



Ruardean C of E Primary School

Love of learning – Love of life – Love of one another

Non-fiction Genre Skills Progression

Year 1– Year 6

V1 8-12-22

Progression in Explanatory Writing

Explanatory texts generally go beyond simple ‘description’ in that they include information about causes, motives or reasons. Explanations and reports are sometimes confused when children are asked to ‘explain’ and they actually provide a report, e.g. what they did (or what happened) but not how and why. Although some children’s dictionaries do include an encyclopedia-like explanation, others are inaccurately categorised as explanation texts when they simply define a word’s meaning. Like all text types, explanatory texts vary widely and are often found combined with other text types.

PURPOSE – Writing to Inform	Text Types
To explain how or why, e.g. to explain the processes involved in natural/social phenomena or to explain why something is the way it is.	Explaining electricity, forces, food chains etc. in science Explaining inventions such as the steam train, the causes of historic events such as wars and revolutions, explaining the role of the Nile in determining the seasons in Ancient Egypt Explaining phenomena such as the water cycle or how a volcano erupts in geography Explaining religious traditions and practices in RE Encyclopaedia entries Technical manuals Question and answer articles and leaflets Science write-ups

Generic Text Structure – all year groups

- Choose a title that shows what you are explaining, perhaps using why or how.
- A general statement to introduce the topic being explained. E.g. In the winter some animals hibernate.
- The steps or phases in a process are explained logically, in order. E.g. When the nights get longer ... because the temperature begins to drop ... so the hedgehog looks for a safe place to hide. Use the first paragraph to introduce what you will be explaining.
- Decide whether you need to include images or other features to help your reader, e.g. diagrams, photographs, a flow chart, a text box, captions, a list or a glossary.
- Plan the steps in your explanation and check that you have included any necessary information about how and why things happen as they do.
- Add a few interesting details.
- Interest the reader by talking directly to them
- Re-read your explanation as if you know nothing at all about the subject. Check that there are no gaps in the information
- Remember that you can adapt explanatory texts or combine them with other text types to make them work effectively for your audience and purpose.

Progression of Text Features

YEAR 1	<p><i>EXPLANATION WILL NOT BE TAUGHT AS A SPECIFIC GENRE IN ENGLISH BUT WILL BE CARRIED OUT THROUGH OTHER SUBJECTS.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read captions, pictures and diagrams on wall displays and in simple books that explain a process • Draw pictures to illustrate a process and use the picture to explain the process orally • Ask questions to extend their understanding and knowledge • Write a series of sentences to explain a simple process based on first-hand experience e.g. chicks hatching, life cycle of a frog
YEAR 2	<p><i>EXPLANATION WILL NOT BE TAUGHT AS A SPECIFIC GENRE IN ENGLISH BUT WILL BE CARRIED OUT THROUGH OTHER SUBJECTS.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and discuss a wide range of explanatory texts • Draw on and use new vocabulary from reading explanatory texts • After carrying out a practical activity e.g. experiment, investigation, construction task, contribute to creating a flowchart or cyclical diagram to explain the process • After seeing and hearing an oral explanation of a process, explain the same process orally also using flowchart, language and gestures appropriately • Read flowcharts or cyclical diagrams explaining other processes • Following other practical tasks, produce a flowchart or cyclical diagram independently ensuring content is clearly sequenced • Write a series of sentences to explain the flowchart
YEAR 3	<p><i>EXPLANATION WILL NOT BE TAUGHT AS A SPECIFIC GENRE IN ENGLISH BUT WILL BE CARRIED OUT THROUGH OTHER SUBJECTS.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read explanations as a whole class, in groups and individually • Comment on a range of explanatory texts, focusing on how easy they are to understand (e.g. by trying to reproduce that information in a different form, such as a diagram, or flow chart) • Create diagrams such as flow charts to summarise or make notes of stages in a process (e.g. in science, D&T or geography) • Ensure relevant items are grouped together • In formal presentations, explain processes orally using notes • Write a series of extended sentences to explain a process • Ensure relevant details are included and accounts ended effectively

