



## Jen's NAPLAN Super Summary & Samples

What's the key to NAPLAN writing? It's having a set of tools at hand to plan, write and edit a text in a very short period of time. I should know – I've sat the NAPLAN writing test 10 times!

Here are the insights I've gained along the way – plus my 10 NAPLAN responses (unedited!) – to help your students give it their very best shot on the day.

Happy teaching and learning!

**Jen McVeity OAM**

Author and Founder of Seven Steps

### Planning



Insight	Action
<b>Plan on paper.</b> It's much harder to get the creative juices flowing when typing words in a linear fashion on-screen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even if students are sitting NAPLAN online, ensure they continue to plan their writing on paper.</li> <li>• Have them visualise the story graph when planning so they can map out how the story will unfold.</li> </ul>
<b>Practise brainstorming.</b> It's vital to come up with ideas quickly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide lots of opportunities to practise brainstorming topic ideas.</li> <li>• Brainstorm different topics as a class, in groups and individually. This will help students to cope with the pressure on the day.</li> </ul>
<b>Know the ending before you start writing.</b> Avoid falling flat at the end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students need to include an idea for the ending on their plan to ensure that their story/argument has a strong impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Think outside the box.</b> Ignore the images provided with the prompt and dig deeper for original ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to think differently about topics to come up with something original.</li> <li>• Ask: Does it have to be a thing or a person? Could it be an animal or an idea or concept? Could the topic 'Brave' be a dog's name? Or 'The Door' be short for Doreen? 'Hope' could be a place or 'Time' a command!</li> </ul>
<b>Keep it simple.</b> With only 40 minutes writing time, it's best to avoid an epic saga.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students to identify a short story idea rather than a movie-length idea – i.e. avoiding multiple characters and ornate storylines in favour of a simple idea that can be executed well.</li> </ul>



# Writing

Insight	Action
<b>Practise keyboard skills.</b> Good typing skills allow students to write and edit quickly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run short, sharp activities using the keyboard to speed up letter finding.</li> <li>• Consider using keyboards (real or laminated) in spelling lessons.</li> <li>• Ensure students know how to access the keyboard on a tablet.</li> <li>• Practise placing the cursor at the correct point rather than deleting lots of text.</li> </ul>
<b>Aim for quality, not quantity.</b> More words do not equal more marks. A short, well-written text is better than a long one with half-baked ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the mantras 'less is more' and 'quality not quantity' with students.</li> <li>• Strongly discourage students from writing the word count at the end. This wastes valuable editing time and doesn't earn them any marks.</li> </ul>
<b>Follow your plan.</b> Avoid going off on a tangent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give students practise using their plan as a roadmap while writing their response, so they can avoid 'losing the plot'.</li> </ul>
<b>Finish your text.</b> Risk losing a significant number of marks in several assessment criteria if the text is unfinished.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give students lots of timed writing practice so they're used to writing under pressure.</li> <li>• Run timed typing activities and games.</li> </ul>
<b>Uplevel your vocabulary.</b> Students lose marks for spelling errors, but they also gain marks for adventurous or unusual vocabulary – so playing it safe is not necessarily the best option.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get students to experiment with the words in their personal dictionaries. Place words on a continuum to show shades of meaning and talk explicitly about the differences in the meaning of closely related verbs (e.g. <i>cry, sob, bawl, weep, howl, wail</i>) and adjectives (e.g. <i>thin, slim, skinny, scrawny, slender, slight</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Write what you know.</b> In a pickle, this is the safe and entirely acceptable option.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students that it's fine to write about a topic they're familiar with, especially when time is so tight.</li> <li>• Students should still try to make their writing lively enough to stand out from the crowd.</li> </ul>
<b>Do what authors do.</b> Use writing exemplars to deconstruct good writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse writing exemplars with students (see link below). Make a class list of the best authorial techniques to use.</li> <li>• Students experiment with using the techniques in their own writing.</li> </ul>

## NAPLAN writing samples

There are 10 NAPLAN writing samples on pages 4–35. See how the Seven Steps help structure and enhance a NAPLAN response. Get more insights on these writing samples on Teacher Hub. Not a Teacher Hub member? [Try it for FREE here.](#)

- Find out how Jen planned, wrote and edited each response under test conditions.
- Analyse the markers' comments about what was done well and what could be improved.

