



# Keeping oracy going

Suggestions and tools for  
in-class and remote learning

## Resource collated by

Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub inspired by our final  
training session with Will Collins, Voice 21



March 2021

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## Introduction

To ensure oracy remains a key part of blended learning in Tower Hamlets, teachers have approached keeping oracy going this spring term with innovation and creativity.

During our final training session with [Voice 21](#), strategies, such as discussion guidelines, scaffolds and protocols for talk, as well as the use of oracy sessions as a key AFL tool, were shared for developing talk-rich remote classrooms. These strategies and tools have allowed oracy to be extended to the remote classroom, whilst maintaining oracy in the physical classroom for those attending school in-person.

Schools contributing to this publication, ensured that all pupils had an opportunity to use their voice: having an opportunity to use their voice each morning using icebreakers to accompany the register, be it 'true-or-false' questions at Marner Primary, a daily talk stimulus at John Scurr and Canon Barnett, or show-and-tell sessions at Elizabeth Selby Infants; or more in-depth discussions on Google Classroom have also proved fruitful in many schools.

Teachers have shared value of the chat function to supplement verbal feedback, allowing for participation even in the face of frozen or stuttering videos. Furthermore, the Mote App has allowed for seamless individual verbal feedback. Apps like Padlet and Jamboard have also helped to collate ideas and frame discussions.

**Nicky Pear**, AHT, Cubitt Town Junior School

**Nicole Gurvidi**, Primary Curriculum Lead (English), Tower Hamlets Education Partnership

## Acknowledgements

We like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks to Will, Harley and Natasha at Voice 21, who have skilfully guided us through the first part of our oracy journey. Given how disrupted this past year has been, it is a real testament to the quality of training, that oracy continues to play such a central role in many of our online classrooms.

We would also like to thank our schools for their innovation and creativity.

Guided reading sessions at Marion Richardson and elsewhere have been structured around talk roles, with children agreeing, disagreeing, building-on and challenging each other's opinions. Furthermore, teachers at a number of schools including Globe and Cubitt Town Infants have emphasised the importance of daily online story times, during which teachers can model a love of reading aloud.

The performative side of talk is also being valued, with poetry performances at Arnhem Wharf taking inspiration from Amanda Gorman's spectacular recital.

There have been attempts to embed oracy during this time within the broader culture of schools, with oracy learning celebrated through videos, and oracy stars of the month at Cubitt Town Juniors, as well as a new oracy section in the school newsletter at St Johns at Bethnal Green.

This is not to say that there are not additional barriers to talk in the absence of face-to-face teaching. Everything from technological nightmares to noisy living spaces, and reluctance to speak on camera, makes the teaching of key oracy skills even more challenging. However, it is clear, that the teachers and schools working within our Hub are ensuring that talk remains a key part of the classroom.

This publication offers detail and examples of how we kept oracy going.

## School/classroom suggestions

### Profiling oracy in our school's newsletter

Kirsty Walker, St John's CE Primary School

Every two weeks we have a St John's newsletter, and we are adding an oracy feature each edition. Children either email in their conversations to us via our parent email address or they send pictures and videos of themselves doing it to our twitter account.

Last half-term (spring 1) we focused on the 'challenger'\* role, and even though we were delivering remote learning, we continued with this. We emailed all teachers their year groups challenger vocabulary, updated the oracy display in the main hall for those children attending school in person to see, and the expectation was that teachers will do two oracy activities this half term via their google

classroom lessons. All staff have attended a voice 21 twilight session this half term and new ideas and activities arose from this, too.

In the key-worker room, the teachers have engaged with various oracy-based activities ranging from: 'Should the plastic bag be changed to 10p', 'Do you prefer online or school learning?' 'Should everyone be eligible for the vaccination?'

*\*Challenger: disagrees with or presents an alternative argument. E.g. "That's true, but have you considered...", "You mentioned X but what about...", or "I hear what you're saying, but..."*

**We have introduced a talk timetable where we have a picture/question each day and introduce it in our zoom lessons as a starter each day.**

John Scurr Primary School

### Getting my class talking

Andrew Robertson, Cubitt Town Infants School

We've been using a website called Explorify (<https://explorify.wellcome.ac.uk/>) to support oracy during live lessons. They have a variety of short, talk-based activities such as Odd One Out, What If...? and Zoom In Zoom Out designed to get children to think creatively, agree/disagree, explain their ideas, etc. The activities are largely science-based but many can easily be used as a more general oracy starting point.

