



## Creating Quality Independent Writing

At Hallsville, we have found that there is not one magic ingredient for creating quality independent writing, but many. What do we think is the most important? Reading.

We have found that the longer you linger with the text, the better the independent outcomes are. It is easy to rush through the imitation stage, especially when you get further up the school, but choosing a challenging text and taking the time to explore it are both crucial. I will use the example of a Y6 unit on Macbeth.

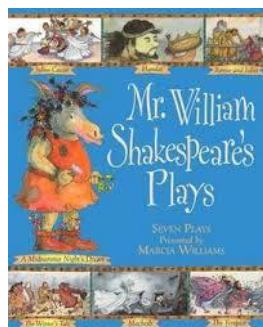
### Hearing the Story Retold

Creating storytellers is important to us and, where possible, we try to ensure that children hear stories retold without the book first of all. Anthony Glenn of *Shaking up Shakespeare* completely immersed our children in the story of Macbeth through his storytelling workshop, and after a morning filled with the drama, the children were already very familiar with the events of the story.



### Reading as a Reader

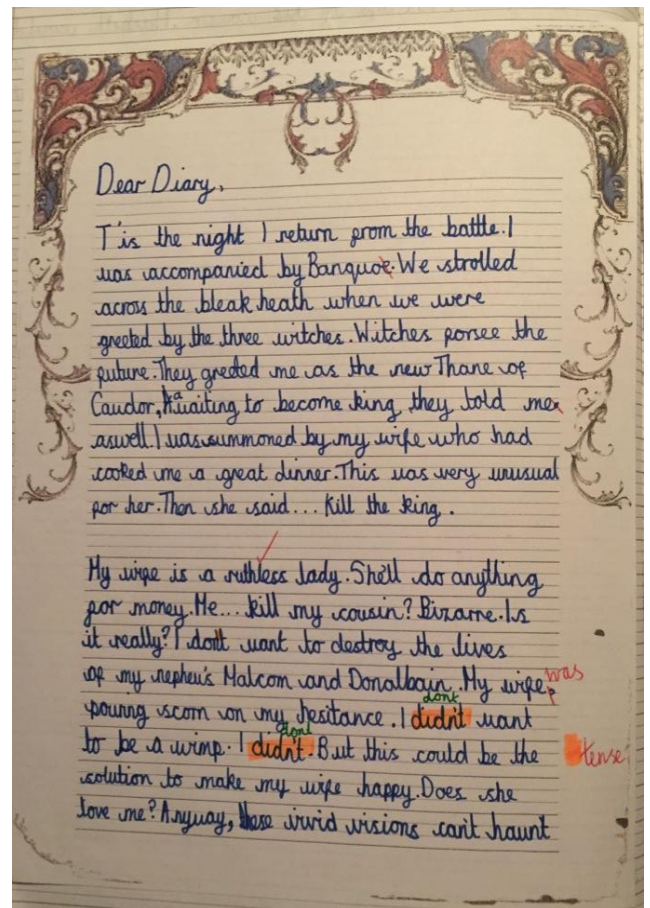
We like to start with a quality version of the text at the reading stage that ideally is in book form. For Macbeth, we used the Marcia Williams version. To ensure we can spend longer on the text at the imitation phase, we use **our** reading lessons for the first three days of the term to really explore the book and its themes. We use a three-part model to teach reading at Hallsville and we apply this model to all of our Talk for Writing texts. We always ensure our texts contain



vocabulary that will be new to the children and we teach it at this stage using Isabel Beck's three-tiered approach.

### Writing at the Reading Stage

We believe that it is important for our children to practise the skill of writing every day and the reading stage is no exception. During this phase of Macbeth, we provided the children with two opportunities to write extensively.



The first piece was a diary entry. The children wrote this from Macbeth's point of view at the point of the story when he is tormented with the idea of killing King Duncan. Not only did this give the children a chance to produce an invented piece of writing, it also allowed us to assess the children's understanding of this character and their motivations.

The second piece of writing was an argument piece. The children were asked the question of who was to blame for King Duncan's death. Was it Macbeth's fault for committing the deed? Was it Lady Macbeth's fault for putting so much pressure on her husband? Was it

the witches' fault for telling Macbeth that he would one day become king in the first place? The children used pie charts to show where the biggest proportion of the blame lied and took part in in-depth discussions, which covered subjects such as free will and predetermination. The children enjoyed sharing their own opinions during these discussions but also took the time to consider how other people's opinions might have differed to their own.

Who is Responsible for King Duncan's death?

After seeing Anthony Glenn act out the story of Macbeth, who, in your opinion, is really to blame for the death of King Duncan?

Some people believe that Lady Macbeth is the culprit of King Duncan's death because she lured Macbeth to kill his own cousin. She did this by manipulating him by saying she couldn't kill Duncan because he looked like her father. This was just a mere excuse for her not to commit the crime. When Macbeth saw the dagger and he was deciding whether he should murder the king, she poured scorn on his hesitance. This encouraged Macbeth to become a murderer.

