

# Achieve greater depth in reading and writing

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# Introduction

## The Approach

Read in to Writing (RitW) is a complete suite of materials that provides schools with a reading-rich curriculum for quality first teaching of English, from Reception to Year 6. The RitW curriculum differs from other English schemes available as it centres on high quality texts rather than simply texts as a stimulus for writing. This approach comes directly from the purpose of study for English which states, 'Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know.'

Reading is core to the English curriculum, fundamental to everyday English lessons and RitW embraces this. Each unit teaches reading in depth, first and foremost, through a rounded study of the whole text. Convincing writing tasks are embedded within this reading experience, so the children's deep reading knowledge and understanding are crucial to the success of the writing. Metacognitive questioning encourages children to engage with what they do as readers

and writers, so that learning is really personal to them rather than seen as 'school' reading and writing; it is part of their self-expression. With this rich study of the book and the authenticity of writing, children invest in what they write; they want to write, have plenty to say and know how to say it.

The books being studied in the RitW curriculum have been carefully selected to give children a breadth of reading experience that includes exploration of themes, philosophical questions, context, the children's own experiences as well as the emotional journey the characters go on in the stories. Thus, RitW helps children to develop in the ways intended from the purpose of study, whilst acquiring knowledge and broadening their vocabulary, using all that they learn to express themselves in writing. In this way, RitW develops children's understanding of themselves, others and the world.

Finally, the RitW approach acknowledges that, 'Talk is the sea upon which all else floats.' (James Britton, 1970) and so progressive, open questioning and strategic pupil talk is how learning is initiated and developed across each unit.



## Challenge

Challenge is high across the RitW curriculum, with the aim being that more children will achieve the highest standard, including 'greater depth' at the end of year 2 and year 6. The RitW approach is influenced by Bruner here and his theory of scaffolding: 'We begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development.' (Bruner, 1960). In each unit, teaching and learning is carefully structured and presented in detail, so as to target all children. Progression is scaffolded across each session using talk in many forms to develop learning, meaning that all of the children, no matter what standard they are working at, can make good progress.

There will be a need for teachers to provide more specific scaffolds for children with particular needs, such as SEND, for some of the writing tasks. This is bespoke support that only teachers who know the children can provide. It is recommended that these children be expected to achieve the same outcomes, albeit at different standards.

## Coverage

RitW delivers the entire National Curriculum for English through a reading-rich programme of study, with key objectives for spoken language, reading, grammar and writing identified on the overview and each session. Influenced by Bruner's notion of the 'Spiral Curriculum', children across each year group will learn and revisit many aspects of the curriculum, supporting the belief that English is a recursive subject and knowledge and skills need to be continually revised. The RitW curriculum provides progression within each year and across years, from Reception to the end of year 6, helping to avoid any dips in expectation or outcomes across the primary phase. RitW is a complete, coherent and cumulative English curriculum.



The Boy at the Back of the Class, Year 5 Teaching Slide



### Skellig by David Almond

**Unit overview**

This six-week unit is a study of David Almond's Skellig. It will develop children's understanding of the story, characters, themes and language. The unit teaches reading, including fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, and meaningful writing, for a range of forms, purposes and audiences. The teaching of grammar and punctuation is embedded within analysis of the language and structures used to tell the story, through activities that explore the effect these might have on readers. The children are taught to apply what they have learnt to their own writing, making choices to affect their reader's thoughts and feelings. All learning in the unit builds towards a final piece of writing, where the children can use everything they have learned. In this case to write a story of their own. **All extracts, resources, session planning and teaching slides are included within this unit. This unit also includes a piece written by the author about how he wrote Skellig, to further inspire the children's writing.**

**Themes and cross-curricular links**

- History** - Romanticism period art/writing/Willem Blake
- Geography** - Skellig Michael (the location is the inspiration for the story)
- Science** - Evolution, Dinosaurs and fossils
- RE** - creation story compared to evolution theories and links to angels
- DT** - create fossils made from clay
- Art** - Romanticism artwork (draw Skellig/birds/characters)
- SMSC** - relationships, change, loss
- Drama** - Performance of scenes from Skellig, hot-seed, poetry read aloud
- Extra curriculum** - A trip to a Natural History Museum to explore fossils or visit Darwin's house

