



encouraging expression through words and pictures...



Encouraging unsure writers

This information sheet has been put together in response to concerns raised by parents and experiences shared at **Inkpots**. We do get lots of children at our workshops who just want to write and always have several stories on the go. But there are plenty who may be brimming with ideas yet find it so hard to get those words out and onto paper. The following thoughts are based on talks with other parents, teachers, special educational needs co-ordinators and literary specialists. It's just the start of a discussion that we want to keep going at Inkpots and hope that many people join in.

The first thing to know is that you're not alone if you have a child who is an unsure writer. I have two grown up sons and my elder one was particularly unsure – and not really interested to be honest – about writing stories. Turns out he has a very scientific brain, and he's now a physicist. But there were plenty of tears over the years – most of them mine – about his difficulties expressing himself on paper. Many parents of boys share these frustrations but girls can be affected too.

- 1. A dislike of writing stories down might be due to something practical like a concern about untidy handwriting** – your child's teacher should be able to help with this. You may also want to rule out any medical conditions like Dyslexia; your child's school's special educational needs co-ordinator or class teacher will be good starting points. You could also contact the **Helen Arkell Trust** <https://www.helenarkell.org.uk>.
- 2. You may have lived and breathed The Famous Five or the Narnia Stories as a child – but your child may not!** It may go against the grain but try to harness what your child is really into – Minecraft, Pokemon Go, My Little Pony, Halo, Top Model – even collecting football stickers. Whatever it is, if your child is absolutely passionate about something, you can use this to your advantage. Even if it doesn't seem to make sense to you, see if there is any way you can use that passion to encourage stories.
- 3. Join your local library and make it an ordinary thing to regularly go and wander around absorbing which books are available.** It doesn't matter at first if your child doesn't want to take any books out, just let them find their own way.



4. **Do you all like nice stationery and notebooks?** It's a bit of an event in my family if one of us finds a good notebook! Let your child choose a new notebook, give them a pen, and folder to keep everything in – and then leave them to it. This is for their writing – to do as much or as little as they want – and no peeking!
5. **Comics can be great for unsure writers** – take a look at www.beano.com and www.thephoenixcomic.co.uk. These are particularly good if your child doesn't like reading long books – they may prefer to write stories in short sections too. Or draw out a story like a comic strip.
6. **Try to get to know about the wide range of books that are available** – there is a mass available on the internet but following a children's book blogger can help you. At **Inkpots**, we really like **Book Monster Ally** (<http://bookmonsters.info/blog>), **Book Lover Jo** (<https://bookloverjo.wordpress.com>) and the **Book Activist** (<http://thebookactivist.com>). There are also some reading suggestions at the end of this sheet.
7. If you have a local creative writing group like **Inkpots** your child may benefit from just being around other children who are telling stories. The balance is that they don't get disheartened so it's always a good idea to have a chat to the leader. At **Inkpots** we're also starting an **online club**, and we welcome all young writers at whatever stage. **Please visit** <http://inkpots.org/wordpress/inkpots-inc>.

Progress may be very slow – and sometimes painful – but please don't give up. I'm convinced that being able to write even short pieces can help raise self esteem enormously and this is vital if we're to raise balanced, happy young people.

Good luck – and please do contact me if you have any ideas you would like to share.

Gill Pawley

With special thanks to

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Reading suggestions

Journey by Aaron Becker (wordless picture book for older children. Also **Quest** and **Return** in the series allow children to create/narrate their own stories with pictorial guidance) – <http://amzn.to/2djWdxN>

The following are fabulous illustrated novels. Much more accessible, and allow younger children to see that writing can be funny and entertaining and supported by illustrations.

Rabbit's Bad Habbits by Julian Gough and Jim Field – <http://amzn.to/2d9Tou3>

Pugs of the Frozen North by Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre – <http://amzn.to/2cucaLD>

Oliver and the Seawigs by Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre – <http://amzn.to/2cXs87y>

Cakes in Space by Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre – <http://amzn.to/2djW9Ig>

Jinks & O'Hare Funfair Repair by Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre – <http://amzn.to/2dGyCm0>

Mortimer Keene books by Tim Healy – <http://amzn.to/2djV6I1>

Pocket Pirates by Chris Mould – <http://amzn.to/2cudxu5>

The Adventures of Dog Man by Dav Pilkey – <http://amzn.to/2cQoE5q>

Dave Pigeon by Swapna Haddow and Sheena Dempsey – <http://amzn.to/2dqmxEG>

Ottoline by Chris Riddell – <http://amzn.to/2dHCDam>

The World's Worst Children by David Walliams – <http://amzn.to/2dpoSlu>

Danger is Everywhere by David O'Doherty and Chris Judge – <http://amzn.to/2cQvIV7>

Graphic novels are great for reluctant readers and writers. These show that you can create great stories, with not a huge amount of text!

Bunny vs Monkey by Jamie Stewart – <http://amzn.to/2dHwHmx>

Hilda and the Troll by Luke Pearson – <http://amzn.to/2cQqovA>

Space Dumplings by Craig Thomson – <http://amzn.to/2dHt8YQ>

Short stories are great because they're good bite sized tales, often quirky and full of humour, and also show that good stories don't have to be long. The following authors all tell good tales.

Andy Griffiths – <http://amzn.to/2dGCMKE> – <http://amzn.to/2dC3TtO>

Paul Jennings – <http://amzn.to/2dQI0TO>

Dan Worsley – <http://amzn.to/2dZIWsl>

These are also just great, and non-fiction is often more appealing to some children.

Science Quest & History Quest books – <http://amzn.to/2cQowDe> – <http://amzn.to/2d0QBpC>