

Figurative language and paragraphs

Year 6



Lesson overview

This lesson consists of three activities exploring letter writing conventions and culminating in students writing a letter to their own pen pal. Schools may wish to set up a pen pal system with students at another school in Australia or encourage the students to choose their own pen pal. Register for **The Pen Pal Club** at auspost.com.au/penpalclub to assist you in arranging pen pals for your students.

The activities throughout this lesson will use the book *The Pen Pal Club* by Sally Morgan as a stimulus for writing letters to pen pals and exploring features of writing, from the very basic to the more complex. This lesson will primarily focus on the Literacy strand of the English curriculum however students will also explore aspects of the Language and Literature strands. Year 6 students will be exploring features of figurative language and the correct use of paragraphs in narrative. They will use *The Pen Pal Club* to explore these features in situ then improve sentences by generating improvements of their own using their knowledge of these features. Students will then write a letter to their chosen pen pal including all the features they have explored throughout the lesson to show their learning.

Teachers may choose to organise an excursion to the local Post Office for students to post their letters at the end of these activities. This is a great opportunity for students to ask questions and expand their knowledge about the Australian postal system. Email penpalclub@auspost.com.au to arrange a tour of your local Post Office.

Learning intentions

Students will understand:

- How to recognise and use personification in their writing
- How to use speech effectively in their writing
- How to lay out an informal letter

Resources

- *The Pen Pal Club* by Sally Morgan
- Large pieces of paper (A3 or A2) for posters
- Felt tip pens
- Stamps
- Student workbooks
- Supplementary interactive whiteboard (IWB) resources
- Scissors
- Dice
- Envelopes

For schools that do not have access to an IWB, please be aware that the resources can be downloaded or accessed on personal devices or used as a reference if teachers choose to provide their own resources.

Assessment

- Group discussions
- Group work (supervised)
- Self assessment activities
- Peer assessment activities
- Summative tasks (addressed envelope and letter)

Australian Curriculum links Year 6 – English Outcomes

- Analyse how text structures and language features work together to meet the purpose of a text (**ACELY1711**).
- Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience (**ACELY1714**).
- Re-read and edit students' own and others' work using agreed criteria and explaining editing choices (**ACELY1715**).
- Develop a handwriting style that is legible, fluent and automatic and varies according to audience and purpose (**ACELY1716**).

Differentiation

As with all our lessons teachers are encouraged to change or update the activities in order to cater to diverse student needs.

The activities in this unit have been differentiated for three ability levels (support, core and extension) with differing levels of support.

General capabilities

-  Literacy
-  Critical and Creative Thinking
-  Personal and Social Capability
-  Intercultural Understanding

Cross curriculum priorities

-  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures (depending on school context)

Introduction

1. Gather the class as a group and read the book *The Pen Pal Club* by Sally Morgan.
2. Discuss the themes in the book; holidays, animals, hobbies, etc and relate to the students' own experiences. This will provide inspiration for when students write their own pen pal letters later in the lesson.
3. Ask the students, 'who would you most like to receive a letter from?' and follow this up by asking their reasons for this.
4. Now ask the students, 'who would you most like to send a letter to?' and follow this up by asking their reasons for this.
5. Introduce or recap differences in sending formal versus informal letters.
6. Explain to the students that they will be writing their own letters in this unit and ask them, 'what makes our writing interesting?' Collect students' ideas. This is a good opportunity to identify any gaps in learning and fill those gaps before moving on.



Activity 1

Introduction

1. Recap features of figurative language the students have explored previously, for example, similes and metaphors and personification. Find or create some examples and discuss how figurative language has been used to evoke emotion.
2. Introduce or recap onomatopoeia - A word that sounds like what it describes.
3. Provide some examples of how onomatopoeia has been used, in comics for example, or use the poem 'Onomatopoeia' by Eve Merriam to demonstrate.
4. Discuss why authors might use onomatopoeia in their writing and how the reader might react to this kind of description.

Main body - Part 1

1. Provide students with large pieces of paper. Direct them to work in groups or partners to generate 3 examples of onomatopoeia and create a colourful poster to demonstrate these words visually. Three differentiated activities have been provided below. Teachers are encouraged to select the most appropriate activity according to student ability, or provide another, more appropriate activity.
 - **Support** - Students that need extra support sit in a small group with an adult and work together to create a poster of onomatopoeic words they feel an affinity with, from the *Onomatopoeic Words* activity sheet, and show them visually, i.e. 'drip' drawn as a raindrop. Adults should encourage students to think about when these words might be used.
 - **Core** - Students work in pairs to visually represent 3 words that inspire them from the *Onomatopoeic Words* activity sheet. As an extension, students could add an extra onomatopoeic word they feel inspired by, that does not appear on the sheet.
 - **Extension** - Students work in pairs to create a poster of visually represented onomatopoeic words generated by them but perhaps inspired by the words on the activity sheet.