**Curriculum coverage**

**Spoken language:**

- ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments

**Reading**

- recommending books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices
- identifying and discussing themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing
- making comparisons within and across books
- discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the effect on the reader
- explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary
- provide reasoned justifications for their views

**Grammar, punctuation and spelling**

- using reported noun phrases to convey complex information concisely
- using modal verbs or adverbs to indicate degrees of possibility
- using relative clauses beginning with who, which, where, when, whose, that or with an implied (or omitted) relative pronoun
- using commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity in writing
- using hyphens to avoid ambiguity
- using brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parentheticals
- using semi-colons, colons or dashes to mark boundaries between independent clauses

**Writing**

- identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own writing and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary
- in writing narratives, considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed
- in narratives, describing settings, characters and atmosphere and integrating dialogue to convey character and advance the action
- assessing the effectiveness of their own and

**Recommended Year Group:** Year 6  
**Recommended Term:** Autumn 1  
**Recommended Edition:** 9780340944950

**Key questions**

- Are you ever truly isolated?
- What wisdom can you find that is greater than kindness?
- What is Skellig?

**Writing outcomes**

- Internal monologue** - to explore Michael's feelings in the problem solving and therefore the purpose for the reader is to empathise with this point - same with the other monologues and diaries
- Personal narrative** - to describe and entertain
- Internal monologue** - to explore Skellig's feelings
- An extra excerpt for the story** - to entertain
- Minor's diary** - to explore Minor's feelings
- Michael's diary** - to explore the change in Michael's feelings
- Final piece** - story - to entertain
- Formal piece of non-fiction writing** - The children may also wish to write a one-sided or balanced argument on the topic of home school vs state school.

**Essential teaching guidance**

- The Read it in Writing approach supports meaningful reading experiences within a rich book study. This unit also offers SATs style questions/preparation (see Teaching slides), which may be used in guided reading lessons or focused SATs prep sessions, still linked to the book that's being studied, in depth, in English. The reading comprehension within the unit of work, and the reading aloud to improve fluency and understanding threaded through the unit, is essential SATs preparation also.
- Children are urged to freely discuss their feelings throughout, so it is important that there is clear guidance about respecting the thoughts and views of others.
- As this story focuses on the theme of 'life vs death' it is advisable that any individuals with personal experience are spoken to prior to beginning the unit if deemed appropriate, or there is the potential that it may cause distress, or stir up repressed feeling.
- Teachers may want to ensure that they are clear in their understanding of the five terms suspension and intertextuality, as they are key concepts discussed within the unit and interwoven in Skellig.

**Skellig, Year 6 Unit Overview**

risingstars-uk.com/readintowriting 3



## Promoting reading

The root for promoting reading in schools is through a rich, reading curriculum. RitW promotes reading because 'the book is all'. Each unit is a book study, with the story given as much time as is needed to teach it fully so that children gain an understanding of all aspects of it. The book is always read to the end! This depth of study, which 'sails on a sea of talk', improves children's reading knowledge and skills and the acceptance of different interpretations gives them confidence in their reading, thoughts and ideas. It is this feeling of security that makes children want to read more.

A key feature of the RitW curriculum is that not only does the teacher regularly read aloud to their class but children are given more opportunity than before to read aloud and importantly, to rehearse their reading aloud in order to master their performance and understanding. Rhythm is important for reading and writing; how text sounds and how it makes us feel and this is explicitly taught in RitW. Reading aloud is modelled by the teacher and then the children practise their skills of making meaning through clear pronunciation, expression, stress and pace. They will perform their reading, explore the reasons behind the choices they made and be given the chance, through peer feedback,

to improve the effect of their reading before a final performance. Being active in reading stories in this way engages the children whilst enhancing their decoding and comprehension skills and as they become better readers and readers who enjoy reading, this nurtures their motivation to read with purpose and for pleasure.

