
UNIT 19 WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

STRUCTURE

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19.0 OBJECTIVES

Writing activity is not confined to the area of language acquisition alone. Much of the writing that happens in the school is within other subject areas. Although this is particularly true of the mother tongue, it is also relevant to schools where there is a transition to the second language, in this case English, as the medium of instruction, in later school years. It is important to expose the children to writing tasks from various subject areas, right from the beginning so that they are adequately prepared for later writing tasks in school, and in real life. Writing in real life does not come in the neatly labelled slots of subject areas. In this unit we shall look at how we can design writing activities within different subject areas. After you have been through this unit you should be able to:

1. develop suitable writing tasks across the curriculum, for beginners.
2. develop similar suitable tasks for more advanced learners.
3. make linkages in the timetable, so that there is optimal utilisation of the time available.
4. integrate different areas of the curriculum.

19.1 INTRODUCTION

Writing is communicating. It is a way of expressing ourselves and clarifying our thoughts. It forces us to think ideas through in a clear and coherent way. It helps us to differentiate between what we know and understand and what still needs to be clarified. When we write we understand the material better and remember it longer. Writing helps us to integrate new ideas with old ones and to formulate new questions. In other words, writing forces us to think, analyse, to synthesise and to organise. Because of these qualities, writing is one of the most valuable skills in education.

Since the mid-seventies, researchers, in the western world have repeatedly pointed out a decline in the ability of students to write well. One reason given is that the students are not asked to write enough. A logical solution, would then be to give students more opportunities to write; to make writing an integral part of learning in all subject areas. Besides giving students more writing experiences, providing them with opportunity to write in different subject areas gives them a wider range of topics. Assigning topics that

progress logically from the material being studied or from the students' actual experiences elicits better results than those topics assigned with no curriculum context. Writing in all areas of the curriculum can provide the students with a range of writing, that will help them to become better writers.

Writing work in other subject areas of the school curriculum often is not viewed as writing. Writing tasks often get limited to narrative, descriptive, expository or expressive forms. One does not look at the writing of a mathematics problem, or the flow chart in a geography lesson, or a report based on diagrammatic or tabular information as 'writing'. Yet a very large amount of time is spent by children doing such tasks. These tasks require the ability to present ideas logically, to choose the appropriate style and form accurately, sometimes they also tap the ability to transcode information from a diagrammatic to a verbal written form. Writing research in recent years has highlighted the need to look at writing across the curriculum. Achievement levels in other subject areas are often determined by the child's ability to use the language effectively. While this is certainly true of the writing that happens in the mother tongue or the language which is the medium of instruction, it also has relevance for the second language. It is important that the children get a holistic exposure to the second language. Often the only exposure children get is to readers and grammar books. A very large amount of the writing that happens in real life or in the later school years in the second language is to do with other subjects areas. It is important, therefore to extend the kind of writing tasks we undertake to include activities from across the curriculum. In this unit we shall look at suitable examples for beginners, as well as for more advanced learners.

19.2 WORKING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM – AN APPROACH

The uniqueness of a school is that it is a place where a whole community of learners can be given opportunities to be reflective about what and how they are learning. It is a place where the learning which occurs in the present can act to give new life and vitality to the past and create new possibilities for the future. The organisational means for this empowerment is the curriculum. In order to construct a curriculum that empowers children to be actively involved in the learning process, we need to be able to look at:

- 1) the way children learn naturally;
- 2) what conditions support and enhance learning;
- 3) how learners become active participants in the learning process.

While we shall not go into these three points in detail, it is perhaps enough to say that we have plenty of research evidence to show that in real life children do not compartmentalise learning. In fact learning progresses from simpler, concrete, general and more holistic forms initially, to more complex, abstract, specific and fragmented learning at a later advanced stage. This has great relevance to the development of writing skills in the initial years of school. Before we look specifically at writing tasks from 'across the curriculum', let us take a glimpse at the philosophy of integrating the curriculum through what may be called 'holistic teaching'. Holistic teachers endeavour to place the children's learning within the context of their own experiences. There is a fundamental belief that when learning is meaningful, children learn. In fact in a meaningful environment it is difficult to stop children from learning. Within the constraints of the formal syllabus, such teachers try, as far as possible, not to fragment learning or divide and subdivide it into artificial time periods or subject areas. They recognise the fact that boundaries between subject areas have been artificially created, purely for convenience. There are overlaps and a flow between subjects. In the child's mind there are no compartments. These are artificially created. Whether the writing

