

This booklet is the result of research carried out by members of the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA, formerly UKRA), supported by a grant from QCA, as part of continuing research into writing in schools.

The participants in the project were Eve Bearne, Sue Ellis, Lynda Graham, Pam Hulme, Guy Merchant and Colin Mills. QCA is delighted to support this work and thanks UKLA for this new contribution to our understanding of children's texts.

The research involved teachers from schools in England and Scotland. We are grateful to them and their pupils for giving us materials for this booklet.

Pam Hulme	St Andrew's Benn CE Primary School, Rugby
Caroline Keating	Rawmarsh Thorogate School, Rotherham
Alex Lundie	Croydon Advisory Service, working with Applegarth Junior School, Croydon
Irene Napier	Byron Primary School, Croydon
Clair Vince	Kingsley Primary School, Croydon
Sue Ellis and teachers	St Ninian's Primary School, Stirling

Any comments and responses are welcome. Please contact the English team at QCA (englishteam@qca.org.uk) or UKLA (admin@ukla.org).

First published in 2004

© Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2004

ISBN 1 85838 553 9

Reproduction, storage, adaptation or translation, in any form or by any means, of this publication is prohibited without prior written permission of the publisher, unless within the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Excerpts may be reproduced for the purpose of research, private study, criticism or review, or by educational institutions solely for educational purposes, without permission, providing full acknowledgement is given.

Printed in Great Britain.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority is an exempt charity under Schedule 2 of the Charities Act 1993.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
83 Piccadilly
London W1J 8QA
www.qca.org.uk/

Contents

Introduction	3
Using this booklet	4
What are multimodal texts?	5
Case study 1: <i>What can you do if you're angry?</i>	6
Case study 2: <i>Where can you see examples of friction on a bike?</i>	7
Using the writing assessment strands	11
The rainforest (year 1)	12
The Greeks (year 6)	14
The Burger-phone and the Swim-phone (year 6)	16
Key ideas and classroom applications	18
Making appropriate choices	18
Communicating in different curriculum areas	20
Teachers' knowledge	24
Next questions	24
Further reading	25

Introduction

Children are surrounded by visual texts of all kinds at home and at school. Some are in print: illustrated stories, picture books, information books, comics and magazines. Others are screen-based: television, video and different forms of multimedia communications. This means that children have experience of a wide range of texts that combine words and pictures, movement and sound, and they can use this in their classroom work.

The aim of this research project was to look systematically at some of this work and to consider the implications for the classroom. For this initial investigation we focused on texts that combine drawing, design and layout with writing. The work was taken from different curriculum areas: ICT, science, history, geography and PSHE as well as English work in key stages 1 and 2.

In aiming to develop ways of describing these texts, which fit with teachers' existing expectations about writing, we began by looking at the QCA writing assessment focuses that underpin the mark schemes for writing. We wanted to see how far the different aspects of writing identified in the focuses would help in describing texts that use pictures as well as words to communicate ideas. At all key stages the focuses are combined into strands, so the writing assessment strands were used as a starting point:

- composition and effect;
- text structure and organisation;
- sentence structure and punctuation (plus spelling).

The research looked at how the strands could describe the features of texts that combine writing and pictures, rather than use test mark schemes to evaluate the texts.

We began by asking two key questions:

- 1 How can we describe what children know and can do as shown in their multimodal texts (in this case drawing plus writing)?
- 2 What are the implications for classroom practice: how can teachers help pupils develop and extend their control of different modes?

The examples shown in this booklet offer ways of starting to address these questions. During the investigations into how children use a combination of visual design and language to represent their ideas, more questions arose, suggesting that there is scope for much wider research both into the texts themselves and into classroom approaches to support and extend the texts. These questions are outlined at the end of the report.

The booklet presents a small number of the texts from children in years 1–6 to help readers appreciate how images and pictures are integral to communication in these texts.

Using this booklet

The materials in this booklet can be used by **teachers** and **schools** to:

- aid understanding of how the writing assessment strands might be used to describe the features of children's texts that use image plus writing;
- find ways of describing children's progress in representing their ideas through a combination of word, image and design;
- build on the information gained to enhance pupils' learning using multimodal texts;
- develop ways of talking with pupils about their multimodal texts.

Within a **school**, teachers could discuss a coordinated approach to describing the features of texts that combine image, layout and writing to represent ideas, considering:

- the effect of the piece and the role played in composition by image, design and words;
- the use of image, design and words to structure and organise the text;
- how layout and typography contribute to the meaning of the text;
- the choices made about appropriate syntax for the written parts of the text.

Groups of staff as a whole or **teachers** who plan together might consider developing and responding to multimodal texts by:

- increasing the use of multimodal texts of all kinds, both as resources and models and as outcomes of learning;
- offering opportunities for discussing with pupils the range of multimodal texts and their uses for communication;
- planning to teach design, layout and effects of multimodal texts.

In discussing specific texts with **pupils**, teachers might ask:

- Does this text do the job you wanted it to do?
- How does it do it?
- Could you do it better if you used pictures or writing in a different way?

What are multimodal texts?

There's talking, photos, computer graphics, drawing, print, sign language, music, films. (Marlon, age seven)

Marlon had been asked: *What different modes of communication are there?* His reply clearly indicates that at the age of seven, in common with many other children, he is aware of the different channels of communication used in western society: book, magazine, computer screen, video, film, radio. He is reflecting his everyday experience of the combinations of modes and media that allow people to express their ideas and feelings and communicate them to others. Although not every young writer would perhaps be as clear as Marlon, they certainly bring a great deal of text knowledge to their classroom learning.

New forms of communication, and the knowledge of texts brought to the classroom by even the very youngest readers and writers, pose new questions for teaching and learning. Many books and other media now available in schools cannot be read by attention to writing alone. Much learning in the curriculum is presented through images, often in the double-page spreads of books, which are designed to use layout, font size and shape and colour to add to the information or stories contained in the words. Such designed double-page spreads, whether in picture or information book, make use of spatial arrangements to convey ideas. We read them differently from the way we read continuous print, making different choices about where to start reading: often the eye falls on a strong central image, or a coloured text box presented as a 'fascinating fact'; or the arrows on a diagram might direct our gaze. With continuous print we also make choices about how we take in the meaning, but usually, in order to make sense of it, at least on first reading, we tend to read according to the direction of print. Children are aware of these differences, and the layout options available, and their reading knowledge influences how they use pictures and words to communicate their own ideas. When children use multimodal ways of presenting ideas (often pictures plus words) they use their knowledge of spatial organisation as well as print conventions.

The following two case studies, from key stages 1 and 2, show that looking only at the words runs the risk of missing a lot of what children know. These examples suggest that both teachers and pupils can gain from closer attention to multimodal texts.

Case study 1: What can you do if you're angry?

This teacher decided to use the familiar task of making a poster to present a direct message. An important first step was to emphasise how words, images and the overall design of the poster contribute to the meaning.

In PSHE lessons a year 2 class had been discussing the question: *What can you do if you're angry?* and the teacher asked them to design posters that would teach other children some helpful strategies to deal with anger.



Figure 1: Marlon's poster showing how to deal with anger

Marlon's poster (Figure 1) shows control of design features, producing a piece that includes visual image and different styles of writing in a cohesive layout. He shows understanding about how communication works; he knows, for example, that what a message looks like is important and that layout and visual impact are part of what he wants to say. He uses font size and shape, punctuation and the design of image to help him get his message across, deliberately mixing design and writing. He explained:

I did a poster about if you're angry. I thought of a football cos I like football and I put lines on it, then I found out I could put words on it. I prefer writing more than drawing because you don't have to take time, I'm happy with the poster because I like how I done it. I'm particularly pleased with the words inside the football.

The conversations with his teacher show his understanding of the choices of modes he has made in designing this poster.

