

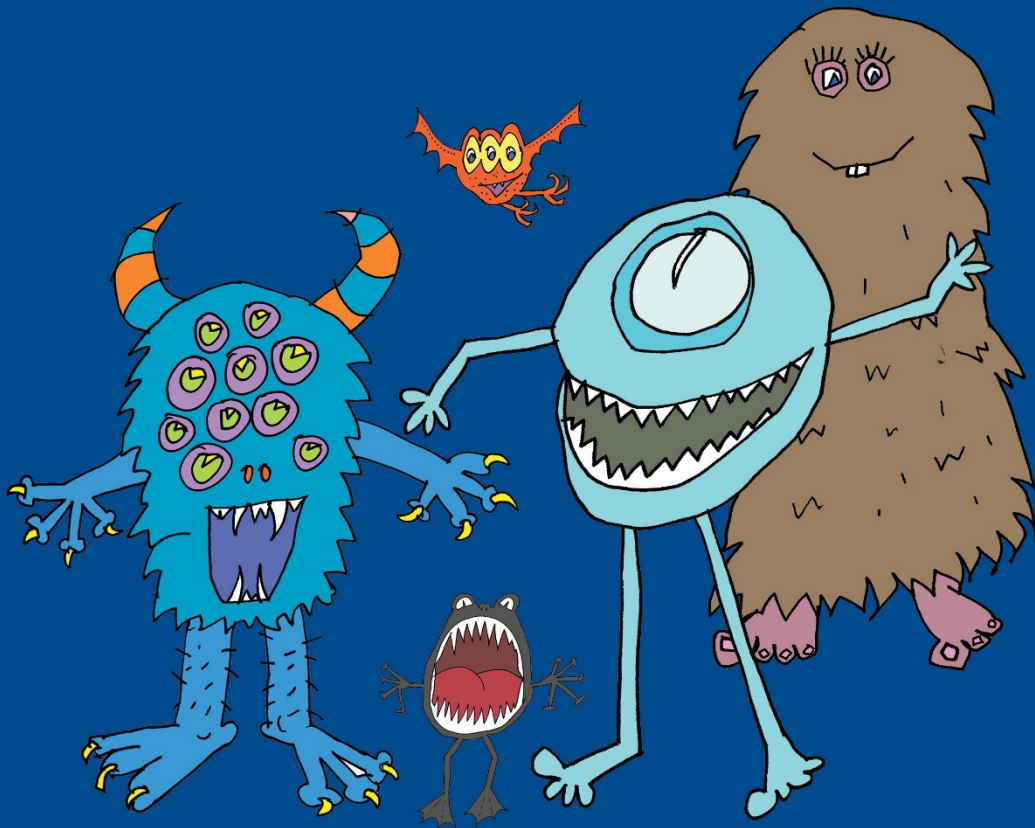


TalkforWriting™

Talk for Writing Home-school booklet

# Monsters

by James Walker



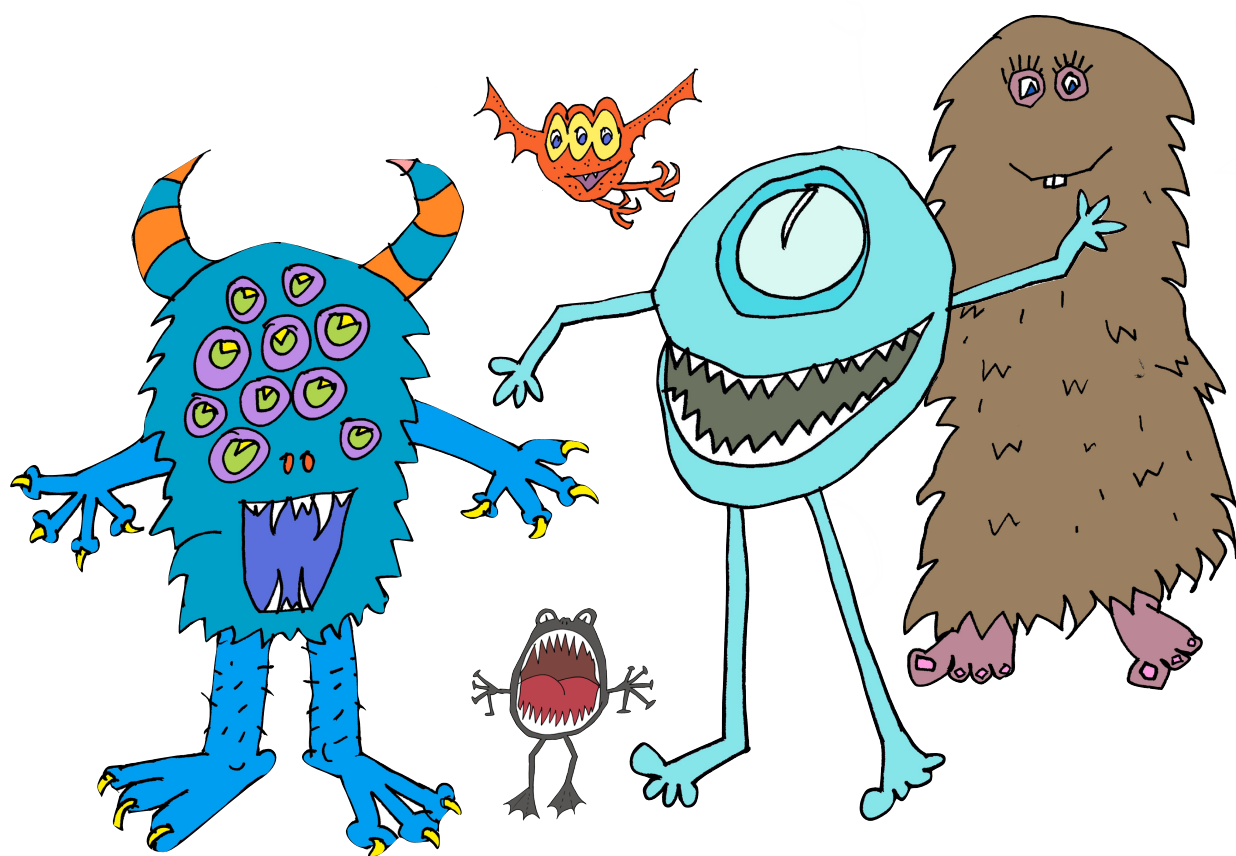
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# Monsters

A workbook  
by James Walker



## Professor Behemoth's Monsterology



World famous monster expert Professor Behemoth is putting together a **Monsterology** of different types of monsters and beasts. He has spent years researching all sorts of weird and wonderful monsters and has a wide variety for his encyclopedia. Your job, in this booklet, is to provide the professor with another entry for his book; you'll have to use your imagination unless you have actually seen a monster!



### Information with a touch of 'faction'

In this workbook, we are going to be writing an information text about a made-up monster or beast. Even though this is a non-fiction genre of writing, we can still be inventive and creative. I like calling it **FACTION** when teaching it (the form fits information about facts but the content is fiction).

To get us started, here is a model of a fictional information text about swamp monsters. As you are listening, you might want to think about which type of monster you will write about. Have a read below and then listen to me read it aloud here:

<https://soundcloud.com/talkforwriting/swamp/s-28ED2KJCK6n>



## Swamp Monsters

Do you ever wonder what might be lurking in the murky swamps of our world? Rumour has it that the fabled swamp monster is not just a creature mentioned in myth and legend but it actually exists! Now is your chance to find out all that has been discovered about this unique being.