Our Year 1s have particularly enjoyed the Zoom In, Zoom Out activities where we show a close-up of a picture and ask the children to suggest

what they think the picture is of, giving reasons for their answers. Children are able to talk or post ideas in the chat box if reluctant to talk on camera. We then gradually zoom out, continually asking the children if they have changed their minds on what the picture is showing and why. This approach can continue within the classroom through continued use of the website or by using a visualiser with objects.

<https://explorify.wellcome.ac.uk/en/activities/zoom-in-zoom-out/prints>

## Oracy in mathematics

Jane Scott-Gall, Marner Primary School

We start each day with a 'Maths: warm-up our brains talk activity' during our Live Registration.

Resources that we find are working particularly well are the Third Space Learning 'Fluent in Five' resources and the White Rose Maths 'True or False' statements. The children also enjoy any sort of problem of the day including the old National Numeracy Strategies puzzles and problems.

### Examples:

| Year 6<br>Week 17 - Day 1          |                         |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A. $70 \times 7 =$                 | B. $? = 34 \times 6$    |
| C. $16 \div 8 \times 12 =$         | D. $2,592 \div 1,999 =$ |
| E. $346,345 + 77,134 =$            | F. $247 - 8 =$          |
| G. $4\frac{2}{3} + 1\frac{1}{2} =$ |                         |

**True or False?** Percentage of an amount (2)

Tommy and Ron are both correct.

Tommy: To find 25% I can divide the amount by 4.

Ron: To find 25% I can halve the amount then halve the amount again.

**Anyone for tennis?**

Two boys and two girls can play tennis.



All said: 'I will only play if Holly plays.'  
Holly said: 'I won't play if Ben is playing.'  
Ben said: 'I won't play if Luke or Laura plays.'  
Luke said: 'I will only play if Zoe plays.'  
Zoe said: 'I don't mind who I play with.'

Which two boys and which two girls play tennis?

With Fluent in Five, children take it in turns to read out a question, explain whether they would answer it using a mental or written calculation, before talking through their steps - not revealing the answer to the question - but giving reminders along the way e.g. don't forget to line up your decimal points, remember you're multiplying by 10 :)

### Popular sentence stems in my class include:

'I know that... because...'; 'I know that... so I

know...'; 'I know that... therefore...'

'To check my work, I would....'

'Remember to....'

'To find the answer you could... or you could...'

'First... next... then'

As the child is talking through how to tackle the question, the other children in the class are working it out. Once everyone is ready, we sometimes use 'Waterfall'\* as a way of everyone sharing their answer. Alternatively, I share the answers at the very end once we've worked through all the questions.

The children love to talk through their maths and to explain how they know.

We (the teachers) also record mini-loom videos for these 'Maths: warm-up our brains talk activities' each day. These videos give us a chance to model how we would approach and answer these questions using the sentence stems. We include pause points so that the children can work along with us. They're useful for a child who missed the Live Registration, or children who want to revisit a question; some children just like to start their day with them as it reminds them of how we'd start our day if we were all in school together.

\***Waterfall** is a technique similar to pupils writing on a whiteboard and all sharing at once, see Emma Whitman's section for more detail.

## Maintaining oracy remotely in EYFS and KS1

Ria Islam, Elizabeth Selby Infant School

At Elizabeth Selby Infant school, we have taken on a whole school approach at ensuring our children are still active talkers and listeners. We use Google Classroom and Evidence Me to set work for children throughout the day. It can be quite challenging to have discussions online with children aging between 4-7 years old. Therefore, we decided to allocate a time, every Friday afternoon to the children in KS1, to bring something in to share with their friends. In addition, every afternoon at EYFS the children share their work they have finished for the day.

In KS1 both teachers in the same year group, share a live session between 60 children, whereby children talk about what they have to share. The children can either bring a toy, a piece of work or any item that they want to talk about. Sometimes teachers will ask probing questions to get the children to explain further. Even teachers and teacher assistants get involved in sharing something.

In EYFS, teachers hold a sharing time every day, where all the children in the class come together and share their work they have completed for the day. This is a time to celebrate their achievements and hard work at home.

Introducing these sharing sessions has really benefitted all the children. Especially children who are not comfortable with talking online. It has helped to show the children that talking online is no different than in the classroom. As the task is personal to each child, they all have something to say about their item without it feeling like a lesson or task, as they can take ownership of their time when sharing.

