridges around the world?

What risks do you think the local community takes by using nature in this way?

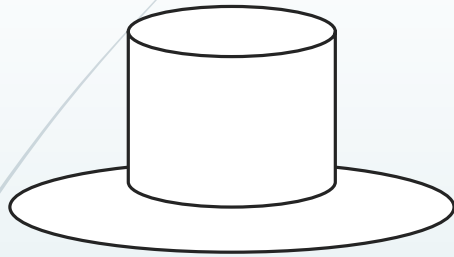


benefits,  
positives

How might the environment benefit from this way of construction?

How might the local community benefit from using nature in this way?

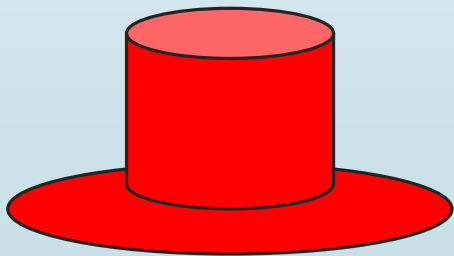
# Speaking Activity: Thinking Hats / Cooperative Controversy



facts, data

How big do you think a living tree bridge could be?

What kind of trees do you think would make good living tree bridges?

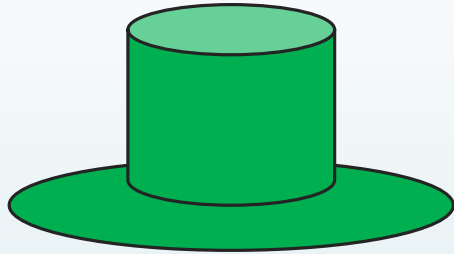


feelings,  
emotions

Do you think the people of Hong Kong would welcome an eco tour to Meghalaya, India?

How do you think the local community feel about their relationship with the environment?

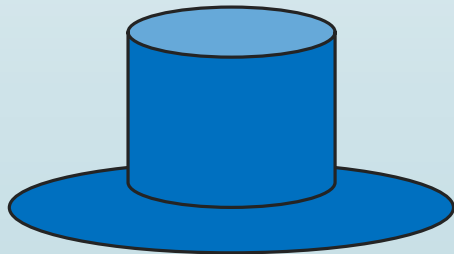
# Speaking Activity: Thinking Hats / Cooperative Controversy



creative ideas,  
solutions

What else do you think living trees could be used to construct?

How do you think living tree bridges are actually “constructed”?



focus, summary

Ask a question to someone else.

# Speaking Activity: Language Map Activity

**Tourism** is developing at a rapid rate in many areas of the world. Some places build up urban cities with all sorts of tourist attractions and shopping outlets to cater for these tourists. Other places focus on attracting tourists to appreciate the natural beauty of their landscape. **Eco-tourism** is a type of tourism which aims to encourage tourists to visit natural areas, while causing minimal damage to the environment at the same time.

Write a letter to the Hong Kong Tourist Board, encouraging them to promote eco-tourism more in Hong Kong. **Discuss** what to include in your letter.

# Speaking Activity: Language Map Activity

**Differentiating process: Engaging students with varied amount of language support**

How to scaffold a speaking task through differentiating language support?