Swamp monsters are rumoured to inhabit the most remote and humid swamps of the Amazon rainforest. Living in total solitude, it is believed that there is, perhaps, only one swamp monster on our planet, making it a mystery how they reproduce. Dr Patrick Thurston - world renowned monsterologist from Bristol University - could perhaps be the only living person ever to see this magnificent creature: "You cannot believe the pure majesty of the swamp monster. They seem as if they are 'one with the swamp' living in pure harmony with their habitat."

Swamp monsters don't just live in swamps they resemble them. Being experts in camouflage, they are indistinguishable from their environment. Their bodies are made from this environment: limbs of gnarled branches, incredibly long fingers and glowing, iridescent hair which changes colour to match their mood. The most incredible thing about a swamp monster is that they have translucent breathing tubes meaning they can stay underwater indefinitely but continue to breathe.

Have you ever wondered what a swamp monster eats? Their diet consists of herons, rats and even alligators which they hypnotise with their ever-staring, haunting eyes. Transfixed, any animal is helpless to the swamp monster who squeezes the life from them with its lean, powerful limbs. The swamp monster's tongue has the ability to taste the air; this allows it to identify when its prey is close by.

If you are now tempted to try and spot a swamp monster, we advise extreme caution! This beautiful but deadly creature should be left in solitude to be studied only by experts trained in monsterology.



## Activity 1: Match the vocabulary to its definition

You might not know all of the vocabulary that is in our model text. Don't worry as this activity will help! Match the word to the correct definition and then check at the end of the booklet to see if you have them all right.

