



COURSE BOOK

Philip Davis

WRITEINSPIRED.CO.UK





Write Inspired aims to reignite a love of words and make writing enjoyable, engaging and meaningful, empowering young minds to express themselves with confidence and joy.

In this newly revised version of the course book you will find notes and ideas from the Inset day.

Good luck and enjoy Write Inspired

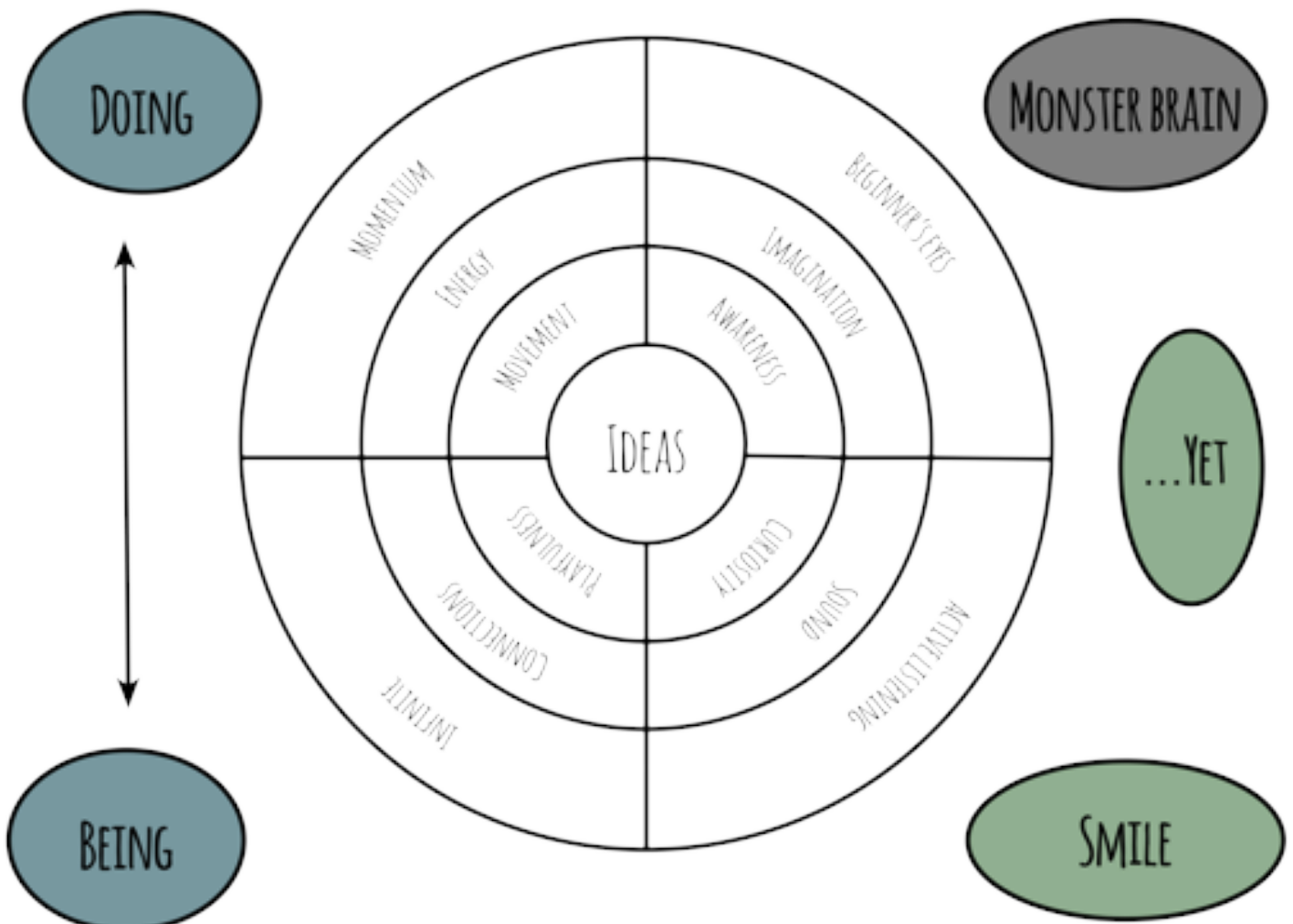
Philip Davis

IDEAS

In order to write you need ideas. This is the foundation of the creative process. Generating ideas and being able to express them.

The diagram below demonstrates what is needed in order to successfully find ideas. We all have them, of that I have no doubt. The trouble is accessing them, and knowing what to do with them once they are on the page.

Inside the wheel are the skills and states of mind needed to generate ideas. On the outside are some of the processes that may hinder or help this.



MOVEMENT

It may surprise you that one of the key factors to help with idea generation, and learning in general, is movement. We need to be awake, active and energised to have ideas.

We are designed to move.

If still for too long, we become restless, distracted, lethargic and frustrated. These are not conditions we want for a motivated learning environment.

A simple way to get people moving, feeling awake and active is to use beat and rhythm. We have beat within us. Our hearts beat, we walk in a beat, there is rhythm in language. It is everywhere. We are beat.

Using rhythm also improves beat competency (the ability to maintain a steady beat.) Beat competency has been linked to handwriting, co-ordination, early language skills, mathematical ability, gross and fine motor skills to name a few.

Like many things, beat competency can be nurtured and improved through repeated practice.

Try playing a metronome at about 100 beats per minute. People immediately start to tap their feet, or clap their hands or click their fingers. Human beings naturally love to follow a beat. To join in.

Creating a dynamic learning space happens organically. You will be able to judge when the class need to be active and wake up.

