Year 2 Non-fiction Unit 2 – Explanations

Explanations (3 weeks)

This unit is the second in a block of four non-fiction units in Year 2. It can be linked to many curriculum subjects or themes in which a process needs to be understood. This could include any life cycle, for example sunflowers, tadpoles, ourselves, or work on forces and movement or sound and hearing. It is important that children have the chance to carry out the practical activity, be it an investigation, experiment or construction task, so that they can draw on first-hand experience of the process.

Phase 1

Read a range of non-fiction texts, identifying organisational features of the text including index pages, glossary and title pages. Construct a glossary of words drawn from another curriculum area. Discuss how diagrams, charts, labels and captions are used in non-fiction texts.

Phase 2

Investigate and record the key features of explanation texts. Demonstrate how to organise stages in a process using time and causal connectives.

Phase 3

Revisit and clarify the key features of the text-type. Construct a pictorial flow chart based on an investigation from another curriculum area.

Phase 4

Demonstrate how to write an explanation text using causal connectives to create whole-text cohesion. Children write their own explanation text sequenced correctly and using causal connectives to link sections of the text.

Overview

Link this unit to a curriculum area such as science or design and technology in which a process needs to be understood. Carry out the practical activity, for example experiment, investigation, construction task, so that children have first-hand experience of the process. Lead the children in the creation of a flowchart or cyclical diagram to explain the process. Model an oral explanation of the process using the flowchart and appropriate physical gestures. Give the children the opportunity to explain the same process orally also using language and gestures appropriately. Show the children a flowchart or cyclical diagram explaining another process and support their reading before asking them to read others independently. Following another practical task, children produce a simple flowchart or cyclical diagram independently.
1998 Framework objectives covered:

Year 2, Term 2: T19 read flowcharts and cyclical diagrams that explain a process; T21 produce simple flow charts or diagrams that explain a process.

Objectives

To ensure effective planning of literacy teachers need to ensure they plan for all elements of literacy effectively across the year ensuring that assessment for learning is used to plan and amend teaching. It is essential that core skills such as phonic strategies, spelling, and handwriting are incorporated into these exemplar units to ensure effective learning.

Most children learn to:

(The following list comprises only the strands, numbered 1 through 12, that are relevant to this particular unit. Where there are relevant Steps in Learning for an objective, a link has been included.)

1. Speaking

• Explain ideas and processes using imaginative and adventurous vocabulary and non–verbal gestures to support communication

2. Listening and responding

• Listen to others in class, ask relevant questions and follow instructions
• Listen to talk by an adult, remember some specific points and identify what they have learned

3. Group discussion and interaction

• Ensure that everyone contributes, allocate tasks, and consider alternatives and reach agreement

5. Word recognition: decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling)

• Read independently and with increasing fluency longer and less familiar texts
• Spell with increasing accuracy and confidence, drawing on word recognition and knowledge of word structure, and spelling patterns
• Know how to tackle unfamiliar words that are not completely decodable
• Read and spell less common alternative graphemes including trigraphs
• Read high and medium frequency words independently and automatically

6. Word structure and spelling

• Spell with increasing accuracy and confidence, drawing on word recognition and knowledge of word structure, and spelling patterns including common inflections and use of double letters
• Read and spell less common alternative graphemes including trigraphs

7. Understanding and interpreting texts

• Give some reasons why things happen or characters change
• Explain organisational features of texts, including alphabetical order, layout, diagrams, captions, hyperlinks and bullet points

8. Engaging with and responding to texts

• Engage with books though exploring and enacting interpretations

9. Creating and shaping texts

• Draw on knowledge and experience of texts in deciding and planning what and how to write
• Select from different presentational features to suit particular writing purposes on paper and on screen

10. Text structure and organisation

• Use planning to establish clear sections for writing
• Use appropriate language to make sections hang together

11. Sentence structure and punctuation

• Write simple and compound sentences and begin to use subordination in relation to time and reason

Prior learning

Check that children can already:

• Use alphabetical order to access simple dictionaries and glossaries.
• Read simple definitions and explanations.
• Write simple reports – explanations require many of the same language structures as reports, but explanations are an extension of report texts in that they explain phenomena, rather than simply describe them.
• Contribute to class discussions on the use of conjunctions which relate to cause and effect, for example because and so.

Teaching sequence phase 1

Note: Children working significantly above or below age-related expectations will need differentiated support, which may include tracking forward or back in terms of learning objectives. EAL learners should be expected to work within the overall expectations for their year group. For further advice see the progression strands and hyperlinks to useful sources of practical support.