Word	Definition
myth	not distinguishable
translucent	the state of living alone in seclusion
indistinguishable	agreement or harmonious relations
resemble	displaying lustrous colours like those of a rainbow
renowned	a traditional or legendary story
majesty	rugged, bent, twisted or weather-beaten
iridescent	to be like or similar to
harmony	permitting light to pass through but any objects on the other side are not clearly visible
gnarled	to hold motionless with amazement
solitude	supreme greatness
transfixed	to be celebrated or famous

You could magpie some of these words and use them in your own writing later on.



## Activity 2: Underlying pattern of information texts

Let's go back to the model text. I have picked out the underlying pattern for you by boxing up the structure for you; this will help guide your writing.

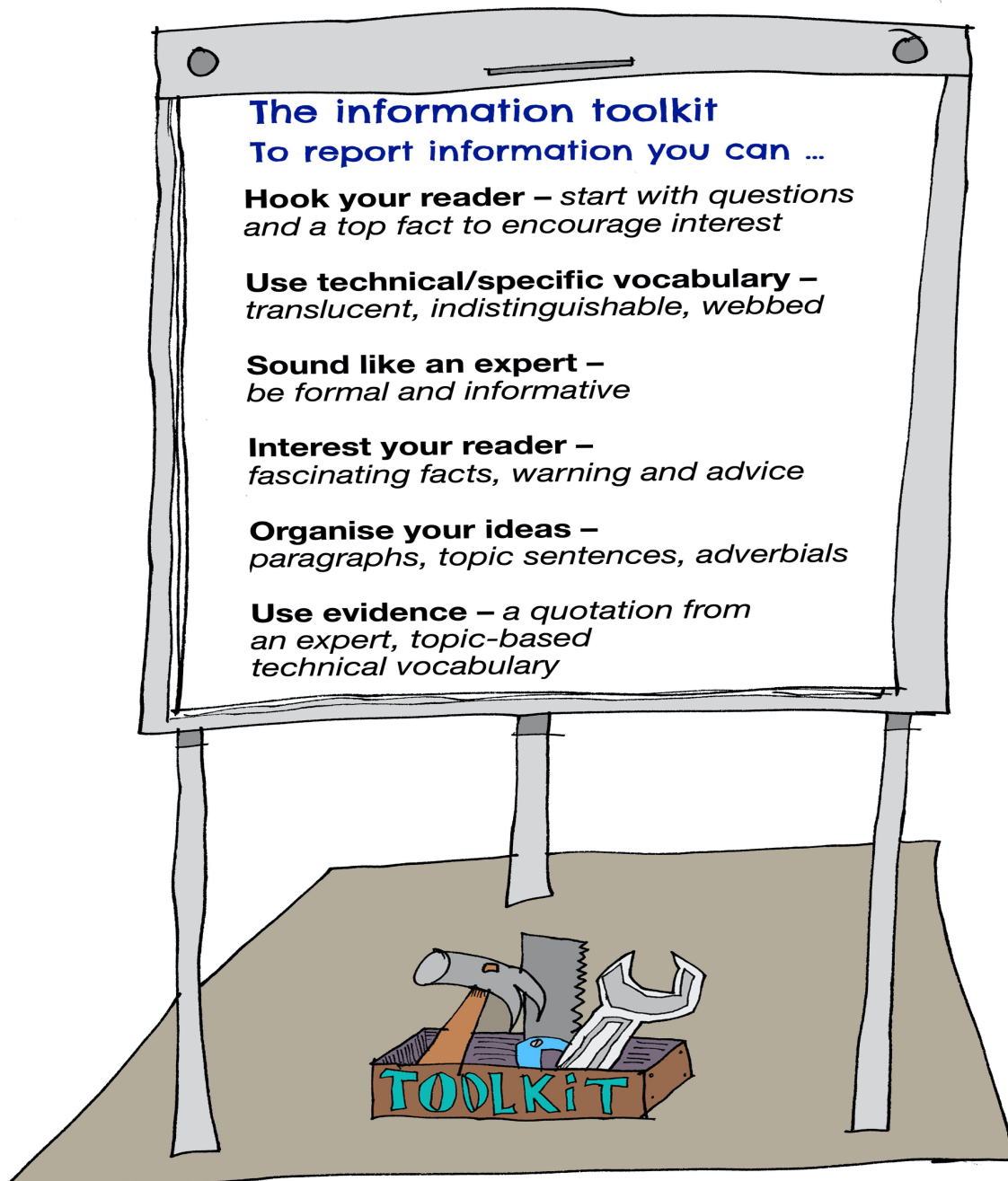
Remember this is just a guide and, if you are confident, you could add in extra paragraphs, different sections, diagrams etc.

