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Introduction: Nothing Fits in a Box Anymore

This book and the concepts contained within it are a direct response to the growing trend toward differentiation and individualisation. The multi-genre, hybrid approach of *Project-Based Writing: Year 5* recognises the differences between students, how they learn and how they seek to show their learning. It caters to their individual strengths, while also guiding them toward the exploration of other means of expression that they might instinctively tend to avoid.

Ultimately, project-based writing is about choice. Just as we live in a culture in which every person in the coffee line can have their own personalised beverage made to order, so too should students be given the tools and the opportunity to show off their knowledge in many different ways.

A vital aspect of project-based writing is the blending of school life with real life. Often, there is a disconnect between the two. Many students, especially tweens and teens, see school life as totally separate from life outside of school. Therefore, it becomes our job as teachers to make sure that the classroom more directly correlates to the outside world. Choice is a huge part of doing that. So whenever possible in your curriculum, you should feel encouraged to offer students choices, while of course still emphasising academic rigour and content knowledge.

The multi-genre activities and units covered in *Project-Based Writing: Year 5* offer the best of both worlds: students gain a functional knowledge of a whole slew of genres, formats and ways of expressing themselves; and at the same time, they learn to successfully weave these separate elements together into a cohesive whole that digs deeper into the topics, themes and issues that are most important to their lives outside of school. It is this step of integration that moves students beyond the simple regurgitation of ideas and into a higher level of thinking: that of creation.



How To Use This Book

This book is divided into four parts, each designed to help you, the teacher, guide your students in the creation of project-based writing units.

I. Project-Based Writing and the Multi-Genre Approach (pages 4–7)

Here is where you can find an overview of the ideas behind project-based writing and why the multi-genre approach is so vital to engaging your students and enriching their writing.

II. Creating a Project-Based Writing Unit (pages 8–14)

This section shows you how to begin the process of introducing your students to multi-genre projects. This is where you and your students can start to hone in on the topics and themes that most interest them. It's also where you will learn about the elements that make up each project-based writing unit and where you'll get a glimpse at what a finished product could look like.

III. Resources (pages 16–58)

The resources contained within this section are divided into four main categories:



Activities



Research



Organisation



Assessment

Collectively – or in any combination you choose – these resources are intended to provide your students with the tools needed to produce projects that are effective, engaging and unique. Each page is written to the students, and each is designed to serve as a resource your students can refer back to as they work through the creative process. Each new resource in this section begins with a brief statement explaining how it can be helpful in the creation of a project-based writing unit.

A. Activities

Here you'll find the nuts and bolts of any project-based writing unit. These activities are varied and flexible; they span several genres and skills, and they can be introduced in any order. The aim here is to equip your students with an abundance of options and ideas.

B. Research

This section gives your students practical methods for conducting and recording the research they will need to do in order to dig deeper into their topics.

How To Use This Book *(cont.)*

III. Resources *(cont.)*

C. Organisation

Students need to plan and structure their work so that they stay focused and on task. The checklists and multiple outlines provided here will help do just that.

D. Assessment

Need a rubric? There are options for different rubrics in this section, as well as a guide to help your students design their own rubrics. Also included is a form that students can use to record your feedback in their own words.

IV. Pre-Made Project-Based Writing Units (pages 60–93)

Finally, this book includes three pre-made project-based writing units that you can use as is, from beginning to end.

For Year 5, the three pre-made units are as follows:



Teach the Teacher



Advocacy Research Project



Historical Advocacy Project

Each unit begins with an overview page that provides step-by-step instructions on how to proceed through the unit. You can also dip into the “Activities” section to add or swap out any lesson you wish. It is this ability to interchange lessons and create different combinations of units that makes this concept of project-based writing with a multi-genre emphasis so unique.

Project-Based Writing: Year 5

Unit 1: Teach the Teacher

Teacher Instructions

It can be said that those who are teaching are also learning, so why not ask the students to teach? After all, knowing, creating or improving, by being able to communicate that content to someone else is an essential skill. This unit gives them the opportunity to do just that.

“Teach the Teacher” is a multi-genre unit that asks each student to select a topic for a lesson that they will teach to the class in a way that engages all of the different learners in the class. What that post can be made up of is up to you, but you will want to ensure that students will learn a lot in the attempt to educate.

This unit is all about the power of student choice. It puts the authority of the lesson in the students' hands, scaffolding each lesson step by step until each student is ready to present an entire lesson and assessment to the whole class.

