



Key stage 2 (KS2) English writing training exercise 1 commentary

Pupil A – working at the expected standard

The collection includes the following pieces:

- A) a diary
- B) a letter
- C) an additional scene
- D) a narrative flashback
- E) a promotional leaflet

All of the statements for ‘working towards the expected standard’ and ‘working at the expected standard’ are met.

The pupil can:

- write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences, selecting language that shows good awareness of the reader (e.g. the use of first person in a diary, direct address in instructions and persuasive writing).

Across the collection, the pupil writes effectively for a range of purposes and audiences: a personal diary conveying the writer’s thoughts and feelings during a WW2 air raid; a letter home written in role as a young evacuee; an additional scene that imaginatively reconstructs events based on the reading of a class novel; a first-person fictional recount of life in the trenches during WW1; and a promotional leaflet for an imaginary hotel.

Although most pieces are relatively informal, and predominantly written in the first person, the pupil selects language that shows good awareness of the reader.

The diary and the narrative flashback both maintain the first person throughout, apart from a brief but deliberate shift to the second person for effect. The shift to the second person (*You know when you’re squashed between...*) captures the intimacy of a personal diary, enabling the writer to address it directly as a friend and confidant. Similarly, in the narrative flashback, the pupil adopts the first person to paint a convincing picture of the misery and suffering of a soldier’s life during WWI, positioning the narrator in the midst of it all (*It’s an awfully wet and cold day...I’m shin-high in water and mud*), whilst aptly shifting to the second person in the aside (*if you weren’t blind*) to draw the reader into the horror.

The personal letter maintains the first person throughout, appropriately conveying emotion (*I'm fighting back my tears*), reassurance (*it's alright...I'm not alone*), factual information (*Their house is a cottage*) and a touch of humour (*apparently I need some improvement*).

The additional scene adopts a first-person narrative to recreate an imaginary scene from Thomas Peaceful's childhood, immersing the reader in the everyday life of the children and presenting their opinions (*another treacherrus day*), anxieties (*a worried turn in his voice*), actions (*Charlie broke into a brisk walk...Molly had a real go at Grandma Wolf*), and alliances (*All of us were trying to find Big Joe's cries...I was proud of my Molly*) through the eyes of Tommo.

The promotional leaflet, with its semi-formal direct address, is appropriate to its persuasive purpose, inferring that the opportunity on offer is simply too good to miss (*Wake up happy...you'll feel at home...You are spoilt...The fun never stops*). The sights of Paris, and the delicacies on offer, create a holiday atmosphere designed to tempt even the most reluctant of travellers (*exhilarating waterparks...fresh seafood...breath-taking sights*).

The pupil can:

- in narratives, describe settings, characters and atmosphere.

Four of the five pieces in the collection are fictional narratives, in which settings, characters and atmosphere are plausibly described.

The pupil effectively sets the scene at the outset - in both the candid opening of the diary (*Last night was one of the worst nights of my life*) and the opening of the additional scene (*another treacherrus day*). The overcrowding, confinement and discomfort of a night in the underground shelter are convincingly portrayed (*squashed between...the room was hushed...you're not allowed out...*), whilst, in the additional scene, the writer creates a growing sense of unease (*a worried turn in his voice...something twitchy...a distressed frantic grunt or sob*), culminating in the urgency of Charlie's actions (*Charlie broke into a brisk walk, into a run, and then into a race*).

A sense of cheerless despondency threads its way throughout the narrative flashback as the writer recalls the harsh reality of endless days spent in the trenches (*awfully wet and cold...shin-high in water and mud...extremely uncomfortable...whopping blisters...the days rattled on...an awful sight*). Literary language is deployed to describe the gas attack (*snaked over to us...closer and closer...nearer and nearer...a beast of silence...As deadly as a viper...The devils daughter*); however, the overall effect is weakened through less precise choices of vocabulary in the final sentence (*a blue face...as if somebody had thrown paint over him*).

Expanded noun phrases are used to good effect in the letter, painting a picture of the child's temporary home (*a cottage with a grand garden...an everlasting lake, flowing from field to field*).

Characters are described convincingly. We see the initial sense of panic (*I was petrified*), the heightened state of anxiety (*I just lay there wondering when it would all be over*), and the eventual relief (*I have never been so happy*) of the narrator in the shelter, whilst snippets of information provide an insight into the character of the evacuee (as well as glimpses of other characters), revealing an outgoing personality (*we instantly became best friends*), a sense of humour (*the awful Andersons*), a love of animals (*my favourite is the cow*), and a hint of stoicism (*At least it's a home*).

There is a range of characterisation in the additional scene - from the distressed state of Big Joe (captured by the descriptive noun phrase *'the screams of those wretched,*

puckered lips) and his habitual actions as he attempts to comfort himself (*rocking, singing*) – to the implicit hints at the unforgiving nature of Grandma Wolf and the children's irrepressible defiance.

The pupil can:

- integrate dialogue in narratives to convey character and advance the action.

Dialogue is used in the additional scene for a range of purposes.

