



## *How would I use this book with TfW?*

### Using model Texts by Kathryn Pennington

As a trainer, I often get asked questions such as: ‘How would I use this book with TfW?’; ‘I am reading *The Tunnel* by Anthony Browne to my class – how do I teach that using TfW?’ or ‘Do you have a good model text for the Hobbit?’

Whether it’s a picture book or a novel, it is important that during a TfW unit of work children have:

**1. A good ‘main’ model text which they can learn from. This model should include the key features and writerly tools that you want the children to learn, but also have a clearly transferable and identifiable pattern on which they can base their own writing. The model text should be no more than 350 words in length and it will be this text that the children learn off-by-heart.**

**2. Exposure, through shared reading, to other models and snippets collected from quality literature. They can then add to their writer’s toolkit by drawing upon what other authors do.**

So, I often go back and ask the teachers ‘how’ do they want the book to be used?

#### **Using a novel or picture book as a stimulus**

One way is to use a novel or a picture book as a stimulus. If in class you were reading and studying *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (TLTWTW) by C.S Lewis, you may decide to teach the children how to write a portal story with a focus on writing a cracking setting. If this is the case, I would recommend using Pie’s Elf Road as a model text as this is a great portal story into a fantasy world which includes a carefully crafted setting. (<https://www.teachwire.net/news/elf-road-use-pie-corbetts-portal-story-and-activities-to-develop-grammar-wr>)

I would read TLTWTW to the class at the end of every school day and use carefully chosen extracts within my English lessons to ‘read as a reader’ and ‘read as a writer’. We want children to comprehend what they read but also explore the writerly tools used and their effect on the reader. An example would be to explore the snippet below with the children. It is the moment Edmund first sees the White Witch’s Castle:

**In the Witch's House**  
*Taken from **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe***

But at last he came to a part where it was more level and the valley opened out. And there, on the other side of the river, quite close to him, in the middle of a little plain between two hills, he saw what must be the White Witch's House. And the moon was shining brighter than ever. The house was really a small castle. It seemed to be all towers; little towers with long pointed spires on them, sharp as needles. They looked like huge dunce's caps or sorcerer's caps. And they shone in the moonlight and their long shadows looked strange on the snow. Edmund began to be afraid of the House.

But it was too late to think of turning back now. He crossed the river on the ice and walked up to the House. There was nothing stirring; not the slightest sound anywhere. Even his own feet made no noise on the deep newly fallen snow. He walked on and on, past corner after corner of the House, and past turret after turret to find the door. He had to go right around to the far side before he found it. It was a huge arch but the great iron gates stood wide open.

You could then add to the toolkit and learning by reading other snippets like this one.

**The Hobbit**

**I**n a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat; it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.

It had a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle. The door opened on to a tube-shaped hall like a tunnel; a very comfortable tunnel without smoke, with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats – the hobbit was fond of visitors. The tunnel wound on and on, going fairly but not quite straight into the side of the hill – The Hill, as all people for many miles round called it – and many little round doors opened out of it, first on one side and then on another. No going upstairs for this hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens, dining rooms, all were on the same floor, and indeed on the same passage. The best rooms were all on the left-hand side (going in), for these were the only ones to have windows, deep-set round windows looking over his garden, and meadows beyond, sloping down to the river.

The novel becomes a stimulus. A rich resource to draw ideas and inspiration from, but ultimately, we are not asking our children to write *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*! If we are asking children to write a short portal story, then their main model needs to be a short portal story.

### The Learning Journey

To summarise the learning journey:

- Outcome: Portal Story
- Focus: Setting
- Model text: *Elf Road*
- Supporting Literature: *CLASS BOOK*: *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (& 2+ other snippets).

