



**DULWICH COLLEGE SUZHOU**

**Big Writing**  
**A Ros Wilson Strategy**



## The Big Writing Philosophy

- Big Writing is the development of the 'writing voice' through fast, fun, lively and predominantly oral activities
- Pupils talk the 'writing voice' in a dedicated 'Big Writing' session & at other points in a week
- Based on the premise,  
IF A CHILD CAN SAY IT, A CHILD CAN  
WRITE IT



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## Philosophy Continued ....

- The talking voice is not the same as the 'writing voice'
- BOYS LOVE TO TALK!
- WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE BOYS IS GOOD FOR THE GIRLS



The key to Big Writing success in any school is to break through the glass ceiling of expectations

Aim low - achieve low.  
Aim high - achieve high.



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## So how does Big Writing work?

- Ros Wilson developed a way of teaching writing to children which focuses on four main aspects of writing:
  - **V**ocabulary
  - **C**onnectives
  - **O**peners
  - **P**unctuation

**VCOP**



- There are 2 'whats' and 2 'hows'

### What 1

**The text type and its characteristics.**

*The range of genre in fiction.*

### What 2

**Interpretation of the stimulus or purpose for writing the text type.**

### How 1

**The 4 basic skills**

- 1. Grammar**
- 2. Handwriting**
- 3. Spelling**
- 4. Accurate use of punctuation and capital letters to show sentence structure, which should also be accurate.**

