Introduction

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

Reading this chapter will allow you to:

+ Understand how students' vocabularies develop, and explore ways this development can be fostered.

+ Recognise that writing is a process, and know how to explain this to your students.

+ Distinguish between genres and text types, and name examples of each.

+ Explain how students' expression can be expanded by exposing them to a wide range of genres and text types.

+ Begin to see how students' literature can be used to motivate them to write.

KEY VOCABULARY

Antonym
Genre
Modelling
Synonym
Text type

Teaching writing

Willa Cather writes, 'Most of the basic material a writer works with is acquired before the age of fifteen' (Goodreads, 2015). Because of this, it's important to make sure that children are well equipped to be writers in school and in the future. There is so much involved in teaching writing to children. What genre or text type are they using? Who is their audience? What is the purpose? What are they trying to say? Is there a model they can follow? Do they have free choice in choosing topics? Writing involves a lot and can be difficult to teach.

Think back, for example, to your first experiences with writing. Were they positive? Donald Graves investigates this in his 1994 book *A Fresh Look at Writing*. He contends that writers must look at where they've come from in order to see where they can go next. This ties in with Cather's observation: it is important that children develop proper writing skills at an early age, especially in the primary school years.

This book is designed to assist teachers in teaching writing, specifically looking at the genres and text types that teachers can use in order to teach children to write for not only a variety of purposes, but also for a plethora of audiences. We will come back to the topic of genres and text types, as there are several other key ingredients needed when teaching writing. Teachers need to:

+ be aware of how children's vocabularies develop, and know how to foster this development. This is discussed below;

+ recognise that writing is a process, and be able to convey this to their students; again, this is explored below;

+ have a solid knowledge of grammar, and of how particular grammar or language features appear in various genres and text types, allowing them to give students concrete writing strategies and feedback. This is the subject of Chapter 2, Grammar;

+ establish a classroom environment that supports students' writing efforts—in particular, by exposing students to a wide variety of texts and by modelling reading and writing practices. Chapter 3, Getting Ready, deals with this;

+ understand how to assess students' writing, and encourage students to self-assess in order to increase their engagement and motivation. Chapter 4, Assessment, explores this further.

Children's vocabulary development

Opitz and Zbaracki (2004) in their book *Listen, Hear!* describe a hierarchy of children's vocabulary development. The base, and main level, is listening vocabulary—children listen from birth. This leads to speaking vocabulary, then reading, and finally to writing. Although children are exposed to a wide range of words from birth, once they start writing, years later, they are less willing to experiment with words they do not have one hundred per cent mastery of. This can be seen in the comic strip 'One Big Happy' by Rick Detorie (see Figure 1.1). In this comic, Joe is writing a report about lobsters. It is clear though, that he does not have mastery of a large vocabulary, and because of this, limits himself to only those words that he knows, even if the more challenging words would fit better: this is called word substitution or **synonym** usage. It's not all bad news though: Joe's word substitution is both creative and humorous.

One of the main goals of this book is to explain how important it is to capture children's initial enthusiasm for writing and to show how using different genres and text types can be an exciting and fun process. Where appropriate, it will also show how children's vocabulary can be developed in order to enhance their confidence in their writing. Following Opitz and Zbaracki's ideas about listening comprehension, it is important to develop a listening vocabulary, and one easy way that teachers can make this happen is to read aloud to children daily. Teachers can choose books that have good vocabulary, thus exposing children to a number of new words. Another way of developing children's vocabularies is to discuss their finished writing. Look at the writing sample, by the author's young son, Oliver, over the page. It is a Christmas card to his friend Axel.
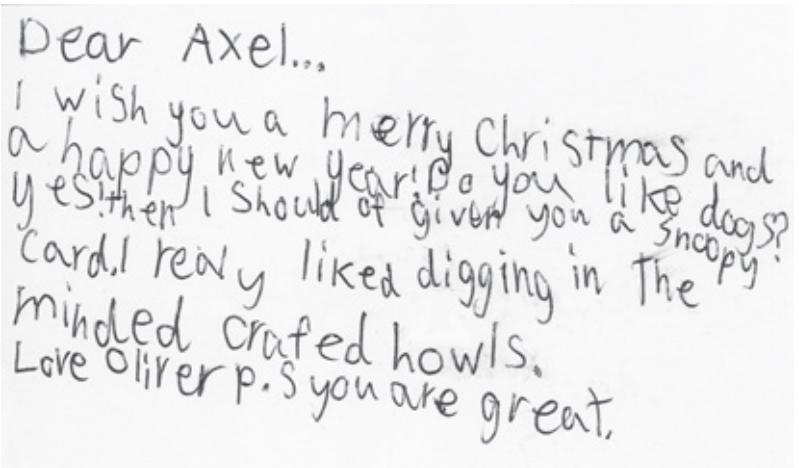
Synonym

