

Whole class teaching using OHT

How should English teachers at Key Stage 3 improve standards of writing? What is the most effective resource when working through that magic sequence for teaching writing that the Literacy Strategy promotes? And how can we ensure that specific objectives at word, sentence and whole text level are clearly addressed in whole class, interactive teaching?

The use of the OHT or electronic whiteboard to display a limited quantity of a specific text type is the ideal medium through which to address those pressing questions. It's not just the bright light or the square image on a large screen that seems to focus the attention of a class. It's that manageable, shared focus that works. Shared reading of a text that the whole class digest together on screen is a powerfully engaging task. . One text can satisfy many demands – but the teacher can narrow the objective for the lesson. And that is just what the Strategy recommend.

Let me give you just one simple example – and there are many, many more. The students are working on persuasive writing. The teacher shows them an OHT that is an enlarged copy of one of those charity captions from the daily newspapers. The teacher has masked the key emotive words, but there is enough to read for the students to identify the purpose of the text, and even guess its intended audience. The student task, in pairs, is to supply the missing words. The pairs work quickly to re-read the text to fill in the gaps. One of the students is chosen, OHT or whiteboard pen in hand, as scribe, and the pairs make their suggestions for those missing words. One by one the original words are revealed. The teacher encourages the students to compare their words with the actual words, and gradually, the force of the persuasive words emerges. The word “emotive” arises – it's necessary and helpful to the discussion. Then the teacher draws the students' attention to the sentences used in that text –and so on. The text is shared – its features uncovered named and marked. A separate list of features is made on a flip chart to reinforce them. Teacher and class are now ready to begin the task of writing their own text – teacher revising the key features with the students, then modelling the task at first before sharing the writing with them. The students will move to independent writing with confidence.

Economical. Practical. Engaging. Focused work on a manageable piece of text. The text can be a straight photocopy from a magazine (picture and text), hand written by a student or a computer printed page. The OHT or electronic whiteboard has to be one of the most effective ways of teaching literacy.

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