Some of the moves can be more sedate. These are perfect when you feel the the class need to re-focus or simply have a gentle stretch.

There is now widespread evidence that we all need to move more. Regular movement helps you to maintain good postures and reduce muscle fatigue. It also improves concentration.

Move more in the classroom and it will :

Activate and energise the body

Increase metabolic rate

Break down fats

Reduce blood sugar levels

Boost oxygen flow to the brain

See Later for some movements you can try. The movement pack with instructions and accompanying sounds is available to buy at writeinspired.co.uk



THE MONSTER BRAIN

On the outside of the wheel diagram you will notice something that I call The Monster Brain. This is something that we all need to understand as it is detrimental to idea generation and learning as a whole.

I call it the monster brain as it refers to the way the brain has evolved to deal with threat.

NEGATIVITY BIAS

In short the negativity bias refers to the fact that the brain clings on to negative experiences far more easily than positive ones. We have evolved to take notice of things that may harm us to protect us from future danger. This is hard wired in all humans.

This was very useful when we were at risk of being eaten by wild creatures (monsters). The response to this threat is familiar to us all - increased heart rates, dilated pupils, butterflies in the stomach. What we generally call STRESS.

It involves a part of the brain called the Amygdala. The Amygdala is an ancient part of the brain that responds to threat and acts as an alarm bell. Once this alarm bell has been triggered, it makes sure the mind remembers it. Negative experiences stick.

When in this state of alertness it is very difficult to learn. If writing is experienced as a threat and stressful, the amygdala will still do its job as it cannot distinguish between this, and the sabre toothed tiger. So writing, maths, homework, tests, even school itself can trigger these sort of fight, flight, freeze responses.

There are ways we can counteract the negativity bias and the stress response.

What you can't do is think your way out of it. The mind will simply give you evidence about why you feel stressed. It will try and help you but actually make you feel worse. Think about what happens to all of us when we want to 'think things through' after a stressful moment. We tend to brood and ruminate and then feel worse.

What we need is Kindness and self compassion.

So when in the position of not knowing or understanding something (often the instigator of the stress response in the classroom) SMILE.

The action of smiling reduces the stress response. If you are really in danger you won't smile. Not knowing something in the classroom may well be unpleasant, but it is not dangerous. Reinforce the fact that no-one knows everything. Not knowing something or finding things difficult is part of the learning process. It's OK not to know or understand things.

Have a mantra - Smile when you're not sure or don't understand. Advertise it round the school. It is healthy and productive. It builds an atmosphere that is conducive to having a go. Learning is a risky activity and there needs to be an atmosphere of risk taking. We learn through our mistakes.



In the context of writing this need for perfection builds a reticence and reluctance in the room. It quite simply kills creativity. It can quickly become a negative spiral of...

'I can't write, I can't do it, it's rubbish.'

If this is allowed to grow it can lead to a writing phobia where even the mention of the word 'writing' is met with a slump of the shoulders. A collective sigh.

Build an atmosphere of drafting and having a go. Get rid of erasers. They reinforce the idea that everything has to be perfect. Learning isn't like that. Have some on hand for when they publish things but other than that, don't have them in sight.

Celebrate mistakes. Learn from them. This is a life skill.

Remember learning needs to be experiential.

Too often ideas and facts are delivered by the teacher rather than experienced by the learner. Immerse the class in authentic experience.

When expressing ideas through writing we need something to write about. It cannot simply be a mechanical process of putting letters on a page. Try to move away from the 'one day' or 'once upon a time' approach. This quickly demotivates and disengages.

Inspiration follows motivation. Once motivated, awake and feeling safe, immersed in authentic experience, inspiration will follow.

It is in this space where true learning happens. Inside the minds of motivated, fearless, inspired people



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE IS NEGATIVE?

It is important to look at what happens when the learning experience is not a positive one.

In short, the fall out from a negative experience can be drastic and very damaging for a child. As teachers, we have a huge responsibility to ensure that the experiences we provide are positive and nurturing.

Let's imagine one typical scenario in a writing session.

The child is ready to learn but apprehensive as they feel deep down that they can't write. They have struggled before with this. They know they can't write. They have evidence for it from previous lessons.

They may have been told before that they haven't written enough, their spellings are all wrong or they have not used the correct punctuation. The list goes on.

If the lesson constantly includes these negative messages, it will make them feel less able to cope than when they started and it will reinforce the pattern of 'I can't do it' thinking. A negativity bias will build. The mind will want to avoid this at all costs in the future.

So what happens when the learning experience is negative?

The barriers go up, the learner feels unable and unwilling to engage in the process and their writing and communication skills do not progress.

It makes total sense. We all want to avoid unpleasantness, especially if this unpleasantness makes you feel worthless.

Of course learning how to become a writer is hard. But it does not have to be negative.

It is hard but does not have to drain confidence.

We need to sell writing as important and beautiful. If we drench it in unachievable, non-purposeful, dry and dull outcomes it is no wonder it switches people off. You may well understand why people need to write and use grammar correctly, but remember the child often doesn't. Telling them is not enough. The teaching of writing and communication needs to be inspired and inspiring.

IT NEEDS TO BE TAUGHT BY INSPIRED PEOPLE.



'The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.'

Henry Miller



AWARENESS

One of the most successful ways to get ideas is beautifully simple. NOTICE THINGS. PAY ATTENTION. Open your eyes.

This is challenging in today's world. We are constantly distracted. By screens, screens and more screens.

I believe that we are at risk of losing our innate curiosity. Look at how many people are in the world now. Constantly checking their phones, looking at screens, being absorbed in the virtual and not the real.