Teachers may choose to use the students' posters as display teaching tools for the classroom when they are completed.

Read through *The Pen Pal Club* again to identify some noun phrases that could be improved by using onomatopoeia. i.e. "big, brown camels" -> "the tall, brown camels flumped across the hot sand on their wide stumpy hooves."

2. Direct the students to take notes of some noun phrases that interest them and improve each with a new sentence that uses onomatopoeia to evoke how the noun behaves and creates more meaning for the reader. Three differentiated activities have been provided below. Teachers are encouraged to select the most appropriate activity according to student ability, or provide another, more appropriate activity.
 - **Support** - Students that need extra support sit in a small group with an adult and work together to pick a noun phrase from the book and create a new sentence to describe it which uses onomatopoeia. Students should each write the new sentence in their workbooks.
 - **Core** - Students work in pairs to improve two noun phrases from the book by rewriting them as sentences which use onomatopoeia. Students should write the new sentences in their workbooks.
 - **Extension** - Students work independently to improve two noun phrases from the book by rewriting them as descriptive sentences which use onomatopoeia. Students should write the new sentences in their workbooks.

Plenary

1. Invite the students to share their favourite examples of onomatopoeia or their new sentences that describe the noun phrase from the book. Discuss how the new sentences add meaning to the original nouns and how they might affect the reader.



Activity 2

Introduction

1. Start with a writing warm up: Display the following story starter on the board; 'You wake up in a room with three doors; a black door, a white door and a red door. What is behind each of them?' Challenge the students to finish the story within a time limit of 2-5 minutes, depending on student needs.
2. Introduce or recap how to write and use paragraphs.
3. Remind students of when to use paragraphs with the following mnemonic;

New TIME

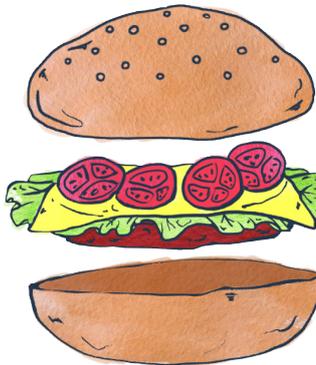
New TOPIC

TiPToP

New PLACE

New PERSON

4. Demonstrate how constructing paragraphs can be compared to making a burger, with the introductory sentence, extra details and then concluding sentence.



Top bun
Topic sentence

Tomato, cheese, lettuce and meat
Supporting details

Bottom bun
Concluding sentence

Main body - Part 1

1. Explain to the students that they will now write their own paragraphs.
2. Display the *Roll a Paragraph* slide on the board. Three differentiated activities have been provided below. Teachers are encouraged to select the most appropriate activity according to student ability, or provide another, more appropriate activity.
 - **Support** - Students that need more support work in a small group with an adult. Students take turns to roll the dice and pick a character, setting and a random prop from the board. As a group, students construct a silly paragraph using the three features.

The adult facilitates the students' thoughts and ideas to create the paragraph, potentially scribing for them to construct the paragraph. All students write the finished paragraph in their workbooks.

- **Core** - Students roll a dice in pairs to choose a character, setting and random prop from the board. They work together to construct a paragraph featuring these choices in their workbooks, ensuring it follows the layout of the paragraph burger.
- **Extension** - Students work independently to roll a dice and choose a character, setting and random prop, then write a correctly constructed paragraph about these features in their workbooks.

Teachers may choose to display these paragraphs in the classroom as a teaching tool

Main body - Part 2

1. Photocopy or display one of the letters from *The Pen Pal Club* and discuss with the students how it would look if it was written in correct paragraphs.
2. Challenge the students to rewrite the letter in correct paragraphs.

Students that need extra support may need to work in a small group with an adult to complete this activity. Other students may need to work with a partner for extra support and students that need extra challenge may be directed to choose to a different letter from the story to rewrite. Teachers are encouraged to select the most appropriate activity according to student ability, or provide another, more appropriate activity.

Plenary

1. Bring the class together as a group and review what students have learned about writing paragraphs and review the paragraph burger image and TiPToP mnemonic.
2. Invite students to share their silly paragraphs with the class.
3. Remind the students that they will be writing letters to their pen pal in the next session. For homework, direct them to decide on who they will write to and find their address. If you have signed up to **The Pen Pal Club**, distribute the school address and assign each student a pen pal from the corresponding class to write to.

