

## Notes for Teachers

The Ideas Factory was developed as an experimental project to develop an online resource based on creative writing workshops which playwright Peter Arnott regularly runs with writers of many ages, from teenagers to adults. It guides users through a planning model which Peter uses in his own practice and can be used for planning an extended narrative (prose fiction or dramatic script).

### The Ideas Factory planning model

This planning model is based on a careful consideration of the key elements of a story before writing takes place, and encourages thinking about the coherence and strength of the planned story:

- *Where* involves the locations a story takes place in, and encourages a consideration of the impact this has on the story the student is going to tell, focussing on expected rules of the locations chosen.
- *What* considers the narrative development of a story to make a cohesive narrative structure.
- *Who* involves the characters in a story, encouraging consideration of their perspective, motivation and contribution to the narrative.
- *Does it Work* is a review stage in which pupils are encouraged to review their plan and, if required, go back and make changes.

The completed plans can be copied to a word processor like Microsoft Word or printed for continued use and reference when writing their pieces.

### Curriculum Links

This resource has been developed by playwright Peter Arnott in collaboration with the learning team at the National Library of Scotland. We aimed to develop a resource which can support creative writing teaching at secondary level and can be adapted to different levels of ability and ages, depending upon the level of depth you explore the ideas presented.

Although it has not been designed around curriculum terminology, The Ideas Factory has a strong relevance to creative writing at Higher English level, and will encourage pupils to think about some of the key characteristics of prose writing as outlined in the SQA arrangements documents including:

- A plot, or clear narrative development, centred on identifiable characters (or other agents) and leading to some kind of denouement.
- An opening, setting the scene, introducing the characters/agents; a development, expanding our knowledge of predicament or situation; a conclusion, giving some kind of point to, or understanding of, characters and their development.
- A significant shaping of content and theme
- A necessary connection between and among all the parts, so that none of the material appears irrelevant or contradictory.

We recommend you experiment with the resource yourself before using it for teaching, and plan how you can embed the tool with your own teaching of creative writing.

At the simplest level, you can run through the resource by just using the instructional 'Getting Started' videos and the activities to use the resource as a basic story planning tool. However, additional depth can be added by using class discussion to explore the key elements of creative writing, like those from SQA Higher documents outlined above. In addition, 'Thinking Like a Writer' is an essay by Peter Arnott that offers a discussion of his technique for planning creative writing which has inspired The Ideas Factory, why he works in this way and the benefits it can bring to students' planning and writing.



### Teaching Model

To assist with your planning for using the resource we have given a recommended model for using the resource in the classroom below:

1. Introduce the resource in a class activity. Run through the whole resource as a group, discussing key concepts at each stage. This run through should be focussed primarily on how to use the tool, and planning for creative writing, not crafting a perfect story plan.
2. Ask your class to run through the resource in small groups. At this stage the run through should be quite light and fun, they should not spend too much time crafting a polished story plan, but be thinking together about how they can use the resource as an individual planning tool. Alternatively, ask the class to work in small groups to develop a careful group plan which all participants should use to develop a full narrative. This can lead to follow-up discussions on the different ways students have developed the same plan into a story.
3. Pupils then use the resource individually, either in the classroom or individually at home. By this time they should be familiar with how the resource works and able to use it as a tool in their own planning for creative writing prior to writing an extended narrative.

There are many ways you can enrich the class run through with discussion and examples, here are two suggestions:

- Many story ideas start with a where, what and who (see first 'Getting Started' video), and it is likely pupils will naturally think of ideas like this – that's ok, this story planning model simply encourages users to slow down and think carefully about each element. Therefore as a warm up activity you may want to generate random triplets as a group to demonstrate that ideas often start like this, and can be applied to the story planning model used in The Ideas Factory. These ideas can be as random as you want.
- The story planning model introduced in The Ideas Factory can also be used to analyse existing narratives, and this can be a useful tool for exploring each stage in more depth in the class run through:
  - After the introduction film, select a number of texts, perhaps those on your reading list, and break them down into basic triplets of 'Where/What/Who' to demonstrate the concept that all stories can be understood – and analysed – using this model. These examples can then be referred to through out the group run through.
  - At each following stage apply the examples you have generated with your class to the process, e.g. What are the key places in the texts you are using as case studies, and what are the rules of those places (repeat with events and characters using the questions asked in the resource). Finally at 'Does it Work?' consider this for the case study text.