Lesson examples

Example 1: Year 1, term 1

Class context
There are 27 pupils in the class. 80 per cent of them are learning English as an additional language (EAL), two at very early stages. One pupil has a statement that identifies attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Two pupils are at School Action Plus with literacy difficulties.

Learning context
The lesson with this very challenging class was followed by work in PSHE on feelings and managing feelings.

Prelude
When taking the register all pupils had to reply by giving some of their favourite words from the story, 'The fisherman and his wife', which the class had been enjoying together. The teacher always uses the register to cue pupils in to the learning that follows. The pupils had read the book twice already.

Whole-class shared work
The teacher shared with pupils the learning objective:

- retell the story, and
- pretend you are in it.

The teacher led pupils in a dramatic retelling of the story; the class acted out the events and joined in with lines from the story.

These were some of the prompts used:

- “All be magical fish” – feel your fins sparkling, swim through the waves, they’re getting rougher
- “You foolish man” – say it again to show you’re getting fed up
- Why is the fish fed up? What word is in the story for fed up? Yes, ‘grumpy’. All be grumpy. When might you feel grumpy?
- Imagine this classroom has turned into a mansion. Gaze round in amazement – what do you see? Tell the person next to you what you see
- What is the wife going to be feeling? Why do you say that?
- What would you feel if X did that?
- Think of the words "Ruler of the whole universe". Say it as if you wanted to be king of the whole world – show how important you feel.

Word-level work
The class has 15 minutes of phonics work daily. The class applied recently taught phonic strategies to blending words from three sentences taken from ‘The fisherman and his wife’. The teacher chose sentences from the story that the pupils with reading difficulties would later be using in their independent work.

Independent work
In their independent work, mixed-ability pairs of pupils retold the story in writing (with one pupil acting as scribe), some (including several EAL learners) worked in groups to retell the story orally using puppets and props, and some pupils with reading difficulties used software with onscreen word grids containing the words from three key sentences to recreate the sentences and print them out.
Plenary
In the plenary, pupils who had used the computer read out their printed sentences and the teacher asked the group that had used puppets and props to act them out. The pupils then talked to the person next to them about what they found hard in the lesson, what they found easy and what helped them to learn. The teacher took feedback from three pairs and made links to the learning they would be doing together the next day.

Example 2: Year 3, term 3

Class context
80 per cent of the class are EAL pupils, two are at very early stages. 32 per cent of pupils receive free school meals. Twelve pupils are identified as having SEN, including five at School Action Plus. Two pupils have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia).

Learning context
Literacy letter-writing; a unit of work linked with citizenship as the class wrote letters relating to conservation at the end of the unit.

Five-minute starter
The pupils were asked to talk for two minutes to a partner using the talking frame written on a flipchart. The teacher modelled the activity: "I would love to look out of my window and see... because... (the structure of the sentence is linked to the text, 'Dear Greenpeace'). The teacher took feedback from two pairs of pupils.

Whole-class shared work
The teacher held up the text from ‘Dear Greenpeace’ and gave pupils 30 seconds, thinking time to consider what sort of book it might be and to give their reasons. Responses from the pupils included:

- “It’s about a letter because of the stamp”
- “It’s got ‘Dear’ in the title”, and
- “It’s about a girl who doesn’t like vegetables” (which led to discussion of ‘peas’ and ‘peace’).

The teacher warned the pupils with dyslexia about the question she would ask them shortly. They both answered well when asked.

Next came a discussion of what Greenpeace does. One pupil asked, “Is it like the council?”

The teacher explained words like ‘environment’ and ‘protection’, using school-based examples.

The teacher read the first letter in the text, stopping when Lucy asked for information about whales. She asked for comments about this page and took feedback from pupils about what interested them.

The teacher explained that the task was to find some information about whales for Lucy. She asked what kinds of things it would be useful for Lucy to find out.

