



11+ English: Writing

Supporting the development of your
child's writing skills





What are examiners looking for?

- Ability to address the task
- A broad vocabulary, applied appropriately
- The ability to organise thoughts
- The ability to describe the world around them meaningfully and in detail
- The ability to express thoughts and feelings (real or imagined)
- Creative spark
- Technical accuracy

What does that mean in real terms?

- Writing a short, descriptive piece
- Not a story, but a brief extract (of an imagined, much bigger story)
- Usually about three paragraphs in about 30 minutes

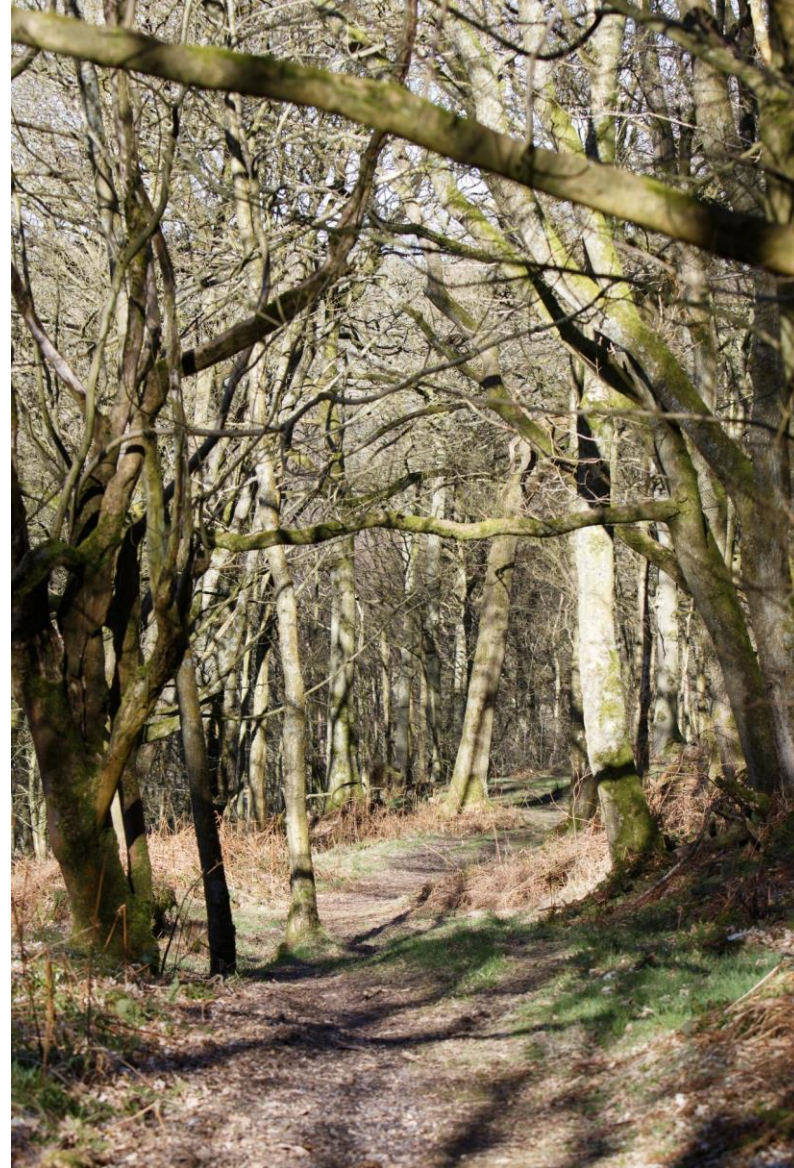


Different Types of Tasks



Picture Task

Look at the picture opposite. Describe your experience of walking through this setting. You may wish to describe what you see, hear, smell or feel as you move through this setting. (30 minutes)



First Line Task

Write a character description that begins with the line below. You may wish to describe the character's appearance, movement and behaviour. (25 minutes)

“Footsteps echoed down the cold, stone corridor and a shadowy figure appeared in the distance.”



Continuation Task

You have answered questions based on an extract from “The Clockwork Sparrow” by Katherine Woodfine. The extract ended with the main character, Sophie, locked the Baron’s library.

Write a continuation of this story, starting with the last line of the passage. Your writing should match the author’s style, tense and narrative perspective and should include details from the original text.