happens in a mathematics class or a writing class, it draws upon the same writing competencies and skills. What may need as much focus in a science or maths class is the reading and writing skills that are available with the children, and whether they are adequate for the child to be able to do the required task. Sometimes the difficulty in solving a word problem in mathematics, is one with understanding the language. It is essential for teachers to encourage reading, writing, and speaking in all areas of the curriculum. They attempt to integrate all areas of the curriculum. They are likely to take advantage of an opportunity to teach a geography lesson during a reading class, if the need arises, or the other way round. They are aware that natural learning that continuously takes place in the real world is not fragmented. They make efforts to integrate the children's learning across the various subject areas, to the extent possible.

Language naturally pervades all areas of learning. It is for us teachers to use every opportunity that the curriculum offers, for developing language skills. In this section we shall focus our attention on how writing skills can be integrated with other areas of the curriculum. However, similar attention needs to be given to the other language skills, namely reading, listening and speaking.

Check Your Progress 1

Why do we need to extend writing activities to other areas of the curriculum?

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**19.3 TIME ALLOTMENT FOR WRITING TASK
IN THE CURRICULUM**

The medium of instruction varies from school to school. In some schools the medium of instruction is the mother tongue and English is taught as the second language. A large number of other schools have the mother tongue, as the medium of instruction, with a switch to English at the upper primary stage. There is plenty of research evidence to show that initial use of the mother tongue greatly enhances the learning as well as self esteem of the children. By learning English as the second language, in the early years, children become equipped to deal with a transition to English, later on, if that is necessary at all. What is important is to determine the place of the second language, in terms of the time allotment. This will ensure that there is enough time for the kind of process based activities we have discussed in the earlier units. A minimum of one hour a day is recommended to allow for distribution of the time for the different language skills that we have talked about namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills need to be integrated. For example listening or speaking tasks could be given as pre-writing activities leading to a writing task. Alternatively a reading task could be followed by a

writing task or a writing task followed by a reading one. What seems essential is that some amount of reading and writing happens every day in the second language. Ideally one hour a day should be set aside for the second language. If this is not possible, it is useful to get two double periods together, at least thrice a week, so that the children get a continuous amount of time for process writing, with at least a single period of 30 minutes on the other days. Since the attention span of young children is quite low, one would need to provide a range and variety of activities, which supplement each other. We need to draw upon the other subject areas to provide the range and variety that children require. In addition to this, we need to integrate the language skills, i. e. reading, writing, listening and speaking. Another opportunity that we have in the school curriculum, for integrating writing with other subject areas, is in the project work that children take up. It is important to plan for this. A conscious effort needs to be made to view the writing that happens in other subjects as a language skill. In case these are being taught by different teachers, it means that they would need to get together and plan.

19.4 WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM FOR BEGINNERS

Given below are samples of the kind of writing activities that can be taken up with very young children. These are just some indicators. The teachers need to use their resources and ideas to develop their own activities.

Writing in Mathematics

Ask children to write stories about themselves using numbers

For example:

a) **Go shopping:** Ask the children to draw a picture of the things they would buy if they had ten rupees. Then ask them to imagine that they had really gone on the shopping trip, and to write a story about the shopping trip. This is a good activity for reinforcing order words like- first, next, then, finally. As a follow up activity let some children make a list on the board of the things that the children bought. Let the other children respond by saying how realistic the lists were. Let the children get an idea of which items could be bought with ten rupees and which could not.

b) **Tell about time :** Draw four pictures of clocks on the blackboard, showing four different times of the day. Let the children read the times and then write a story about what they do at these times. It could be called 'What I did yesterday', or 'How I will spend my day'. Give some vocabulary words if required.

An extension of this activity is to give the children an idea of **one minute, by keeping quiet, while the watch hands move through one minute.** Once the children have an idea of a minute let them write about the things they can do in one minute, followed by the things they cannot do in one minute.

Some other ideas: Ask the children to write a story based on a day when all the clocks stopped or when every clock had a different time. Try and tap real stories of what happened when a clock stopped or when someone got the time wrong.

c) **Writing about favourite numbers:** Ask the children to write all that they know about their favourite number. For example, number six is like nine upside down. It is the same as three pairs or half a dozen.. It is one less than the days of the week. It is how old I am. It is the time the birds wake up in the morning., and so on.

