

# Writing and reading workshops:

An alternative to the current organizational orthodoxy of units of work in junior secondary English



## Preliminary Task

Please read the handout  
2 sides:



1. Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott*
2. Some writing tasks that could be generated from the poem

# **Writing and reading workshops: An alternative to the current organizational orthodoxy of units of work in junior secondary English**

ETAQ Seminar @ Corinda SHS –11 March 2017

***Tectonic Shifts: Changes and challenges for  
assessment and learning in English***

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# From the session abstract

As an alternative (to the current orthodoxy of units of work), this session will outline how English classes can be run as **writing and reading workshops**.

The system to be described is an adaptation of ideas originally encountered by the presenter in Nancie Atwell's 1987 book *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents*.

# **Writing and reading workshops:**

**An alternative to the current organizational  
orthodoxy of units of work in junior secondary  
English**

**A**

**provocation**

# Session outline

The way things used to be

The way things are now

**The way things might be**

**The way  
things used  
to be**

# A bit of history:

organization of high school English programs:  
the norm

## When I started teaching:

- Compartmentalized
- Mon – *comprehension*,  
Tues – *novel*, Wed –  
*poetry* etc
- Reflected sections in  
external exam papers

# A bit of history:

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external exam papers

## Since the mid 1970s:

- Integrated units of work
- Organized around a focus:  
a text (e.g. novel), literary  
form, theme, project etc
- Assessment tasks  
completed in final phase

**The way  
things are  
now**

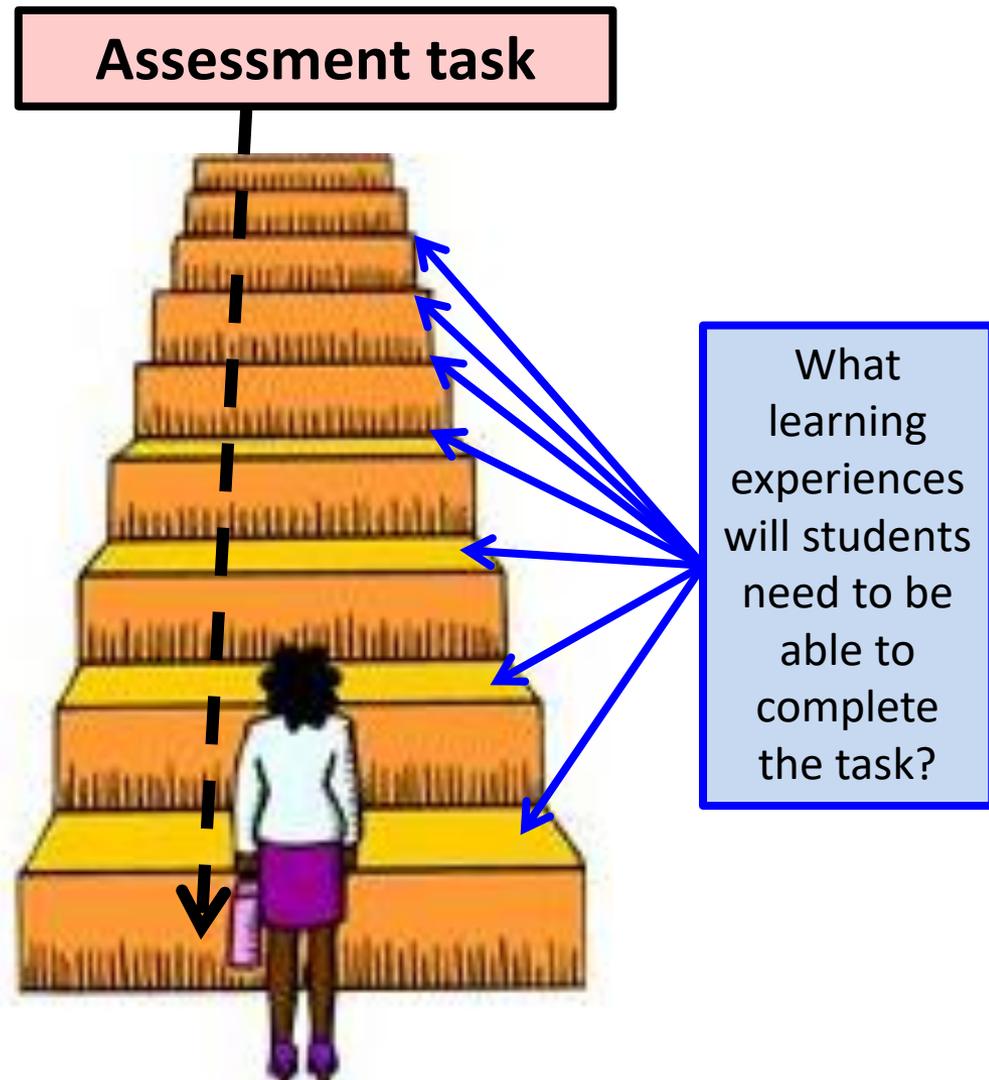
# A possible outline year plan

Semester 1									Semester 2								
Term 1			Term 2			Term 3			Term 4								
Unit 1			Unit 2			Unit 3			Unit 4			Unit 5			Unit 6		
Focus (ID) 1			Focus (ID) 2			Focus (ID) 3			Focus (ID) 4			Focus (ID) 5			Focus (ID) 6		
Phases			Phases			Phases			Phases			Phases			Phases		
O	E	S	O	E	S	O	E	S	O	E	S	O	E	S	O	E	S
Assessment task 1			Assessment task 2			Assessment task 3			Assessment task 4			Assessment task 5			Assessment task 6		

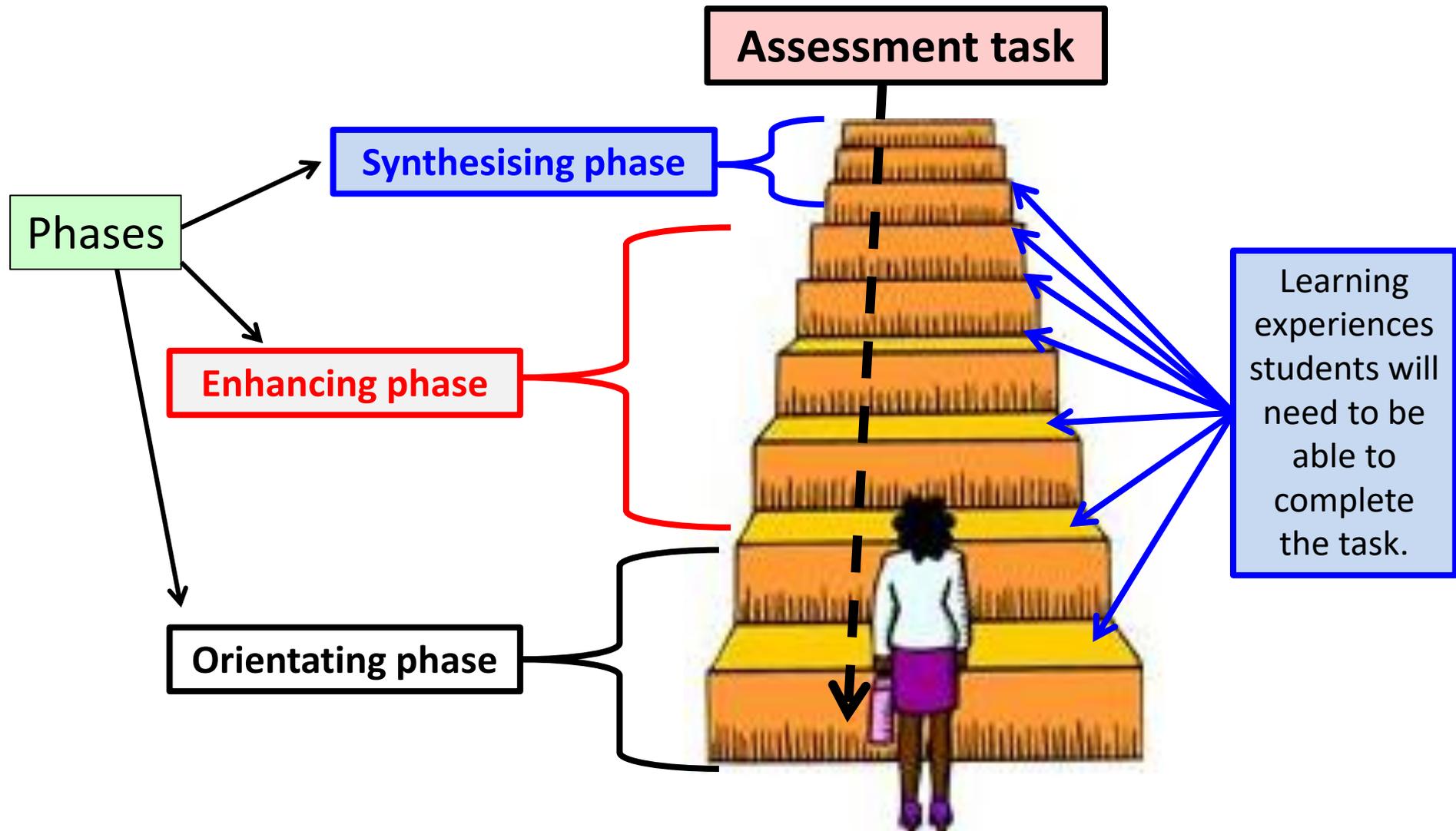
1. 6 x units of 5 or 6 weeks duration each
2. ID = integrating device (e.g. a core text), c.f. "focus"
3. Phases/stages: O = Orientating, E = Enhancing, S = Synthesising
4. Assessment tasks usually completed during final synthesising phase
5. Unit could produce > 1 assessment task

