



TeachingLive | Season 6 | Week 5 | Teaching Notes | Podkin Adventure 1 | Monday 6th June 2022

Today's Game – We start with a quick warm-up to get our creative juices flowing. In pairs or threes, create mini stories. If you dry up, start again. There are two key ways to play the game:

- a. *Word by word.*
- b. *Sentence by sentence.*

The Objective – to create mini stories either word by word or sentence by sentence, drawing on useful connecting language to link ideas and create coherence.



Padlet – Edingly - children have a few minutes to complete one or more ‘post it notes’. The challenge is to write story sentences using a range of 3 different ‘sentence starters’: – ‘ed-ing-ly’:

Starter	Example	Other examples
Ed	<u>Excited</u> , Pipkin ran towards the cave.	Disappointed, scared, bewildered, annoyed, worried, fascinated, astonished, ...
Ing	<u>Hoping</u> that the Gorm could not swim, Pasco leaped into the river.	Wishing, remembering, running, leaping, joking, grinning, staring, roaring, snarling, following, ...
Ly	<u>Quietly</u> , Pipkin crept forwards.	Slowly, luckily, unfortunately, cautiously, angrily, sadly, rapidly, carefully, hopefully, desperately, ...

The Objective – to write sentences, varying the openings with fronted adverbs.

Children’s Audio – Objective – to listen attentively, enjoy and reflect on what makes good writing and performance.

Jotcast activity – Extending sentences

Objective - extending simple sentences in different ways.

- a. Adding on a conjunction
- b. Adding on an ‘ing’ verb
- c. Adding on an ‘ed’ verb.
- d. Adding on an ‘ly’ adverb.

Pipkin crept through the forest.

Pipkin crept through the forest **until** he reached the warren.

Pipkin crept through the forest, **hoping** that the Gorm would not find him.

Pipkin crept through the forest, **worried** that Pasco was lost.

Pipkin crept through the forest, **silently** as a thief.

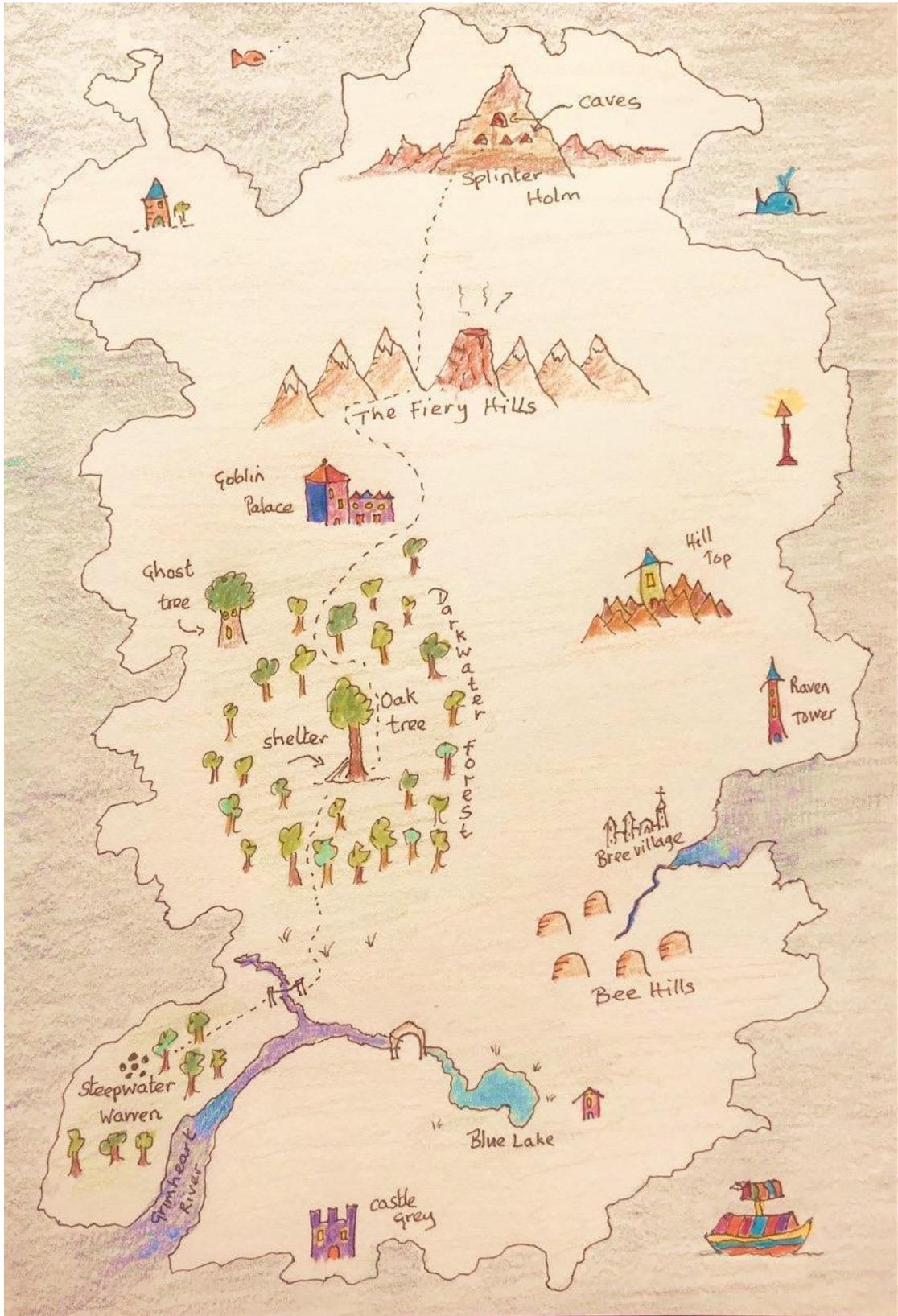
Conjunctions	'ing'	'ed'
and, but, so, so that, when, while, where, because, as, as soon as, until, before, after, although...	wishing, remembering, running, leaping, joking, grinning, staring, roaring, snarling, following ...	disappointed, scared, bewildered, annoyed, worried, fascinated, astonished ...
'ly' adverb	slowly, silently, cautiously, carefully, rapidly, angrily, moodily, slyly, sneakily, desperately, immediately, bravely, boldly, bitterly, easily, greedily, willingly...	



