

English Language

Original Writing and Commentary:
ideas for teaching original writing and critical
commentaries

1. As learners are introduced to different text types, encourage them to experiment with linguistic modelling. This is their opportunity to play around with the language features they have identified in the texts they have been studying. e.g. travel writing, news reports, autobiographies, diaries, drama scripts, first chapters, public speeches, advice guides etc. The aim should be to cover as wide a range as possible
2. Learners could develop a portfolio of their most successful pieces of original writing. They could keep two copies of their favourite pieces, with one annotated to draw attention to the significant features.
3. Create an editorial board to discuss sample pieces of writing. The aim should be to identify writing that has an original voice and distinctive linguistic features, and that engages with the audience and communicates meaning effectively. Learners could produce a group anthology of the best pieces written in a range of genres
4. Create stimulus cards listing a text type, target audience, a broad suggestion about subject content, a purpose and a physical context (see below).
5. Divide the class into teams of 3-4 learners and get each team to draw a card. They are given 15 minutes to produce a piece of writing according to the criteria on the card they have drawn. They then judge each other's writing, (assessing it against the criteria OR working out the criteria), or one of the teams could be reserved as 'editors' for each round.

Examples of stimulus cards

TEXT TYPE:	billboard advertisement
TARGET AUDIENCE:	18-24 year olds
SUBJECT CONTENT:	new celebrity-branded fashion line
PURPOSE:	attract customers to a store promotion event
PHYSICAL CONTEXT:	roadside hoardings near a university

TEXT TYPE:	newsreport
TARGET AUDIENCE:	60+ women
SUBJECT CONTENT:	a series of bag-snatching incidents
PURPOSE:	to warn readers
PHYSICAL CONTEXT:	tabloid local newspaper

TEXT TYPE:	opening to a fantasy novel
TARGET AUDIENCE:	8-12 year olds
SUBJECT CONTENT:	introducing a new 'world'
PURPOSE:	to engage readers who enjoyed <i>The Hunger Games</i> or <i>The Maze Runner</i> series
PHYSICAL CONTEXT:	published as the first part of a dystopian series

CRITICAL COMMENTARY: TEACHING IDEAS

1. Encourage learners to apply their critical skills to their own work, paying particular attention to:
 - their use of language and their stylistic choices
 - the distinctive features of the text type
 - the significance of the contextual factors
 - how far their intended effects were achieved.
2. In the style of a writers' group, develop feedback sessions in which learners discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each other's writing.
3. Groups of learners could evaluate examples of original writing using the 'REVIEW' features of Microsoft Word. The comment boxes could create a running dialogue with the text, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and suggesting alternatives or possibilities for improvement.