The Viewer by Gary Crew and Shaun Tan

The Viewer tells the peculiar story of a boy (Tristan) whose obsession with curious artefacts leads him to discover an strange box at a dump site. It proves to be an ancient chest full of optical devices, one of which captures his interest; an intricately mechanical object which carries disks of images; scenes of destruction, violence and the collapse of civilisations throughout time. Tristan is afraid, but also cannot help but look into the machine time and time again as the images shift and change...

Overall aims of this teaching sequence.

- To explore, interpret and respond to illustrations in a book
- To enjoy a story and discuss its meanings
- To build an imaginative picture of a fantasy world, based on real life experiences
- To explore these through role play and through writing in role
- To write own stories based on the story read from another character’s point of view

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 5 or Year 6 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.

This teaching sequence is approximately 4 weeks long if spread out over 20 sessions.
The book supports teachers to teach about character development, emotional response and changes of setting in narrative fiction. The narrative structure is carefully crafted and the characters and settings are well drawn, offering young readers a good model for their own story planning and descriptive writing.

National Curriculum 2014 Links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading: (Word reading / Comprehension)</th>
<th>Writing: (Transcription / Composition)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes</td>
<td>identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own</td>
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<tr>
<td>reading aloud to children should include whole books so that they meet books and authors that they might not choose to read themselves.</td>
<td>noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying and discussing themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing</td>
<td>in writing narratives, considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what they have read, listened to or seen performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>making comparisons within and across books</td>
<td>in narratives, describing settings, characters and atmosphere and integrating dialogue to convey character and advance the action</td>
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<tr>
<td>checking the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context</td>
<td>assessing the effectiveness of their own and others’ writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>ask questions to improve their understanding</td>
<td>perform their own compositions, using appropriate intonation, volume, and movement so that meaning is clear</td>
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<tr>
<td>draw inferences such as inferring characters’ feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>predicting what might happen from details stated and implied</td>
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<tr>
<td>summarising the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others’ ideas and challenging views courteously</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
• 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.

Speaking and Listening:
• ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and build vocabulary and knowledge
• articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions, give well-structured descriptions and explanations
• maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
• use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
• participate in discussions, presentations, performances and debates
• gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
• consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and build on the contributions of others

Cross Curricular Links

It would be really good to have a selection of items around the class that ‘magnify, illuminate and focus’ and a Viewmaster if you can get one, to allow the children to see and handle these items.

Mathematics
Investigate Roman numerals and devise own symbols to use in mathematics
Investigations into circles and spirals

There are a number of links here that will help in planning this:

Roman Numerals
http://www.mathsisfun.com/definitions/roman-numerals.html
Logo Squares
http://nrich.maths.org/282
Circle Panes
http://nrich.maths.org/4773
Investigating Circles
http://nrich.maths.org/2844
Circles Circles Everywhere
http://nrich.maths.org/2561

Investigating patterns in circles:

Investigate patterns within a circle:
What happens when you join every other dot?
What pattern do you get if you leave 3 dots between numbers?

History:
The structure of the book lends itself to a vast variety of history topics:
• Creation and Evolution (to a human consciousness).
• Ancient Civilisation — natural disaster.
• Middle Ages — war and conflict.
• Age of Conquest/Colonisation — attacks on indigenous peoples.
• Machine Age — oppression of people by technology.
• Modern ecological crisis

Each age is depicted in slide-show fashion beginning at the top of the wheel with
A human figure from that era:
• 1. Hunter Gatherer
• 2. Egyptian (e.g. Imhotep — Architect of the step Pyramid)
• 3. Religious Figure (e.g. Joan of Arc)
• 4. Amerindian Chieftain (e.g. Montezuma)
• 5. Scientific Figure (e.g. Florence Nightingale)
• 6. Unknown Toxic Waste Worker

DT:
There are a variety of ‘viewing’ items that could be investigated, designed and made:
• Levers and pulleys
• Kaleidoscope
• Pin Hole Camera
• Zoopraxiscope

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1M0gAcWG1WU

Science:
Earth and Space
• Halley’s Comet
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8zV1xiGqf4
(this could also be used as inspiration for artwork around the night sky)

Light
• Work with the children using prisms to investigate how light works.

Life cycles
• Evolution and Inheritance – how living things change over time.

