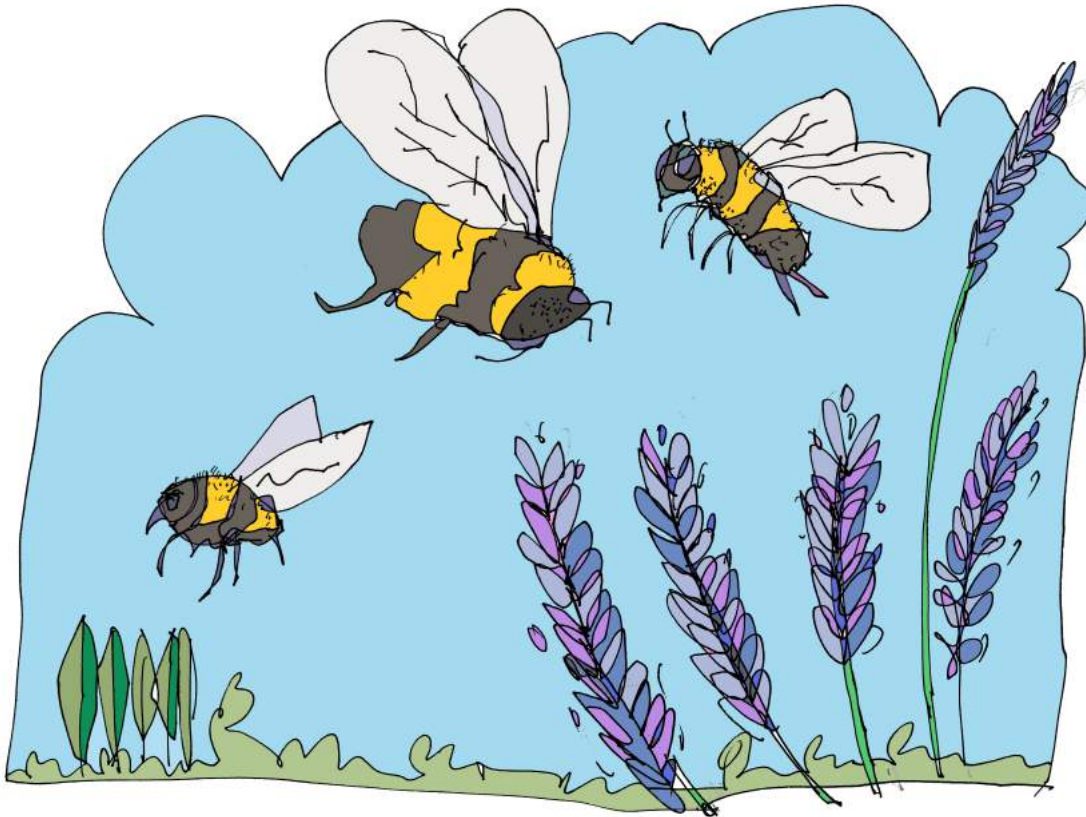




## Bee Our Friend: Appreciating Bees



### Introduction and purpose of unit:

This Talk for Writing English unit aims to engage children in reading, talking and writing about bees. The unit focuses on the crucial part bees play in pollinating many of the foods we currently rely on to survive and involves the children in creating an environment in which bees can thrive. Remember to warn the children that bees sting and check that no one is allergic to bees.

**By the end of the unit, pupils should:**

- **know that** bees play a central role in supporting life on earth and be able to explain simply why bees matter using appropriate vocabulary
- **have improved their observational writing skills** by describing bees engagingly
- **know how to write instructions** clearly by using the key tools for instruction writing.



## Recommended reads to support the unit:



- *Why do we need bees?* by Katie Daynes and Christine Pym
- *Bee & Me* by Alison Jay
- *Bee* by Patricia Hegarty and Britta Teckentrup
- *Omar, the Bees and Me* by Helen Mortimer and Katie Cottle
- *Lift and Look Bees* by Tracy Cottingham
- *Bees: A lift-the-flap eco book* by Carmen Saldana
- *Usborne Peep Inside a Beehive* by Anna Milbourne & Stephanie Fizer Coleman
- *The Honeybee* by Kirsten Hall and Isabelle Arsenault

## Before the unit:

As the children might be coming to the unit with very little knowledge of bees, you could set the children a home-learning project before starting the unit. We set a similar project the half term before



teaching the unit and allowed the children creative freedom to communicate their learning. Some made model bees and beehives, some created fact books, while other planted seeds, drew and labelled diagrams of bees or created miniature bee gardens. You can see some examples of their work here.



