Workshop material

Writing

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Activities

Session 1

Crocfest reports

Crocfest Report 1

On Monday the bus took grades 5, 6, 7 and the High school to Kununurra for our excursion. We went to the Kununurra swimming pool and it was fun. Afterwards we went to the motel. We had Chicken Treat for dinner then went back to the motel. We got on the bus and drove to the Disco and it was fun. We went back to the motel and we went to sleep.

by Raelene.

Crocfest Report 2

On the performance night I felt a bit nervous and happy. It was my first time going on the stage. I felt good when the music came on. I knew what I was doing. I could feel the music in my bones.

by Sabina

Discussion questions

1. Read each recount of these two students’ experience of Crocfest. Remembering that they were both secondary students, which writing example do you think is most literate?
'Oral' qualities in texts

Example 1
On the holiday we go to Fregon and we go to Mimili and we go to Mintabie and we sleep and we go to Munla and we playing snooker and we play game and we saw Russell and we play snooker and we go back to Mintabie and we sleep.

Example 2
Help?

All of us were walking along. Locky, he was playing his game boy. Locky held, yes, Level 9. He loved game boys. Locky was tall and young. He was 11 years old. Josh had long legs and black hair. Thien he had black hair too.

He was small. Kyle he was small too. He had blond hair. Gary he had dark black hair and a scar on his hand. As we were walking we all fell in a dark black hole. Locky yelled, “Help, help!” We were trapped. I looked up and there was a dark figure. Everybody was stunned. It was Freeza. He was ugly. He had dark black painted hair.

He said, “See you blokes in hell!” Josh yelled, “Get lost!” Freeza shut the door and locked it. I ran to the other door and kicked. It swung right open. My feet were stinging. Then all of us ran out. Freeza was laughing his head off. We all ran for him. I grabbed him and slammed him into the Dungeon and locked all the doors.

Example 3
The Fight Dream

Last night I had a dream, a dream about Abel and Euan. They were fighting in my dream. I remembered how it started. It was silly. The fight was about icecream. It made me laugh. I thought the fight was about something important. Abel threw the first punch and hit Euan on the face. It sounded like Abel broke Euan’s jaw. Crack! Euan started to hit back. He punched him hard in the stomach. Fists were flying. Both of them were bleeding. I had to stop the fight.

Example 4
Fight

Now I’m going to tell you about the big fight in town. First I saw coppers with their guns drawn. I felt scared and my heart was pumping so loud I could hear it in my ears. The crowd was crying. Somebody told me it was about the football. I ran away as fast as I could. I was as scared as a rabbit. People were hurt that day.
Discussion questions

1. Identify the most ‘oral’ writing. What language choices helped you make that choice?

2. In each of the other examples, identify language choices each student has made that show writing development. What literate language features did the student use?
Session 2

Resources
Text 1 – Fantastic Mr Fox

Down in the valley there were three farms.
The owners of these farms had done very well.
They were rich men.
They were also nasty men.
All three were about as nasty and mean as any men you could meet.
Their names were Farmer Boggis, Farmer Bunce and Farmer Bean.

Boggis was a chicken farmer.
He kept thousands of chickens.
He was enormously fat.
This was because he ate three boiled chickens smothered with dumplings every day for breakfast, lunch and supper.

Bean was a turkey-and-apple farmer.
He kept thousands of turkeys in an orchard full of apple trees.
He never ate any food at all.
Instead, he drank gallons of strong cider which he made from the apples in his orchard.
He was as thin as a pencil and the cleverest of them all.
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Text 2 - My Mob Going to the Beach

by Sylvia Emmerton, 2004: Black Ink Press, Queensland

One day the grown-ups said we were going to the beach. We would take some blankets, a couple of billies and some tea and sugar. We were going to sleep there too. Just for one night though. We didn’t have a car so we would have to walk.

We started out early, and soon came to some cattle yards. We had to cross a yard where there was a huge bull in one corner. The grown-ups and the big kids walked across quietly. But not us. We ran as fast as we could.

Shortly after that we came to a camp near a billabong. We knew the people in the camp So we stopped for a visit. The grown-ups and the big kids sat down for a yarn. But not us. We went looking for wild duck eggs in the grass beside the billabong.

We started out again and had to cross through the cemetery. It was getting very hot. The grown-ups and the big kids stopped at the taps for a drink. But not us. We sat under the taps and got wet all over.