Gallery Challenge – *Draw a storyworld map for a Podkin adventure*

One of my favourite things about reading children's books is the inclusion of a map right at the beginning of the book, showing the landscape of the story. I thought it would be a great idea for the children to design and draw their own map showing the journey of the main characters across the 4 chapters. The best approach is to check out on the internet to see how Kieran Larwood, author of *Podkin One-Ear*, draws maps of his story worlds: <https://www.kmlarwood.com/resources/>

This is quite a brief clip but will set everybody off in the right direction. On my map below you can see the rabbits' journey.



Blogging Activity – writing the first part of a Podkin style adventure. The story pattern for the four sessions will be:

Podkin Adventure 1 – meeting our main character/s as they set off on their journey.

Podkin Adventure 2 – a threat appears and the MCs are chased and hide.

Podkin Adventure 3 – suspense builds – the threat gets closer!

Podkin Adventure 4 – a magical ending.

Objective – learning to write an engaging opening, introducing characters and using a range of sentence openers as well as extending sentences.

Audio Challenge – If children want to record their own blog ensure that they have read it aloud a number of times. They should read it slowly and clearly with expression. This could be worked on in pairs or threes so that children can develop their performance.

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Chapter 1 - The Leaving

Finally, they were ready to leave.

That afternoon, a message had arrived with Flame, a robin-carrier, to say that the Gorm were only a few miles away from Steepwater Warren. No one would be safe. The old warren's tunnels had been built many a Bramblemas day ago and were too rickety. Its walls were too sandy to withstand an onslaught. Its rooms would never survive an attack from the Gorm.

So it was that the three little rabbits, Pipkin, Pasco and baby Prue, left home. Their journey to safety would take at least a week but first they would have to pass through the forest of Darkwater and cross the Fiery Hills until they reached the rock caves of Splinter Holm. Even the Gorm could not enter that mighty warren, carved in the mountainside by rabbits so long ago that they had passed into the old stories that only the Bards now knew. Once the rabbits reached their destination, they would be safe. Other rabbits from their warren had chosen to travel elsewhere but Pipkin's mother had given them an ancient map that showed the old paths,

mostly hidden from unwanted eyes and glances. Too old to travel, she had stayed behind, hiding in the woods.

Clutching the ancient map, the little band of brave rabbits struggled over the rope bridge that crossed the dark waters of the Grimheart River. Soon they were in the forest, wending their way towards what they hoped would mean safety. Tall trees towered overhead as they followed the ancient rabbit pathways. Cautiously, Pipkin took the lead. Tugging his fur-lined cloak closer, he trudged on as the winter winds swept snow across the landscape. Wherever he looked, he imagined the sharp, red eyes of wolves, shadows of bandits and perhaps the steely weapons of the Gorm.

Trailing behind Pipkin, Pasco held onto baby Prue's paw. Wearily, they tried to follow in the footsteps of their elder brother. Pasco made it like a game for Prue but soon, his paw was frozen and she could feel him shivering. As the sun began to fade and the shadows of the forest drew in, she made Pipkin halt so that they could build a shelter. Together, they dragged branches to an oak tree and soon had built a lean-to hut.

Pipkin packed the gaps with moss until it was weather-proof. Pasco lit the stump of a candle and the shelter began to warm.

That night, they ate slices of dried apple, oatcakes and nibbled at the clover bread and stoat cheese that their mother had packed. Prue was soon fast asleep, snuggled between his older brother and sister. Carefully, Pipkin tugged some branches across the front of their shelter, hoping it would be enough to hide them from prying eyes.

As Pipkin drifted into sleep, his mind swirled with dreams of the metallic clank of the *Gorm*, moving through the darkness like a relentless wave of fear. Would they ever reach the safety of Splinter Holm?

A Fight for Space

Chapter 1.

Meet Amber, Willow and Arthur. They all are Lop-eared rabbits, and their little lives are about to change. They live at Cenoursvile Warren - a happy, big, warming and safe warren; well it used to be.

One day, a dove came bearing news that the moles had been sighted, and that they were coming, and that their worst nightmares were about to come true. Except there was one problem: the Warren could not hold another fight as it was built many moons ago, by the first rabbits that walked the land. Their mum, Alana, told them to run far away, and ask for assistance from Boing Boing burrow from the fierce, blood-thirsty, red-eyed rabbits that eat danger for breakfast. This journey would take at least a week, and it wasn't going to be easy. They would have to travel through a dark, gloomy, betraying forest and sneak through Coelcheshire then wade through Leisure Lake to see the moles cunning plan.