Art:
• Collage – Design a new book cover
• Draw a representation of something from their own history.
• Designs using curves and spirals

Music:
• Ask children to compose a piece of music to represent the return of Hally’s Comet.
• Listen to Holst Planets – Discuss the sounds of the different planets.
• Ask children to think what ‘the place between’ would sound like – Can they reproduce this sound using ICT, percussion instruments, body percussion.

Geography:
• Plot historical images on a world map / globe.
• Look at images of destruction of rainforests – research this further.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASbug4J4kIg
Image of a starving child – Link this to UNCRC – Discuss articles

Projects over time:
Children could each be given a copy of one of the discs for homework each week / month.
Using one image from the disc children can write a short story telling the story of that image to add to a ‘corridor of time’ short story anthology which could then be placed in the class reading area.

Oral story telling: This is an excellent why to improve spoken language and listening skills within the class.
Give a copy of the blank template at the end of the book to each child and ask them to draw images to represent things that they
recall from their past. Children then tell a partner the story of a chosen image and then the partners tell the story to the whole class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Approaches</th>
<th>Writing Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>Writing in role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance poetry</td>
<td>Letter writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me - booktalk</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing in role</td>
<td>Narrative writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualising</td>
<td>Information text writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate and argument</td>
<td>Note writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Newspaper report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing, mapping and annotating</td>
<td>Personal research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama and role play</td>
<td>Autobiography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Argument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links to other texts and resources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Arrival by Shaun Tan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lost Thing by Shaun Tan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rules of Summer by Shaun Tan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Red Tree by Shaun Tan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links to other resources on the Power of Reading Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Approaches section for examples of approaches used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetryline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session one: Responding to Illustration
Learning Objective:
Children will draw an object that is special to them.
Children will write about the special object.

- Look at the first image in the book – the one of the baby, without revealing the name or story to the children. Give the children copies of the image to look at closely.
- Discuss what the image is and ask children to try to identify some of the objects that surround the baby. Why would these objects be on the quilt? Do they have anything in common?
- Hand out squares of coloured card or paper and ask the children to think about an object that is special to them, they can discuss this object with a partner if they wish.
- On the coloured pieces of paper children draw their object and write why it is special to them below.
- The sections can then be put together to make a class quilt for display.

** You could also get the children to replicate the image by drawing items from their past that are special to them and placing a picture of them as a baby in the centre. In art, children could create a white window frame with the sky reflected in the window. This could be a lead into some autobiographical writing which could also be pictorially represented as an child’s timeline using the empty Viewer template on the last page of the book.

Session two: Investigating an image, writing and performing poetry
Learning Objective:
Children will identify objects in an image
Children will respond to an image through poetry

- Give children a copy of the image of Tristan at the City Dump, stuck in the middle of an A3 sheet of paper
- In pairs, or groups, ask the children to brainstorm words for what they can see and phrases for how it makes them feel around the image.
- Discuss with children what they have written and share reasons for these.
- Hand out strips of paper and tell the children that they are going to write a poem from the words and phrases they have brainstormed.
- Tell children to choose words and phrases and write these on the strips of paper – one word per strip, one phrase per strip.
- Children then organise their strips into a poem – this is a great method to use, because it allows the children to edit their poem for best effect instantly.
- Once the children are happy with the order of their poem tell them that they are going to perform this to the class – If the children have little experience at performance poetry they may need to see examples of real poets performing their poetry: [http://www.poetryline.org.uk/](http://www.poetryline.org.uk/)
- Children will need to think about intonation, volume, movements etc in their performances – This would also offer an opportunity to reinforce musical terminology e.g. timbre, tempo, dynamics, and pitch.
- Give the children time to practise their performances and then perform to the class.
- The children’s poems could then be written up in a class poetry book that could then be placed in the reading corner.

Session three: Visualisation and soundscape.
Learning Objective:
Children will create a soundscape to give the feel and atmosphere of Tristan’s dreams.

- Read from... These sights left Tristan terribly afraid... to another presence in the room.
- Discuss what is happening in this part of the book; what does it tell us about Tristan?
- Discuss what a restless dream might look like – Children can take digital photos in groups to show what this may look like. There is a really good iphone / ipad app that would work well with this activity called Virtual Binoculars Lite or children could draw this using charcoal.
- Give out dictaphones or use another resource for recording sound and in groups ask them to produce the sound from a ‘restless sleep’.