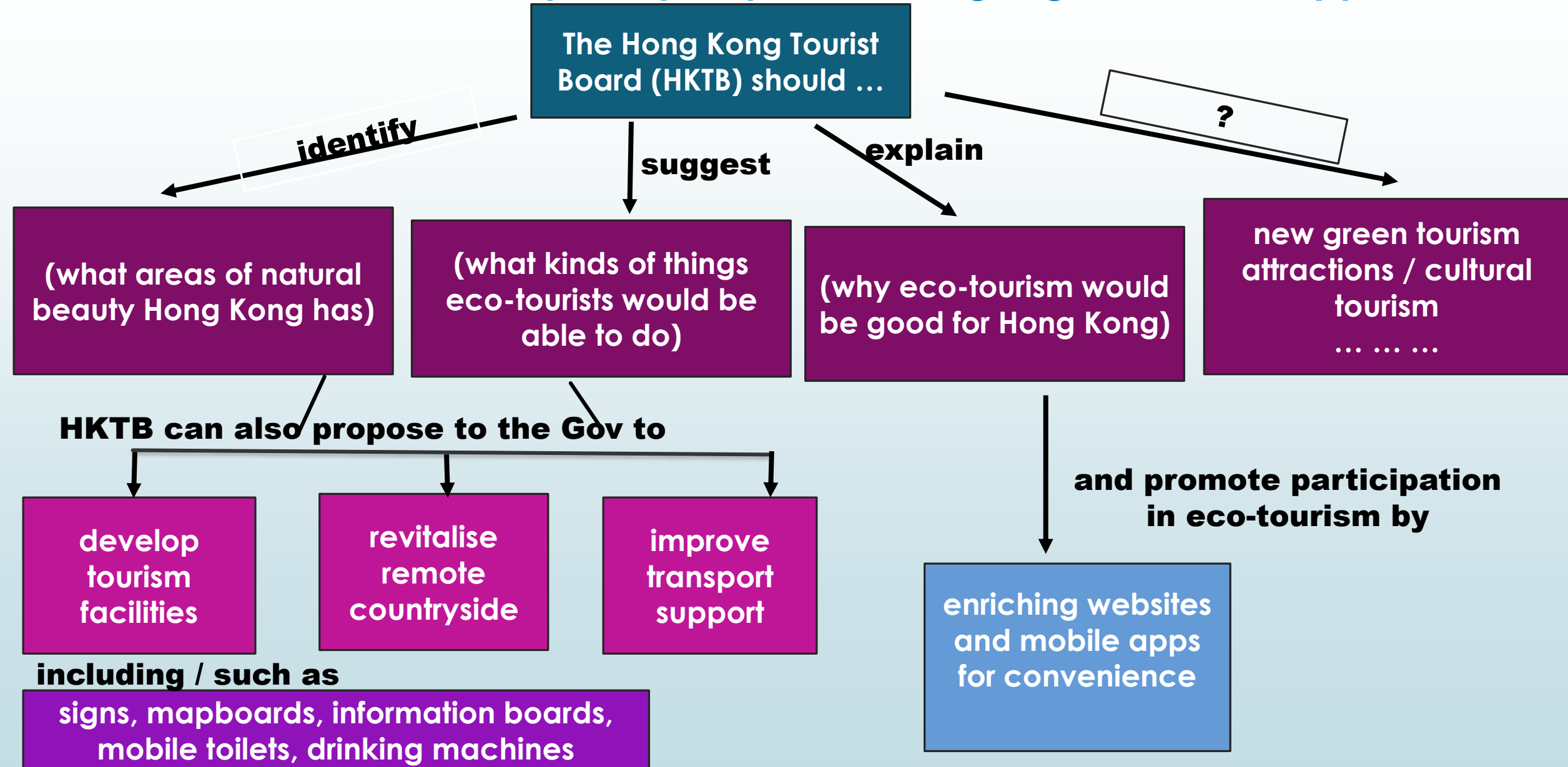
Write a letter to the Hong Kong Tourist Board, encouraging them to promote eco-tourism more in Hong Kong. Discuss what to include in your letter.

**You might want to consider:**

- ➡ what areas of natural beauty Hong Kong has
- ➡ what kinds of things eco-tourists would be able to do in Hong Kong
- ➡ why eco-tourism would be good for Hong Kong

# Speaking Activity: Language Map Activity

Use of a concept map to provide language/content support







# Writing

# Writing Activity: A Biography for a Famous Person

## Onion Ring Brainstorm

**Differentiating Process: Design tasks to be completed in stages of re-drafting with content input, language support and feedback provided at each stage**

Scaffolding ...

- Visiting major events and milestones using flashback
- Identifying a major theme
- Building a chronological structure
- Developing opinions and thoughts about the person
- Creating a thesis



# Writing Activity: A Biography for a Famous Person

## Onion Ring Brainstorm

- ➡ A way to gradually **build understanding and knowledge** **visually** throughout different stages of lesson
- ➡ A task which **enables students to work at their own pace**
- ➡ A task which **promotes self-directed learning** skills



# Writing Activity: A Biography for a Famous Person

## Use of Jigsaw Strategy

- A **cooperative** learning strategy
- Brainstorm effective group work skills
- Active participation of students in each stage of the jigsaw

# Jigsaw Classroom in Easy Steps

Divide students into jigsaw groups (home groups) – diverse in ability, interests, learning styles

- Appoint one student from each group as leader.
- Divide a short biography of a famous person into stand-alone segments on:
  - (1) Her childhood (e.g. JK Rowling)
  - (2) Her family life
  - (3) Her attempts to write & publish novels
  - (4) Her life after the novels have gained popularity
  - (5) Her life and work at present
- Students read the segment from home groups and move to expert groups.
- Students discuss main points of their segment in expert groups & rehearse the presentations they will make to their home group.
- Each student presents own segment at home group & members ask questions to clarify ideas.
- Each home group makes a presentation about the topic.