### Cold task 1:

In order to start the unit of work, we need to find out what the children already know so that we can see what we need to teach them and can measure their progress. Begin by asking the children to complete the following sentence:

**Bees are important because ...**

Once the children have jotted their ideas, you could show the following clip from *Newsround* that was shown on *World Bee Day 2020* to give feedback and generate further discussion on the subject.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/44222859>

Flipchart up all the reasons why bees are so important for the world.



### Cold task 2:

For the second part of this cold task, ask the children to write a simple set of instructions for something that is familiar to them. It could be something they do every day, such as brushing their teeth, or it could be something they have recently experienced in another lesson in school, such as making a sandwich in design and technology or making a bird feeder in science.





### The hook:

Listed below are potential ways that you could start the project to get children excited about bees. The hook can be as simple or as elaborate as you like, but the more memorable and engaging it is the better.

- Visit a local farm with bee hives – a quick Google search reveals several around the country that offer school visits
- Invite a local beekeeper into school
- Make a fruit salad using fruits that are pollinated by bees, e.g. apples, blueberries, strawberries, melon, oranges, peaches and pears
- Have a picnic with fruits pollinated by bees
- Create a display in the classroom with bee-friendly flowers and bee-pollinated fruits
- Carry out a bee survey in the school grounds or go on a bee hunt in a local park
- Watch videos of bees in class



**Drama opportunities:** The subject of bees offers some fantastic opportunities for bringing drama into the classroom.

Here are just a few ideas that you could use to further deepen the children's understanding on the topic.

- Learn the dances bees perform to direct the other bees to flowers – round dance and waggle dance
- Act out the process of pollination
- Interview a bee expert – teacher in role
- Role play the jobs different bees do in the hive
- Act out the lifecycle of a bee

**Choral poetry:** The book *Bee* by Patricia Hegarty and Britta Teckentrup provides a wonderful opportunity for some choral poetry. It is also an opportunity for children to learn about, and act out, the important process of pollination. You could read the book with the children and choose a section to learn and perform. Alternatively, if you have multiple classes in the year group, each class could learn a different part and come together to perform it. There is plenty of opportunity for bringing in props to aid understanding and for adding music to support the children's performance of the poem.

## Vocabulary



During the unit, the children will be exposed to many unfamiliar words. It will be important to do some teaching around these if we want the children to be able to talk and write confidently about bees. The words below are just an idea of some of the words you might teach. They have been categorised into tier two and tier three vocabulary. The tier three words are the technical words that the children would only use when talking about the subject of bees. The tier two words are those that have greater utility and can be used when talking and writing about a range of subjects – for this reason, these will be the ones we will spend most of our time teaching. Many of the tier two words below have been taken from the book *Bee* by Patricia Hegarty and Britta Teckentrup.

**Tier 2 words:** *thrumming, foraging, to-ing and fro-ing, gathering*

**Tier 3 words:** *hive, nectar, pollen, drone, honeybee, bumblebee*

When teaching new words to children, be careful to use child-friendly definitions to teach the meanings and use games to deepen their understanding. Here are some ideas of games you might play, many of which are taken from the book *Bringing Words to Life* by Isobel Beck et al.

- Example/non-example – Which sentence is an example of *foraging*?
- Acting words out – What does *thrumming* sound like? Can you show me *to-ing* and *fro-ing*?
- Finish the sentence – The bee was *beating* its wings because ...
- Using pictures – Which picture shows *beating, gathering, foraging*?
- Add the words to a sheet of paper for the washing line, plus pictures and photographs to deepen understanding.



## Observational writing

There are so many wonderful close-ups of bees to be found online and these lend themselves so well to observational writing. Choose some of these images (the one below is from Pexels) and follow the process outlined below to support the children in doing some of their own observational pieces



Look at an image of a bumblebee on the left above. First, what can you see? Generate vocabulary with the children relating to the bee's physical appearance (*body, eyes, legs, wings, etc.*). Shared write a poem about a bumblebee. The children could then repeat this for a honeybee (the other picture here). Possible underlying structures could be a spine poem or a riddle. The words in blue in the examples on the next page are the words that the children can recycle and use to structure their own poem.