Reading, retrieving information, making notes (5 days)

Teaching content:

• Ask children to recall what they have already learned in another curriculum area, for example electricity in science. Begin to list words related to their investigations and introduce a glossary.
• Provide opportunities for children to explore non-fiction texts, drawing attention to index pages, glossary and title pages.
• Begin to construct a class glossary drawing children's attention to alphabetical order and definition. Ask children, using whiteboards in pairs, to write three words they have been using in their investigation. Sort into
alphabetical order. Children should then attempt to write a definition for their words which would be added to the class or individual glossary throughout this unit.

- Play a game in which one child reads out their definition and the class or group have to guess the word. Have a class list of technical vocabulary available to the children.
- Look together at a range of information texts on the linked theme. Use a selection of texts as examples of how a process is described through the use of diagrams and flowcharts. Draw attention to labels and captions that help to explain what is happening.
- Draw attention to the use of cause and effect conjunctions such as because, so and but. This and similar activities could form part of the investigation during science lessons.

Learning outcomes:

- Children can find a key word using an index and then locate the relevant information on a page.
- Children demonstrate that they have understood information read from a book or screen by noting the main points.
- Children can make and use a class glossary of special interest words related to the investigation and give explanations and definitions.
- Children can follow a line of enquiry emerging from their own questions.

Teaching sequence phase 2

Listening, analysis and oral presentation (3 days)

Teaching content:

- Begin to draw from children the key features of this type of writing, based on their experiences of reading explanation texts. These features should include the general statement of introduction and the steps of explanation that continue until a conclusion is reached which explains how something works.
- Play a sentence construction game to develop the use of connectives (see Developing early writing (Ref: 0055-2001)) and adapt to match the chosen explanation.
- Through discussion, identify the different ranges of presentation, including flow charts and diagrams, and encourage children to identify ones that they think give a clear explanation of a process to the reader.
- Play a 'human flow chart' game, using children holding pictures of different stages in the process in the right order. Ask children to supply the explanations orally, paying special attention to the present tense, time connectives (then, next) and causal connectives (because, so, this causes).

Learning outcomes:

- Children can use technical vocabulary and causal connectives to explain a process or phenomenon.
- Children can model a process using models, pictures and diagrams and explain the process to peers.

Teaching sequence phase 3

Reading and analysing (2 days)

Teaching content:

- Read from an example of an explanation text again. Revisit the key features of this type of writing, based on children's experiences of reading explanation texts. These features should include the general statement of
introduction and a series of steps of explanation that continue until a conclusion is reached which explains how something works.

- Remind children of their investigation and explain that for readers who had not carried out the investigation for themselves, it would be helpful to have both diagrams and writing in the explanation texts.
- Having modelled the 'human flow chart' using pictures, ask children, in pairs, to construct their own flow chart in pictorial form. Children may already have examples of suitable drawings from another curriculum area.

Learning outcomes:

- Children can recognise the structure and language features of an explanation text.
- Children can make choices about the best way to present information in an explanation text, using flow charts and diagrams.

Teaching sequence phase 4

Writing and presenting explanation texts (5 days)

Teaching content:

- Begin by deciding on a title that includes the word how or why.
- Demonstrate how to write an explanation text (see Developing early writing (Ref: 0055-2001), Year 2 unit 13: Explanation; glossary) in the form or a flow chart or cyclic diagram. Use the opportunity to demonstrate sentence structure and punctuation, introducing connectives of reason and cause.
- Use talking partners to plan the writing for the next part of the flow chart or diagram. On a whiteboard, write the next part of the explanation, encouraging the use of because and so. When writing, children read and reread texts in pairs to ensure text cohesion and use of present tense.
- Children write their own explanation text choosing an appropriate structure, either in pairs, individually or as a group task with adult support. Before writing, children will need to determine the audience and the final presentation, for example a section of a class book, wall display, ICT text, their own book.
- Remind children of the glossary and show them an example again. Discuss the audience and purpose for the writing, for example as an alphabetically arranged reference text for the class library, and make decisions about the addition of pictures, and diagrams. Prepare the explanation texts for final presentation, improving sentence structure, layout, punctuation and vocabulary choice as necessary.
- When preparing for the final presentation, children consider the integration of visual, verbal and written information. Writing partners review and edit each other's work, using a checklist to support decisions about the above and the use of technical terms and causal connectives.

Learning outcome:

- Children note information collected from reading more than one source, their own practical work in another curriculum area and the use of visual representation that models a process. This is presented as a written, diagrammatic explanation text or as an oral presentation using a flow chart or diagram for support.