## Writing Activity: Using **Sentence Jigsaw** to do an Oral Construction

- Arrange sentences into a logical order -- supporting construction of a coherent paragraph about JK Rowling.
- Stick the different paragraphs onto the wall. Work with another group to talk through the final version.

JK Rowling was on a train  
when she first came up with  
the idea...

During that period, she  
considered herself a failure,  
and was diagnosed with...

A publishing house in  
London finally agreed to  
print...

When her first book was  
finished in...

JK Rowling might be  
considered a success by  
many...

Her recent talk given at...

## Writing Activity: Using **Expression Jigsaw** to do an Oral Construction

**... publishing house  
finally agreed ...**

**...was on a train when  
she first conceived the  
idea for ....**

**... submitted the book to  
twelve publishers, and was  
rejected by all of them....**

**... might be considered a  
success...**

**...recent talk given at Harvard  
University entitled The Fringe  
Benefits of Failure...**

**... was diagnosed  
with depression...**

# Writing Activity: Improving a Model Text with a Rubric

Evaluate an article. What makes a good article?

- **Involve students** in creating the assessment rubric
- Share expectations with **practical examples**
- Use the **development of a rubric as a reflective process** and development of **self-directed learning** skills
- Guide the use of the gradations on a rubric to **identify strengths/weaknesses**
- “Stretch” a rubric to **reflect the work of more able students**

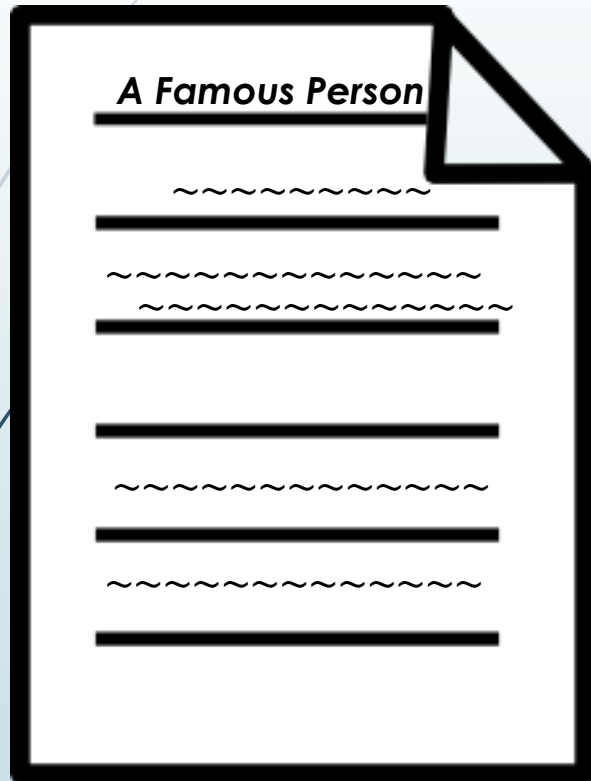
Adapted from TeachersFirst:

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/lessons/rubrics/pro-and-con.cfm>



# Writing Activity: Improving a Model Text

What do you think makes a good article?



Use a student's text as a model

**suspenseful**

**informative**

**engaging**

**persuasive**

**?**

Criteria / Teachers	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
Suspenseful for the reader	There is not much in the narrative or style that makes the reader want to keep reading	There are occasional parts of the narrative and/or style that make the reader want to keep reading	There are some parts of the narrative and style that make the reader want to keep reading	There are good examples of narrative and style used to create suspense
Informative for the reader	There is not much information about success and failure in her life.	There is some relevant information about success and failure in her life, but not enough details.	There is relevant information including some interesting details about success and failure in her life.	There are good examples of relevant & interesting information and details throughout the text.
Engaging for the reader	The style of the writing rarely engages the reader with emotions.	There are some uses of language which are engaging.	Language is often used to create an engaging style.	The style and language of the text are engaging throughout.
Persuasive for the reader	The style of the writing rarely persuades the reader to identify with the writer.	There are some uses of language which help persuade the reader to identify with the writer.	Language is often used to create a persuasive style.	The reader is easily persuaded to identify with the writer throughout the text.