Within EYFS, it has given purpose to their online work, as it is still celebrated and shared as it would be in school. All the children in KS1 enjoy and look forward to the sessions and think throughout the week of what item they want to bring and what they would like to say about it. I also believe it helps break the barrier of being in lockdown and not seeing your friends for a long time, bringing back a slight feeling of normality.

Children are now more confident in talking during live sessions and understand that Google Classroom is the new normal, for now, and to treat it as if they were in the classroom. As we return to the classroom, those children who may have to learn from home occasion will take this confidence to continue talking with the class in the classroom.

### Arnhem Wharf Primary School



**ArnhemWharfKS1**  
@ArnhemwharfKS1

Can you you guess the story?  
[#Arnhemwharfprimary](#) [#Year1](#) [@Bonzetta1](#)



**ArnhemWharfKS1**  
@ArnhemwharfKS1

Snippet of an interview with Egg Box Dragon! [#Year1](#)  
[#Arnhemwharf](#)

A wonderful short video showing an oral retelling of 'Toys in Space' by Mini Grey  
<https://twitter.com/ArnhemwharfKS1/status/1351935234359635970>

Listen to an interview with a pupil's eggbox dragon inspired by the text 'The Adventures of Eggbox Dragon', by Alex T Smith  
<https://twitter.com/ArnhemwharfKS1/status/1355265918893481993>

## Discussion forums

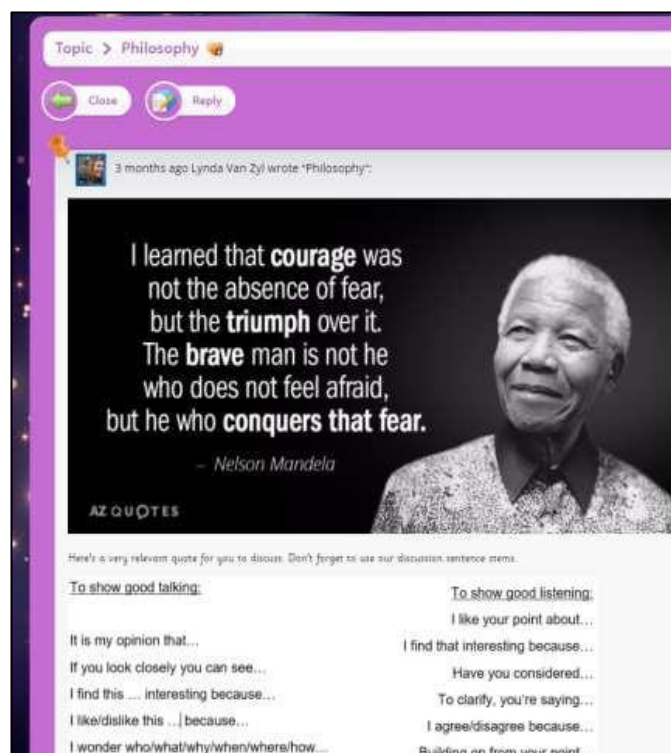
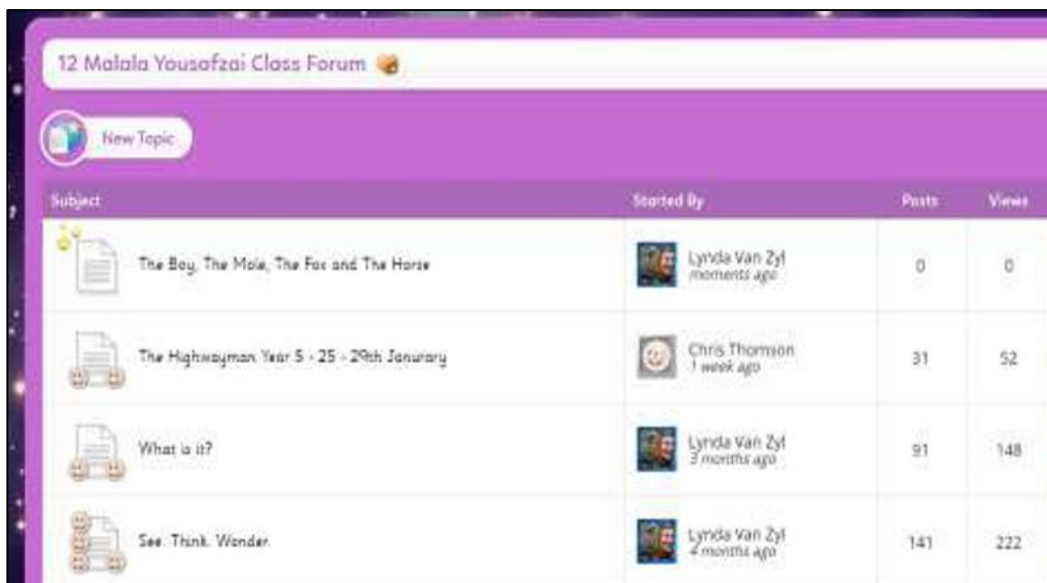
Lynda Van Zyl, Globe Primary School