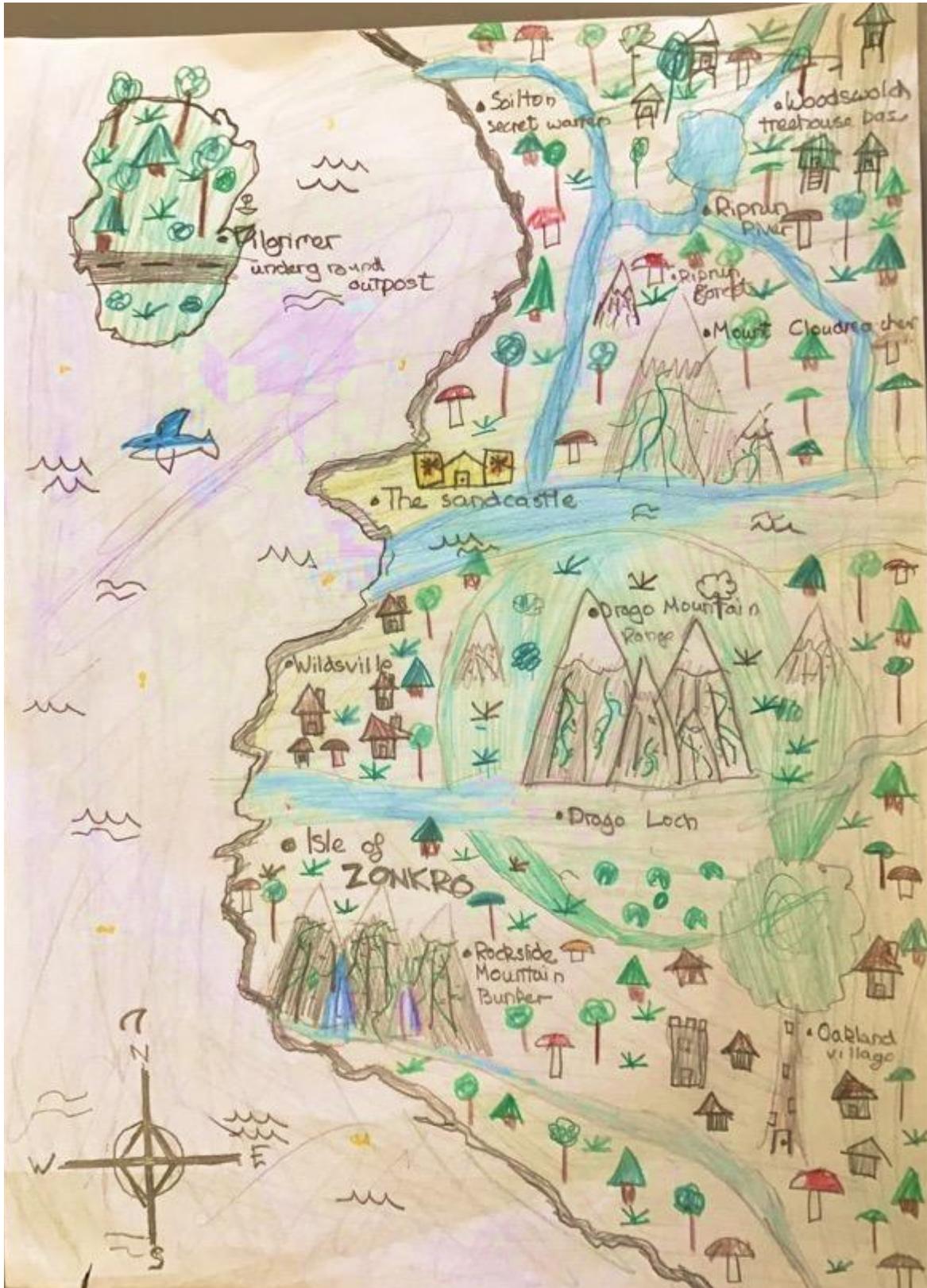
Through their tears, the three rabbits ran for their lives. Their mother was too old to travel, so stayed behind and hid in the forest. Soon the sun set, and the weary little rabbits set up camp in the heart of the gloomy wild willow; those willows had been the heart of war stories; they had been used for hiding from the enemies for years. And with that, Arthur made a tipi-like structure.

Meanwhile Willow and Amber went to collect some wood, leaves and moss to help set a fire, carefully marking the trees ensuring, that they could return to Arthur. These materials would make the tipi weather-proof. After that, Arthur covered the entrance to stop the piercing gaze of the moles.

That night, they nibbled on the green beans, carrots and bananas that their mother had packed for them in case of emergency. After that, the three rabbits snuggled together as if they were in a storm. They slowly drifted off to sleep and dreamt of the day to come, not knowing what they were about to face.

by Martha yr5 -Thrussington Primary School.

Escape from the Pilgrimers



Chapter 1

One early morning, Pipkin, a brown rabbit with white speckles, was minding his own business, playing a game of tig with his lop-eared rabbit friends. He was enjoying himself very much and felt very light-hearted. However, he did not know that the dreaded army of *Pilgrimers* were only a couple of miles north. Their quest to rule the world involved them attacking and taking over every single Warren in the world of Zonkro.

A sudden rustle of leaves alerted the ears of many rabbits and were creating a sense of worry in the air. The call of a long, deep battle horn echoed through the valley. The *Pilgrimers* were here. Chaos erupted from the crowd and rabbits were running carelessly in every direction. Grey rabbits painted with blue paint and armed with deadly broad swords that make fatal injuries ran out of the forest. They bellowed words of war that struck fear into the souls of poor rabbits who will most likely meet their fate in minutes.

Houses were lit and trees the size of skyscrapers collided with the ground and Pipkin was grabbed into a small gathering of his family: Prue, his baby brother, Pasco, his elder sister and his mother. She shoved an ancient map and a glowing orange gem into his hand and pushed them away. "Go," she shouted, "Go, NOW and don't come back!"

Pasco scooped up Prue, and the group of brown, small rabbits sprinted off as fast as their little legs could carry them. Pipkin looked back, staring at the billowing smoke and listening to the petrified cries from injured rabbits. Scared out of

his skin, he ran and ran and did not look back again.

After what seemed like hours of running, Pasco halted and ripped the old, tatted map out of Pipkin's hand and glared at it, trying to distinguish what it meant. "What is it?" Pasco said examining the map, twisting and turning it to try and calculate the correct interpretation. Pipkin replied, "Can you not see it? It's a map of Zonkro. Look. That's Wildsville and that I think is The Sandcastle. The map says we need to head to The Drago Mountains first, north-west of where we are.

For the next couple of hours, they kept on walking through thick shrubs and foliage, stopping every now and then to check their surroundings for *Pilgrimer* scouts. It was starting to become unbearably cold as a thick, bone-chilling coat of snow smothered their bodies. Pipkin was trembling. To keep his mind off it, he looked around. Pipkin was amazed at the forest; he had never been out this far. By the time it was midday they had run into their first dilemma. A fast flowing, deep river stood in their path looking extremely intimidating. Rivers were already cold and it was the middle of winter, making it doubly cold. In moments, Pasco and Pipkin began to argue about the choices they should make, and after a while of shouting they settled on an agreement. They were going to swim...

...Pipkin imagined the cruel snap of alligators - even though they did not exist there - and the biting coldness of the river and the deep gashes

caused by sharp rocks. He was going to jump. 1,2,3 and... However, he couldn't do it. Despite the constant taunts of 'You're a wimp!' from his sister, he couldn't do it. But he should. But... he thought for a second. There was nothing to lose; it was jump in, or die a torturous death in the grasp of the *Pilgrims*. He closed his eyes and jumped.

The water gave him a shock worse than electricity. The water was as cold as a turned shoulder. He was shivering uncontrollably. He swam to the other side that felt like a mile away. One arm then the other. Then it happened. A rock as sharp as a blade cut Pipkin, creating a searing pain in his right leg. He heaved himself out the banks and collapsed on the grass. His sister carried Prue and they went next. His sister had a similar reaction but tried to hide it. She crossed the river to find Pipkin bleeding ferociously on the grass. A patch of grass had turned a crimson red. Noting the seriousness of the situation, she tore off her inner cloak and wrapped Pipkin's leg in it.

