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With best wishes,

Pie Corbett,
Founder of Talk for Writing

Talk for Writing

Year 6

Talk for Writing Home-school booklet

The City of Silence

by James Walker

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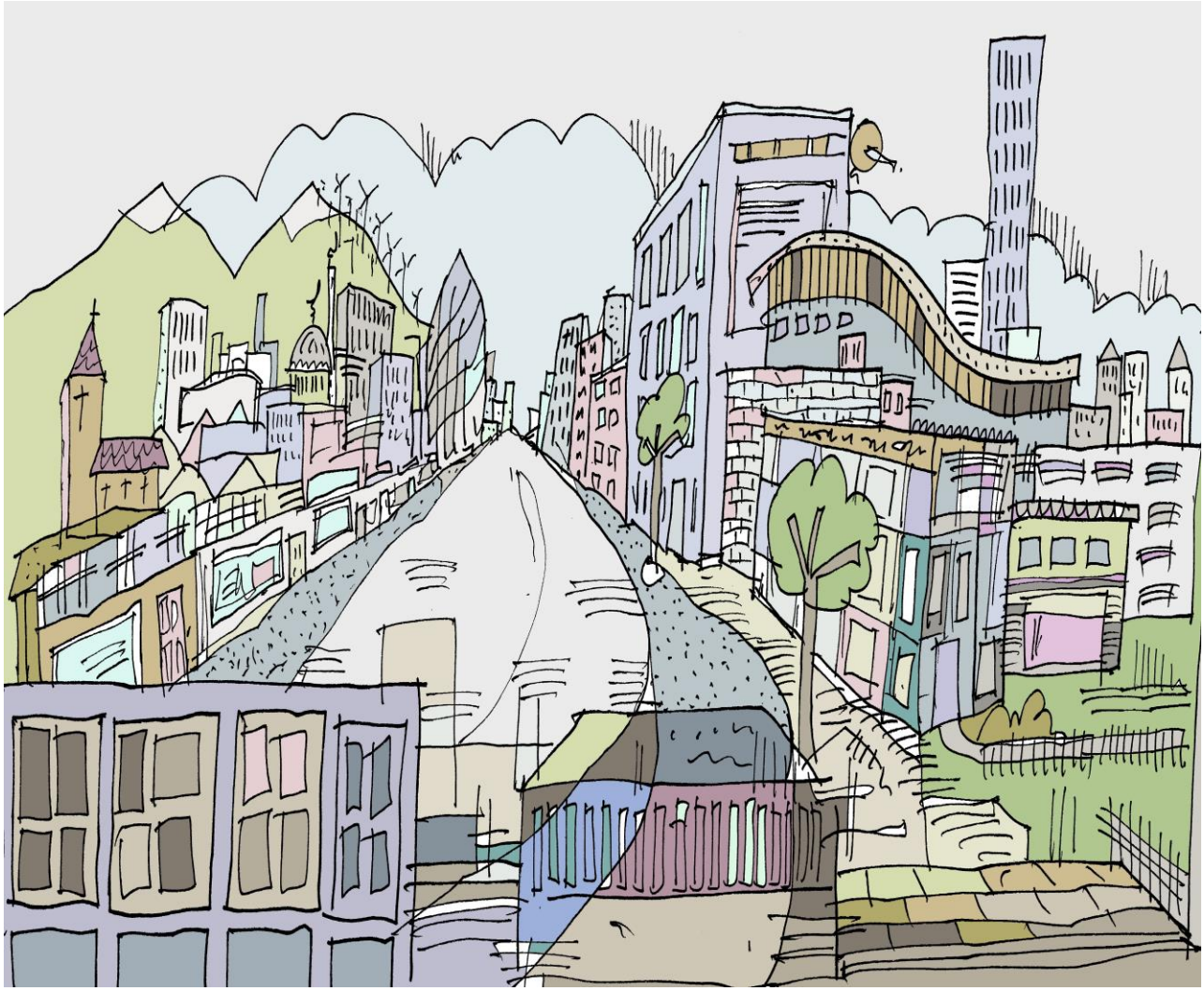
The City of Silence

Year 6 Creative Writing Workbook

by James Walker



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Introduction – Creative Writing and Wordplay

One special thing I love about teaching writing is that it allows children to be really creative. When we write, we often create ideas, combinations, poems or stories that have never been created before. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer and every activity is a chance to produce something fresh. Sometimes children can lose the love of wordplay as they get older so I hope this workbook will remind you how much fun playing with language can be.