Both KS1 and 2 do their own forums but the oracy page is something new I am trying out.

The children have responded well to the forums, but we need to work on using more ambitious sentences for contributions. Part of the success of the forums is that they are more informal than other written work so can be more appealing to some students; it seems to be about getting the balance right between this and quality input.

We use dB Primary for our online learning, and it has an in-built forum feature. Every week, teachers set a new topic for discussion. The children can reply directly to the topic or to each other, as can teachers.

See below a screenshot of the forum's homepage and one of the forum discussions.





I have also set up an Oracy page and children will be working on it this week. There are collaboration areas under each statement for the children to contribute their thoughts.

**I couldn't disagree with you more because...**



This week, as an alternative to P4C and HRE, you'll be taking part in an oracy challenge. It's going to be different from when we've done oracy work in class because we won't be able to actually talk to one another but this is a task that will develop your cognitive (thinking) skills for oracy.

Below, I have made several statements that I think you couldn't possibly disagree with. Your job is to prove me wrong and disagree with me, **even if you really don't disagree**. However, **you must give a reason**.

Add your contributions to the collaboration areas beneath the statements. You must disagree with at least one but can have a go at all of them if you like.

Don't forget to think very carefully about your argument.

If you can, try out some of these with your family at home so that you can practise your physical and social oracy skills too.

**Try out some of these sentence starters for disagreeing:**

*I couldn't disagree with you more because...*

*I see why you might think that but have you thought of....*

*That's a good point but it might be wise to consider...*

*I understand your opinion. However, it is my opinion that...*

*Respectfully, I disagree because...*

Additionally, all subject pages can have collaboration areas where children have been encouraged to discuss what they have been learning.



## Ensuring oracy is part of every lesson

Emma Whitwam, Cubitt Town Juniors School

Little and often has been my mantra for teaching oracy in remote teaching. We don't explicitly have an oracy lesson online in the same way we would do in school, but it is a core part of the day in our class.

We use Google Classroom and Google meet and as part of our Google meet, we ensure we start with 'cameras on, voices off'. This is counter intuitive to what I initially thought oracy was but has been essential for meaningful conversations in Year 3. Early on, it was clear who would unmute and blurt an answer out, always have an answer and noticeably, never have an answer. Talking over a screen requires a different skill set to talking in class and so we have innovated!

We have started using 'Waterfall' regularly in our class. Waterfall is a Voice 21 idea that ensures everyone has a voice. It's also a great AFL tool.

### Waterfall

The children use the chat function to answer a question, for example: 'What is a synonym of said?'. You get them to type their answer and ensure they don't press enter until you say go. Then you get a stream (waterfall) of responses.

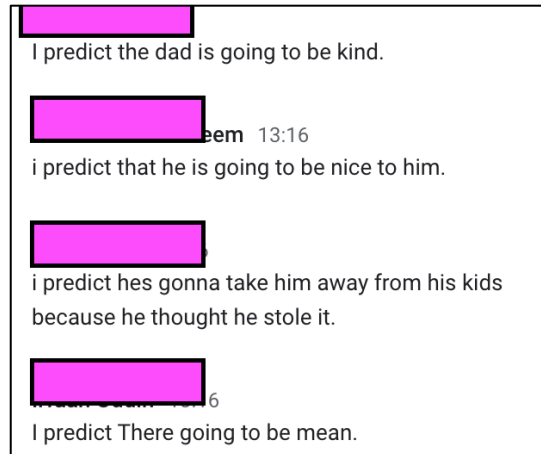
It's a great way to affirm those children you're not hearing from on the screen by responding to their answers. It's also great for the children to have some peer feedback and magpie some good vocabulary choices.