Hours later, Pipkin woke up to a stressed and distraught Pasco. She had taken Pipkin's flint and steel and was currently striking it, trying to create a fire. She had already foraged for food and wood and taken shelter in a cave. "See you have waken up, snoozy," snarled Pasco, "Urgg, you do it!" Pipkin took the flint striker and had a go. 3 strikes later, a spark had settled in the bone-dry straw. He gently blew and a flame was born. He cautiously placed kindling on the flame. It all depended on these catching fire. Fortunately, they did. He added larger sticks to make the fire bigger.

They ate some wild blackberries that were extremely sour, nevertheless it relieved the cramp-like pain in the pit of their stomachs. To wash the everlasting secondary flavour down, they drank some murky water that was most likely from the river that had an after taste of dirt; even so it felt like it was better than his mother's hot chocolate on a cold night. He watched as his siblings drifted off into a well-earned, deep sleep. Something was preventing him from sleeping though. Suddenly something in his pocket felt triple the weight and it popped into his mind. The orange stone. It was flashing deep inside his pocket. He took it out and it seemed to lift him off his feet and pull him deeper into the cave.

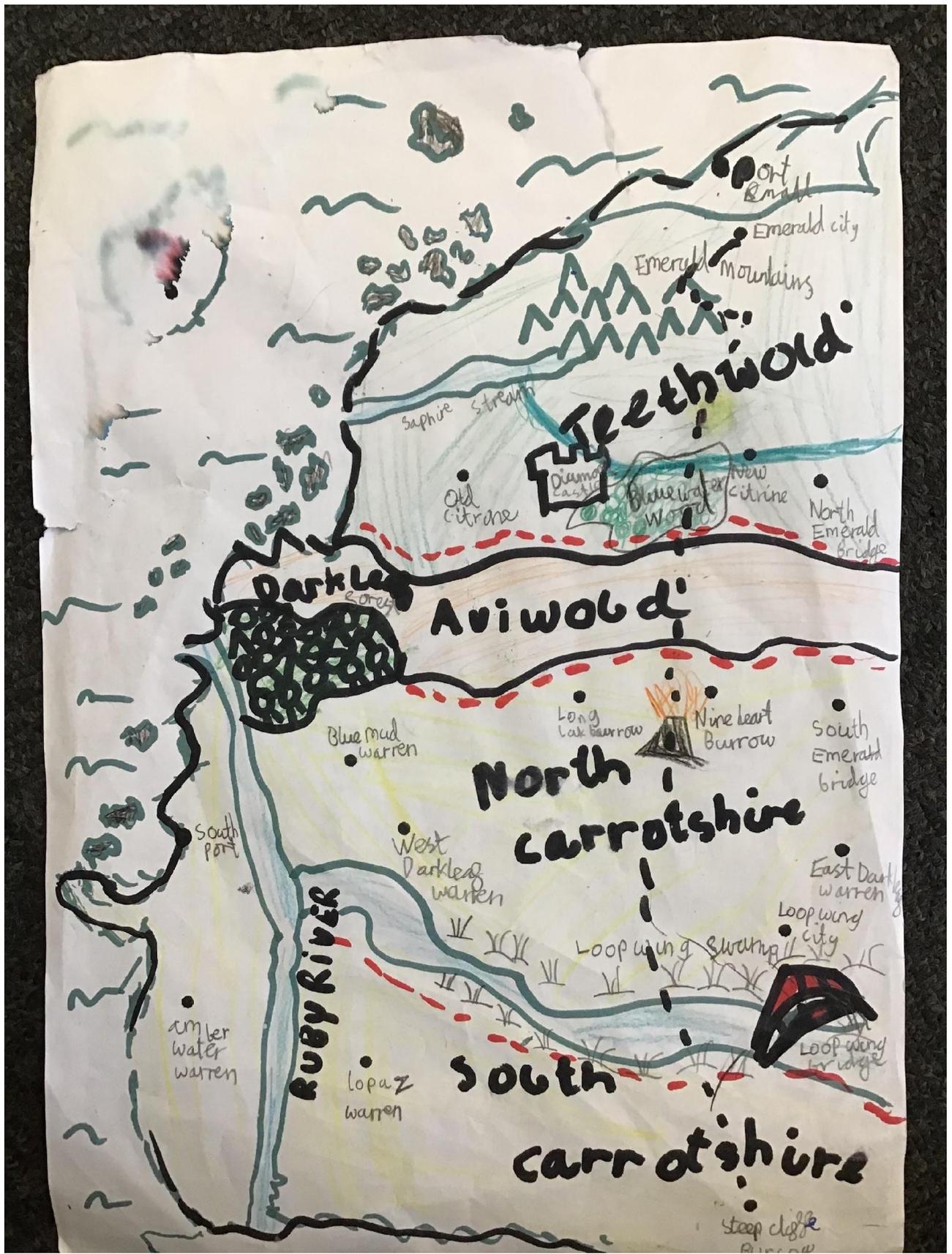
Moments later, something metal shimmered at his glance. He was drawn to it like a coin to a magnet. He took an observant look at what appeared to be a sword and another gem that was blue. Just then it came to him. If the two stones were the fire and water cores that would mean it was... Yes, it was. He had found the legendary, lost until now, Ulti-sword of the creators.

He lifted it up. He felt the power rush out through his hair. He had heard myths about the sword, however he had not believed them. He knew that you put the cores to receive different effects. Longing to know the effects, he placed the fire core in the handle of the sword. Suddenly, the sword erupted with flames. Knowing that you could conjure fire, he imagined fire right in front of him and fire appeared in front of him. He walked through the dancing flames and he felt no pain. He had unlimited fire resistance! He tested

the water core and he could manipulate water and breath under water without drowning. Full to the brim of excitement, he went to sleep.

Andrew -*Thrussington Primary School.*

The Yarn of the Dawn



Chapter 1

The beating of the Dawn's hooves could not be heard over the crackling of the fire and the Bramblemas spirit therefore it was a surprise that a short hour later a guard ran in, an arrow protruding from his stomach shouting that the evil Dawn was at the gates. Silence fell over the Long Burrow for a split second. Shouts and cries followed and the whole warren had become a loud commotion.