A word having the same or a similar meaning; for example, 'big' is a synonym of 'large'. The opposite of a synonym is an **antonym**.

FIGURE 1.1 LOBSTER COMIC
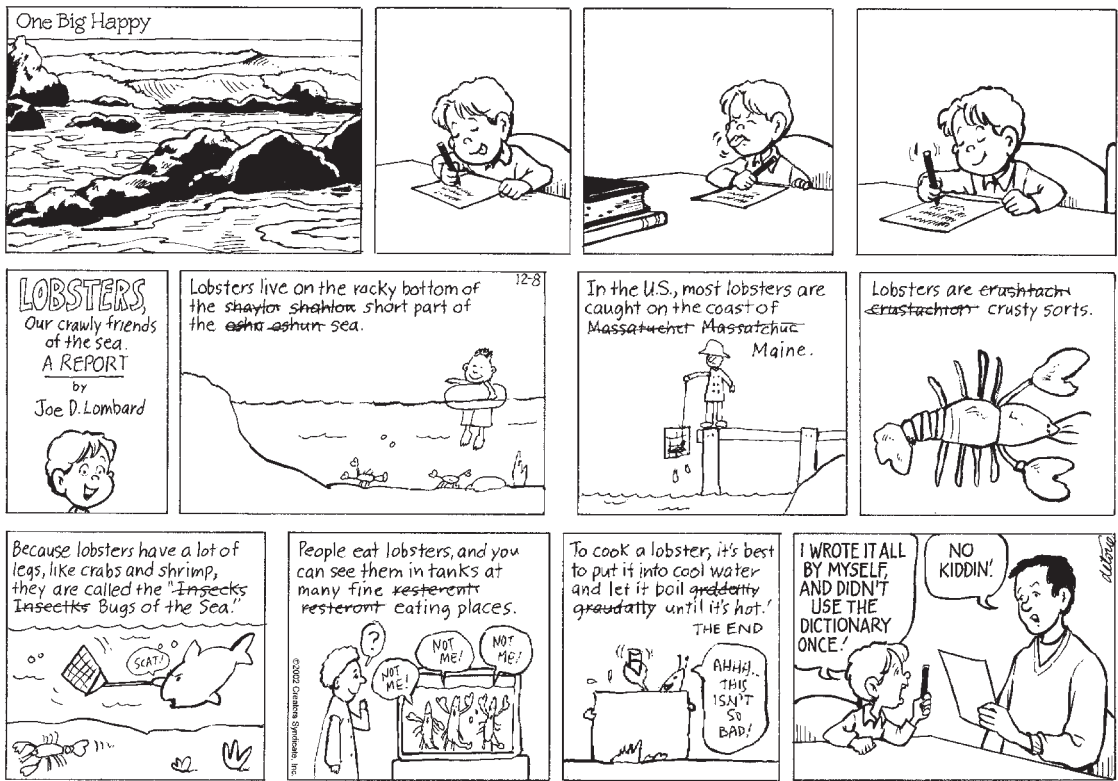
WRITING SAMPLE 1.1 OLIVER'S CHRISTMAS CARD

You can see Oliver uses the term 'minded crafed'. This was not a term that he had ever read, but one he had heard in numerous discussions with his friends about the game Minecraft. Because of his excitement about the game he mentions it in his writing and experiments with the spelling of the word. It is an excellent idea to recognise this excitement, and encourage him to experiment with spelling but also to use new vocabulary. Next, you could show Oliver the actual spelling of the words 'mine' and 'craft', and discuss with him the multiple meanings of the words. As children progress with their reading and become exposed to more words, they can have similar discussions with their teachers.