(40 minutes)



Title Task

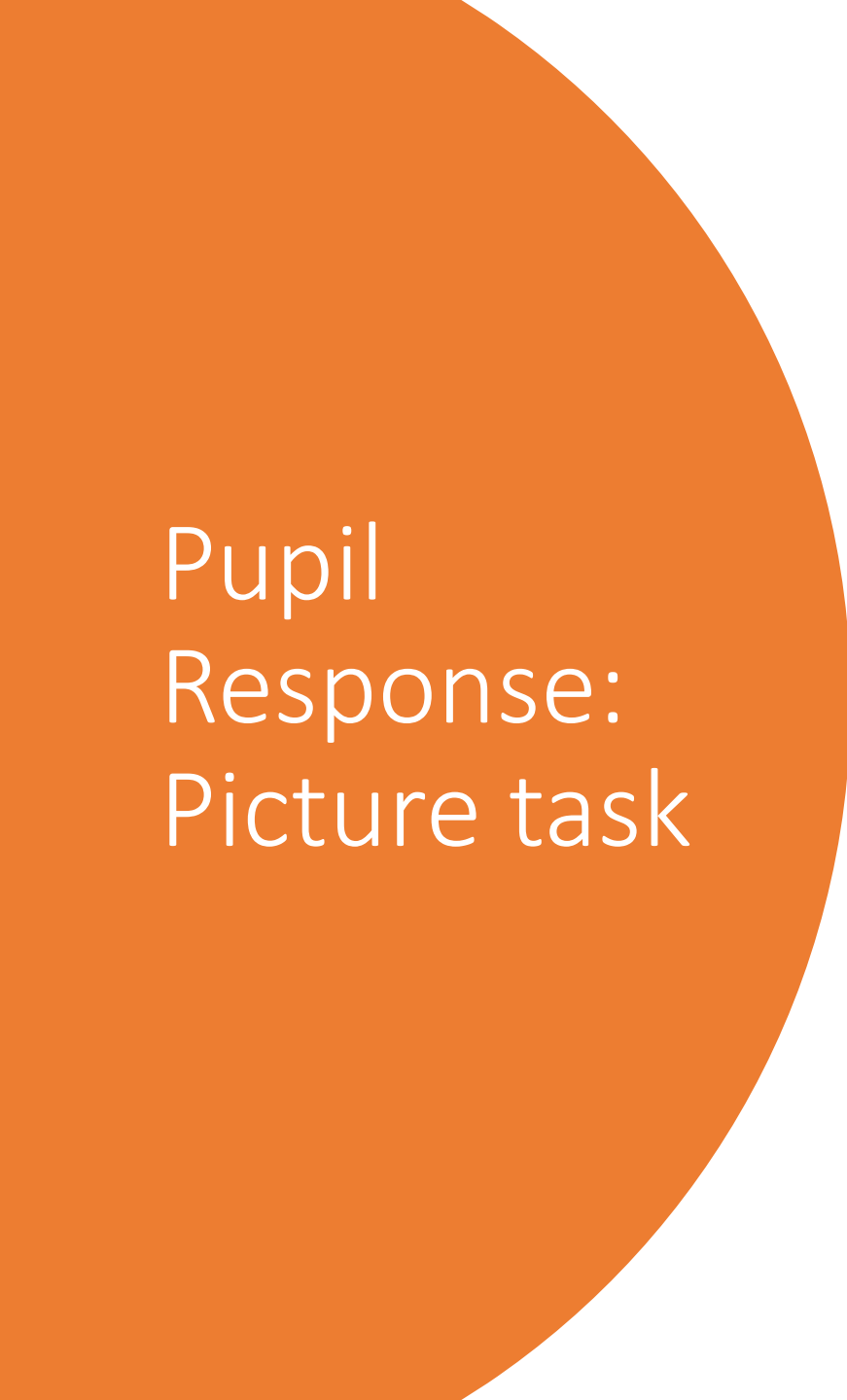
You have 30 minutes to produce a piece of writing with the title “Stormy Weather”. It can be any type of writing you choose, as long as it links to the title and demonstrates a range of skills.





Recount Tasks

Write about a time when something unexpected happened. It might have been a pleasant surprise or an unwelcome shock. Be sure to include your thoughts and feelings about the event. (25 mins)




Pupil Response: Picture task

As I walked along the winding forest track, thoughts of spring filled my mind. The weak, April sun was bravely pushing past the bare branches of the towering trees, determined to cast its warm, loving light upon the tentative shoots of green on the woodland floor.

I ran my hand across the rough bark of a branch, and saw a sprinkling of tiny, shining emeralds at my finger tips. Budding leaves. Budding life. Winter had taken a step back. Spring had arrived.

Any day now, an army of bluebells would overwhelm the murky mulch of rotten leaves and bring a brilliant blue light to this magical, mysterious place. The fresh scent of recent rain would wash this world clean, ready for a new beginning.



Pupil Response: First line task

Footsteps echoed down the cold, stone corridor and a shadowy figure appeared in the distance. Its silhouette was billowing, bold: barely human. Like a bird of prey, it swept relentlessly forward, a black cape sweeping past the spidery crevices of this dark and desperate place.