Molly's words (accentuated by the exclamative '*Uh!*') hint at her contempt for Mr Munnings, whilst her condemnation of Grandma Wolf portrays a feisty attitude of defiance (*Your going to go to hell you wicked lady*). By contrast, Charlie's protective stance towards Big Joe is captured through his perception that all is not well (*Something's wrong*), and this, along with Tommo's response (*Yeah, you're right. There's something twitchy going on around here*) neatly alerts the reader to the impending situation – played out by Grandma Wolf's typically aggressive outburst (*Who let that discusting mut in my house!*).

In addition to conveying character, these timely interjections support the development of the narrative and help to advance the action.

The pupil can:

- select vocabulary and grammatical structures that reflect what the writing requires, doing this mostly appropriately (e.g. using contracted forms in dialogues in narrative; using passive verbs to affect how information is presented; using modal verbs to suggest degrees of possibility).

Despite the relative informality of the pieces in the collection, choices of vocabulary and grammatical structures reflect what the writing requires mostly appropriately.

In the diary, the writer adopts a relatively informal tone, drawing on the language of everyday speech, such as the use of contracted forms (*didn't... you're...there's*), the second person (*there's nothing you can do*), repeated adverbs for emphasis (*really, really scared*), and colloquialism (*You know when...*). There is some variation in grammatical structures, such as the use of the perfect form to create time frames (*had been longing...have never been so happy*); modal verbs to convey ability (*could hear*) and possibility (*might get bombed*); fronted subordination (*Even though there were more than...*); and multi-clause sentences, although these are not wholly successful (*You know when you're squashed... Churchill?*). Despite some apt choices of vocabulary (*wailing...petrified...hushed... wondering ...longing*), occasional less precise selection weakens the overall effect of the piece (*really smells...really scared... get bombed*).

Clause structure in the letter is mostly appropriate, with limited subordination providing explanation (*When we arrived...because apparently 'I need some improvement'*), and multi-clause sentences connecting the writer's thoughts and feelings (*Right now I'm fighting back my tears but it's alright because there are millions of us so I'm not alone*). The use of single clause sentences and fragments are, to some extent, in keeping with the writer's fragile state of mind (*At least it's a home. For now.*); however, at times, they result in a slightly disjointed narrative (*Then, we instantly became best friends....At least, it's a home. For now... The smell though, puey!*).

Contracted forms are similarly used in dialogue in the additional scene to convey the speechlike quality of the language (*Something's wrong... Yeah, you're right. There's*

something...), and the short single clause sentence (*There would be no tea tonight*) aptly concludes the piece.

Single clause statements and sentence fragments dominate the narrative flashback, presenting the narrator's memories in a series of clipped individual frames. The exclamation sentence in the first paragraph emphasises the narrator's despair at the sight of his boots (*What an awful sight they are*), whilst the aside at the end of the second paragraph drives home a consequence of war for some of the soldiers (*- if you weren't blind*). Structural repetition is sometimes used to good effect (*always in mud, always in cold*); however, there is some lack of variety in the use of vocabulary (*cold...mud...muddy...brown*) and choices are not always appropriate (*a blue face as if somebody had thrown paint over him*).

The pupil uses a range of simple persuasive language techniques in the leaflet to convince the reader that a visit to the Explorers Hotel is not to be missed: use of the second person to directly address the reader (*will enable you to see...so that you can sleep...*); elliptical rhetorical questions (*Tired of your kids?...Thirsty?*); emphatic statements (*We assure you...there's everything you need...the fun never stops*); expanded noun phrases (*a city like no other...the breath-taking sights...a very reasonable cost... freshly-made beds...a stunning view...our glorious buffet restaurant...foods from all over the world*); and imperative clauses inviting the reader to participate in the delights on offer (*tuck them away...Fill up...Find a mouth-watering three-course meal*). Some apt choices of vocabulary support the purpose of the piece (*exhilarating...crammed...elaborate souvenirs...continental palate...mouth-watering...delicious desserts*).

The pupil can:

- use a range of devices to build cohesion (e.g. conjunctions, adverbials of time and place, pronouns, synonyms) within and across paragraphs.

A range of devices is used to build cohesion within and across paragraphs.

In the letter, adverbials of time support chronology, distinguishing between present (*Right now*) and past events (*At first...Then...When we arrived*). Pronouns and synonymous noun phrases work in tandem to provide coherence and avoid repetition (*there are millions of us...Lots of them...the awful Andersons...They...Mr and Mrs... Their house*). There is some use of repetition for effect (*no one picked me, no one except*), although this is not always entirely successful (*It's lovely. I wish they're lovely*).

Similarly, in the additional scene, adverbials support the pace of events and enable the reader to follow the action (*After a couple more steps...Instantly...Soon after...Around us...into the garden*), whilst pronoun references link clauses and sentences to support coherence (*we heard a noise...It was...We had to come to Big Joe...He was*).

In the narrative flashback, links within and across paragraphs are established through the use of determiners, pronouns and subject references (*My boots...They're horrendously muddy...Our boots*), although at times the latter become overly repetitive (*wet and cold day...rain...water and mud*). Cohesion is similarly achieved in the promotional leaflet through the use of ongoing reference chains (*freshly-made beds...sleep...bunkbed room...Every room; glorious buffet...foods from all over the world...currys to nuggets*), pronouns (*enable you to see...we provide...tuck them away*), and determiners (*your own kettle...Every room...Our rooms*).