[View insights](#)

# Editing



Insight	Action
<p><b>Check punctuation and spelling.</b> A few marks lost here can make a big difference so students must allow time to check for typos.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make it your classroom policy NOT to look at a student's writing until they've completed a line edit first. They'll need a bit of retraining, but it's well worth it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work on the expression.</b> Ensuring that the text flows well and uplevelling the vocabulary will score a few extra marks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train students to revise their work using a different coloured pen or pencil so you can give them feedback on their edits.</li> <li>• The 'Track Changes' function can be used by students editing on-screen.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finesse the ending.</b> There are 6 marks for audience, so it's important that the ending leaves a lasting impression.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a list of banned endings to display in the classroom, e.g. <i>THE END!</i></li> <li>• As a class, craft final sentences and then rank them by level of impact.</li> <li>• Run a lesson on writing short, strong final sentences. Having a few of these up their sleeves is a lifesaver for students, e.g.:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Phew! That was close!</i></li> <li>• <i>Still think it's a lie?</i></li> <li>• <i>I told you so.</i></li> <li>• <i>Not today, not ever.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>



## Super tips for persuasive topics

Insight	Action
<p><b>Use narrative techniques.</b> NAPLAN values creativity so using narrative techniques in persuasive writing is encouraged and rewarded.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisements offer great examples of using emotion, humour, dialogue and show, don't tell to persuade an audience. Show some to the class, identify the techniques and discuss their impact.</li> <li>• Students practise using at least one narrative technique in their introductions for a persuasive topic. Repeat using other techniques.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Avoid the boring formula.</b> Formulaic writing will not earn strong marks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students avoid writing to the formula, e.g. <i>I think ice cream is better than chocolate because of a, b and c.</i></li> <li>• Teach students to infer their argument rather than state it outright, e.g. <i>Cold, sweet and creamy ... can you guess my favourite treat?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Use persuasive devices.</b> They can do some heavy lifting when it comes to convincing the reader.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on just a few persuasive devices so students can master them.</li> <li>• Create a checklist and practise starting or ending a paragraph with a powerful persuasive combo, e.g. a rhetorical question, direct address, emotive language and rule of three can often be combined: <i>Surely, you'd prefer the convenience of a delicious chocolate bar to a sticky, drippy, icy mess?</i></li> </ul>



## 2015 NAPLAN Topic – Years 3 & 5

### Try This Activity

**Choose a sport, hobby or activity that you are interested in. Write to persuade a reader why they should try your chosen activity.**

*Note: This exemplar was written by Jen McVeity, creator of the Seven Steps to Writing Success and the author of over 20 books. She wrote this in the exact time that all children receive to draft and submit their NAPLAN writing test. We have not checked or changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time allowed.*

**Planning (13 minutes)**

**Writing (31 minutes)**

**Editing (1 minute)**

## Sun, Sand and Memories

### Sizzling Start (6 minutes)

*Sun and sand, who doesn't love the beach? Now add in another word for the best sport I've ever played. Beach ... volleyball.*

*Here's how the sport goes. Take one beach, a net and three friends. Coat yourself in sunscreen. Someone serves and from then on it is dig, dive, set, spike. Now you are really sweaty and covered in sand. And your partner is pulling you up, a big grin on her face, slapping her hand against yours. 'Great spike!' she cries. 'Good point' say the opposition. And then you walk back to serve, the sun warm on your back and a smily on your face. That's just one point of the great game called beach volleyball.*

### Argument 1 (11 minutes)

*You want to get fit? You could pay \$150 a month, join a gym, run on a treadmill to nowhere for an hour, and then lift some smelly weights. Or you could grab a ball and head to the beach. Much cheaper – and a whole lot more workout. According to those gadgets you wear on your wrist, In half an hour you will have run over 2 kms. And not jogged – sprinted at full speed trying to beat a ball before hit hits the sand. You've seen the calf muscles on bike riders? Nothing compared to the toned legs of a beach volleyballer after 2 kms of sprinting on sand. You want strong shoulders and great hand-eye co-ordination? You try leaping out of the sand and connecting with a ball to smash it over the net. Like to be supple? In beach volleyball you dive full length in the sand 10–20 times a game and then immediately leap up to hit the ball again. All for the cost of some sunscreen and a bottle of water.*

