

Let's write

A Monster Book

Outline for Primary Schools

This is a provisional document. Please send feedback to rosen.trevithick@gmail.com.

Aim: To create a monster book using input from children everywhere.

Objective: Invite schools and members of the public to contribute ideas using structured weekly activities. I will choose the most suitable responses to these exercises for inclusion in the book, which will be a short chapter book published in paperback and eBook.

Duration: Project begins on January 6th 2014 and runs for ten weeks, with a two week break for half term. Schools can participate for as many or as few weeks as they choose.

Target audience: The project is primarily aimed at KS2 children. However, some of the simpler exercises will be suitable for KS1. The project is designed to appeal to both motivated and reluctant writers. The 'get published' aspect will appeal to children who are already keen writers, whilst the theme (monsters) and genres (humour/action & adventure) have been chosen to engage less motivated writers, by providing a light-hearted hook.

Process: The project will take place at <http://ourmonsterbook.blogspot.co.uk/>

I will set weekly activities that encourage creativity.

Each Monday, I will set a task. Throughout the week, I will post resources to help with the task. Every Friday I will collect responses by email.

I will use the children's best ideas to arrive at a detailed story plan.

Over half term, I will begin writing a first draft using our plan and extracts of children's work.

During the second half of term, I will set activities such as drawing illustrations, designing a cover, write a blurb etc.

Facilities Required: The teacher running the project will need access to the Internet. You will be able to print the resources that I upload, so a class Internet computer is not essential. I will collect responses to activities by email. If possible, pupils should be encouraged to type up their work. If that's not an option, I recommend teachers collect in handwritten work and choose a small selection of work to type up and send. Most tasks ask for no more than 150 words. Access to a scanner will be necessary for schools taking part in the illustration activities.

Cost: The book will be published as a paperback and eBook and made available to buy for the price of a typical book of its length. There will be no obligation to buy. There will be no other costs to take part.

Contact: I need a minimum number of schools for the project to go ahead. Please register your interest by contacting rosen.trevithick@gmail.com

Take a look at the activities overleaf and decide which week's you'd like to follow.

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Pre-Term – Getting monster-ready

The following are optional exercises that can be set before Christmas, to prepare classes for the project.

Children are invited to draw monsters to decorate the website. <http://ourmonsterbook.blogspot.co.uk/>

Background reading could include:

- *The Troll Trap* by Rosen Trevithick – ISBN: 1482064898

- *The BFG* by Roald Dahl – ISBN: 0141346426

- *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler – ISBN: 0333710932

Week 1 (January 6th – 10th) – Designing our monster species

Task: Design a Monster Species

I will post about what makes an effective monster, using examples by Roald Dahl, JK Rowling and my own work.

I will propose creating one or two species of monster for our book.

I will explain that sketching and brainstorming are good ways to get ideas down and will recommend this intermediary step for people doing this week's task.

Either alone, in groups or as a class, design a species of monster. What do your monsters look like, smell like and sound like? Where do they live? What do they eat? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Write your description in 150 words or less.

Discussion: Monster Smells

I will post an article about paying attention to all the senses when creating characters, using smell as an example. I will start a discussion and children will be welcome to leave comments on the blog and/or discuss in class.

Discussion: Monster Strengths and Weaknesses

I will post an article generating a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses we will give our monster species.

Deadline: Please email responses to the species creation task by Friday 10th January.

Week 2 (January 13th to 17th) – Designing some heroes

I'll announce, with the help of a poll if necessary, which species will be used in our monster book. I will post examples of some of the best ideas and discuss what makes them brilliant. I'll explain that many of the ideas that didn't make it into the book have great potential and children may want to keep them for telling their own stories in the future.

Task: Describe Your Hero

This week we will be designing heroes. Will our heroes be human, from another species of monster or good individuals from our monster species? I will post some pointers on creating a good hero.

In 150 words or less, describe your hero. Is your hero a boy or a girl? Is your hero human or from another species? What does your hero look like? What makes him or her a hero? How old is your hero? Does he or she have a sidekick?

Deadline: Please email responses to the hero creation task by Friday 17th January.

Week 3 (January 20th to 24th) – Designing some baddies

I'll choose a hero or group of heroes, to be used in the story. If I can't decide, I may run a poll. I'll give feedback on some of the ideas sent.

Task: Describe a Baddie

Having designed our monster species, I'll ask children to create individual characters belonging to that species. I will discuss creating individual character traits, roles within a monster hierarchy, etc. Children will be set the task of describing a monster character in 150 words or less.

In 150 words or less, describe your member of our monster species. What is its name? Is it a boy, girl or does nobody know? What's its job or role in life? How old is it? We already decided what our species looks, smells and sounds like in general but does your character have any specific features?

Discussion: How to Name Characters

I will post about tried and tested ways to create realistic or funny character names.

Discussion: Similes

I will introduce using imagery to paint a vivid picture of a monster.

Discussion: Boundaries

Often asking children to write about disgusting monsters generates a wide spectrum of ideas. Whilst many are brilliant, some can be too gory or too rude to be suitable. Should this arise, I will write a post generating a discussion about boundaries.