Similarly, Pie's *Zelda Claw* works well as a model when reading, *Varjak Paw* by S. F. Said. So again the learning journey could be:

- Outcome: Adventure / Quest story
- Focus: Suspense
- Model text: *Zelda Claw*
- Supporting Literature: *CLASS BOOK*: *Varjak Paw* (& 2+ others snippets)

It works for non-fiction too. Pie's: 'Buy Now: Multifunction Mobile Phone and 'Buy Now: Multi-purpose Spy Key Ring,' works alongside the *Alex Rider* series by Anthony Horowitz which can be found here: [https://www.teachprimary.com/learning\\_resources/view/pie-corbetts-non-fiction-alex-ryder](https://www.teachprimary.com/learning_resources/view/pie-corbetts-non-fiction-alex-ryder)

Here are some other suggestions:

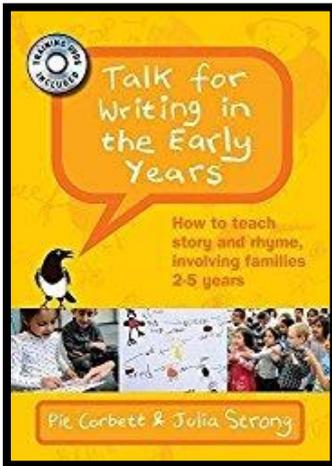
Book	Suggested Model Text written by Pie Corbett
<i>Squash and a squeeze</i> by Julia Donaldson	<i>The Squeaky Story</i>
<i>Rosie's Walk</i>	<i>Charlie's Walk</i>
<i>We're going on a bear hunt</i>	<i>Take a Walk Little Bear</i>
<i>How the Whale Became and other stories</i> by Ted Hughes	<i>How the Tiger Learned Not to be Greedy &amp; How the Tortoise got its Shell</i>
<i>A Traveller in Time</i> by Alison Utterly	<i>Back in time</i>
<i>The Mozart Question</i> (or WW2 themed book)	<i>Gas Mask</i>
<i>The Water Tower</i> by Gary Crew	<i>Alien Landing</i>
<i>Dead Man's Cove</i> or <i>Famous 5 Series</i>	<i>Adventure at Sandy Cove</i> <i>Safia and the Captain</i>

Some picture books are fine to be used as a model text e.g. *Farmer Duck* because they follow the golden principles of being easy to innovate, filled with memorable, meaningful repetition and include the key language features/structures that you would want your children to internalise and learn.

## Rewriting a model based on a book

Trying to write a model text by rewriting or abridging an original comes with a warning – no one does Philip Pullman like Phillip Pullman, but there are some, often traditional tales, which need rewriting to deliver exactly what you need – almost to make them ‘more teachable’.

Pie has rewritten many traditional tales to ensure that they include key language patterns, a clear structure and memorable meaningful repetition.



We need to ensure that model texts teach children key, transferable language patterns that can be built upon year after year. Our aim is to create confident, imaginative and independent writers, so we need to ensure that the tools and models that we expose them to support them in this journey. More information and 15 example model texts can be found in [Talk for Writing in the Early Years](#).

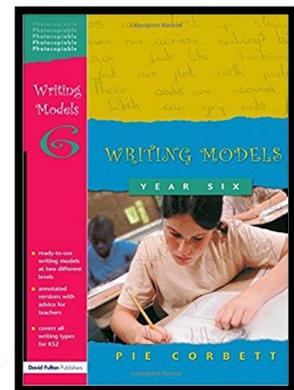
I have included two example models at the back of this article that are based on the following books:

- Lost and Found by Oliver Jeffers (model written by Cazz Williams, Y1 Literacy Lead at Warren Road)
- Mr Big by Ed Verr (written by me)

An alternative idea is to take a model text (I always use Pie’s) and adapt it so that it is based on the book. Have a look at Little Charlie and the Lighthouse Keeper model texts at the end of this article. This is actually Pie’s story Little Charlie but adapted to run alongside the Lighthouse Keeper’s Lunch. When I did this with some Year 2 teachers this story became our model, but every day we still planned to read the actual Light House Keeper’s Lunch and explore it in depth. The model text is much easier for the children to learn and innovate upon.

## So, how would I use the Hobbit as a model text?

When I’m asked, ‘How would I use the Hobbit as a model text?’ I now reply, ‘I wouldn’t’. Instead I would use The Hobbit as a stimulus but write or adapt my own model which has the underlying pattern of a quest / adventure story and includes similar characters e.g. goblins, trolls and elves. An example of this is Pie’s ‘opening chapter’ model text, which is in the style of The Hobbit and can be found in the [Year 6 Writing Models book](#).