'Waterfall' can be used across all subjects. So far, I have tried it in reading, English, mathematics and history, and it is quick and effective. I've noticed a difference in the participation in those children who initially said very little, both in the chat function but also unmuting and sharing their ideas.

### Examples:

#### Reading

We predicted what was going to happen as a new member joined the tribe in 'The Boy with the Bronze Axe'.



#### Mathematics

We named all the different 3D objects we could think of and then children did a show and tell of objects at home and they had to comment.

#### History

We shared what is 1 fact you know about life in the Stone Age.

#### Dubbing

The children are now used to the Google Meet set up and as they develop their confidence, so do I. We have begun to play a silent game of 'Dubbing' (also a Voice 21 initiative) which is essentially charades. I started off by modelling the game which was to put myself on mute and using only body language to show the children my favourite dinner. It's a great way to get the children really focused and use the physical strand of oracy. It's also a fun game that they love.

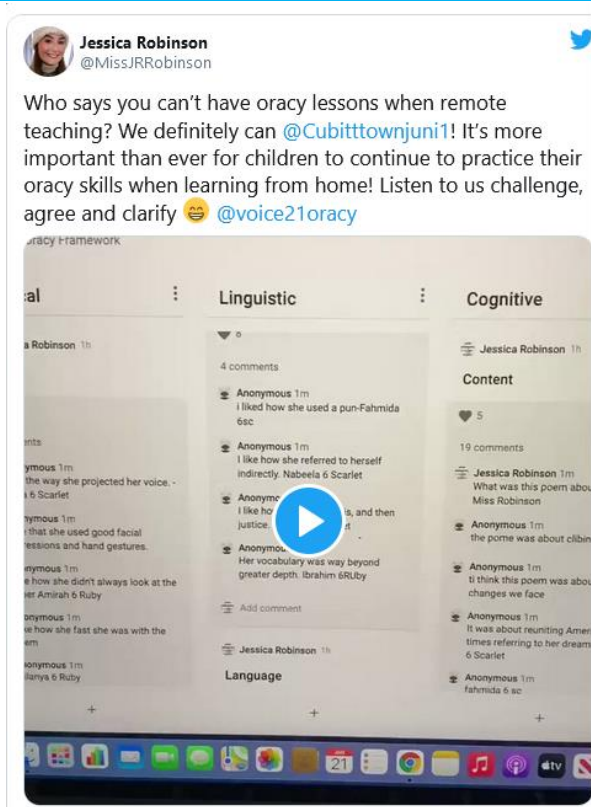
This is definitely a game we will keep using!

## Further suggestions from our schools

I have been trying to get my class to unpick the inauguration poem against the oracy framework, and then perform their own versions this.  
**Arnhem Wharf Primary School**

Small group live lessons are working well. They give children a great opportunity to engage in oracy activities.  
**Marnier Primary School**

Weekly online 'circle time' session with Year 1s - sharing work, storytime with discussion, talk-based games.  
**Cubitt Town Infants School**



**Daily shared reading lessons**  
Predictions, inferences, opinions about characters.

Children have the chance to agree/disagree and respond/build on what others say.

Some children speak more with their cameras switched off.

**Marion Richardson Primary School**

<https://twitter.com/MissJRRobinson/status/1352262336065761280>

Drop-in help sessions for children to ask questions.  
**Canon Barnett Primary School**



Using @GoogleForEdu Jamboard for oracy in our English this morning. We had been discussing themes of the poem "The British" by @BZephaniah. We were given two opinions where we had to state the one that we agreed with the most and explain why. @Cubittownjuni1 @OracyTH

<https://twitter.com/MissJRRobinson/status/1359457045351645188>



Mr Pear  
@nickypair



Oracy Home Learning Challenge 8

I see, I think, I wonder!

Look closely at the image and discuss with someone at home:

What can you see?

What do you think is going on?

What do you wonder?

