



Clock Close: A example of a model text that links story writing to local history or geography

The following story has been devised as a possible model text for writing that could be taught in English and then used and applied in history or geography.

The story pattern is a basic portal or time slip story where the main character 'witnesses' an historical event, a period of history or an environment that has gone through significant change over time (human or physical). This is where relevant historical or geographical knowledge and sources should be used to create what the character may have seen in the past at the innovation phase or independent application in history or geography lessons. The text has been written for upper Key Stage 2 but the text could be adapted for a younger age group.

N.B., Prior to any independent application in history or geography, the children should be taught, in the English lessons, the story structure of the portal tale and how they can create a good setting.



Clock Close

There were no clocks in Clock Close. No ticks. No chimes. No hands or faces. No visible signs. Time died here long ago.

The once thriving industrial ‘top-shops’ were now reduced to rubble and waste on either side of the road. A crumpled sign on the left provided the only echo of its past.

Billy looked out over the industrial wasteland before him. A board nearby announced big changes – a new shopping centre was coming soon and one of the new shops, ironically, was to be called Top Shop!

At that moment, something caught Billy’s eye. In the red rubble, Billy saw a flash – a glint. Cautiously, he crept forward and stared down. Below, on the old street cobbles was a small, battered box made of metal and cracked glass. A rusted key protruded from the side. Inside, tiny cogs whirled and clicked. Billy picked up the box, listened and then carefully tried to turn the corroded key. Nothing.

Stuck. Strain. Then...

Click. Click. Click.

The world melted into darkness. Darker than darkness...

Then...

Tick.

Tock.

Tick...

Chime. Chime. Chime.

Where was he?

Faces and hands began to emerge. Billy was standing in a workshop – a clock-shop. All around him, skilled clock-makers crouched and squinted over cluttered tables, building exquisite time pieces. The walls were filled with boxes of copper cogs, pointing hands and coiled springs. There were pendulums waiting to swing and keys waiting to twist and turn.

Billy looked into the faces of those around him, their eyes wound tight with concentration. Could they see him? Their



eyes were glazed – fixed in time. They were not of this time – our time.

Another clock chimed. Clocking off time. The workers fixed their last cog, sat back and sighed. The day was done. As the shift ended, the workers chattered and laughed. Soon, the room began to empty. Billy stared at the small box made of metal and glass with the shiny key still in his hand. He began to place it on the workbench nearby but then... darkness descended. Darker than darkness.

Tick.

Tock.

Tick...

Chime. Chime. Chime.

The world emerged again. There were no clocks in Clock Close – except for the small box with a rusted key. Billy blinked once, trying to remember the scene. The time. The place. Had he seen an echo of the past?

He tried to turn the rusted key. Stuck. Strain. Nothing...

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Glossary

*A **topshop** or **top-shop** are old industrial buildings specific to Coventry, Bedworth and Nuneaton, common in the 18th and 19th Century. A top-shop had 2 or 3 storeys. The bottom floors were for living whereas the top floor, with its distinctive larger window, was a workshop for ribbon weavers and watch makers. In times before artificial lighting, the larger top windows made the best possible use of any natural daylight for the workers.*



Imitation Phase

Learn the text orally in English lessons, using a simple map and actions. Then read as a reader, ensuring good understanding of the vocabulary and world knowledge required to comprehend the story.

Deepen understanding through discussion, drama, hot-seating and freeze-framing episodes from the story in the role of the different characters.

Use a printed version of the text to read aloud with expression and discuss meaning through shared reading.

Use one or two question stems from the KS2 SAT reading papers to teach and practice oral and written comprehension of the model text.

Research, through shared, guided and independent reading, any relevant world knowledge in history or geography lessons that could then be used to innovate on the story or apply in an independent application across the curriculum.

Vocabulary

Read the story through and underline potentially difficult vocabulary. Discuss words or expressions that might present a barrier to understanding. Provide simple, child-friendly definitions.

For some tier two words, list examples or synonyms/antonyms and then try using the words in sentences. Use the words and phrases over several days for grammar games as well as rapid reading, spelling and writing creative sentences through short-burst writing.



Possible 'Tier Two' Words/phrases (Beck et al 'Bringing Words to Life' 2013)

thriving, ironically, protruded, glint, corroded, rusted, wound tight, emerged, exquisite, protruded, descended, glazed, the day was done, concentration, echo of the past, fixed in time, not of this time – our time.

World Knowledge & Technical Vocabulary

top-shop – see glossary, cogs, pendulums, 'clocking off', workshop, cobbles, time pieces, industrial wasteland.

Boxed Up Structure

Co-construct with the children the underlying story pattern.

- Character arrives at a setting with a past history or geography (e.g., buildings, an historical event, a past industry, etc...)
- Relic from the past is discovered.
- The relic transports character to the past to be an 'eye witness' to the historical period, place or event.
- Character returns to the present with memories and/or memento from the past.