You can use just one – or more than one. Sometimes if you use all of them you can't communicate with other people 'cos it's too much in one go.

Case study 2: Where can you see examples of friction on a bike?

A year 4 science class had been investigating friction and other forces for several weeks. The teacher then brought a bicycle into the classroom and asked the pupils to work with partners talking about what they already knew about friction, and discussing specific examples they could find on the bike itself. Next the teacher modelled ways of representing this thinking in diagrammatic form. The class shared extracts from a selection of information books about friction and discussed these in terms of effective presentation of ideas. Some had quite a lot of words in relation to pictures; others were almost wordless, relying on the images to do the job of explaining. Finally, she asked the children to work individually, and to explain 'friction in bikes' using words and pictures.

In discussion, Paul had shown some understanding of the concept of friction. In his first attempt to represent this thinking on paper, he chose to make a detailed, labelled drawing of a bike, and to write additional information in a separate text box (see Figure 2).

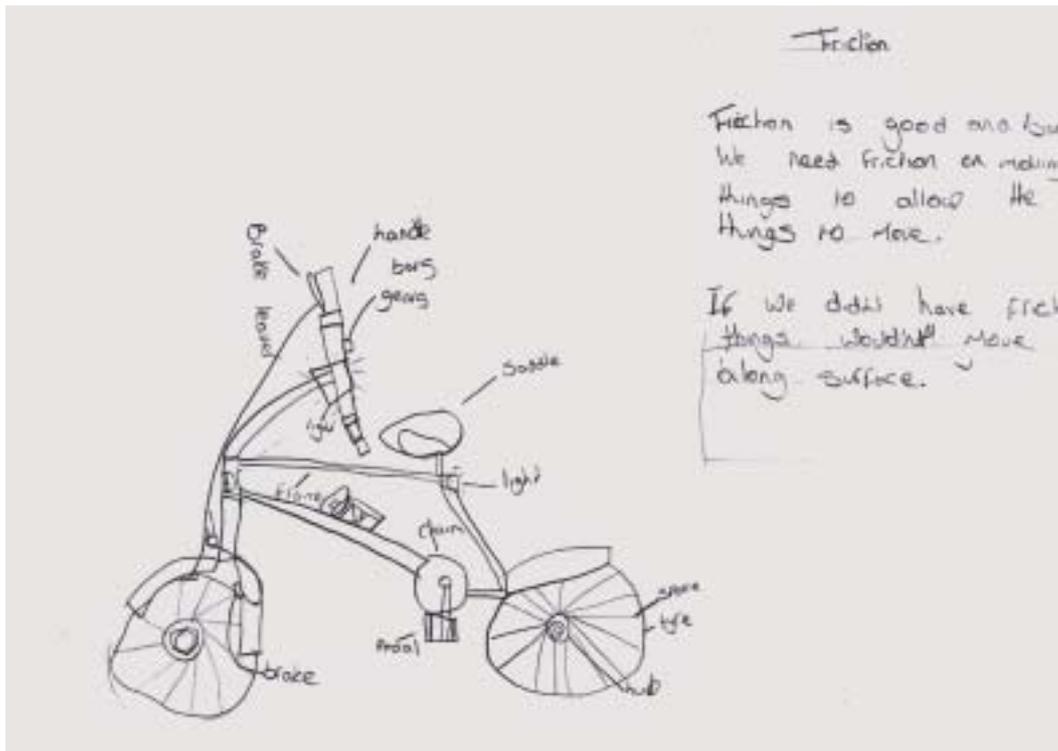


Figure 2: Paul's first draft

The teacher asked Paul what he had found hard or easy in the work. He said: *It was hard to get the drawing right, but it was easy to say where friction was.* However, despite his knowledge of friction, the labels on Paul's diagram simply named the bike parts. So the teacher's comments on his first draft were aimed at focusing more on friction, drawing an example of a close up of a brake pad, inviting him to elaborate by using a similar device (see Figure 3).

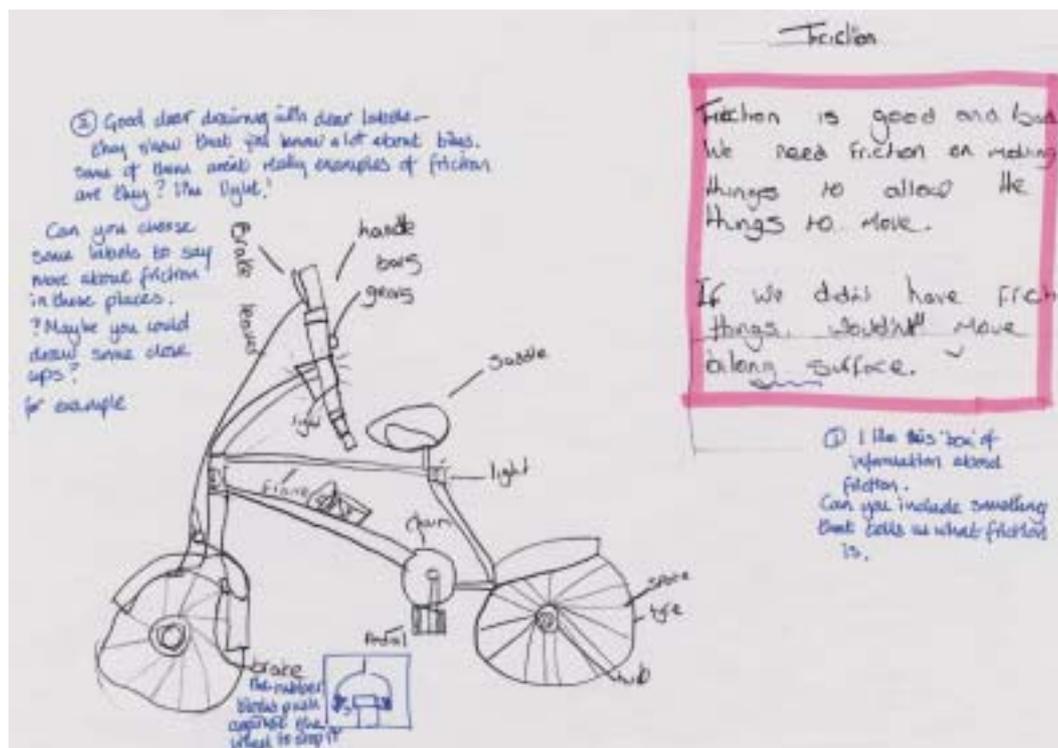


Figure 3: Teacher's comments on Paul's first draft

In Paul's second draft (Figure 4) we can see the extent to which he has taken his teacher's advice. He has cut out his original drawing and stuck it on a fresh page, removing most of the generalised labels and adding detail.