Complete teaching sequence

Note: Children working significantly above or below age–related expectations will need differentiated support, which may include tracking forward or back in terms of learning objectives. EAL learners should be expected to work within the overall expectations for their year group. For further advice see the progression strands and hyperlinks to useful sources of practical support.
Phase 1: Reading, retrieving information, making notes (5 days)

Teaching content:

- Ask children to recall what they have already learned in another curriculum area, for example electricity in science. Begin to list words related to their investigations and introduce a glossary.
- Provide opportunities for children to explore non-fiction texts, drawing attention to index pages, glossary and title pages.
- Begin to construct a class glossary drawing children's attention to alphabetical order and definition. Ask children, using whiteboards in pairs, to write three words they have been using in their investigation. Sort into alphabetical order. Children should then attempt to write a definition for their words which would be added to the class or individual glossary throughout this unit.
- Play a game in which one child reads out their definition and the class or group have to guess the word. Have a class list of technical vocabulary available to the children.
- Look together at a range of information texts on the linked theme. Use a selection of texts as examples of how a process is described through the use of diagrams and flowcharts. Draw attention to labels and captions that help to explain what is happening.
- Draw attention to the use of cause and effect conjunctions such as because, so and but. This and similar activities could form part of the investigation during science lessons.

Learning outcomes:

- Children can find a key word using an index and then locate the relevant information on a page.
- Children demonstrate that they have understood information read from a book or screen by noting the main points.
- Children can make and use a class glossary of special interest words related to the investigation and give explanations and definitions.
- Children can follow a line of enquiry emerging from their own questions.

Phase 2: Listening, analysis and oral presentation (3 days)

Teaching content:

- Begin to draw from children the key features of this type of writing, based on their experiences of reading explanation texts. These features should include the general statement of introduction and the steps of explanation that continue until a conclusion is reached which explains how something works.
- Play a sentence construction game to develop the use of connectives (see Developing early writing (Ref: 0055-2001) and adapt to match the chosen explanation.
- Through discussion, identify the different ranges of presentation, including flow charts and diagrams, and encourage children to identify ones that they think give a clear explanation of a process to the reader.
- Play a 'human flow chart' game, using children holding pictures of different stages in the process in the right order. Ask children to supply the explanations orally, paying special attention to the present tense, time connectives (then, next) and causal connectives (because, so, this causes).

Learning outcomes:

- Children can use technical vocabulary and causal connectives to explain a process or phenomenon.
- Children can model a process using models, pictures and diagrams and explain the process to peers.
Phase 3: Reading and analysing (2 days)

Teaching content:

- Read from an example of an explanation text again. Revisit the key features of this type of writing, based on children’s experiences of reading explanation texts. These features should include the general statement of introduction and a series of steps of explanation that continue until a conclusion is reached which explains how something works.
- Remind children of their investigation and explain that for readers who had not carried out the investigation for themselves, it would be helpful to have both diagrams and writing in the explanation texts.
- Having modelled the ‘human flow chart’ using pictures, ask children, in pairs, to construct their own flow chart in pictorial form. Children may already have examples of suitable drawings from another curriculum area.

Learning outcomes:

- Children can recognise the structure and language features of an explanation text.
- Children can make choices about the best way to present information in an explanation text, using flow charts and diagrams.

Phase 4: Writing and presenting explanation texts (5 days)

Teaching content:

- Begin by deciding on a title that includes the word how or why.
- Demonstrate how to write an explanation text (see Developing early writing, Year 2 unit 13: Explanation; glossary) in the form or a flow chart or cyclic diagram. Use the opportunity to demonstrate sentence structure and punctuation, introducing connectives of reason and cause.
- Use talking partners to plan the writing for the next part of the flow chart or diagram. On a whiteboard, write the next part of the explanation, encouraging the use of because and so. When writing, children read and reread texts in pairs to ensure text cohesion and use of present tense.
- Children write their own explanation text choosing an appropriate structure, either in pairs, individually or as a group task with adult support. Before writing, children will need to determine the audience and the final presentation, for example a section of a class book, wall display, ICT text, their own book.
- Remind children of the glossary and show them an example again. Discuss the audience and purpose for the writing, for example as an alphabetically arranged reference text for the class library, and make decisions about the addition of pictures, and diagrams. Prepare the explanation texts for final presentation, improving sentence structure, layout, punctuation and vocabulary choice as necessary.
- When preparing for the final presentation, children consider the integration of visual, verbal and written information. Writing partners review and edit each other’s work, using a checklist to support decisions about the above and the use of technical terms and causal connectives.