# Backward Mapping

- What do I want students to **know and be able to do** by the end of this unit?
- What will need to be **explicitly taught** to enable students to demonstrate this knowledge & skill in the culminating assessment task?



# Unit organization



# Evaluating the status quo: the integrated unit of work model

<b>P - Pluses</b>	<b>M - Minuses</b>	<b>I - Interesting</b>



Initially, please confer with a neighbour to compile a PMI.

# Edward de Bono's CoRT Thinking Techniques

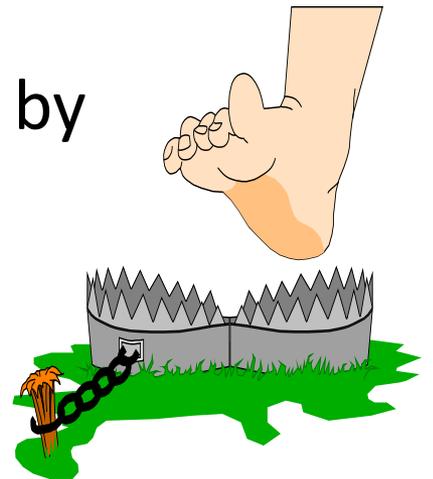
<b>PMI</b>	Plus, Minus, Interesting
<b>CAF</b>	Consider All factors
<b>FIP</b>	First Important Priorities
<b>AGO</b>	Aims, Goals, Objectives
<b>APC</b>	Alternatives, Possibilities, Choices
<b>OPV</b>	Other People's Views
<b>C&amp;S</b>	Consequence & Sequel

CoRt = Cognitive Research Trust

# The current 'unit of work' orthodoxy has much to recommend it

## But - some Perceived Problems

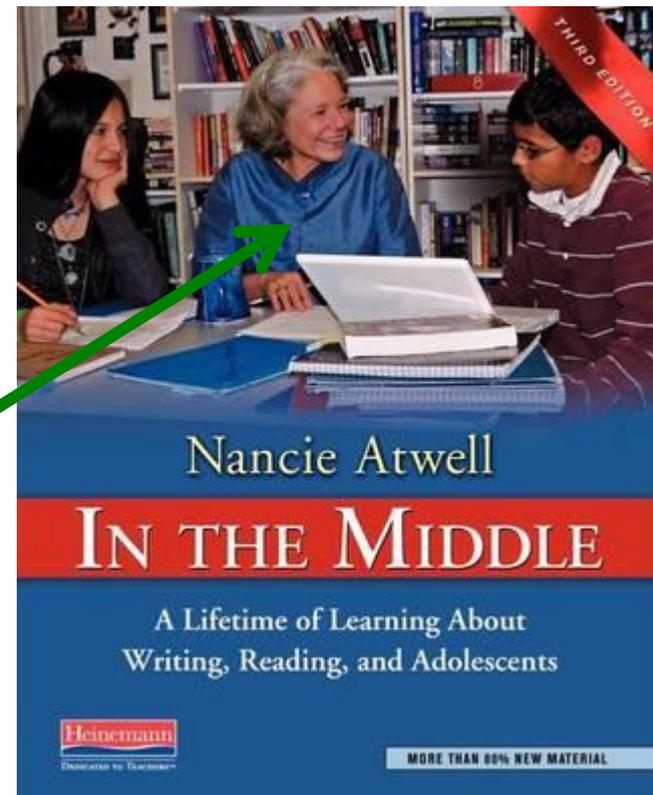
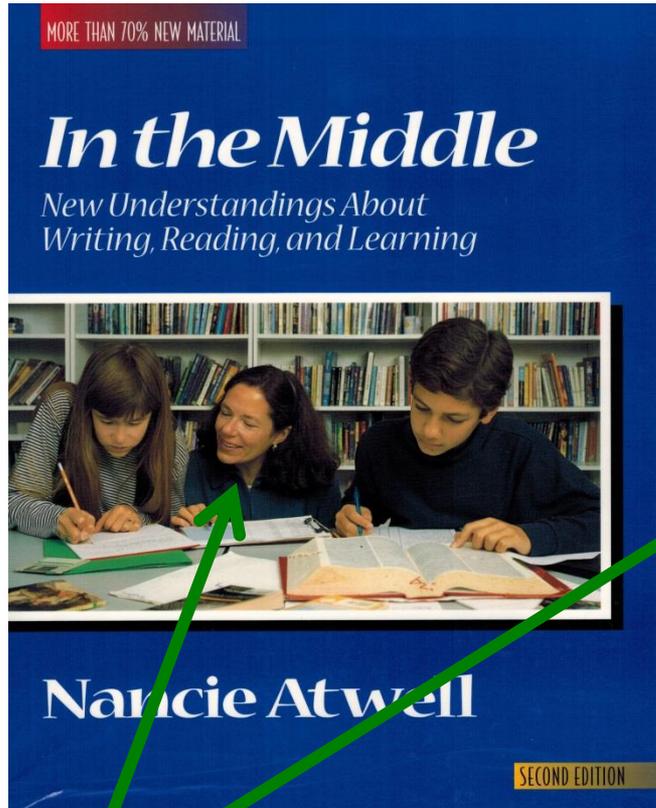
- marking comes all at once
- marking often makes little contribution to student learning – and it's boring if student work is similar!
- topics/genres/materials usually selected by teacher - limited choice for students
- minimal writing output required