In this workbook, we shall be getting our creative juices flowing starting with the game **The City of Silence** and then we'll use the ideas that come out of it to do a variety of activities: writing short poems, trying some descriptive writing, giving feedback to writers, being a teacher, doing some artwork and finally publishing or performing our work.

Through the workbook, there are 15 different activities that you can have a go at. You can choose which ones interest you or have a go at them all: the choice is yours! Pencil and paper at the ready……and we're off!

Starting Game: The City of Silence

Have you ever wondered what it is like in …

★ the mountain of imagination,
★ the castle of doom,
★ the city of wonder,
★ the maze of wishes,
★ or the cellar of despair?

Well, you are about to find out! In this game, we are going to create our own unique settings by combining places and things. Let's get started by making a list of places.

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Activity 1: Make a list of place

★ Here we want as many different type of places as possible – the more the better. For example: wood, city, shed, street, station, maze, cellar …

★ Top Tip: generic places are what we are looking for here, not the actual names of particular places: we want city not London, planet not Jupiter.

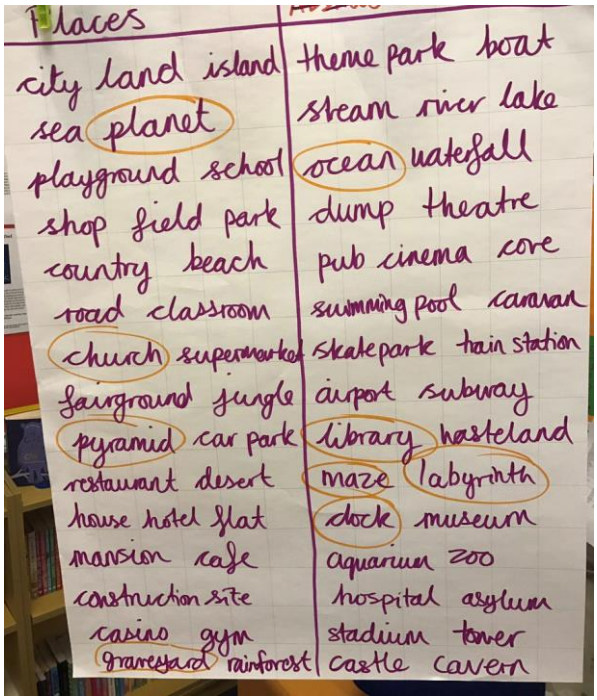
Sorting your ideas

One way to sort your places is to put them into categories. This often helps you to think of more ideas as one idea can lead to another and so on.

Water	Where people live	Buildings	Outer space
lake	town	shed	moon
river	house	supermarket	planet

★ **Now over to you to make your lists of places. Can you get more than 50?**

Here is the list I made with my class: please feel free to magpie!



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Activity 2: Make a list of abstract nouns

Before we make our list for the game, you might need to brush up on the four types of nouns:

- **Concrete nouns**: the general names for people, places and things that you can see/touch/taste/smell etc. e.g. *ball, table, grass, pony, child*
- **Proper nouns**: special names starting with capital letters e.g**.** *Sarah, Dr Foster, Spain*
- **Collective nouns**: a word for a group of animals, people or things e.g. *gang, swarm, crowd, pair*
- **Abstract nouns:** something that exists but you cannot see/touch e.g. *love, dream, fear, hope*

For our game, we want lots and lots of **abstract** nouns. Here are some top tips for your list:

Happy feelings: *hope, love, joy, friendship, happiness,*

Sad feelings: *regret, pain, doom, sadness, dread*

Fantasy: *curse, premonition, vision, dream, nightmare,*

Attitude words ending in -tion/-sion: *determination, ambition, trepidation, passion, confusion*

Question? Is the word happy an abstract noun? Let's try it out in a sentence:
The man felt very ***happy*** as it was his birthday.