As it reached the weak and watery light of my lantern, the face was revealed. A woman. Her hawk-like nose sneered above her thin, curled lips. A look of contempt filled her steely grey eyes, slanted and scowling. She reached out a deathly white hand and pointed her blood-red fingertip directly at my face. My mouth was dry and my stomach was filled with ice. She was talking to me.

"You, boy," she snarled, revealing tiny, sharpened teeth. A fleck of warm spittle landed on my stricken face. I tried not to show the repulsion I felt. What did she want from me?



Does spelling count?

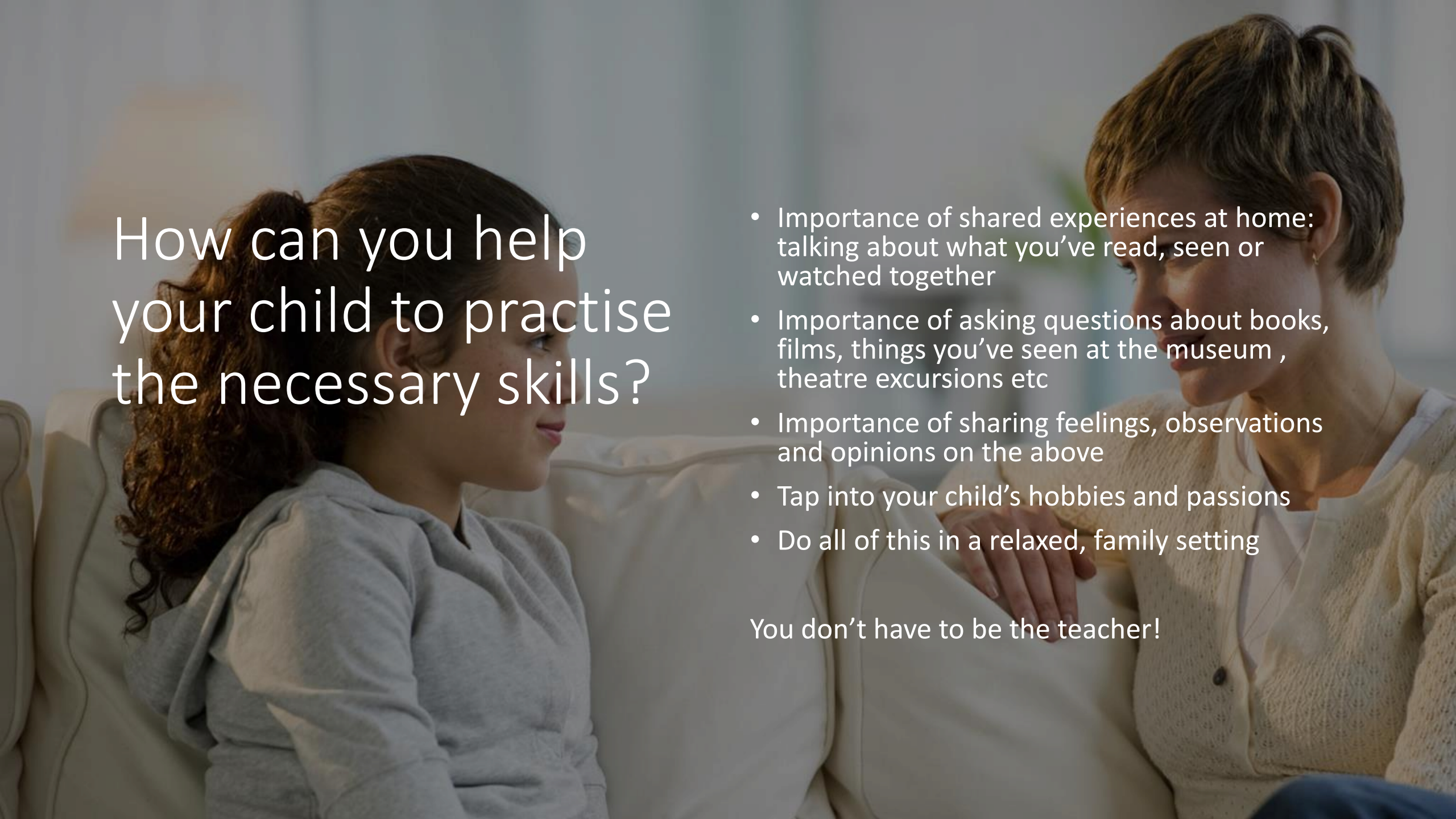
- Vocabulary is more important than spelling
- Prioritise the most useful words and practise them at home
- Festoon your house with post-it notes of priority spelling words
- Nessy Spelling is a fun and effective online tool that pupils can access at home





Punctuation and Capital Letters

- Punctuation affects meaning and understanding
- Importance of proof-reading own work
- BBC Bitesize has useful film clips and explainers for Key Stage 2 pupils
- Priorities at this stage:
 - Capital letters
 - Full stops
 - Paragraphs

A woman with short brown hair and a young girl with long curly brown hair are sitting on a light-colored couch. The woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored cardigan, and the girl is on the left, wearing a grey hoodie. They are both looking towards the right side of the frame. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting.