**The way  
things might  
be**

# Nancie Atwell

workshop approaches to reading & writing



The same woman – received a Global Teacher Award in 2015

# Process writing

## 7 conditions for effective writing

1. Time
2. Choice
3. Response
4. Demonstration
5. Expectations
6. Room structure
7. Evaluation



US writing guru, the late **Donald Graves** – a key figure in process writing

# Learning to Write, Reading to Learn

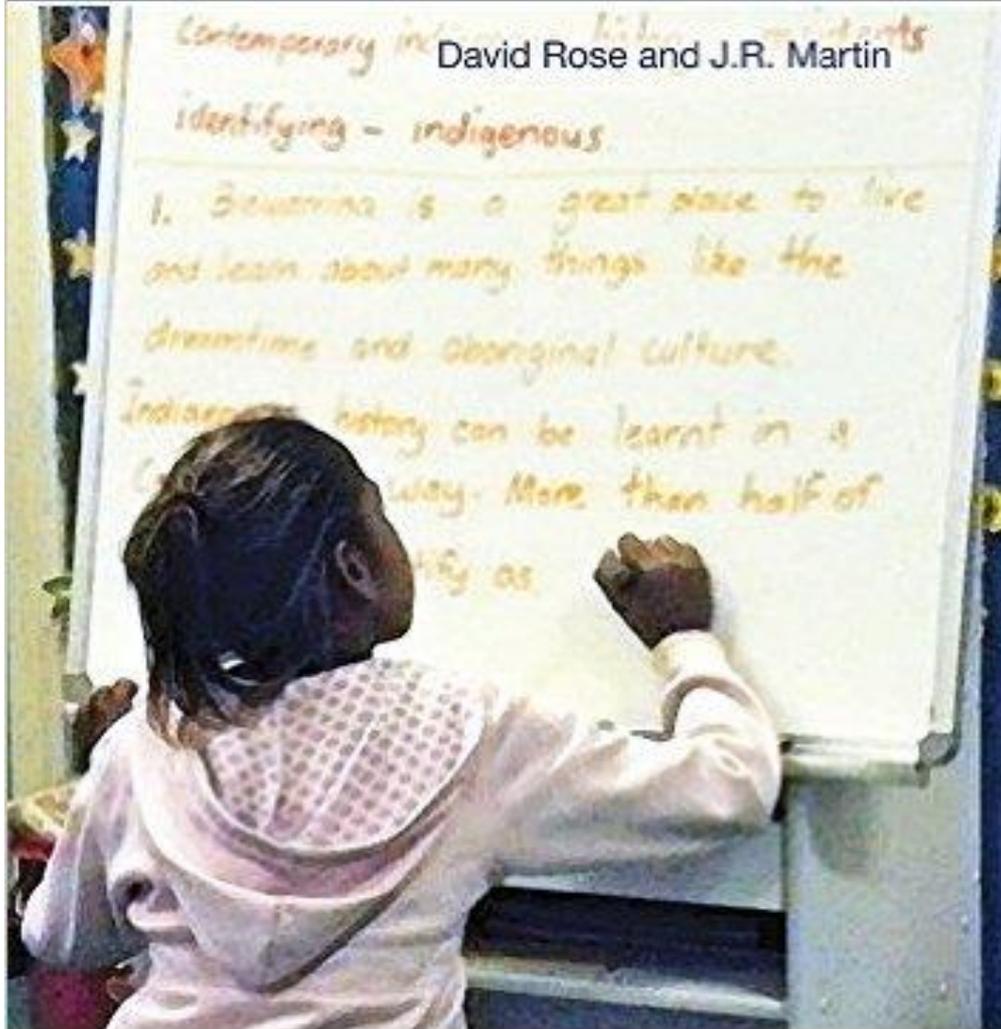
Genre, Knowledge and Pedagogy  
in the Sydney School

David Rose and J.R. Martin

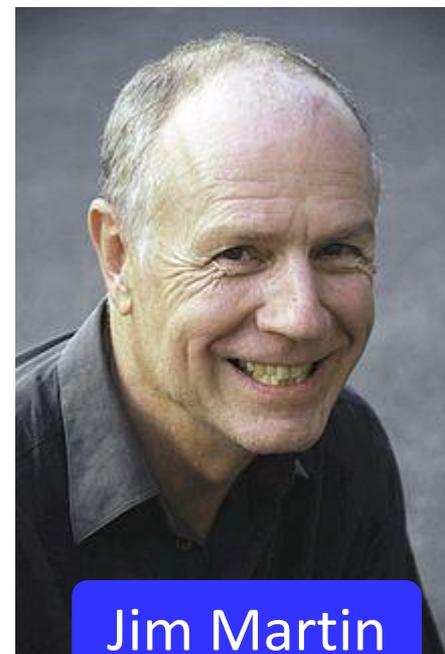
Contemporary indigenous history - students  
identifying - indigenous

1. Bourkina is a great place to live  
and learn about many things like the  
dreamtime and aboriginal culture.

Indigenous history can be learnt in a  
different way. More than half of  
the population identify as



David Rose



Jim Martin

*From Learning to write, reading to learn,*  
Rose & Martin, 2012, pp 29-30

By the early 1980s Australian infants and primary school education had been strongly influenced by what was known at the time as progressive education (now constructivism), with what was probably a stronger uptake than anywhere else in the world. This was reflected in its wholehearted adoption of progressive literacy programs which had been developed in America and imported under the banners of **Process Writing** (Graves, e.g. 1983) and Whole Language (Goodman, e.g. 1986).

From *Learning to write, reading to learn*,  
Rose & Martin, 2012, p 30

Australian implementations of process writing/whole language programs emphasized the importance of making time for writing, preferably every day.

They encouraged students to work on whole texts, which they would re-draft through 'conferencing' with peers and their teacher, working towards a culminative 'publication' stage.

Teachers were encouraged to let students write on topics of their own choice, in whatever form they chose, . . .

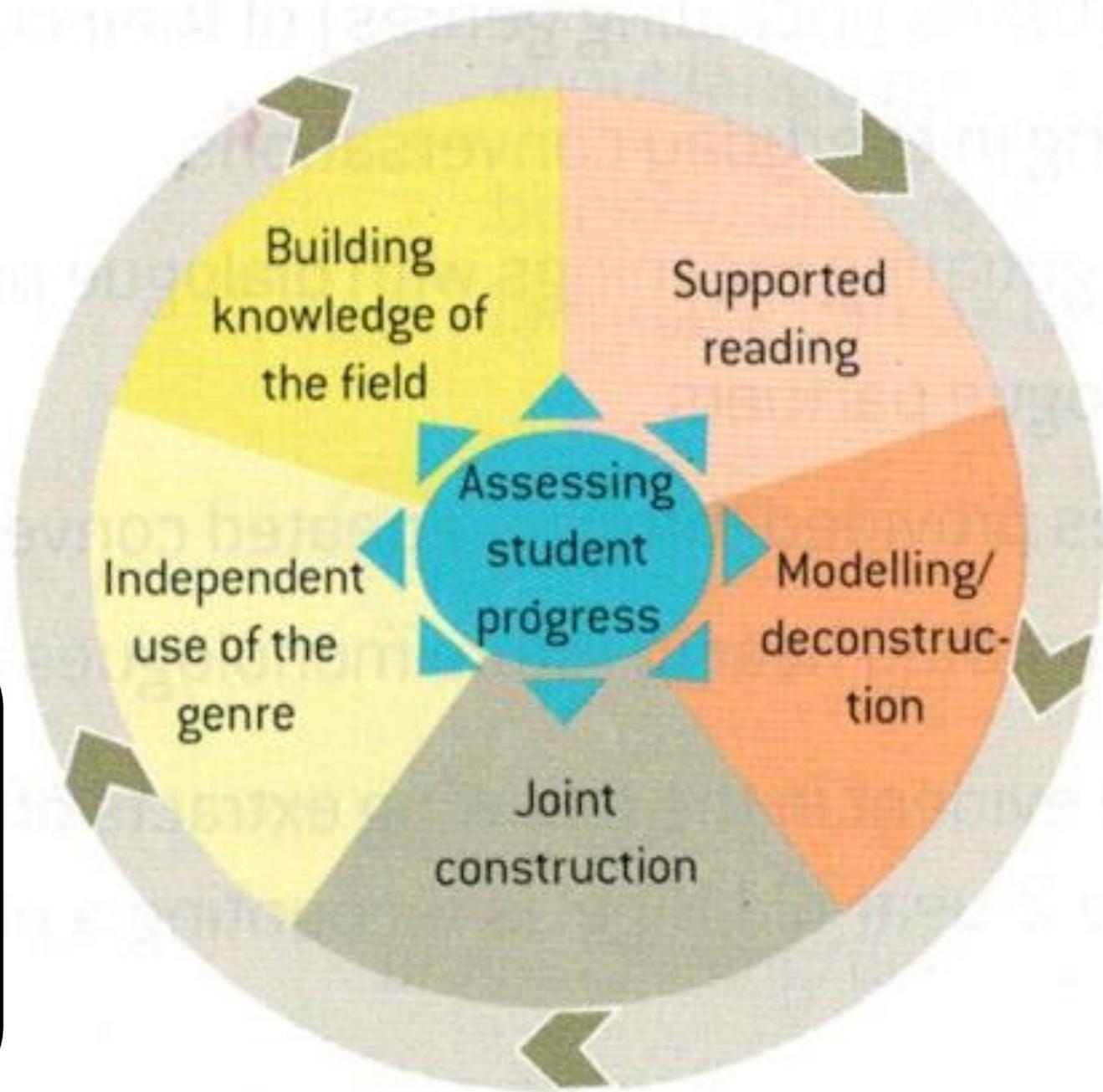
This pedagogy . . . places teachers in a non-authoritative facilitating role.