In short we are becoming less aware. We are noticing less. We are forgetting that the biggest mine of ideas is all around us. In the real world.

This simple awareness activity proves how powerful this skill is.

Using the grid you ask the class to notice things in the room. They are not going to look for the obvious. They notice the tiny, the hidden, the easily missed.

They become idea detectives.



Playfulness, Curiosity and Associative thinking

The noting down of things that are observed is simple. It draws you in.

Playfulness and curiosity are vital. All too often learners can approach tasks with too much seriousness. We need to develop a sense of playful curiosity.

I always talk to students I work with, whether they are 7 or 17, about the difference between playfulness and mucking around. One is an action and the other is a state of mind. Having a playful approach increases curiosity. Be brave and experiment with thoughts and ideas. Challenge the 'what's the point of this?' mind.

Apathy is the enemy of learning. Some may be challenged with this activity as they may not see the point. Encourage the innate curiosity that is in us all. Remind them that that is what makes us human.

Playfulness and curiosity come to the fore when making connections between ideas. One idea can become many. It takes practice, but the more you work with this skill the better you will get.

What you notice	You						
Reflector	could	will	stiles	silva	that	white	shiny
holes	dark	deep	mysterious	or not	rotten	grey	light
scratches	his	on the	brown	rough	jagged	scuffed	dirty
Soak	soft	small	foggy	fluffy	dirty	moisty	smelly
String	found	on roof	curled	hanging	wavy	brown	with dirt
Nice	short	on roof	hard	foggy	swinging	clear	curled
Scratch	grey	small	short	shiny	flat	wavy	so natural
Paint	thin	purple	shiny	shiny	shiny	small	round
Let	in	dark	string	wavy	long	straight	in
dust	scattered	on	grey	dark	dark	dark	dirty

IN THIS MOMENT...



Making connections

Start with an idea on the grid that you like. Then begin by making logical connections. Use these questions to help ;

Where is it?

What colour is it?

What size is it?

How is it moving? Even if still say so.

What shape?

These logical questions build on the initial idea. So if you saw a hole you can respond to the above questions as follows : On the wall, dark, tiny, motionless,

On the photo you can see how the initial ideas in the left column develop into a wonderful variation of thoughts. The logical connections can then be connected to divergent ones. So dark can become space or cave or tunnel or mysterious. Start with literal 'answers' and then branch out into whatever the ideas suggest. Go off on a tangent. Be imaginative.

Holes become mysterious and linked to rabbits and space.

These can then be connected into poetic phrases.

'Deep in the hole I saw vibrant space rabbits.'

These three skills of Playfulness, Curiosity and Associative thinking (Making Connections) are the foundation of creativity.

The more you notice, the more ideas you will have. It's that simple.

Ideas are everywhere.



Here is an example form what is seen in the classroom.

An orange stain

A desert

Dry and petrified

Messy wires like vines of a tree

Hole

A darkness

Another realm

Dark, black and endless

Paint blob

The opening of a volcano

A portal

Glue tack

Frozen on the wall

Collecting stuck flies

On its sticky borders



The Idea Map

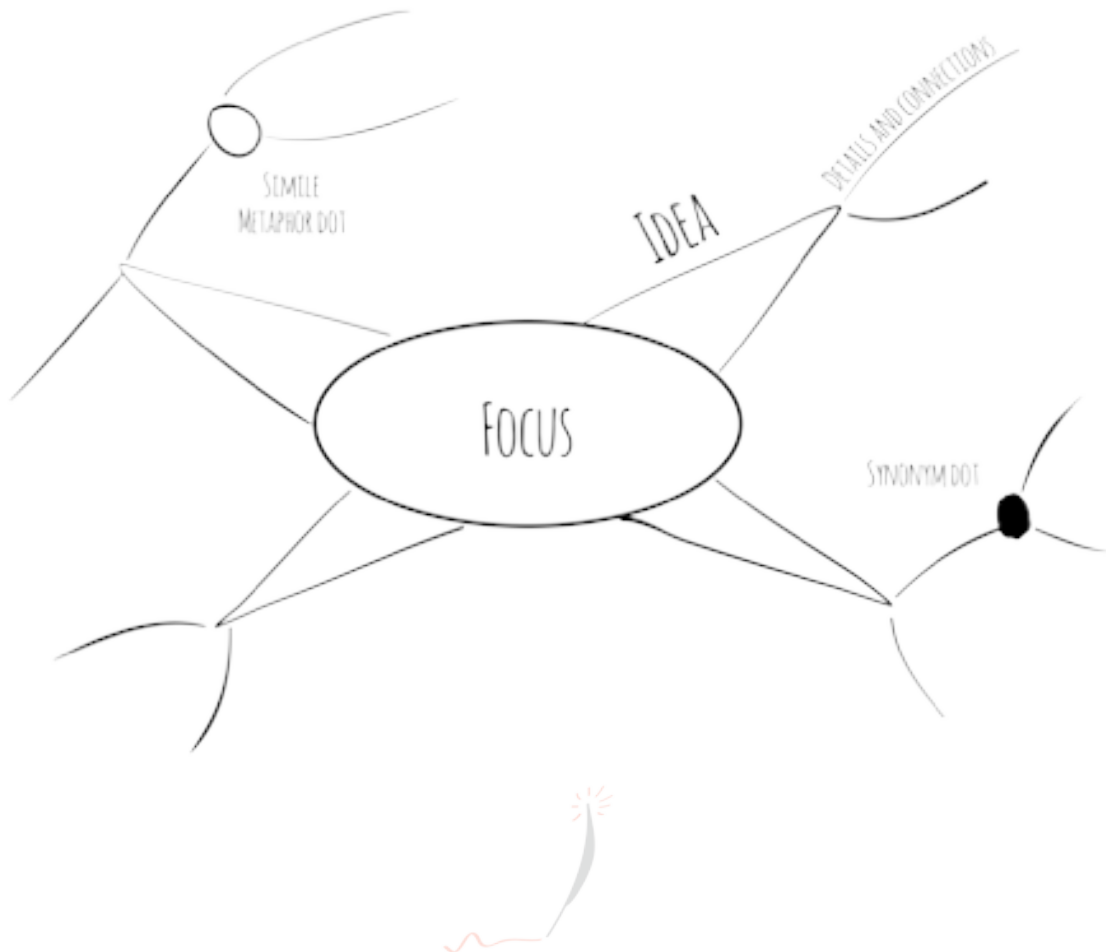
An effective way to organise ideas is the Idea Map. The central oval represents the main focus as with the Idea Wheel.