## 3 approaches to consider

There are 3 approaches to consider when creating a model text:

- 1) Using a novel or a picture book as a stimulus
- 2) Rewriting an original story
- 3) Writing your own – This article hasn’t looked at this option. Writing your own is the most difficult option, but also the most rewarding. I’ve written a separate article with advice on this that will be made available online and featured in the next term’s TFW newsletter.

## **Some final key points**

- Having a model text is vitally important. Without showing children a model of what is expected, it is a little bit like saying to them: 'Today I am going to teach you how to play tennis, but I'm not actually going to show you what playing tennis looks like.'
- Pitch your model texts high, make them aspirational but achievable and teach with high expectations. Make sure that teachers are looking critically at their models and thinking – what will my children learn from this model and add to their writer's toolkit belt?
- Although creating and/or finding the right model text can take time, once done, you will always have it. Collect a bank of model texts and use them year on year – just tweak them to meet the needs of your new class.

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## **Model Texts included below**

- 1) *Zelda Claw* by Pie Corbett
- 2) *Lost and Found* by Cazz Williams, Y1 Literacy Lead at Warren Road School
- 3) *Mr Big* by Kathryn Pennington
- 4) *Little Charlie and the Lighthouse Keeper* written by Pie Corbett, adapted by Kathryn Pennington & Y2 teachers at St Andrews Primary School

## Zelda Claw and the Rain Cat

All night, thunder growled overhead. Zelda crouched in the darkness, staring. Wind lashed the glistening tarmac and the streetlights flickered; Zelda shivered. Where could she escape from the rain?

At that moment, Zelda heard something crawling along the pavement, hidden by shadows. A vague shape slipped into a doorway. A green eye flickered. Zelda's fur prickled as she watched. What was it?

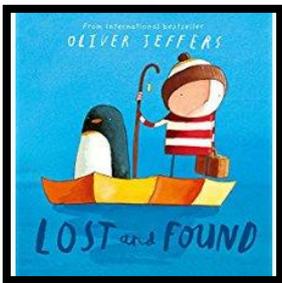
Without thinking, Zelda dashed under a lorry and crouched as still as stone. Silently, the shadow of an enormous cat paced through the darkness, sinking along the rain washed pavements. Zelda shivered.

Slowly, the great rain cat drew closer and closer. Zelda could hear its claws scratching on the tarmac and see its green eyes glittering. Had it seen her?

At that moment, Zelda could bear it no longer. Leaping out from under the lorry, she shot back across the rain-swept road and jumped over the wall. She was alone. The rain cat had not followed her. Zelda was safe – for now.

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## Lost and Found



Somewhere north of Italy there lived a boy. One cold, winter's day he found a penguin slumped at his door. The penguin looked sad and the boy was curious. He thought it might be lost.

First, the boy decided to row the penguin to the South Pole. They rowed and they rowed and they rowed for many days and nights. A storm raged and they trembled with fear.

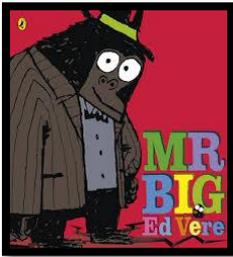
Next, the penguin cautiously shuffled out of the boat, The boy said, "Goodbye" and floated away, but the penguin looked sadder than ever.

After that, the boy realized that the penguin wasn't lost – he was lonely!

Quickly, he powered back to the South Pole as fast as he could. The boy searched but the penguin was nowhere to be seen.

Finally, the boy saw something in the water. He rushed closer and closer until he could see the penguin! They both felt delighted and gleefully sailed home together and lived happily ever after.

## Mr Big (KS1)



Once upon a time, there was lonely Gorilla called Mr Big who lived in a little house on the edge of a rainy city. Mr Big was very good at playing the piano and wished that he had some friends to play music with.

Early one morning, Mr Big woke up and decided to go and look for some friends to play in his band.

First, he walked and he walked and he walked past the sticky swamp, until he reached the local park. Slowly, he opened the park gate and he looked up and down but unfortunately there weren't any friends at the park to play with. So he carried on walking.

Next, he walked and he walked and he walked across the wibbly, wobbly bridge, until he reached the local library. Carefully, he opened the library door and looked left and right, but unfortunately, there weren't any friends in the library to play with. So, he carried on walking.