Halliday's apt term for progressive pedagogy of this kind is 'benevolent inertia'.

**Genre approach  
teaching-  
learning cycle**

diagram from  
Derewianka &  
Jones, *Teaching  
Language in  
Context* p 52

Involves **explicit  
teaching** of  
**structure** and  
**language  
features** of  
target **genres**



# Writing Workshop Features

1. significant choice for students (tasks selected from a list of suggestions or proposed)
2. regular submission of drafts but no set dates
3. Feedback on drafts but grade on unit output
4. Significant amount of class time for actual writing
5. elastic output requirement
6. Teacher receives drafts for editing a few at a time

# A dilemma?

I'm a strong proponent of:

- explicit teaching
- KAL (**K**nowledge **A**bout Language - genres & functional grammar)

**BUT**

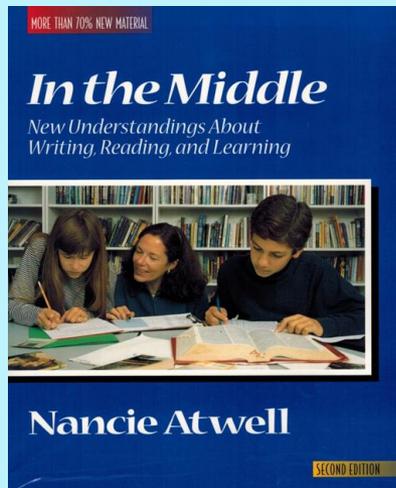
I can see some positive features in process writing

**Can the two be married in some way?**



# My main adaptation of Atwell's system

Suggestions made but students allowed free choice of topics & genres



Students selected tasks from a list of suggestions related to a core narrative text



**Common feature:**  
Students to be working on a writing project at all times –  
not the same task for all

# Organizational Pattern

- **Intro unit** of 2 weeks at start of term then -
- **Writing Workshop** - 2 lessons per week, e.g. Mondays & Thursdays
- **Reading Workshop** - 1 lesson per week, e.g. Fridays



# Some core narrative texts



Alfred Noyes' poem  
*The Highwayman*



Script of a  
*Get Smart* episode



Will Ogilvie's poem  
*The Death of Ben Hall*



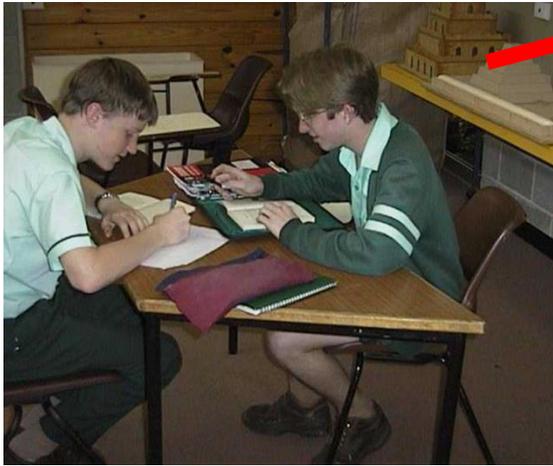
Tennyson's poem  
*The Lady of Shalott*

# A variety of possible writing tasks on this occasion based on *The Lady of Shalott*

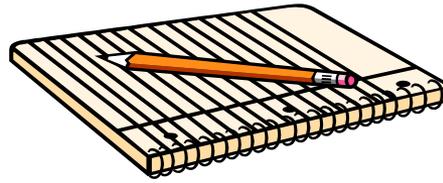
- News report
- Editorial
- Short story
- Feature article
- Business letter
- Formal report
- Drama script
- Diary entries

- Real estate ad
- Job advertisement
- Job application
- Meeting minutes
- Sports report
- Travel feature
- Review
- Historical narrative

**imaginative re-creation**



Content conference



Self editing



Filing completed pieces

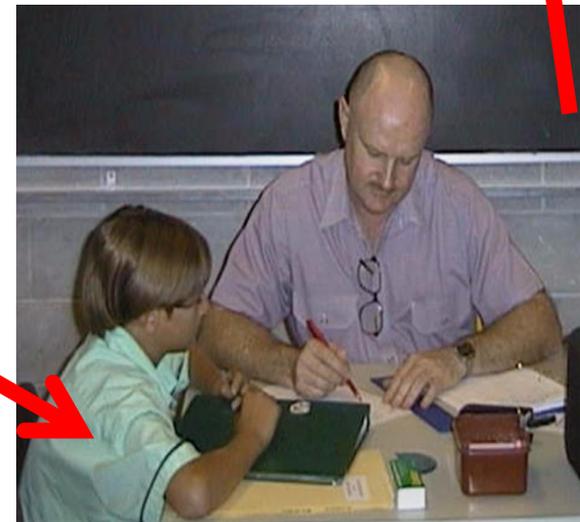
# WRITING CYCLE



Submitting draft for teacher editing



Working on drafts

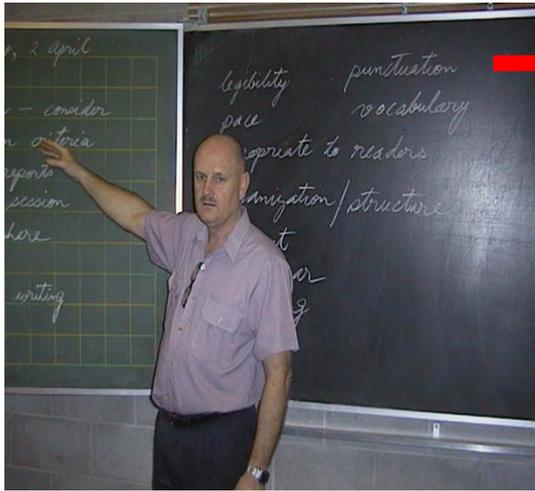


Editing conference

# Writing workshop daily plan

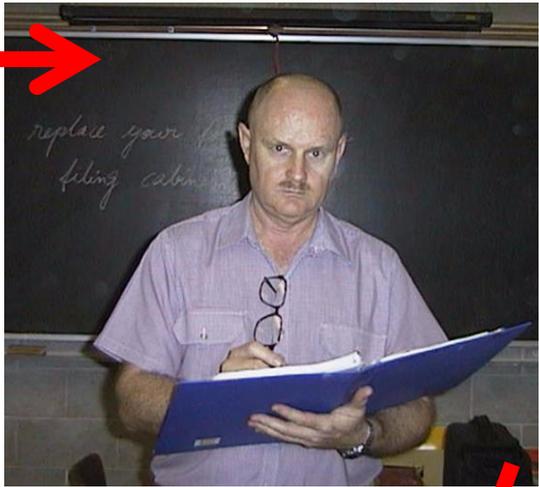
Mini lesson	15-20 mins
Status reports	5 mins
Writing session	35-40 mins
Group share	5 mins