The writing techniques focused on here are:

- Making every word count – so choose each word carefully to help the reader picture what you are describing
- Include some alliteration to help the words sound good
- Include a simile (a comparison) again to help the reader picture what is being described.

When the children write their own versions, they should make sure they use these features.



### Spine Poem

The bumblebee's fat, furry body  
is as round as can be

Its enormous eyes are like  
satellite dishes

Fuzzy legs are dusted in pollen

The bee's delicate, lacy wings  
beat the air.

### Riddle

My fat, furry body is as round as  
can be

My enormous eyes are like  
satellite dishes

My fuzzy legs collect the dusty  
pollen from colourful flowers

My delicate wings beat the air  
and make a buzzing sound.

**What am I?**



### Warming up the tune of instructional writing

Although children in Year 1 will be familiar with hearing instructions being given to them on a regular basis, it is likely that this will be the first time they will be experiencing writing a set of their own. It will, therefore, be important to play games with the children to immerse them in the tune of instructional writing if we want them to be successful at writing their own. Here are a few ideas of ways you could do this.

**Muddled instructions:** Provide the children with a set of instructions that are muddled. If they made a fruit salad as their hook, it could be the instructions for how to make a fruit salad. If they learned to perform the waggle dance, the instructions could be based on the dance. The children can then reorganise them as fast as possible.

Chop the apple, pear and strawberries.

First, wash your hands.

Finally, drizzle your fruit salad with honey.

Mix the chopped fruit together.

Peel the apple and pear.

## Practise the art of giving instructions

Provide the children with plenty of opportunities at the start of lessons to practise giving instructions orally, e.g. You have one minute to give your partner instructions for getting to the playground/peeling a banana etc. Begin banking useful words, such as imperative verbs and time signposts, for the working wall so that the children can draw on these when they write their own instructions.

## Make a bee bath



Use the instructions represented by the text map on the next page to make a bee bath. It is likely that the concept of a bee bath will be quite abstract to Y1 children so, providing them with this concrete experience will help them greatly when it comes to internalising the model text.

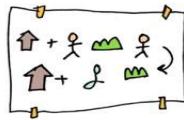
## Internalising the tune of the model text

For those of you who are familiar with the TfW approach, you will know that the best way to help children have the words and phrases that they need to talk and write in the mode of the model text is for them to internalise the text from a text map before seeing it in written form. If you are










not familiar with this, but want to know how to do it, then look at this film of Pie Corbett explaining it: [www.youtube.com/embed/p\\_NI2jD-5Es](http://www.youtube.com/embed/p_NI2jD-5Es) or buy *Creating Storytellers and Writers* from [www.talkforwritingshop.com/product-page/creating-storytellers-and-writers-38-online-video-clips](http://www.talkforwritingshop.com/product-page/creating-storytellers-and-writers-38-online-video-clips).





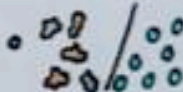


Here is a text map representing the model text on page 11:



















## How to Make a Bee Bath


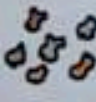


    ?  &  

You will need:

- 
- 
- 

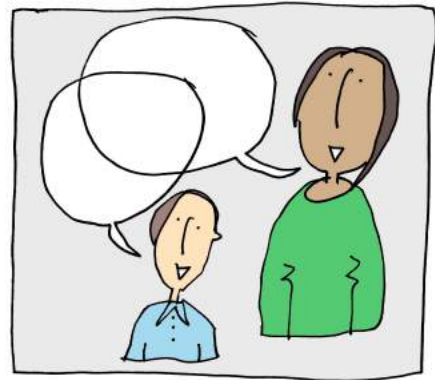
What to do:

1. 1<sup>st</sup>,  ↓     while .
2.   .
3.      .
4. Finally,   M1W1F5S  >> →.

**W:**  **X** . If  ↓ .

## Using the text map to help the children internalise the text

Use actions to help the children remember the order of the content. As their confidence in saying the instructions grows, stress using a clear confident voice and expression so that the bossy verbs (the imperative commands) are very clear. As the children's expression improves, gradually start to withdraw so that the children take ownership of saying the instructions.