Each branch that comes out of the centre begins with something noticed. This may be an object or an emotion, atmosphere etc

As the ideas grow we can add two types of development dots.

The **synonym dot** indicates the need to find a synonym for the word on the branch. This is a great way to encourage new diverse vocabulary. When starting to write you can only use the language you have. Out what you know down and then build it with the synonym dot.

The **simile and metaphor dot** is used for exactly that. If there is something that needs a simile or metaphor then this can be added here.



Developing Imagination - The Divergent Mind

Imagination is hugely important in Write Inspired. It is one of those skills that can seem to be lacking in some. However, I do not believe that it is not there. If imagination is not used and played with in a curious, aware mindset then it cannot develop to its full potential. Use it or lose it. We can help nurture an imaginative mind but remember :

Everyone thinks differently.

Try this. Ask everyone in the room to close their eyes and think of a dragon. Explain that in the instant they hear the word 'dragon' the mind will conjure up an image. Each individual will see their own image. No one else will see it. It is in the mind. Visualised.

This is imagination.

For 20 seconds ask everyone to notice one thing about the dragon. It can be a tiny thing such as the colour of its eyes or the bigger picture, where it is, what it may be doing.

After the 20 seconds, go round each member of the class and get them to say the one thing that they noticed. Encourage them to stick with what they actually saw and not to be influenced by what other people are saying. **Be authentic.**

What you will find is that everyone says something different. There may be a few who say the same thing, green skin, for example. But if you were able to see the image of the dragon in their heads, even though both had green skin, there would be subtle differences.

The 86 billion neurons inside our minds give rise to millions of potential thoughts and ideas. The number of possible ideas is limitless. Infinite.

It is important to discuss the uniqueness of everyone. Remind them that they are the only one of them. In the history of the universe. Ever.

People need to know and feel that they are valued for who they are. Especially in the classroom.

For any creative endeavour try saying

I am not interested in what you think I think.

I am not interested in what you think your friend thinks. I am interested in what **YOU** think.

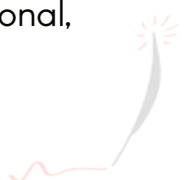
This is heart of the individual response. Imagination is personal.

If we were automatons we would have the exact same response to experiences.

If asked to think of a stone there would be a programmed response.

Stone = Stone Stone = Stone Stone = Stone

Human beings are diverse and are not automatons. This is an incredibly motivational, inspirational fact.



The world is full of ideas. We are bombarded with them on a daily basis. The dominance of entertainment media presents us with a challenge. If asked to create a character, children will often describe one from a film.

This must be challenged as that is not the idea of the person in the classroom; it is a repetition of someone else's idea. It is playing it safe and not developing that imaginative playful mind that will lead to creative writing and authentic self expression.

So adapt ideas. Change them into something that is your own.

Have confidence in doing this.

It's not a piece of string...

This is a simple way to nurture the divergent nature of the mind. All you need is a piece of string.

Start with noticing things about the string. Remember, always try and start with awareness, focus. The simple act of paying attention.

Once these have been noted then move on to imagination. This is where the magic happens. Humans have this innate ability to look at something, see details and then pretend it **COULD BE** something else.

Once again, bring in playfulness and curiosity to this activity. You will instantly hear them coming up with ideas. They may well have done it in the first place before being asked to do so. It is a natural state of being. Humans are curious by nature. They are imaginative by default.

Always remind them of this. And don't forget it yourself either!

The variety of ideas generated in this activity is remarkable and a reminder of the wonderfully divergent nature of the mind. For more of a challenge imagine the string as concepts.



SOUND

Sound is incredible. Almost magical in its ability to inspire ideas.

Sound is so much more than a background to something else. It is the most powerful and profound deliverer of ideas. A door opener in the mind.

Connecting with sound is complex. It happens naturally but can seem out of reach to many people. It involves engaging with the sound. Using it and responding skilfully.

So take time to introduce sound. The ground work is everything. Once it has been introduced you will simply need to remind the class of the key points. The natural curiosity of the mind will do the rest.

INTRODUCING SOUND

When sound enters the ears all kinds of wonderful things start to happen. There are three key ways in which we respond to sound. These are :

The **PHYSICAL** response. the **EMOTIONAL** response and the **VISUAL** response.

Lets imagine the sound 'Hiss' or 'sssssss.'

A physical response is the description of the sound through :

Onomatopoeia - Words that describe the sound - in this case hiss.

The texture and physical attributes of the sound - soft, smooth.

The duration - long or short.

The dynamic - quiet or loud.