### Argument 2 (6 minutes)

*What people remember most about beach volleyball are the bikinis and the hand signals. What I remember is the teamwork. One finger behind the back – ‘I’ll block line, you cover my back and take the cross court hit.’ If you miss a serve, you partner just slaps your hand ‘Next one,’ she says with a shrug. You make a great shot ‘Awesome! Amazing!’ It’s a smart game volleyball, so many strategies to work out, so many variations in each point. So you talk to your partner all the time, encourage, cheer them on, and make plans for the next winning shot. And afterwards you watch other people play, applaud great shots, tease them and learn from them too.*

### Argument 3 (5 minutes)

*It’s always been amazing to me that I can play a sport at such a competitive level even now. Beach volleyball may be a fantastic workout, but it is easy on the body. Remember Natalie Cook and Kerri Pottharst – they won gold in the Sydney Olympics. Both came from an indoor volleyball background and struggled so much with knee injuries they were both retired. Then they headed to beach volleyball and the rest is Olympic gold history. How many mothers do you know who can win Olympic gold medals after having kids? Kerri Walsh in the USA had two children and won gold last Olympics. When I look at the beach volleyball courts where I play there are times when I see fathers and sons playing together, mothers and daughters, I play with my own son ... What a wonderful experience it is play WITH your kids, not sit on the sidelines and watch and clap and then drive them home.*

### Ending with Impact (3 minutes)

*There are days when I am on the beach and playing with my kids, or good friends, or even new people. There are times when I’ve won a medal, or just gone home tired and happy after a great day. Then there are the keeper moments – that wonderful feeling of happiness when you are with good people. You are on the beach, there’s a lot of laughter and lots of talking. In the distance the sun is setting and the sky is golden and the last ball has been played.*

*Those are the moments that stay in your heart forever.*

*Come, grab a ball and head to the beach and join us.*



## 2015 NAPLAN Topic – Years 7 & 9

# Simply the Best

### Choose:

- the best movie, TV show or performance you have seen, or
- the best book you have read.

**Write to persuade a reader that they should see or read what you have chosen to write about.**

*Note: This exemplar was written by Jen McVeity, creator of the Seven Steps to Writing Success and the author of over 20 books. She wrote this in the exact time that all children receive to draft and submit their NAPLAN writing test. We have not checked or changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time allowed.*

.....

**Planning (8.5 minutes)**

**Writing (32 minutes)**

**Editing (4.5 minutes)**

.....

## Hills End – Just the Beginning

### Sizzling Start (6.5 minutes)

*'Jen, lights out.'*

*Jen, I told you, stop reading. Get to sleep.'*

*'JENNIFER!' Oh oh ... I put down the book and switched off the lights. When I got the 'JENNIFER' call from Mum I knew I was in trouble. I waited a while, until I heard her footsteps recede, listened ... coast clear. Then I switched on the torch under the covers and kept reading.*

*Thousands of books kept me company in my childhood. Thousands gave me insights into other lives. Only a special few have stayed close to me, as a guide and an inspiration to my life.*

*Ivan Southall wrote Hills End. A story about a group of kids in a mining town who got cut off by floods from the adults and had to survive.*

*Hills End is simply the best book I've ever read.*

*Because it has stayed with me always.*

### Argument 1 (8.5 minutes)

*Books teach. Not like a lecture, but sideways, sliding the information in so that you are fascinated and want to learn more. Hills End was set in a timber logging town in a remote area. I was a sort of city girl. But reading one book, just three hours of my life, I learnt what it was like to live in a remote town, cut off from shops and cities, the only way out over 80 kms of dirt trails and bridges that got washed away in floods. I learnt never drink the waters of a flood because of disease and bacteria. I learnt about different parenting styles, the hard demanding father, head of the logging corporation, the more democratic styles of the parents of the kids who didn't crack under the pressure and the dedication of the teacher, injured and suffering but still trying to guide.*