This unit includes the following components:

- **“Teachable Topics”** (page 61) – Begin the unit by distributing this worksheet. Use it to guide students in choosing topics that will be both fun and significant to research and teach.
- **“Lesson Learning Goals”** (page 62–63) – Introduce the concept of how different learners learn. Have students reach up to the learning objectives with various activities, which will help them think about how their topics can be taught to meet that need.
- **“Pitch Your Topic”** (page 64) – Have students research and pitch in writing their topics to you, the teacher.
- **“Create a Lesson Plan”** (page 65–66) – Show an example of a lesson plan for teaching a topic, and then have students create outlines for their own lesson plans.
- **“Give the Class”** (page 67–68) – Examine the different types of questions before having students create questions based on their teaching topics. (Note: Before distributing this page, have an appropriate open-ended question. Set up for an answer of “no” so that your students can use the website to create questions.)
- **“Write an Oral Presentation”** (page 69–71) – Give students opportunity to write and have of planning a second oral presentation, which they will then use to present their topics to the class.
- **“Write a Persuasive Letter”** (page 72) – Direct students to write a business letter to a school administrator; this letter will explain why their topic should be considered as a possible new subject for the following school year.
- **“Use Checklists”** (page 73) – Provide students with this valuable resource, which will help them stay focused, on task and in front of deadlines.

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Project-Based Writing: Year 5

Unit 2: Advocacy Research Project

Teacher Instructions

Advocacy is an area that comes specifically to connecting school life to real life. With the Advocacy Research Project, students choose a topic to study and advocate for and also the format in which they want to present their results. These topics should be based on current issues and should be ones that have an impact on the world around the students. After all, it doesn't matter if a student is in primary school, they can still make an impact on the world.

This unit includes the following components:

- **“Zoning In”** (page 75–76) – Have students choose an advocacy topic that interests them. Along the way, they will consider the impact their topic has on the world around them. (Note: You may want to distribute these or some copies of the worksheet on page 75 to students to help you fill them out for multiple topics.)
- **“Write a Main Summary”** (page 77–78) – Show how a main summary functions in a persuasive piece of writing and have students create main summaries for works about their topics.
- **“The Newspaper Article”** (page 79–80) – Examine the parts of a newspaper article and have students think about those elements in relation to their advocacy topics.
- **“Create a Graph”** (page 81–82) – Discuss the functions of graphs, and examine two prevalent types: the column graph and the pie chart.
- **“A Call to Action”** (page 83) – Offer several methods for students to choose from as they present persuasive solutions to advocacy topics.
- **“Use Checklists”** (page 84) – Help students stay on task and in front of deadlines.

To begin, you first need to get your students comfortable with sifting through the news. Pick four students each week to bring in an article, blog post, or on topic that are important to them, their community, their country, etc. Collect the articles and keep them organized in a student-created resource library on page 93. Then, once you are ready to begin the Advocacy Research Project, the students can begin the process of choosing their topic by searching through what's already in the classroom's “real news,” and the students, which they will then use to present their topics to the class.

Step 1 – After looking through the library, they should ask themselves these questions:

- Is there a topic out there that is noteworthy?
- Are there at least two sides to the issue?
- Can I find ample evidence to back up my opinion?
- Can I offer a solution or ask my reader or audience to do something to help the issue?

Step 2 – Write down a list of three possible topics they are interested in.

Step 3 – Once students choose their topic for “Zoning In,” they should maintain a bibliography based on where they conduct their research.

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Unit 3 – Historical Advocacy Project

Unit 3: Historical Advocacy Project

Teacher Instructions

Of course, you aren't limited to developing an advocacy project about current issues. Have students look through all of the covers of history for advocacy topics and interesting events. And the any project-based writing unit should, the “Historical Advocacy Project” allows students to choose the topic they wish to study and the format in which they want to present their results.

This unit includes the following components:

- **“A Historical Choice”** (page 86) – Explore ideas for historical topics. Several specific topics are suggested, along with an extensive list of appropriate historical figures and events.
- **“Choose a Topic”** (page 87) – Hand out three copies of this worksheet to each student. Have students narrow down their choice of a historical advocacy topic to the three that are most interesting to them. Students should then fill out a form for each of the three topics.
- **“Choose an Issue”** (page 88–89) – This section makes students aware of the importance of connecting those with knowledge about a subject. Provided are clear sheets that give students a checklist of how to prepare for and conduct a great interview. An activity page challenges students to read an excerpt from an interview and ask pertinent follow-up questions. Finally, each student is asked to compose an email thanking a fictitious interviewee within their time and budget.
- **“The Political Cartoon”** (page 90–92) – Use the provided images to introduce your students to political cartoons. They have your students think about the symbols associated with their topics and create political cartoons of their own.
- **“Use Checklists”** (page 93) – Help students stay focused, on task and in front of deadlines.

Get started by following these steps:

Step 1 – Direct students to look for interesting methods to explore on these resources:

- <http://www.gps-articles.com/>
- <http://www.famous.com/landmarks-history/>
- <http://www.history.com/>

There are so many choices that would work, and the topics chosen could even be tied into the curriculum currently being taught in your classroom. For instance, if you're done in studying:

- ancient civilizations, a student could take a side in the debate in Sparta Athens
- the Renaissance, a student could advocate for funding trips to the New World
- Black Slavery, a student could debate whether or not had better punishments for picking

Step 2 – Distribute the “A Historical Choice” page to your students and begin the process of picking historical advocacy topics.