Co-construct a Setting Toolkit

Co-construct a toolkit, focussing in on how the writer has created the different settings and how the characters may have felt in these settings.



To create contrasting settings, you could:

Tool to create the effect	Examples in text	Grammar Terminology
See each setting through the main character's eyes	Billy looked out over... All around him, Below, Inside,	Prepositions / Fronted adverbials
Give your place a good name	Clock Close	Proper noun
Make link to the place at the start and end of the story	There were no clocks in Clock Close.	Punchy statement about the place.
Pick out specific details in the contrasting settings	old street cobbles cracked glass rusted/corroded key small, battered box made of metal The walls were filled with boxes of copper cogs, pointing hands and coiled springs	Noun phrases Commas in a list List sentence of 3 noun phrases
Use the senses to bring the setting alive: sights, sounds, smells, textures Use of repetition to emphasise the sounds	tiny cogs whirled and clicked. Chime. Chime. Chime. Tick. Tock. Tick Click. Click. Click	Use of onomatopoeia Patterns of 3 Sentence fragments
Describe the setting with different 'moods'	old, battered, cracked, wasteland, rubble and waste	Negative/positive adjectives



	<p>rusted then shiny</p> <p>'workers chattered and laughed'</p>	<p>Actions using verbs</p>
<p>Describe how the main character felt in each of the settings</p>	<p>Cautiously,</p> <p>Where was he?</p> <p>Had they seen him?</p> <p>Billy picked up the box, listened and then carefully tried to turn the corroded key.</p> <p>Nothing.</p>	<p>Fronted adverbial</p> <p>Rhetorical questions</p> <p>List sentences of three actions</p> <p>Commas in a list.</p> <p>Sentence fragment showing no reaction</p>
<p>Describe how the other characters might have felt in the setting through their actions</p>	<p>The workers fixed their last cog, sat back and sighed.</p>	<p>List sentences of three actions</p> <p>Commas in a list</p>

Innovation and/or Independent Application

Once the story has been internalised and the boxed-up pattern and toolkit have been co-constructed, model planning a new version, using knowledge gleaned from history or geography lessons.

Children plan their new version using their ideas and knowledge from history or geography.

Possible Innovation or Independent Application Ideas

- Link to local history or geography and/or famous historical events.
- Link to national or world history or geography and/or famous historical events.



Other innovation ideas...

- Have a vision of a future world based on familiar settings e.g., the school or city/town/village 100 years from now.
- Visit and witness fictional worlds or events from the class novel. Write in first person or imagine the scene through the eyes of another character in the novel.
- Visit another world e.g., fantasy/sci-fi setting, based on knowledge of the genre.

Through shared and guided writing, model writing a new class version using the class plan, co-constructing the story with the children bit-by-bit over a number of days. Children have a go at writing their own version bit-by-bit. Provide oral and written feedback within the lesson and over the days so that children can edit and improve their ideas.

Alternatively, if the children already have the knowledge of the portal tale and how to create a good setting from their English lessons, use the boxed-up planner and toolkit in history or geography lessons where the focus is on using their historical or geographical knowledge and sources to try and recreate the event or place.

Possible sentences and language patterns to imitate and innovate

During the imitation phase, warm up the words (vocabulary), phrases and sentences each day through short-burst writing.

Below are some examples of sentences and phrases from the model text that could be imitated and innovated upon, making links to the relevant grammar and writing tools that need to be taught.

1. Use of fronted adverbials for how and where

Noun phrases to pick out detail – describing objects and setting negatively/positively.

Adding sounds to bring setting alive.



- **Cautiously**, he crept forward and stared down. **Below**, on the old street cobbles was a small battered box made of metal and cracked glass. A rusty key protruded from the side. **Inside**, tiny cogs whirled and clicked.

Other fronted adverbials,

- **All around him,**
 - **At that moment,**
 - **Soon,**
2. Repeated statement with alliteration makes link between start and end of story. 'Cl' echoing ticking sounds.
(Inspired by opening line of Holes 'There is no lake at Camp Green Lake.')
- **There were no clocks in Clock Close.**
3. Sentence of 3 actions. Second one with a sentence fragment signalling no reaction.
- **The workers fixed their last cog, sat back and sighed.**
 - **Billy picked up the box, listened and then carefully tried to turn the corroded key. Nothing.**
4. Subordination using **as** a conjunction.
- **As** the shift ended, the workers chattered and laughed.
5. Use of rhetorical question
- **Where was he?**
 - **Had he seen an echo of the past?**



Talk for Writing



Dean is an accredited Talk for Writing trainer who has been working to develop Primary English in schools for over 20 years. His previous roles include: National Programme Director for Primary School Improvement with the National Strategies, Local Authority School Improvement Lead, Literacy Advisor and Primary School Leader. Dean is developing Talk for Reading and Writing approach in schools across the UK and internationally.

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