

Process Writing Scheme: Travel Writing for Creative Writing Coursework: “Pies and Prejudice”

A class of 16 students aged between 16 and 19, targeting grades E to C in AS Level Language participated in a series of 6 lessons introducing travel writing (as an alternative to editorial, autobiographical or advice writing) for a potential piece of ENGB2 coursework. There are 4 boys and 12 girls in the group, from a range of social, cultural, economic and educational backgrounds (including those who have been out of education for some time, are recent immigrants or have been home schooled).

I aimed to use process writing principles, whilst also adhering to specification requirements that students should engage with style models in producing their original pieces.

Pre-Writing activities

- In groups students analysed features of style in one of four texts (“style models”), using prior knowledge of linguistic frameworks and differentiated prompt questions. Each group then presented their text to the class. Texts: extract from Maconie’s “Pies and Prejudice” describing Manchester Piccadilly; extract from Halliday’s “A Sarong in my Back Pack”; extract from Bryson describing London; short extracts from Moxon (on-line).
 - Texts were chosen for content that students might identify with, or audience.
 - Key questions: what unique viewpoint does the author provide on the place? What is interesting about their style?
- Discussion activity: what would make you want to read a piece of travel writing? This was used to devise a list of criteria for success:
 - To learn something new about a place or person
 - To be entertained by an interesting story or to be amused
 - Lively writing
- Paired discussion: what would you want to tell someone else about where you live/have lived in the past? Pairs then shared ideas generating very lively discussion about local areas as well as cultural differences, prejudices and stereotypes.

Drafting (Students had access to computers throughout.)

- Individual free-writing activity (20 min) about chosen place. Student identifies one or two phrases they would like to keep that reveal their distinctive viewpoint or are particularly successful. These are shared and celebrated as a class.
- First draft
- Discussion of success criteria: students make links to coursework assessment objectives they might relate to (for example, for someone to be entertained the piece has to be written with an **audience** in mind). Students were asked to visualise their final successful piece and set themselves a target to help them achieve it. Pairs then swapped work and also set a target for each other.

Revision

- Revision: taking one target, students revised one aspect of their work and then presented back how/why their piece had become more successful using concrete examples (scaffolding an initial attempt at commentary writing). Improvements were discussed and celebrated as models.
- Second draft.
- One-to-one discussion with me as the teacher on revisions made and coaching-style discussion on further changes that could be made to achieve success criteria.
- Before completing third draft students were asked to complete a grid giving precise details on intended purpose, audience and genre.

Final proof-reading

Celebrating

- Students shared their work in groups and nominated a piece to be published on either the college website, VLE (Moodle) or the college magazine.
- Students were asked to reflect on the changes they had made during the writing process by looking at initial work next to the final piece. This scaffolded the concluding comments each made in their coursework commentary.

Extracts from students' writing: "Pies and Prejudice" scheme of work

I've lived in Cheadle Hulme ever since I can remember, not a lot's changed in the last 16 years either. I started off my life playing on a street full of detached houses but when I was at the age of 12 we had to move out. This meant I was then welcomed into the non-stereotypical side of Cheadle Hulme, or what some people from round here would call 'the Dark Side'. As soon as someone asks where I live and I reply "Cheadle Hulme", all I get is "Oh my god are you rich? Do you live in a mansion?"... Living in a two bedroom flat with my Dad definitely isn't my idea of rich or a mansion, but it'll do for me.

Friday nights I walk round to my mum's to get ready to go out at 7 o'clock, straight up through the village. I start off at the precinct or "Cheadle Hulme Shopping Centre" as they like to call it. The only person "shopping" there is my Great Nan who enjoys wasting time looking at musty old clothes in a charity shop or buying her daily packet of mint imperials from the open all hours newsagent.

The author wanted to dispel stereotypes about the area she is from and reveal the seedy side of the village for other young people to identify with and be amused by. During revision, she decided to adopt a more ironic stance by revealing herself to be just like the inhabitants she scorns as she didn't want to be perceived as arrogant or offensive but still wanted to use hyperbole to entertain.

When I landed in Corfu, I had disregarded the type of holiday I believed would lie before me. Corfu, a small island off mainland Greece, is typically shunned by adults over the age of 21. The younger generation recognise the island for its larger clubbing sites, Kavos and Palaeokastritsa, whereas I was in search of a more cultural view of the island to rediscover the forgotten villages of Corfu.

After a reasonably pleasant night flight to the island we landed at the sole airport a few miles outside Corfu town – a good distance away from Kavos and Palaeokastritsa. At disembarkation I remained seated until all the groups of young teenagers with their matching "Kavos 2012" t-shirts sporting crude nick-names across the back had safely disappeared to waiting coaches.

The author's father is from Corfu, but during the revision process she decided to adopt the persona of an older writer visiting the island in order for her chosen reader to be able to identify with her more effectively. She wished to write about "the real island" and its beauty rather than the stereotype many are aware of.

First draft

Don't get me wrong I know Wythenshawe is known for its negatives as well as its qualities. To me I love everyday life in the town, everyone sticks together and everyone knows each other through the social events house parties, football clubs, youth clubs local events, school and by word-of-mouth. It's almost impossible not to be known around Wythenshawe! Most unbelievably to outsiders the community of Wythenshawe is actually quite vibrant, yes, it does have one of the biggest crime rates in Manchester, but that's because of some "wannabe gangster's" trying to be the next Biggie Smalls.... Most of the families and schools teach great manners and morals to the youths so we can live as a friendly and happy community.

During the revision process, the author decided to keep the point of view acknowledging the two sides to the town (using the negatives to create humour) with the aim of persuading the reader not to stereotype all those from the area. He decided he needed to create a more authoritative tone by structuring his work more clearly (so it wasn't just a rant), raising his register at times (a mixed mode approach) and using facts and statistics about the area to add credence, but also to surprise the reader. He chose to use the central image reported in the media of a hooded youth pretending to threaten David Cameron with a gun during his visit as an opening hook and key idea.

Ruth Phillips at Cheadle and Marple College, Stockport