How can you help your child to practise the necessary skills?

- Importance of shared experiences at home: talking about what you've read, seen or watched together
- Importance of asking questions about books, films, things you've seen at the museum, theatre excursions etc
- Importance of sharing feelings, observations and opinions on the above
- Tap into your child's hobbies and passions
- Do all of this in a relaxed, family setting

You don't have to be the teacher!

From the Chair of the 11+ Consortium, 2022:

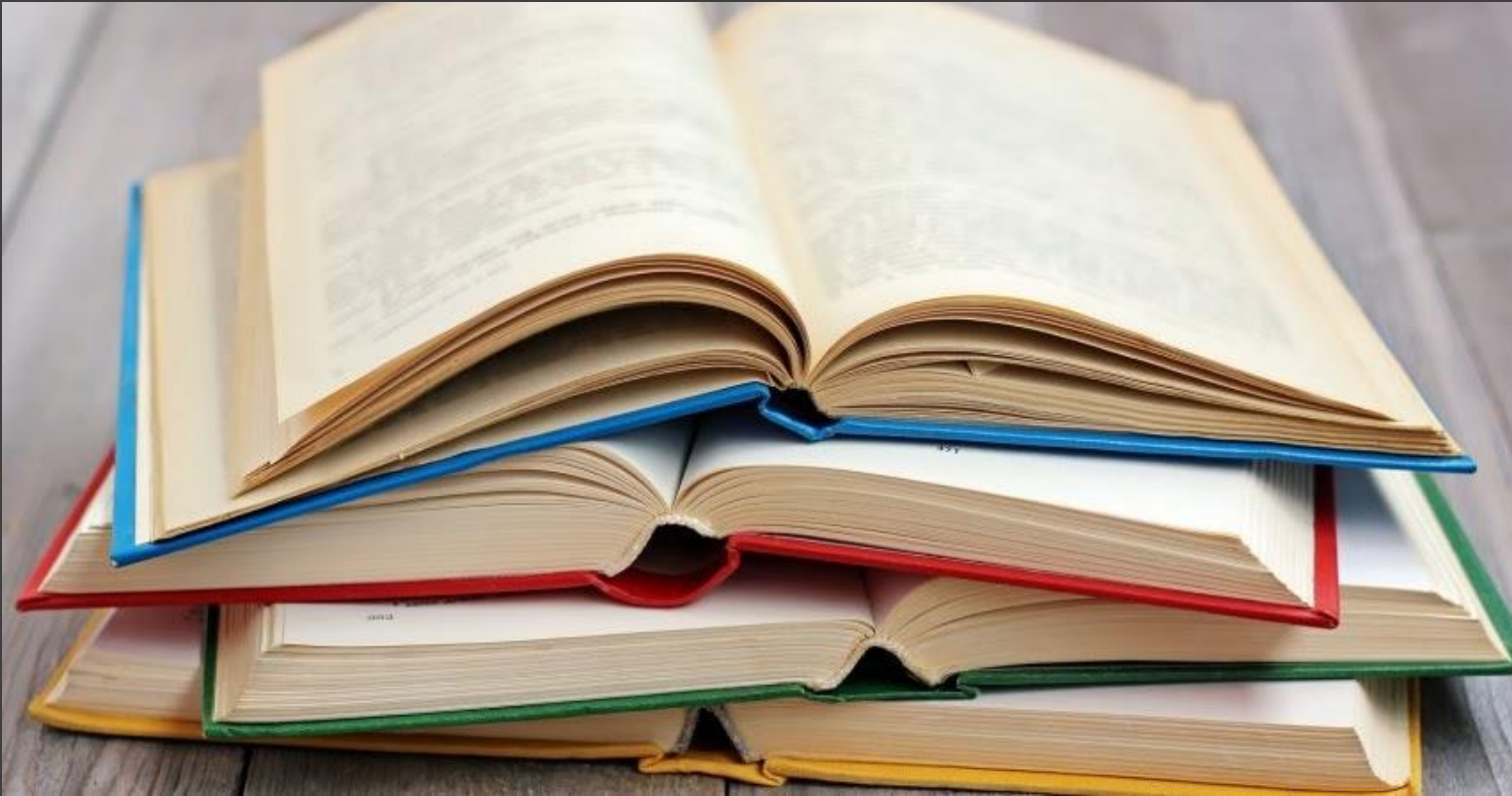
“We encourage all prospective pupils to look beyond practising papers to far more helpful methods of developing the attributes we seek.