The timbre - the characteristic of the sound- glassy, wooden, watery, cavernous, small, big, heavy, dull, bright, soft, hard. (More on this later.)

These five areas are doorways to hundreds of ideas, even from the simplest of sounds.

The emotional response is how the sound makes us feel.

Sound affects us emotionally. We all have this innate connection with the sounds around us. They can evoke powerful memories of time, place and people. They can excite us. They can make us feel scared. They can slow us down or speed us up.

Think about the way sound is used in films to build emotional resonance. Sudden loud sounds can make us jump. Distant quiet sounds can make us feel as if something is far away.

The pitch is also very emotive.

Very low pitches with no melody tend to evoke fear. Sometimes referred to as the fear frequency. Sound suggests. It can suggest time. Early morning, late at night.

It can suggest movement, stillness or shaking for example. It can suggest a sense of space - desolate, busy.

It can suggest colour, shape, texture.



The visual response is the most prevalent in the mind. When you hear a sound you will often see an image. Allow the image to form in the mind and then pay attention to it.

This visualisation of sound leads to many wonderful ideas.

This image may well not be what the sound actually is. It will whatever the sound suggests to you in that moment. There will be a variety of ideas with one sound.

Through the visual response we introduce what I call

THE 'IT COULD BE' MIND

The work with the string is a great prelude to this sort of activity.

Playing a sound you ask 'What do you think the sound **could** be?'

This is very different to 'What is the sound?' With this question you would either know or you wouldn't. It is narrow.

By asking what it **could be** you are opening doors in the mind. Doorways to brilliantly imaginative and personal ideas. You are encouraging individuality. The writer's voice.

So, when listening to a sound, say to yourself these powerful words.

It could be.....or....it could beor it could be.....

The power of the word 'OR' should not be underestimated. It creates variety and curiosity in the mind. It brings personal and divergent ideas to the fore.

This world of sound will bring a whole new dimension to writing. One that is endless in its possibilities.



The following ideas came from a year 4 class in response to the sound of crunching. Actually the sound was the inside of a wood ants nest. Thousands of tiny feet tapping. It doesn't matter that the class did not know this. Ideas will flow using the 'It could be' mind.

What could the sound be...

The patter of rain
A horse and carriage
Hail
Popcorn popping
A giant crying
A signal breaking
Water groaning
A crackling fire
Dominoes falling
Broken speakers
Electric interference
Tummy
An asteroid
Earth exploding
A giant eating spaghetti
Storm rain
A rattlesnake
Running through the jungle
A rocket launching
Taking off in a plane
Stomping in mud
Racing ripples of a river
Raindrops
Disconnecting
Rubbish being crushed
Sizzling hot food



The variety of ideas is fabulous. Following this you can expand these. Using them to begin story, connecting them to build plots or poetry. Being playful with them.

Remember these ideas are generated by the class . They are owned by the class. This authenticity and ownership creates engagement.

It inspires.



SUBJECTIVE SONIC LANGUAGE

This is a fascinating area to explore and one which leads to a flowering of language and individual ideas. We use language to describe things. It is how we communicate what we see and what we hear. The slightly different thing about sound is that the descriptions we use are subjective.

When we hear a sound there are three main areas we choose words from in order to try and explain the 'quality' and 'nature' of the sound.

These are

ONOMATOPOEIC - so describing a sound as boomy or hissing or rumbling etc

IMAGERY - we may describe a sound with a sense of something seen such as airy, golden or bright. This is a rich source of language. You can investigate this by asking questions such as 'What colour is the sound?' Some sounds appear dark while others may seem brighter or warmer colours.

SENSORY - we can describe sounds as gritty, rough, sweet or smooth etc



USING THE IDEAS

Once we have created a map or wheel of ideas we need to be able to create sentences and phrases with them.

This can be difficult and takes a lot of practice. The key thing here is repetition. Firstly try using the ideas and creating phrases and sentences through talking. Have fun putting together ideas and sharing them.

Model this skill a lot as well. The fact that two ideas such as **SKY** and **BLUE** can become an infinite number of sentences.

These can be simple - 'The **sky** is **blue**.'

Or more complex - 'High above the mountain an endless **blue sky** stretched as far as the eye could see.'

Remind the class that beyond the graphic organiser they have created there are more ideas.

Where are these? They may well ask. The answer of course is in their minds. This is wonderfully encouraging. There are always more ideas within the mind. We need to get used to going back and looking.

We cannot ever put all our ideas on a map. This is just the starting point. Look into the mind for more using the skills of associative and divergent thinking. Constantly make new connections.

The key motivator in this scenario is the fact that ideas gathered have come from the individual. The ideas are personal to the learner and mean something to them. Rather than ideas being given, they have been discovered.



CREATING A WORD STEW

In order to develop our ideas we need words. This can be a problem. Some students may not have much vocabulary to work with.

We can only use the language that we know at the time of writing. If we put on our map 'tuneful' as a description of a melodic sound that is what we will use. If we do not know alternative words then we use what we have.

We all know that the key to gaining a more diverse variety of words is reading. The more we read the more words we will witness and the wider our vocabulary will become.

As well as this however, we need to be searching for new words all the time. Becoming word curious. Little things like discovering a new word every day and sharing it with the class. There are always wonderfully rich words to be discovered.

In my experience the class love to hear them.

It is important that I mention the risk of simply bunging in as many long complex words as possible in the writing. We must understand that simply putting new words in to our writing does not, by default, make it 'good'. For example, there is definitely a trend of overusing adjectives in writing. I continually see sentences being over complex and long in an effort to get a good mark. This is missing the point of what writing is all about. It is not painting by numbers. That can lead to generic, monotonous, stock sentences that inspire no-one. Least of all the writer themselves.

