

# RIPLEY ST THOMAS

CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

As we approach the summer holidays, we hope that your son or daughter has enjoyed developing their English skills throughout Year 7. We understand that some pupils may be nervous about only having one year left before they start their GCSEs in English Language and Literature.

In the English Department, we have a wide range of methods for supporting pupils to ensure that they are 'GCSE-ready' by the time they start Year 9. One of these is to offer a significant discount on a set of textbooks, 'Skills for Writing', aimed at developing the writing skills required at GCSE. These books are based on research by the University of Exeter and use tried and tested methods to accelerate progress in writing.

Full information on the books can be found on the following page. The RRP for these books is £14.25 each but we are offering a set of three for £15. These books can be used to practise and develop writing skills over the summer holidays and throughout Year 8. They are suitable for all abilities as they focus on developing all aspects of writing.

If you would like to purchase a set of books for your son or daughter, payment may be made using the online payment system at [www.scopay.com/ripley](http://www.scopay.com/ripley) using your personal login details from the letter issued to pupils. Alternatively, you may pay by cash, which should be placed in an envelope clearly marked with your child's name and 'English Writing Textbooks' and posted in the blue box by the school canteen.

We do have a limited number of these sets of books and will sell them on a first come, first served basis. The final date for orders is Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs R Goulds  
Subject Leader, English

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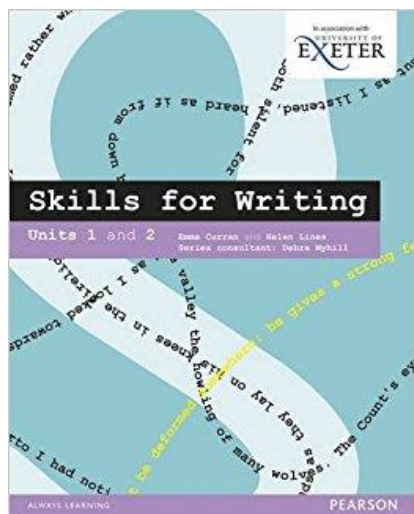
**I would like to order a set of 'Skills for Writing' textbooks for £15.**

Pupil name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor group: 7\_\_\_\_\_

Please place this slip and payment in an envelope clearly marked with your child's name and 'English Writing Textbooks' and post in the blue box by the school canteen by Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July.

*Believe.....*

## About the books:



'Skills for Writing' is a series of three books developed in partnership with Professor Debra Myhill and her team at the University of Exeter. It is based on extensive research and is proven to accelerate progress in writing significantly.

Each full-colour book contains six units based on a range of topics. Extracts from a wide variety of real fiction and nonfiction texts are used to demonstrate the different effects that writers use and to model how grammar choices can create these effects. Pupils can then experiment with creating these effects in their own writing.

Grammar is taught in a contextualised way, always focusing of effects, so pupils have a wider range of techniques with which to craft creative, effective texts.


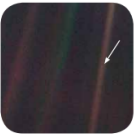
Pupils will also gain experience of the analysis of texts through exploring the choices writers make.

## Sample pages:

### 3 Describing nature by using comparisons

**Learning objective**

- Understand how writers and presenters use simile and metaphor to describe the natural world

**Activity 1**

- Look at the photographs of Earth from space and read the astronauts' descriptions on the right.
  - Which description paints the best picture for you? Explain your choice.
  - Using either of the photographs to help you, invent two or three comparisons of your own to describe Earth as seen from space.

Unit 2: Writing the World

**Activity 2**

- Read these descriptions of sea creatures and for each one decide:
  - Which creature is being described? Match the correct letters and numbers.
  - What features of the creature are described and what are they compared to? Be as precise as possible.
  - Is it a good comparison? Explain your answer.

**A ... the size of a marble, the most beautiful you can imagine. That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate, that if you touched it with a finger it would crumble and fall apart.**  
(Clayton Kopp)

**B ... a sparkling blue and white jewel, a light, delicate sky-blue sphere laced with slowly swirling veils of white, rising gradually like a small pearl in a thick sea of black mystery.**  
(Edgar Mitchell)

**A ... a long, torpedo-shaped body. At one end, surrounding a beak-like mouth strong enough to cut through steel cable, are five pairs of arms.**

**B ... a few metres away was a pointed nose, and a mouth lined with razor-sharp teeth, coming at him.**

**C ... the tail breaks the surface and rears up into the air, dripping with water. It is as wide as the wings of a small aircraft.**

1 A great white shark      2 A blue whale      3 A giant squid

**Activity 3**

- Read the text below, adapted from *Things that go chomp in the night* by John Downer. The text is describing creatures that live in our beds and come out every night to feed on our dead skin cells!
  - What are dustmites compared to? Can you find at least three different comparisons?
  - Explain which comparison you think is the most surprising or unusual.
- Look at the photograph of a dustmite, magnified so that it's much larger than life.
  - Decide which feature of the dustmite to describe and what you can compare it to.
  - Write your own simile or metaphor describing this feature of the dustmite.

**What do better writers do?**

Better writers:

- use similes and metaphors to surprise or shock us: unusual comparisons can make us see the natural world in a new way.

**WRITER'S WORKSHOP: Using similes and metaphors to make comparisons**

**How can I use similes and metaphors to describe the natural world?**

Good writers use **similes** and **metaphors** to draw attention to something special or unusual about a natural feature or creature. Look at this example:

... the explosion produced an immense wave in the sea. As it travelled towards the coast of Java, it became **a wall of water as high as a four-storey house**. It picked up a naval gunboat, carried it bodily nearly two kilometres inland and dumped it on top of a hill.  
(from *The Power of Krakatau* by David Attenborough)

Most people have never seen a tsunami so would find it difficult to picture one. Why does David Attenborough compare the tidal wave to a tall building? What picture does this give you?

For similes and metaphors to work, the objects being compared need to be connected in some way. The wave is the same height as a four-storey house, but it's also as **solid and dense** as a brick wall. What will happen when it crashes onto the shore? Can you make any connection with the destruction caused by a falling house?

It isn't a pleasant thought, but you're never alone in bed. As you snuggle up among the sheets and blankets, an army of tiny refuse-collectors sifts and chews its way through your dreams.

Beneath the sheets of even the cleanest bed lurk thousands of eight-legged **scavengers**. We never notice our unwitting guests because each one is smaller than a speck of dust. They are only able to survive in this seemingly barren landscape because, each night, cells flake from our skin surface and shower down on them like **manna** from heaven.

**Sustained** by this nutritious snowstorm, up to two million dustmites are able to survive in the average mattress – they graze the vast **savannah** of our sheets, like herds of miniature **wildebeest**.

**Glossary**

**scavengers:** creatures that live off dead meat or rubbish

**manna:** in the Bible, the food provided for the Israelites in the wilderness

**sustained:** kept alive

**savannah:** plains in southern Africa

**wildebeest:** African animals, between an ox and an antelope