Time (and money) spent reading, discussing current affairs, visiting museums and art galleries, science exhibitions and design centres will be far more usefully and enjoyably deployed.


Curiosity and imagination, undervalued qualities, will serve the hopeful candidate well.

Do encourage your families to be adventurous.”



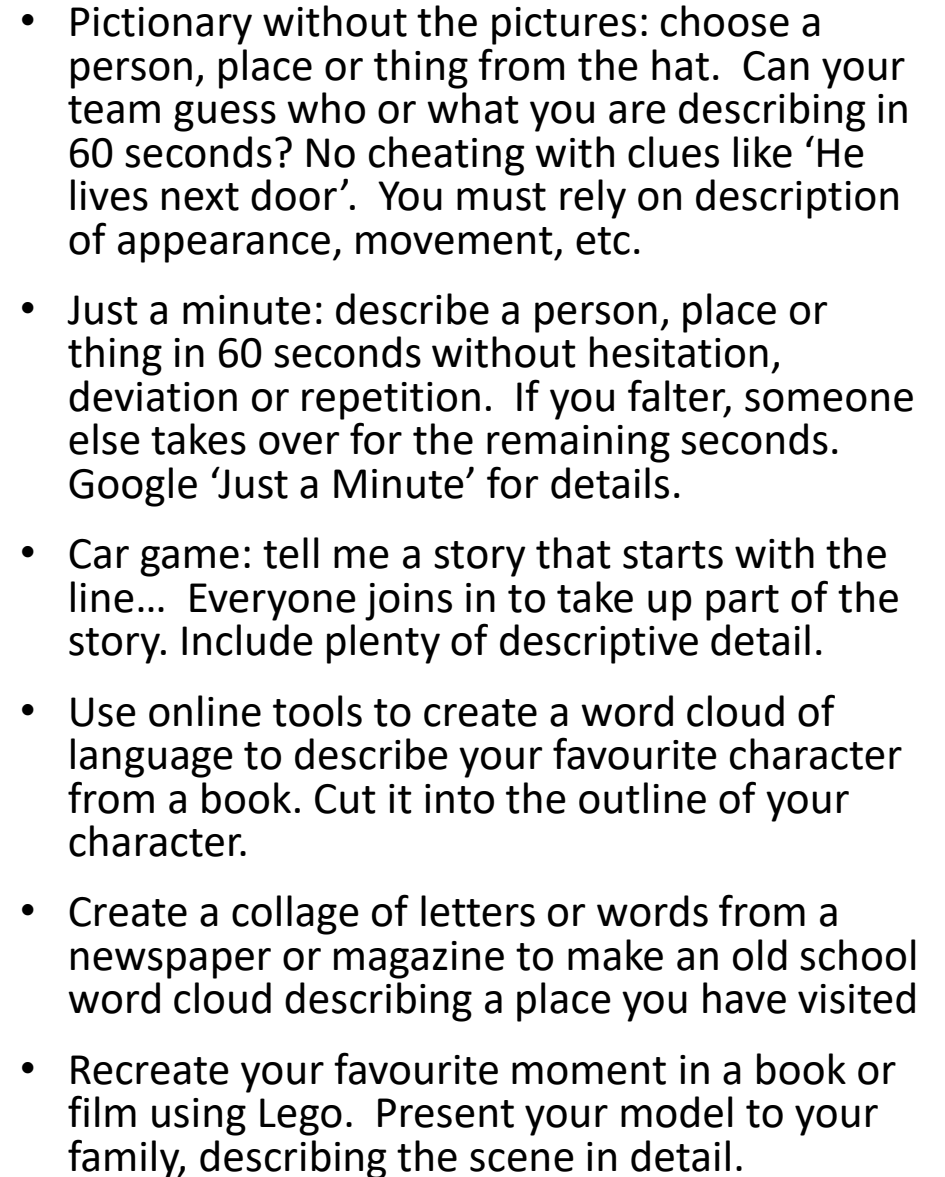
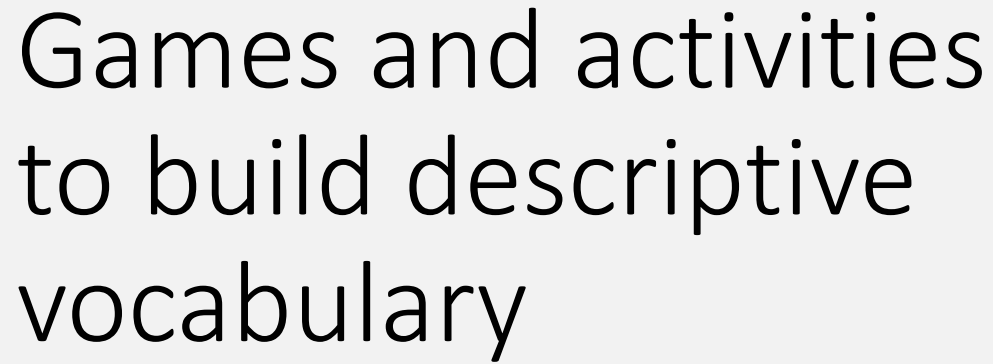


Reading
Fuels
Writing

An illustration of an open book with yellowed pages, set against a vibrant green background filled with sparkling stars and light rays. The book is positioned at the bottom left, with its pages fanning out towards the center.