YEAR 4	<p>EXPLANATION WILL NOT BE TAUGHT AS A SPECIFIC GENRE IN ENGLISH BUT WILL BE CARRIED OUT THROUGH OTHER SUBJECTS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and analyse a range of explanatory texts, investigating and noting features of impersonal style (and noting when a personal tone is used) • Distinguish between explanatory texts, reports and recounts while recognising that an information book might contain examples of all these forms of text or a combination of these forms • Comment on, and justify views about, a range of explanatory texts • Take notes from reading or film and use these to inform writing • Plan clear steps in an explanation; ensure sentences are sequenced logically to enable the reader to understand the process • Interest the reader by addressing them directly (<i>You'll be surprised to know that ... Have you ever thought about the way that ...?</i>) or by relating the subject to their own experience at the end (<i>So next time you see a pile of dead leaves in the autumn ...</i>)
YEAR 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and analyse a range of explanatory texts linked to other curriculum areas e.g. 'physical geography, including: climate zones, biomes and vegetation belts, rivers, mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes, and the water cycle • Research, take notes and convert these into full sentences later • Plan, compose, edit and refine explanatory texts, using reading as a source, focusing on clarity, conciseness and impersonal style • Choose the appropriate form of writing and style to suit a specific purpose and audience • Use features of the chosen form to add interest to the writing e.g. charts and diagrams • Consider use of vocabulary to inform the reader e.g. technical language or use of precise verbs and nouns
YEAR 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read, evaluate and discuss the effectiveness of a variety of explanation texts • Consider the difference between historical explanations (e.g. Roman army tactics) and explanations using the present tense (e.g. the water cycle). Investigate when a different tense is needed • Choose the appropriate register for the audience and maintain a consistent level of formality throughout the writing • Maintain interest for the reader through various devices, structures and features, e.g. layout, direct appeal to the audience, carefully chosen vocabulary • Write well-structured introductions to engage the reader, with appropriate endings that conclude the piece clearly • Evaluate clarity, level of detail and effect of own writing
MOVING BEYOND	<p>Once students move beyond Year 6 age related expectations, it is expected that these writing skills are consolidated within more complex topics and contexts as well as being sustained over more sophisticated pieces of work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiment with the form, for example write explanations of real-life situations that are in process (unfolding events in world news; a fictional project that is at a critical stage) • Explain how events led to the current situation and then speculate/advise/instruct on how to proceed with /manage/resolve the situation • Confident use of tense, adverbials and conjunctions move the writing from the past, through the present to the future

Progression in Grammar

YEAR 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of words with spaces • How words can combine to make sentences • Introduction to capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks to demarcate sentences • Sequencing sentences to form short narratives e.g. <i>Chicks have a spike on their beak. This is called the egg tooth.</i> • Joining words and joining clauses using <i>and</i> e.g. <i>The hen lays an egg and sits on it.</i> • Capital letters for names and for the personal pronoun I
YEAR 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks to demarcate sentences. For example: practise generating their own titles for explanations texts e.g. <i>How do hedgehogs survive the winter? Why do we use bricks to build houses?</i> • Subordination (using when, if, that, because) and co-ordination (using or, and, but) e.g. build word banks of commonly used conjunctions in this text type e.g. <i>Hedgehogs wake up in March or April <u>because</u> the weather is warmer and food is easier to find.</i> • Expanded noun phrases for description and specification e.g. collect noun phrases from reading and use these to generating own examples e.g. <i>some hibernating animals, the adult male frog</i> • How the grammatical patterns in a sentence indicate its function as a statement, question, exclamation or command e.g. <i>What an amazing life cycle it is!</i> • Explore titles of explanations texts and identify that they usually begin with 'how' or 'why' • Write general statements to introduce topics being explained e.g. <i>Some animals hibernate in winter.</i> • Correct choice and consistent use of present tense and past tense throughout writing e.g. know that explanations are usually written in the simple present tense, for example, <i>Hedgehogs usually wake up again in the spring.</i> • Use of the suffixes –er, –est in adjectives e.g. <i>They wake up when the weather is warmer.</i>