In the wonderful book 'The Elements of Style' by William Strunk Jr and E.B White Rule 17 states :

OMIT NEEDLESS WORDS

'Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all sentences short, or avoid all detail and treat subjects in outline, but that every word tell.'

This is wise advice. Words are all about context. I do not subscribe to the idea of a wow word. All language is wonderful. Use words where appropriate. Variety is the key.

Here are a few ideas on how to gather more words on a daily basis to improve the variety of vocabulary within the class. The first is known by all teachers.

READ READ READ READ - as much as possible. I believe there needs to be a time where children are read to, daily. For the pure purpose of listening to a story. Pointing out wonderful words as they come up. Recording them in a special book. Becoming word wise.

Talk to people. When writing and developing ideas encourage an environment of talk. Asking people if they have an alternative word for...etc They may well say no. But it is important to keep talking. As the vocabulary grows it will spread. Through talking!

Use a good thesaurus. The trouble with the 'basic' thesaurus is they lack words. This is counterproductive and can become very dull very quickly.

Use thesaurus apps. You can then use this as a teacher and deliver and discover new words as look at the maps and wheels that are being created. We are pushed for time in the classroom and this is a quick and effective way to build exciting vocabulary.

Set tasks where the discovery of words is paramount. Having a few minutes to find new colour words. Or words that describe movement. Or words that describe stillness.



SOUNDS AND ABSTRACT IMAGERY

We have looked at interpreting sounds with words but there is another way we can generate ideas from what we hear. We can interpret sound visually through lines, shapes and colours.

It is best to use oil pastels for this as they are lovely to use and incredibly expressive. I would strongly advise not using felt tips as they tend to be very one dimensional.

The important thing here is the listener does not draw things. They simply interpret the sound as a line or a shape. If it is the sound of rain they do not draw a raindrop. They may use blue, as the sound of water may suggest that, but they interpret the sound as shapes and lines. Depth of colour is also great to explore.

Once the images have been created you look at it and see what you notice within the painting. A little like looking at clouds.

What can you see within the shapes and colours? The class can do their own or you can swap them around. It is from these observations we can create some beautiful written work.



Here is a poem written from an interpretation of sound using oil pastels.

In this picture I see...

A calm day at the beach
Water as clear as glass
The sun streaming onto the ocean
Water gently lapping against the rocks
Seeping up onto the sand

A rainbow
Standing royally on a hillside
Watching on the world below it
Vivid colours filling the sky like a paint pallet
I couldn't tear my eyes away

Raindrops
Pittering and pattering on to windows
Catching the sun like diamonds
Gushing into streams and rivers
As fast as light

A beautiful bird
With kaleidoscopic plumage
Singing a mellifluous tune
Slicing through the air like a knife
Sailing on clouds



PART 2

MOVEMENT



Here are some of the moves we have tried in the course. The full book with 24 specially composed sounds is available on the write inspired website.

WIGGLY LINES

This is a very popular, fun series of moves that also doubles up as a great way to learn mathematical language.

Imagine the fingers are pencils. As the sound is playing you call out different things to draw in the air. The aim is draw the shapes in time with the music.

Try this sequence. Allow about 4 to 8 beats for each drawing. Vertical lines

Horizontal lines

Circles (vary these - giant circles, tiny circles etc) , Squares,

Any sort of triangle

Perpendicular (use arms for this)

Rectangle

Zig Zag

Wiggly lines - make squiggles in the air - any sort of wiggly line.

When you say Wiggly lines allow the body to become bendy and flexible. This is a great way to ease out tension that may have built up through sitting. It's also great fun and will generate lots of laughter.

Irregular shapes.

Choose one hand to be the starting and finishing point. Hold the finger of that hand in front of you as an imaginary dot.

The other hand will move from the dot and return back in the number sides of the shape you call out.

So a Pentagon would be five lines from the starting dot and back.

Hexagon - six sides

Introduce some of the less familiar ones such as the Nonagon, Decagon and the Dodecahedron.



BEND THOSE KNEES

This is a simple move that is very popular with everyone.

It's a great way to energise the class and get them smiling and laughing.

It also improves beat competency. (The ability to maintain a steady beat.)

As always everyone stands up. Then play the sound.

Everyone starts keeping the beat by bending the knees. You don't want jumping. Just gentle bouncing by bending the knees to the beat. The feet stay on the floor.

Then call out 4 parts of their body to tap with both hands to the beat. For example :
Heads, shoulders, tummy, nose

The class then tap those while calling them out. Standard call and repeat. Then choose 4 more

Heads, knees, shoulders, cheeks.

And the class call back, all the while keeping the beat with their bending knees!



WRITING LETTERS

This is a fantastic way to help reinforce key vocabulary and letter shapes, spellings etc.

Decide on the word you want to focus on. This can be a key word, a difficult spelling, a wonderful new word you have discovered, your own name...anything.

Then with a sound playing slowly write the word in the air with your hand. Use your finger as a pen, or pretend to be holding a pen. Younger ages may like to use a feather.

Then move on and write in the air with your nose. Then move to the elbow.

And finish off with the foot.

Try singing the word as you write



PICKING FRUIT

Imagine you are standing in front of two apple trees. There are apples at three different places. Some high in the trees where you have to stretch to get them. Others in the middle of the trees about waist height. And some lying on the ground around your feet.

You are going to pick eight apples at a time from the different places. You will pick them using your right hand to pick from the left of the body and left hand to pick from the right.