Session four: Character profile
Learning Objective:
Children will create a character profile of Tristan

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session five: Conscience alley and note of advice</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Objective:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children will develop their own opinion and give reasons for this</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Children will write a note of advice to a character</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discuss with the children what Tristan had seen in the viewer, you may like to hand out the images of the discs that he has viewed so far for the children to look at more closely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Should Tristan use the machine again?</td>
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<td>• Tell the children that they are going to make a conscience alley to give Tristan advice on what he should do, giving reasons.</td>
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<td>• Divide the class into two lines (one encouraging Tristan to look into the Viewer, giving reasons, and the other giving advice not to, giving reasons) and elect one child to be Tristan – As Tristan walks along the Conscience Alley children give their advice one by one.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ask Tristan whether there were any arguments that were convincing? Did this help to make up his mind as to what action he should take?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Hand out note paper – tell the children that they are going to write a note of advice to Tristan, once written children can screw these up and throw them to another children across the room, the receiving child will then read the note and respond in role as Tristan.</td>
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<td>• Share some of the notes and responses.</td>
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<th>Session six: Story mapping</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Children will be able to summarise the text, identifying key events.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Children will be able to discuss the text giving personal response.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Read to the end of the book.</td>
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<td>• Ask the children where they think Tristan has gone? How does this make them feel? Why did his mother act the way she did? Has the story taught them anything? How do people remember who you are? Do they think that Tristan was always meant to find the viewer?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Hand out ‘Tell Me Grids’ to help children with their book discussion.</td>
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<td>• Once they have completed their book discussions ask them to create a map of the story using illustrations and annotation to record the main events.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Session seven and eight: Interview with a character – Newspaper / radio report</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Discuss what we found out about Tristan by the end of the story; children can add ‘extra information ‘to the character profiles they did earlier.</td>
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<td>• How did his mum react? Why did she act this way?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In pairs role play an interview between Tristan’s mum and a newspaper reporter – what questions could we ask and what answers could his mum give. Would people believe that he just disappeared?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tell children that they will need to think carefully about the questions they ask and equally careful about the answers they give.</td>
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<td>• In pairs allow children time to script the interview.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• They can then record these interviews for radio using dictaphones or write up as a newspaper report.</td>
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<th>Session nine and ten: Personal research</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Children will research a period in history and present pictorially</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tell the children over the next two sessions they will have time to undertake personal research.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• They can choose any area in history that they are interested in (or work on a history topic you are studying in class).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Allow children to spend time researching their chosen era.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Children find / draw images that represent the main events from their era.</td>
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</table>
- These can then be published using the empty viewer disc on the last page of the book.
- Children could then present their research to the class using the disc as a reference point.

### Session eleven: Visualisation

**Learning Objective:**

Children will use visualisation to create a setting for the space between

- Reread ‘Afraid, Tristan wanted to pull the machine from his eyes, but something compelled him, against his own wishes, against his own common sense, to slip into the space between one flickering darkness and the next...drifting into a collapsing circle of time, that moment, the eternal present...returning, perhaps, to a place he had always know...’
- Discuss with the children where Tristan may have gone – what would it be like?
- Hand out black paper and chalks or pastels and ask the children to draw an image of the space between. Thinking about how it would feel, smell and look.
- Ask the children to add words and phrases, or a more detailed description, to their drawing to draw out descriptive vocabulary around the image.
- When the children have completed their images they then speak to a response partner explaining what they have drawn and why.

### Sessions twelve and thirteen: Retelling from another character’s point of view

**Learning Objective:**

Children know the key elements of a story structure;
Children understand that characters in a story have a viewpoint and a voice;
Children are able to write in a narrative style.

- Give the children copies of the images from the various disks in the text – Discuss with the children the people that can be seen on these discs at the top left and identify the space below them that is empty. Why do they think the space is empty? What do they think happened to the people from the images? Allow the children time to share ideas. Discuss the idea of the people falling into the space between, like Tristan did.
- Tell the children that they are going to write the story of the viewer from one of these characters points of view.
- Give children time to plan/draft and discuss their ideas with a partner.
- Write the story from one of the characters point of view, taking into account their particular era of history (you may need to spend some time researching this with the children)
- Once written children will need time to edit their story and prepare it for presentation
- These could then be published as ‘real books’ and placed in the class reading area – see next session

### Session fourteen and fifteen: Bookmaking

**Learning Objective:**

Children will publish their stories
Children will design a front cover for their book

- Look at the front and back cover of The Viewer – Discuss with the children what they can see.
- Tell them that they are going to create a cover for their characters story using collage.
- Hand out a selection of magazines, newspapers and catalogues and give children time to browse these for suitable images for their designs.
- Make their book covers and publish the stories.