Title	Swamp Monsters
<b>Opening hook</b> – to make the reader interested in finding out more. Fascinating fact for interest	Do you ever wonder what might be lurking in the murky swamps of our world? Rumour has it that the fabled swamp monster is not just a creature mentioned in myth and legend but it actually exists! Now is your chance to find out all that has been discovered about this unique being.
<b>Habitat</b> Information about the area the creature lives in	Swamp monsters are rumoured to inhabit the most remote and humid swamps of the Amazon rainforest. Living in total solitude, it is believed that there is, perhaps, only one swamp monster on our planet, making it a mystery how they reproduce. Dr Patrick Thurston - world renowned monsterologist from Bristol University - could perhaps be the only living person ever to see this magnificent creature: "You cannot believe the pure majesty of the swamp monster. They seem as if they are ' <i>one with the swamp</i> ' living in pure harmony with their habitat."
<b>Appearance</b> Information about what the creature looks like including evidence	Swamp monsters don't just live in swamps they resemble them. Being experts in camouflage, they are indistinguishable from their environment. Their bodies are made from this environment: limbs of gnarled branches, incredibly long fingers and glowing, iridescent hair which changes colour to match their mood. The most incredible thing about a swamp monster is that they have translucent breathing tubes meaning they can stay underwater indefinitely but continue to breathe.
<b>Diet</b> Information about what the creature eats	Have you ever wondered what a swamp monster eats? Their diet consists of herons, rats and even alligators which they hypnotise with their ever-staring, haunting eyes. Transfixed, any animal is helpless to the swamp monster who squeezes the life from them with its lean, powerful limbs. The swamp monster's tongue has the ability to taste the air; this allows it to identify when its prey is close by.
<b>Warnings and advice</b> to the reader	If you are now tempted to try and spot a swamp monster, we advise extreme caution! This beautiful but deadly creature should be left in solitude to be studied only by experts trained in monsterology.

## Activity 3: Let's look at the toolkit



Before we start thinking about our own ideas for our monster, we need to look closely at the text and see what writing tools/tips/tricks the author has used so we can do the same in ours. Here is a toolkit I have made for writing information texts.



## Activity 4: Formality



You might have heard your teachers talking about ‘being formal’. The best way to explain it in this type of writing is to: **SOUND LIKE AN EXPERT.**

Imagine you are David Attenborough narrating a TV show or your writing will feature in a non-fiction book from the library. We don’t need to make our reader laugh, persuade them or in fact give any opinion at all. Our main job is to give information as precisely as possible.

Here are two texts. Spot which is formal and which is informal!

- 1) Swamp monsters have a proper rancid diet. They love to eat all sorts of weird and unusual stuff like slugs - uuurrrggghhh! Also, they glug down the dirty swamp water by the gallon!
- 2) It has been discovered that swamp monsters have an unusual diet. In the main, these creatures are known to consume only gastropods. In addition, they have a preference for water from their swamps as it contains essential minerals.

Which one is **informal** and why?

Which one is **formal** and why?

Now decide whether these are formal or informal sentences?

- ★ I really want you to come to my party – please come!  
formal/informal
- ★ Henry VII didn’t like his wife – he chopped off her head!  
formal/informal
- ★ The teacher-pleaser machine is a state-of-the-art contraption.  
formal/informal
- ★ Your presence is requested at the Queen’s celebration.  
formal/informal
- ★ At 6:00pm on the 24<sup>th</sup> December Mr Jones was arrested by the police and detained at the local police station.  
formal/informal

Challenge: can you re-write each sentence the other way round so the formal ones become informal and the informal ones become formal!

## Activity 5: Topic sentences

You might have noticed that the model text does not have sub-headings. Instead, in Year 6, we can use TOPIC SENTENCES. These are like little introductions to the paragraph allowing you to add more detail than you would in a simple heading.

**Examples from our model:**

Swamp monsters don't just live in swamps they resemble them.

This topic sentence introduces our APPEARANCE paragraph

Have you ever wondered what a swamp monster eats?

This topic sentence introduces our DIET paragraph and uses another question to interest the reader.

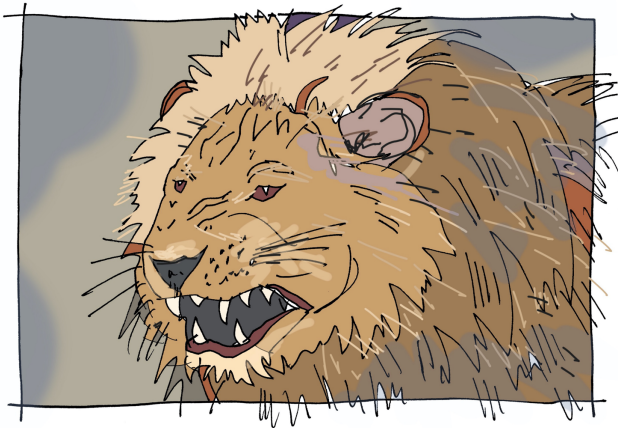
Swamp monsters are rumoured to inhabit the most remote and humid swamps of the Amazon rainforest.