Across the RitW book studies, children explore their own experiences, thoughts and feelings, making links to the characters to help them empathise and better understand the situation the characters are in. The units often ask the children to consider, 'What would you do? Why?'. By making such strong links between themselves and characters the children begin to 'live' the stories, entering into the world of the book which empowers and enthuses them, encouraging them to read more widely.

In the RitW curriculum, importance is placed on the personal experience; ideas, thoughts and feelings about how what we read affects us and how our writing affects others. Children learn to express their human experience. Metacognition is embedded in RitW to explore this and how it impacts on the choices the writers we read make and the choices we make in our writing. Making their intentions as writers clear and showing how subject content and grammar work together to serve the purpose and audience for writing,

makes the children's writing most effective in meaning.

To promote wider reading and give teachers ready recommendations of books that the children can read alongside the story being studied, or for teachers to read to their class for enjoyment, each unit has suggestions for related stories by the same author, on the same topic or on the same theme that are guaranteed to engage the children whilst they are enjoying the story they are studying.



## Professional Development

The RitW curriculum develops teachers' subject knowledge of English through immersing them in an approach that makes clear how to teach reading well and how reading and writing are inextricably linked; how one feeds the other and back again. They become in tune with the purpose of study for English and more aware of what the discipline of English is. Teachers see how important knowledge is for reading and writing and that English is not only a 'skills-based subject' where skills are ticked off when the children achieve them. That is not how teaching language works.

The detail in the units means that teachers are taken step by step through the process. It is recommended, in order for teachers to fully benefit from the subject knowledge development that the units can provide, that they teach one or two units verbatim so they are immersed in the approach. This gives teachers confidence and puts them in a strong position to change the units without affecting the essence of the approach and losing the powerful impact of the deep reading experience, which takes time and could be so easily lost.

## Structure of a unit

The majority of the RitW units will last for half a term; time that is needed for this rich learning experience in reading and writing. This may seem unusual to some but the results from schools teaching the RitW curriculum confirm that this time is necessary to achieve the powerful outcomes for children. It is a leap of faith for some teachers that once taken they will see the difference it can make to their children; increasing their engagement, knowledge and reading and writing progress.

Progression becomes clear within each session and across all of the sessions in a unit, as questioning delves increasingly deeper in to how meaning is made and how to make meaning. The order of questions is carefully thought through, to take children on a learning journey from overview to understanding to analysing deeper layers of meaning. This method gives children strategies for how to pay close attention to what they read.

There are approximately 3 key pieces of writing in each unit. There are other pieces of writing that the children will do, that form part of the learning process. The key pieces of writing tend to be spaced evenly across the weeks and the final extended piece draws on everything the children have learnt in the unit, with a celebration of their achievements included at the end.



SESSION 1 Skellig by David Almond	
Learning objective	To understand theme
Outcomes	Foundation of knowledge for key ideas in the text, such as the link between themes (love and loss/ isolation and uncertainty). Children show understanding of narrative writing (use of conjunctions to link ideas, fronted adverbials and emotive language) and write their own personal narrative linked to the theme.
Key vocabulary	isolation, loneliness, uncertainty, interpretation, synonyms, antonyms, expression, delivery
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It is best to not show children the book at this point. Keep this lesson more for introducing key themes and building intrigue in the book.</li><li>Display words 'isolation' 'uncertainty' and 'loneliness'. Give each group a poster with one of the words and have them write down words, phrases or pictures that come to mind for their selected word. <b>What does this word mean to you? What images or thoughts come to mind when you see this word?</b></li><li>Let's discuss opposites. <b>What is a synonym? What is an antonym? How do they relate to each other? How do they help us to better understand words? Can you think of any synonyms or antonyms for the vocabulary words? How do these words help you understand the words that are displayed?</b></li><li>Have children create a mini-presentation about their understanding of the word and their experiences with this word.</li><li>After each presentation, all the children share their understanding of the word or any other input they would like to share about the word. Challenge pupils to create a sentence using the word.</li><li>Display the word 'change' on the board. <b>What comes to mind when you see this word? How do you feel about the word? Do you embrace change, or does it worry you?</b> Explain.</li></ul>