### Argument 2 (5 minutes)

*As a kid your life is often the four walls of the classroom and the four walls of your bedroom. Unless you had a book. Then you could escape, go on a journey, have an adventure. Authors of children's books try to get rid of parents so their main characters can have LOTS of adventures without parents getting in the way. (Look at all the books that have single parents, or are set in boarding schools. Hello Harry Potter.) After Hills End I got interested in caving, I went camping, I followed the logging debates. And swear I looked at those small country towns we drove through on family holidays, as places where floods and fire were about to happen and if I just hung around long enough, I could be part of the action and know exactly what to do to save everyone.*

### Argument 3 (6 minutes)

*Kids are strong. We often disempower them. 'Be careful!' 'Don't fall!' 'Watch out for ...'*

*Message: The world's a scary place. Yet Alexander the Great conquered a large part of the world when he was 16 years old. Matt Reilly, Paul Jennings, John Marsden – kids love reading their books, for underneath all these stories of strong young protagonists is a message of empowerment. Look, this girl slays dragons. Here is a boy stranded on a desert island, I could survive that too. In Hills End, the children fought and struggled, there were leadership battles, they made mistakes. I loved discovering that. You could make mistakes, and still succeed! Kids actually CAN succeed. When you read this often enough (and I read Hills End a lot!) you start to imagine it. And slowly, you start to believe it. That's a powerful belief to take into adulthood.*

### Ending with Impact (6 minutes)

*Years ago, when I held my first book in my hand (and tried to believe I had actually written it), I unexpectedly realised the theme. A story of five kids lost in the bush and the fear of their parents as they waited through three days of searching for news of their children. Of course, through their courage and determination, the children survive. But as I held the book in my hand I suddenly realised I had written a tribute to Hills End.*

*I packaged up the first copy of my book and sent it to Ivan Southall. 'Thank you for your inspiration and for all the days of enjoyment you have given me. I will remember.'*

*He sent back a letter I treasure.*

*'Dear Jen,*

*I loved your book. Your kids are strong and inspiring. Isn't that the legacy we want to leave?'*

*Oh yes. Simply the best.*





## 2016 NAPLAN Topic – Years 3 & 5

# Imagine

**Imagine if a character found an object that made something amazing happen.**

**Write a narrative (story) about the adventure.**

*Note: This exemplar was written by Jen McVeity, creator of the Seven Steps to Writing Success and the author of over 20 books. She wrote this in the exact time that all children receive to draft and submit their NAPLAN writing test. We have not checked or changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time allowed.*

.....

**Planning (7 minutes)**

**Writing (37 minutes)**

**Editing (1 minute)**

.....

## Imagine

### Sizzling Start

Woof, woof. Woof.

Come on human mother Emma, please let me out! I need to go tinkle.

Woof woof. She was stirring something on the hot thing in the kitchen.

WOOF.

'Quiet Rufus!' she ordered. But I'd been locked inside all day.

WOOF. WOOF. Human mother Emma, you don't want a wet floor do you?

Meow. Sneer. Cyril the cat stalked past, tailed raised. With a sleek movement he disappeared out the cat door. Way too small for me – and he knew it. He strolled out into the garden. I hate that cat.

WOOF! Please, please mother Emma. It's alright for you humans, you can cross your legs. Ever seen a dog cross their legs???

With a sigh, the Emma got up and crossed over to the door and flung it open. I raced out and just made it to the nearest tree. Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle. Ah relief.

'Nearly didn't make it, did you?' Cyril was watching me and sneering again. 'Nearly wet the floor. Ha ha.' And he disappeared inside again. Flip flap went the cat door. I had to wait outside.



