

20 teaching ideas for literacy in science

1

Sales pitch. Choose an invention or scientific discovery and write a sales pitch for it.

2

Limited syllables. Students sum up a topic or key idea. First line is a word of one syllable; second line has two syllables; third has three syllables and so on up to (maximum) line eight then go into reverse so ninth line has seven syllables; tenth has six until final one-syllable word.

3

Write an essay. Students choose a contentious issue such as GM, fracking, banning the use of mobile phones for under 16s etc. They consider the evidence and various points of view and present their own, informed opinion on the topic.

4

Write a report. Students describe something they have done in class. Write in present tense using the first person. List key words you would like them to include.

5

Blogging and tweeting. How would Darwin/Newton/Einstein report their thoughts and developing ideas today?

6

Science haiku. Students describe a concept in the form of a haiku poem (a three-line poem of seventeen syllables, the first line with five syllables, the second with seven and the third with five).

7

Flash fiction. Show recent examples of developments in science e.g. from (listverse.com/2013/07/12/10-recent-scientific-advances-that-signal-the-future/). Students write a piece of flash fiction (a story in 100-250 words) inspired by a recent development.

8

Anxious elements. As if you were a dentist explaining a procedure to a nervous patient, explain to an element involved in a displacement reaction what is about to happen to it.

9

Analyse a persuasive article. Select advertisements for environmental or wildlife charities. How do they draw attention to the issues? What emotive language is used to persuade the reader? How do they use science? What facts are included? What data? How do they make the reader feel involved in the issues?

10

Last word. Ask students to write an obituary for the death of an idea e.g. phlogiston theory; theory of acquired characteristics; spontaneous generation; geocentric universe; emission of light rays from the eye etc.

20 teaching ideas for literacy in science

11

Vignette. Create a snapshot in words. This is about creating an atmosphere rather than a story. Students write a short, evocative scene that focusses on one moment or episode in science. Show *Experiment on the bird in an air pump* 1768 painting by Joseph Wright, to illustrate.

12

Write an informative text in the style of the 'Horrid science' series or similar. Use humour and graphic language. Include relevant facts and figures. Highlight key words, underline, change size and style of handwriting (or font) for emphasis.

13

Organ email. Organs in the body are in contact with the brain. Imagine they send messages by email. What will they say? How does the brain cope with email overload?

14

Recount an event in which students witnessed something they have learnt about in science e.g. water changing state; effect of gravity or pressure; immune response. Opening paragraph should include who, when and where. Write in the past tense and in chronological order.

15

Wiki. What scientific advances have occurred within the students' own lifetime? E.g. robot probe Philae; stem cell research; Higgs Boson found. Students write contributions and make modifications to a wiki page on the school VLE which discusses a recent development.

16

Triple explanation. Use plain language to explain a concept/process. Organise writing into a series of steps. Include a diagram and glossary. Use 'How?' or 'Why?' in the title. Work in groups of three. Agree on what to include. Choose your audience. One person writes for primary school readers, one for grandparents/older readers and one for sixth-form students.

17

Jigsaw! Cut up a text intended to instruct. Students assemble the instructions into a logical order.

18

Speed dating elements. Students choose an element and write how it might describe itself at a speed dating session (30-60 secs). Number of electrons in outer shell could indicate how keen they are to form a relationship!

19

Write an evaluation of a model/object they have made in science e.g. model cell; periscope. Use the past tense to describe how they made their model; use present tense to describe its characteristics; future tense to say how their model could be improved.

20

Wild pet. Think about your (or friend/relatives) pet. What does it do all day? Is it active at night? Imagine it is a wild animal. You have filmed 3-4 scenes for a wildlife documentary. Write a voice-over commentary for your short film.