Such writing helps children to connect their learning to real life experiences.

d) **Measuring or distances:** Once the children have studied about these get them to write about things like:

How would you measure the length of your room, if you didn't have anything to measure it with? Let them actually do it then write about it.

Let the children give rough estimations of about how far some places are from the school. The list should have places within and around the school. Using the distances let the children write a paragraph on "the area around my school". Let them use words like – near, further, closer, far away.

A variation of the above is to do writing based on weighing. For example : I was walking down the road and I found a rock that weighed one kg.... ask the children to continue the paragraph, writing about what they did with it. What things they could weigh and what they could n't . You could even stretch the children and ask them to write a little story of how they used the rock to weigh something very big. Let the children use their imagination, but make sure they have grasped how much a kg. is. Ask children to measure their heights in hands. Let them present their findings in simple bar graphs. Ask them to write a simple report on their findings, using the words, more than, less than, same as, tall, short.

e) **Addition and subtraction stories:** Give children simple sums like:

$$3+2=5$$

or $4-3=1$

Ask them to write simple stories which illustrate these sums. As children get older give them stories based on multiplication and division or stories which have multiple steps.

f) **Calendar:** Ask each child to find her birthday on a calendar. Look for the day of the week it falls on. How many more such days are there in the month? What will the child be doing on the week before, and in the week after her birthday? Write a poem or story based on these. Develop other writing activities to reinforce other maths concepts, and link them to the children's lives.

Writing in science, social studies or EVS

These subjects present endless opportunities for writing. Much of the learning that takes place in the areas of learning at this early stage, is directly related to the children's experience. Children observe, collect, classify, experiment, enquire, about a particular subject area, from their immediate environment. They need to then communicate their findings in suitable ways. They can further extend their own understandings through suitably designed creative writing experiences. **Suitably planned work cards** are one way of allowing children to do their own, independent investigations and presentations based on these. These could either be done as a part of subject teaching or as a part of project work. To allow for individual interests the children could be given a set of work cards to choose from. In a class of very young children, it is sometimes simpler to have all the children working on the same thing, with some amount of individual variation. Much of the investigative work that children do at the primary school level is teacher selected. The best activities are 'hands on' experiences. In the beginning these activities could begin by focusing on the child's skills of observation. Picture books can serve as very good research vehicles. Some samples of the kind of work cards that may be used are given below.

INSECTS

1. Find out how many legs an insect has.
2. How is an insect different from a bird?
3. How is it the same ?
4. Draw a beautiful insect you saw. It could be in a book. Imagine that this insect became your friend. Write a paragraph about what you did together.

JUNGLES

1. Name three jungle animals
2. Why are jungles so thick with plants and trees?
3. Write the names of any real jungle.
4. Write the name of a jungle story you have heard.
5. Imagine you went to a jungle. Write a story telling what happened.

A MAMMAL

1. Who do you think is the cleverest mammal in the world? Draw a picture of this mammal.
2. Write a riddle about this mammal and see if your friends can guess it .

MY FIVE SENSES

1. Name the five senses that you have.
2. Does everyone have five senses? What about animals like dogs, cats, cows, goats?
3. If some one gave you a wish, that you could have another sense what would you like ? Write a funny story about what you would do with your sixth sense.

KANGAROOS

1. Where do kangaroos live?
2. Why do you think a mama kangaroo has a pocket and a mama rabbit does not?
3. Supposing your mama had a pocket for you to sit in. Write about one day that you spent in the pocket of your mama.

MY FAMILY

1. Make a list of the people in your family.
2. Find out who has the biggest family in your class.
3. Do animals have families?
4. Write about some things you like about your family, and some things you don't.