Structural features also support cohesion: paragraphing in the narrative flashback supports the shift from the initial flashback to the series of subsequent reminiscences; the text in the promotional leaflet moves from the general introductory paragraph to specific

aspects of the hotel, signposted by subheadings; whilst exchanges of dialogue in the additional scene interact effectively with the voice of the narrator, supporting cohesion across the piece (*Charlie and I felt it. "Something's wrong,"*).

The pupil can:

- use verb tenses consistently and correctly throughout their writing.

Tenses are used consistently and correctly throughout the writing.

In the diary, the pupil effectively shifts between past and present forms as appropriate. The shift to the present tense in the opening of the fourth paragraph supports interrogative comment as the diary is addressed directly (*You know when...*), prior to the apt switch back to the past tense in the final sentence (*That's how I was feeling then*). The use of the simple past (*heard*), the past perfect progressive (*had been longing*), the present perfect (*have [never] been*), and the past progressive (*were sounding*) in the final paragraph support clarity of meaning.

In the letter, the simple present and present progressive convey the writer's current and ongoing emotions to the recipients (*I miss you...I'm fighting back my tears*). Shifts between present and past tense within sentences are well managed, for example, the use of the simple past to convey the Andersons' decision is juxtaposed with the use of the simple present to explain their current opinion of the new arrival (*They only chose me...I need some improvement*). The consistent use of the present tense to describe the setting (*There is an everlasting lake*) and the current state of affairs (*I love school*), is wholly appropriate.

In the additional scene, the past tense is predominant and consistent as befitting a first-person narrative of childhood events, with some appropriate shifts to the present tense in dialogue (*Something's wrong... you're right*). In the narrative flashback, consistent use of the present tense in the opening paragraph places the narrator in the midst of the scene (*The clouds are...I hope*), whereas past tense forms are used consistently to recall memories of life in the trenches (*We were always in mud...I was writing a letter...I didn't know*).

The pupil can:

- use the range of punctuation taught at KS2 mostly correctly (such as inverted commas and other punctuation to indicate direct speech).

A range of punctuation is used mostly correctly:

- commas mark fronted adverbials and clauses
 - *Even though there were more than 150,000 people in the station, the room was hushed.* [Piece A]
 - *At first, I was sitting alone...* [Piece B]
 - *Soon after, Charlie broke into a brisk walk...* [Piece C]
 - *I didn't know what it was, but I knew it wasn't good.* [Piece D]
 - *If you have a more continental palate, enjoy our lovely breakfast...* [Piece E]
- commas and brackets for parenthesis
 - *...a nice girl, Mary, sat next to me.* [Piece B]
 - *(but she is a bit lonely...)* [Piece B]

- *(if requested)* [Piece E]
- dashes to mark independent clauses
 - *You are spoilt...from pasta to chips – there’s everything you need!* [Piece E]
- colons to introduce items in a list:
 - *...choose any drink you’d like: orange juice, pepsi, milk, water and more!* [Piece E]
- speech punctuation
 - *“Something’s wrong,” Charlie said...* [Piece C]
- hyphens
 - *breath-taking sights* [Piece E]
 - *mouth-watering three-course meal* [Piece E]

The pupil can:

- spell correctly most words from the year 5/6 spelling list and use a dictionary to check the spelling of uncommon or more ambitious vocabulary.

Words from the statutory year 5/6 spelling list are correctly spelt (*apparently... unconsciously... restaurant*).

The spelling of more ambitious vocabulary is mostly correct (*wretched...precious...exhilarating*), suggesting possible use of a dictionary.

The pupil can:

- maintain legibility in joined handwriting when writing at speed.

Handwriting is joined and legible.

Why is the collection not awarded the higher standard?

The collection cannot be awarded ‘working at greater depth within the expected standard’ because the pupil does not exercise an assured and conscious control over levels of formality through manipulating grammar and vocabulary. Whilst most of the pieces in the collection are appropriately informal, there is no evidence that the pupil can manipulate the grammar and vocabulary required in more formal writing.

Vocabulary is sometimes overly repetitive and lacking in variety (*It’s lovely. I wish they’re lovely... cold...mud...muddy...brown*), whilst some less precise choices also weaken the overall effect of the writing (*really smells...really scared... get bombed*).

Clause structure is mostly appropriate, but subordination is limited and the pupil sometimes loses control of multi-clause sentences (*You know when you’re squashed... Churchill?*). Single clause sentences and fragments are sometimes used to good effect, but, at times, they result in a slightly disjointed narrative (*Then, we instantly became best friends....At least, it’s a home. For now...The smell though, puey!*).

Literary language is deployed (*snaked over to us...closer and closer...nearer and nearer...a beast of silence...As deadly as a viper...The devils daughter*); however, the overall effect is weakened through less appropriate choices of vocabulary and imagery (*a blue face...as if somebody had thrown paint over him*).