Mini lesson

# WRITING WORKSHOP LESSON FORMAT



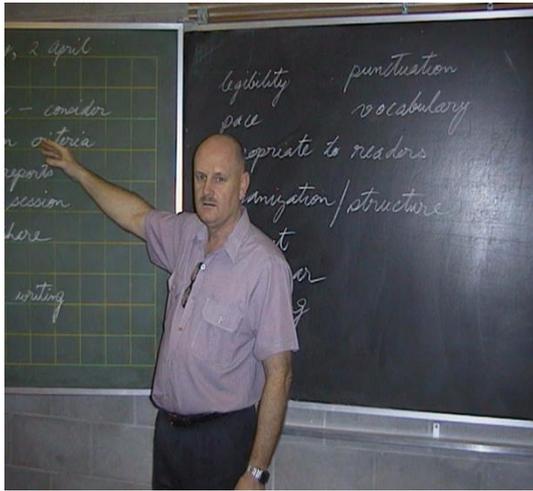
Status reports



Group share

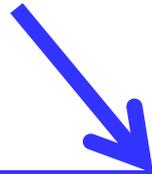


Writing session



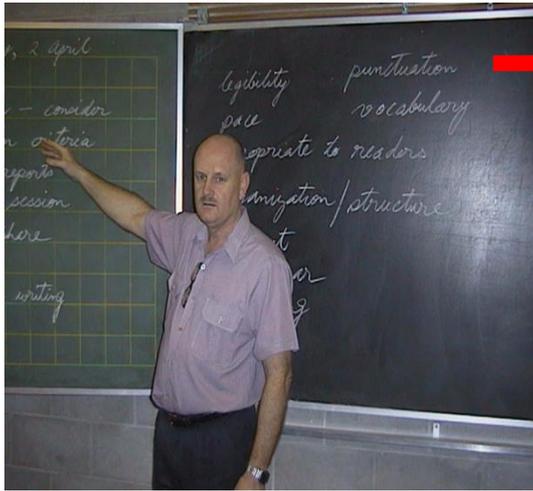
# WRITING WORKSHOP LESSON FORMAT

Mini lesson



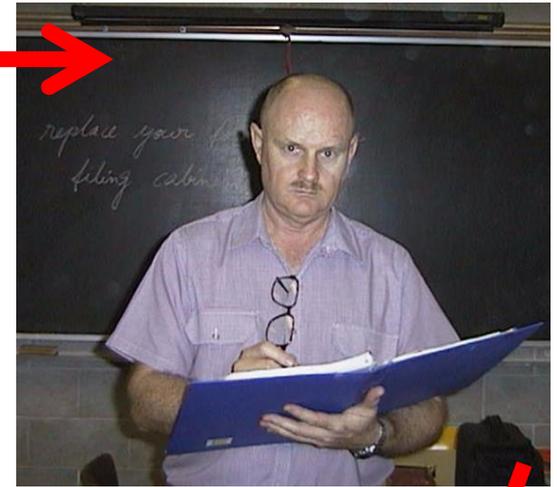
Included:

- Consideration of teacher-written (and other) genre exemplars: analysis & discussion of structure & language features
- Explicit teaching re issues evident in student drafts: grammar, spelling, punctuation



Mini lesson

# WRITING WORKSHOP LESSON FORMAT



Status reports

1 on 1 teacher-student editing conferences (discussion of drafts) conducted during this stage



Writing session

# WRITING CYCLE

Teacher records issues discussed – a manageable # each time

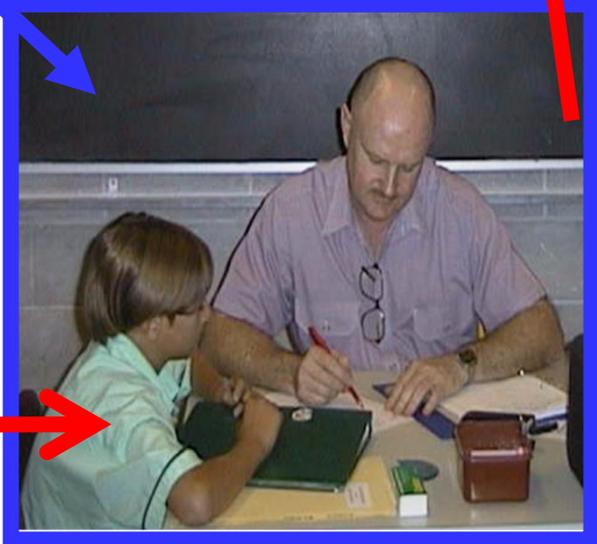
Form in student folders to record issues for which they should now be responsible



Filing completed pieces



Submitting draft for teacher editing



Editing conference

# Common school genres

Stories

Histories

Explanations

Procedures

Reports

Arguments

Text Responses

Table 3.5: Genres and stages

	genre	purpose	stages
Stories	recount	recounting events	Orientation Record of events
	narrative	resolving a complication in a story	Orientation Complication Resolution
	exemplum	judging character or behaviour in a story	Orientation Incident Interpretation
	anecdote	sharing an emotional reaction in a story	Orientation Remarkable event Reaction
Histories	autobiographical recount	recounting life events	Orientation Record of stages
	biographical recount	recounting life stages	Orientation Record of stages
	historical recount	recounting historical events	Background Record of stages
	historical account	explaining historical events	Background Account of stages
Explanations	sequential explanation	explaining a sequence	Phenomenon Explanation
	conditional explanation	alternative causes and effects	Phenomenon Explanation
	factorial explanation	explaining multiple causes	Phenomenon: outcome Explanation: factors
	consequential explanation	explaining multiple effects	Phenomenon: cause Explanation: consq.
Procedures	procedure	how to do experiments and observations	Purpose Equipment Steps
	procedural recount	recounting experiments and observations	Purpose Method Results
Reports	descriptive report	classifying and describing a phenomenon	Classification Description
	classifying report	classifying and describing types of phenomena	Classification Description: types
	compositional report	describing parts of wholes	Classification Description: parts
Arguments	exposition	arguing for a point of view	Thesis Arguments Reiteration
	discussion	discussing two or more points of view	Issue Sides Resolution
Text Responses	review	evaluating a literary, visual or musical text	Context Description of text Judgement
	interpretation	interpreting the message of a text	Evaluation Synopsis of text Reaffirmation
	critical response	challenging the message of a text	Evaluation Deconstruction Challenge