Finally we got to the beach. We found a big shady tree to make our camp. The tide was out so we went searching through the rocks and pools.
The grown-ups and the big kids searched for oysters. Yuk!
But not us. We went looking for cockles. Yum!

The grown-ups made a fire on the beach
And we cooked the cockles and some oysters in the coals.
When we finished our feed,
The tide had come in.
The grown-ups and the big kids went fishing and crabbing.
But not us. We went swimming
and played in the sand.

Late in the afternoon, we cooked the fish and the crabs
And had a big feed.
It started to get dark
And the grown-ups and the big kids sat around the campfire to yarn and tell stories.
But not us. We fell fast asleep.
Text passage from *My Mob going to the Beach* by Sylvia Emmerton

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Chapter 19

There, swimming in the clear water, was a devilfish. It was the same one I had been hunting for. It was the giant!

Seldom did you see any devilfish here, for they like deep places and the water along this part of the reef is shallow. Perhaps this one lived in the cave and came here only when he could not find food.

Rontu made no sound. I fixed the head of the spear and the long string that held it to my wrist. I then crawled back to the edge of the reef.

The giant had not moved. He was floating just below the surface of the water and I could plainly see his eyes. They were the size of small stones and stood out from his head, with black rims and gold centres and in the centres a black spot, like the eyes of a spirit I had once seen on a night that rain fell and lightning forked in the sky.

Where my hands rested was a deep crevice and in it a fish was hiding.

The giant was half the length of my spear from the reef, but while I watched, one of his long arms ran out like a snake and felt its way into the crevice. It went past the fish and along the side of the rock and then the end of it curled back. As the arm gently wound itself around the fish from behind, I rose to one knee and drove the spear.

I aimed at the giant's head, but though it was larger than my two fishes and a good target, I missed. The spear struck down through the water and slanted off. Instantly a black cloud surrounded the devilfish. The only thing I could see of him was one long arm still grasping his prey.

I jumped to my feet to pull in the spear, thinking that I might have a chance to throw it again. As I did so, the shaft bobbed back to the surface and I saw that the barbed point had come loose.

At the same moment the string tightened. My grip on it broke, and aware that I had struck the devilfish, I quickly dropped the coils I held, for when the string runs out fast it burns your hands or becomes entangled.

The devilfish does not swim with fins or flippers, like other things in the sea. He takes water in through the hole in the front of his body and pushes the water out behind through two slits. When he is swimming slowly you can see these two streams trailing out, but only then. When he moves fast, you can see nothing except a streak in the water.
The coils I had dropped on the rock hopped and sang as they ran. Then there were no more of them. The string tightened on my wrist and, to lessen the shock, I leaped across the crevice in the direction the giant had taken. With the string in both hands, but still fastened to my wrist, I braced my feet on the slippery rock and leaned backwards.

**Activity**

In groups read the whole passage supplied then refer to the text analysis sheet and the shorter description repeated there. Using this workshop sheet discuss the role of the description of the giant squid’s eye. Discuss the language choices but also the role such a description might have in the way readers feel about the ‘giant’ and how this emotion relates to the rest of the passage.
Text passage from *The Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O’Dell

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Discussion questions to go with video clips

Activity – Fantastic Mr Fox
Discuss:
1. Identify teaching practice that was significant in achieving writing outcomes in these clips.

2. 'What can you take from the video to help in your own teaching practice?

Activity – My Mob going to the each
Discuss:
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Activity – Island of the Blue Dolphins
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Reading - Applying Creative Writing Techniques
from http://www.frostburg.edu/clife/writingcenter/techniq.htm

Style is the writer's fingerprint. Although there are no two identical styles, all writers use the same creative writing techniques in varying degrees. By using pertinent description, analogies, personification, allusions, and quotations, the writer can keep readers engaged.

1. Use Sensory Appeal: When appropriate, use all five senses—appearance, sound, touch, taste, smell—to provide rich detail for your reader.
   - "The rich aroma of mama's spaghetti sauce filled the house, and our stomachs rumbled in anticipation of her spaghetti and the crisp, hot garlic bread that always accompanied it."
   - "She felt the rake of the frightened cat's claws on her face, felt the warm blood begin to trickle down her cheek."
   - "The baby, born seconds before, blinked in the bright light, puckered up her mouth as if someone had hurt her feelings, then cried lustily."