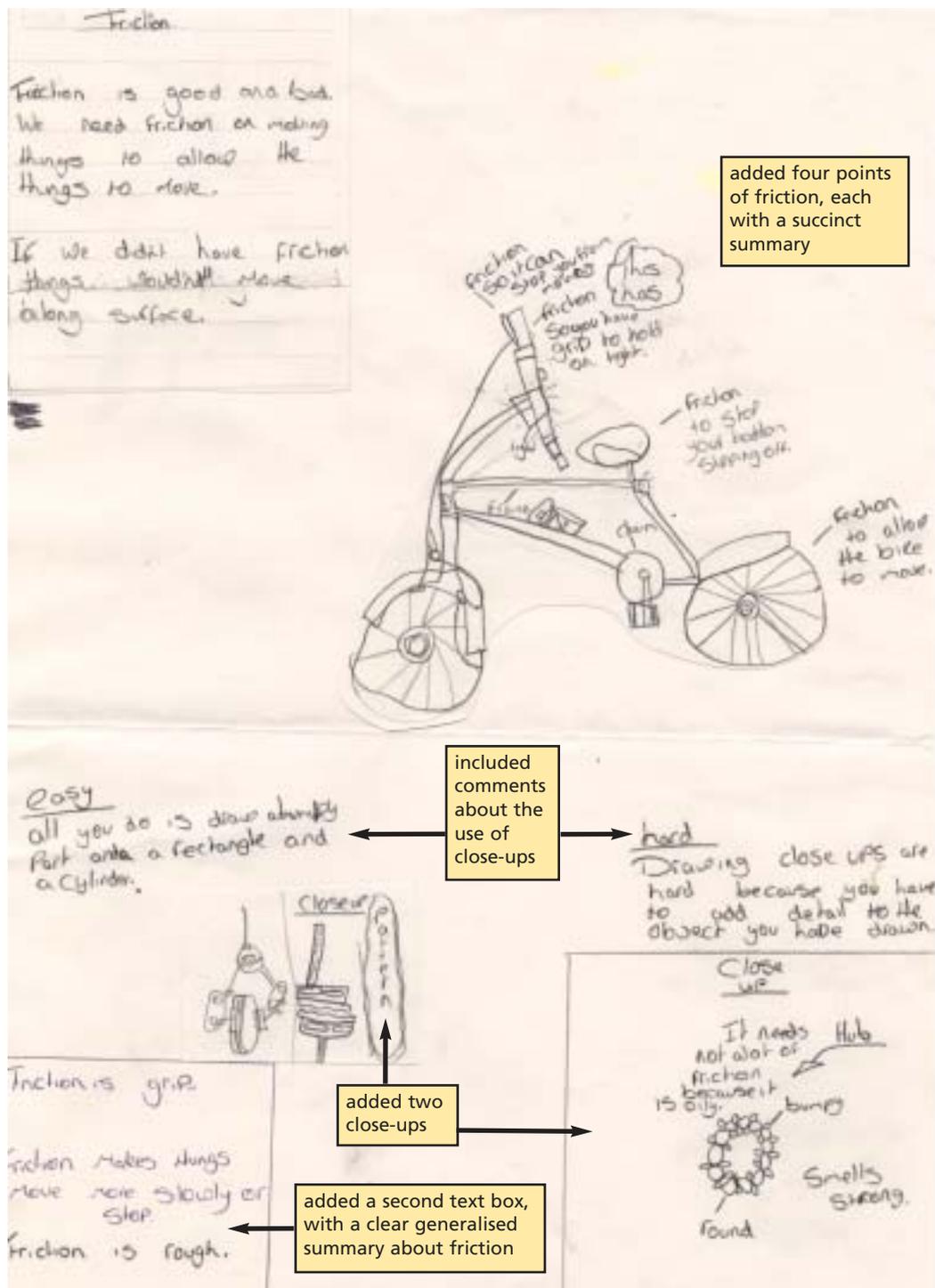


Figure 4: Paul's second draft, showing his knowledge of friction

In his first draft (Figure 2) we can see that he was unable to orchestrate both his scientific thinking and his knowledge about how to represent his ideas. He concentrated on one aspect, that of design and presentation. Following intervention from his teacher Paul's second draft represents his thinking about friction as well as his understanding about design and layout in an information text (Figure 4).

These two case studies show that **for pupils**, use of drawing and writing can help them to:

- use their experience of such texts, incorporate their strengths (such as in drawing), and demonstrate this understanding in different subject areas and in different ways;
- develop a repertoire of approaches making appropriate choices to communicate effectively.

For teachers, attention to these texts can:

- develop greater understanding of what children know, including what they know about the ways texts can be put together and the information and ideas they convey through combined uses of image and words;
- draw on their current ways of responding to, and assessing, children's work to extend and enhance teaching and learning of texts and how they communicate.

Using the writing assessment strands

The examples in the first section of this booklet raise some important questions:

- What are the most useful ways to describe and respond to texts with drawings and words?
- How can we assess these texts in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and build on children's text knowledge?

The case studies in this section begin to answer some of these questions. The research group used the writing assessment strands as a starting point. Using the three strands gave valuable evidence of children's complex knowledge of how these texts work. The terminology of the assessment strands allowed for a common way of describing what the children showed they could do.

Writing assessment strands

Composition and effect Pupils' ability to write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts and produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purposes:

- select and adapt form and content according to purpose, viewpoint and reader;
- convey ideas and themes in appropriate styles.

Text structure and organisation

Pupils' ability to organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events; construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs:

- select and use structural devices for the organisation of texts;
- order and group ideas and material within sections of their texts to elaborate meaning;
- maintain cohesion in texts of increasing variety and complexity.

Sentence structure and punctuation

Pupils' ability to write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation in phrases, clauses and sentences; vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect:

- select and deploy a varied and complex range of sentence structures;
- use punctuation to mark grammatical boundaries and clarify meaning accurately and consistently;
- combine grammatical structure and punctuation to enhance meaning.

The rainforest (year 1)

The class read simple texts about the Amazonian rainforest, and before they wrote their own text, the teacher discussed how information is presented, specifically looking at how different texts were illustrated in different ways. The children explored ideas through drama, going into role as animals in the rainforest and as explorers. They used a rainforest story box to inspire talk and had imaginatively been transported to a rainforest by means of a magic carpet. The work was cross-curricular including art and mathematics as well as drama and literacy and the classroom display of the rainforest had been established long before the writing began.

Composition and effect

Liam chooses to make a text with images plus labels and additional verbal information (see **Figure 5**).

The purpose is to summarise and communicate what he knows and he uses a humorous, cartoon-like approach, for example, in the tiny spider top left, the snake on the central stump and the huge ears of the jaguar.

This viewpoint of the text is a fascination with all that goes on in the forest. The outstretched wing of the parrot points to the wealth of different rainforest creatures depicted.

Text structure and organisation

Liam organises and presents the pictorial and verbal information as a whole text. He sequences the information following the levels of the rainforest as a cohesive pattern, grouping creatures at the levels of the canopy, the middle space of the forest and the floor, rather like visual 'paragraphs'. The separate pictures act as short descriptive items and he uses the white space between the images to separate ideas, rather like punctuation.

The structure balances the factual information carried by the pictures with the atmospheric detail carried by the writing, presented as a block of text on the right-hand side.

Sentence structure and punctuation

Liam uses the separate images like nouns, adding written labels; the colour and detail of the pictures act like adjectives. He spells about half of the labels correctly and generally attempts to spell using both visual and aural cues.

He chooses to convey the atmosphere in one compound sentence: *It is hot and dark and sweaty and rainy and steamy, and this parallels the piling up of pictorial detail.*

The number of images and their detail is the pictorial equivalent of descriptive writing.

