



Literacy: A cross-curricular, topic-based approach

What we can offer you

- A broad, balanced, imaginative and engaging approach to literacy, applied across the curriculum and presenting broader contexts for writing.
- High quality, student-centred, topic-based work, linking reading, writing, speaking and listening in exciting and interactive ways.
- Direct links to the National Curriculum in every session.
- Skills, ideas and strategies to help you plan creatively in the future.
- A successful track-record of working with high numbers of pupils with EAL.
- A unique, challenging and far-reaching way to help raise attainment for pupils who qualify for the Pupil Premium.
- **A free taster session before you commit to more sessions!**

Topics

Key Stage 1: Aliens	Key Stage 2: The rainforest
Traditional Stories	Tomb raiders (Egypt)
Pirates	Sustainable transport

This list is not exhaustive. We would be happy to discuss other topics with you.

How we do it

- We make learning enjoyable by following our simple, three-step method: 1) find a topic which fires up the imaginations and stimulates curiosity, 2) talk about it, 3) write about it (by which time the pupils are enthusiastic, engaged and motivated to write).
- We use techniques which follow the pupils' interests, where the child is placed in the role of expert and is encouraged to build up their knowledge and form their own opinions, thus increasing their problem-solving skills and ability to work independently.
- We build up pupils' confidence in expressing themselves and trying new things.
- We focus on language development, using correct and appropriate terminology, enhancing vocabulary and expressive language, as the way to improve their reading and writing.
- We use interactive tools, games and exercises which encourage effective communication, including listening skills and working together.
- We give students frequent opportunities to reflect and talk about what they are doing, thinking and feeling, via 'mini-plenaries'.

Key Stage 1

Example Topic: Aliens*



Project outline

Aliens have visited the school. They have left clues everywhere (slime, mysterious objects, footprints). Pupils are then put in the role of expert, as we ask them to investigate and collect evidence for our lab. Over a series of exchanges through letter-writing and other media, a connection is made between the pupils and the aliens as they learn about each other's worlds, reaching a mutual understanding and respect for each other.

Curriculum subjects: English, Citizenship, ICT, Maths.

Links with English Curriculum

Speaking and Listening: Working in role as Investigators, pupils will be asked to express their ideas and feelings clearly and confidently, using the language they need to explore this imaginary scenario. They will be given the opportunity to listen and respond to others, through small group and whole class planning, discussion and interaction. We will invite them to ask questions and respond to the strange sound patterns belonging to the alien language. They will ultimately get the chance to present their poems and stories through a variety of different performance techniques.

Reading: We hope that the exciting nature of the topic will develop an interest and enjoyment in reading. There will be plenty of opportunities in sessions, as they read the Aliens' letters, alien poem (The Alien has Landed by Ken Nesbitt) and their own stories aloud, and research ICT-based information (e.g. locating pictures which the aliens ask for). We hope to develop their understanding of fiction and poetry, enable them to identify patterns of rhythm, rhyme and sounds, and respond imaginatively.

Writing: Our project will provide pupils with the opportunity to use writing to: communicate, by responding to the letters and asking questions; explore, experience, organise and explain information, by way of their investigation; create imaginary worlds, by writing their own poems and stories; and remember and develop ideas via their own notebooks. Our activities encourage the use of descriptive language (e.g. how do they imagine the Aliens look like?), including adventurous and wide-ranging vocabulary (WOW words).

Examples of National Curriculum attainment targets met

Level 1 Speaking and listening: Pupils talk about matters of immediate interest. They listen to others and usually respond appropriately.

Level 1 Reading: (Pupils) express their response to poems, stories and non-fiction by identifying aspects they like.

Level 2 Writing: Pupils' writing communicates meaning in both narrative and non-narrative forms, using appropriate and interesting vocabulary, and showing some awareness of the reader.

Level 2 Citizenship: (Pupils) consider what their opinions are and share their ideas with others. They describe some of the groups and communities they belong to and recognise that people in their communities are different.

**This is an example topic. We have project outlines for other topics, and are happy to discuss other potential topics with you.*

Key Stage 2

Example topic: The rainforest*

Project outline

The pupils are shown a photo of a boy, Felipe, from the Amazon jungle, and are given some brief information about him: His age, his likes and dislikes, his home. Later, pupils hear from the Brazilian authorities about a plan to clear Felipe's area of land for farmland. Sessions use drama, music and storytelling to look deeper than just the environmental aspects of Felipe's situation. We explore communities, identity, difference and similarity, intercultural understanding and globalisation, by developing empathy and looking at the effects our actions have on others around the world.