Conny, Carlos and Catkin were standing at the door of the secret exit with huge draw-string bags wrapped around their little shoulders. Little Catkin had no idea what was going on but all he knew was that his Bramblemas sandwich meal had been interrupted. Conny had been given a yellowish map that she was told to follow but she knew nothing of the art of orienteering. Carlos however was a clever rabbit, in fact the cleverest in South Carrotshire.

*

The heat spilled across Black Sand Desert and the band of rabbits thought they were in a kiln, moreover each reflection looked like an oasis. The sand was like fire on the soft, padded paws of the three little rabbits. Carlos lead the little tribe, the withered map scrunched up in his paw. The desert looking never ending, the horizon was a line of ochre sand.

Soon the rabbits' mouths were like paper and they hadn't had water for at least five hours. Suddenly, baby Catkin began crying, all they needed now is a huge oasis. Conny picked him up and began walking wearily across the sand. Twelve hours of walking through a boiling desert did not do much good to tiny little rabbits and their mind began to play tricks on them; trees and lakes began to pop up in front of them and the disappointment of the mirages was unthinkable.

Finally, they came to the border gates, however they were not safe here. On the North side of the gates there was a swamp, the swamp of the Loopwings. The gates opened revealing Silver Gate Bridge. It spanned for three miles across the biggest river in the Isles Of Halti. The river was red and shiny and the current rolled across the water at three hundred miles per hour. The colossal bridge was a whopping three hundred metres high so the ascent was a gruelling one mile up. Carlos began to worry weather they would make it over the bridge in time.

They finished the descent after a long three hours of walking. A pale wing poked out of the crimson mud and a few seconds later, little Catkin was poking the red spike. A creature had been disturbed in the midst of a slumber and a winged monkey emerged from the goo. It was the ancient Loopwing from the story of St Oak IV, the king killed by the evil winged monkey. His face was stained with red mud he had teeth the size of swords. His wing beat were rhythmical and as loud as a base drum. Its roar was like a harp, a harp with

very un-tuned strings. Now high in the sky, the Loopwing was about to dive. A loud whistle came from the creature but it was stopped by a shout from someone directly behind them. It was a Carrotshire legion.

He escorted the band of rabbits to a colossal tree standing at nine ten thousand metres high and nine hundred metres wide. Inside was a rabbit settlement. It looked like a warren. Kitchens, bedrooms even a long burrow. All small rabbit approached the legion and muttered something. Picking up the three rabbits, he took them to their rooms they would be sleeping in that night.

The snoring of Catkin kept Conny awake and he was pondering whether they would ever get to Emerald City. She thought about staying here but if the Dawn found them the tree would give them no protection. Her head began swirling with thoughts of their mother and the Dawn but she finally drifted into a well-earned sleep.

Tom – Thrussington Primary



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What inspired the author?

Kieran Larwood, author of *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear*, tells TeachingLive what inspired him and how he went from teaching a reception class to writing an award-winning children's book.

www.kmlarwood.com

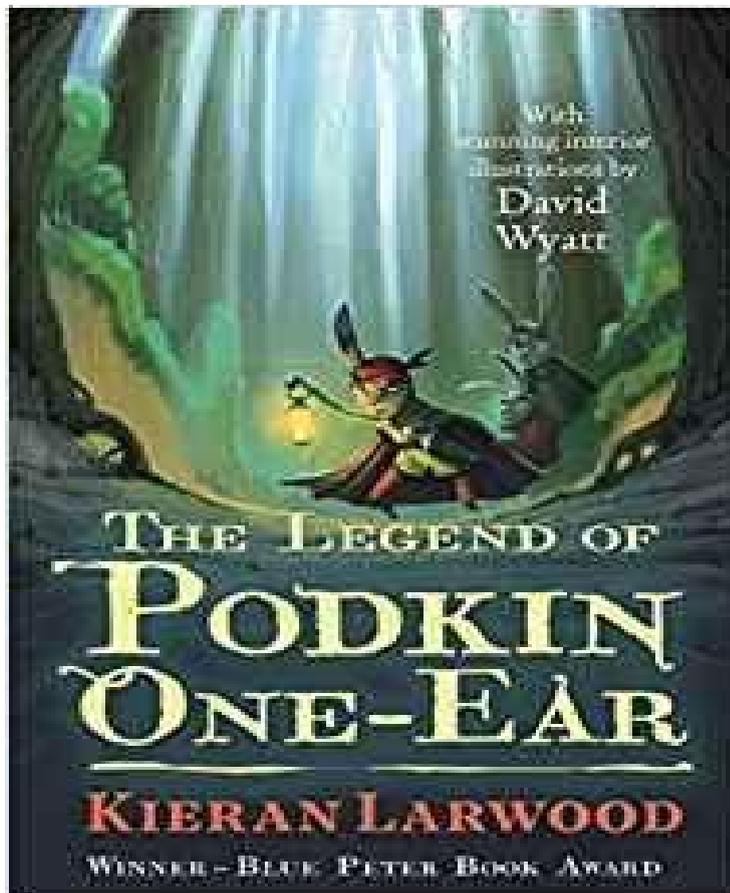
In my previous life, I was a Reception class teacher for fifteen years. I was lucky enough to attend one of Pie Corbett's Talk for Writing workshops early on in my career, and his approach of getting children to explore story structures through learning, telling, then adapting them made perfect sense to me. It quickly became a staple of my teaching approach (I can still recite 'the Jack story' in my sleep) and it was such a pleasure to see children progress towards retelling stories, attempting to write them, and finally improvising their own.



As all teachers know, the act of 'writing a story' is far more complicated than sitting down with a pencil and a title and letting rip (which is what I remember being expected to do in my dim and distant schooldays). It involves having an understanding or experience of structure— plot, events, characters, dialogue— and being able to sequence these into a particular order, even to write something as basic as the retelling of a fairy tale. And to build upon that to create something new takes a serious leap in using a quite advanced type of imagination.

Perhaps this can be subliminally absorbed through exposure to a constant stream of fairy tales, rhymes and so on, but when I began teaching I soon learned that this wasn't always happening.

It was quite a shock to me personally, having come from a background where I was lucky enough to have wide access to books and libraries, but year on year I was progressively more horrified when I asked the children which stories they knew.



