

Prior Knowledge - Check that children can already:

- Talk about a particular author and the type of books that author writes; express a personal response and make independent choices about their own reading.
- Make a valid contribution to a collaborative group activity, listen to others and reach agreement within the group.
- Group sentences into paragraphs.

Experience . have someone deliver a shoebox (cover in brown paper and add address/stamp in the style of the front cover) to the class. Inside find a meerkat and some items he has packed for his holiday . linked to adventures in book. Great start for discussion.

Familiarisation and immersion in text

Begin by giving each group copies of the pictures and writing on the postcards from **Meerkat Mail**. The group work together to decide which postcard front and back go together. Read the book closely, enjoying humour in the illustrations, and links throughout (eg jackal). Read other books by Gravett. Discuss and note any similarities. Create a display in class for children to browse and add to. At the end of each story, ask children to talk in pairs about what they particularly enjoyed, for example memorable words and phrases; funny or surprising aspects of the plot; original characters. Discuss aspects of the text that appeal to them, encouraging children to express a personal preference. Gather information about the author's style. Look at the type of book the author writes, building on children's experience of different types of story encountered during the year.

Read the first letter from **Dear Miss** from the Headteacher. Discuss formal style. Continue with letters from Michael. Compare his less formal writing style. Emphasise audience and purpose for writing, and the style of the letter varies accordingly. Stop at a suitable point so that the children can write Michael's next letter (because of the nature of the book, it may link to another area studied, eg. Egyptians . the children could write the letter from Egypt, and include details they have learnt in History)

Dear Greenpeace

Read the first two letters. Contrast the formal/informal language of Greenpeace and Emily, along with text print. Give children copies of the letters. Work in small groups to match the letters, using clues from the text, and recognising the response referring to what has been said previously (audience and purpose). Children order the letters, according to clues. Highlight links between letters which have led them to order the letters in this way. Share with another group and explain their reasoning.

Give children choices and different ways to respond to each of the books eg book review (variety provided), character study, labeling/annotating illustrations, letter to a friend about when they met a character etc.

Play just a minute where each child should talk for 1 minute about their favourite book, without hesitation or repetition.

Phase outcome - Children can identify the key features of different types of letters.

Compare characters, settings, themes, illustrations and type/font styles in the author's books and look for common elements. The judging criteria on http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/shadowingsite/groupleaders/lib_crit.php give useful questions for discussion, e.g. What use is made of covers, end-papers and title page? Are there recurring visual themes or images that enhance the reader's understanding of the book? How well do the illustrations and text relate to each other in terms of layout? Are the images and text consistent with each other?

Use a KWL grid (what do we KNOW, WANT to know, what have we LEARNT) to record information about each author. Generate questions under W the children would like to know about each author. Split class into expert groups for each author. Allow children to choose their favourite author to research. Read background information about each author, for example through research on the internet and videos on <http://www.emilygravett.com/>, <http://www.jacketflap.com/profile.asp?member=amyhusband> (or <http://www.amyhusband.co.uk/> coming soon), <http://www.simonjamesbooks.co.uk/home/about-simon/> Each group discuss and make notes about what they have learned. Present what they have learnt to the rest of the class, giving reasons why they prefer this author to the other two.

Ask children to compose questions they would like to ask the author about the author's writing or illustrating. Use Hotseating to practice asking the questions and imagining appropriate answers. Which questions lead to the most interesting answers? Give time for children to amend their questions accordingly.

Phase outcomes: Children can explain why they like books by a particular author, referring to an author's style or themes. Children can give reasons for their views.

Introduce the writing task: writing letters to real people for a genuine purpose.

Model how to write a letter to an author. Refer to previous work on working wall and make notes about why you like the author's stories and some questions you would like to ask. Group the notes into sections according to subject. Model the correct layout for the letter and rehearse sentences orally to show how to change the notes into sentences. Explain how to start a new paragraph when beginning to write about a new subject. Read the letter carefully and demonstrate how to re-draft particular sections, for example to avoid repetition.

Children plan and write their own letters to authors following the same process. They check that their finished letters; use conventions of letter writing; have complete sentences; are organised into paragraphs. They re-draft on paper or screen and present the letter in a polished form so that letters can be sent. Use Guided writing to support particular targets and areas for improvement.

Model how to address an envelope. Children find the publisher's address in their book, and address their own envelope. Post it and wait!

Phase outcome Children can write a letter using appropriate style for a specific purpose and audience.

Further writing opportunity (application of skills):

Ask the children to bring an envelope into school (with a stamp!), addressed to a relative. If appropriate, link to another curriculum area eg History – questions for Grandparents, Science – healthy eating, favourite dinners, Geography – holidays/holiday memories) Children write a letter, giving school address for the reply. Discuss the differences in the way they will write when it is someone they know. When one relative sends a reply, word soon spreads to other relatives!