# Writing Activity: Improving a Model Text

Guide the use of the gradations on a rubric to identify strengths/weaknesses

Compare the following paragraphs written by two students. What are the differences? Which do you think should be in the article? Why?

**“When** JK Rowling’s first Harry Potter book was finished in 1995, she submitted the book to twelve publishers, and was rejected **by all of them. A year later,** Bloomsbury, a London publishing house, **finally agreed** to print 1000 copies of the book, sending half of them **straight** to libraries **instead of bookshops.** “

“JK Rowling finished her first Harry Potter book in 1995. She submitted the book to twelve publishers, who rejected it. Bloomsbury, a London publishing house, printed 1000 copies of the book. It sent half of them to libraries.”



## Writing Activity: Improving a Model Text (An Extension)

**Differentiating Process: Create varied discussion points**

**Choose 2 of the criteria** from the rubric that you think are most important, and read the teacher comments below for the 2 criteria you chose.

(You can **write your own criteria if you prefer.**)

Use your 2 chosen criteria. Which teacher's comments do you think are appropriate? **Show your partner's examples/evidence in the text for why you chose those comments.**

**Use 1 of your chosen criteria. Make 3 changes to the text to improve it** based on this evaluation criterion.

# Writing Activity: Improving a Model Text

## Improving a Model Text

### Differentiating Process: Create varied discussion points

Applications ...

To cater to different abilities, identify the different problems/areas for improvement in the model text, explain them and involve students in making improvement.

- In what way do the series of tasks scaffold the evaluation process?
- How can the tasks be modified to cater for learner diversity?
- How do we design different tasks for different groups?

# Other Suggested Writing Activities

## **(A) Plan Swap Activity**

Students...

- write own paragraph plan.
- swap plan with another student, and write one paragraph based on the plan from their neighbour, not their own plan.
- swap back and discuss to what extent they think their partner kept to their plan.
- make any improvements they want to their partner's paragraph, and incorporate it into the rest of their essay.

# Other Suggested Writing Activities

**Differentiating Process: Expecting students to use language at varied levels in their work**

## **(B) Essay Completion**

- Student A receives an essay with **every second sentence blanked out**. Student B receives the same essay but with the **other sentences blanked out** – (Student A has all of B's blanks; student B has all of A's blanks).
- Each works alone to **complete some gaps by creating own sentences**.
- Students **compare A and B texts** together and discuss:

(Discussion only at this stage, not writing)

- **WHAT is different**
- **WHAT ASPECTS** of the model language/ ideas/ organisation make them more **successful** and WHY.
- Follow up: students go back alone and make improvements to their writing based on anything remembered from the discussion.

**An opportunity to make improvements at a level each student is comfortable with rather than a memory task**

# Other Suggested Writing Activities

## (C) Stop N Start – 20 min

- Give students 20 min to do an extended writing task. Stop them every 5 min to do a 3-min speaking activity: provide 1 question to discuss with someone nearby (keep changing the pair each 3 min).
  - *What have you just written about in the last 5 min?*
  - *What changes did you make in the last 5 min?*
  - *What problems did you have in the last 5 min?*
  - *What are you going to do with the next 5 min?*
  - *Look at your plan. How far through are you? etc.*





# Suggested Writing Activities

Applications ...

- How might the activities help to engage students?
- How might the design help to cater for learner diversity?
- How might you need to adapt this for your own classes?

# Other Extended Writing Activities

Designing tasks requiring several stages of re-drafting work to allow support, input and feedback to be provided at each stage.

## **(C) Stop N Start – 20 min**

➡ **This activity aims to**

- break up a long writing task into manageable chunks
- provide varied discussion points
- enable various different pairings for more interaction
- enable peer teaching/learning
- support students to be more involved in thinking about ways to undertake the writing task

## Product

Expecting students to **complete a different task** on the same topic

e.g. Student A produces a comic and Student B produces a poster to explain the same concept

Allowing students to **create own homework assignments** sometimes

(as long as the required elements are contained)

Expecting students to **produce a different level of language** in their work

e.g. Student A labels the diagram, and Student B explains it.