The writing process

Tompkins notes that 'often novice writers terminate the writing process as soon as they complete a rough draft, believing that once their ideas are jotted down, the writing task is complete' (2004, p. 18). Experienced writers know this to be far from the truth. Writing is a process and no matter the age of the writer (primary student, undergraduate, or an adult professional) it is critical to acknowledge that writers follow a process.

The writing process has been described and demonstrated by a number of different writers. Wing Jan showed the process to be: planning and preparing for writing; drafting and reworking; proofreading for meaning, spelling and punctuation; and publishing (2010). Tompkins outlines the process in five stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing (2004—see Figure 1.2). In fact, any book about teaching writing to children that subscribes to the process theory promotes similar steps. It is important to note, however, that good writers will jump around to different steps in the process at different times, so instead of a progressive, step-by-step approach, a wheel might be a more accurate visual representation, demonstrating that writers can move throughout the process in a recursive fashion

(see Figure 1.3). The arrows could really go anywhere and not just back and forth between steps. D'Arcy and colleagues express it best: 'Writing is a journey, developed over time through a recursive, or flexible, process' (D'Arcy, 1989; Calkins, 1986, 1994; Graves, 1983, 1994 as cited in Combs 2002, p. 184).
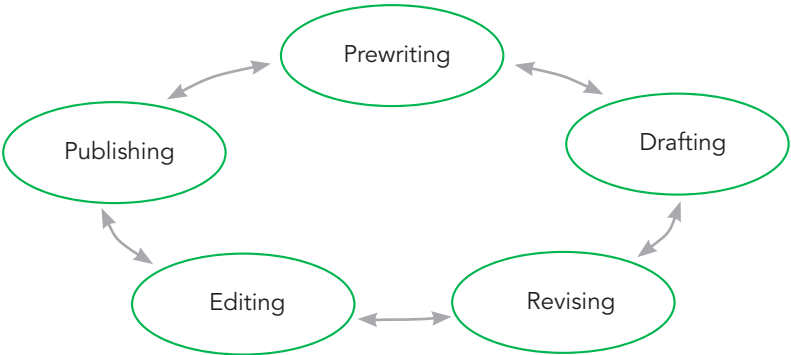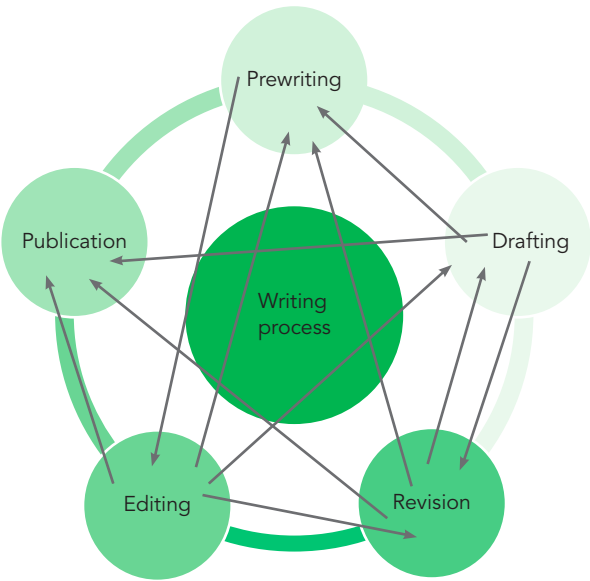
FIGURE 1.2 THE WRITING PROCESS

