

It happened like this ...



Recount writing is often seen as the easiest non-fiction text type to teach, since recounts are organised chronologically, like a story. There are many occasions when children have a 'true story' to write, e.g.

- accounts of schoolwork or outings
- events from history or RE
- anecdotes and personal accounts
- biographical writing in any curricular area.

However, chronological writing is not without its pitfalls. All teachers are familiar with young writers' accounts of school trips that deal admirably with the bus journey but omit to mention what happened later on. Some children, even in upper primary, have difficulty ordering events appropriately in more complex historical or biographical recounts.

Most children therefore benefit from organising the facts as notes on a timeline (or another sequenced framework) before writing. This provides

- an opportunity to sort out the main events, and their sequence, without the added effort of putting them into sentences
- an overview of **all** the events, in clear chronological order, so the author knows exactly how much he or she has to cover (and doesn't get stuck on the bus)
- an opportunity to consider how to divide the information into paragraphs **before** beginning to write
- an opportunity to decide whether to follow a linear chronological structure or to adapt the time sequence for effect, e.g. starting with a key event in a biography.

If an appropriate recount note-taking format or 'skeleton' outline (such as the timeline) is used, the structure of these notes provides a bridge into the structure of the extended written recount. Chronological notes from any subject area can be used to provide the content for purposeful recount writing.

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Role-play, drama, story telling or puppetry provides opportunities for pupils to rehearse and internalise the facts of a historical event before writing.

Find out more about recounts



Further case studies can be found on the NLS website:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy.

See also pages 154-155, *Grammar for writing* and *Developing early writing*.

An RE projects on Hinduism provides a link to biographical writing for a Year 6 class.

1

W. India
Father - Vaisva Varna

Shy, nervous
Hated games

Married at 13

To London - studied law

1886

To S. Africa - lawyer

1893

Worked for Indians in S. Africa. Non-violent protest

e.g. 3000 crossed state border; arrested - publicity

45 yrs - home to India

1915

Mahatma 'Great Soul'

Campaigned for independence
Indian National Congress
Helped people - first aid, hygiene, craft industries
Campaigned for untouchables - Harijan

1919

Massacre 400 dead

Independence

Pakistan - Moslems/Hindu- India

Fasted for peace

1947

Assassinated by Hindu extremist

1948

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

The teacher tells the story of Gandhi's life, and demonstrates how to create a timeline skeleton along a roll of paper. Children in pairs then use the skeleton as a prompt to help them retell sections of the story to each other.

2

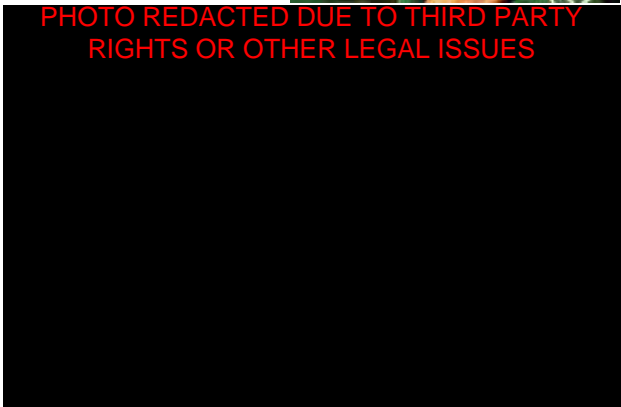
In the Literacy Hour, they study examples of biographical writing (especially encyclopedia entries), focusing on

- how they are divided into paragraphs
- major language features, including past tense and variation in sentence structure
- characteristics of introductory paragraphs and concluding sentences.



3

The children discuss how to divide the timeline into sections – each covering a important stage of Gandhi's life – which will make suitable paragraphs. Groups of children take a 'paragraph' each, and familiarise themselves (and the rest of the class) with the content through role-play.

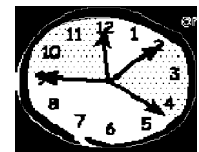


Making notes for recount writing



A timeline gives a clear indication of chronology. It can also incorporate pictures and diagrams. Other possible recount skeletons are **flowcharts**, **storyboards** or **comic strips**.

Recounts requiring reference to specific times could be represented on a **calendar grid** or a **clockface**.



You could also make a **human timeline**, with children holding notes on card in order of chronology, or they could peg **sequenced notes** on card along a washing line.



4

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In shared writing, the teacher demonstrates how to expand one paragraph into recount writing, drawing particular attention to the sentence features they have covered.