### Session sixteen: Research and note taking

**Learning Objective:**

Children will undertake independent research
Children will make notes around research

- Look at the image in resources section ‘population’. What does the picture depict? Give the children time to investigate the image and decide what it is showing us.
- Take feedback – children could write their thoughts around the image on post-it notes to go on a working wall or in a class reading journal.
- The children should pick up on the fact that the image is showing a very populated place, overcrowded with people and cars. Is this an image that we would see in Great Britain, any country around the world? Have the
children visited places where they have seen lots of people and traffic like this?

- Discuss with the children the growing population of the world – show them the population graph from resources supporting this sequence or watch the video here (the language is a little complicated at points, so check it is accessible to your children, but it does get the point across really well) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTznElZRkLg.
- Discuss with the children what problems there may be with an ever increasing population.
- Read the ‘Population in China’ article (this can be found in resources supporting this sequence). Discuss this with the children and tell them that they are going to have a debate around this issue.
- Give the children some time to research growing populations and the impact on the world, as well as the Chinese solution further.
- Children will need to make notes of the research to inform their debate in the next session.

Session seventeen and eighteen: Debate
Learning Objective:
Children will participate in a formal debate

- Remind the children of the research they did in the previous session.
- Ask a question – Is it right for a government to tell people how many children they can have? Organise some of their responses in a grid like the one below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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- Allow children time in groups to discuss this issue and add more responses to their own grid from the research undertaken in the last session. If you are organising this as a formal debate you may wish to elect a chair for each group who will collect and record responses from each child.
- From the response sheet ask children to select 3 points that support their groups’ opinion and ask each group to prepare a speech for each point.
- Run the debate using the structure below.

Introduce the idea of the debate structure on the board:

- **Introduction** – who are you and what do you stand for?
- **Preview** – What are the names of the points you are going to cover?
- **Rebuttal** – unless you are the first speaker, you might say “first let’s take a look at what we heard from the previous speaker” and disagree with their points.
- **Point One** – “Now onto my points”
  - **Name**
  - **Explanation** (the reasoning – why is your point true and why does it mean your overall position is right?)
  - **Evidence** (facts, analogies, examples, imagery or authority to support your reasoning)
- **Point Two** – Name, Explanation, Evidence
- **Point Three** – Name, Explanation, Evidence
- **Reminder** – remind the audience of the three points you have covered

Prepare your speeches

Introduce the idea of developing your arguments by “Making Them REAL”
• Reason
• Evidence
• Analysis
• Link

  - Choose the first speakers in each group and allow them some time to think about how to make each of their points REAL. Only allow them to write down six words for each point (in addition to the name)
  - Choose the summary speaker and either a chair or timekeeper from each group

**Prepare the rest of the class**

Whilst the first three speakers are preparing their speeches:

  - The summary speakers need to think what they think the biggest issues in the debate will be. Their speech will focus on three big issues and show why their side has won those issues.
  - The chairs, timekeepers and any other pupils should try to think what the other side might say and come up with rebuttal.

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### Session nineteen and twenty: Writing an argument

**Learning Objective:**

Children will plan, write and edit a balanced argument

Children will use adverbials to link paragraphs.

- Discuss the debate from last session. How do the children feel the debate went? Were any side more convincing that the other? Why?
- Tell the children that they are going to write a balanced argument on the Chinese solution to a growing population.
- Discuss language and structure of an argument. How will it be written? Revise active and passive sentences and discuss with children which one is appropriate to argument writing.
- Give children time to plan and write their argument.
- Use editing partners to read and respond to each other writing.

**VGAP:** This session would be a good opportunity to revise connectives, adverbials and linking ideas across paragraphs.

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**Use and Application of Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation from the National Curriculum year 5 and 6 programme of study:**

There are many opportunities to teach grammar, punctuation and spelling through this text, a number of specific ideas have been listed below as a starting point for your teaching of VGAP.

**Sentences:**

Difference between active and passive: there is opportunity to look at this in session nineteen.

**Text:**

Building cohesion within and linking across paragraphs session 19

**Punctuation:**

Dashes and commas are used throughout this text to indicate parenthesis and clarify meaning.

**Terminology for pupils:**

Parenthesis, bracket, dash, cohesion, active, passive, ellipsis.