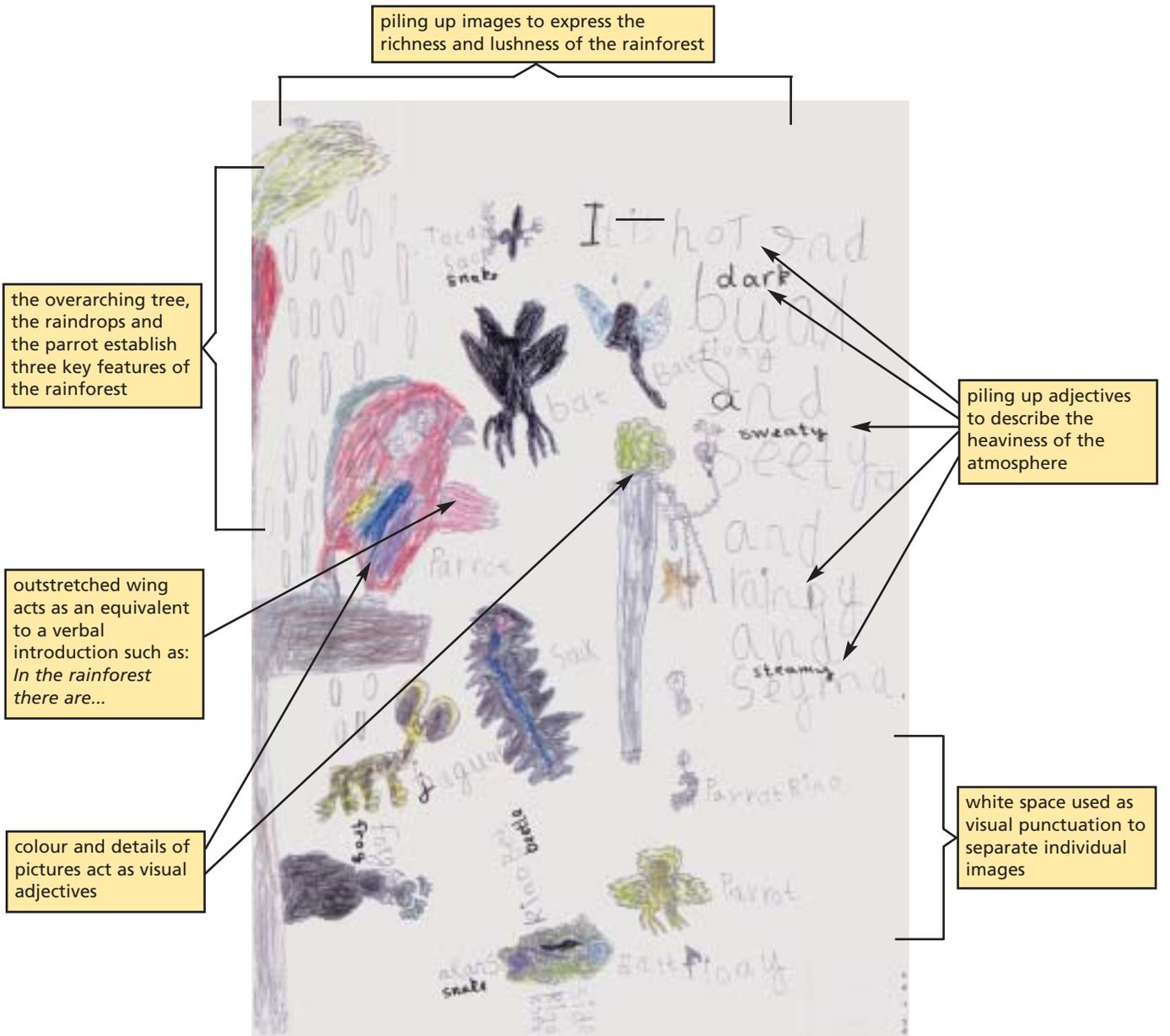


Figure 5: Liam's rainforest

Summary

The pictorial element of the text carries a great deal more information than such a young writer might have been able to attempt in writing. Liam, at 5 years old, not only knows a lot about the rainforest but also about the ways in which layout and image convey information and aid understanding.

The Greeks (year 6)

This follows a sequence of lessons looking at the arguments about whether England should keep or return the Elgin Marbles. In preparation for a museum visit, the teacher asked children for a persuasive text. She left the choice of form to the pupils.

Barry and Simon were not keen year 6 writers, but they were very enthusiastic about making this text, asking *Are we allowed to do it like this?* and commenting that it was hard to fit the speech into speech bubbles because *there's so much to say*.

Composition and effect

Barry and Simon selected a form of representation that suited their purpose, viewpoint and readership (see **Figure 6**). The ideas and themes are conveyed by appropriate humour and the familiar visual style of a comic book. The two boys made an imaginative and interesting text, appropriate to the task of recording their grasp of the opposing arguments about keeping or returning the Elgin Marbles and offering a balanced view.

The comments on the top level of the text represent one point of view (to keep the Marbles) while the middle section represents the views of the characters in the Marbles who wish to return to Greece. Directing the museum attendant's words from left to right and the words of the figures on the Marble from right to left further emphasises the different points of view. However, the boys recognise that there are different shades of opinion within one point of view and different reasons for wanting to keep the Marbles or return them. The museum attendant represents the 'English' position, saying *Speak English will you?* to the baby who is crying in Greek, an indication of the family's cultural origins. However, the parents are appreciative visitors to the museum, taking no notice of the cries: *This is a wicked museum. I now, good isn't it?*

Text structure and organisation

The red museum cord separates the two predominant sections of the text (similar to organising information into paragraphs). These structure the information and ideas effectively and act as cohesive devices, keeping together elements of each side of the argument.

The boys use speech bubbles as an organisational device to carry the argument. The speech bubbles set out a dialogue between the different characters within each section and represent different attitudes within each point of view.

Sentence structure and punctuation

The sentences in speech bubbles are appropriately expressed separating the different sides of the argument and act as a form of punctuation to enhance the meaning of the text as a whole. Much of the spelling is correct although the punctuation within the bubble is lacking.

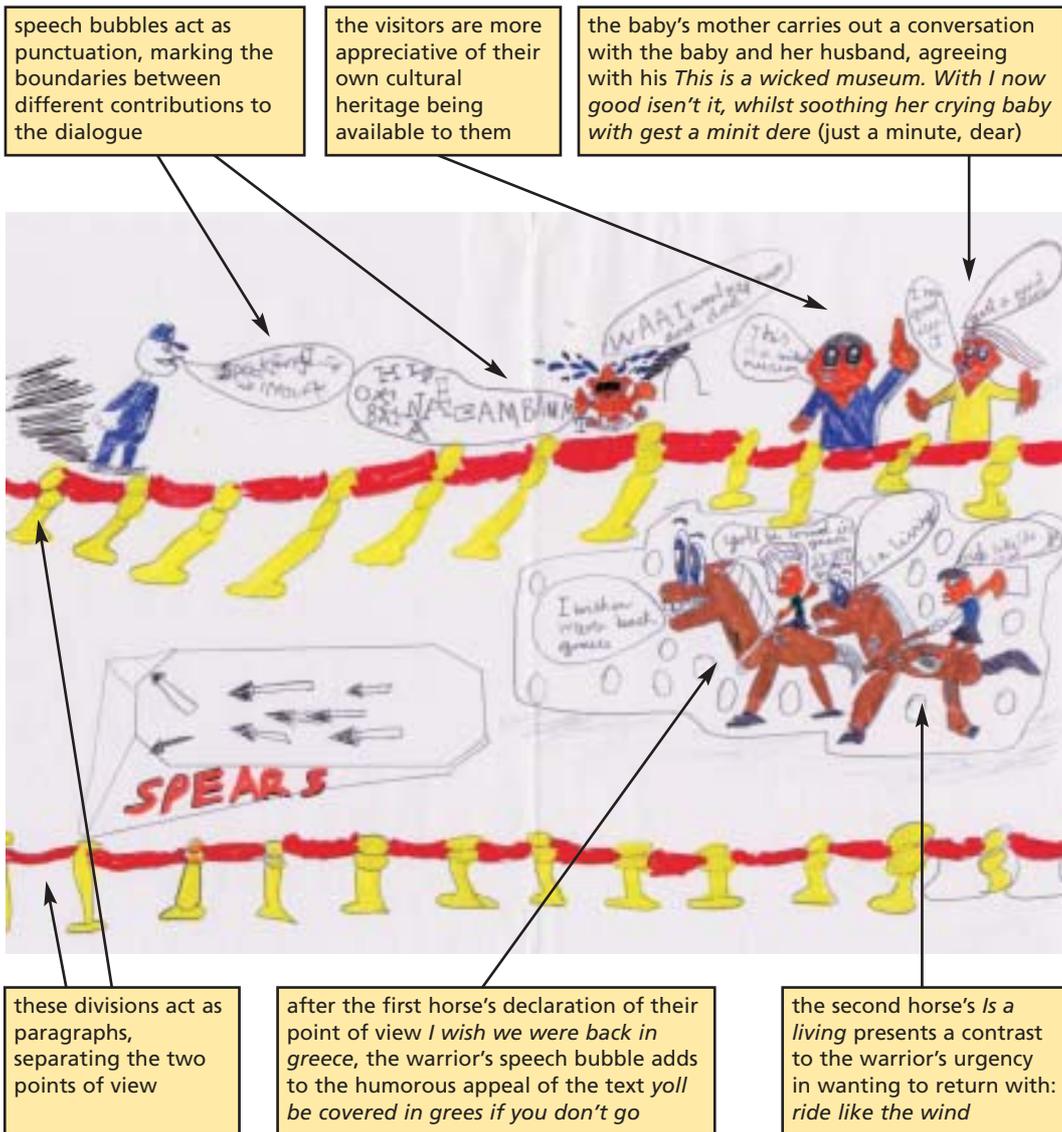


Figure 6: The Elgin Marbles argument

Summary

Barry and Simon draw on familiar, comic strip, layout and text devices showing that they can create a complex text identifying two opposing points of view. They know how to deploy layout and design not only to present opposing ideas but also to show differences within each side of the debate.