*Learning to write,  
reading to learn,  
Rose & Martin,  
2012, p 130*

# A map of school genres

Arguments

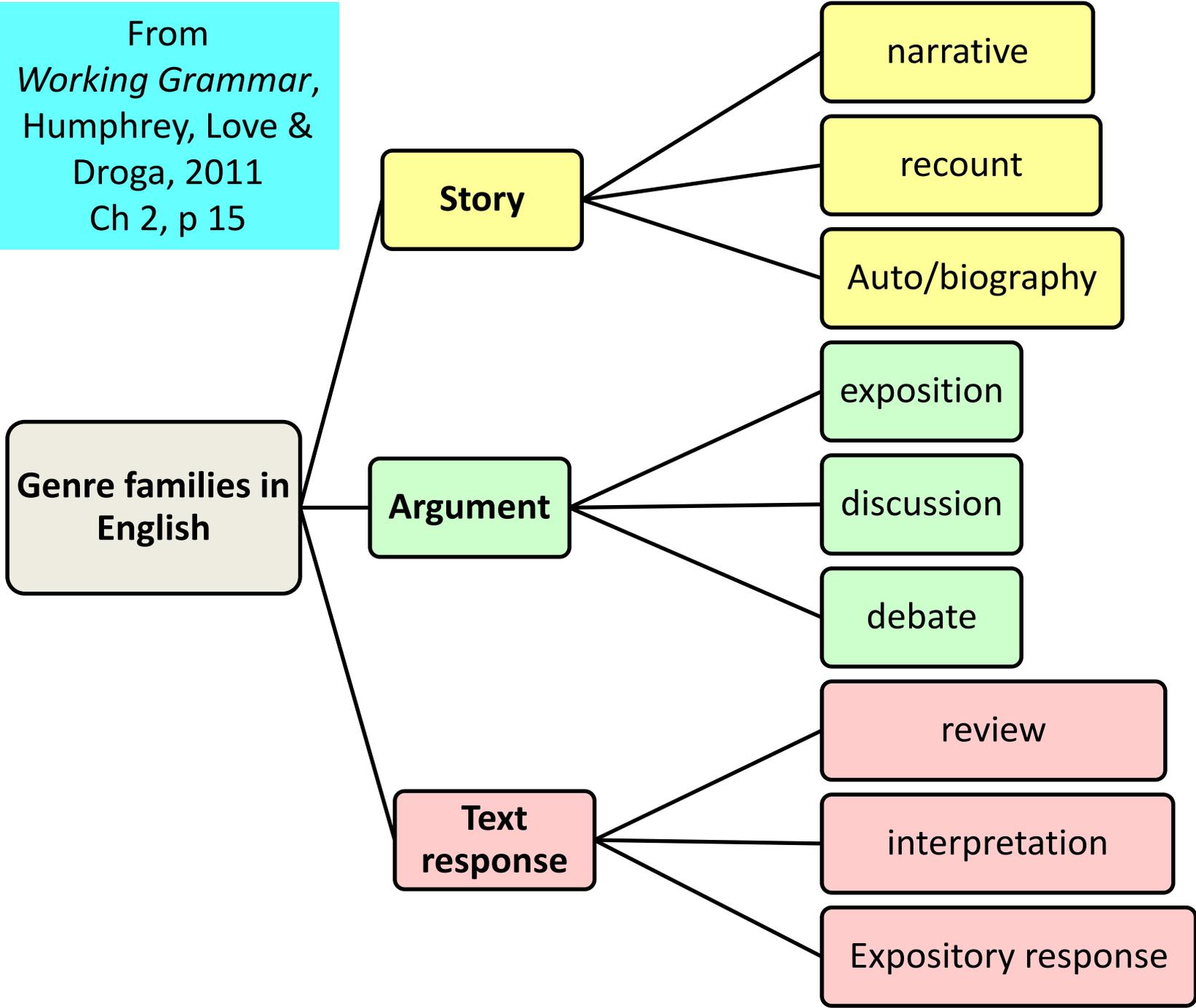
Stages

Arguments	<b>exposition</b>	arguing for a point of view	Thesis Arguments Reiteration
	<b>discussion</b>	discussing two or more points of view	Issue Sides Resolution
Text Responses	<b>review</b>	evaluating a literary, visual or musical text	Context Description of text Judgement
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	<b>critical response</b>	challenging the message of a text	Evaluation Deconstruction Challenge