FIGURE 1.3 A MORE COMPLEX WRITING PROCESS

Some commentators argue that writing to a process limits children's writing and does not properly prepare them as writers. However, knowing that the process is infinitely flexible should not deter teachers from instructing their students about the steps. You might share with students the way the young adult author, Laurie Halse Anderson, describes *her* writing process: pondering, mucking around, scribbling, abandonment, boiling down the bones, chords, singing, and storytelling (see http://madwomanintheforest.com/wfmad-day-16-the-bones-of-the-writing-process-part-1/). Nowhere does she state that there is *not* a writing process, she simply states that it is much more complex than a linear process and describes in realistic terms *how* writers go through the process. It is, therefore, our job as educators to show children that all writers follow a process when we write. One strategy is to model the steps ourselves; for example, when modelling writing in a specific genre, we can work through the first step of planning through a brainstorm, or outline of ideas, in front of our students. This can be done using a graphic organiser so that students can see how they can organise their ideas and develop their writing. The idea of modelling is discussed further in Chapter 3, Getting Ready.

Another, equally beneficial, strategy is to show your students interviews with authors about the process they follow. Table 1.1 provides weblinks to author interviews, both video and written, suitable for this purpose. Note in particular how these authors do not assume that their first draft is the final version.

TABLE 1.1 LINKS TO AUTHOR INTERVIEWS

Author	Website	Summary
Andy Griffiths (written interview)	www.creativekidstales.com.au/featured-author-interviews/308-andy-griffiths-interview-may-2012	In this interview, Andy Griffiths talks about where he gets some of his ideas as well as the steps in his writing process.

TABLE 1.1 LINKS TO AUTHOR INTERVIEWS (*CONTINUED*)

Author	Website	Summary
Andy Griffiths	http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=YBwZgs-oCCY&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DYBwZgs-oCCY	This video interview will introduce children to the author and help them understand how he became a professional writer, and how they can become better writers themselves.
Emily Rodda	http://vimeo.com/43078339	This is a video of Emily Rodda talking with a group about her writing. The beginning of the video really helps show where her ideas come from and how ideas can be developed.
Shaun Tan (written interview)	www.youtube.com/watch?v=5etuXDP3xc4	This interview with Shaun Tan, discussing his book *The Rules of Summer*, showcases illustrations and illustrators. Tan examines the process of illustrating as well as where the idea for *The Rules of Summer* came from.
Gordon Korman (written interview)	www.loc.gov/bookfest/kids-teachers/authors/gordon_korman	This is a great interview where Gordon Korman talks a bit about his work and ideas and provides tips about writing and the writing process. It connects very well to the idea of planning your writing.

STOP AND THINK

1. How do you view yourself as a writer? How will you model yourself as a writer in the classroom?
2. What process do you follow as a writer? What steps do you feel might be the most important to follow in the process? Why do you feel that way?
3. Which writers do you admire the most? Take a look online for any interviews where they talk about their writing process. How might knowing this about a writer help you relate to or better understand their work?

Genres and text types

Defining genres and text types is quite complex. Richardson concurs: '[T]he use of the term *genre* has caused considerable confusion and annoyance. It would seem that a perfectly useful word has now been so expanded in meaning as to render it imprecise' (1994, pp. 124–5). Calkins takes this idea one step further when she writes, 'I don't think there is any one magical list of "genres" or that it's helpful to try and nail this issue down' (1986, p. 364). The definition of genre is indeed complex. Some believe genre and text types are the same thing (Humphrey, Love & Droga 2011; Martin & Rose 2003). In this book they are defined separately. **Genre** is defined as a specific category of writing that follows a set structure. The focus of the book will be on the nine genres listed in Table 1.2. **Text types** are defined as specific types of texts that fit into different genres within different formats. For example, if one were to state that humour is a specific genre, then some different text types within the genre would be parodies and comics (see Chapter 5, Humour). In the same way, in the procedural genre one would find recipes as text types (see Chapter 10, Procedural).

With these definitions in mind, the focus in this book is on the genre approach to writing. There is power in knowing how to write in different genres. Kalantzis and Cope note, 'Learning new genres, and expanding the range of genres we can use, gives us the power of choice and the linguistic potential to join new realms of social activity and social power' (2012, p. 129). Calkins also discusses the importance of working within genres. She points out that writers tend to stay in communities based on a chosen genre; her example of this is that poets read poetry and socialise with other poets. However, as teachers, we are able to extend students beyond one genre into many. This helps them become versatile writers and find their voices as authors. Calkins expresses this best: 'Because the forms in which we write become lenses that affect our way of seeing the world, it is tremendously important that we not allow our writing workshop to become a place in which children write over and over in the same genre' (1994, p. 357). There has been

Genre
A specific category of writing that follows a set structure.