Many were familiar with the traditional tales you would expect, and the rest had done Goldilocks or the Three Little Pigs at pre-school but, in an ever-growing number, the exposure to staple stories seemed to be ebbing away or morphing into Disney versions. I began to realise that, not only was immersing my class in stories important for their development, it was something you couldn't assume they were getting at home. Albert Einstein famously said that, for a child to develop their intelligence, they should read 'fairy tales and more fairy tales,' as a way of fostering their creative imagination. The interactive nature of hearing and imagining a story is part of the skill of 'outside the box' thinking that develops into ingenuity.

But the modern world of passive entertainment doesn't provide enough opportunity for this. Outside of school there are very few chances for some children to read or be read to, and even this precious class activity is under threat from other timetabled demands.



Which is why, as every teacher will understand, it is so depressing that reading and writing in the current curriculum seems to revolve around spotting or regurgitating examples of grammatical structures, as children grind their way along the conveyor belt towards the Year 6 SATs test.

When I think back to my own schooling, the moments that hang in my memory even now are my teachers reading aloud

books such as *Goodnight Mister Tom* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (with all the voices). The neurons containing the mathematical formulas and grammatical terms that were drummed into me have long since quietly blinked out.

So, it was the importance of storytelling— that magical moment when the minds of the audience are connected through words alone— and the dying art of the storyteller, that was on my mind when I came to write my children’s book *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear*. I had already decided that I wanted to create a fantasy story, one which tried to capture the magical qualities of books I’d read as a child, such as *The Hobbit* and *The Box of Delights*, and had the beginnings of a rabbit-filled world sketched out. I had no idea of what the actual plot might be, but my first character was already in my head. He was going to be a wandering bard who would tell the tale, Scheherazade-style, and also explore something of the nature of stories: why we have always told them and the ways they help us.

The tale of Podkin developed as I began to write, but I made sure to intersperse it with several interludes where the bard interacts with his audience. These come straight from my experience of daily story times with a class of fidgety four-year-olds, with the storyteller becoming more and more grumpy as he just wants to get on with the flipping adventure.

As well as giving children a good old-fashioned epic quest to lose themselves in, I hope I’ve succeeded in making them think a little about the function of stories, how important and useful they are, and how reading or listening to them can help their minds grow in a way that highlighting a bunch of ‘fronted adverbials’ never will.

I have been absolutely thrilled to see my book, and those of many other middle-grade authors, being shared in this way in schools as part of a recognition of how important ‘reading for pleasure’ is. My joy was complete when I heard of a teacher

who put a virtual crackling fire on the smartboard and gathered the children around to hear a story. I know, in thirty years' time, that class will still cherish that experience.

Whilst our own bards have long gone, and we now have books or computers to record our histories, films and television to entertain us, I hope we never lose our love of tales, or our appreciation of how they can help us grow, understand each other and connect with a part of our brain that sometimes gets neglected.

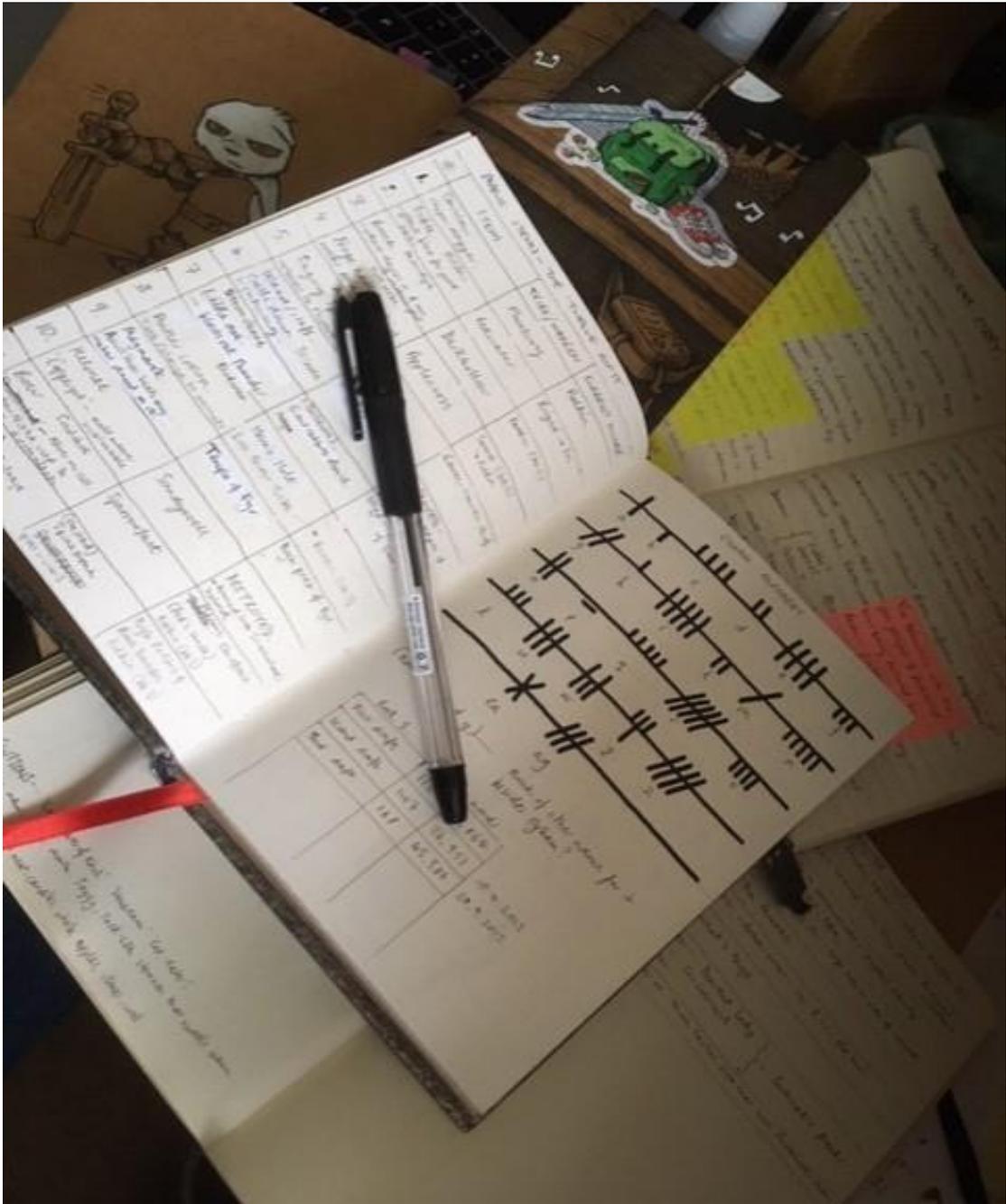
As the wandering bard himself says: 'Stories belong to the teller. At least, half of them do. The other part belongs to the listeners. When a good story is told to a good listener, the pair of them own it together.'

