

Using a Novel to Create a Toolkit for Writing

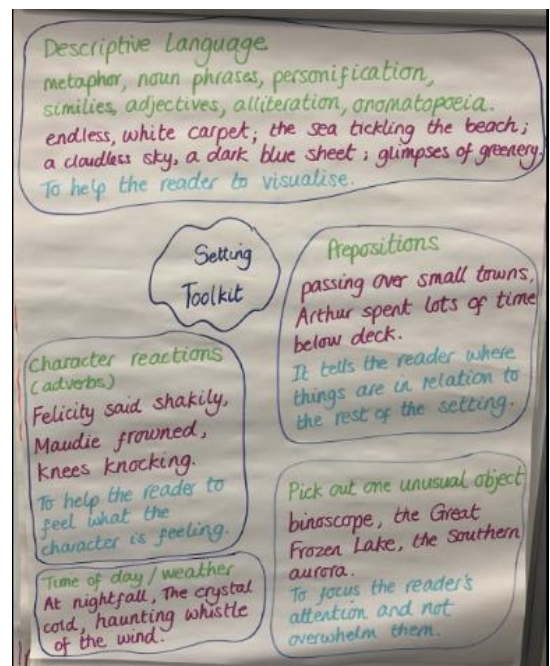
Brightstorm - A Sky-Ship Adventure by Vashti Hardy

As soon as I read Brightstorm by Vashti Hardy, I knew that I had to share it with as many people as possible. It was one of those books that you just can't put down. This fast-paced adventure story has beautiful, vivid descriptions and tackles issues such as gender stereotypes, disability awareness and dealing with loss. This novel could also be used in a range of curriculum areas, as well as inspiring writing.

I began by sharing the book in a staff meeting and bought several copies for our school library. I was then in a position to recommend the book to the pupils, girls and boys alike. I had to work out where I was going to use this incredible story within a Talk for

Writing unit. Extracts from this novel could be used to support the construction of different toolkits, including, suspense, characterisation and description. I decided that, as the book begins with a beautiful colour map of 'The Great Wide', using extracts to support writing a setting would fit perfectly.

As I planned to share extracts from the book with a class of Y3/4 children, I knew they would be able to pick up the devices used by the author to describe the different settings. However, it was my objective that the children understood why such devices were used to engage the reader and help them visualise the scene. What I didn't want was to end up with setting

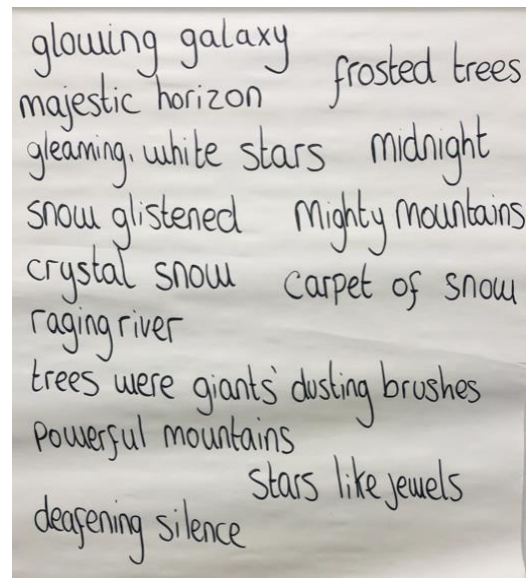


descriptions with lists of noun phrases and similes. My end goal was for all the children to write a shared setting description, using Brightstorm as inspiration. They would then go on to innovate the model and create their own effective description of a setting.

This is an outline of the lessons I used to achieve this objective with my Year 3/4 class. This lesson could be amended to suit any KS2 year group. We had started a Talk for Writing unit where the children were writing their own adventure stories, with a focus on setting. Extracts from Brightstorm were used to help the children create a settings toolkit. We pulled out the features together, found examples and then decided how each device was used to affect, inform and engage the reader. This text was absolutely packed with examples so I photocopied the most useful pages for the children to use.