In the above workcards we have integrated writing activities with other subject areas. The writing can be imaginative, and creative, or factual. It is important, when children are given open-ended activities to guide them about where they will get information from. Workcards can also be based on the children's immediate environment. Some examples are given below:

a) Windows and Doors

1. How many windows are there in your house?
2. How many windows are there in your classroom?
3. Survey : Check and count – How many doors can you find in your school building?
4. How many of these doors lead outside?
5. Do most doors open into a room or away from a room?
6. How many different types of doors can you think of?
7. If you could open a door and enter a very special place what would it be ? Write a paragraph describing it. The above work card draws upon the areas of science, maths and language.

b) **Homes**

1. How many homes are there on the street where you live?
2. Look at the homes on your way to school. What colour do you see the most? Can you think of any reason?
3. What building material is most used in the homes on your street?
4. Think of any two animals that live near your house , what kind of homes do they have? Draw or describe.
5. If you were free to make any kind of home , what would it be like? Describe it in detail.

c) **Balls**

1. Name six different kinds of balls.
2. Look at the balls used on your school playground. Which type of ball is used the most?
3. Think of a new ball game. Write down the rules, and ask your friends to play it. This is an example of integrating writing with sports.

d) **Hair**

1. How many girls in your class have long hair?
2. Make a bar graph, then decide whether short hair or long hair is more popular in your class.
3. Circle the names of animals that have hair of fur.

snake	cow	rabbit	turtle
bear	fish	lizard	fox
duck	horse	chicken	dog

4. Write a story about what happened when all the animals with hair lost their hair and grew wings instead or when your friend drank a medicine which made him grow hair all over his body.

In the above examples, creative writing tasks have been integrated with other subjects. It is very useful to have a set of work cards prepared on the basis of the different topics the children are covering in their different subjects. These can be given to the children whenever the occasion arises. Doing their own investigations helps children to internalise as well as understand abstract concepts and develop a range of learning skills. In Unit 15 on creating a suitable writing environment, we had talked about making children write about the experiences that they have had. These work cards not only help to integrate the learning from various subject areas, but they also provide opportunities for first hand experience. The writing tasks that follow , draw upon this first hand experience. The children are also able to explore different ways of sharing and presenting their findings with others.

It is up to teachers to prepare their own workcards. Keep the interests and age level of the children in mind. A workcard can be covered with polythene, so that it can be used over and over again. These could also be given as group activities. If you like different groups can work on different , related workcards at the same time, and then there can be a common sharing.

Check Your Progress 2

Suggest a suitable activity for integrating writing with art in a class of beginners.

19.5 WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM WITH MORE ADVANCED LEARNERS

As children get into more advanced levels, the variety of forms they can write in, increases. Some of these were looked at in detail in the previous unit.

19.5.1 Integrating Writing with Skill Development

We shall now look at some ways in which writing activities can be integrated with skill development, across the curriculum at this level. We have already taken up a sample of transferring information from a map into writing directions (See Unit 16) We shall take up few other examples in this section.

i) Comparing

Tell the children to pretend that you saw an animal that you had never seen before. How would you tell another person about this animal? One way would be to **compare** it to an animal you have seen before. When you compare things you tell how they are alike and how they are different from other things.

Ask children to collect two different flowers and bring them to their next writing class. Tell them to make the chart given below:-

Observations	Flower A	Flower B
Colour		
Shape		
Width		
Special		
Where did you find it		

Ask the children to look carefully at the flowers and complete the above chart. Then use the information to write a paragraph that explains how these flowers are alike and how they are different.

ii) Observing

Put the chart given below on the board

WIND FORCE

Name of Wind	What you can see
Calm	Leaves are still. Smoke rises up straight. clothes do not move on a clothesline

Gentle breeze

Leaves move a little The flag moves gently on the flagpole

Strong breeze

Branches move on trees making a swishing noise.

Leaves, papers on the ground are blown about. Umbrellas are hard to use

Gale

Twigs snap off trees Difficult to walk

Ask the children to look outside. What is the wind able to move? Look at the chart. What kind of a day is it today? Use their own ideas along with those from the chart to write a weather report for today. What other things would they need to look for?

iii) Sequencing

Tell the children that there are some events or happenings that occur in steps or stages. First something happens, after which something else, then something else and so on. In real life we call such happenings a process, a cycle, or a flow. We also find that the steps in the process happen in a definite order. Can the children think of anything that occurs in steps or stages?

Draw 4 pictures of the stages of seed germination

or life cycle of a butterfly

or formation of clouds

or blowing a balloon

or putting a letter

Make these in a jumbled up order. Let the children number them in the right order and fill up the flow chart on their individual sheets.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
First I wrote a letter and addressed it.	>	>	>

Do the first one for them. Ask them to use sequencing words -- first, next, then, finally.

iv) Using substitution tables

The Antarctic	cold		penguins
The Sahara desert	warm		flowers
Mount Everest	hot	for	camels
The Atlantic Ocean	dry		tea plants
The Red Sea	damp		bananas
Russia	big		apples
The River Nile	wide	to	people
The Amazon jungle	narrow		wheat
Northern Europe	unfertile		irrigate land
China	high		walk across
			live in / on
			visit in one day
			swim across
			support many people

Look at these example:

Europe is too cold for tea plants.