Others argue that Macbeth was the reason King Duncan died. This is because he let his passionate wife take advantage of his innocence and he easily let her dominate.

Macbeth

M + B, 2 [flag] [crown] [arrow]  
 Inverness a X [crown] They  
 de [flag] rebels [crown]  
 M: cousin.

Suddenly, [crown] → 3 [crown] [crown] 1 [crown]  
 M ToG, [crown] 2<sup>nd</sup> ToC,  
 X, 3<sup>rd</sup> [crown] [flag], honour ↓ D. Just  
 [crown], prophesied B [crown], but [crown] [crown]. As  
 2, [crown] [crown] M ToC,  
 honour [crown] 1 [crown] prediction ✓.  
 M [crown] [crown] World M, [crown] [crown]

**Reading as a Writer**

Before we read as a writer, we always know which toolkit we were going to be focusing on and in this case, it was dialogue. We had noticed from previous narrative pieces that this was a weakness and we wanted to address it through this text. It can be difficult to build all the tools you want to use into the shortened version of the text and we often take a part of the shortened version to expand on so that we can read as a writer. In this case, we took the conversation between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth before the murder of King Duncan. The children identified the tools the writer had used and we co-constructed a dialogue toolkit with them.

**Shortening the Text**

In order for the children to be able to learn the text, we shortened the version from the book so that it was under 400 words and then used this version to create the text maps. We find creating the maps ourselves allows the children to learn the text quicker but this is a personal preference. Here is an example of the map we used for this unit of work.

Macbeth

Macbeth and Banquo, two Scottish generals living under the reign of King Duncan, were returning home to Inverness across a black heath. They had just heavily defeated an army of rebels much to the delight of the king, who was also Macbeth's cousin.

Suddenly, as if from nowhere, three hideous witches appeared. The first witch greeted Macbeth as Thane (or Lord) of Glamis, which was his correct title. The second greeted him as Thane of Cawdor, which was not, and the third as King of Scotland, an honour held by Duncan. Just before the witches vanished they also prophesied that Banquo would never be king, but that he would father kings. As the two guards stood, amazed, news arrived that the king had made Macbeth Thane of Cawdor, in honour of his victory. The first witches' prediction had come true! Macbeth sent word to his ambitious wife. "Would he, they wondered, soon be king?"

When Macbeth reached his castle, Lady Macbeth, her mind already fixed on the crown, was plotting King Duncan's death. King Duncan duly arrived with his two sons: Prince Malcolm, heir to the throne, and Donalbain. They had come to thank Macbeth for his valour in battle. Lady Macbeth played the charming hostess, but secretly urged her husband to kill the king that very night.

In preparation for the evil deed, Lady Macbeth drugged King Duncan's two guards. Macbeth, agonising over the murder, saw a phantom dagger hovering before him. "Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand?" Macbeth summoned her husband, pouring scorn on his own hesitation. "Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent underneath!" Reluctantly, Macbeth took the daggers from the drugged guards and slew the king. With their daggers bloodied, the goons were blamed. Macbeth, claiming vengeance, killed them both to safeguard his secret. Despite their display of grief, many suspected the Macbeths of the murder. The king's sons, fearing for their own lives, fled Scotland.

Macbeth, as next in line to the throne, was crowned king, fulfilling the third prophecy. Haunted by guilt, but still anxious to retain power, Macbeth worried that Banquo's descendants, not his own, would one day reign as had been foretold.

Dialogue Toolkit

New line new speech / Subordinate clause to show us Macbeth is thinking

When Macbeth reached his castle, Lady Macbeth, her mind already fixed on the crown, was plotting King Duncan's death. "King Duncan will be here soon, my love, so thank you for your victory in the battle," she hissed as she took off his cape. "Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent underneath. You have to kill him."

"You do realize what it is you ask of me, don't you?" Macbeth queried whilst stroking his wily, ginger beard. He couldn't believe that his wife, the one person he trusted, would make such a request.

"Do you not wish to be king," she retorted through gritted teeth, "and I your queen?"

Macbeth paced the stony floor with a heavy heart and said: "I can imagine nothing less for us, however, there must be some other..."

"There is not. Death is the only way to rid Scotland of the king and for you to claim what is rightfully yours," the ambitious woman interrupted whilst staring at herself in the mirror. "We have one chance and we must seize this opportunity."

Macbeth is nervous through his actions. / Adverbial Phrase show us how they are saying it.

