

Non-fiction —some thoughts on preparing and creating a workshop

To start with, identify some writing that could be inspired by your organisation, its collection and its spaces:

e.g.

Welcome to our Museum!

The life-cycle of an urban fox

*What was life like for a
Roman soldier in Britain?*

*Which of these two artworks
is most worth keeping?*

*How to get to my favourite
object in this place.*

How is salt extracted?

Three questions to consider:

1. What genre(s) of writing could be involved? (instructions, recount, non-chronological report, explanation, persuasion, debate/balanced argument)
2. What will the children need to do at your venue / with your collection to prepare them for their writing?
3. How will this engage the children and relate to their own experiences?

e.g.

<p><i>Welcome to our Museum!</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persuasive writing (why would people come, what should they see)• Instructions (how to get around)• Explanation (why the museum is organised as it is)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visit rooms and make notes on what they see• Group work to decide on which parts to write about and split up the tasks•	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like exploring and discovering• They enjoy being guides• They could relate this to other leaflets and guides from other places they visit (in school?)
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Instructions

Speaking: Just a minute

Try to describe the route to get to a particular artwork or object without stopping, hesitating or deviating.

Listening: Barrier games

Work in threes. One person gives the instructions to the 'driver' who is leading a person who has been blindfolded.

Group work: Envoys

Each group devises a set of instructions for locating something. One envoy takes these to a new group who try them and give feedback for the original group.

Drama: role play / hot seating

Children take on the role of a craftsman connected to an object/artwork and is guided by the leader through what work they would do, acting it out. Then they are interviewed in turn in the hot seat to help others create instructions to make an object.

Recount

Speaking: Radio broadcast

Each child is given a 'microphone' and asked to retell their experience (either what happened on their visit or a role they took on) without using voice or facial gestures.

Listening: Word tennis

Work in pairs. Input from the leader and/or paired discussion. Using only one word or phrase at a time attempt to retell how a person used an object

Group work: Rainbowing

Each group looks at an object or artwork connected with part of a historical event. They discuss the facts they can discover and record them as 'What we know', then decide on 'What we would like to know'. Each group member is given a colour—the new colour groups form and share their information

Drama: conscience alley

Children are given a dilemma associated with a historical object or artwork and discuss in pairs their reasons for taking one or other course of action. People sharing one choice line up one side, opposite those taking the opposing view. One child walks between the two listening to each side and deciding which way to decide. Follow-up discussion can compare this with the historical outcome.

Non-chronological report Explanation

Speaking: Just a minute

Try to explain how an object works in one minute (or 30 seconds) without stopping, hesitating or deviating.

Group work: Spokesperson

Each group researches one area of information connected with an object (possibly selecting from the label or statements given by the leader). They record what they know and what they'd like to find out. They decide on the most important things to feedback and elect a spokesperson to feedback for them.

Listening: Babble gabble

The leader gives some information in relation to an object (e.g. animal),, with specific headings (e.g. 'habitat', 'appearance'). In pairs, children attempt to summarise this information in 30/20/10 seconds.

Drama: role play / hot seating

Children take on roles of different parts of a machine. Then they are interviewed in turn in the hot seat to help others write an explanation of how the machine works.

Persuasion Discussion/balanced argument

Speaking: Polarisation debate

After a mind experiment and/or paired discussion, two sides take up opposition and attempt to persuade others to join their side by their persuasive arguments.

Group work: one / some / all / none

Each group has a set of statements about objects/characters. They attempt to match the statements (one at a time) to one, some, all or none of the objects/characters. To convince others in their group, they must give convincing reasons for or against the choice.

Listening: Telephone call

Work in pairs. One child tries to persuade the other of the value of an artwork/object, a place or a decision. They take it in turns, with each child starting their reply with 'ah, but...' or 'on the other hand...'

Drama: mantle of the expert

Children (alone or in pairs) take on the role of a curator. They choose one object/artwork to save from the museum when it closes, finding out as many facts as possible about it, but also coming up with persuasive arguments for why this object/artwork is so important. The curators present to others, who make the decision.