Parts of India are warm enough to grow tea in.

Now write ten sentences like these examples with too/enough and for (+noun) or to (+verb), using the words from the table.

v) Giving Instructions about a process

Tell the children as much as you can about making recycled paper, why we make it, how it is useful. Copy this table onto the blackboard.

MATERIAL

PROCESS

used, old, crushed paper
 a wide basin
 a blender or mortar
 and pestle
 a sieve
 a roller
 a heavy weight
 the sun

is used for

making recycled paper
 soaking the paper
 making the pulp
 squeezing out water
 smoothening the paper
 flattening the paper
 drying the paper.

The above chart has been filled up. Let the children examine the naming part of the sentence i.e. the subject and the action part i.e. the predicate. Using link words such as 'and', 'also', 'now', 'next' and so on. Let the children write up these instructions in order. It would be useful if these instructions could then be shared and the class jointly works out common instructions, which are given to the craft class to use with another set of children.

vi) Using notes

District - Ladakh	-	State-Jammu & Kashmir
Location	-	North India
Climate	-	Warm in summer
Cold and snowy in winter		
Dress	-	Baku
Food	-	Noodles and meat

Use the above notes to complete the description of Ladakh. Be careful about where to use 'the' and where to use 'a' _____ rict of Ladakh is _____ state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is _____ district in North India. _____ language spoken by _____ is Ladakhi. _____ climate is warm in summer but _____ winter is. _____" _____ wear _____" They eat. _____"

Now write a description of Kalimpong

District	-	Kalimpong
State	-	West Bengal
Language	-	Bengali and Nepali
Climate	-	Warm and moist, subtropical climate throughout the year.
Dress	-	Saree
Food	-	Rice and meat

vii) Using graphs

Simple bar graphs or pie-charts are very effective techniques of presenting information. Let children actually use these for projects they may do for science or social studies. Some ideas:

- a) The children may collect information on food habits or on the languages spoken in a school or class, and present these as a graph with a write-up.
- b) They may collect data on the average time allotment for different activities by the children and present this as a speech for assembly along with a very simple pie chart.

Let the children use words of comparison.

c) The children may survey the different sources of water pollution in the neighbourhood, or different ways in which water is being wasted in the school. These findings could be presented as a table, with a write-up of the children's suggestions about some action that could be taken. The children could make posters, or write slogans or poems on their findings and share these through an exhibition, with the rest of the school.

19.5.2 Integrating Writing with other Subjects

It is a good idea to support specific subject teaching with ideas for making writing within their subjects more effective. Writing of the kind we will be looking at, has the twofold purpose of firstly clarifying concepts or ideas within the subject area and secondly enhancing the ability to communicate these through writing. Some ideas are given below:

Maths writing activities

a) Creating Maths Problems

After the class has learnt how to solve one step word problems in maths. Let them create their own problems to give others to solve. An example is given below:

Ask children to use the price list given below to create three problems that can be solved by using one operation, and one problem whose solution requires two operations. Ask the children to find the solution to their own problems before giving them to others.

PRICE LIST

ITEM	RICE
sugar	Rs. 10 per kg
rice	Rs. 6 per kg.
tea	Rs. 20 "
biscuits	Rs. 20 "
matchboxes	Rs. 10 per dozen

Similar exercises can be given using a variety of data, like the heights of children, scores in a match, distances of places and so on. The exercises can also be varied to allow children to use different maths skills and concepts. For example in the above task if you add a line saying '10% discount will be given on purchases of more than Rs. 200/.' It increases the range of problems that the children can create. Naturally the kind of tasks are entirely based on the level of the children. It is up to teachers to create as many such tasks as they find useful.

b) Writing math stories

Ask the children to read the story given below. Inside each set of parentheses are choices. Let the children circle the one that makes most sense. Now ask the children to write similar stories of their own. They could work in groups or pairs.

Shankar's holiday.