This topic sentence introduces the paragraph which is about DIFFERENT SPECIES and HABITAT.

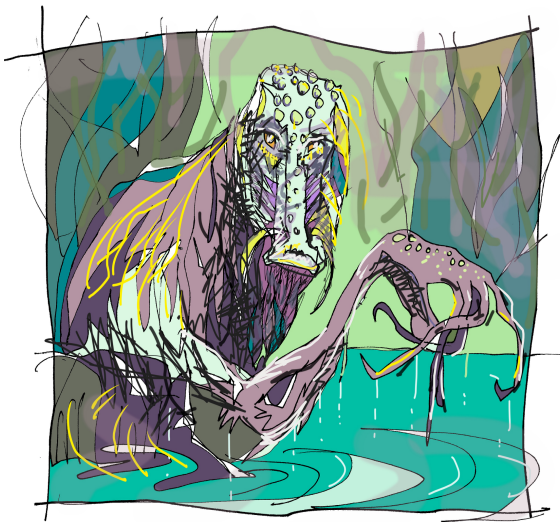


★ Use these examples to have a go at writing some topic sentences of your own for the topics below





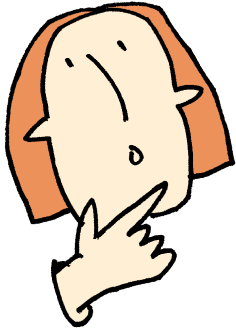
Topic sentences for the appearance, diet and habitat of a lion:



Topic sentences for the habitat, diet, and appearance of a swamp monster:

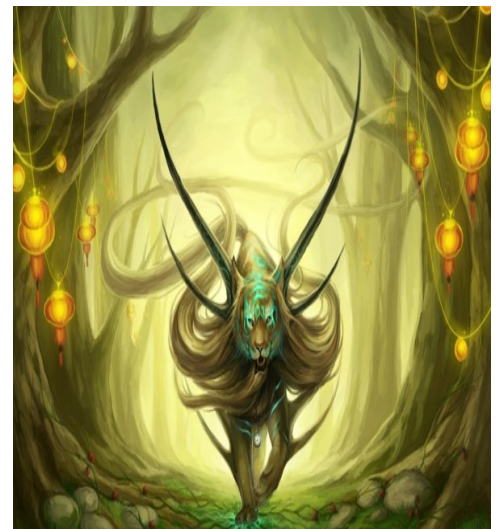
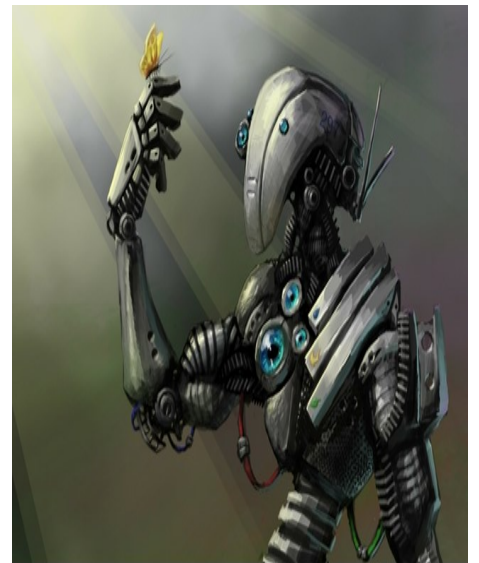


Topic sentences for the appearance, powers, enemies or abilities of a storm giant:



## Activity 6: New ideas

Now comes the fun part! You need to write an information text about a monster beast for Professor Behemoth's Monsterology. The choices are endless and I am sure that you already have an idea about what you might do but here are some pictures that might inspire you.