Kieran Larwood September 2019

Visit www.kmlarwood.com for more info.

*The Legend of **Podkin One-Ear**, published by Faber Children's, was winner of the 2017 Best Story Blue Peter Book Award and the French Prix Sorcières 2019 for middle-grade fiction.*

This is from one of Kieron's notebooks – see page 30 of Podkin.

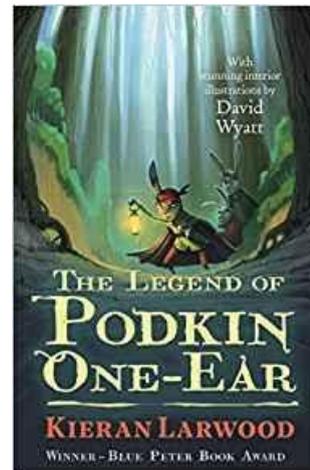


Reading into Writing: Short burst writing inspired by a novel

The Legend of Podkin One-Ear by Kieran Larwood

The inspiration

After reading (and thoroughly enjoying) *Podkin One Ear* by Kieran Larwood, I wanted to explore ways of using it to support the teaching of writing.



I could see that there were many passages within the novel that showed incredible examples of characterisation, setting and suspense. These are perfect to use as snippets to supplement the children's understanding when co-constructing toolkits within the Talk for Writing process. They are ready to be raided when looking at how the writer has created specific effects and are perfect for 'magpieing' and helping children to see how the author chooses the right words and phrases to interest and intrigue the reader.

Incidentally, it was simple to collate these extracts as I read the book. Each time I came across a great example of a particular technique, I added a post-it to the page and labelled it with the effect it was showing - easy!

However, I wanted to do more than just raid the book for passages; I wanted to use it to inspire children's writing. This led me to combine it with my other passion - Short Burst Writing. In my previous article on *Short Burst Writing in the Talk for Writing sequence*

(<https://www.talk4writing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Short-burst-writing-Maria.pdf>) I outlined the process of using it to teach description.

This time I wanted to use it to extend and contextualise the children's writing ideas, by using elements within Podkin to help them invent new passages for the story. Ultimately, they could then use these to invent new storylines and stories.

Below is an outline of the lesson I used to do this, taught to mixed Y3/4 classes, as part of our Transforming Reading and Writing projects in Somerset and Dorset. It has since been used to teach a variety of classes, in different settings and contexts, all the way up to Year 6 (adapted accordingly).

The Lesson

As a warm up, I showed the children the image below and asked them what they thought it *could* be, for example: an ancient fan used for keeping a grumpy giant cool. This was to get the children thinking creatively and going beyond the obvious.



I then explained that I wanted us to use our imagination to write a description of a new character for the novel I was reading. I introduced them to Podkin, read them the blurb

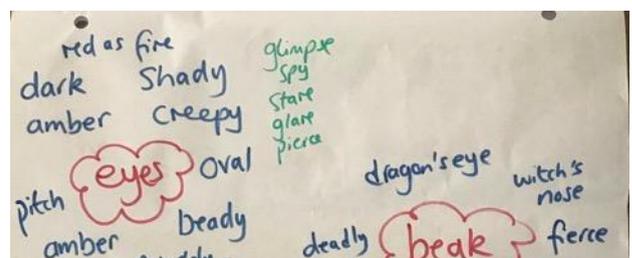
and gave them a brief synopsis of the storyline. I got them to close their eyes whilst I read them the passage below, to set the scene for our writing. I explained that the main characters were on a quest to find help and refuge and ended up in this setting and this was where our new animal character was going to appear. (Pg 111 of the novel & I stopped at ...'thirsty for blood.')

Boneroot

Following Brigid's map, the young rabbits found the Red River again and walked along to where it forked. There was a little bridge made of fallen logs lashed together, which they slipped and slid across, and then they followed the smaller branch south again. Before them lay Grimheart forest, a huge mass of trees that filled the entire horizon. The silver-grey, frosted branches were like an ocean of icy wood; the whole Gorm army could be hidden in there, or a thousand packs of hungry wolves, thirsty for blood. Robbers, bandits, murderers – Podkin's

My first question to the children was: *What kind of atmosphere does this create?* Replies included scary, sinister, evil, dark, mysterious, spooky. I explained that Podkin was going

to meet a new animal character here and the way we described it needed to fit with the atmosphere. It was then that I showed the children the



new character we were going to write into the story, using this visual:



We looked separately at each aspect that we wanted to focus on and generated vocabulary (adjectives & verbs) to describe it.

Taking each element in turn, as the spine to our description, we crafted the writing together; me leading the discussions on what worked best, referring children to the vocabulary gathered and constantly considering the best descriptions with fresh, new ideas. Here is an example of what we created:

The Owl

The stern **owl** glares,

Monstrous, oval **eyes** pierce
in the ruby twilight,

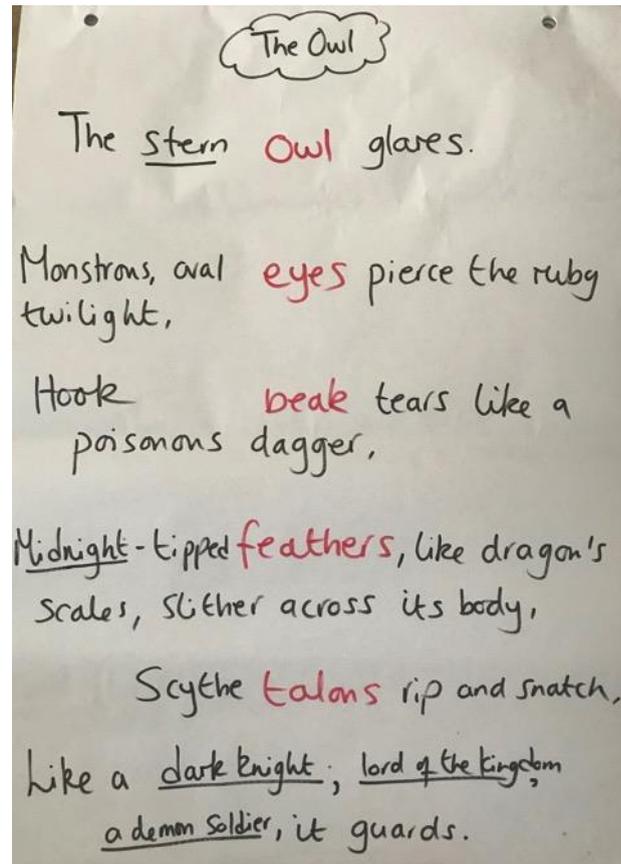
Hook **beak** tears like a
poisonous dagger,

Midnight-tipped **feathers**,
like dragon's scales, slither
across its body,

Scythe **talons** rip and snatch,

Like a dark knight, a lord of
the kingdom, a demon soldier,
it guards.

