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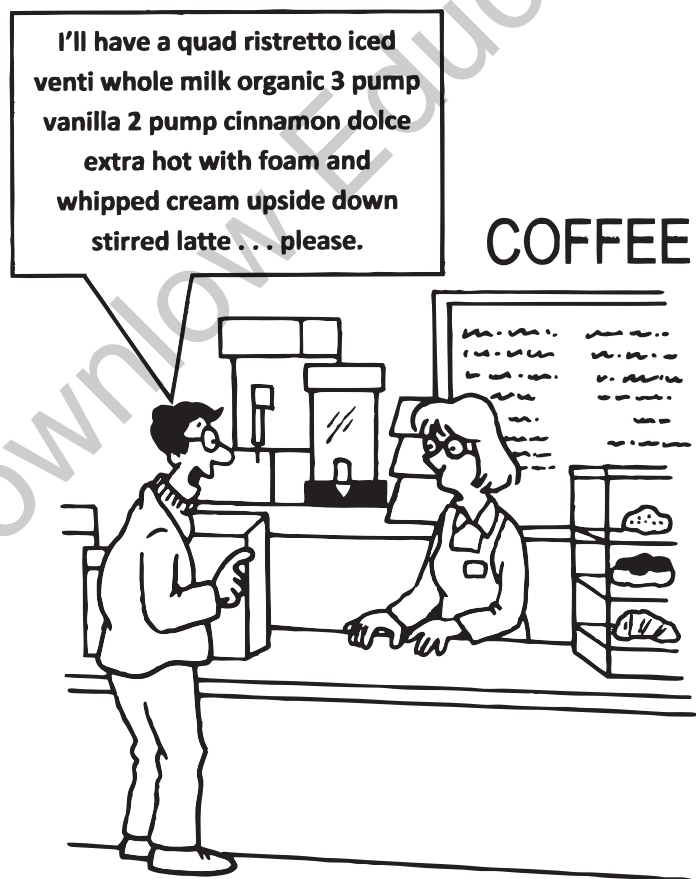
Introduction: Nothing Fits in a Box Anymore

This book and the concepts contained within it are a direct response to the growing trend towards differentiation and individualisation. The multi-genre, hybrid approach of *Project-Based Writing: Year 4* 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 towards 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 4* 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 8–13)

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 16–55)

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 57–95)

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

For Year 4, the three pre-made units are as follows:



Teach the Teacher



Persuasive-Writing Project



Create a State

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 4

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 so. And let's face it, what student doesn't want to be the authority someone? 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. While that goal can be really hard to accomplish for any teacher, with this unit, students will learn a lot in the process to achieve it.

This unit is all about the power of student choice. In part, the authority of the lesson is the student's 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:

- **"Teach the Teacher" (page 59)** – Begins the unit by distributing this worksheet. Use to guide students in choosing topics that will be fun and topics to research and teach.
- **"How Lessons Learn" (pages 60–61)** – Introduces the concept of how different human beings learn in different ways. Includes strategies with various activities, which will help them think about how their topics can be taught in a way that reaches different learners.
- **"Pick Your Topic" (page 62)** – Have students research and pitch in writing their topic to you as a teacher.
- **"Create a Lesson Plan" (pages 63–64)** – Show an example of a lesson plan for teaching a topic, and then have students create outlines for their own lesson plans.
- **"Right the Class" (page 65–66)** – Examine the different types of class questions before having students create questions based on their teaching topics. (Note: Before distributing these pages, have an appropriate topic-making workshop. Sign up for an account, if needed, so that your students can use the website to create questions online.)
- **"Class as the Presenter" (page 67)** – Give students tips on the ways and hows of planning a successful oral presentation, which they will use to present their topic to the class.
- **"Write a Persuasive Letter" (page 70)** – Direct students to write a business letter to a local business that they will explain why their topic should be considered as a possible new lesson for the following school year.
- **"Unit Checklist" (page 72)** – Provide students with this valuable resource, which will help them stay focused, on task and in front of deadlines.

Project-Based Writing: Year 4

Unit 2: Persuasive-Writing Project

Teacher Instructions

The aim of this unit is to encourage students to connect school life to real life. With the Persuasive-Writing Project, students choose a topic to study and the format in which they want to present their results. These topics can be based on current issues that have an impact on us, or issues that affect students. After all, even primary school students can often make an impact on the world around them.

This unit includes the following components:

- **"Candidate Cases and Effect" (page 70)** – Get students thinking about causes and their effects. This will help them consider the impact their topic can have on the world.
- **"Choosing a Topic" (page 70)** – Have students begin to narrow down their choices for a topic that interests them. (Note: You may want to distribute these or more copies of the worksheet on page 74 so students can fill them out for multiple topics.)
- **"Write a Main Statement" (pages 75–76)** – Show how main statements function in a persuasive piece of writing and have students create main statements about their topic.
- **"The Newspaper Article" (pages 77–78)** – Review the parts of a newspaper article and have students think about their topics in relation to their topic.
- **"Share, Don't Tell" (pages 79–80)** – Discuss the function of graphs and examine two previous topics (the colour graph and the pie chart).
- **"Conduct an Interview" (pages 81–83)** – Teach the importance of getting information from people who can knowledgeable about a topic. These pages provide valuable tips and practice for preparing for and conducting a pre-interview.
- **"Unit Checklist" (page 84)** – This valuable resource keeps students focused, on task and in front of deadlines.