- ★ Coming up with ideas! I have given you a few ideas for what your different paragraphs could be about below and I am sure that you can think of others. Use the space to get as many ideas down as you can or use separate paper

### **Appearance**

-  
-  
-  
-

### **Diet**

-  
-  
-  
-

### **Habitat**

-  
-  
-  
-

### **Abilities**

-  
-  
-  
-

### **Friends/Enemies**

-  
-  
-  
-

### **Weapons/Powers**

-  
-  
-  
-

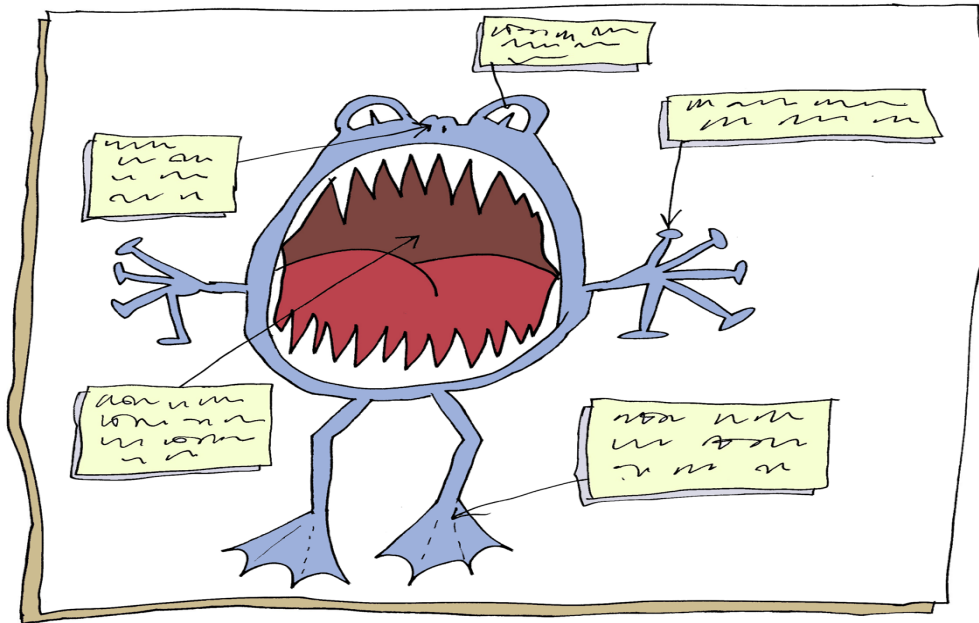
### **Quotations from an expert**

-  
-  
-  
-

### **??????????**

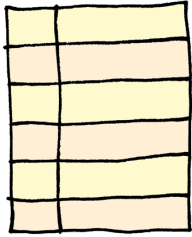
-  
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## Activity 7: Draw your monster



To help you get a real picture of what your monster is like, have a go at sketching them.

## Activity 8: Planning

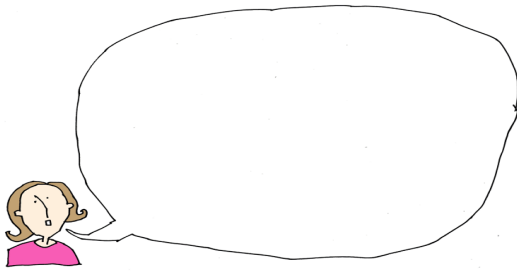


Now we are going to organise our ideas into a box-up planner to help structure your writing. Remember you can pick different topics than appearance, habitat and diet and also you can have your quotation in a different section. I have left the right-hand column blank as you might want to have 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 different sections so draw your own lines!

<b>Structure of monster information text</b>	<b>Your ideas</b>
<b>Title of monster</b>	
<b>Opening hook</b> – to make the reader interested in finding out more. <i>Fascinating fact for interest</i>	
<b>Habitat</b> <i>Information about the area the creature lives in</i>	
<b>Appearance</b> <i>Information about what the creature looks like including evidence</i>	
<b>Diet</b> <i>Information about what the creature eats</i>	
<b>Warnings and advice to the reader</b>	



## Activity 9: Talk your plan through



It is really important to have a good read through your plan to make sure that it makes sense. Why not read it aloud to someone in your house and see if they have any suggestions for how to improve it.

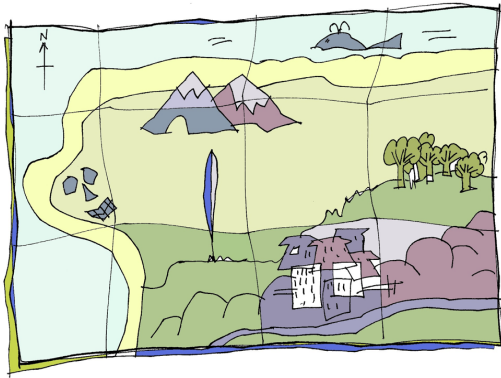
## Activity 10: It's time to write your monster report

To help you with your writing, you have lots of different things to help you:

- ✓ The original text about monsters
- ✓ The toolkit for reporting information
- ✓ Your ideas page
- ✓ Your diagram
- ✓ The vocabulary we learned from the model
- ✓ And most importantly, your plan

Draft your ideas on one piece of paper and edit it so you really like the words you have chosen. Read it through again to check spelling and punctuation and then write your final draft.