The Burger-phone and the Swim-phone (year 6)

The teacher of a year 6 class built on the class's understanding of persuasive texts by introducing a task which required the children to draw on their knowledge of popular culture to produce posters advertising a new mobile phone. In preparation, the children looked at mobile phone advertisements and considered both their language features and their use of visual images. Paired work generated ideas about new design features, based on children's existing knowledge of mobile phones. Their independent work involved them in producing rough sketches of a new phone, listing its design features and making a plan of their poster, before using A3 paper to present their final posters.

The Burger-phone

Composition and effect

The originality of Rosie's phone (**Figure 7**) lies in the burger-shaped design and her use of a marketing strategy that advertises two distinct products (a phone and a burger). The dual marketing of phones and burgers is treated light-heartedly – the slogan 'Obey Your Hunger You Know You Must' plays on this and signals the writer's viewpoint. Rosie has chosen an appropriate form for a persuasive text in a magazine or newspaper. The visual image of the Burger-phone acts as the central organising subject of the text. More detailed ideas are mostly conveyed through concise blocks of writing that surround the central image of the Burger-phone, written in an appropriate style using knowledge of phone technology (ringtones, screen games and network access). The advertisement is organised around the themes of appetite and communication.

Although the poster shows an awareness of visual design, a greater level of sophistication is shown in the written text.

Text structure and organisation

- the written part of the text can be read in any order but achieves cohesion through visual design, being laid out in a semicircle around the phone
- the two slogans and the text message competition are located on the periphery of the page, possibly because they do not constitute essential information

Sentence structure and punctuation

- uses appropriate grammatical structures for this kind of persuasive text
- visual features enrich the verbal text: colour and FIRST
- textboxes use language features such as phrases and clauses
- large yellow exclamation marks help organise the information and tie it in with the yellow logo
- spelling is correct throughout and shows understanding of variation in the text message
- capital letters and punctuation marks are used appropriately

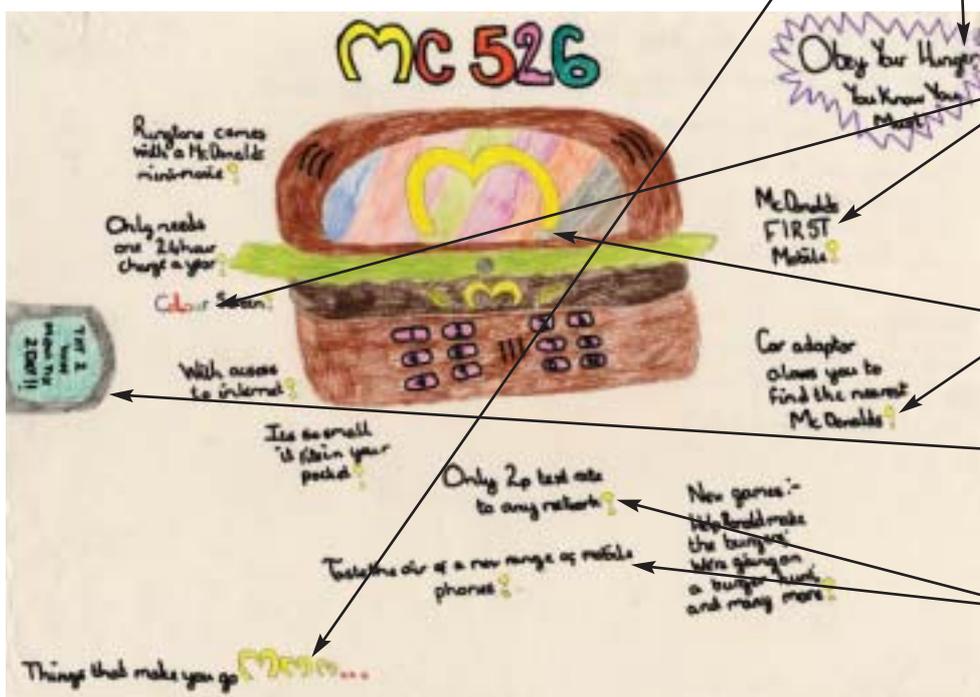


Figure 7: Rosie's Burger-phone advertisement

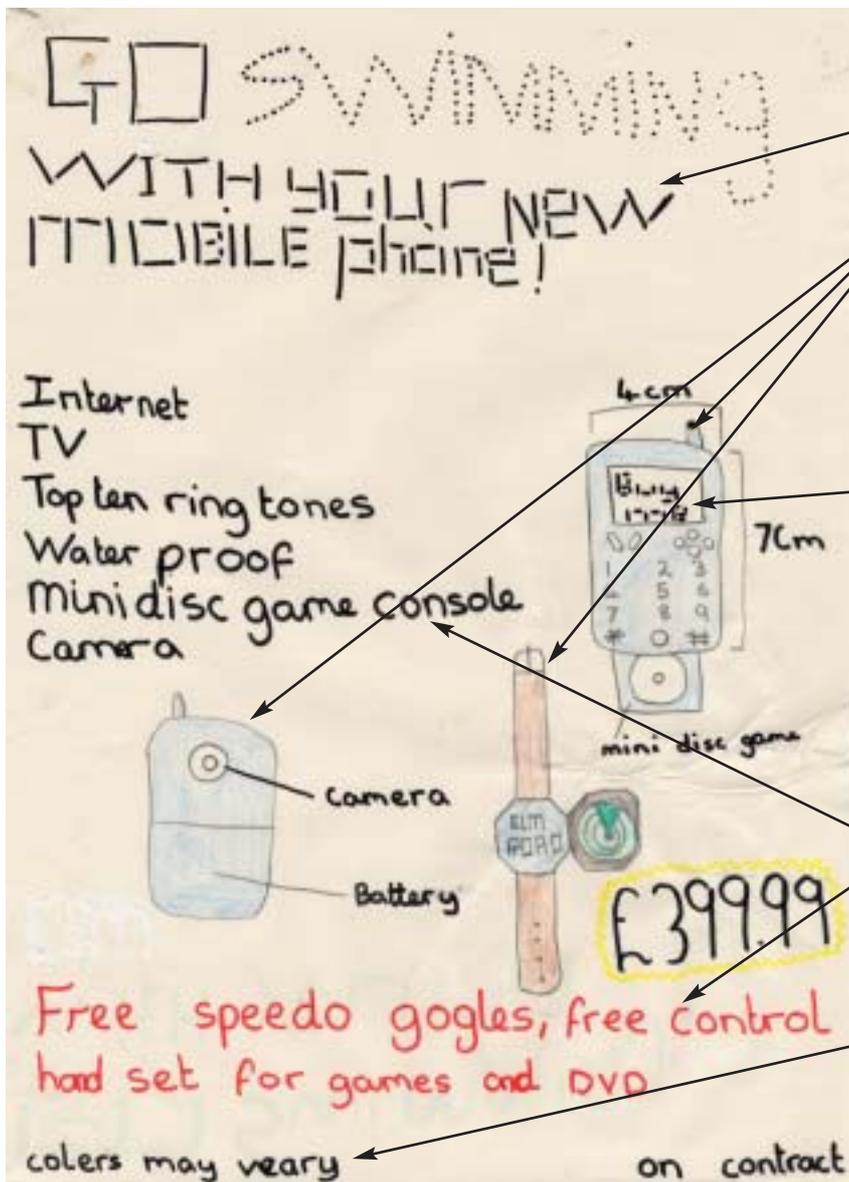
The Swim-phone

Composition and effect

Sarah designed a waterproof phone with a number of technical features (**Figure 8**). The images are drawn to scale in order to attract our attention to the product's special features, and the verbal text works with the images.