After that, he walked and he walked and he walked through the swishy, swashy meadow until he reached a local school. Cautiously, he opened the school door and looked round and round. Fortunately, he saw lots of children playing drums, shaking maracas and singing loudly. "Would you like to join my band?" asked Mr Big. "Yes please," the children replied.

So, Mr Big skipped home. He skipped and he skipped and he skipped past the oozy, sticky swamp, across the wibbly, wobbly bridge and through the swishy, swashy meadow until he reached his little house on the edge of a sunny city.

Finally that evening, all of the children came round to play in Mr Big's band and they all had a wonderful, musical time. From that day on, Mr Big was never lonely again.

*Four leaf clover, our story is over.*

## Mr Big (KS2)

Slumped in his chair, Mr Big stared out of the window. He watched as raindrops raced down the window, autumn leaves departed from the skeletal trees and streetlights flickered. With his head hung down, he made his way slowly to the bedroom and fell asleep.

Early the next day, Mr Big woke to the sound of relentless rain beating down on his window. Reluctantly, he got dressed and made breakfast for one – toast (he always had toast). Slowly, he put on his heavy coat and went outside for his morning walk. As he trudged down the puddle-patched street avoiding people's glances, he would mutter, "Why does no one see me?" Then, out of the corner of his eye, he saw an abandoned piano.

Without hesitation, Mr Big rescued the piano, took it home and started to practise. He practised and he practised and he practised, all day and all night, for two whole weeks. It seemed Mr Big was good at playing the piano - very good. As people passed his window, they would stop to listen to his uplifting music. They watched as Mr Big would dance, sing and fill the air with his talent. His music spread across the town like sunlight rising in the morning.

Then, one sunny Saturday morning, Mr Big received an invitation to join the town's band. Punching the air in delight, he accepted and that evening he skipped all the way to band practice with his head held high. Smiling to himself, Mr Big spent the whole night playing piano with his new musical family. It was the best night he had ever had!

The following week, and for every week after that, Mr Big attended band practice. However, he still enjoyed, every now and then, sitting proudly in his chair where he would wave at those that passed by, warm his toes on the sun's rays and sing along with the birdsong.

### **Little Charlie and the Lighthouse Keeper.**

**Once upon a time** there was a little boy called Charlie **who** lived near the sea.

**Early one morning**, he woke up and his Mother said, "Take this bag of goodies to the Lighthouse keeper." **Into** the bag, she put a slice of cheese, a loaf of bread and a square of chocolate.

**Next**, he walked, and he walked and he walked **till** he came to a bridge. There he met a cat – a lean cat, a mean cat.

"I'm hungry," hissed the cat angrily. "What have you got in your bag?"

"I've got a slice of cheese, a loaf of bread" **but** he kept the chocolate hidden!

"I'll have the cheese please," said the cat. **So** Charlie gave the cheese to the cat and it ate it all up.

**Then**, he walked, and he walked and he walked till he came to a pond. There he met a duck – a snowy, white duck.

"I'm hungry," quacked the duck softly. "What have you got in your bag?"

"I've got a loaf of bread," **but** he kept the chocolate hidden!

"I'll have the bread please," said the duck. **So** Charlie gave the bread to the duck and it ate it all up.

**After that**, he walked, and he walked and he walked till he came to a tall town clock – tick tock, tick tock, tick tock. There he met not one, not two but three scruffy seagulls. "We're hungry," moaned the seagulls loudly. "What have you got in your bag?"

**Unfortunately**, there was only the chocolate!

**Luckily**, Charlie found some crumbs.

**So** he scattered them on the ground and the seagulls ate them all up.

**Next**, he walked, and he walked and he walked till he came to a crossroads. There he met a ....nobody.

"Mmmm, I'm hungry," said Charlie. "What have I got in my bag?"

"Mmmmm, chocolate!" **So**, he ate it all up!

**Finally**, he walked, and he walked and he walked till he came to the Lighthouse. There he met the Lighthouse Keeper .

"I'm hungry," said the Lighthouse Keeper. "What have you got in your bag?"

**Unfortunately**, there was only the chocolate wrapper.

**Luckily**, the Lighthouse Keeper's wife made pizza and chips for tea.