Begin by getting your students comfortable with filling through the form. Pick four students each week to bring in an article. The goal is to try to get an interview to them, their community, their country, and collect the article and keep them organized in a student-created resource library. The students can then begin choosing topics by searching through what's already in the classroom. As students begin the unit and start to narrow down their choices for topics, have them consider the following questions:

- Is there a topic out there that is interesting?
- Are there at least two sides to the issue?
- Can I offer a solution or ask my reader or audience to do something to help the issue?

Have students consider all causes – books, movies, videos, web, interviews, etc. – when researching their topics. Also, remind them to maintain a bibliography of their sources.

Unit 3 – Create a State

Unit 3: Create-a-State Project

Teacher Instructions

Most state projects ask students to study their state and suggest what they've learned. But the highest form of comprehension is not in being able to remember (what, where, when) in the age of the search engine, it's in being able to create something from the information we understand. Researching a state is one thing, but imagining a new state is another, far more creative endeavour. In Year 4, students become experts of the state they live in. This unit will take this idea one step further and ask them to create a new state or territory in Australia.

This is going to take a little time, some knowledge about their own state or territory and the characteristics about states and territories in general, and a lot of imagination.

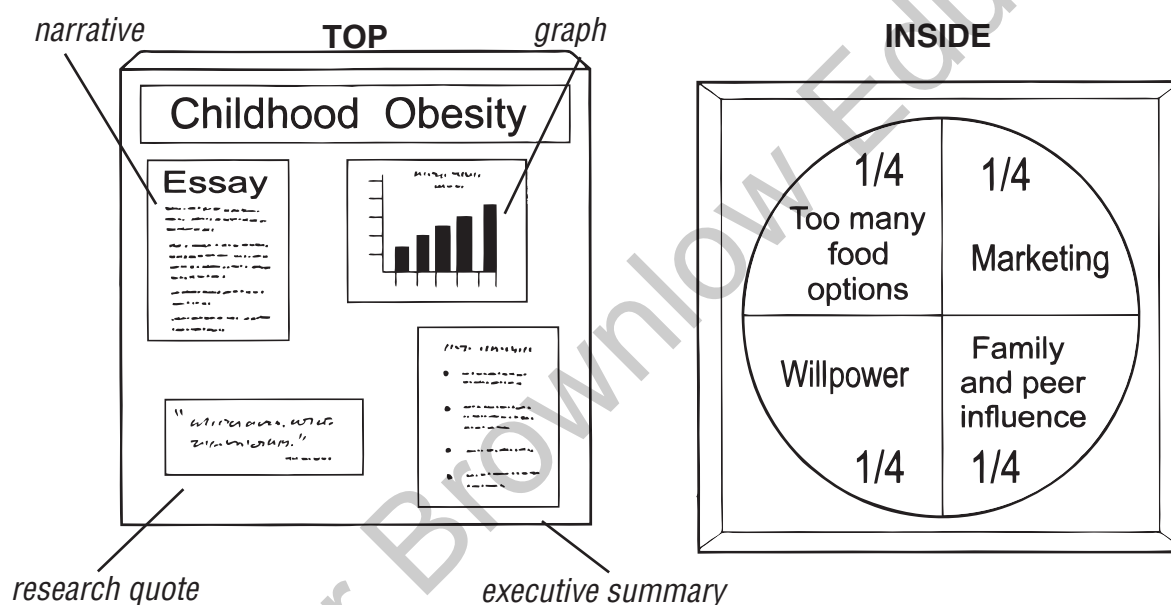
This unit includes the following components:

- **"The State You Call Home" (page 86)** – Begin this unit by having students research the state or territory in which they live. This will focus students as they begin thinking about the state and territories they will create and the questions they will need to answer about those states.
- **"All About Maps" (pages 87–88)** – Use these pages to show students the elements involved in mapping. This activity will lead up to the creation of a new state or territory by each student.
- **"Put Your State on the Map" (pages 89–90)** – Have students show how their newly created states fit into the existing map of Australia. They have then create a more detailed look at their state's geographical features.
- **"Introducing the New State or Territory" (pages 91–92)** – This is where students really get to fill in the details of their state. Two pages of questions about their new state give students an opportunity for creative thinking.
- **"History as a Game" (page 93)** – Students use the timeline format to show the history of their state, from its early beginnings to its present condition.
- **"A Great Place to Visit" (page 94)** – Through the creation of travel brochures, students will have the opportunity to convince readers why their state is the place to visit. A travel brochure is a great project-based writing activity because it combines genres by incorporating visuals, narratives and facts all in one handy folded document.
- **"Unit Checklist" (page 95)** – This valuable resource helps students stay focused, on task and in front of deadlines.