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What Is Project-Based Writing?

Project-based writing puts a spin on the concept of project-based learning, which is the act of learning through identifying a real-world problem and developing its solution. The project that results from this endeavour encourages students to use critical-thinking skills to journey towards an authentic goal.

Project-based writing activities strive to meet certain criteria. By design, these activities are ...

- ❖ multi-genre
- ❖ differentiated
- ❖ thematic
- ❖ both linguistic and non-linguistic
- ❖ cross-curricular
- ❖ based on real-world scenarios
- ❖ guided by student choice
- ❖ filled with 21st-century connections.

Project-based writing argues that any subject – be it English or STEM – can benefit from strong writing practice. Any genre of writing can support the other and any engaging activity that links academic learning to the real world can be a 21st-century tool.

10 Reasons to Teach Project-Based Writing





1. It is an organic way to integrate all core subjects – maths, science, history and English.
2. It proves to students that imagination and creativity are connected to research and expository writing.
3. It hits all the major elements of the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: Analysis, Evaluation and Creation.
4. By allowing students to choose their format of showing what they know, the buy-in for the quality of the final project is tremendous.
5. Students develop projects that are individualised, unique and specific from each other.
6. It is a powerful way to incorporate all multiple intelligences: visual, verbal, logical, musical, physical, social, solitary and naturalistic.
7. It desegregates nonfiction and fiction, blending the two.
8. It integrates the core subjects with non-core subjects, potentially using technology, art, music, etc.
9. It is a rigorous assessment requiring high levels of thought and communication.
10. It requires use of the entire writing process – from brainstorming to revising, editing and completing the final draft – regardless of the genres picked and the topic chosen.

The Multi-Genre Approach

At the heart of project-based writing is the concept of melding multiple genres into a final product. This multi-genre approach involves taking several distinct types of writing and fusing them into something unique and powerful. Essentially, a hybrid is created.

Throughout history, humans have strived to create hybrids. In science, people have bred their ideal loyal companion in the Golden Retriever or created their perfect salad accessory in the bug-resistant tomato. In literature, authors and storytellers have written about hybrids, such as the unicorn and Pegasus.

Here are some examples of hybrids throughout history:

Picture	Description
	half electric, half petrol-powered
	half person, half fish
	half Labrador, half poodle
	half chocolate, half peanut butter

In project-based writing, a hybrid is created when we combine genres that revolve around a shared topic or theme. The result is a multi-genre project that uses the best of different presentations and weaves them together into a totally new creature.

After all, just as any subject can benefit from strong writing practice, so can any genre of writing help support another. The multi-genre aspect of project-based writing is important because it is vital that students understand that genres are not compartmentalised in life. For example, a narrative can support a persuasive argument, just as a graph can support a summary. Weaving the strengths of multiple genres together into one project is the key to project-based writing and to providing one's audience with a richer, fuller picture of a topic or theme.

Unit 1: Teach the Teacher

Teacher Instructions



It can be said that those who are teaching are also learning, so why not ask the students to teach? After all, knowing content is important, but being able to communicate that content is even more important. And let's face it, what student doesn't want to be the authority somehow? This unit gives them the opportunity to do just that.

“Teach the Teacher” is a multi-genre unit that asks each student to select a topic for a course that they will teach to the class in a way that engages all of the different learners in the class. While that goal can be really hard to accomplish (as any teacher will tell you), students will learn a lot in the attempt to achieve it.

This unit is all about the power of student choice. It puts the authority of the lesson in the students' hands, scaffolding each lesson step by step until each student is ready to present an entire lesson and assessment to the whole class.

This unit includes the following components:

- ❖ **“Teachable Topics”** (page 61) – Begin the unit by distributing this worksheet. Use it to guide students in choosing topics that will be both fun and rigorous to research and teach.
- ❖ **“How Learners Learn”** (pages 62–63) – Introduce the concept of how different learners learn. Have students match up the learning categories with various activities, which will help them think about how their topics can be taught in ways that reach different learners.
- ❖ **“Pitch Your Topic”** (page 64) – Have students research and pitch in writing their topics to you, the teacher.
- ❖ **“Create a Lesson Plan”** (pages 65–66) – Show an example of a lesson plan for teaching a topic, and then have students create outlines for their own lesson plans.
- ❖ **“Quiz the Class”** (pages 67–68) – Examine the different types of quiz questions before having students create quizzes based on their teaching topics. (Note: Before distributing these pages, locate an appropriate quiz-making website. Sign up for an account, if needed, so that your students can use the website to create quizzes online.)
- ❖ **“Give an Oral Presentation”** (pages 69–71) – Give students tips on the whys and hows of planning a successful oral presentation, which they will then use to present their topics to the class.
- ❖ **“Write a Persuasive Letter”** (page 72) – Direct students to write a business letter to a school administrator; this letter will explain why their topic should be considered as a possible new subject for the following school year.
- ❖ **“Unit Checklist”** (page 73) – Provide students with this valuable resource, which will help them stay focused, on task and in front of deadlines.