Interruptions show us Lady Macbeth is impatient / Subordinate clause to tell us how Lady Macbeth is + own, selfish and reckless

## After the Reading Phase

Once we had read as a reader and as a writer, we were then ready to practise using our co-constructed dialogue toolkit. In the instance of Macbeth, we gave the children what the characters had said during a conversation between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and asked them to embellish around the dialogue with the characters actions, the appropriate speech words and the correct punctuation. After this, we moved into the innovation stage and boxed up the text. We decided to innovate the text by writing modern versions and what we created were stories set in the current day that involved a character desperate for power. For our innovation, we all set our stories in school and chose a teacher as our main character. When it came to the independent application, the children had many ideas of their own. Some chose to write about footballers who had desires to be the team captain, some wrote about celebrities who wanted Simon Cowell's job on the X Factor and some wrote about our own Y6 monitors who wanted to be the head boy or head girl.

The time spent exploring the text led to the children independently writing stories with ambitious plots and complex characters, which were expertly conveyed through the children's use of dialogue. We were really pleased with the outcomes and the children were so proud of their work when it came to sharing their published pieces at the end of the unit.

Practising the Toolkit - Dialogue

"Well done my love for defeating the army of rebels. I received word from the king that he will arrive here tonight to thank you in person," she spoke gently as she placed ~~his~~ hand on ~~his~~ whilst fluttering her eyes. He stared at her perplexed.

"I don't know if I can look him in the face after the witches' prophecies," uttered Macbeth, slowly shoving his wife off him, his brow furrowed in as he looked intently at his boots.

"It is your chance to seize - look like the innocent flower but be the serpent underneath," she exclaimed through gritted ~~teeth~~. Macbeth was stunned at the sudden change of his wife's behaviour.

"Are you suggesting that I..." he was interrupted by his ambitious wife once again.

"Kill him. You do want to be king, don't you?" she queried with her nostrils flared and her veins pulsing vigorously throughout her body. Macbeth was stood silently whilst his wife rebuked him about killing his cousin.

"Of course, however, there must be some other way?" Macbeth buried his head in his hand and shook his head.

"Death is the ~~new~~ only way to take what is rightfully yours. The people of Scotland will worship you," she screamed at with no remorse. Macbeth felt defeated.

☺ You have done an expert job of conveying your characters through their actions and your use of speech punctuation is almost perfect.

Macbeth Innovated Plan

Macbeth	Generic	Mr Roach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Macbeth and Banquo travelling across heath</li> <li>Two Scottish generals</li> <li>Reigned over by King Duncan in Scotland</li> <li>Celebrating - just defeated army</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MC and friend on journey</li> <li>Job title method</li> <li>Lead by superior</li> <li>Celebrating accomplishment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr Roach and <del>Macbeth</del> <del>clearing out room</del> <del>Scotland</del></li> <li>Both teachers</li> <li>Led by Mr Edg Johnson</li> <li>Celebrating holiday by having dinner</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three witches appear from nowhere</li> <li>Addressed as Thane of Glamis</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> witch - Thane of Cawdor</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> witch - King of Scotland</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> witch - Banquo father of kings</li> <li>Macbeth becomes Thane of Cawdor and writes letter to Lady Macbeth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet three strange characters with same role</li> <li>MC is referred to by correct title</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> prophecy about MC</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> prophecy about MC</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> prophecy about friend</li> <li>MC sends word to family member</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr Roach goes to toilet</li> <li>3 windows with conversation - prophecies</li> <li>Mr Roach - P.E coordinator</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> prophecy - executive head</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> prophecy - Head Jonathan father</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> prophecy - <del>Macbeth</del> <del>mother of heads</del> <del>word to brother</del> <del>Mc Jones leaves</del></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lady Macbeth begins plotting</li> <li>Tells Macbeth to act like flower but be serpent</li> <li>Duncan visits Macbeth's castle with sons</li> <li>Macbeth is hesitant</li> <li>Sees dagger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family member: plotting</li> <li>Metaphor act innocent + be bad</li> <li>Leader with MC</li> <li>MC is reluctant</li> <li>MC sees sign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bother plotting</li> <li>Be the smooth ocean and be the raging waves underneath</li> <li>Mr Roach <del>reaches for Johnson</del></li> <li>is reluctant</li> <li>sets broken chair in conversation - what it with mirror and conversation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lady Macbeth drags the guards</li> <li>Macbeth kills King Duncan</li> <li>Macbeth frames the guards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family member distracts potential witnesses</li> <li>MC kills leader</li> <li>MC frames</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graves dug for MR Walker - <del>Macbeth</del> - Alun gun</li> <li>Mr Roach rips chair back legs to break</li> <li>MC kills Mr Johnson - dies - broken neck</li> <li>frames Mr Walker</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Macduff finds King Duncan's body</li> <li>Sons flee</li> <li>Macbeth is crowned King</li> <li>Macbeth wants to be father of kings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader friend finds body</li> <li>Two family member flee</li> <li>MC turns leader</li> <li>worries about 3<sup>rd</sup> prophecy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr Walker wakes up with a foot on his chest</li> <li>plans to avoid being framed</li> <li>Mr Roach head</li> <li>wants to be father - not Jonathan</li> </ul>