Here the word ***happy*** is describing the man. We call those words **adjectives.**
We can change happy to an abstract noun by adding a suffix:
happy – happiness. The church filled with ***happiness*** on their wedding day.

- So the adjective ***sad*** becomes the abstract noun ***sadness.***
- And the adjective ***lonely*** becomes the abstract noun ***loneliness***

★ **Now over to you to make your list of abstract nouns. If you're stuck, magpie from the ones above or ask your family if they can think of any.**

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Activity 3: Making your first combinations!

Now comes the fun part! Choose one word from each list and put them together to make an interesting combination. Here's how it works:

Places		Abstract Nouns	Combinations
church	+	love	The church of love
village	+	dreams	The village of dreams
station	+	pain	The station of pain
tunnel	+	hope	The tunnel of hope
river	+	anxiety	The river of anxiety

Each place can be paired up with any of the abstract nouns so the possibilities are endless! At this stage, try not to worry about whether they are 'good' or not just generate lots and lots of ideas so we have plenty to choose from later.

★ **Now make as many combinations as you can!**

★ **Top Tip: You could choose ONE setting and then combine it with 5-10 abstract nouns and see which one surprises, entertains or interests you most.**

The school of doom

The school of laughter

The school of determination

The school of hope

The school of fun

The school of dreams

The school of pride

The school of friendship

The school of possibilities

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Activity 4: Try some alliteration

Let's make some more combinations but this time try to make them alliterative: this means both your place and your abstract noun need to start with the same sound:

The cave of curiosity	The temple of terror
The office of honesty	The motorway of mischief
A star of sorrow	The fairground of fear

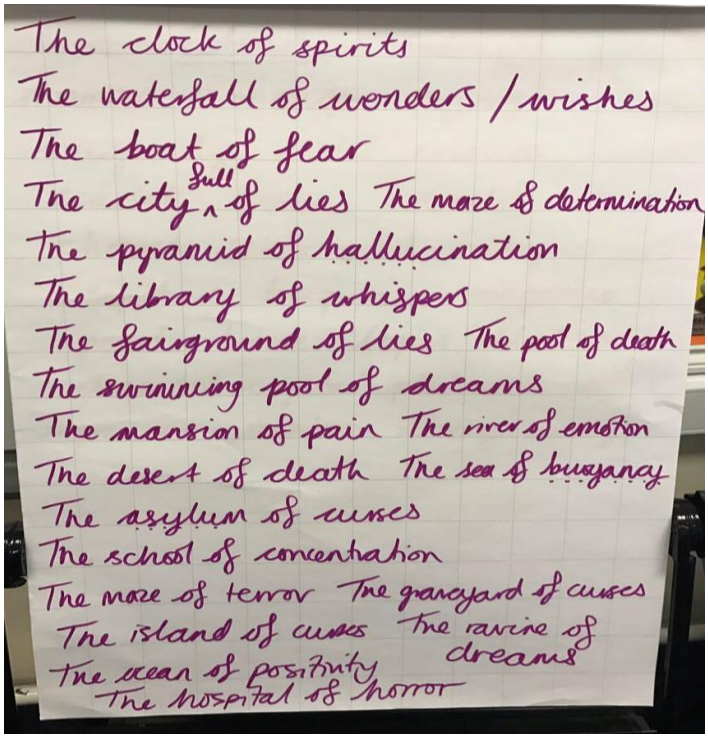
★ **Now have a go at your own alliterative combinations**

Activity 5: Judging your ideas

Now you have generated your list, you can start judging which ideas stand out. Reading your ideas out loud can help here to listen to the effect on the ear. Which ones might surprise your reader? Which ones have you never heard before? Which ones immediately conjure up an image in your mind's eye?