Deadline: Please email responses to the monster description task by Friday 24th January.

Week 4 (January 27th to 31st) – Choosing a Setting

I will reveal which monsters will be used in the book, using a poll if necessary.

Task: Choosing a setting.

I will post about the importance of setting a scene, paying attention to location, time of year, time period etc.

In 150 words or less, set the scene for the first chapter of our monster book. Where is it set? What time period is it set in (the past, present or future)? What time of year is it? What's the weather like? What does the landscape look like?

Discussion: Colours

What's more effective: 'red flowers with green leaves' or 'scarlet flowers with emerald leaves'? I will post about descriptive words.

Deadline: Please email responses to the scene setting task by Friday 31st January.

Week 5 (February 3rd to 7th) – Creating Conflict

I will post some of the most suitable responses to the setting the scene exercise. Children will be asked if any of the openings inspire any ideas about what happens next.

Task: Creating conflict.

Now that we know a bit more about our characters, we can decide what it is that our baddies do to offend or threaten our heroes. I will talk the children through creating conflict, using examples from popular fiction.

I will post detailed character notes for every character designed so far.

I will explain that our book needs some action. However, heroes don't just attack for no reason. That's the kind of thing baddies do. Heroes in monster books defend themselves and other people from terrible danger.

Using the characters we've already created, consider what the baddies might do to threaten our heroes or other innocent people. Jot down your ideas and then post them on our monster book website.

Deadline: Please post conflict ideas on the blog [throughout the week](#), so that we can discuss them in real time.

Week 6 (February 10th to 14th) – Resolutions and Endings

I will summarise the most suitable conflicts raised in week 5.

Task: I will remind children about the importance of beginning, middle and end and stress that the ending is very important. Our heroes need to work out how they will stop the baddies.

Take one of the conflicts listed, and jot down how our heroes could rescue the situation. Post them on our monster book website.

Deadline: Please post conflict ideas on the blog throughout the week, so that we can discuss them in real time.

Homework: Children will be asked to go away and think of ideas for the title, cover and illustrations over half term.

Extended Half Term – I Shall be Drafting the Book

Because half term varies from region to region, there will be a two week break in formal activities.

From February 14th onwards, I will be write the first draft of the book, using our detailed plan and extracts from the children's work. I will post chapters online as and when they're completed.

At this stage, some children might want to write their own stories. This should be encouraged and I'd love to hear from classes and individuals about any spin-off work.

I will explain that the first draft may contain the odd spelling mistake, grammatical error or continuity problems, but that that's okay. The important thing is to get the story down.

Children will be invited to point out mistakes and make surface level suggestions for improvement. I will stress the importance of re-drafting.

Week 7 (March 3rd to 7th) – Drawing Illustrations

Some of the chapters will have been drafted and the rest will have been planned in detail.

Task: Illustration Drawing

Children will be asked to draw illustrations, perhaps with a little guidance from a professional children's illustrator.

Choose a chapter from the book. Draw a black and white illustration, following guidance.

Task: Suggest a Title

Children will be asked to suggest a title for the book. There will be a place to post suggestions on the blog itself.

Deadline: Please email illustrations by Friday 7th March, preferably scanned.

Week 8 (March 10th to 14th) – Designing a Cover and Writing a Blurb

I will choose the most suitable titles and ask children to vote on what to call the book.

This week there will be a variety of tasks to choose from, depending on whether you want to develop art, design, IT or writing.

Task: Design a cover

I will post examples of children's book covers and ask children to look in their school libraries for inspiration.

I will show them examples of paperback sleeves laid out flat for printing.

Between us, we will choose a layout, font etc. Children will be invited to design artwork.

Either:

- Sketch a rough, colour layout for the book cover. It can be rough because the final layout will be put together later using a computer. On separate paper, draw or paint any artwork needed for your cover. This should be neat, as the chosen artwork may be scanned and used.

or

- Create a cover using a computer.

Task: Write a blurb

I will write an article on creating a blurb, using examples from popular children's books.

Write a blurb for the book. It must be between 80 and 120 words long.

Deadline: Please email cover designs and blurbs by Friday 14th March.

Week 9 (March 17th to 21st) – The editing process

I will reveal the cover and title.

I will ask a professional editor to look at the first few chapters and upload some examples of the editor's notes. We will discuss the role of the editor and why redrafting is important.

There will be no formal tasks this week. Teachers may wish to consider pairing up their pupils and asking them to take it in turns to play writer/editor.

Week 10 (March 24th to 28th) – What happens next

I will explain the publishing process, including the role of the proof copy.

I will describe what happens when a customer orders a copy of the book online.

After Week 10 (29th March onwards) - Are we nearly there yet?

I will up keep the blog updated about progress, blogging photos of the proof copy etc.

Eventually, I will post the news that the book is available to buy, and details of how to get copies. At a rough guess, I'd say our monster book will be available to buy shortly after the Easter holidays.

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