Unit 2: Advocacy Research Project

Teacher Instructions



Advocacy is an area that caters specifically to connecting school life to real life. With the Advocacy Research Project, students choose a topic to study (and advocate for) and also the format in which they want to present their results. These topics should be based on current issues and should be ones that have an impact on the world around the students. After all, it doesn't matter if a student is in primary school, they can still make an impact on the world.

This unit includes the following components:

- ❖ **“Zeroing In”** (pages 75–76) – Have students choose an advocacy topic that interests them. Along the way, they will consider the impact their topics have on the world around them. (Note: You may want to distribute three or more copies of the worksheet on page 75 to students so they can fill them out for multiple topics.)
- ❖ **“Write a Main Statement”** (pages 77–78) – Show how a main statement functions in a persuasive piece of writing and have students create main statements for works about their topics.
- ❖ **“The Newspaper Article”** (pages 79–80) – Examine the parts of a newspaper article and have students think about those elements in relation to their advocacy topics.
- ❖ **“Create a Graph”** (pages 81–82) – Discuss the functions of graphs, and examine two prevalent types (the column graph and the pie chart).
- ❖ **“A Call to Action”** (page 83) – Offer several methods for students to choose from as they practise proposing solutions to advocacy topics.
- ❖ **“Unit Checklist”** (page 84) – Help students stay on task and in front of deadlines.

To begin, you first need to get your students comfortable with sifting through the news. Pick four students each week to bring in an article, blog post, etc. on topics that are important to them, their community, their country, etc. Collect the articles and keep them organised in a student-created resource library (see page 9). Then, once you are ready to begin the Advocacy Research Project, the students can begin the process of choosing topics by searching through what's already in the classroom. From there, have the students do the following:

Step 1 – After looking through the library, they should ask themselves these questions:

- ❖ Is there a topic out there that is newsworthy?
- ❖ Are there at least two sides to the issue?
- ❖ Can I find ample evidence to back up my opinion?
- ❖ Can I offer a solution or ask my reader or audience to do something to help the issue?

Step 2 – Write down a list of three possible topics they are interested in.

Step 3 – Once students choose their topics (see “Zeroing In”), they should maintain a bibliography based on where they conduct their research.

Unit 3: Historical Advocacy Project

Teacher Instructions



Of course, you aren't limited to developing an advocacy project about current issues. Have students look through all of the events of history for debatable topics and interesting events. And like any project-based writing unit should, the "Historical Advocacy Project" allows students to choose the topic they wish to study and the format in which they want to present their results.

This unit includes the following components:

- ❖ **"A Historical Choice"** (page 86) – Explore ideas for historical topics. Several specific topics are suggested, along with an extensive list of important historical figures and events.
- ❖ **"Choose a Topic"** (page 87) – Hand out three copies of this worksheet to each student. Have students narrow down their choice of a historical advocacy topic to the three that most interest them. Students should then fill out a form for each of the three topics.
- ❖ **"Conduct an Interview"** (pages 88–90) – This section teaches students about the importance of interviewing those with knowledge about a subject. Provided are cheat sheets that give students valuable tips on how to prepare for and conduct a great interview. An activity page challenges students to read an excerpt from an interview and ask pertinent follow-up questions. Finally, each student is asked to compose an email thanking a fictitious interview subject for their time and insights.
- ❖ **"The Political Cartoon"** (pages 91–92) – Use the provided image to introduce your students to political cartoons. Then have your students think about the symbols associated with their topics and create political cartoons of their own.
- ❖ **"Unit Checklist"** (page 93) – Help students stay focused, on task and in front of deadlines.

Get started by following these steps:

Step 1 – Direct students to look for inspiration in textbooks or online at these resources:

- ❖ http://www.nma.gov.au/online_features/defining_moments
- ❖ <http://timelines.ws/>
- ❖ <https://www.factmonster.com/world/world-history>

There are so many choices that would work, and the topics chosen could even be tied into the curriculum currently being taught in your classroom. For instance, if your class is studying:

- ❖ ancient civilisations, a student could take a side in the Athens vs Sparta debate
- ❖ the Renaissance, a student could advocate for funding trips to the New World
- ❖ Black Saturday, a student could debate whether we need harsher punishments for arsonists.

Step 2 – Distribute the "A Historical Choice" page to your students and begin the process of picking historical advocacy topics.