The teacher sorted and noted the pupils’ answers on to a mind map on the flipchart, using the categories:

- food
- sleep
- what happens when whales get injured, and
- where whales live normally.

The teacher modelled how to select text, find information and record on a sticky note.

Independent work
One pupil with dyslexia was paired with a partner to use the ‘living library’ software on a PC, the other was put in charge of the sticky notes in a group with an identified reader. All pupils had a choice of books or photocopies of texts with differing reading levels.
The teacher worked initially on labelling a picture with pupils in the early stages of learning EAL. She moved to the group with one pupil with dyslexia and did paired reading with him. She discussed what they had read in the group and identified a fact that he wanted to write on a note. He then wrote it independently, using words identified in the text by a blob of sticky tack and his list of common words.

**Plenary**

Pupils read out a note and placed it on the flipchart mind map in the right category. The teacher quickly explained vocabulary as it came up, for example ‘warm-blooded’, ‘mammal’, and so on.

The teacher explained that she would type up some of these notes so that all pupils had access to the research of the whole class when they were writing their own letters later in the week.

**Example 3: Year 4, term 2**

**Class context**

A class of 31 pupils, with five in the early stages of learning EAL, and 22 at later stages, three pupils on School Action Plus, including one pupil with dyslexia.

**Learning context**

The learning objectives were to write poems based on the structure and style of poems read together and to understand the use of figurative language. This lesson was linked to work on colour in art and design. The poems written by the pupils were published as a collage. The shared text was a classic poem, ‘What is pink?’, by Christina Rossetti.

**Starter**

The teacher wrote three unfamiliar words from the poem on the board. He asked the pupils what to do about words they couldn’t read or words whose meaning they didn’t know. The class discussed how breaking the word into syllables helps with decoding and how to blend phonemes or syllables ‘robot-style’. They explored how to use ‘chin bumps’ to count syllables. The teacher provided a range of words at different levels of difficulty for pairs of pupils to split into syllables and blend.

Pupils explained how they would read another unfamiliar word from the poem to a partner.

They discussed the meanings of the unfamiliar words, for example ‘mellow’, acting this out and identifying times from that day when their teacher may have felt mellow.

**Main activity**

The teacher read the poem to the pupils, pointing to the pictures in the shared text to support their understanding and asking them to make a picture in their heads as they listened.

Afterwards he asked whether there were any new and interesting words in the poem that needed explaining. Pupils identified two words. The teacher asked for a volunteer to guess at their meaning and engaged that pupil in some extended dialogue about how they had come to their guess.

The class then read the poem together. He gave them the choice of reading from the big book or having their own photocopy to read from.

The pupils discussed questions that focused on figurative language using ‘think pair share’. The teacher chose pupils to answer rather than asking for “Hands up”, but pupils did not have to answer if they didn’t want to. His questions included:

- how would you help me with this word or idea?
- why does that comparison help me see the picture in the poet’s head?
- why am I pleased with that answer?

**Shared writing**

The teacher and the class wrote a simple poem on a movable whiteboard, using a structure that forced the pupils to make a comparison. Some key vocabulary was written on a mind map with little sketches beside the words.
Independent work
The pupils wrote their own poems. The model provided through shared writing enabled all pupils, including those learning EAL and the pupil with dyslexia, to compose a repetitive but effective poem. The movable whiteboard with the poem composed by the whole class was put on one table to help the group with the most difficulty. The dyslexic pupil made a tape recording of her poem, rather than writing it down on paper.

Plenary
The pupils read out the comparisons they had used and explored what made them effective.

Example 4: Year 5

Class context
A class of 29 pupils, 70 per cent EAL learners, including three recently arrived pupils at very early stages of learning EAL. Two pupils at School Action Plus identified as having literacy difficulties.

Learning context
This was a history lesson focusing on life in the 1960s. There was a class exhibition of primary/secondary sources from this period. Later in the week, pupils were to write a report about an event in the 1960s to add to this display. Other year groups would visit the exhibition and read the reports.