## Activity 11: Draw a map of your monster's land



One of my favourite things about reading children's books is when you find a map right at the beginning of the land in the story. I keep referring to the map as they talk about the different locations and settings in the story. I am sure that you have done the same. I thought it would be a great idea for you to design and draw your own map of where your giant lives.

- ★ Step 1: draw the outline of your map
- ★ Step 2: fill in the landmarks: trees, rivers, boulders, mountains, volcano, cities, sea, swamps
- ★ Step 3: make up names for the different areas of your map
- ★ Step 4: stain the map to make it look old by using a used (and cool) tea bag to turn the paper brown. You don't need to get it that wet for it to change colour
- ★ Step 5: When it is dry, cut or rip the edges of the paper to make it look old and worn. A small hole in the middle of the map can look great



## Activity 12: Giving feedback

An important part of writing is giving feedback to the writer. Normally, in school, this is probably done by your teacher and sometimes by other children in your class. Read my paragraph of information writing underneath.

Good work 

Correct up any errors and then leave me some feedback based on the toolkit from earlier in the booklet. Is it formal enough? Is there a topic sentence? Is it interesting? Does it engage the reader?

### Diet:

Ogres clubs there pray to death and then feast on the carcasses. Many ogres keep the bones and use them to festoon their caves; skulls being their main bone of choice! Disgusting isn't it. Their favourite thing to eat are definitely otter or beaver cub's which they cruelly take from their mothers.

Feedback:

## Activity 13: Extension writing choices

- ★ You are not finished yet! There are lots of different bits of writing you could do if you are enjoying this unit:
- ★ Write another report about a real animal (lion, great white shark)
- ★ Write another report about a different beast (vampire, ogre)
- ★ Write a fact-file for your monster
- ★ Write a newspaper report about a monster on the loose
- ★ Write a set of Instructions for How to Trap a Monster
- ★ Write a discussion text like Should Monsters be Allowed to Live on Earth?

## Activity 14: WANTED Poster

Imagine the monster or beast you have written about is on the loose! Design a WANTED poster calling on the public to help hunt down and capture them before it is too late. You might want to include:

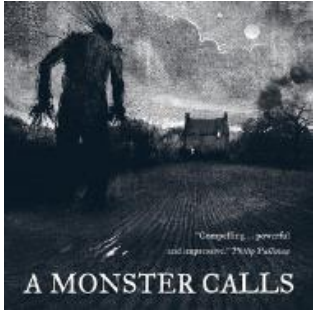

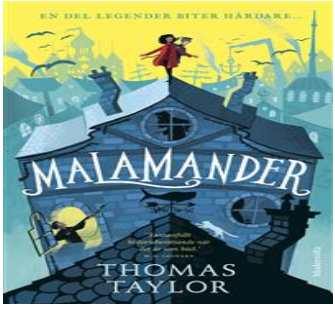
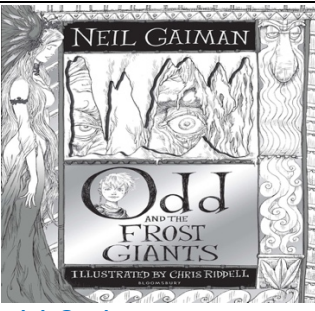