## Backfill/Set Up

*Should I bark at the possums? No that gets me into trouble. Should I chase around the yard? No, wait, I can play with the old blue box thing I dug up today.*

*'Rufus! Come in now.' Oh, great, inside already. Yay! I grab my box toy and head inside.*

*The human boy Jack was home from the school. I drop the box in front of him.*

*'What's that?' he asked and opened it up.*

*It's a strange thing about humans, they don't see much and don't hear as much as us dogs. A bright blue light shot out of the box right into him. The other end of the light came to me, right into my brain. I shook, my head, it felt weird.*

*'Good dog,' said Jack. I wagged my tail delightedly. When he spoke like that it often meant a tummy rub. I dropped onto my back.*

*Tummy rub, tummy rub, I thought to him. Oh joy, he stretched out his hand and obliged.*

*More, more ... I was in heaven. And he kept on rubbing. This was the longest tummy rub in the history of my life. I rolled over.*

*Ear scratch, ear scratch ... He did! Wow, the BEST day!*

*'Jack, stop playing with the dog and get ready for dinner,' said Mother.*

*No, no, don't stop ... I thought to him. Amazing – he didn't listen to the mother and kept on patting me.*

*'Jack!' Oh oh, I knew that tone. So did Jack. We both backed away.*

*'What's this?' Mother Emma had found the box I bought in. 'Ah, I remember this. It used to belong to our old dog. Collie loved this box.' Her eyes grew soft. 'He was the greatest dog, we used to go on long walks, play fetch for hours, even go to the beach.*

*I wagged my tail. I LOVE the beach. I can do fetch! I adore long walks. I want that too!*

*She opened the box. The weird blue light immediately shone out. It went to her, and right back to me. I saw her shake her head, just like I was doing. What was that light?*

*'Give it back to me,' I thought.*

*'Here,' she placed it in front of me. 'Take it back.'*

*That was nice of her.*

*How about some dinner, I begged. It was early yet, but worth a try.*

*'How about I feed you?' she asked and headed to the dog food cupboard. She poured a huge bowl of dry biscuits. I really wish I had some raw meat too...the thought came into my mind and it seemed like hers at exactly the same time. 'I'll get you some raw meat too,' she said.*

*Wow, could this day get any better!*

## Crescendo #1

*'Getting your own way – just for a change,' sneered Cyril. He was sitting on his usual position on the couch glaring down at me. Cyril was allowed on the couch, not me. 'Must feel nice to have the humans do what you want,' he sniggered. 'Of course they always treat ME wonderfully.' He settled down closer and purred in smug satisfaction.*

*Cats are never nice creatures, but Cyril was one of the nastiest.*

*'Make the most of it,' he whispered, 'it won't last.'*

*But I was starting to wonder. Cat's think they are so smart, but I was figuring something out. The box, the blue light, the humans being so nice for a change, doing exactly what I asked for.*

*I settled down on the floor and waited for the human father Josh to come home. I had a plan to test.*

## Crescendo #2

*Woof, woof! Josh was home. I let him put down his briefcase, give mother and boy Jack a hug, and then I bounded over to him with the box. 'Not now,' he said. I went into the wag the tail, happy dog, please, please play with me routine. At last, he picked up the box.*

*'Hey, wasn't this Collie's box?' he asked Emma mother. 'Collie was such a great dog, we always had such fun with him. All those walks and trips and remember how he always curled up on the bed with us? He was such a happy dog.' Then Josh opened the box. YES! Out shone the blue light, it went from him to me and I didn't waste any time.*

*Pat me, pat me ... I thought. Absently he reached out a hand and rubbed my back. 'Ear scratch, ear scratch...' and immediately his hand went to my ears. Tummy rub ... I rolled over. 'Hey Rufus,' he rubbed hard, 'looks like you're really pleased to see me hey?'*

*Ah, it was going to be a good night.*

## Crescendo #3

*It was a good night. A great week. A fabulous month. My humans were amazing. They took me for long walks. Rubbed my tummy every night for hours while they watched TV. Shared their meals with me and every weekend we got in the car and drove to the park or beach and we all played cricket or romped on the sand and swam. I had never seen my humans so happy.*

*It is always the simple things that made the difference in life.*

*'Ah Rufus, you're such a great dog.' Jack hugged me and snuggled up to me all the time. We both loved it.*

*'Here Rufus, try a bit of this.' Mother Emma would sneak a bit of lamb chop to me under the table at dinner and smile.*

*'Hey boy, come for a walk!' Josh was getting fitter and healthier every day from all the walks we were taking.*