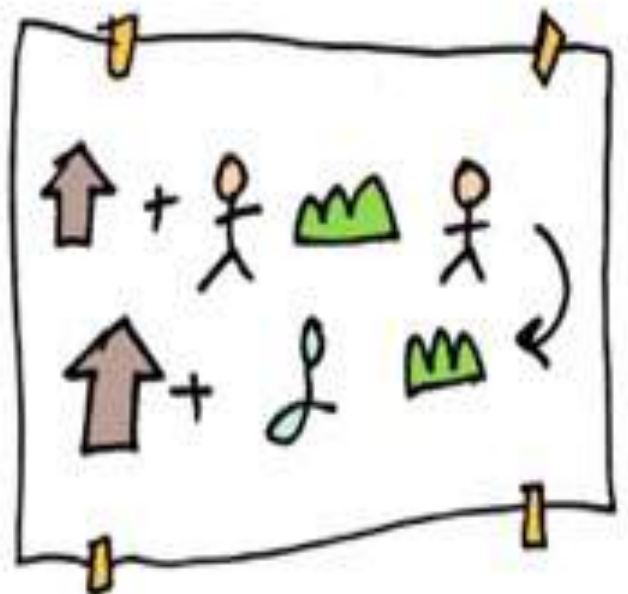


Once they've begun to internalise it, have fun with the text – split the class in half so they can listen to the other half tell the instructions. What do the children do well? What could be improved? Ask the children to give their recommendations.



Mime a line from the text – can the children guess what the line is. The children then have a go with their talk partner miming lines from the text to help them internalise it.

Ask the children to draw their own version of the text map. It is much easier to remember things from your own scribbled text map than from anyone else's.





## Reading the model text as a reader

Once the children have internalised the model text, show them the actual text, which they should all be able to read because they are familiar with the words.

### How to Make a Bee Bath

Did you know that bees need water just like we do? Follow these instructions and you can help thirsty bees in your garden.

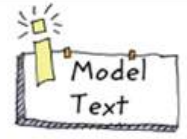
#### You will need:

- a saucer
- water
- stones or marbles

#### What to do:

1. First, place some stones in the bottom of a clean saucer. The bees will stand on these while they drink.
2. Add some water to the saucer.
3. Find a shady spot in your garden to place your bee bath.
4. Finally, check the water daily and refill it when it runs out.

**WARNING:** Make sure the water does not cover the stones. If it is too deep, the bee could drown. And do not touch the bee - bees sting!



First, ask some questions to ensure the children have understood the text before asking questions about its structure. You can then lead them through each section drawing on what the writer has done to draw the reader in and help the reader to follow the text.

#### Understanding the content

- What are the stones for?
- Why should the water not be deep? Follow this up by asking them to show you how deep the water should be bearing in mind the size of a bee.
- Why do you need to check the water daily?

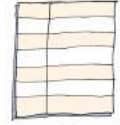
#### Understanding how it has been structured

- Why did the writer start with a question?
- Why are the ingredients given before the actual instructions?
- How do the numbers/bullet points help us?



## Reading as a writer

**Boxing up the structure of the text:** Create a boxed-up plan of the instructions with the children to help them identify the different sections of the instructions. This bare-bones structure will become the plan for their own instructions.



Bare bones of each section	Model text: How to Make a Bee Bath
<b>Hook reader</b> with a question Introduce what the instructions are about	Did you know that bees need water just like we do? Follow these instructions and you can help thirsty bees in your garden.
<b>List what you will need</b>	<b>You will need:</b> · a saucer · water · stones or marbles
<b>List what to do in order</b>	<b>What to do:</b> 1. First, place some stones in the bottom of a clean saucer. The bees will stand on these while they drink. 2. Add some water to the saucer. 3. Find a shady spot in your garden to place your bee bath. 4. Finally, check the water daily and refill it when it runs out.
<b>Warning or top tip</b>	<b>WARNING:</b> Make sure the water does not cover the stones. If it is too deep, the bee could drown. And do not touch the bee - bees sting!



