

Explanation

We use expository writing to predict cause and effect or to explain the reasons for an event. For instance, “Why do you think Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall?” Using interactive writing, they made the following list of possibilities:

- ❖ Was he being silly?
- ❖ Was he too close to the edge?
- ❖ Did he trip?
- ❖ Was he dancing?
- ❖ Did he not listen to his mother?
- ❖ Was he trying to stand up?

Not only does their writing reflect very good thinking, but the text is composed as a series of questions, again providing a language model. The following example illustrates children’s thinking about the relationship between providing water and plant growth.

The teacher used shared writing to record the class’s observations day by day, providing a comparison upon which to base conclusions about cause and effect. The children concluded the following:

The one that we watered is still growing

The one without water is brown and crumbled.

Through a combination of shared and interactive writing, the teacher and her students were able to document a rather complex experiment, about which children could later read.

This piece of shared and interactive writing provided a good model for documenting observations over time and then using the written information as a focus for analysis and conclusion.

We decided to water one ivy plant and not water the other to see what would happen.

PREDICTION: We think the plant we water will grow and stay green. It might grow flowers.

We think the plant we don’t water will wilt and die. The leaves will turn brown.

WATER	NO WATER
3/25 green, leaves up, leaves like maple leaves, shaped like a bush	3/25 green, leaves up, leaves like maple leaves, shaped like a bush.
3/27 leaves and stem stick up (looks proud) light green leaves, some white	3/27 wilting leaves and stems falling, looks sad, lighter leaves, some white
3/30 leaves stick up and out and leaves light green	3/30 leaves are wilting and wrinkly and bunching up
4/1 leaves bigger, branches stick out	4/1 wilting, leaves face down, leaves crinkle, leaves turn brown
4/3 new baby leaves, taller, sticks up and out	4/3 turning brown, tangled up, points face down and are crumpled
4/8 tall, proud, straight up, flat and big leaves	4/8 turning brown, wilting, squashed leaves, crunchy leaves
4/13 sticking out, growing baby leaves, very green	4/13 brown leaves, crumpled leaves, looks like it’s dying, squished.
4/15 Sticking up, growing tall, new baby leaves, very very green	4/15 crunchy, flat, brown, leaves fallen off

The one that we watered is still growing

The one without water is brown and crumpled

In the following example, the children brought analytic thinking to the consideration of a narrative text and made inferences, another skill that is frequently needed by readers and writers in the later grades.

Using the word because over and over, the children were able to organize a clearly written text. The ideas and sentences were more complex than these children would have been able to produce without support.

Jack was a little foolish because he

believed the wizard. Jack was a little

smart because he hid in the bread box

Jack was a little brave because he climbed

down the beanstalk and chopped it down.