What does reading bring to writing?

- Importance of reading a wide range of genres (science fiction, adventure, historical fiction, etc)
- Importance of reading a variety of text types (fiction, non-fiction, newspaper articles, autobiography)
- Highlight new vocabulary and discuss with parents – no need to write it all out
- Exposure to different styles of writing, eg long, complex sentences in pre-20th Century literature
- Exposure to variety of narrative perspectives and techniques that they could use in their own writing (eg first person, third person, past or present tense)
- Exposure to a range of figurative language and other literary techniques

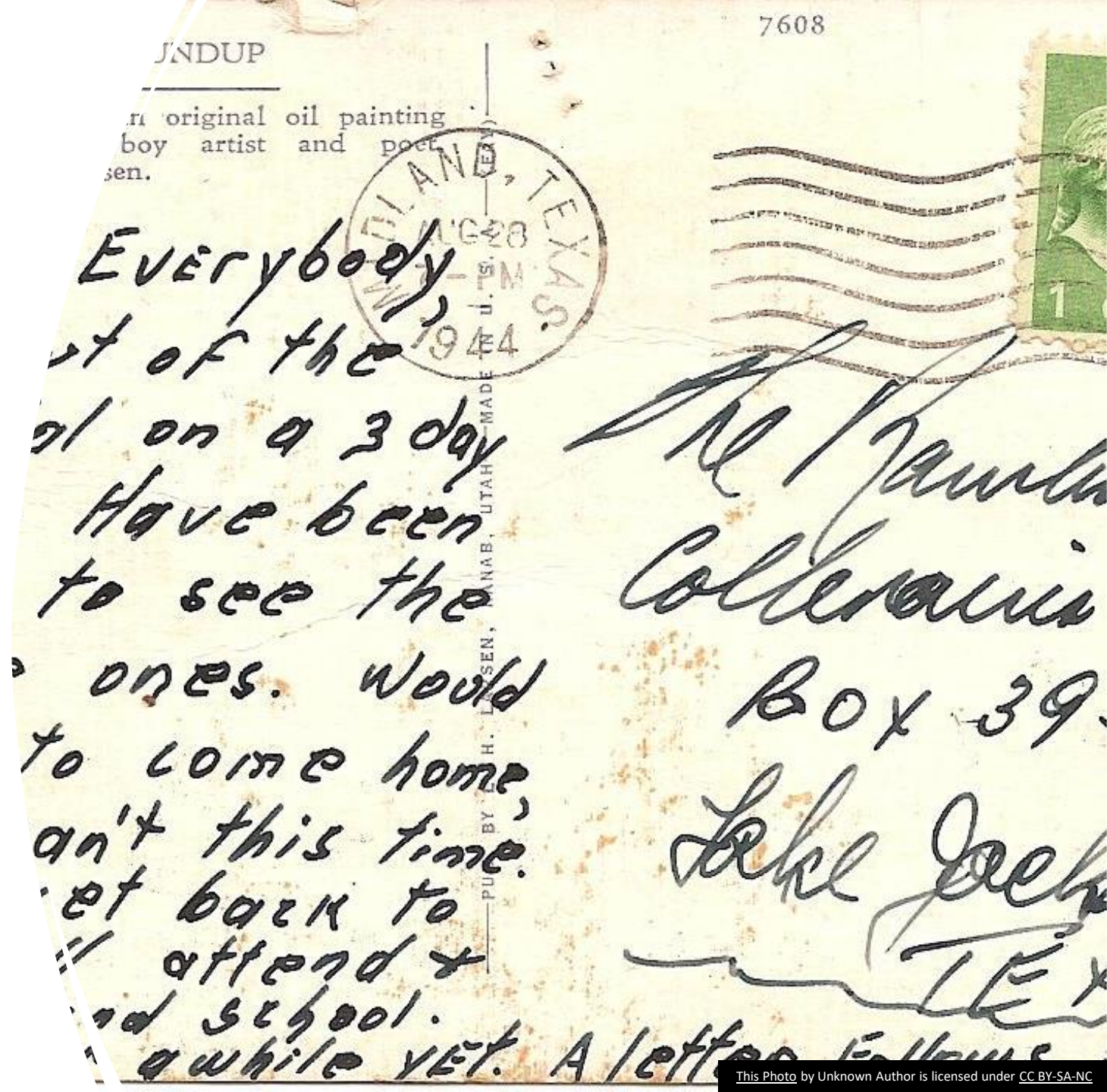


Opportunities
for your child
to write for
pleasure



Practise using the senses

- Travel journal or blog
 - Describe your arrival in new place. Use the senses to bring the scene to life
- Postcards
 - Describe your surroundings in this new place