@voice21oracy @TheOracyHub @theESU @noisyclassroom  
@talkthetalkUK @OracyProject @tes



10:51 AM · Jan 26, 2021



<https://twitter.com/nickypair/status/1354019101237256198>

### List of oracy activities:

- Odd one out
- Would you rather?
- Who would?
- Consensus circle
- Disaster
- Concept cartoons
- What's the link?
- What's the story?
- Waterfall
- Dubbing
- Treasure hunt



Seven Mills Primary  
@7millsprimary



Today children in Garrett Anderson class have been defense attorneys defending the three little pigs in court. Have a look at one amazing performance from one of the children in year 6! #7millsartsmark

<https://twitter.com/7millsprimary/status/1356212809344950272>

### Supporting prompts:

- showing 'thinking thumbs' to indicate you want to share
- Go on mute unless you are talking
- Include sentence stems
- Ask questions to clarify
- Inviting others in
- Take your turn; raise your hand to talk
- Acknowledging people's contributions
- Using Loom videos alongside activities to model how you would answer questions etc.

## Voice21 suggestions

### Consensus circle

**If London was about to be flooded and there were only enough sandbags to protect 5 places, which would you save?**

1. Write down each place suggestion on a post it note
2. Reach a consensus on which 5 are to be saved and place these within the circle (you can move suggestions in and out of the circle at any time so long as you give reasons)

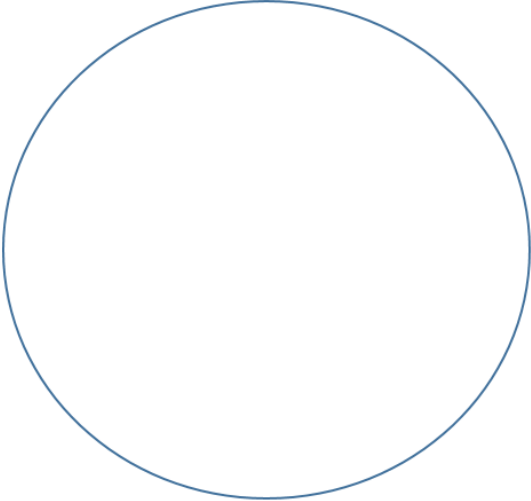
I think ... should be saved because...

I agree/ disagree because...

In my opinion...

... and ... are quite similar so...

How about we compromise and put...?



This work, "Consensus Circle" by Voice 21, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub/Tower Hamlets Education Partnership

### Who would

Who would.....

- ... make the best headteacher?
- ... you want on your team in a football match?
- ... make a good best friend?
- ... be the best person to rely on in an emergency?
- ... be the best one to go on holiday with?

**Build**  
Develop, add to or elaborate on an idea.

**Start by saying:**

- Building on X's idea...
- I agree and would like to add...
- X's idea made me think...



**Build**

**Challenge**  
Disagree or present an alternative argument

**Start by saying:**

- I disagree because...
- To challenge you X, I think...
- I understand your point of view, but have you thought about...?

**Challenge**



This work, "Who would..." by Voice 21, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub/Tower Hamlets Education Partnership

## Desert Island Disaster!

Your group have ended up alone on a deserted island! As a group, discuss the questions below and agree on your answers. Be prepared to justify your choices!

1. Which two essential items would you want to have with you on the island and why?
2. Which 3 rules for behaviour will you pick to help you behave sensibly on the island?
3. How would your group try to get rescued from the island?



This work, "Desert Island Disaster" by Voice 21, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub/Tower Hamlets Education Partnership

## Talk Stimuli

### Odd one out



|    |    |
|----|----|
| 9  | 16 |
| 25 | 43 |

### Would you rather?

Would you rather be a half or a quarter?

Would you rather live in a tropical climate or a temperate climate?

### Concept Cartoons



### What's the link?




### Talking points

- When you multiply a number by 10, you add a zero.
- It would have been better to live in Sparta than Rome.
- It is good to be selfish.



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Examples




### **My favourite place**

Prepare a 60 second speech on your favourite place.

In the speech, explain what is so great about the place that makes it your favourite.


Remember to:

- Include reasons why the place is your favourite
- Speak clearly
- Use interesting words to make the reader interested
- Speak confidently



This work, “My Favourite Place” by Voice 21, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub/Tower Hamlets Education Partnership

Examples




### **Perform a passage from your favourite book**

Read a short section from your favourite book.

Think about how to make your performance entertaining whilst also making sure that your audience can understand you.

Remember to:

- Change your volume and pace to make your performance more engaging.
- Emphasise the most important words in what you are reading.
- Make eye contact with the camera/your audience
- Speak confidently.



This work, “Perform a Passage from your Favourite Book” by Voice 21, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub/Tower Hamlets Education Partnership





### This is how to cook.....

Make a short video explaining to a friend how to cook your favourite dish. Include the ingredients and equipment that will be needed.