### How 2

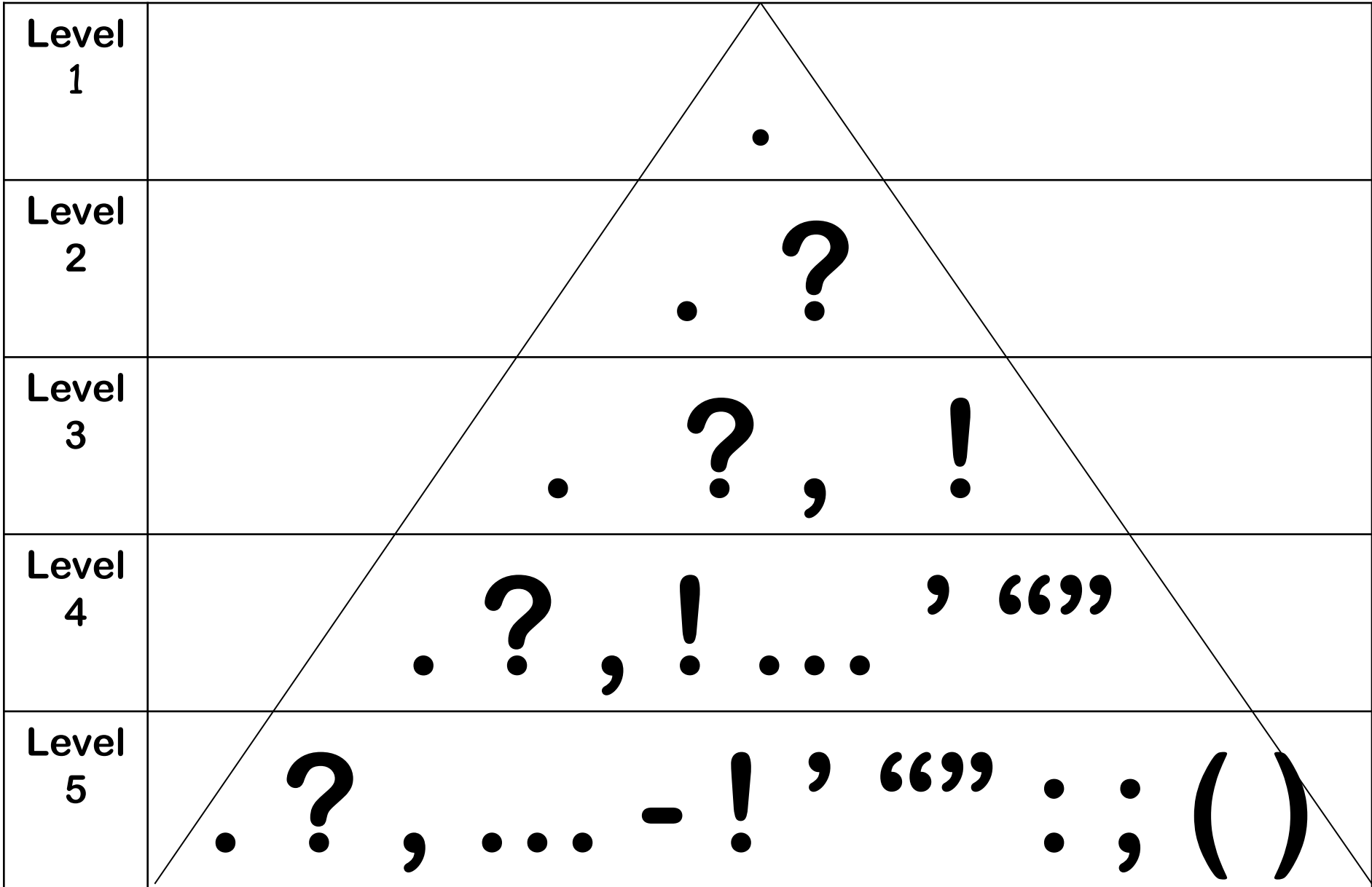
**The writing voice**

- 1. Vocabulary**
- 2. Connectives**
- 3. Openers**
- 4. Punctuation**



## The Four Generic Targets

VCOP	Summary
Vocabulary	The range of ambitious vocabulary a pupil knows; WOW words.
Connectives	The range of ways pupils have of joining ideas, phrases & sentences
Openers	The strategies pupils have for opening sentences; especially the 3 key openers: connectives, 'ly' words & 'ing' words
Punctuation	The range of punctuation a pupil can use & the accuracy with which they use it.



The Punctuation Pyramid







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Big Writing is  
the writing voice  
- the HOW.



## Children are encouraged to...

- **Talk** about their writing
- Find exciting words and use these in their writing.
- **'Borrow'** exciting words and phrases from other authors. 'WOW' words.
- Have a go at using interesting examples of punctuation.
- Once a week in their classrooms write for an extended period of time.
- **Re-read** their own writing and find ways to make it better.
- **Understand** what they need to do next to improve.



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Why were you late today? Bad traffic this morning!

**Having battled the rigours of the  
rush hour this morning...**





## The Big Write

- This happens once a week and using all the skills they have learnt the children are encouraged to write at length. The lighting is sometimes changed and music is played softly in the background.
- Children are encouraged to write at length without interruption. They are building their stamina.



# The Four Elements of Big Writing

## Vocabulary

- Every class has a 'Wow Words' board where new and impressive words that the children have used and have found in good quality texts, are shared with everyone.
- The children are encouraged to use these words where appropriate in their writing.



## Connectives

- Every class displays examples of powerful connectives.

The children are encouraged to use these in their writing to join sentences and paragraphs, therefore improving the organisation of their writing.



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Use the connectives/openers to up level the sentences.

I have a dog.

I have cat.

I do not have a baboon.

and, also, but

although, sadly



## Openers

- Every class displays and discusses good sentence ‘openers’ (sentence starters) that the children can use in their writing to make their sentences and overall texts more interesting.
- Teach ways of improving a basic sentence by changing how it begins e.g. ‘She opened the door’ to a better sentence, ‘Cautiously, she opened the door.’

*Some connectives can also be used as sentence openers.*





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*Choose an opener. What is the most interesting way to finish the sentence?*

Nervously...

Laughing...

If only I...

To my great surprise...

Reluctantly...

I'll never forget the day that...

Sleepily...

Earlier...

I couldn't believe my eyes when...



# Punctuation

- The teaching of punctuation is based on the ‘Punctuation Pyramid.’
- Children start by using full stops, then question marks followed by commas and an exclamation mark.
- Eventually they should use the higher order punctuation such as ( ) - ; : etc



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Level  
1

.

Level  
2

. ?

Level  
3

. ? , !