You can call out the different heights.

High (pick 8) Middle (pick 8) Low (pick 8)

Obviously you can jumble the sequence up. This is a great way to stretch the body and get practice in counting in eights.



SLOW STRETCH

This is a very calming stretch.

As the sound is playing reach up to one side as if reaching for something from a high shelf.

Look towards the imaginary thing you are reaching for. Follow your hand with the eyes.

Focus on the movement. Do this very slowly.

When in the stretch hold it for a few seconds and then bring the arm back to the side of the body. Again, very slowly.

Repeat with the other arm.

Its a fabulous way to have a stretch and very calming if that is what is needed.



FLOP

As we go about the day we start to hold tension in our shoulders and necks. This move is very useful to get rid of that tension. It's valuable for you as well so join in.

Simply stand up and feel grounded. Pay attention to the feet on the ground. Just be still for a few seconds.

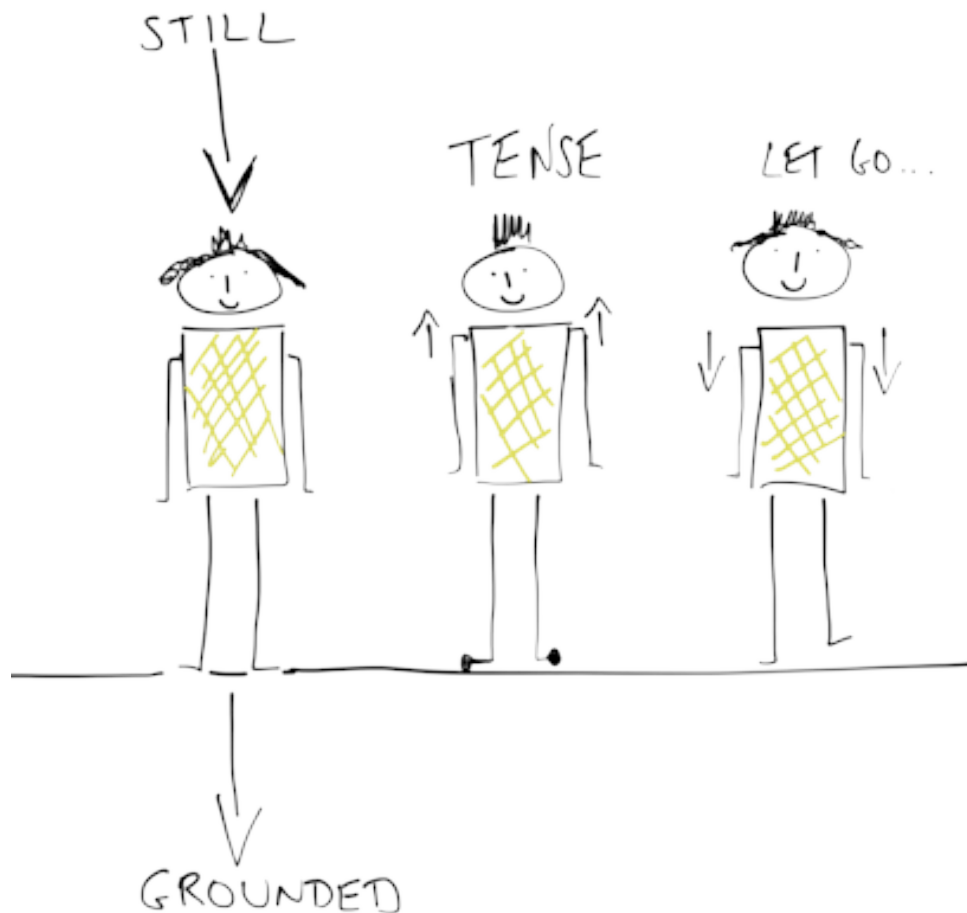
Now you will intentionally tense your muscles.

Pull your shoulders up to the neck, make your hands in to fists, clench the toes.

Hold for about 5 seconds and then let it all go. Just flop. Try letting out a big breath as well. Have a gentle shake during the relaxation phase.

Repeat a few times.

It's reminding the body the difference between tension and relaxation.



PART 3

TIME TO BE STILL



What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is simply paying attention, on purpose, to the present moment. Focussing the attention on what is happening now. The present.

The mind is naturally discursive. It wanders. Mindfulness helps train the mind to be still. To not get drawn and distracted by thoughts of the past and future.

What are the Benefits?

A variety of case studies have demonstrated the following benefits of mindfulness :

Reduction in stress

Better sleep

Happier and healthier relationships

Reduced anxiety

Improved concentration

The following activities can really make a difference in the classroom and lead to a more mindful approach to learning. It is also very beneficial to adults in the school.

THE PAUSE BELL

This is used as a call to mindfulness. Initially children will be asked to simply follow the sound of the bell. To pay attention to it as it changes from audible to inaudible. Following the change in dynamic. Follow the fade out. They move from a place of doing to being. Simply paying attention to the sound of the bell as it fades. After it has faded you return to whatever it was you were doing. It is vital that everyone in the room pauses. This is not done to the class but with them, Remember, it is good for you too.

The Pause bell is a great way to remind children to be mindful.

SOUND

Sounds are played that change. In dynamic, pitch or timbre. Sometimes a mixture of all three. The focus is the sound. Simply be aware of these changes as they happen.

To extend the activity we will use real sounds of the school. Just become still and be aware of the sounds we hear in the moment. What can you hear right now?



VISUALISATION

This is a lovely way to introduce the idea of focus to children. Using the pause bell as a timer we imagine a small feather floating in front of us. As the bell fades the feather floats away.