★ **Now pick your top 10 combinations and keep them somewhere special**

★ **BONUS**! Here is a photo of a list I made with my class. If you had to choose 5 to steal/magpie, which ones would you go for?



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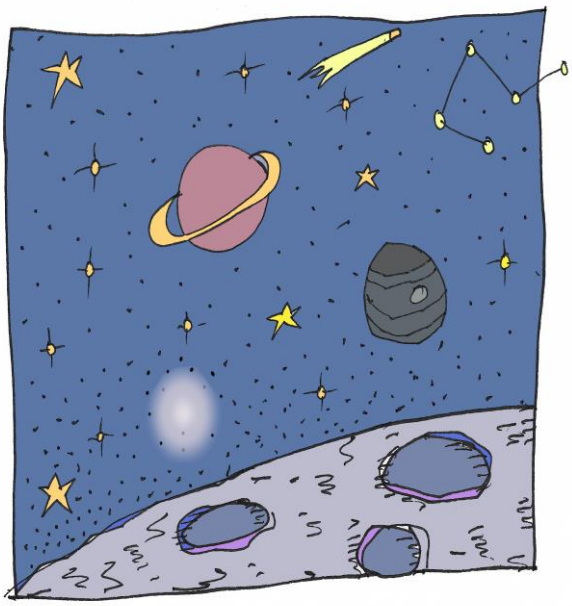
Activity 6: Can you judge my ideas?

Fancy being a teacher for a minute? Have a go at judging some of these ideas. Number these combinations in order from 'best' to 'worst'. Can you say why you have chosen the top one as your favourite? What is it about it that you like?

- The city of kindness
- The living room of boredom
- The factory of creativity
- The farm of hunger
- The forest of premonitions

Activity 7: Creating a simple list poem

Let's have a go at writing a simple poem now from your favourite 10 or so ideas. They could be around a theme (e.g. space, happiness, darkness) or just the combinations that really caught your eye. Why not add some illustrations around your list poem ideas on the previous page?



Space

The planet of doom
The star of freedom
The black hole of light
The moon of isolation
The galaxy of hope
The universe of infinity
The sun of nightmares
The solar system of confusion

★ **Now have a go writing your own simple list poem**

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Activity 8: Let's look at a model poem

Below is a poem written by Pie Corbett using *The City of Silence* game called *The Cave of Curiosity.* It is a great example of a poem using a repetitive pattern; this time he starts each verse with the phrase: *In the cave of curiosity.* We are going look closely at this poem and write some responses.

★ **Start by reading the poem out loud a few times. You can also listen to a reading of the poem here https://soundcloud.com/talkforwriting/city/s-UmP7BEbB2cG**

The Cave of Curiosity

In the cave of curiosity, I created
an angry ant ambling along,
a terrified tarantula tickling a tornado
and a curious computer calling cautiously to the King.

In the cave of curiosity, I created
the sound of silence closing its lips,
a hummingbird's wings flickering,
as the sea silently scrapes the pebbles and ten tired lorries trundle by.

In the cave of curiosity, I created
the touch of smooth stones from the summer beach,
the stickiness of honey on a fingertip
and the heat from a teaspoon as it stirs my morning tea.

In the cave of curiosity, I created
the coldness of frost as it freckles the windowpane,
the sharpness of a saw as it crunches through wood
and the sadness of a tear as it trickles down a cheek.

In the cave of curiosity, I captured
the moon's cold gleam imprisoned in a box,
the joy of a merry-go-round as it spins like a feral ferris wheel
and the force of a rainbow as it dazzles the sky with a smile that stuns.

© Pie Corbett

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★ **Now let's look at the poem closely and try to respond to what we have read.**

1) Which is your favourite word, line or verse? And why?