Level  
4

. ? , ! ... ' "

Level  
5

. ? , ... - ! ' " : ; ( )

# The Punctuation Pyramid





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# Kung Fu Punctuation



## Fiery Ideas

Basic training

Training exercises

I wonder who will  
be the 'Full stop  
Master' this week?





# Big Talk Foundation Stage and Year 1

- When children are not ready to write they can easily talk the VCOP!  
eg.
- Adult: Who can say a sentence that begins with when?
- Child: When I walked to school I saw a cat.
- Adult: Who can put a WOW word into that sentence?
- Child: When I STROLLED to school I saw a cat.
- Adult: Who can add another WOW word?
- Child: When I strolled to school I saw an ENORMOUS cat.



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We need to think and speak as writers.

- Up level it:  
She was poor.

Poor, penniless and alone,  
she dreamed of a better life.



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You try it!

- She lived with her 2 step-sisters.
- She worked hard.



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Can you add in the missing punctuation to this paragraph?

Sarah whispered urgently to Sam wake up wake up it should be light but its still dark outside what has happened said sam rubbing his eyes i think mr midnight has been up to mischief responded sarah the sun should be shining brightly by now slowly sam walked to the window the garden was grey and felt very spooky a black cat walked along the dark dreary fence the grey mouse scampered quickly through the black sea of damp grass sam felt a shiver down his spine what shall we do he whispered frantically





# Stocking Fillers

- Every day aim to finish one lesson 5 minutes early to do some quick VCOP activities.
- Encourage the children to 'steal' good examples of VCOP from authors.





## Big Writing Progression

- Year 1 20 mins - 1 hour
- 10 mins VCOP followed by 10 min writing
- Building up to 30min (VCOP and planning) + 30 min writing by end of Y1
  
- Year 2 1 hour 30 minutes
- Start Y2 30 min (VCOP and planning) + 30 min writing - build to 45 min/ 45min after the first term
  
- KS2
- 45 min ( 35 min VCOP, 10 min planning)
- Break
- 45 minutes writing



## Talk Home Learning

- **Talk!** Ask them to describe everything and anything.
- Take it in turns to tell a story. One person starts it, the other says what happens next etc...
- Look at a picture or photo together. Use it to tell a story. Think of a title for your story. What would the opening 10 words be?
- Encourage your children to spot WOW words and perhaps write them down in a book at home or on a piece of paper.
- Encourage your children to borrow words or phrases which they like from books, magazines, television programmes.



## Big Talk Homework

- On Thursday night in Big Writing this will be your task:
- **Mr Midnight the evil wizard has cast a spell to turn the world into a dark place with no sunshine, light or colours. You have been chosen to write him a letter to tell him what it is like without any sunshine. You have to convince him it is awful and you need the light back immediately!**
- Your Talk Homework is to share with someone at home your thoughts and ideas.
- Think about how terrible and frightening life is without any light
- What do you miss? Describe all the beautiful things you can no longer see.
- Think about if you need to use your other senses more.
- Use the knowledge you have learned in Science!
- The more talking and sharing of ideas you can do the more successful your writing could be!





# Progression

- **Level 1** The dog is big. The dog likes a bone. The dog can bark. I like the dog.
- **Level 2B** My dog is big and brown and very scruffy. He likes to eat bones but he likes sausages best. My dog can bark loudly and he can run very fast. I like my cat and my dog but I like my dog best.
- **Level 3B** I have two pets, a dog, and a cat. I like them both but I like my dog best! He is large, rusty brown and very scruffy. Have you seen him? He looks very funny. My dog likes eating bones and biscuits, but best of all he likes eating sausages. When my dog barks it is so loud that I cover my ears. Also my dog runs very fast.
- **Level 4B** People often ask me about my pets and although I have two, I have to say I like my dog best. That large, rusty brown ragamuffin looks so very amusing that he makes me laugh. Have you seen him? He mainly dines on biscuits and bones, however he prefers meat and he enjoys sausages most of all. When my scruffy, old friend barks it is as loud as Concorde, crashing through the sound barrier. We all have to cover our ears for protection.



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Children need to believe that they can achieve and that they can always improve.



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**"CREATIVITY TAKES  
COURAGE."**

*Henri Matisse*