Sarah's phone advertisement is interesting and imaginative and the mini-disc player and camera clearly show features that would appeal to a young audience. The idea of free goggles is used as a persuasive device. The form is appropriate for the sort of persuasive text that would appear in a magazine or newspaper, and provides quite specific technical information. Sarah adopts an informative viewpoint, using the phone's special features to persuade the reader. Her ideas are clearly and concisely stated and effectively organised and presented through a combination of visual and verbal devices. The technical theme is carefully sustained.

The design uses space to organise and group different kinds of information. The bold lettering at the top of the page acts as a title. The drawings of the Swim-phone are the central organising device for the text, providing cohesion.



Text structure and organisation

- the main message conveyed in a modern, angular font dominates the top third of the advert
- the phone's key features are represented in three labelled diagrams

Sentence structure and punctuation

- writing represents the screen-writing of text messaging – an idea that is repeated in the phone's text window which reads *Buy me*.
- larger-scale figures and yellow border highlight the price
- technical information and measurements are economically provided with minimal explanation
- grammatical structure is appropriate: brief and informative note form
- punctuation is used only where necessary
- spelling is mostly correct although there are several errors at the bottom of the page, suggesting Sarah's use of aural cues for her first draft spelling

Figure 8: Sarah's Swim-phone advertisement

Key ideas and classroom applications

The first two sections of this booklet offered ways of describing children's knowledge of text. The research group's work suggests that the writing assessment strands for composition and effect and text structure and organisation, including punctuation, can be applied to the pictorial and verbal parts of a multimodal text, although sentence structure is more likely to help in describing the verbal parts of a text. This section identifies the key ideas that came out of the investigation and considers the implications for classroom practice.

- **Making appropriate choices:** children need to be helped to make appropriate choices to suit their purposes for communication. At times writing (or images) alone can be the best way to get a message across. A useful question might be: *For this message, what can best be expressed in words and what in images?*
- **Communication in different curriculum areas:** teachers can respond to and value the kinds of evidence they get from multimodal texts. Children's use of drawings and design alongside writing can reveal a great deal about their learning in many curriculum areas.
- **Teachers' knowledge:** professional and personal experience or familiarity with visual communication can make a difference to the ways in which children use multimodal texts. What is on offer in the classroom influences what children are able to achieve in constructing these texts.

Making appropriate choices

Discussion is essential in helping children make appropriate choices about the modes and formats in which they can best represent their ideas. They are used to looking for clues to meaning in pictures, as well as reading information presented in pictorial or diagrammatic form. They can handle the ways that books display ideas that can be read in any order – not necessarily in the way that print is designed to be read. It is a small shift from reading and discussing such books to reading and discussing children's own multimodal texts. Explicit discussion about layout features, colour, font size and style, choice of language and the overall design in combining words and images contributes to children's repertoire and is likely to have an impact on their use of different modes and media for specific purposes.

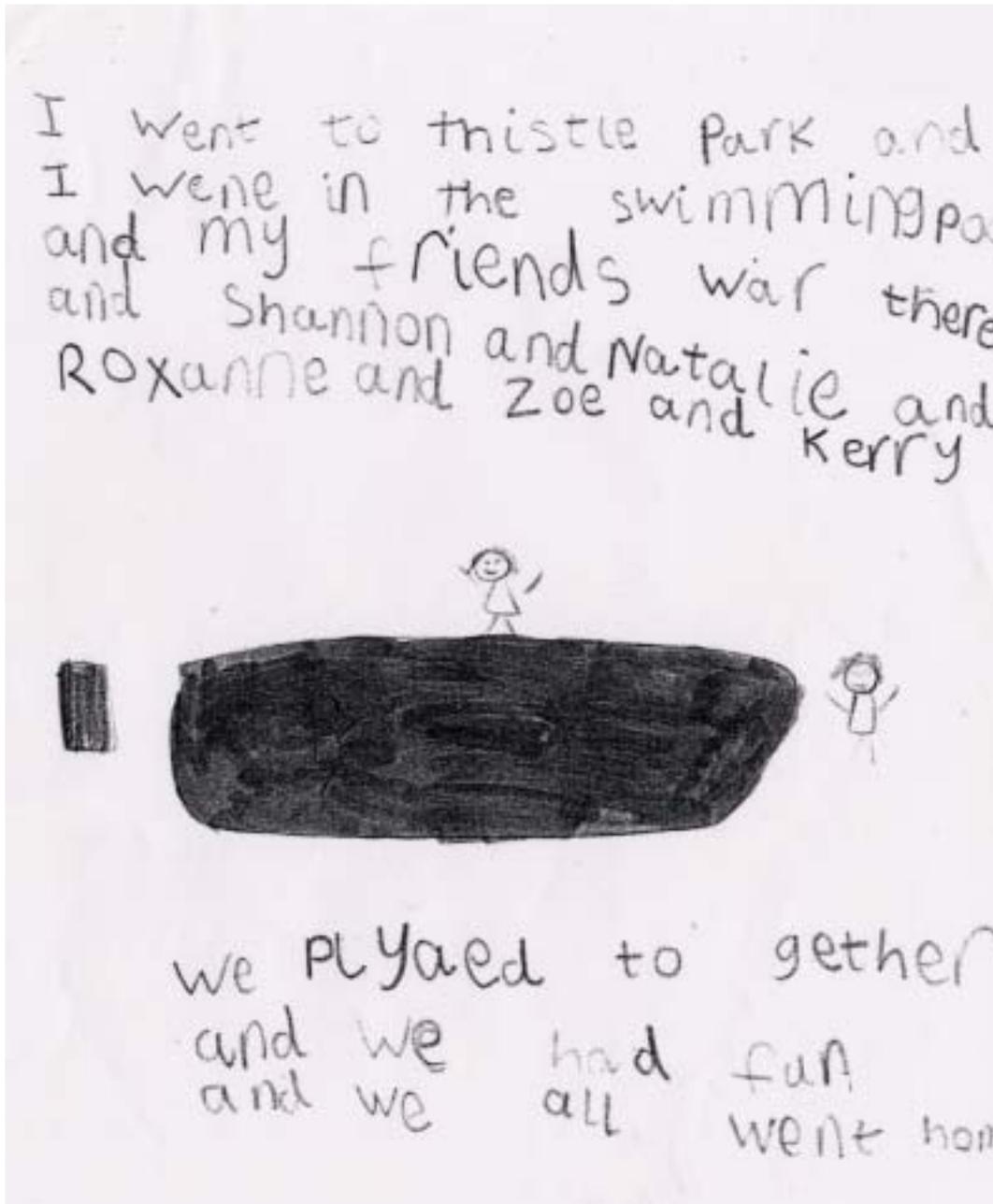


Figure 9: Chloe's 'real book'

Figure 9 was produced by Chloe, an inexperienced writer, shortly after her sixth birthday. She was very excited that she had made this look *just like a real book* because she had placed the illustration between two bits of written text. This was the first indication that she understood that she could make deliberate choices about her writing and it was the first time she had expressed pride in her work.