Curriculum subjects: English, Citizenship, Geography, ICT.

Links with English curriculum

Speaking and Listening: We will build up pupils' capacity to listen and their confidence to perform through a variety of verbal and non-verbal communication exercises. A bank of expressive and descriptive vocabulary relating to the jungle will be built up via exercises designed to stimulate the imagination. Meanwhile, pupils will be given opportunities to speak in a wide range of contexts, by taking on varied roles in groups (such as Felipe's family, the Brazilian authorities and news reporters). We encourage the use of persuasive language, the ability to adapt to, and maintain the interest of, the audience, and to respond appropriately to each other. Sessions will incorporate regular group discussion about the issues. The project will culminate in group or class performances, scripted by the pupils.

Reading: Students will engage with challenging and demanding subject matter. Groups of students will be given different texts to read with tasks to perform; they will need to obtain information and make connections,



from print and ICT-based information; and read fictional stories and myths from the Brazilian culture. They will be encouraged to read their own poems, stories or scripts aloud with fluency and accuracy.

Writing: The development of a broad and adventurous oral vocabulary will lay the path for inventive writing. We will focus on creative uses of language which imagine and explore feelings and ideas about the rainforest, as well as persuasive arguments addressing the issues discussed. They will be expected to plan their arguments in groups, write up their opinions, and write their scripts, with the occasional use of ICT to present their work. We will also promote the use of personal notebooks to help their thinking.

Examples of National Curriculum attainment targets met

Level 3 Speaking and Listening: Pupils talk and listen confidently in different contexts, exploring and communicating ideas.

Level 4 Writing: Pupils' writing in a range of forms is lively and thoughtful...Vocabulary choices are often adventurous.

Level 4 Citizenship: They identify different and opposing views and can explain their own opinion about what is fair and unfair in different situations... (They) begin to assess the impact for those individuals and communities.

Level 4 Geography: They begin to understand how (physical and human processes) can change the features of places, and how these changes affect the lives and activities of people living there.

**This is an example topic. We have project outlines for other topics, and are happy to discuss other potential topics with you.*

What we ask of you

- To provide pupils with notebooks to record their own notes, reflections and ideas. All other resources and materials will be provided by us.
- The creation of space in your classroom (i.e. tables to one side) and the occasional use of the hall.
- We're the drama experts; you're the literacy experts! The reading and writing activities that we plan are limited in order to make the best use of our time in the classroom. However, there is plenty of scope for further reading and writing, as well as interactive activities, for teachers to pursue outside of these sessions, which will enhance the project. We will make a list of possible extensions after each session, from which the teacher is of course free to take what they want and add their own ideas.

Further information

- If working on longer term projects, we will endeavour to work with the teacher to identify targets in speaking and listening, reading or writing, and find the best way to address these using drama.
- We can link in with your weekly planning (e.g. poetry, narrative, non-fiction) if given these in advance to incorporate in our own planning.
- We fill out regular detailed session plans outlining activity aims, student learning objectives AND links to the National Curriculum, which will be submitted to you in advance.

Please see our main guide for further details, including: length, duration and frequency of sessions and prices.

Please call or email for a chat: 0114 250 8075 / 07969 433665

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www.squarecirclearts.co.uk



Experience and expertise

Square Circle Arts is run by Drama and Storytelling practitioner Shuna Beckett. All sessions are currently designed and delivered by her. You can find more information about Shuna's experience and training in the main guide issued to your school, and on our website: www.squarecirclearts.co.uk/about.php

Examples of past drama-based literacy projects in schools

Tinsley Junior School: We spent two days a week for one term with Year 6 pupils, 90% of whom spoke English as an Additional Language, to explore the topic of the Rainforest. We used creative literacy techniques aimed at enhancing oral language and enriching vocabulary, together with verbal and non-verbal communication tools aimed at improving listening and cooperation, and increasing confidence to perform. As a result, pupils' motivation and engagement, reading and writing skills significantly improved.

Pipworth Community Primary School: Working across two terms, we worked with Years 1 and 5 to explore how creative approaches to literacy encouraged collaborative working across the school. We worked on three topics across two terms: The Tudors (Y5), Cinderella and Aliens (Y1), using visual and physical theatrical devices, soundscapes and imagery, character-work, imaginative storytelling and provocations, and followed the children's lead. The children were extremely motivated and engaged in the topic and, as a result, were motivated to use their writing skills.