

Aims

- To consider the text-types used in RE
- To identify characteristics of these text-types
- To recognise the benefits of using a sequence in RE for the teaching of writing

4.1 Text-types in RE

This section uses the ideas from *Literacy across the curriculum* (DfEE 0235/2001) Module 2: Writing non-fiction, and contextualises it within RE.

The main categories of non-fiction writing (with examples) are:

- *Instruction – give instructions to godparents about their part in a baptism service*
- *Recount – a visit to a local mosque*
- *Explanation – explain why Jews observe the Shabbat*
- *Information – present the results of an investigation into how newspapers present Islam; use PowerPoint to demonstrate use of bullet points*
- *Persuasion – seek support for an ethical stance in a letter to a newspaper*
- *Discursive writing – discuss a variety of Christian attitudes to divorce in a magazine article*
- *Analysis – explore some Hindu attitudes to caste and social status in an essay*
- *Evaluation – make a judgement about the strengths and weaknesses of an argument.*

Writing in RE also consists of narratives as pupils create, for example, their own myths or parables; poetry, to express intense emotion; and drama, to dramatise the stories of the faiths they are studying and to work through contentious social issues through role-play.

What types of writing do you set in RE?

Use the following table, to reflect on the written tasks that you currently set.

Give examples of tasks that you have set recently that match any of the purposes below.

Purpose for writing	Example
■ to instruct	
■ to recount	
■ to explain	
■ to inform	
■ to persuade	
■ to discuss	
■ to analyse	
■ to evaluate	
■ to arouse emotion in the reader (which may be involved in any of the above) but here consider myth, verse or drama	

Variety of forms to write for a range of purposes

A variety of forms and purposes will feature in a scheme of work, including:

- a biographical account of the life of a key figure
- booklets, pamphlets, brochures, guidebooks
- captions, labels, titles
- charters, petitions, posters, placards
- comic strips/storyboards
- dialogue
- diaries, journals, logs
- essays
- instructions
- leading article/comment column
- magazine articles
- narratives
- news stories (from newspaper or television)
- notes, lists, mind-maps, flow charts
- notices
- scripts for plays
- poetry
- postcards, letters
- speech/thought bubbles
- summaries
- surveys, questionnaires
- tables, diagrams.

When setting a piece of writing, there is not just the type of writing to consider, but also the audience and purpose.

A sense of audience – for whom are pupils asked to write?

Having a sense of audience helps to define the style and language of a piece of written work. Consider some of the intended audiences for tasks you currently set.

Here are some ideas from other teachers as to the pupils' intended audiences:

- Pupils write for themselves – e.g. rough notes, a report of a visit, a concept map
- Pupils write for their peers – e.g. questions for others to ask or answer, instructions
- Pupils write for other known people – e.g. a letter of thanks after a visit, writing for other younger pupils
- Pupils write for an unknown, generalised audience – e.g. campaigning literature
- Pupils write in a particular role for an imaginary, specific audience – e.g. writing as a hajji reporting back to the community
- Pupils write for the teacher for assessment purposes, which may include any of the above.

It is important that pupils know the purpose and audience for their writing as this affects the choices they must make.

4.2 Preparing to write

Each text-type has its own characteristics – see *Literacy across the curriculum* (DfEE 0235/2001) Module 2 – and these characteristics need to be considered when setting any written task in RE. To achieve the higher levels in the eight-level scale, pupils are required to write discursive, persuasive, explanatory and analytical texts. However, as pupils move through Key Stage 3, text-types become less clear-cut, for example pupils will need to inform before they can persuade, explain, analyse or discuss. This section focuses on explanations.

Explain that the Key Stage 3 National Strategy proposes a sequence for teaching writing which ensures pupils move to independence with confidence.

A sequence for teaching writing

- *Establish clear aims*
- *Provide an example*
- *Explore the features of the text*
- *Define the conventions*
- *Scaffold first attempts*
- *Encourage independent writing*
- *Evaluate*

In section 3 there was a shared reading activity. The purpose then was to understand the writer's point of view. Another aim of shared reading is to show pupils the features of a text prior to them writing something similar. Look at the version of a text that follows, as it has been annotated to show the features of an explanatory text.

Why did Jesus of Nazareth come to be known as Jesus 'Christ'?

