

Specialists in Dyslexia and other Specific Learning Difficulties

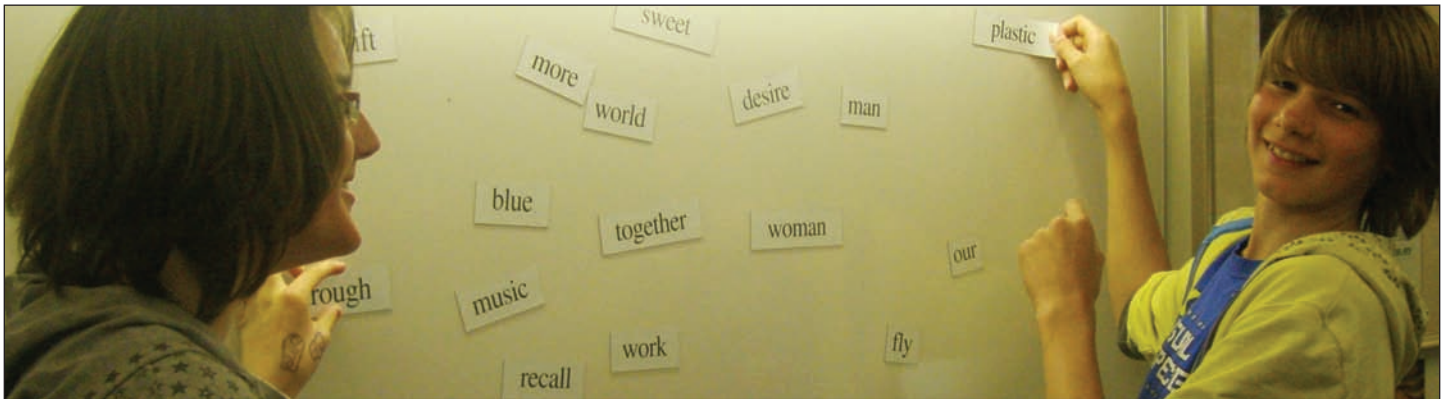


Stanbridge
Earls School

Romsey, Hampshire SO51 0ZS Tel: 01794 529400 www.stanbridgeearls.co.uk

Poetry Writing?

Stanbridge Earls commends it; Chapter and Verse



Stanbridge Earls School, Romsey, educates boys and girls, aged 10-19, who have specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and mild Asperger's Syndrome.

Stanbridge is at the forefront of innovative teaching and its English department continues to build on this reputation. Dr Frank Myszor, BA (Hons) PhD, PGCE, Dip Ch, explains specifically how using poetry helps liberate dyslexic pupils – enabling them to gain confidence by expressing their thoughts in creative poetry.

“Teaching English to dyslexic children, whose main challenge is the written word, calls for original and perhaps unexpected ideas. Working with Year 9, I have employed a variety of visual and mental stimuli to break down some of the constraints pupils face when writing.

Techniques:

My poetry class doesn't carry the burden of spelling - I accept whatever they write. This is a delicate balancing act because I have to assure them that, otherwise, I care very much about their spelling. Hence, one of my roles is interpreting their writing, while affirming that their poetry is valid; also helping them discover what they're trying to say. That's when things become enlightening or therapeutic.

I encourage approaching poetry from two angles: to teach them about form, so children have something into which to put their ideas, while generating ideas about topics – akin to having a cup in which to pour a liquid.

On topics, using a visual approach, we ran a short film from early 1900s, playing it repeatedly, pausing, observing detail and generating discussion.

Factory Gates 1901

Soon they would be sent to war
Soon they would be no more
They thought that they could live their lives
Soon there'd be some widowed wives
Waiting in an eternal prison
Until the war has slowly risen
Living in a life of doubt
War is the only way out
Working hopelessly for what awaits
Hiding behind these factory gates
Poor but happy all the same
They didn't know before it came.

A further technique encourages expression of form by producing a list of nouns or objects and listing some qualities that these things have, such as a clock has a hand; then considering how these objects would be if the qualities were not attached - essentially writing a 'without' poem. Content follows naturally; it's just a short step to ask what conclusion or feeling would result if all these things were lacking.

To the Endless sky

Endless sky blue and white
Birds riding winds
Trying to reach to the top of the sky
To become the sky king
Don't rush, the sky never goes
Flap your wings to the sky

Please help me before it's too late

Mountains without trees
Trees without leaves
Streams without water
Animals without homes
Mountains crying every night
Please help me before it's too late

Time without you

Life without hope
Love without happiness
Streams without water
Birds without voices
Trees without leaves
Time without you

Makes me lonely.

Sometimes it is good to relieve the pressure of trying to make sense, we illustrated this using a projector, writing a poem together; playing with words, creating patterns, demonstrating techniques like alliteration, positioning of words and lines, rhyme and rhythm. A simple technique is to use fridge magnet words, enabling pupils to write, without writing!

The verse speaks for itself

One would not have expected children to show such facility with the written word but the poems defied this, combining technical confidence, thoughtfulness and depth. A selection were entered into Stanbridge's annual poetry competition, and have been published as an anthology." www.stanbridgeearls.co.uk