Shankar, who likes to talk in riddles was telling his math class about himself and his holidays. He began by describing himself. "Lets say I am x years old. My (younger, older) brother, Shekar, who is $x+3$ years old, and I went to spend our holiday with our(grandmother, cousin) Malini, who likes doing the same things as we do, although she is $x+7$ years old. Anyway on Saturday the three of us took the bus to a mela in the next town. Malini had to pay Rs. y for the bus ride. The driver charged Shekar and me only $(y+1, y-1)$ because we're younger. The journey usually takes 25 minutes. Since it was Saturday, there was very little traffic. The whole trip took $(25-n, 25+n)$ minutes. It

cost each of us Rs. a to get in. It cost Malini ($a + Rs. 2$, $a - Rs. 2$). We ran to the ferris wheel, but we found that you had to be at least h cms tall to be allowed on the ferris wheel without a grownup. When they measured us they found I was $h - 20$ cms tall, Shekar was $h + 10$ cms tall, and Malini was exactly h cms tall. Only (1,2,3) of us got on the ferris wheel. I don't have to tell you who was unhappy, do I?

Let the children devise a variety of stories using different mathematical operations and functions.

c) Writing about math

Give the children the following writing situation:

Writing situation – fractions and percentages

You have been studying fractions and percentages in your math class. Your teacher feels that your class is having problems because they lack an understanding of the usefulness of this knowledge in everyday life. She feels that if the students realised the importance of fractions and percentages in everyday life, their class work would be more meaningful and they would do a better job. Your problem is to convince your teacher that you understand the usefulness of this information. So you need to write an essay convincing your teacher that you understand the importance of knowing fractions and percentages by giving examples of their use in everyday life.

The above writing situation could be altered to getting children to write about the usefulness of mathematics in everyday life. Some other suggestions for writing situations:

Money matters: You would like to have a little bit of money to spend on some extra things you need. Your parents cannot afford to give you this money. Write an essay in which you describe your problem of not having enough money for the extra things you want to buy. Specify the amount of money per month that you feel would enable you to buy these things. Propose thoughtful solutions to your problem. List each solution and estimate the income that would be derived from it. Be sure that the income you receive adds up to the amount you said you needed in the beginning of the essay.

Budgeting time: You want to participate in an activity after school that takes up two hours three times a week. The problem is that your parents do not want you to participate because they think it will interfere with your studies. You feel you can solve the problem by budgeting your time wisely. Write a letter to your parents offering solutions to your problem by outlining how you will budget your time to accomplish everything you need to do to convince them that your plan will work.

The above activities and writing situations are illustrations of extending writing into the domain of mathematics. It is up to the teacher to grab real situations that constantly crop up in a class and convert these into writing tasks. Since these are situations that the students are really confronted with, the writing becomes meaningful. Thus in one task the teacher is able to accomplish several purposes, as has already been talked about earlier.

Writing in Science and Social studies

Several examples of writing in these subject areas have already been discussed in earlier units. We shall therefore just take a brief look at just a few of the numerous writing possibilities in these subject areas. There is a lot of overlap between these areas, and therefore what is being taken up in one subject area may be relevant to another.

History : Lifestyles have changed throughout history. For example a young person living at the time of the Indus valley civilisation would live differently and engage in different activities from what a young person would do today. Write a letter to an imaginary person from an earlier period in history. In this letter write about what life today is like for a person your age. Think about how life would be different for this child and what are the things you might need to explain clearly.

Geography : Helping children to read and try and experience situations they may not have access to, through their writings is one way of making geography come alive. For example children could be given the following situations as a part of a study experience of different physical features of the Earth.: If you could be a diver what are the things you would like to look for in an ocean? Choose one interesting animal who lives in the ocean. Write about why this animal is unusual. Write about an imaginary trip to the Sahara Desert for the children in a younger class. Draw pictures, and use all the information you have about the desert while writing your first-hand account.

Another way is to get children to write reports on particular topics. For example if the class is studying forests or rivers , let each child do a detailed study of one river or one forest animal or plant. Give clear guidelines for this study as well as some possible reference material from the library. Let the children present their study as an individual report.

Another idea is to let each child present a write up on her home state. The children could include aspects that they are interested in like foods, local games, stories and legends, festivals and customs. This is one way of making the multicultural aspect of each class come alive. It also gives recognition to each child's cultural background and reinforces the cultural diversity of our country in a way that is meaningful for children. There could be a cultural event to wind up, and some of the children's writings shared with others through displays and exhibitions.