The word 'Christ' is Greek for 'anointed one', which means someone who is specially chosen by God. When a King or Queen is crowned in Britain, they are anointed with oil to show that they have been chosen as the new ruler. At the time of Jesus' birth, the Jews had been waiting for many years for a 'Christ', another word for 'Messiah'. They believed that the Messiah would rescue them from the cruel rule of the Roman Empire, and make Israel into a great nation once again, as King David had done in the past. The key question to be addressed is: what was it about Jesus which stood out so strongly to his followers that led them to believe that he was the Christ (i.e. chosen by God)? We need to look for evidence from the Gospels, the stories in the Bible about Jesus' life.

The birth stories about Jesus are very important, because they include many symbols that suggest that the baby Jesus had been sent from God. For many Christians this was no ordinary baby: the Angel Gabriel announces the birth; the star is a puzzling feature; the Magi are extraordinary visitors with very significant gifts.

Jesus called God his 'Father'. As a 12-year-old he got 'lost' in Jerusalem and he was found in his 'Father's House', teaching the High Priests. What is more, at his baptism God the Father spoke to him from the clouds, saying 'This is my beloved son ...'. These stories seem to show that Jesus had a special relationship with his 'Father in Heaven'. At one stage he called God 'Abba' which means 'Dad', an informal method of address.

Jesus seems to have had a unique relationship with his 'Father'. The Gospels express the idea that he could heal people with God's power, and the way he taught showed that God was very close at hand.

The real proof for Christians, though, is found in the stories of his crucifixion and resurrection. How could any normal human being pray for forgiveness for his executioners, 'Father, forgive them'? How could a dead man rise again to life? And what could have persuaded his disciples to go out themselves, and risk dying in order to preach about their faith in this dead religious prophet? Many Christians would conclude that Jesus must have been sent by God.

To those who knew Jesus, the evidence was clear: he was not just a preacher from Nazareth, another holy man with attitude, but he was special, sent by God. Therefore many chose not just to follow him, but to worship him as God. His followers gave him many titles, including Son of God, Saviour, and King of Heaven. By the way Jesus spoke and acted it seemed that he must be God's own special representative on Earth: this is why he became known as Jesus 'Christ'.

- *Introduction (setting the scene, key terminology, the intention of the writer)*

- *Tenses: present tense except when referring to past events*

- *Quotation marks to highlight significant terms.*

- *In the main body of the writing, the case is made*

- *Each paragraph contains a single point expressed in a topic sentence*

- *Each point is explained and supported by evidence*

- *Reflective style, e.g. 'Jesus seems ...'; 'Many Christians would conclude ...'*

- *Use of colon to introduce explanatory list; semi-colons to separate items in the list*

- *Connectives, e.g. 'what is more' for emphasis and to link the idea to previous sentence*

- *Use of specialist vocabulary: e.g. symbols, crucifixion, resurrection;*

- *Use of rhetorical questions to support argument*

- *Conclusion (summing up the arguments)*

- *Note that this is not a descriptive piece in which the life of Jesus is told – it explains why Jesus is recognised by Christians as the Messiah.*

The table below sets out the work a teacher did prior to asking pupils to write an explanation of why Siddhartha Gautama became known as the Buddha.

A sequence for teaching the writing of an analysis with Year 9	
Establish clear aims	<p>The pupils are asked at the end of a module on Buddhism to write a piece explaining why Siddhartha Gautama became known as the Buddha.</p> <p>Subject learning objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To draw together evidence already studied which points towards why Siddhartha came to be known as the Buddha ■ To help pupils come to mature conclusions about the significance of these events <p>Literacy objectives, Year 9</p> <p>Writing to analyse, review, comment</p> <p>16 present a balanced analysis of a situation, text, issue or set of ideas, taking into account a range of evidence and opinions</p> <p>17 cite specific and relevant textual evidence to justify critical judgements about texts.</p>
Provide an example	<p>The teacher shows the pupils how to examine a similar essay from a different module which they had completed the previous term (see Jesus of Nazareth text on p.46).</p>
Explore the features of the text	<p>These features are made explicit to pupils (as identified in column 2 of Jesus of Nazareth text on p.46): an overview, to introduce the piece; a series of arguments with supportive evidence, to make the case; and a conclusion, to summarise.</p>
Define the conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use of the third person ■ use of present tense for statements applicable to now, past tense for events in the past ■ mostly active voice ■ connectives to link ideas ■ precise choice of vocabulary, particularly use of nouns and verbs with few adjectives and adverbs.
Scaffold first attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ suggested structure and features ■ list of specialised vocabulary necessary ■ useful connectives. <p>Different pupils may require scaffolding directed to their individual needs.</p> <p>What other features may need to be included in other scaffolds?</p>
Encourage independent writing	<p>Pupils complete their writing using the model, identifying grammatical features and scaffolding as appropriate.</p>
Evaluate	<p>A plenary session enables pupils to articulate what was successful in their analysis and reflect on the most useful aspects of the scaffolding. Effective examples are read and discussed.</p>

Reflect on how writing the piece about Buddha links with analysing the passage about Jesus.