---

2) Which line would you like to change? What would you change it to?

---

3) Which part of the poem did you find scariest, saddest or most unusual?

---

4) Find a part of the poem that uses alliteration really effectively.

---

5) Write Pie a short piece of feedback about his poem. It could follow this structure: 1. Give some praise 2. Offer some advice 3. Ask a question

★ **Now have a go at responding to Pie's poem.**

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Activity 9: Extending our ideas to write our own

Now let's be a bit more adventurous! Go back to your list of combinations and I am going to show you 3 different ways of extending them:

a. Adding in more detail

Here we want to describe more about either the place or the abstract noun and we will do this by adding in **well-chosen adjectives**.

Example: The city of silence

The city of silence … *The **forgotten** city of silence*

The city of silence … *The city of **frozen** silence*

The city of silence … *The **forgotten** city of **frozen** silence*

★ Top Tip: sometimes using too many adjectives can cause your writing to be overwritten: The huge, gigantic, massive, ugly city of silence.

So, add some effective adjectives and make sure that the adjective you choose actually adds something to the writing. Pie tells us, *"Every word should earn its place."*

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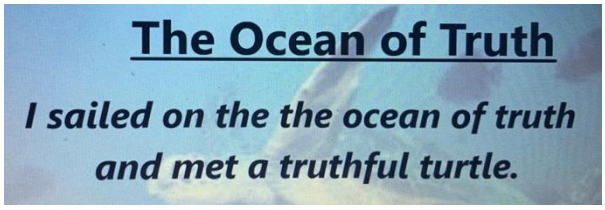
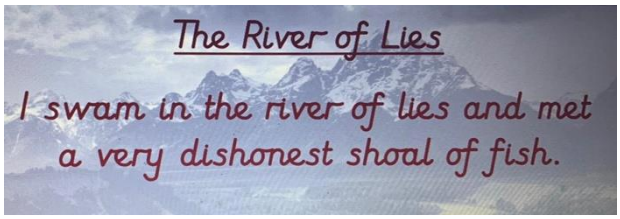
b. Add in a character

This could be you or someone else and you'll need a verb telling the reader what they are doing in your place.





Example: The forest of nightmares

- I got lost in the forest of nightmares.
- She went into in the forest of nightmares and never came back.
- Blake wandered into the forest of nightmares by mistake.
- Someone whispered in my ear stories about the forest of nightmares.

★ Try adding a character into a new idea like the example here or add it into your favourite descriptive ideas from a) above.

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c. What it is like in your place

Here we are telling the reader what might be in your place, what could happen if you went there or how it got its name!

Example: **The castle of curses**

The castle of curses is home to all evil in the kingdom.
The castle of curses looms over the city forever watching.
Once you enter the castle of curses, you can never escape.

★ **Now try adding all the ideas together and creating some powerful verses. Here's one example – as you can see, I've been influenced by the lock down.**

I walked softly into the forgotten city of silence, staring at empty streets, abandoned shops and scary emptiness.

★ **Top tip: Remember poems don't have to rhyme – and they're often more powerful if they don't!**

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Activity 10: CHALLENGE! Try some juxtaposition

If you haven't heard of this term before, **juxtaposition** means having two opposite or contrasting ideas next to each other. This can surprise the reader as they might not be expecting it or have never heard it before.

The title of our game – *The City of Silence* – is actually an example of juxtaposition because a city is not normally silent but full of noise. Here are some other examples to help you think of your own.

The sun of darkness
The dungeon of love
The black hole of light
The cave of dreams
The waterfall of pain

★ **Now have a go at coming up with some ideas that use juxtaposition.**

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Activity 11: A poem with a repeating pattern

For this poem, you will need a repeating phrase chosen from one of the ideas above. Here are some examples so you get the idea:

I Got Lost

I got lost in the castle of curses and never came out,
I got lost in the maze of confusion as….
I got lost in the land of dreams where….
I got lost in the field of fear because….