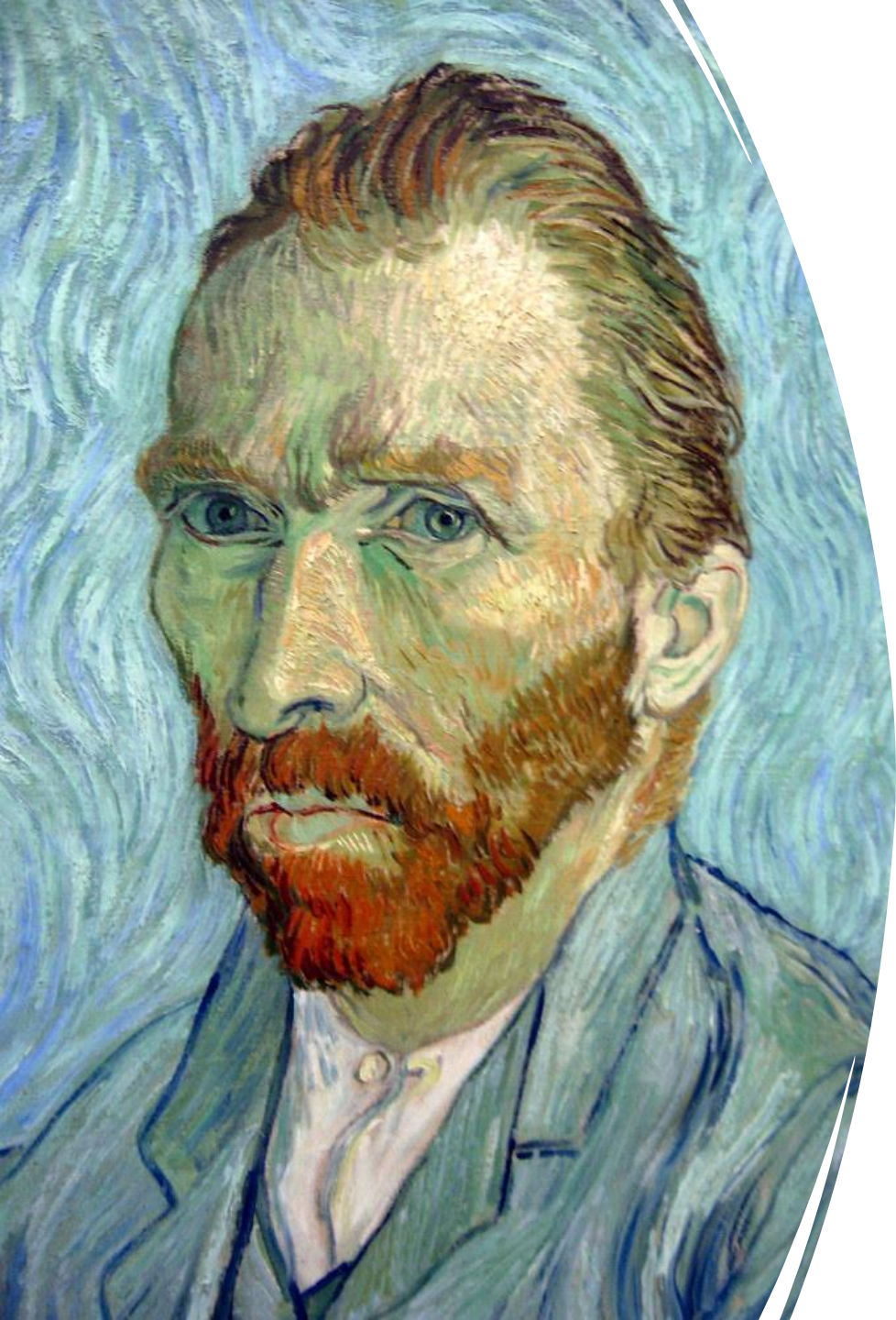


Practise recounting an experience

- Write (and post) a letter to a friend or relative: a real letter!
- Keep a journal or diary
 - Note the importance of really nice stationery

Remember: you are still telling a rich and engaging story with plenty of descriptive detail – it's just taken from real life





Practise using descriptive language

- Describe a painting you saw in an art gallery
- Describe the villain at the Christmas panto
- Describe your favourite dancer on Strictly: appearance, movement, personality