When looking with children at the effectiveness of their multimodal texts, some useful questions are:

- Does this text do the job you wanted it to do?
- How does it do it?
- Could you do it better if you used pictures or writing in a different way?

Communicating in different curriculum areas

Geography

An advertising poster can be used as a good starting point for discussing what pictures can do that words cannot, and when you need to add words to pictures to help get the meaning across. One year 2 teacher used a poster (with the title covered up) showing photographs of lots of doors, asking her class: what other information do you need in order to know more about the doors, for example, *Where could you see these doors?* She then revealed the title: 'Irish Doors' and the discussion turned to the purpose of the poster for tourism, before moving on to listing other useful information that might be added, for example, a map showing where the doors were located. The children were able to discuss other possible modes and media of communicating the information including the use of talk, internet and video.

Science

Building on this type of discussion, after work on life cycles, the same teacher invited children to use A3 paper or a simple folded booklet, to communicate the life cycles of animals and plants.



Figure 10: Gemma's drawing of the life cycle of a sunflower

Gemma decided to use only one mode – drawing – to depict the life cycle of a sunflower (see Figure 10). When she discussed it afterwards she decided that she could have added some words to indicate how long the time span was between each part of the cycle.

Sadie benefited from the discussion about time and added some verbal information to her flow diagram to show time passing (see Figure 11).

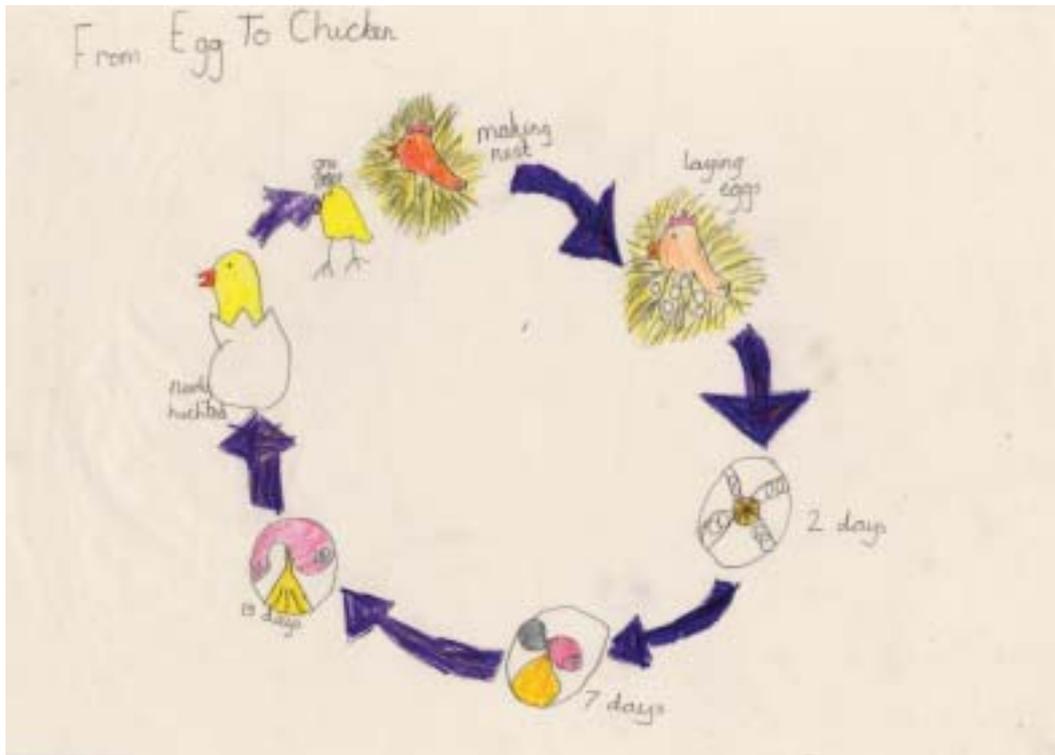


Figure 11: Sadie's flow diagram

PSHE

Towards the end of the summer term, these year 2 children reflected on their experiences during the the year and their hopes and fears about moving on to year 3. They then wrote a letter to their prospective year 3 teacher introducing themselves. From their experiences of combining pictures and words, the teacher asked them to convey their information through posters.

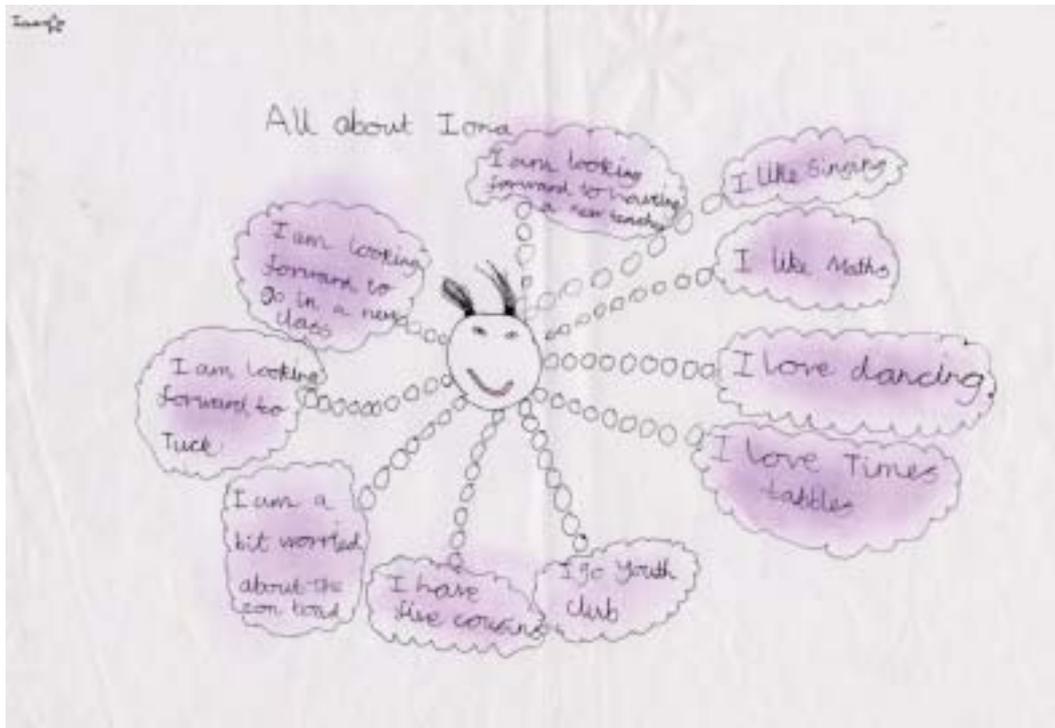


Figure 12: Iona's poster, showing hopes and fears

The focus of the poster (Figure 12) is the happy confident child because the face (open and smiling) communicates a positive image. The control of the whole text suggests a reflective child, too. Iona uses thought bubbles, a muted use of colour and a smudged effect to imply a confidential communication of her feelings to her new teacher. The regular layout implies that every point she makes about her preferences and concerns are equally important as each other. The design suggests balance by the way in which it is organised: each statement is clear and concise and the separate thought bubbles act as visual punctuation, separating the different items. Although these seem to be randomly presented, Iona has in fact grouped the bubbles: the four bubbles on the right are things that she likes; the two at the bottom are about Iona outside school and on the left-hand side she has grouped her thoughts about next year. She has also divided her ideas into present and future. The teacher commented:

In a short time, the class began independently adopting a mixed mode and mixed media approach wherever possible. The emphasis on thoughtful layout and presentation skills led to a noticeable improvement both to the appearance and substance of their texts and, particularly, to their written work.