Skellig, Year 6 Session 1



## Assessment

The units for the RitW curriculum are written to target 'greater depth' or achievement at the higher standard. The National Curriculum is taught in a recursive way throughout the units, meaning that what the children need to know and be able to do is practised again and again, to achieve that high standard.

Simon Sock, Reception  
'I can' Teaching Slide

**I can write a sentence about my favourite part of the story.**

**Success criteria**

- I can say what my favourite part of the story is.
- I can say the sentence I want to write aloud and on my fingers.
- I can hear the sounds I need to write.
- I can use finger spaces, capital letters and full stops.
- I can read back my sentence to check it makes sense.

Use with Session 1

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Read to Write Reception © 2019 Rising Stars UK Ltd

Read to Write

For reading, the requirements of the Key Stage 1 Teacher Assessment Framework (TAF) and the reading domains for the Key Stage 2 reading test are explicitly taught progressively throughout the RitW curriculum, not only in the year 2 and year 6 units. In most of the year 6 units there are 'test-style' questions and opportunities for children to prepare for the test are embedded within the sessions.

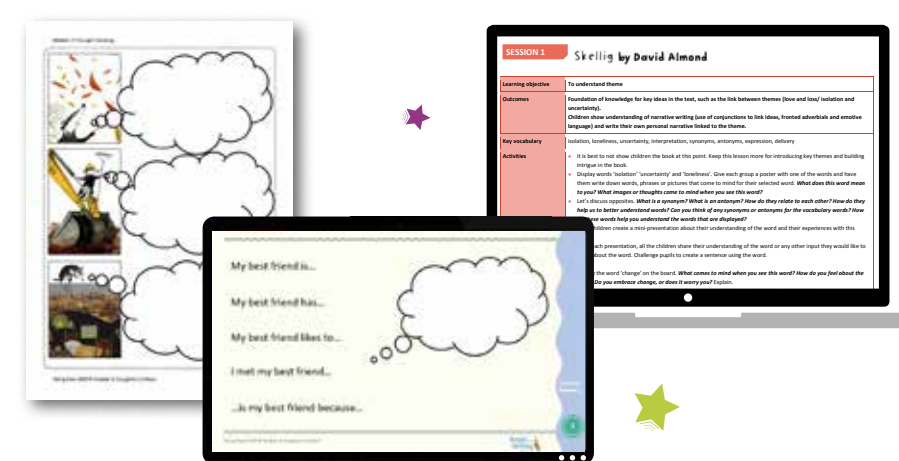
For writing, the 'Pupil can' statements from the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 TAFs are explicitly taught, with the main focus of tasks being to target the purpose and audience so that writing is purposeful, coherent, cohesive and draws on the children's independent reading, not just on the class texts. Each unit teaches 3 or more key pieces of writing and it is these pieces that should be used to assess the children's achievement in writing as these will be their best work. When teaching RitW across the whole year, children will have at least 18 pieces of writing that show what they can do. These can be used for their end of year or Key Stage assessment, providing plenty of evidence for moderation.

# Topics and themes

Go online to see a detailed list of topics and themes covered

## Reception

	PSED	Understanding the World	Maths	Expressive Arts and Design	British Values	Physical Development	Philosophy/SMSC
Simon Sock	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Little Whale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Be Brave Little Penguin and The Lion Inside	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Bee & Me	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Think Big!	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mr Wolf's Pancakes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	



# Key Stage 1

		History	Geography	Maths	Science	RE	DT	Art	SMSC / PSHE	Drama	ICT	Extra Curriculum	Music	PE	Languages
Year 1	Oi Frog!		✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			
	Where the Wild Things Are		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
	Manfred the Baddie	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
	The Queen's Hat and The Queen's Handbag	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					
	The Nightbox and Orion and the Dark	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓				
	Mole's Star		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓				