- *Why was the passage about Jesus a useful model for the Buddha piece?*
- *How did the teacher use the sequence for teaching writing in order to ensure a successful outcome?*

Here are some points made by other teachers.

- It has the same purpose, i.e. to explain.
- It has the expected structure, from setting the intention to conclusion.
- It has the same sentence structures.
- It has points supported by relevant evidence.
- It uses appropriate subject-specific vocabulary.

The table below gives further support through suggestions about structure and connectives.

Year 9 Buddhism assessment task		
Literacy target: analytical essay writing		
<p>Explain why Siddhartha Gautama came to be known as 'The Buddha'.</p> <p>Task: to write a superbly crafted essay on the Buddha</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You may use some of the sentence starters below to structure your work, writing in paragraphs. ■ You could use some of the words from the 'word bank' and the 'connectives', backing up your ideas with evidence to create a more developed style. ■ Try to write as if you are arguing a case, not just retelling a story (explain, don't narrate). 		
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Buddhism is ...</p> <p>The word 'Buddha' ...</p> <p>Possible topic sentences starters</p> <p>Symbolic stories about Siddhartha's birth ...</p> <p>The events of the four sights are important because ...</p> <p>His experience as an ascetic ... but ...</p> <p>Seated under a Bodhi tree ...</p> <p>The story of his temptation shows ...</p> <p>Through the practice of meditation ...</p> <p>In gaining enlightenment he ...</p> <p>Conclusion</p> <p>His enlightenment shows ...</p> <p>I think Siddhartha was ... because ...</p>	<p>Connectives</p> <p>To add more: also, as well as, moreover, in addition</p> <p>To contrast: whereas, though, unlike, on the other hand, but</p> <p>To emphasise: in particular, above all, especially, indeed, etc.</p> <p>To introduce evidence: for example, when, the story of ... shows that ... On one occasion ...</p> <p>To indicate cause and effect: because, so, since</p>	<p>Word bank</p> <p>Awakened one, enlightenment, title, renunciation, testing, the body, freeing the spirit, atman, realisation, middle way, wisdom, meditation, past lives</p> <p>Asita, mother, Queen Mahamaya, King Suddhodhana, Mara, Rahula, holyman, princess, sadhu</p> <p>symbolic, lotus flowers, prophecy, seer, archery, martial arts, one grain of rice</p> <p>luxury, old age, sickness, death, suffering, compassion, search, hardship, temptation, imagination, pride, greed, fear, ignorance, desire, overcoming, reality, truth, knowledge</p>

It is important to note that the two topics are far enough removed for the pupils to have to find their own content. By supporting the pupils in handling the text-type, the teacher ensures that they can focus on managing the content appropriately rather than having to deal with all aspects.

A key feature of preparing pupils to write is modelling, where the teacher writes a section of text, explaining choices as he or she goes along. Modelling is not about taking suggestions from the pupils, but makes explicit and vocal the choices a writer makes during the construction of a text.

4.3 **Deciding on changes to your teaching**

Activity

Consider a piece of writing completed recently by one of your pupils. Use the table below to reflect on how you supported the writing and how you might change your approach in the future.

A sequence for teaching the writing of:

Choose a piece of writing that you have set recently. Use the grid below to identify:

- ways in which you have incorporated the teaching of writing into your teaching of RE
- how you could improve the writing tasks that you ask pupils to do in RE.

The task set: _____ Aimed at levels: _____

The sequence	What I did	What I could do next time
Establish clear aims		
Provide an example – modelling		
Explore the features of the text		
Define the conventions		
Scaffold first attempts		
Encourage independent writing		
Evaluate		

4.4 Conclusion

Further support is available in *Literacy across the curriculum* (DfEE, 0235/2001) Module 2: Writing non-fiction; Module 3: Writing style; Module 4: Spelling and vocabulary.

A favourable context for writing:

- 1 *establishes both the purpose and the audience of the writing*
- 2 *ensures that writers have something to say*
- 3 *gives writers opportunities to develop, sharpen and revise ideas*
- 4 *encourages collaboration during planning, drafting and proofreading*
- 5 *gives pupils access to reference material to support writing, e.g. word banks, dictionaries, thesauruses*
- 6 *provides feedback, both during and after writing, on writing strengths and on ways to improve weaknesses.*