Text type
A specific type of text that fits into different genres within different formats.

so much emphasis on the genre approach to teaching writing that NAPLAN-standardised testing focuses Grades 3 and 5 students on writing persuasive pieces. The Australian Curriculum also emphasises genres in writing. Because of this, it is essential that children are aware that they can use different text types to write within different genres, and this informs Chapters 5 to 13—hereafter the 'genre chapters'.

Introducing the genre chapters

No matter what genre students are taught, and what text type they are interested in using, it is important that they are able to understand the genre and how it works. The aim of this book is to help you teach them just that. Listed in Table 1.2 are the genres included in the genre chapters and the text types that can be incorporated into them.

TABLE 1.2 GENRES AND TEXT TYPES INCLUDED IN THIS BOOK

Genre	Purpose	Examples (text types)
Humour (Chapter 5)	To entertain To make readers laugh using language creatively	Almost all inclusive but usually found within fictional stories, comics, poetry
Narrative (Chapter 6)	To tell a story using a sequence of events with characters, place, and time	Fictional stories, scripts, plays, comics, graphic novels, and with information narratives, biographies/autobiographies
Recount (Chapter 7)	To tell what happened including sequence, participants, time, and place	Journals, diaries
Persuasive (Chapter 8)	To put forth a point of view and be convincing about an issue or topic	Advertisements, arguments, debates, discussions, commercials, social commentary, cartoons
Information Reports (Chapter 9)	To describe and classify	News reports, newspaper articles, essays

Genre	Purpose	Examples (text types)
Procedural (Chapter 10)	To instruct or inform how	Recipes, directions, instructions, experiments
Explanation (Chapter 11)	To show how or why things happen and describe a process	Essays, accounts, explanations telling how, why, and the process
Transactional (Chapter 12)	To establish and/or maintain communication or relationships	Letters, emails, invitations
Poetry (Chapter 13)	To use language to evoke moods, feelings, and images in a creative way	A number of different poem formats (see Chapter 13 for specific examples)

The genre chapters take the following structure:

+ First, they define the genre.

+ Second, they look at the structure of text types within that genre: What do such works generally contain? What structures do they follow? What tools can children use to help them plan their work?

+ Third, they explore the language and grammar features of the genre. What is typical? What might be tricky for children to achieve?

+ Fourth, they examine some examples of children's writing within the genre in depth: the work is analysed according to the structure and grammar already discussed, and readers are encouraged to do the same analysis with other authentic examples.

There are some features that appear in all chapters of this book, not just the genre ones:

+ 'Stop and think' activities (such as the one above), together with 'In the classroom' and 'Now it's your turn!' features challenge readers to examine their existing knowledge, apply ideas from the chapter in their classrooms, and develop their own classroom activities and lesson plans.

+ Margin notes define key terms and highlight how discussions and activities connect to Australian Curriculum standards.

+ Websites and applications (apps) that will assist in teaching each genre are discussed within the body text and listed in a table at the

end of each chapter. These are intended as resources for a teacher to use beyond simply the 'pen and paper' approach. They are meant to go beyond 'cool' and fun novelties, and instead be meaningful and engaging teaching tools for classroom teachers.

Using children's literature to motivate young writers

Calkins has found that children respond well to specific examples and when exposed to such examples are likely to incorporate aspects of selected authors' work in their own writing. As will become apparent in the chapters to come, **modelling** is a major theme of this book, and numerous children's literature titles are included throughout the book to help showcase genres and text types. A table of these—'Children's literature'—is also found at the end of each chapter, along with a recommended grade level and a short description of each title. The table at the end of this chapter, for example, will help introduce to children the writing process and how books work.

Modelling
The production of an example or model for comparison or understanding.