YEAR 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressing time, place and cause using conjunctions e.g. <i>Hedgehogs need to hibernate <u>when</u> the temperature begins to drop. The hedgehog looks for a safe place to sleep <u>so that</u> he will survive the winter.</i> Expressing time, place and cause using adverbs [for example, then, next, soon, therefore] e.g. use adverbs to express sequence, for example, <i>first, then, after that, finally</i> Expressing time, place and cause using prepositions [for example, before, after, during, in, because of] e.g. <i>Hedgehogs make their nests <u>under</u> hedges and <u>at</u> the base of tree trunks. Hedgehogs build up their stores of fat <u>during</u> autumn.</i> Introduction to paragraphs as a way to group related material Headings and sub-headings to aid presentation
YEAR 4 (As for Y3 plus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noun phrases expanded by the addition of modifying adjectives, nouns and preposition phrases e.g. <i>When an animal dies, <u>the soft part of the animal rots away. Millions of years later, the rock surrounding the skeleton rises to the Earth's surface.</u></i> Fronted adverbials - note how these are usually used to specific a time or cause e.g. <i>Millions of years later,... , When an animal or plant dies..., Consequently,...</i> Use of paragraphs to organise ideas around a theme e.g. use the first paragraph to introduce what you will be explaining. Organise following paragraphs according to the stages of the process. Conclude by addressing the reader, for example, <i>Now that you know about fossils, why don't you go on your very own fossil hunt?</i> Appropriate choice of pronoun or noun within and across sentences to aid cohesion and avoid repetition e.g. investigate the use of nouns and pronouns in a text and note the use of the noun in the opening statement, followed by the pronoun, for example, <i>In winter, <u>hedgehogs</u> hibernate. <u>They</u> make their nests under hedges.</i> Decide on an appropriate balance between nouns and pronouns to aid clarity.

YEAR 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devices to build cohesion within a paragraph. Build on the range of connecting adverbs/adverbials used in year 4 to present further sequencing e.g. <i>at this point, after that, from then on, in general</i>. Use a range of conjunctions to link ideas e.g. <i>If all goes to plan, the hedgehog will remain here until the spring</i>. Use pronouns and synonyms to avoid repetition e.g. <i>Fossils are the preserved remains of creatures and plants that died millions of years ago. They are good clues to prehistoric life. There are many of these fascinating relics all over the UK.</i> Use repetition for effect e.g. <i>The name dinosaur means ‘terrible lizard’. Whilst they were lizards and some were indeed terrible, many were fairly harmless creatures.</i> • Linking ideas across paragraphs using adverbials of time, place and number or tense choices and referring back to the previous content. • Modal verbs and adverbs to express possibility e.g. <i>As hedgerows disappear, hedgehogs could possibly become an endangered species.</i> • Relative clauses beginning with who, which, where, when, whose, that, or an omitted relative pronoun e.g. use relative clauses to add an extra layer of information, for example, <i>Darwin, a famous evolutionist, studied the lifecycles of many animals.</i> • Brackets, dashes or commas e.g. explore when the author chooses to parenthesise information using brackets and when the author uses a dash/comma instead and draw generalisations from this e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The modern marathon is 26 miles (approximately 42 km) and runners must complete the entire distance.</i> ➤ <i>If you see a tiger in the wild -and this is rare- do not approach it.</i>
YEAR 6 (As for Y5 plus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking ideas across paragraphs using a wider range of cohesive devices: repetition of a word or phrase, grammatical connections e.g. investigate how the subject noun is used repeatedly in more complex explanations to aid understanding (compare with simpler explanations where the noun is often replaced with a pronoun). See Year 5 exemplification. • Use of passive voice to give a tone of formality and where the agent in the sentence is unimportant e.g. <i>Dinosaur bones were discovered...First of all, the fossils are extracted from the rock...At this point, the skeleton can be reassembled...</i> • Layout devices [for example, headings, sub-headings, columns, bullets, or tables, to structure text] • Adverbial phrases link events according to chronology and cause e.g. <i>Once this has happened, the vapour condenses resulting in the formation of water droplets.</i> • Use of the colon to introduce a list and use of semi-colons within lists of more complex information e.g. <i>The water cycle consists of four main stages: water turning to gas (evaporation); gas turning back into water (condensation); water falling to earth (precipitation); collection of water into groundwater storage (infiltration).</i> • Use the semi-colon, colon and dash to mark the boundary between independent clauses e.g. <i>Water is never destroyed or used up; the cycle is continuous.</i>

Adapted from Herts For Learning non-fiction genre progression of skills documents.