

The Write Team

Writing About Home

Teaching Ideas
Key Stage 2&3

by Helen Cross

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HOME

We are thinking in this scheme of work about home. We will be looking at ways of writing about home in innovative and meaningful ways. We are trying to create accurate detailed writing that focuses on character and place. We want to write with truth and insight into our own homes and the homes of others.

WEEK ONE

We are going to start by thinking about the idea of home - and what makes a home.

To get us started we are going to work in groups, and imagine all the different ways you might welcome someone into your home, eg.

- Give them a tour
- Pour them a drink
- Put up a banner
- Show them to a seat.
- Make them a meal

Try and think of as many ways of you can of welcoming someone into your home. Collect at least ten ideas. Think of what might happen in cultures other than your own. Share the ideas

Now in the same groups imagine you have to go out and buy ten things for a new home. Imagine you have nothing yet, and you need ten really important things. What would be the most important things needed for your home? Write ten detailed sentences of what you would buy. Try and avoid writing about obvious celebrity-style clichés – flat screen TV, gold taps, hot tub etc . You are thinking in detail about what a home really needs.

Now look at the bag of objects all taken from a home (perhaps a candlestick, an ornament, a photograph in a frame, a snow-dome, a lantern, a model of the Indian God Ganesh etc). Discuss as a group what kind of home these things might have come from. Think about the importance of objects in houses and how they are sometimes more than just practical objects, but give clues to character and mood and place. Think of how what we have in our homes informs and transforms our identity.

Gather all the ideas about the objects on the board. Make connections. Discuss characters.

In an individual piece of writing start a story about the home to which these objects belong. Is it a haunted house, a stately home, a castle? It can, of course, be any place you imagine it to be. Make up an address for the home. Make up someone who lives there.

WEEK TWO: Our Homes

Start with a quick burst of automatic writing. Close your eyes and imagine what happens when you first wake up in your house you first wake up, think about your home. Concentrate on and all the sensations of your home. What sounds can you hear – shower running, people talking, radio playing? What is happening? Can you smell anything – porridge bubbling, bread toasting? What can you physically feel around your home – the floorboards under your feet, the scratchy surface of the sofa, the soft cotton of your bed sheets? Write with as much accurate detail as possible, for at least one side of A4

Share some of the pieces. Discuss what different ideas came up about home: home as a refuge, home as a restful place, a dull place, an busy place. Think about the meaning of home, and all the different ways that writers can approach the theme.

Look at this poem by poet Grace Nichols.

Like a Beacon
In London
every now and then
I get this craving
for my mother's food
I leave art galleries
in search of plantains
saltfish/sweet potatoes

I need this link

I need this touch
of home
swinging in my bag
like a beacon
against the cold

Grace Nichols (b. 1950)

(another very good poem to look at here, or elsewhere in this scheme of work is A Martian Sends a Postcard Home by Craig Raine (1979). It is tricky for primary children to understand, though one they get it they love it. Secondary pupils should be fine with it and enjoy working out the images – you can give some visual clues. This Grace Nichols poems is fine for both primary and secondary and is very easy to learn)

Try and learn it. Speak it out loud.

What does it say to you? What is the poet's idea of home? Why is she writing the poem? What is she trying to communicate? Think about the rhythm.

Now look again at your automatic writing, try and highlight the best sentences you have written. Look at any powerful images you have created. What have you said that is true? Cut away the dull or confusing pieces of writing. Try and edit down your automatic writing to one strong paragraph on the theme of home. Write the piece a poem if you prefer.

WEEK THREE: Animal homes

Brainstorm all the different types of animal home you can think of: a cave, a stable, a kennel, a web, a nest. Put all the suggestions on the board. Choose a few of these homes and think of them in sense terms, working as group. What would a kennel smell like/sound like/feel like. What would be the challenges of living there? What would be the advantages? What would be the comforts and discomforts?

If there is time look at a few of the descriptive passages from EB White's *Charlotte's Web*.

Now choose an animal you are going to imagine being and think of their home. Create a mind map of all your impressions about this home – the sense details particularly, how it smells, sounds etc. Now imagine you are that animal and write in the first person about your home. If you need a first line to get you going start with: 'Welcome to my home....'

WEEK FOUR: A different home.

We have thought about our own homes, an animal's home and now we are thinking about a human home that is completely different to our own.

Show some photographs/newspaper clippings of different/unusual/foreign homes – some with people, perhaps historical, in them. Discuss. What do you imagine this home to be like? What would it look/feel/smell like? How would it be different to your own home (For younger children you can work with two sets of pictures: people and home and then work with matching the person to the home – thinking why the soldier might live in the barracks etc)

Think of a person with a home that is totally different to your own. Really use your imagination. Think of different places and people. Consider how people have to leave their homes, and why. Think of what it feels like and what happens when you change your home. Choose someone you are interested in. It can be anyone, anywhere in the world*. For example:

- A prince living in a royal palace in Spain
- A hermit living in a cave in the mountains
- An asylum seeker living in a hostel
- A homeless person living in a doorway.
- An astronaut living in a spaceship

*But please no celebrities in mansions! They are too familiar.

Gather ideas on the board. Think of the home and who would live there. You are thinking now about two things; character and place, or home and homeowner. Remember all the details we gathered when we were thinking about shopping lists for homes and in our bag of objects. Try and be very detailed in your thinking about this person and their home.

Choose your own character and choose their home. Let's say an old fisherman living on a boat.

Write as though you are this character, in the first person. Tell us all about your home, using the accuracy of sense details; smells and sounds as well as what things look like, which you described in your own home and the animal's home. Make a mind map to help you.

Write with as much accurate detail as possible, for at least one side of A4. Try to use some dialogue and work towards structuring the writing as a complete story. What happens to the character? Try and gather the home into the actual story, rather than just having it as a backdrop. Think of what drama could happen to the house. Does the roof fall in? Is there a ghost in the attic? Is the house threatened with repossession? Is the owner moving house?

WEEK FIVE: The Voice of Home

We are still thinking about the idea of home. We have thought about our own homes, an animal's home and a home completely different to our own.

Now we are going to try and be really imaginative and write the actual voice of a house. Think how your house would talk if it could talk. Gather ideas of the board. What would it sound like? What would it say? Would it be funny, or sad, or irritable, or mischievous? Think about what the home sees and what the home knows. What secrets does the house hold? Does the house play tricks on its occupants? Think of all the people the home has known, all the people who have lived there in the past – long before you and your family. Who were the home's favourite occupants? Who were the worst occupants?

Now look at the postcards of the different types of home: the stately home, the tower block, the farmstead. *(These can come from anywhere, but art galleries are particularly good for finding postcards with a range of homes/houses on them)*

Choose a home from the cards and in a group gather ideas about what the house would sound like if it could talk. Think of tone of voice, personality, level of self-confidence etc) and write a short group monologue as if in the voice of the house on the postcard.

Now we are going to do the same thing in a piece of imaginative individual writing. You can either write about your own home in the first person, or any other home of your choosing – in the first person. For example:

- A royal palace on a remote mountainside.
- A caravan in a campsite.
- A flat in a high-rise block.
- A prison on a secret island

Really try and get the voice of the home and make your piece as startling and imaginative and unusual as possible.