Learning outcome:

- Children note information collected from reading more than one source, their own practical work in another curriculum area and the use of visual representation that models a process. This is presented as a written, diagrammatic explanation text or as an oral presentation using a flow chart or diagram for support.
Assessing Pupils' Progress

In this exemplified unit we have identified the 'main' assessment focuses for reading and writing. However, it is important to remember that teachers should interpret and adapt the teaching sequence to meet the needs of particular classes and this may affect the types of evidence which it is desirable and possible to gather.

In order for a judgement to be made against writing assessment focuses 1 and 2 it is important that children are given space and time to develop their own ideas and define their own purposes for writing. Opportunities to plan for this will arise throughout the literacy curriculum as well as through the application of skills across the curriculum.

The suggested outcome for this unit is an explanation text, preferably based on children’s learning in another area of the curriculum. It is important to be aware that with good teaching, many children will be able to go beyond this, and to encourage this where possible.

The teaching of this unit should particularly support the collection of evidence against **Reading assessment focuses 1** *(Use a range of strategies, including accurate decoding of text, to read for meaning)*, **2** *(understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text)* and **4** *(identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts, including grammatical and presentational features at text level)* and also **Writing Assessment Focuses 2** *(produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purpose)*, **3** *(organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events)* and **8** *(use correct spelling)*.

It is important to remember to link this work for the children with the learning they do during discrete spelling and phonics sessions, and encourage them to apply their knowledge when reading and writing.

Evidence against a variety of assessment focuses will be collected at many points during the teaching sequence. Independence and opportunities to make decisions are integral to children's development in reading and writing, and it will be important to collect evidence of achievement against the assessment focuses from occasions where children can demonstrate some independence and choice away from direct teaching.

Suggestions for the collection of assessment information against a range of assessment focuses are found below.

**Opportunities for assessment**

The following are examples selected from the teaching content for this unit of work that will support planning for effective assessment as an integrated part of the teaching and learning process. Evidence gathered during this ongoing work will contribute to the periodic assessment of pupils' progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcomes</th>
<th>Example of teaching content and assessment opportunities</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Approach to assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children demonstrate that they have understood information read from a book or screen by noting the main points.</td>
<td>Drawing on work from another curriculum area, the teacher has helped the children make a glossary of words related to that area. The teacher has modelled how to write simple definitions and the children have added their own. In pairs or small groups they play a game. The glossary words and definitions are written on cards and they take it in turns to pick a word and then match it to the right card. More confident children can pick a word and give a definition themselves. The class discusses what they have learned in the curriculum area and the teacher models how to frame these ideas in spoken sentences. With talking partners, the children identify one key thing they have learned and formulate their own sentence. Other children listen to hear if the sentence makes sense and is correct.</td>
<td>Teacher observation</td>
<td>Teacher observation, peer- and self-assessment.</td>
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<td>Children note information collected from reading more than one source, their own practical work in another curriculum area and the use of visual representation that models a process. This is presented as a written, diagrammatic explanation text or as an oral presentation using a flow chart or diagram for support.</td>
<td>The teacher has demonstrated how to use a particular, simple strategy to support planning for writing an explanation. Children have read and discussed examples of explanations. Children plan what to include in their own explanation text and the order in which it will be included. For example, they plan how to organise an explanation of the life cycle of an animal they have studied or a process they have undertaken in a technology lesson. They discuss the content with a talk partner and then apply the same planning structure the teacher demonstrated to organise their own text. For example, they create a flow chart to note the order of main points to be made (and possibly the causal connectives they will use to begin each section) or a cyclical diagram if the process being explained is one that repeats itself.</td>
<td>Children's writing, oral presentation and teacher observation</td>
<td>Marking, teacher observation, peer- and self-assessment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key aspects of learning

For further information, see the booklet *Progression in key aspects of learning* (Ref: 0524-2004) from *Learning and teaching in the primary years: Professional development resources* (Ref: 0518-2004G).

### Enquiry

Children will carry out their own enquiry or investigation in another area of the curriculum, and will make observations and explain what they have found out. Throughout their enquiry, children will be encouraged to pose questions prior to, during and after their investigation. They will decide the most appropriate presentation for their findings.

### Information processing

Children will identify relevant information from observation and practical experience, information texts and ICT texts and select this to help them write their own explanation text for an individual or class book or wall display.

### Evaluation

Children will present information orally and in writing, in the form of a flow chart or cyclic diagram. They will be able to support their judgements with their own evidence, drawing on a range of sources to support their evaluation.

### Communication

Children will develop their ability to express and communicate in spoken, pictorial and written form a simple explanation of a process. They may also communicate their ideas using a variety of prompts, including models, diagrams and charts.