Text Responses

From *Learning to write, reading to learn*,  
Rose & Martin, 2012, p 130

From  
*Working Grammar*,  
Humphrey, Love &  
Droga, 2011  
Ch 2, p 15



**Story**

narrative

recount

Auto/biography

**Argument**

exposition

discussion

debate

**Genre families in English**

**Text response**

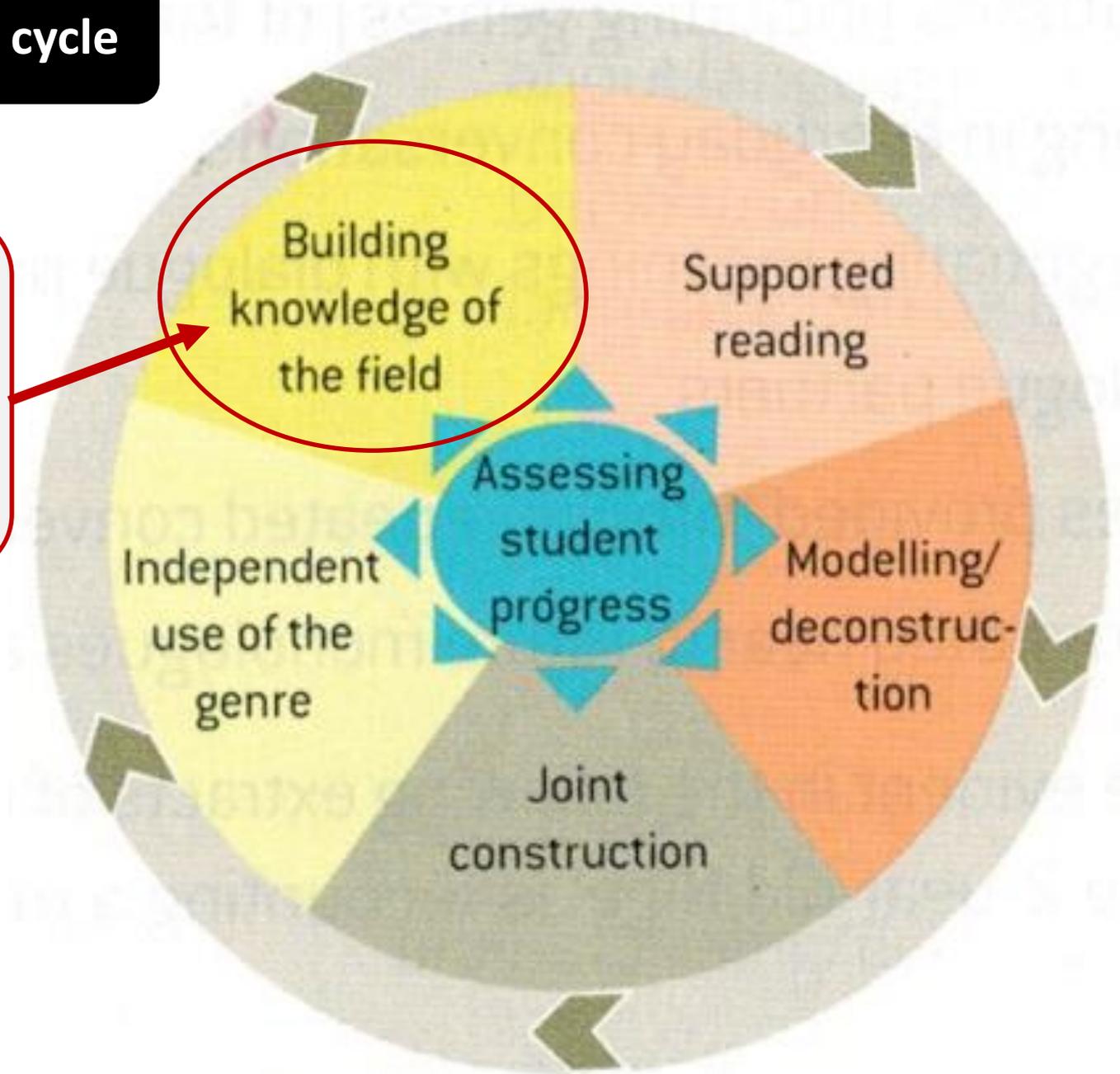
review

interpretation

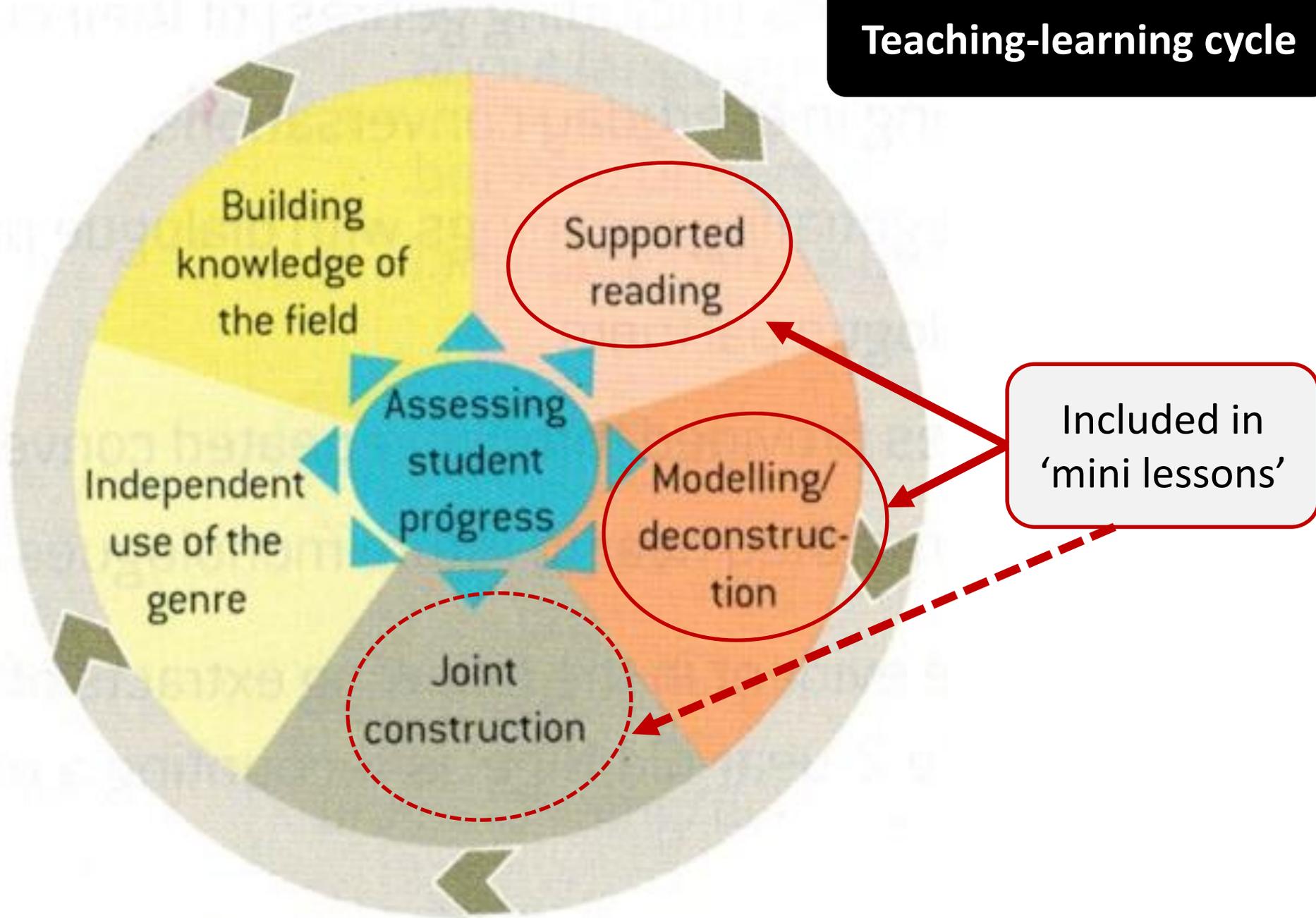
Expository response

# Teaching-learning cycle

The core narrative text provides much of the subject matter



# Teaching-learning cycle



# Accompanying **reading** workshop

- **Intro unit** of 2 weeks at start of term then -
- **Writing Workshop** - 2 lessons per week, e.g. Mondays & Thursdays
- **Reading Workshop** - 1 lesson per week, e.g. Fridays



# Reading workshop lesson format

## Mini lesson

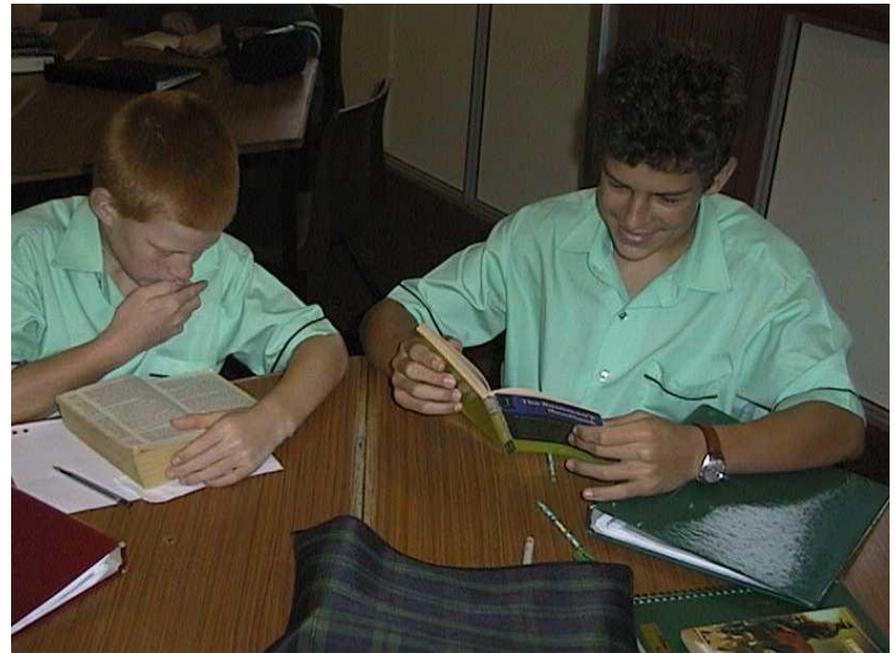
40 -50 minutes

- Teacher-directed reading & discussion of short texts

## Workshop session

20-30 minutes

- Individual reading of self-selected books
- Response journal writing



# Reading workshop lesson format

## Mini lesson

40 -50 minutes

- Teacher-directed reading & discussion of short texts

## Workshop session

20-30 minutes

- Individual reading of self-selected books
- Response journal writing

Texts used here would mainly relate to the core narrative text, e.g.:

- *The Lady of Shalott*
- *The Death of Ben Hall*
- *The Highwayman*
- *Get Smart* script

# Homework was standard

## From **writing workshop** lessons

- Continue writing - work on own writing project



## From **reading workshop** lessons

- Continue reading self-selected book
- Write weekly entry in a Reading Response Journal





**Questions  
for  
clarification  
?**

# Evaluating the workshop procedures that I've outlined

<b>P - Pluses</b>	<b>M - Minuses</b>	<b>I - Interesting</b>



Again, please initially confer with a neighbour to compile a PMI.

# From one of my current UQ students

I generally loved English at school! I think my favourite units included narratives, and writing and performing our own drama scripts (Romeo & Juliet). I loved any chance I had to be creative and/or politicised. A memorable oral presentation from school was one I did in Grade 10 or 11 about refugee rights. This was shortly after one more horrific decision by the Australia government about asylum seekers and **I remember feeling good about writing something which I was passionate about.**

# Further adaptation

**Possible ways to combine the explicit teaching of genres with the productive features of the workshop approach?**

- Writing workshop units to focus on specific genres or families of genres
- A series of conventional units focusing on selected genres followed by a writing workshop unit in which students could choose genres which have previously been taught

An illustration of a classroom scene. A male teacher in a white shirt and green tie stands at the front, pointing towards the right. He is holding a red folder. Two female students are seated at desks in the foreground. One student is looking at a book, and the other is looking towards the teacher. A large blue thought bubble is positioned in the center of the scene, containing text. A large red speech bubble is on the right side of the image, containing a list of items and a question mark.

Hmm – marrying  
explicit teaching of  
genres with positive  
aspects of process  
writing

**Almost done.**

Any final:

- questions,
- comments,
- discussion

?



# How do we learn to do stuff?

Is anyone here reasonably good at a sport or can play a musical instrument?

What are the factors that contribute to competence in such things?

In groups, do a quick 'brainstorm'.



# How to be good at sport etc

- Natural talent
- Motivation
- Experience of success
- Practice: time, effort, technique
- Coaching: instruction, advice, feedback, setting training tasks
- Watching experts
- Accessing resources: reading, watching films etc
- Actual participation: competition experience



What applies to learning to write effectively?