Activity 3

Introduction

1. Start with a writing warm up: Challenge the students to describe the days of the week as if they were people! Give the students a time limit of 2 - 5 minutes depending on student needs.
2. Revisit the book *The Pen Pal Club*, by Sally Morgan and look at how the letters are displayed. Display the letter template on the board and talk about who the letters are addressed to.
3. Discuss with the students who they will be writing to and recap or introduce the difference between sending an informal letter versus sending a formal letter. Students may need to decide which sign off they will use for their letter.
4. Revisit the students' ideas for how to make our writing exciting from the first activity. Is there anything they can now add to the list? From these ideas create a class criterion for the students to use as they write their letters.

Main body

1. Explain that the students will be drafting their letters to their pen pals in this activity.
2. Remind students of the features they need to include in their work to make it an interesting and well-written letter, i.e. correct punctuation, paragraphs and some interesting writing features such as questions, direct speech and figurative language.
3. Three differentiated activities have been provided below. Teachers are encouraged to select the most appropriate activity according to student ability, or provide another, more appropriate activity.
 - **Support** - Students sit in a small group with an adult and use the Letter Template activity sheet to draft a letter consisting of at least one paragraph to their pen pal, one of which is a question for their pen pal. The letter should include some of the features in the class criteria for how to make their writing interesting.
 - **Core** - Students work independently to draft a letter to their pen pal in the Letter Template activity sheet. The letter should consist of at least two descriptive and interesting paragraphs. The letter must include most of the features in the class criteria for how to make their writing interesting.

- **Extension** - Students work independently and draft out a letter to their pen pal, using the template on the board as a guide. The letters should consist of at least three interesting and descriptive paragraphs which use correct punctuation for each type of sentence. The letter must include all of the features in the class criteria for how to make their writing interesting.

During this activity, teachers should play the role of facilitator, assessing and filling gaps in students' learning by observing work, answering questions and providing guidance where necessary.

4. Using the *Assess my Writing* (peer assessment) or the *Self Check* (self assessment) activity sheet, students should aim to check a partner's or their own writing for capital letters, full stops, language features and different types of sentences.

Plenary

1. After gaining appropriate feedback, students should write out their letters in 'best copy'.
2. Support the students in putting the letters into envelopes and applying a stamp. Their homework will be to address the envelope and post it!

Going further

For students who need an extra challenge, teachers may choose to use the following tasks to extend their thinking or create one of their own.

1. Encourage students to think of some questions they would like to ask a postie.
2. Brainstorm ideas for what happens to letters when we post them.
3. Discuss writing a letter of invitation.
4. Discuss writing a letter of response to bad news to show you care.
5. Draft up a letter to your head teacher persuading them to buy a new piece of equipment for the school.
6. Draft up a letter to a service company notifying them of a negative experience. What would you have to include and how would you phrase it?
7. Explore simple 'secret codes' and use one or make up your own code to write a letter! Discuss codes used throughout history and the reasons for using them.

Onomatopoeic words

Whizz	Thud	Vroom
Bang	Slash	Clang
Drip	Clatter	Gurgle
Whoosh	Jingle	Zap
Slop	Hiss	Rustle

Assess my writing!



Partner assessment. Read your partner's writing and draw a smiley face if they have included the following.

Capital letters and full stops	
Some interesting details	
Direct speech with an interesting alternative for 'said'	
Some questions for my pen pal	
Different types of sentences	
Figurative language (simile, metaphor or personification)	
Written in paragraphs	

Self check!

Self assessment. Draw a smiley face if your writing has:

Capital letter at the start of every sentence and full stops at the end of every sentence	
Interesting details	
Direct speech with an alternative word for 'said'	
Different types of sentences	
Figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification or onomatopoeia)	
Written in paragraphs	

Letter template

Dear

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

From,

.....

The Pen Pal Club

Year 6



Roll a Paragraph!

Number on dice	Character	Setting	Random Prop
1	Bank robber	Your classroom	White fluffy cat
2	Ninja	Hospital	A dead fish
3	Racing driver	Sydney Opera House	Map of Indonesia
4	Dragon hunter	Parliament House, Canberra	Mirror
5	Fire fighter	Tree house	A left-handed glove
6	Dentist	Top of a mountain	Wooden salad bowl

Letter template

Dear

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

From,
.....

Letter Template

- Greeting - Who are you writing to?
- Main letter - What will you write about?
- Sign off - your name