2. Use Description in Analogy and Contrast:
   A. A simile compares two unlike things, using "like" or "as." Two basic tools of analogy are simile and metaphor.
      - "The wind roared like a freight train through the naked winter trees, which swayed violently from its force."
      - "The lifeless trees stood like sentinels in the dank swamp."
      - "She walked like a queen approaching her subjects."
   B. A metaphor compares two unlike things without the use of "like" or "as."
      - "The monkey clawing my back was Teacher's Pet." Roger Hoffman.
      - "The bull is roaring, groaning, grinding, . . . my father is a tiny spider of flailing arms and legs." Teresa Jordan
      - "True wisdom is a rare and precious jewel."
      - When properly used, the simile and the metaphor invite us to see familiar things in unfamiliar ways and unfamiliar things in familiar ways. They do not just decorate the story; they help the reader understand the message.
   C. Another form of analogy is contrast. Similes and metaphors establish similarities. Contrast shows differences. You can sometimes tell what something is by telling what it isn't. Contrast is also inherent in the word "than."
• "To tell it straight out, there are 147,342,320 ounces of gold at Fort Knox, more than was ever viewed by all the pharaohs of Egypt or the conquistadors of Spain."

• "Unlike Aphrodite, whose first priority is romantic relationships, Athena places the highest value on intellectual pursuits."

• For writers who paint word pictures, analogy and contrast are the primary colours.

3. Personification: Personification is often the application of an extended metaphor. Animals, inanimate objects and abstractions are given human characteristics.

• "... the volcano in the past seven weeks had awakened from a century and a half of slumber ... Pressure built. Trying to accommodate that force, the mountain stretched and reshaped itself."

• "The train would have its tongue hanging out." Roger Hoffman

4. Allusions: Allusion permits the writer to compare two things, people, places, or events in few words. It saves time on explanation.

• "Living with him requires the patience of Job."

5. Apt Quotations: Quotations may be used to support arguments because of particularly appropriate syntax or for their historical context. Note: avoid overuse.

6. Pacing, Emphasis, and Repetition:
   Pacing: Sentences should be consistent with the subject matter. Generally, longer sentences are appropriate for more leisurely and serious topics. They slow down the reader. Short sentences convey action or tenseness. Manipulating sentence length, then, helps you establish the appropriate pace for your writing. By coupling changing sentence lengths with a variety of sentence openings, a writer can avoid boring the reader. Variety is the spice of writing; proper pacing provides the spice.

   The most common sentence order is subject/verb/object, but using only this order makes for monotonous writing. Read the following excerpts out loud and note the monotony of the first example versus the variety of the second.

   • It was a Saturday morning. I found the gravediggers at work in a thicket. The thicket was dark and warm. The sky was overcast. Lennie had dug a hole at the foot of the apple tree. It was among the alders and young hackmatacks. It was beautiful. It was five feet long, three feet wide, three feet deep. Lennie was standing in it. He was removing the last spadefuls of earth. Fred patrolled the brink of the hole in circles. The circles were simple but impressive. They disturbed the loose earth of the mound. It
trickled back into the hole. There had been no rain in weeks. The soil was dry and powdery three feet down.

- It was a Saturday morning. The thicket in which I found the gravediggers at work was dark and warm, the sky overcast. Here, among the alders and young hackmatacks, at the foot of the apple tree, Lennie had dug a beautiful hole, five feet long, three feet wide, three feet deep. He was standing in it, removing the last spadefuls of earth while Fred patrolled the brink in simple but impressive circles, disturbing the loose earth of the mound so that it trickled back in. There had been no rain in weeks and the soil, even three feet down, was dry and powdery. *E.B. White*, from "Death of a Pig"

**Emphasis:** Devices a writer can use to achieve emphasis include story organization, story proportion, sentence ordering, parallel construction, punctuation, and repetition. In a news story, the emphasis of the message appears at the beginning of the story. In the narrative form, the essence of the message usually appears near the end. Marks of emphasis like parentheses and quotation marks around puns should be used about as often as the buzzards return to Hinkley, Ohio.

**Repetition** provides both pacing and emphasis. Repeating words is a way to provide transitions or emphasis. Repetition of form is also a useful technique.