Science: One kind of writing that lends itself naturally to science topics is report writing. Tell the children that in report writing the writer presents herself as an authority on a subject. It is important to narrow the subject down to a manageable topic. The writer must then present information by supporting statements with facts, examples, explanations, details, or anecdotes from personal experiences or observations. The area of science also gives children plenty of opportunity to present findings of experiments, discoveries, observations and other hands-on experiences. The children need to be able to present the information systematically and precisely. It is a good idea for language teachers to collaborate with science teachers for this purpose. We have already looked at some ways in which writing is done in the area of science, particularly with reference to the specific skills, therefore we shall not go into it in detail here.

Art and music : It is up to the imaginative teacher to tap every opportunity for writing. Art lends itself beautifully to arousing images and moods for creative writing. Letting children listen to some music with their eyes closed and then writing, produces a range of written expressions, as do experiences with paints, clay or drawing. In addition to this, children can be asked to write about their experiences with colours, or sounds. Responding to a piece of art such as a painting or a sculpture is another way of using art as a stimulus for writing. Writing the lyrics for a class theme song can be taken up as a group activity. Children can also be asked to write instructions for doing a particular craft activity. Getting children to write their views on a school art exhibition, or on whether painting competitions are a good idea, if they had to teach art how would they do it, are some of the other possibilities.

Check Your Progress 3

Suggest a suitable activity for integrating writing with science and mathematics at the upper primary level.

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19.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we stressed the need for children to have plenty of practise in writing, so that they improve and develop their writing skills. Since a lot of writing of various kinds is done in other subject areas, it is important for language teachers to collaborate with subject teachers in giving this writing the attention it requires. Often the inability of a student to grasp a concept or topic is related more to difficulties in grasping the language. By extending the scope of writing activities to include writing from all areas of the curriculum, we can provide children with the kinds of support they may require. We also reinforced the view that in their natural learning situation children do not compartmentalise knowledge, and by integrating different subject areas through writing activities, we are supporting the child's natural ways of learning. We looked at several examples suitable for beginners as well as for more advanced learners. These were taken up as possibilities. Finally it is up to the teacher to create, try out and modify writing activities which work in the specific situation that she is in. There are no easy ready-made answers to activities. What may work in one situation may not in another. It is with this openness that teachers need to try out, adapt or create their own ideas for activities.

19.7 SUGGESTED READING

Bennet, Beryl. *Writing Across the Curriculum*. Dandy Lion Publications, 1991.

Raimes, Ann. *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. Oxford University Press, 1983.

Rhodes, Lynn K. *Readers and Writers with a Difference*. Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1988.

19.8 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

When children learn naturally they do not compartmentalise learning into subject areas. Taking writing tasks across the curriculum helps to reinforce and support the natural ways of learning. It helps to integrate learning from the various subject areas. Often the difficulty that a child has with a math problem or with a science concept, is one of language. By extending writing tasks into these subjects we help children to further their understanding of the subject matter being studied. Writing across the curriculum also enables teachers to give their students a greater amount of writing practice. By using the writing that is being done in other subject areas as ways of further strengthening the children's writing skills, we enhance the opportunities that children have to develop writing skills within the school curriculum. It also exposes the children to a wider variety of writing.

Check Your Progress 2

The children could be asked to use the writing situation given below. Write a paragraph for the school notice board.

Writing situation : There are many special occasions when we want to give gifts to our friends. These gifts cost a lot of money. However, there are gifts that we can give our friends that are hand-made and attractive. Think about the many craft ideas you have learnt in school. What hand-made gift can you suggest which does not cost a lot, and your friends will like?

Write a paragraph for your school notice board, suggesting craft items that you feel will make good gifts. Very briefly describe how these could be made. Convince other students that such gifts will be liked by others.

Check Your Progress 3

Given below is a sample of a writing task for more advanced learners within the subject areas of science and mathematics.

In the task that is being presented the children are given a writing situation from the areas of science and mathematics to do a piece of creative writing.

Writing situation : You have a class project, which requires you to make a model showing different sources of water. The problem is that it will cost money. You can pay a part of the expenses from your savings. Your parents may help you if you can give an idea of the project and how much it will cost, and how the project will be useful for you. Write a letter to your parents outlining your project. List out the materials you will require. Estimate the cost. Explain how much you can pay, and how much more you need. Convince them that what you are doing is important for you.