Starter
The pupils were allotted 30 seconds to recall learning from the previous lesson, which was about sources of evidence on life in the 1960s. Pupils worked in pairs to write possible sources of evidence on cards, in large writing. These cards were then grouped into primary/secondary sources. Pupils were asked to explain their reasoning as the cards were sorted.

Main part of lesson
Pupils were given three photographs of life in the 1960s. They were asked what the photos told them and what other sources would be needed. They discussed what they knew about the photographs and what they had found out for homework by asking parents/carers or grandparents. The teacher modelled note-making as the pupils gave their thoughts. The pupils then had 10 minutes to make notes in pairs in answer to these questions:

- who was involved and what was the event?
- what happened (brief summary of the event)?
- what did people at the time think?
- why do we remember this event today?

The pupils read out their notes and the teacher contrasted the notes with full text to emphasise the difference.

Independent task
Pupils chose whether to work in pairs or as individuals. They used a selection of texts and pictures available from books at different levels of readability. Pupils could select from these to make notes to add to their existing ones. These notes would be used to write the report for the class exhibition at the end of the week. Some pupils highlighted a photocopy, some made notes in books, some on sticky notes. Others used the computer, searching for Pathé news clips from the period. The teacher held a series of mini-plenaries during the lesson, in which pupils read out what they had written to make sure it sounded like notes rather than sentences.

Plenary
Some pupils read out their notes so that pupils could hear the difference between notes and full sentences. Listeners were encouraged to add any new information to their own notes.
Example 6: Year 6

Learning context
This literacy lesson formed part of cross-curricular work on World War II. The learning objectives were to:

- develop strategies to work out how to spell words containing unstressed syllables, and
- make comparisons and links between different texts.

Whole class word-level work
The teacher asked the pupils to spell the word ‘business’, using individual whiteboards. Some pupils worked in pairs. She asked what was difficult and explained the idea of an unstressed syllable. She went on to explore what the root word (busy) was, how that might help and reminded pupils about the rule about ‘y’ and suffixes. Pupils described strategies they used to remember words, such as thinking of a link word, finding a hidden word or deliberately mispronouncing the word. They discussed which of these would help with ‘business’, then applied these to spelling the word ‘mathematics’. Pupils selected a word from a list of varying difficulty, all of which contained unstressed syllables, discussed with a partner how they were going to remember it, and had a ‘mini test’ with their partner. The teacher then gave them 30 seconds to move in some way – stand up, stretch, wave, go round their table shaking hands, and so on.

Whole-class shared text
Shared text work began with paired talk to share memories of Friday’s lesson when the class had read an account from ‘The diary of Anne Frank’ and one from ‘Carrie’s war’ (the class novel). After brief feedback, the teacher moved on to explore the difference between Anne Frank and Carrie. Pupils highlighted the evidence in the text when giving their answer. The teacher made brief notes using a grid based on their answers. She asked the pupils to close their eyes, imagine the scene and listen carefully for differences. She then read the next part of Anne Frank and arranged paired talk to discuss more similarities and differences between Anne Frank and Carrie. When feedback was taken, the pupils referred to the texts in support of answers. A pupil who had given an answer made notes, or asked their partner to make notes, on the class grid, while the class was discussing the next point so that notes were built up efficiently and the teacher was able to praise pupils for writing understandable notes, not sentences. The teacher explained and briefly modelled the task.

Task
Write a formal comparison of Carrie and Anne Frank. A group of eight pupils worked with the teacher on the computer for this task. Flipchart grid notes from both lessons were placed near the group with most difficulty. This group had a short writing frame and vocabulary folder on the table. Writing frames were available for all pupils who wanted them.

Plenary
The pupils read out different comparisons between the two girls. The class had to give comments on the work that was read out without knowing beforehand what they would be asked to comment on. Good focused listening was praised.