## Process

Enabling some students to complete the task **alone** and others in **pairs/groups**

Designing **tasks requiring several stages of re-drafting work**, so that **support, input and feedback** can be provided appropriately **at each stage**.

**Giving students specific roles** each during a group task, e.g. Student A encourages participation, Student B oversees grammar, Student C keeps the pen

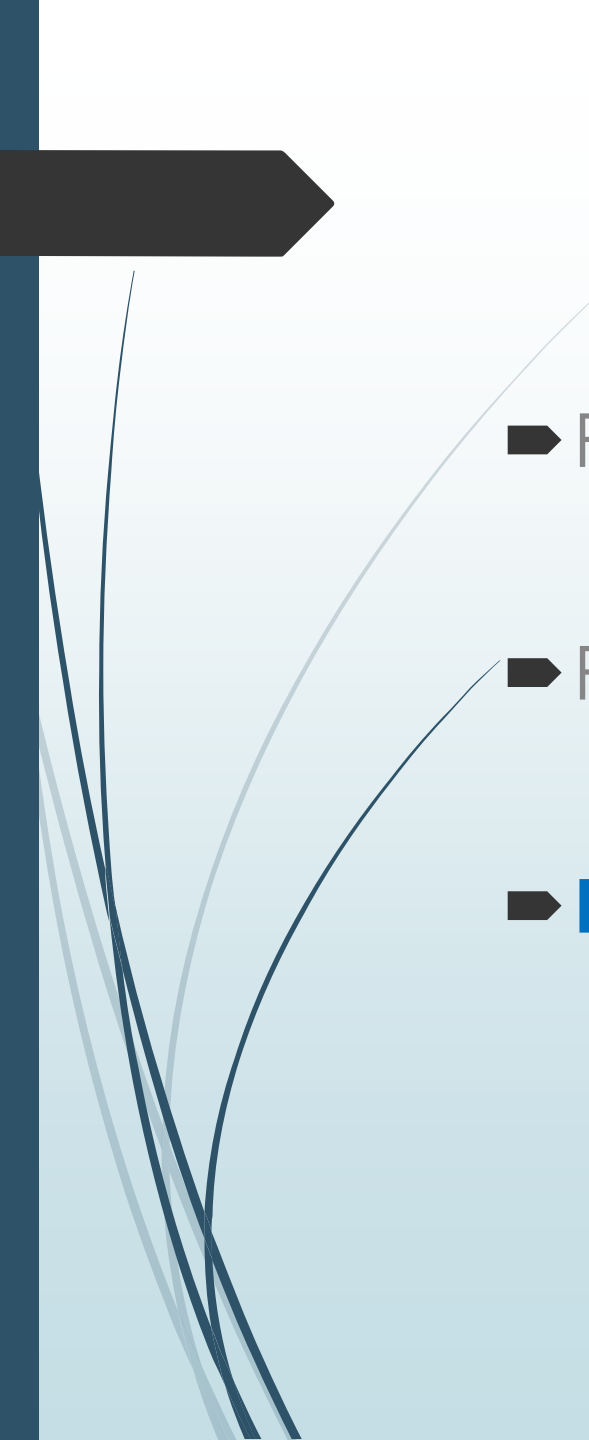
## Learning Environment

Developing classroom **routines that enable students to seek help** when they want it, e.g. students write post-it notes on their desks through the lesson, and the teacher can come around at an appropriate time later, to help them

Encouraging **reflective tasks**, where students talk about what they have learned and how they have learned it

Designing **hands-on activities**, or activities which involve **standing up, turning chairs around, moving seats**, etc.

Creating a classroom atmosphere that **encourages mistakes as an interesting learning point**, not as a failure

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- Part 1: Overview of key concepts
  - Part 2: Strategies to cater for learner diversity
  - **Part 3: Application**

# Hands-on Activity

- Read a textbook unit.
- Have a class of students in mind.
- Make adaptations to the design of 1 task.
  - Reading activities: Text 1
  - Reading activities: Text 2
  - Listening activities
  - Design an ad and write a letter of proposal, etc.
- Apply the strategies for differentiating support to address student differences. Choose 2 classroom variables to work on.



**Thank you**