# How to get good at writing

- Natural talent
- Motivation
- Experience of success
- **Practice**: time, effort, technique
- Coaching: **instruction**, advice, **feedback**, setting training tasks
- **Watching experts**
- Accessing resources: reading, watching films etc
- Actual **participation**: competition experience



# How to get good at writing

- **Practice** makes perfect →

Students need to do lots of writing

- Coaching: **instruction**, advice,  
**feedback**

Features of target genres need to be explicitly taught

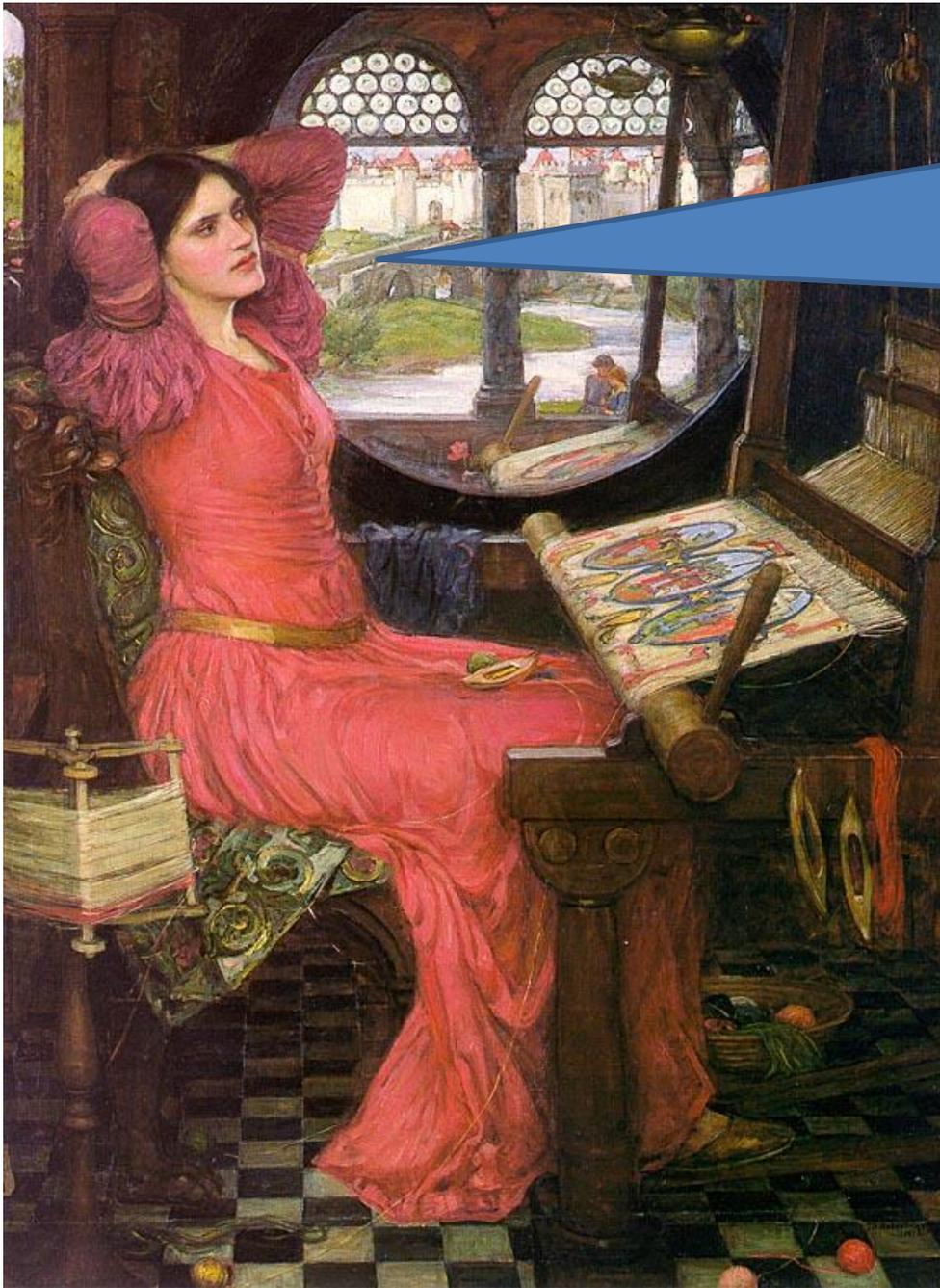
- **Watching experts**

Students need useful feedback on their efforts

- Actual **participation**:  
competition experience

Models of effective writing should be analysed & discussed

Provide opportunities for students to publish their writing



Consider these bits of texts  
generated from Lord  
Tennyson's poem about me.

"I am half sick of shadows"  
John William Waterhouse, 1916

# Newspaper news report



## Corpse disturbs royal party

Festivities at King Arthur's palace were disturbed last night when a boat containing the dead body of a beautiful young woman mysteriously turned up at the nearby river dock.

The body is thought to be that of Lady Judith Percy of Shalott but a positive identification has yet to be made.

# Newspaper editorial



## **Action needed to suppress witchcraft**

The recent mysterious death of the Lady of Shalott should be ringing alarm bells about the threat of witchcraft in the kingdom. Surgeons at the Royal Infirmary found no signs of injury on the body and no indications that the deceased was suffering from any known disease. Accordingly, the Camelot Coroner's Court had no option but to return a verdict of death by supernatural causes.

Usually expositions

# Letter to the editor



## Witchcraft panic opposed

I found your recent editorial arguing for a crack-down on suspected witches profoundly disturbing. This is not, as you might suppose, because I agree with your reading of the situation and am fearful of the power of witchcraft, but rather because I am sure that many innocent people will suffer unjustly if your call is heeded by the authorities.

Usually expositions

# Short story



As he trotted down the road beside the river, between yellow fields where sheaves of newly harvested barley stood in the sunshine, Sir Lancelot was unaware that he was being observed. With his mind firmly fixed on his destination of Camelot and the feast that would be held that night in King Arthur's palace, he gave little thought to the small grey stone castle on the Island of Shalott in the middle of the stream.

# Police report

1. At 9:15 pm on the evening of Tuesday 14 September a report was received at the Camelot City Watch House that a boat containing the body of a young woman had been seen at the river wharf near the royal palace. Constable John Armstrong and I were detailed to attend to the incident and we immediately proceeded to the riverside docks area.





# Drama script



**King:** Well, Lancelot, what was the cause of all the commotion?

**Lancelot:** A mysterious death, Sire. An open boat had turned up at the strand dock. Apparently it had just drifted down river with the current; there were no oars to be seen. In it, lying on her back in a composed posture was a young woman in an expensive looking snowy white gown. There was no obvious sign of injury or sickness but she was quite dead.

# Real estate ad



## **Four towered castle & private island**

Situated on its own picturesque island in the beautiful River Wye just five miles upstream from down town Camelot, the Castle of Shalott is the ideal country estate. It would suit a feudal lord wishing to expand his existing landholdings or perhaps even a Round Table Knight seeking the peace and seclusion of country life after strenuous years spent in the quest for the Holy Grail.



# Minutes of a meeting

**Opening:** The meeting was declared open at 6:30 pm with Head Witch Grizelda in the chair.

**Attendance and Apologies:** Thirteen members were in attendance as recorded on the accompanying roll. An apology was recorded for Weird Sister Winnifred who was recovering from a scald sustained while dropping the liver of a blaspheming Jew into her cauldron.



# Some narrative possibilities

1. A **prose version** of the narrative of the poem, ie a **short story**
2. **Short story** version of the poem with a different ending
3. **Short story** of events preceding the action of the poem – the back story  
Imaginative re-creation
4. **Short story** with similar themes: love, jealousy, betrayal, crime, justice, violent death – but differences in plot, characters, setting
5. The story related from a **different narrative viewpoint**: Tim the ostler, Bess's father or sister
6. A version with the highwayman and Bess portrayed negatively