5

Children in pairs work on other paragraphs (including an introductory paragraph summarising why Gandhi was famous), and the class selects successful writing to be combined into a complete biographical piece. This is produced on the computer for inclusion in the class's Hinduism display.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a great leader. He was a Hindu but he was a friend of people from all different religions and he tried to help them live in peace. He also set an example of living a simple life and never being violent.

Gandhi was born in 1869 in western India. Some Hindu people are born into a varna, which gives them their job. Gandhi's father was a Vaisya - that means he worked as a merchant or in an office. People who were not in a varna were called Untouchables and they did the dirty work. When Gandhi was a boy he was shy and nervous and he hated games and sports. He was friends with an Untouchable boy who came to their house to clean the toilets. Gandhi decided to help the Untouchables when he grew up.

6

For independent writing, each child now chooses a hero or heroine to research and write about, using the model demonstrated for Gandhi:

- create a timeline
- divide it into sections
- expand each section into a paragraph to create a complete piece of biographical recount writing.

PLANNING PROGRESSION in writing recount text

Year 1 Term 3 T20

Objective: Write simple recounts linked to topics of interest /study or personal experience.

Example

Shared writing: Teacher plans anecdote about 'When I was Little', using beginning/middle/end pictures and talking through. Then demonstrates how to write as prose.

Individual/guided work: Pupils plan and write own anecdotes based on teacher's model.

Year 2 Term 3 T19/20

Objective: Write non-fiction texts using texts read as models

Example

Shared writing: Class compiles a writing frame based on recount texts read (including time connectives); teacher demonstrates how to use it to write a recount of a shared experience/outing, etc.

Individual/guided work: Pupils write recounts of personal experiences, using writing frame if necessary

Year 3 Term 3 T22/25

Objective: Experiment with recounting the same event in various ways, e.g. story, letter, news report.

Example

Shared work: Class compiles timeline notes about a shared experience/outing, etc.; teacher models the writing of opening paragraph in a variety of styles.

Individual/guided work: Pupils complete each recount in appropriate style, based on timeline; then make own timelines on another event, to write up in two styles.

Year 4 Term 1 T24

Objective: Write newspaper style reports, e.g. about school events, including headlines, editing, paragraphing, ICT layout.

Example

Shared work: Producing a class newspaper. Teacher demonstrates how to write a newspaper report, from notes to published piece.

Individual/guided work: Pupils in pairs create own newspaper reports on stories of interest for inclusion in the newspaper.

Year 5 Term 1 T24

Objective: Write recounts based on subject, topic or personal experience for (a) a close friend (b) an unknown reader.

Example

Shared work: Teacher demonstrates how to use same notes to write opening paragraphs of recounts for two different audiences.

Individual/guided work: Pupils complete recounts begun by teacher, then make own notes on which to base writing of informal/formal recounts.

Year 6 Term 1 T14

Objective: Develop skills of (auto)biographical writing, including biography based on research .

Example

Shared work: Teacher models how to research and make biographical notes on a timeline; begins converting these into an information leaflet.

Individual/guided work: Pupils complete teacher's biography and/or create own biographical leaflets on subjects of their own choice.

Year 6 Term 3 T22

Objective: Select appropriate style and form to suit a specific purpose and audience, drawing on knowledge of different non-fiction text types.

Example

Shared work: Teacher (1) models how to select appropriate non-fiction text type for a piece of writing; (2) revises how to plan and write that text type, depending upon purpose and audience.

Individual/guided work: Pupils, given audience and purpose, select style and form for a range of pieces of writing, and plan and write one piece.

National Curriculum and NLS Objectives

The NLS objectives link with and support work in the rest of the curriculum in several ways. We can:

- Bring content knowledge and reading/writing activities from the curriculum into the Literacy Hour. Work in the Literacy Hour is then linked to real purposes for reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Teach language and literacy in both the Literacy Hour and other subjects, weaving the work in subjects and the Literacy Hour explicitly together.
- Apply and practise the skills learned in the literacy hour in new contexts in the rest of the curriculum.
- Use language work done in other subjects to access children's English abilities.

Linking QCA Units of Work and NLS Writing Objectives

In order to help with planning, links have been mapped between NLS objectives and existing writing activities within QCA schemes of work for history, geography, science, religious education and design and technology.

Visit the QCA website:



www.qca.org.uk/ca/subjects/english/literacy

NLS Non-Fiction Filters	
	1: Recount
	2: Instructions
	3: Non-chronological report
	4: Explanation
	5: Persuasion
	6: Discussion