THOUGHTS AS SAND IN A JAR

This is a great way to show the nature of thoughts in the mind and the nature of busyness. The sand is allowed to settle in the jar of water. Stirring the jar represents thoughts moving around the mind. The more we think and are distracted the more the sand moves. If we never stop, the mind (water) becomes blurred. Mindfulness is like pausing from the stirring. We are not stopping thinking we are simply letting go of the thinking for a while. The water stops, and the sand settles. A clearer mind. This is the purpose of stopping. Being still, Just being.



BREATH

This is one of the key objects of focus in mindfulness. It is perfect, as it is always with us. We do not have to think about breathing. We are always doing it. However, because of this, we are very often not aware of it,

Bringing our attention to the breath helps us discover what is happening in that moment. Our breath can change - sometimes it will be shallow, fast, deep, slow etc.

Place a hand on the tummy and feel the movement of the breath. This up and down sensation happens when we breath. Discuss the science of breathing. The nature of the diaphragm.

We will use a variety of techniques to help children understand what they are focussing on. To help them not think about the breathing - just be aware of it.

These will include :

1. Moving our hands back and forth with the breath
2. Stretching our fingers with the breath
3. Placing a hand on the tummy and feeling the rise and fall of the breath. Counting the up and the down.

BREATHING LINES

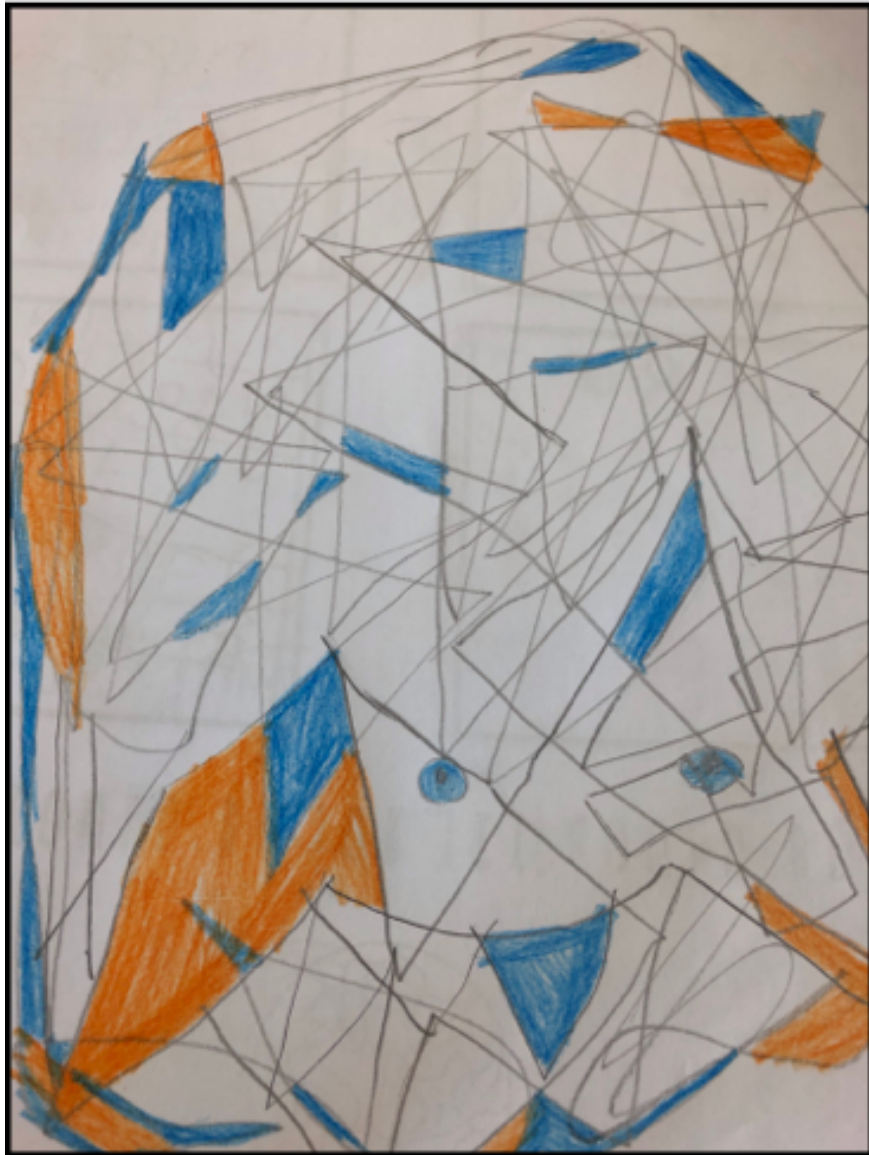
This is a lovely way to connect with the breath. It also builds a fabulous visual resource of calmness.

First connect with the breath. Sit still and find where you can feel the sensation of breathing. Some people feel it in the tummy, others at the nostrils and others in the chest. It doesn't matter, as long as you can feel the rise and fall of the in-breath and the out-breath.

Using a blank piece of paper and a pencil simply draw lines, following the in-breath and the out-breath. It doesn't matter where the lines go. Link the movement of the breath to the movement of the pencil. It is wonderfully calming.



Once the lines have been drawn you can colour them in with 2 colours. During this have a drone playing. There are some free ones at writeinspired.co.uk. The resulting piece is a visual representation of focus itself.





I hope you enjoyed the day course and this book is helpful to you.

If you would like some in house CPD and see Write Inspired in action in your school then please get in touch - phil@writeinspired.co.uk

Good luck with your creative endeavours!