Year 2	Fantastic Mr Fox		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
	The Way Home for Wolf	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓			✓	
	The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓				
	The Tin Forest		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓				
	The Diary of a Killer Cat	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓			✓	
	Tidy and Greta and the Giants			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					



# Key Stage 2



		History	Geography	Maths	Science	RE	DT	Art	SMSC / PSHE	Drama	ICT	Extra Curriculum	Music	PE	Languages
Year 3	The Iron Man		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓		
	The Velveteen Rabbit						✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		
	Mary Poppins	✓						✓	✓	✓					
	Zoo								✓	✓					
	The Bear and the Piano		✓					✓	✓	✓			✓		
	The Selfish Giant and The Happy Prince				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		

Year 4	The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
	How to Train Your Dragon	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
	The Day I was Erased	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					
	Phileas' Fortune		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
	The Wolves in the Walls				✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
	The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane		✓					✓	✓	✓			✓		



		History	Geography	Maths	Science	RE	DT	Art	SMSC / PSHE	Drama	ICT	Extra Curriculum	Music	PE	Languages
Year 5	The Wizards of Once	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
	The Jungle Book		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					
	Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	The Boy at the Back of the Class	✓	✓						✓						
	The Call of the Wild	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓						
	The Rocket and All Summer in a Day	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓					

Year 6	Skellig	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
	The Arrival	✓						✓	✓	✓					
	The Lost Magician	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓			
	Wonder		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓			
	Macbeth	✓						✓	✓	✓			✓		
	Tom's Midnight Garden	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓					



## About the authors

### Maggie McGuigan

Maggie has been working in education for 30 years as a teacher and English adviser. The Read in to Writing curriculum is based on the principles of and approach to teaching English that Maggie has great success with when working with teachers to develop their English teaching and improve their pupils' progress and attainment in talk, reading and writing. She is a Series Editor and author of *Read in to Writing*.

Maggie regularly teaches English in Year 6 and has taught across all key stages. She plans and delivers central training to teachers and school leaders on teaching, learning and assessment and provides bespoke English training and support to schools. She is Moderation Manager for the London borough where she is based and works for STA as a moderator, trainer and quality assurer.

Central to Maggie's work to develop English teaching is her belief in the importance of 'story'. She promotes stories as fundamental to the way that we learn about ourselves, others and the world. Stories, she believes, provide children with rich, broad and deep life and learning experiences.



### Maddy Barnes

Maddy is an experienced primary school teacher and senior leader who is currently a full-time English Consultant offering bespoke training to support schools locally, nationally and internationally.

Maddy still regularly teaches in the classroom and includes live-teaching sessions in most of her training. She is also an established educational author, writer, writing moderator, blogger and series editor for a range of educational publishers and is a Department for Education QA proofer for grammar and reading within test development.

Passionate about 'getting it right' for children, Maddy is a published author and is the Series Editor and Author for Read in to Writing as well as Skills Builders Grammar and Punctuation for Rising Stars and NTS Assessment for RS Assessment from Hodder Education. She was a key advisor on the development of Reading Planet and contributed to the development of the teacher's guides and to embedding comprehension skills within the series.



# All Saints Benhilton C of E Primary School

Year 6 Teacher, Key Stage 2 and English Leader, Jessie Farley, and her Year 6 pupils share their thoughts on studying *Skellig* as a whole book through Read in to Writing.

“What I enjoyed about reading *Skellig*, was how he was really descriptive with what he did.”

“We really explored life and death and all the meanings in the book.”

“The *Skellig* unit immersed my children into writing stories on a deeper level than I have ever experienced before.”

“It is great to have children practising grammar skills and building their vocabulary in context rather than discrete lessons.”



To watch the full series and find out more about how schools are using Read in to Writing, visit our [Impact in Schools](#) page online.