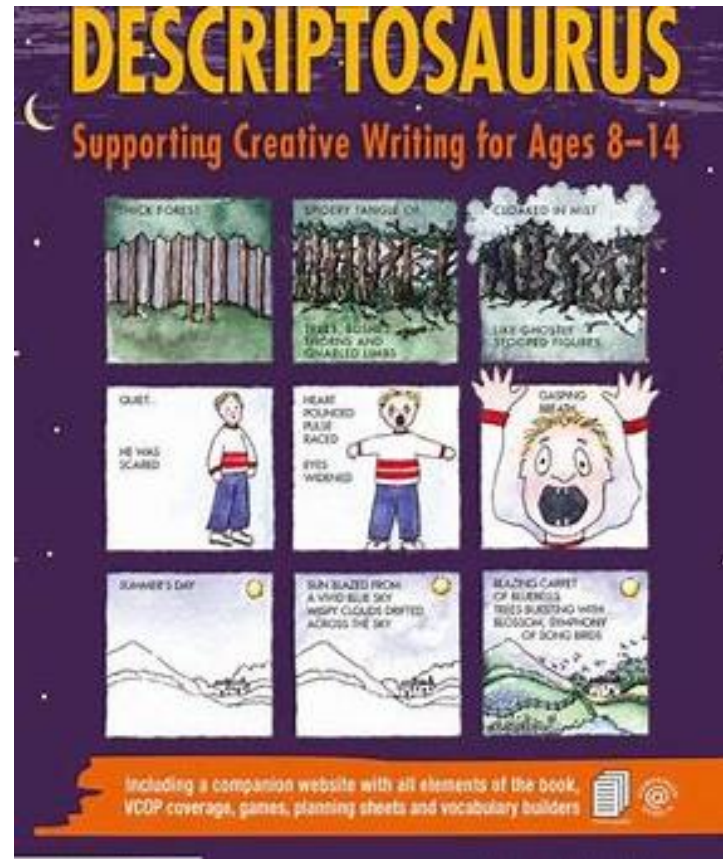
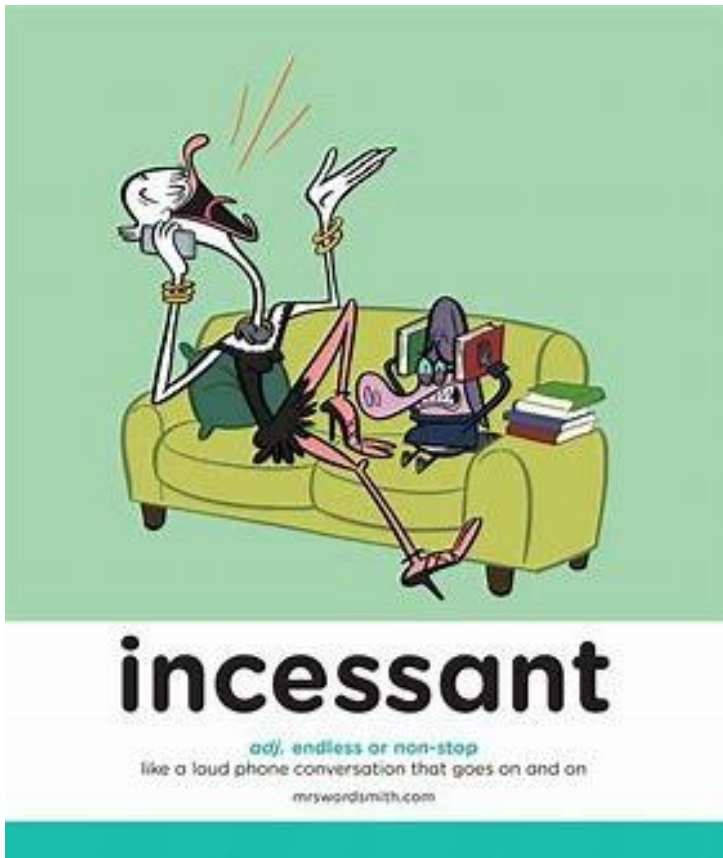
Remember: talking about the above is one of the best ways to practise these skills. Children don't always have to write everything down.

When English isn't your home language

- 25% of Roche school families speak another language at home
- 22% of London families speak another language at home
- If your child considers English to be an additional language (EAL):
 - He/she should be receiving the support they need already. If you have concerns, please speak to your class teacher
 - Your child's EAL status will be noted positively in the reference we provide to secondary schools
 - It is an *advantage*, not a handicap!
- You are (still) well-placed to support your child
 - Importance of shared experiences, learning together
 - Let your child lead you on some of these games and activities; allow your child to be the teacher



Resources you can use at home



- Descriptosaurus
- Wordsmith's Word a Day calendar

Build vocabulary

Help your child to
develop an eye for
detail

Get creative

Talk, talk, talk



Remember:
Keep it light, make
it fun

Any questions?