Explain the actions you have to take (in the correct order) to make the dish.

Remember to:

- Present the ideas in the correct order
- Use hand gestures to help make your meaning clear
- Use appropriate cooking vocabulary
- Consider how much your audience knows about cooking. How will you adapt your explanation help them?



This work, "This is how to cook..." by Voice 21, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub/Tower Hamlets Education Partnership



This work, "Online Discussion Guidelines" by Voice 21, used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub/Tower Hamlets Education Partnership

## Suggestions from further afield

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Draw something based on my instructions</b></p> <p>This is a great one! You could pick a category like 'monster'. Describe what your monster looks like and have children draw it. Guaranteed to create lots of laughter! Switch it around and have a child describe something for you to draw!</p> | <p><b>'Thanks'</b></p> <p>Big questions for the children to reflect on and discuss, e.g. "what colours would you match to the different emotions and why?" "What superhero power would you want?" "If you could be made of any material on Earth, what would you be?" "Are humans more important than other animals?" – Could choose a few different children to share their responses each time.</p> | <p><b>Guess what's in my box?</b></p> <p>Bring an item to the call hidden in a box. Children can ask you a certain amount of questions about it, with you only responding 'yes' or 'no'. The class gets three guesses before the big reveal...</p> |
| <p><b>Balderdash</b></p> <p>Teacher chooses an unusual word from the dictionary and children have to guess its meaning. Teacher could display some real definitions and some false ones to help children come up with a guess. They should justify their answer with some good reasoning!</p>             | <p><b>Story generator</b></p> <p>Display a character, a setting and a plot. As a class, take turns adding a sentence to the story and create your own shared narrative. Some children will need some prompting or support during this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Story Path, by Kate Baker (EYFS and KS1)</li> <li>▪ Story Cubes (KS1 and KS2)</li> </ul>                          | <p><b>In the News</b></p> <p>Share something from the daily news with the children. Maybe share a quick clip from Newsround. Have a little discussion about the issue at hand. This will keep them connected with the world beyond their home.</p> |

**Taken from:** 30 ideas for live class catch-ups *Compiled by @DynamicDeps, Russell & Steve*  
 Many thanks to our group members at [Make an Impact Education](#) who contributed so brilliantly.



We have been identifying the different techniques famous speakers have used in their speeches. We were then inspired to write, perform and assess our own motivational speeches on @Flipgrid. We identified our own strengths and weaknesses using the oracy framework. @voice21oracy



<https://twitter.com/DosbarthAbereddy/status/1365228863056318466>

### The Oracy Framework -Voice 21

<https://voice21.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/The-Oracy-Framework-1-1.pdf>



Emma  
@EmmaMT21



Y6 are reading *The Nowhere Emporium*.  
We take it in turns to write a summary of each chapter on padlet. A different child then orally retells the chapter on the same post.  
Developing storytelling alongside the 4 oracy framework strands! 🗣️ #Oracy #Reading @OracyTH @voice21oracy

The oral recordings can be added to padlet so the resource can be used both in-school and at home to support readers with how the book is developing at the point of reading.

And to close our publication, here is a reminder why our schools are keeping oracy going:

### What are the benefits of developing teachers' and students' oracy?

Developing classroom talk has a wide range of benefits on students' outcomes during school, and beyond. In particular, structured dialogue during lessons, where students are encouraged to participate verbally and given space and time to reflect upon and discuss complex ideas, is linked with:

- **Cognitive gains**, including improved results in English, maths and science, the retention of subject-specific knowledge, and 'transference' of reasoning skills across subject areas (Jay et al., 2017);
- **Personal and social gains**, including attitudes towards learning, enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence, and a reduction in anxiety (Hanley P et al., 2015); (Gorard et al., 2015), and;
- **Civic engagement and empowerment**, increasing children and young people's ability to debate issues, while also increasing understanding about social issues and ability to manage differences with others (Nagda and Gurin, 2007).

Recent Education Endowment Foundation-funded evaluations indicate raising the quality and rigour of classroom talk has a range of positive academic, personal and social outcomes, in particular for children eligible for free school meals (Gorard et al., 2015); (Hanley P et al., 2015), and in terms of teachers' confidence (Jay et al., 2017).

<https://impact.chartered.college/article/millard-importance-of-oracy-in-teaching-learning/>