History

Information in history is often presented through images and artefacts, and part of historical understanding is an appreciation of some of the experiences of people in the past. In this example, a pupil shows how effectively lessons have been learned about the role of image in conveying both factual information and feelings. The Gas Mask poster was produced at the end of an enquiry on World War 2. Groups of pupils had been allocated wall space and asked to produce a display for an open afternoon on an aspect of the topic that had interested them. Stewart, an 11-year-old boy who produced a number of pieces for display, contributed the poster shown in **Figure 13**. The overall theme chosen by the group was 'The War at Home'. The pupils said: *We want people to know that it was miserable for some people left at home and had obviously discussed the overall effect they wanted; the whole display was in black and white and mounted on black paper.*

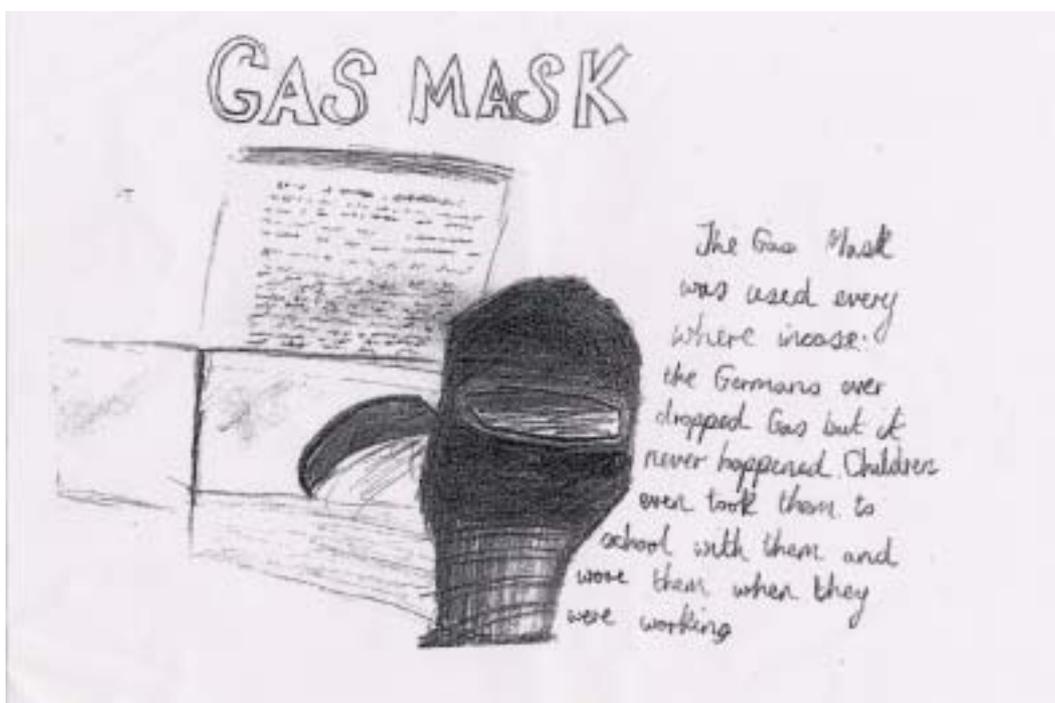


Figure 13: 'The war at home'

The decision to use a black and white sketch was a deliberate choice by the pupil who said: *I wanted to make people think about what it was really like. I think they would have been quite scared when they first saw the gas mask.* The pictorial element of the poster carries information not included in the written text: about what the gas mask looked like, and that that they came in boxes with instructions written on the lid. The picture and the written text have almost equal space on the page, but the black mass of the gas mask dominates and divides the page. It announces the topic as surely as the capitalised title at the top, and both separates and links the information contained in the writing and drawings on either side. The written text is short and concise, conveying anxiety (*in case the Germans ever dropped gas and children even took them to school*) but the style, the positioning and the choice of black and white for the design create a sense of foreboding.

This poster shows understanding of the anxieties that were felt by those waiting out the war at home as well as awareness of the ways in which historical evidence can be presented through different means.

Teachers' knowledge

Much of the research into effective teaching emphasises the importance of teachers' professional subject knowledge. In terms of multimodality, this means developing ways of talking about meaning-making, the use of different media and ways in which visual, multimodal and multimedia texts are constructed. As the research using the writing assessment strands suggests, teachers have a great deal of knowledge to draw on as a basis for describing children's production of texts that use more than one mode.

Experienced readers already have a repertoire of text knowledge, which can help in discussing multimodal approaches. The differences between reading a picture book, a magazine, a novel and information on a website suggest knowledge about how to access different kinds of text. Notes, jottings, diagrams, mind-maps and flowcharts form part of the teacher's text experience, which can help in discussing visual ways of recording thoughts and ideas. Photographs, advertisements, films and television programmes all have to be read in different ways from the continuous print of a novel and this reading is achieved without a great deal of conscious effort. All this forms an important part of teachers' subject knowledge of texts and helps them not to see pictures as merely illustrations or motivators for less able writers.

Next questions

This work shows how children can compose effective text using both words and images, and how teachers can value both aspects of these texts. A number of questions arise from this work, which can be taken further both in research and in the classroom.

- 1 This research has indicated scope for the application of the writing assessment strands to texts with pictures and words. What are the implications for schools and teachers applying the strands to their own pupils' work:
 - in terms of assessment?
 - in approaches to teaching and learning?
- 2 The research concentrated on some non-fiction texts. Narrative is one of the predominant forms in which children meet multimodal texts both at home and at school. Would the writing assessment strands be equally useful in considering pupils' narrative texts?
- 3 These materials have focused on multimodal texts that are a combination of drawing, design and writing. What are the further implications of taking moving image and computer-generated texts into account? Would the writing assessment strands be equally applicable?
- 4 Describing progress in multimodal texts will present challenges as well as opportunities. What does 'getting better at' multimodal representation look like?

Further reading

Bearne, E, Dombey, H and Grainger, T (eds), *Classroom interactions in literacy*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, 2003 (see particularly chapters by Eve Bearne; Cathy Coulthard, Evelyn Arizpe and Morage Styles; Ilana Snyder).

Evans, J (ed), *Literacy moves on: using popular culture, new technologies and critical literacy in the primary classroom*, David Fulton, London, 2004 (see particularly the chapter by Eve Bearne, 'Multimodal texts: what they are and how children use them').

Kress, G, *Literacy in the new media age*, Routledge, London, 2003.

Kress, G and van Leeuwen, T, *The grammar of visual design*, Routledge, London, 1996.

Lankshear, C and Knobel, M, *New literacies: changing knowledge and classroom learning*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 2003.

Moss, G, 'To work or play? Junior age non-fiction as objects of design' in *Reading literacy and language*, 35(3), pages 106–110, 2001.

Unsworth, L, *Teaching multiliteracies across the curriculum: changing contexts of text and image in classroom practice*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 2001.

 Curriculum and Standards	
Audience	Primary headteachers and teachers, literacy subject leaders, assessment coordinators
Type	Information/guidance
Description	<p>This booklet describes how children use a combination of visual design and language to represent their ideas. There are cross-curricular examples of children's work and commentaries that show how teachers can assess them.</p> <p>It supports teachers in developing and responding to multimodal texts.</p>
Contact	QCA English team (020 7509 5578); englishteam@qca.org.uk
For school use	

For more information, contact:

Customer Services, QCA, 83 Piccadilly, London W1J 8QA (tel: 020 7509 5556)
www.qca.org.uk/

UKLA, Upton House, Baldock Street, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 5AY (tel: 01763 241188)
www.ukla.org

For more copies, contact:

QCA Publications, PO Box 99, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2SN
 (tel: 01787 884444; fax: 01787 312950)

UKLA, Upton House, Baldock Street, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 5AY
 (tel: 01763 241188; fax: 01763 243785)

Price and order ref: £4 QCA/04/1290