The Starting Point

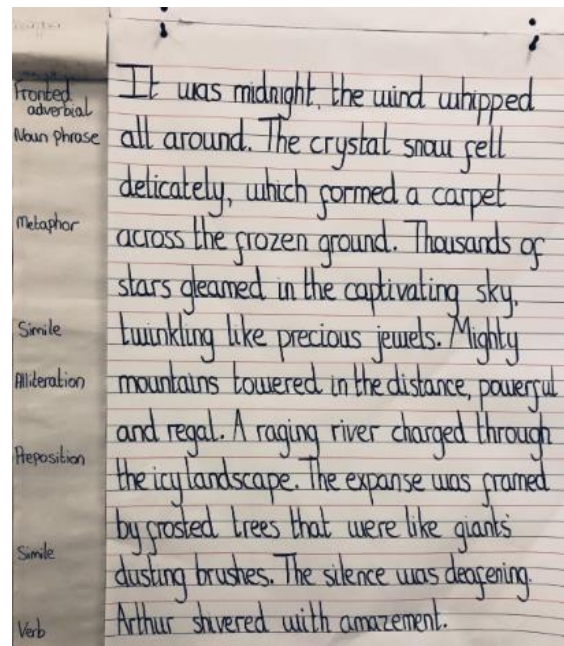
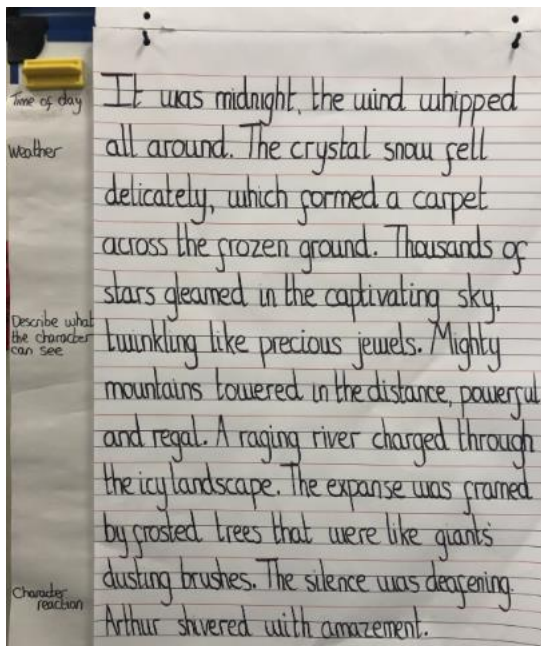
To begin our shared write, we started with the image below. This was taken from Vashti Hardi's Pinterest Board. On her website she shares pictures she used to help create the different scenes in Brightstorm. We then collected words and phrases to describe the picture, which was written up on flipchart paper. The children used the settings toolkit to help them generate their ideas. Any vocabulary the children found particularly effective they could write into their magpie books. These are small exercise books that the children use to store away ideas they have thought of, borrowed from other children or taken from their wider reading.



Shared Write

We then started our shared write and I began to model how to use all of the ideas ideas and put them together into an effective paragraph. We decided we wanted to tell the reader the

time of day first, followed by what the weather was like. We then wanted to describe what could be seen in the setting and end with a character reaction. Below are the pictures of our shared write. The first picture shows our setting description with how we informed the reader to the left hand side. In the second picture, the flap on the left shows the grammar that we have used. This way we can show how we are affecting the reader and what grammar we have used to create this.



Innovation and Short Burst Writing

The children were then ready to innovate the model and create their own setting descriptions.

Alongside this unit, the children were creating their own fantasy world map, based on the map of 'The Great Wide' in Brightstorm. As a warm up we played 'City of Stars' where the children think of places and abstract nouns then put them together to create possible names of places. To the right is a list of some of our favourite place names. The children then created a map and 'maggied' some of the place names for this. They then chose one place on their map and drew a more detailed

Place	of	Abstract Noun
River	of	Dreams
Hills	of	Silence
Desert	of	Souls
Caves	of	Darkness
Sea	of	Memories
Mountains	of	Magic
Jungle	of	Life
Sand Dunes	of	Doom
Forest	of	Hope

picture of the scene. This gave the children a new place to use for their own setting description, which they wrote in a short burst write session. This was very successful and children were able to articulate why they were using each technique, rather than trying to use them all in a list.



The Outcome

Now that the children are skilled at writing setting descriptions, they can use this knowledge to help write any story type. The children could write setting descriptions for other places on their maps and this toolkit would be relevant for any fictional writing. The children used their magpie books to record ideas and vocabulary so they will always have a record of ideas they can use in the future.

Brightstorm was an amazing novel to use for setting description but it could be used for so much more. For example, suspense writing, any descriptive writing and it also lends itself to be used as a stimulus for non-fiction writing. It's a novel the children loved and I'm sure many classrooms will enjoy using it in the future.

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