STOP AND THINK

1. Looking at Table 1.2, think about which genres you believe children need to know the most. Why do you feel that way?
2. How do you think children's literature could be used to help teach writing?
3. Make a list of books you know or remember that could be used in your own teaching to help promote writing.
4. Think about the different ways this chapter and its components connect with the Australian Curriculum, specifically:

   ACELY1707: Use a range of software including word processing programs with fluency to construct, edit and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements:

   For example, as discussed in this chapter, editing and publishing are steps in the writing process. It is a good idea to revisit this standard as you read through this book.

CONCLUSION

Writing can at times be a daunting process, but this does not need to be the case. Writing can also be a fun and enjoyable experience where children and adults can experiment while entertaining and informing audiences. This chapter has explained how understanding and encouraging children's vocabulary development, and teaching them about the writing process, can help them on this journey. It has also introduced the idea of genres and text types and the value of teaching children to write in a range of text types as a way of expanding their expressive abilities. Chapter 2 addresses another key ingredient—grammar—while Chapter 3 makes clear that when teachers create a positive classroom environment, and model appropriately, children can be motivated and engaged writers. Read on, and you may be surprised to find yourself thinking that you, too, are a writer!

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

This table includes books for children about writing.

TITLE	AUTHOR	AGE LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Parsley Rabbit's Book about Books	Frances Watts (2007)	Early Primary	This fun and informational book talks about how books are made and their components. It is great for introducing early primary students to these topics. You will also find this title as an example of an information report (see Chapter 9).
How the Aliens from Alpha Centauri Invaded My Maths Class and Turned Me into a Writer … and How You Can Be One Too	Jackie French (2010)	Middle and Upper Primary	Have you ever thought about becoming a writer, or how authors create imaginative worlds in their books? Then this book is for you! It talks about ways to write stories, and even how *not* to begin a story. It also provides tips and hints for making stories more interesting and engaging to readers. It is a great resource for children to learn more about writing from an author they may already know very well.

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TITLE	AUTHOR	AGE LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Writing Hannah: On Writing for Children	Libby Gleeson (1999)	Adults	Well-known children's author Libby Gleeson kept a journal when she wrote her third Hannah book, *Hannah and the Tomorrow Room*. This book is that journal. It is useful for adults who want to understand what writers think about as they write their stories, and for teachers looking for ways to engage their students.
You Have to Write	Janet Wong (2002)	Middle Primary	We all know the drill: students are asked to write a story about anything they want. The trouble is, there is so much to choose from that it is hard to decide! This book will help students when they are stuck for ideas, or have too many of them. It provides them with ideas and things to think about to help them begin writing or storytelling.
Author: A True Story	Helen Lester (2002)	Early and Middle Primary	Helen Lester has written many books for children, with one of her best known characters being Tacky the Penguin. This book takes children on a journey through the ups and downs of the writing process. It also provides them with tips to help them in their own writing. One notable example is her fizzle box, 'a whole box full of fizzled thoughts and half finished books'. When students need an idea, a name, or any other storytelling tool, their own fizzle box can provide it! This book will motivate children in their own writing while teaching them more about the craft.
What Do Authors Do?	Eileen Christelow (1998)	Middle Primary	This may be an older title, but the content is wonderful. The author based the book upon all the questions she has been asked as she has toured schools. It takes readers along on the journey of writing a book from the initial idea to sharing the published book with an audience. This is an excellent resource for highlighting the writing process and how authors follow it.

TITLE	AUTHOR	AGE LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Rocket Writes a Story	Tad Hills (2012)	Early Primary	In this sequel to *Rocket Learns to Read*, the puppy Rocket begins to write his own books. With the help of his friend, the yellow bird, Rocket learns about elements of storytelling and how he can use them to become a writer. This book will help young children become writers and think about ways they can improve their writing.
Ralph Tells a Story	Abby Hanlon (2012)	Early Primary	Ralph thinks that nothing ever exciting happens to him. So, when it's writing time at school he can't think of a thing to write about. His classmates give him ideas and he begins to write. He then learns that perhaps small things, such as what he had for breakfast and the things he does to annoy his classmates can lead to ideas for writing and perhaps he really does have plenty of stories to tell. This book could help younger reluctant writers come up with ideas for their own work.

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