

Pedagogy Newsletter #50

31st January 2020

Why Do We Assess?

Assessment is pretty useless for judging how well a pupil is doing. End of unit assessments are awful. Ask two skilled test writers to write an end of unit test for the same class and you'd get two different sets of scores. Worse than that, the rank order of pupils would also be quite different. Different questions = different outcomes.

But still we have to do them.

That's because we aren't really trying to assess individual progress. (If we wanted to do that, the assessments would be long, taking hours of class time - just see how long the GCSEs are).

We use end of unit assessments because at a class, school and Trust level, most of the randomness averages out. For every pupil who does better than they should, there's a pupil who does worse. So we can tell, overall, how well our learners are doing, even if we can't be sure which individuals are doing well. That's still really useful.

But it isn't much help to teachers and parents. If you want to know how well a learner is doing, you have to make thousands of small judgements in class every day - that's our Circulate, Check and React, or Check for Understanding.

In next week's newsletter, I will explain how we try to have integrity when using assessments to give pupils a score (it isn't easy!)

I would **very** happily chat about this - email, phone, hangout or even face to face :) Please get in touch.

Many thanks,

Ben

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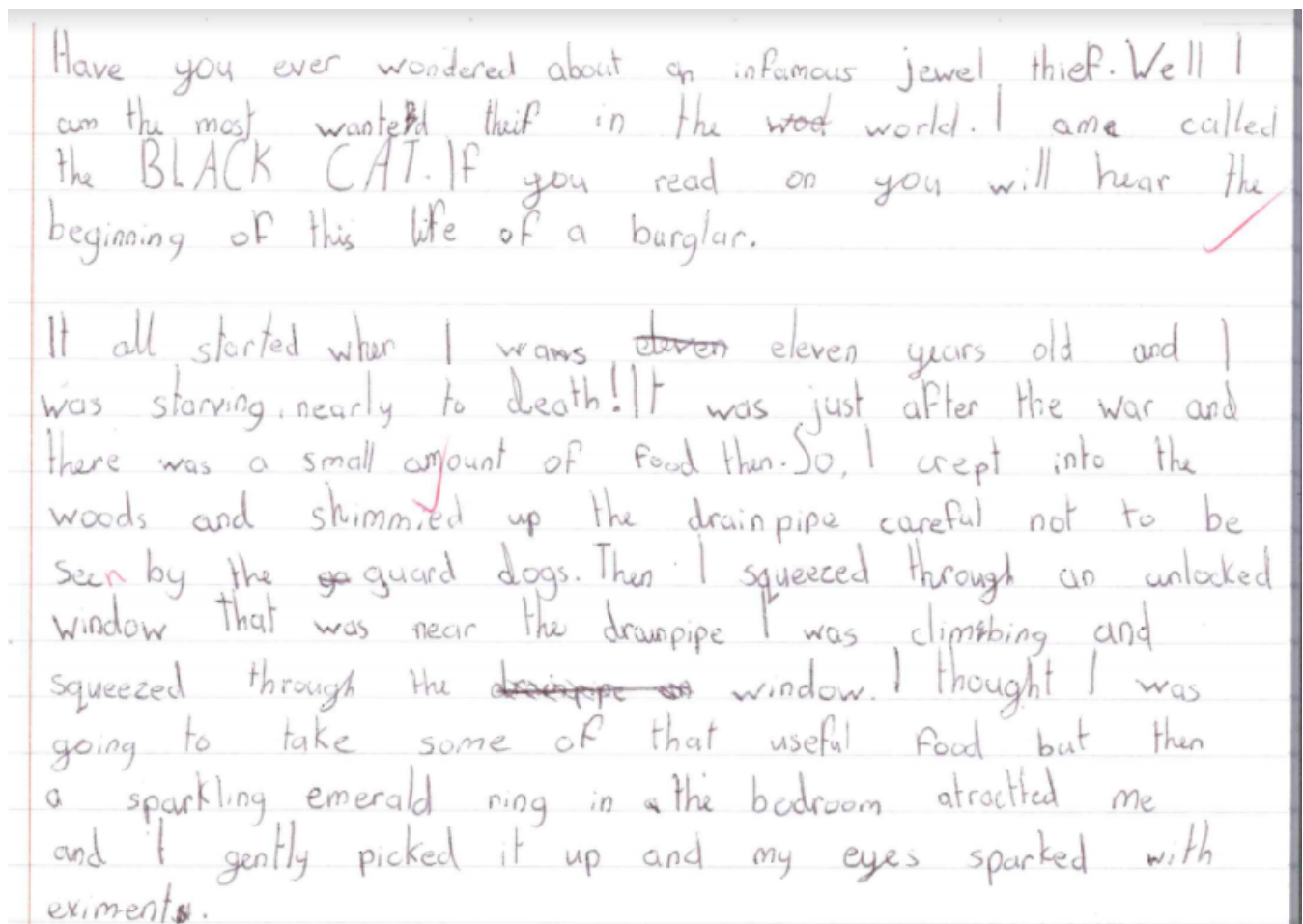
Weekly Writing Outcome Example

This week we have two examples; English and geography.

This week's English weekly writing comes from a year 3 pupil at Old Ford Primary Academy.

The pupil wrote this piece in response to the Shared Reading text: Gangsta Granny, the remit was to (as an independent piece of writing) describe Granny's life as a thief.

We have chosen this piece of work because it showcases a number of devices that are crucial to an effective description.



In this section there is/are:

1. Drawing the reader in, by posing a question 'Have you ever wondered...'
2. Phrases used to signify time 'It all started when...'
3. Vocab for specific effect 'shimmied' up the drainpipe, 'sparkling emerald'
4. Adverb 'gently'
5. Switching of tense accurately 'I squeezed' 'careful not to be seen'

The geography writing is by a year 11 pupil. It is a very effective example of the style of writing we want to develop in our younger writers.

You can see how well the writer has controlled her sentences: they are sophisticated, communicating complex ideas with clarity.

Her choice of vocabulary is also interesting. Notice how she has used technical language correctly, but also notice her choice of tier two vocabulary - she has mostly chosen words with precise meanings (note: her opening sentence is not a good example of this - she could have used the word arid).

The text is also well structured - her use of paragraphs helps her organise her thoughts and communicate her meaning clearly.

Check Out:

Desert areas are hot and dry. There is little to no rainfall, meaning there are very few plants that grow in these areas, leading to low biodiversity. It has a low carrying capacity, so population density is low. It is difficult to farm, irrigation is required, but there are opportunities for energy production, especially solar.

Semi-desert areas are cooler than deserts, and have relatively predictable rainfall, making settled agriculture possible. Due to the increased rainfall compared to deserts, more plants grow here, so biodiversity is higher. These areas have a higher carrying capacity than deserts, so population density is higher. More farming occurs here due to increased rainfall.

Desertification will pose a great challenge in poorer countries like LICs. This is because many people who live in these countries are vulnerable, and desertification will just make them more vulnerable. In these countries, governments do not have the money to spend on overcoming these challenges, so the situation is left to worsen, increasing the challenge overall.

Desertification will pose a lesser challenge in richer countries like HICs. This is because inhabitants are less vulnerable to begin with, so are able to adapt to the challenge themselves. Also, governments are able to put plans in place to combat aid those who need to adapt or attempt to prevent issues occurring, overcoming the challenge and preventing it from worsening. Also, HICs will have better access to technology which will help them to overcome the challenge effectively.

& causing them to lose their livelihoods or become unable to feed families.