What Will a Completed Project Look Like?

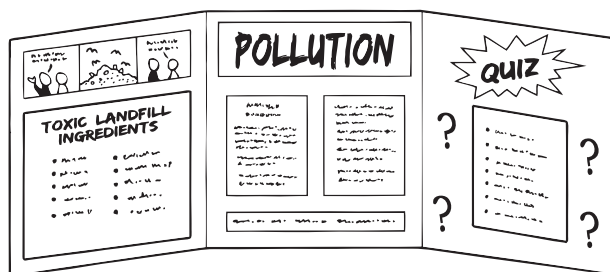
So what should a completed project-based writing unit look like? The short answer is that there is no one design for how these units should look. In fact, the hope is that each student project looks unique in its display and is specific in its content. Individuality is not only encouraged, it is essential to the concept. Here are some examples:

Project Topic/Theme: Childhood Obesity Container/Format: Pizza Box



Project Topic/Theme: Pollution

Container/Format: Tri-Board Display



Includes: a research paper on pollution, a science-fiction narrative about a future in which the world has been taken over by rubbish, comic book frames illustrating key moments from the narrative, a recipe of the ingredients that make up a dump site and a student-created quiz, the answers to which can be found in the contents of the project

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 so. 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 59) – 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 60–61) – 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 62) – Have students research and pitch in writing their topics to you, the teacher.
- ❖ **"Create a Lesson Plan"** (pages 63–64) – 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 65–66) – 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 67–69) – 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 70) – 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 lesson for the following school year.
- ❖ **"Unit Checklist"** (page 71) – Provide students with this valuable resource, which will help them stay focused, on task and in front of deadlines.

Unit 2: Persuasive-Writing Project

Teacher Instructions



The aim of this unit is to encourage students to connect school life to real life. With the Persuasive-Writing Project, students choose a topic to study and the format in which they want to present their results. These topics can be based on current issues that have an impact on the world around the students. After all, even primary school students can strive to make an impact on the world around them.

This unit includes the following components:

- ❖ **“Consider Cause and Effect”** (page 73) – Get students thinking about causes and their effects. This will help them examine the impacts their topics can have on the world.
- ❖ **“Choosing a Topic”** (page 74) – Have students begin to narrow down their choices for a topic that interests them. (Note: You may want to distribute three or more copies of the worksheet on page 74 so students can fill them out for multiple topics.)
- ❖ **“Write a Main Statement”** (pages 75–76) – Show how a main statement functions in a persuasive piece of writing and have students create main statements about their topics.
- ❖ **“The Newspaper Article”** (pages 77–78) – Review the parts of a newspaper article and have students think about those elements in relation to their topics.
- ❖ **“Show, Don’t Tell”** (pages 79–80) – Discuss the functions of graphs and examine two prevalent types (the column graph and the pie chart).
- ❖ **“Conduct an Interview”** (pages 81–83) – Teach the importance of getting information from people who are knowledgeable about a topic. These pages provide valuable tips and practice for preparing for and conducting a great interview.
- ❖ **“Unit Checklist”** (page 84) – This valuable resource keeps students focused, on task and in front of deadlines.

Begin by getting 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. The students can then begin choosing topics by searching through what’s already in the classroom.

As students begin the unit and start to narrow down their choices for topics, have them consider the following questions:

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

Have students consider all sources – books, websites, videos, podcasts, interviews, etc. – when researching their topics. Also, remind them to maintain a bibliography of their sources.

Unit 3: Create-a-State Project

Teacher Instructions



Most state projects ask students to study their state and regurgitate what they've learned. But the highest form of comprehension is not in being able to remember (after all, we live in the age of the search engines, right?), but in being able to create something from the information we understand. Researching a state is one thing, but imagining a new state is another, far more creative endeavour. In Year 4, students become experts of the state they live in. This unit will take this idea one step further and ask them to create a new state or territory in Australia.

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- ❖ **“Put Your State on the Map”** (pages 89–90) – Have students show how their newly created states fit into the existing map of Australia. Then have them create a more detailed look at their state's topographical features.
- ❖ **“Introducing the New State or Territory”** (pages 91–92) – This is where students really get to fill in the details of their states. Two pages of questions about their new states give students an opportunity for creative thinking.
- ❖ **“History at a Glance”** (page 93) – Students use the timeline format to show the history of their state, from its early beginnings to its present condition.
- ❖ **“A Great Place to Visit!”** (page 94) – Through the creation of travel brochures, each student will have the opportunity to convince readers why their state is the place to visit. A travel brochure serves a great project-based writing activity because it combines genres by incorporating visuals, narratives and facts all in one handy folded document.
- ❖ **“Unit Checklist”** (page 95) – This valuable resource helps students stay focused, on task and in front of deadlines.