When analysing the model text in these lessons, continue to magpie words and phrases that will be useful for their writing so that these can be displayed on the working wall, e.g. *First, ... Finally, ... Place ... , Add... , Find ...* etc.



## Create a writing toolkit for instructions

Help the children identify all the writing tools used in the model text that make it a successful set of instructions. Add these tools and examples to your working wall. Your final list might be like this:

To write clear instructions, I could:

- Begin with a question to hook the reader e.g., *Did you know...?*
- Use imperative (bossy) verbs e.g., *Place ...*, *Add...*, *Find ...*
- Use headings to make the sections clear e.g. *You will need:*
- Use words to make the order clear e.g., *First, ... Finally, ...*
- Or use bullet points/numbers to make the order clear for the reader

There is a very simple set of instructions in the book *Omar, the Bees and Me* by Helen Mortimer and Katie Cottle that you could get the children to critique using their new toolkit.



**Short-burst writing:** One area the children might need practice with before writing their own instructions is writing questions. Display the question from the model text: **Did you know ...?** Discuss how the question is used to draw the reader in and make them consider the bigger issue that is about to be addressed through the instructions.

Play a game using the same sentence stem to ask questions e.g.

**Did you know that worker bees are all female?**

**Did you know that bees collect nectar?**

Children could also make up silly sentences.

**Did you know that bees use emojis?**



Give children time to orally practise asking each other questions about bees and share as a class to generate ideas.

Model writing a question on the board using the sentence stem with a focus on the question mark at the end. Children could then practise writing questions to intrigue the reader on their white boards (guided practice) before writing their own questions independently. Provide other stems and pictures of bees in a variety of contexts to help them write questions e.g. **Have you ever noticed ...? Have you ever wondered ...?**



## Planning using the boxed-up plan

The children are now ready to plan their own set of instructions and will need a new context in which to write. Following the bee theme, we recommend reading *Omar, the Bees and Me* to inspire the children to create their own bee corridor. Spend a lesson designing a bee garden. This could be done by drawing or by collaging images of bee-friendly plants, such as sunflowers, chives, thyme or tulips. Spend another lesson planting bee friendly plants to create the bee garden before the children plan their own set of instructions for growing bee friendly plants. This picture shows some wildflowers the Year 1 children at Hallsville planted along with a visiting bee!



Bare bones of each section	Plan for new instructions Creating a Bee-friendly Garden
<b>Hook reader</b> with a question Introduce what the instructions are about	Have you ever wondered how you can help the bees? Bees are dying Need our help
<b>List what you will need</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seeds (e.g., sunflowers, chives, thyme)</li> <li>• plant pots</li> <li>• soil</li> <li>• watering can</li> <li>• trowel/spoon</li> </ul>
<b>List what to do in order</b>	Spoon soil ... Place seed ... Fill pot ... Water ... Position ...
<b>Warning or top tip</b>	Don't overwater

## Creating an audience and purpose

Once the children have written their own instructions, they could put these in envelopes along with some seeds and post them to houses in the local area to create a local bee corridor.

If the children make up the envelopes with their instructions and seeds in themselves and then go out as a class to post them to different houses, this could also lend itself very well to writing a recount of the day they helped to save the bees! And, of course, they would need to write a short letter explaining why they were sending the instructions and the seeds, so this leads to a wide range of writing opportunities!





## Independent application

Sometimes, at this stage, it can be useful to provide the children with a new hook or a new experience to get them excited about their independent piece. We recommend spending a lesson teaching the children how to perform the waggle dance. They could have lots of fun dressing up as bees or coming to school dressed in yellow that day and performing the dance to music in the school hall. This could then lead into a set of instructions for how to perform the waggle dance. Or you could ask them to write some instructions on *How to make your teacher happy*. They could then ask you a few questions so they have the necessary information on which to write their instructions!

**Other ideas:** If you want to get more writing out of the unit, some other ideas could be writing a recount. See the section on audience and purpose on the page above for this. Another idea could be writing an explanation text for how to tell the difference between a honeybee and a wasp – something lots of adults, let alone children, find tricky to do!

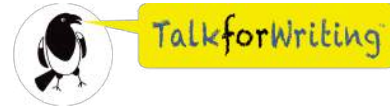


## Publishing their work

Display the children's written work, photographs and drawings with a particular focus on why we all need to support bees.







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