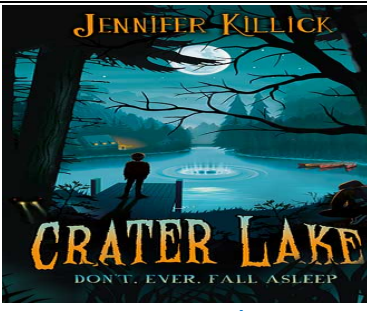
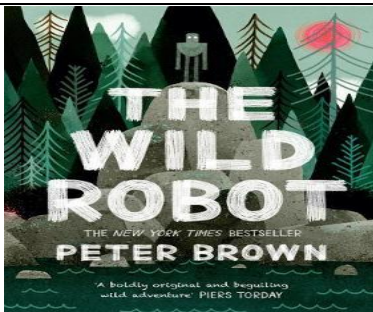
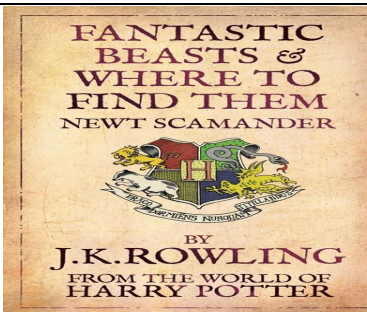
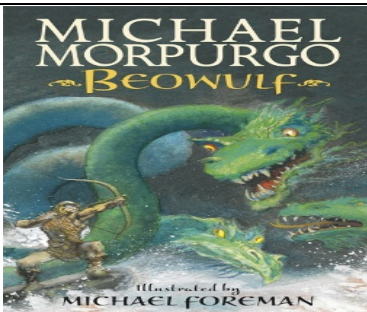
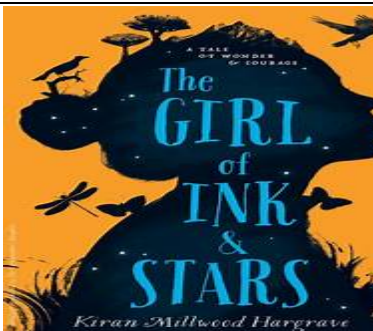
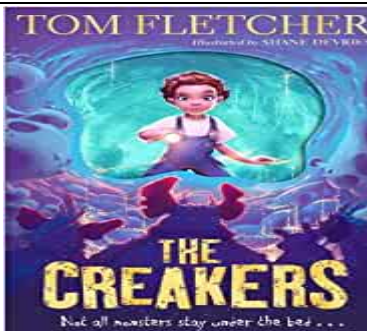
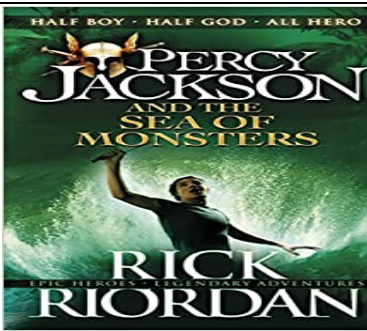
- ★ A reward
- ★ Who to contact if they see the monster
- ★ What the monster has done – why they are dangerous
- ★ Where they were last spotted





## Book recommendations

Below are books that I would recommend for Year 6 that feature a monster or a beast. If you have read some of them, why not do a book review?

 <p><b>A Monster Calls</b> by Patrick Ness</p>	 <p><b>Skellig</b> by David Almond</p>	 <p><b>Malamander</b> by Thomas Taylor</p>
 <p><b>Odd &amp; the Frost Giants</b> by Neil Gaiman</p>	 <p><b>The Iron Man</b> by Ted Hughes</p>	 <p><b>Crater Lake</b> by Jennifer Killick</p>
 <p><b>The Wild Robot</b> by Peter Brown</p>	 <p><b>Fantastic Beasts &amp; Where to Find Them</b> by JK Rowling</p>	 <p><b>Beowulf</b> by Michael Morpurgo</p>
 <p><b>The Girl of Ink &amp; Stars</b> by Kiran Millwood Hargrave</p>	 <p><b>The Creakers</b> by Tom Fletcher</p>	 <p><b>Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monster</b> by Rick Riordan</p>



If you enjoyed this activity, why not tune in to the creative writing show Radioblogging each morning at 9:30am with Pie Corbett. Visit [RadioBlogging.net](http://RadioBlogging.net)

I hope you have enjoyed working through this workbook. Please share any work produced by tweeting me @MrWalkerPrimary

James Walker a Year 6 Teacher and TalkForWriting Trainer from Bristol.

### **Answers to vocabulary**

myth	– a traditional or legendary story
translucent	– permitting light to pass through but objects on the other side are not clearly visible
indistinguishable	– not distinguishable
resemble	– to be like or similar to
renowned	– to be celebrated or famous
majesty	– supreme greatness
iridescent	– displaying lustrous colours like those of a rainbow
harmony	– agreement or harmonious relations
gnarled	– rugged, bent, twisted or weather-beaten
solitude	– the state of living alone in seclusion
transfixed	– to hold motionless with amazement

### **Answers to formality**

- ★ I really want you to come to my party - please come!  
formal/**informal**
- ★ Henry VII didn't like his wife – he chopped off her head!  
formal/**informal**
- ★ The teacher-pleaser machine is a state-of-the-art contraption.  
**formal**/informal
- ★ Your presence is requested at the Queen's celebration.  
**formal**/informal
- ★ At 6:00pm on the 24<sup>th</sup> December Mr Jones was arrested by the police and detained at the local police station.  
**formal**/informal



**James Walker is a teacher who also works as a trainer with Talk for Writing to help schools develop the approach.**

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Prepared for online distribution by Nick Batty**

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**Thanks to Jon Ralphs for the cartoons: [jonralphs.com](http://jonralphs.com)**