In the Castle of Dreams

In the castle of dreams there are….
In the castle of dreams you will….
In the castle of dreams no-one….
In the castle of dreams I…..

The Dungeon of Doom

The dungeon of doom is home to….
The dungeon of doom wants you to……
The dungeon of doom is a place where…..
The dungeon of doom can……

To extend this poem, each verse could be 4 lines on a different threatening setting. E.g. *Dungeon of doom* followed by *Cave of Death, Forest of Dread* and *Cavern of Fear.*

★ **Now have a go at a repetitive poem – continue on a separate page and add drawings if you want to.**

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Activity 12: Writing a descriptive paragraph

One activity you could try now is to write a narrative or descriptive paragraph based around one of your favourite combinations. Try to describe the setting and how the character reacts to what they see. Remember to keep re-reading your writing to see if it works and if it needs a tweak here or there with the spelling or punctuation.

The City of Silence

I took a trip to the city of silence where the streets were silent and no-one could utter a word. Cars passed by me without a sound and songless birds flew overhead. My feet didn't even make a sound on the pavement when I walked: it sounded as if everything was made of cotton wool or had had the volume turned down to zero. I tried to talk to the people but I couldn't even manage a squeak. An evil lord ruled over the city and had cast a spell on the people making it impossible for them to talk. Who could save them from this terrible fate? And who could save me?

★ **Now have a go at writing a paragraph about one of your combinations.**

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Activity 13: Artistic challenge

One of your ideas might already stand out to you as a great setting to bring to life by drawing/painting. Choose one of your ideas and sketch out what it might look like there. Here's Jon's idea for *The forest of premonitions*:

★ **Now have a go at drawing/painting what it might look like in one of your incredible places.**

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Activity 14: Performing one of your pieces of work

Poems and creative writing really come alive when they are read out loud and performed. You could just do this for yourself, or for your family or record it and send it to other people you know to cheer them up or inspire them to do their own. I am sure that your teachers would be over-the-moon to hear your performances!

★ **Top tips for performing your writing:**

a. Know your writing/poem really well so you can focus on the performance

b. Think about the tone of voice you are going to use on certain words or lines. Can you slow down, speed up or emphasise certain parts?

c. As you are reading your work aloud, you may hear certain parts that don't sound quite right or jar. This is a chance for you to edit and improve!

d. Be confident and enjoy it! Try not to re-record yourself 1,000 times trying to make it perfect.

e. Speak really clearly so that your audience can hear each precious word.

★Now be brave and have a go at performing one of your poems.

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I hope you've enjoyed working through this workbook.

The beauty of this kind of writing is that you could start the booklet all over again and write a different list of setting and nouns and have a go at different poems or activities. Each time I play the game with classes, I get new and different outcomes.

I will leave you with a poem I have written whilst writing this workbook. I would love to read what you have come up with.
Please share them by tweeting your work to me @MrWalkerPrimary.

The City of Silence

I took a trip to the city of silence where no-one can utter a word;
But then I danced in the field of happiness and lost track of time.
I got lost in the maze of fear and couldn't find my way out;
But then I discovered an ancient waterfall of wishes and was granted three of my own.

I fell into the pool of nightmares and saw things beyond my wildest imagination;
But then I swam in the ocean of joy with a shoal of friendly fish.

I passed through the black hole of doom and into a dark abyss;
But then I skipped on the moon of melody to a rhymical beat.

I was trapped in the house of isolation for what felt like eternity;
But then I entered the land of hope and saw how wonderful the world was.

By James Walker, Year 6 Teacher (Bristol) & Talk for Writing trainer

If you want to see what Pie has written about playing with words you can read it here. You'll see that I have magpied lots of his ideas!

https://www.talk4writing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Playing-with-words-and-ideas.pdf

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James Walker is a teacher who is also a trainer for Talk for Writing to help schools develop the approach.

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