Now it was time to put our character back into the story. After the setting description on Pg111 of Podkin, the characters push on with their journey, eventually finding the place they have been searching for. I read the children this extract from Pg 118 and explained we were going to drop our new character into this scene:



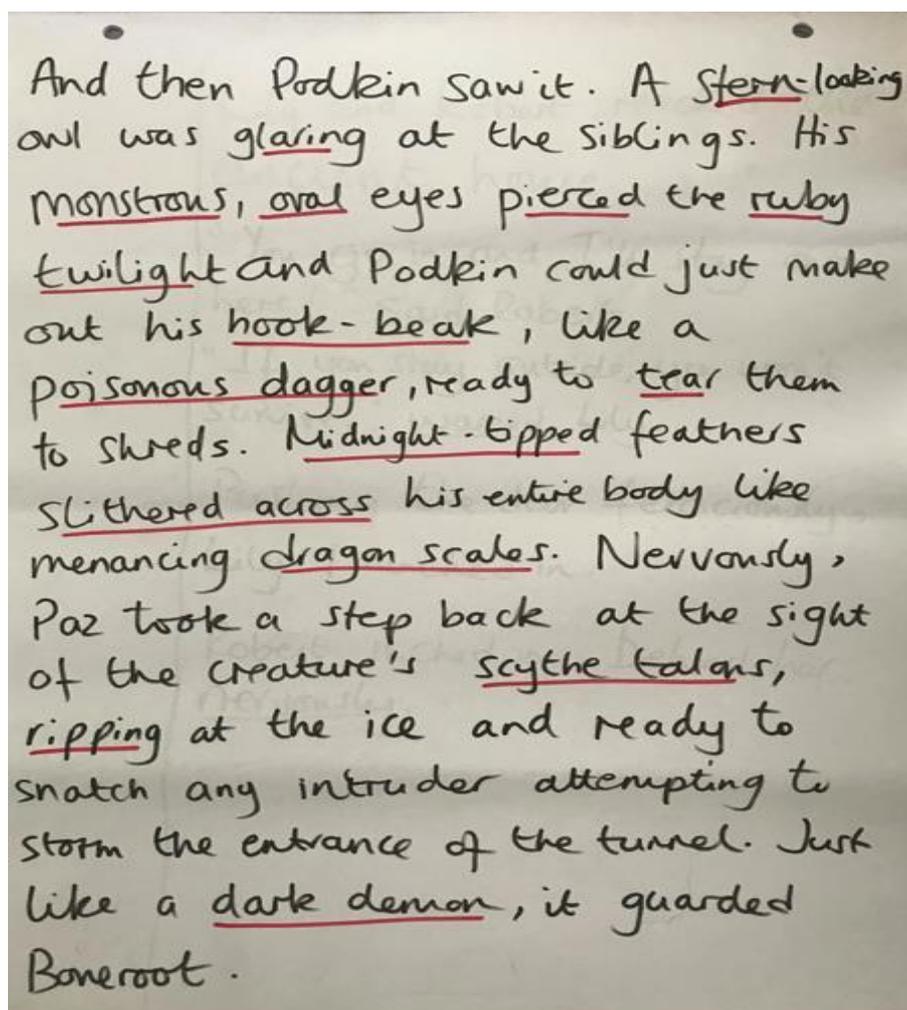
The rabbits stared at it for a while. It was a wonder to them why anyone would build something like this above ground, and how they had even managed to do it. The thing towered over them, sculpted so cleanly. There had been a stone fireplace in the Munbury warren, but everything else had been built out of wood, carved all over with patterns of twining leaves and the daisy that had been their tribal symbol. To make something this big out of stone would have taken such effort; and it was only *part* of a doorway. What had the rest of the building been like?

A voice suddenly echoed out of nowhere, making them all jump. 'Who goes there?' They looked around the darkening woods, trying to spot its owner, but couldn't see anything. Surely it hadn't come from the stone pillar itself?

I gave them

a linking sentence start: *Then Podkin saw it...* and showed the children how to drop our creative description in to narrative, keeping the mood and atmosphere the same. This was the result:

And then Podkin saw it. A stern-looking owl was glaring at the siblings. His monstrous, oval eyes pierced the ruby twilight and Podkin could just make out its hook-beak, like a poisonous dagger, ready to tear them to shreds. Midnight-tipped feathers slithered across his entire body, like menacing dragon scales. Nervously, Paz took a step back at the sight of the creature's scythe talons, ripping at the ice and ready to snatch any intruder attempting to storm the entrance of the tunnel. Just like a dark demon, it guarded Boneroot.



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What next?

Over a series of lessons, the children could then use this method to create alternate animal characters to drop into this scene. They could also add to other parts of the story where action or interaction takes place, either extending the storyline or dropping in scenes. They could practice extending the description of settings or adding in suspense at various parts of the novel and they could also take the new animal characters created and use them when writing a sequel or prequel to a 'Podkin-like' story. This could be done in the same Journey story structure or any that fitted their composition, like a Tale of Fear or a Warning Story.

Overall, using the novel as the main stimulus for practising writing skills and ultimately using it as a springboard for new, invented writing was extremely successful. It also sparked so many other ideas on how to use snippets from novels to practice or inspire writing. Watch this space for more novel-inspired lessons in the future!

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Maria Richards is available to deliver Talk for Writing training throughout the UK & internationally. Please visit the training page on the Talk for Writing website for more details. Want a project to run in your area? Contact Maria for details.