*'He's just like old Collie' I heard Josh say one night. 'Collie was always so playful and lovable. And so is Rufus. He makes us happy.'*

*It was good to teach my humans how to play.*

*In fact the only small glitch in my life was sneering Cyril. True, he was getting ignored a bit – as he should have been. I managed to persuade Emma that I should be on the couch too. The bed now, that was a bit more difficult. Cyril always got there first and he had sharp claws and could lash out at a wet nose quicker than I could back away. The bed was still Cyril's.*

## Exciting Ending

*Until, one day I wondered if the blue light from the box would work on a cat too...*

*It took a while, I had to lever the box half open, and then leave it around. When Cyril discovered it, he sneered of course.*

*'Kind of a dumb toy, isn't it?' he sniffed. He batted the box with his paw. I played dog dumb and waited.*

*Bang! The box tipped and the lid fell open. Out flared the blue light. To Cyril and back to me. I saw Cyril blink and then look sick. 'What was that?' he asked.*

*He never really knew.*

*Poor Cyril changed after that. The next day, he seemed to think that being outside and not on the couch was a wonderful way to spend the day. That slinking past me and not saying a word was a very good idea. Plus somehow, an odd thought or two of mine convinced Cyril that sleeping outside in the dark was far better than spending every night on the warm bed of the humans.*

## Character resolution

*'Come on Rufus, come on!' Josh the father was patting the bed. 'Come on up!' I landed right in the middle of the bed and licked Josh and Emma's faces delightedly.*

*'Oh stop it,' laughed Emma, but she came back for more. 'You're such a great dog.' She buried her face in my fur. 'We love you.'*

*I curled up at the foot of the bed and tried not to hog all the space. There was a contented sigh from Emma. 'I'm happy,' she said.*

*Josh was scratching my ears. 'Thanks pal,' was all he said, but I knew what he meant.*

*It was good to help my humans be so happy.*

*Tomorrow, I thought as I closed my eyes for sleep, we might go to the beach.*



## 2016 NAPLAN Topic – Years 7 & 9

### The Sign Said

Write a narrative (story) about what happened to a character or characters after reading a sign.

You can use a sign on this page OR you can make up your own sign.

**Note:** This exemplar was written by Jen McVeity, creator of the Seven Steps to Writing Success and the author of over 20 books. She wrote this in the exact time that all children receive to draft and submit their NAPLAN writing test. We have not checked or changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time allowed.

Planning (6.5 minutes)

Writing (37.5 minutes)

Editing (1 minute)

### The Sign Said

#### Sizzling Start

*The sign said: No dogs, cars, bikes or horses – just in case I was thinking of smuggling one of those hidden in my rucksack.*

*It should have said no flies too, because they were everywhere – in our hair, eyes and face.*

*Marvel Park,' said Trent in his usual ultra bored voice. 'Guess we're expecting to meet Captain Marvel here, right?'*

*Wish the sign had banned know-everything brothers too. I would have traded a thousand more flies not to hear him for the day.*

#### Backfill

*I saw Mum sigh, and straighten up under her rucksack.*

*Here's the picture. A national Park in the middle of no-where. The happy family gathered to hike and bond. Missing one member – Dad. Last year Dad, Mum, Trent and I had gone to Bali for the holidays, we'd swum in pools, explored the towns, learn to bargain in the markets and laughed a lot. Then came The Divorce ... the smaller house, lots of mince meat for dinner and the visits to Dad only every second weekend. Not to mention the no expense spared family trip to Marvel Park for the holidays.*

## The main problem is introduced

*'Come on,' said Mum and set off along the trail. 'You can navigate,' she called to Trent. He had his tablet out as always. He was checking Facebook and I wondered how long his reception or batteries would hold out under all the trees.*

*It was hot and I was glad to get under the shade of the gums. You could feel the calm as you walked. Trees are my thing. Something living, breathing, replacing human Co2 with oxygen and beautiful. The ones over us must have been over a hundred years old. How did they always manage to grow so gracefully?*

*'Where are we headed?' asked Trent.*

*'Wilson Falls,' said Mum. 'We are staying there the night. It's a cabin run by some friends of mine.' Mum did a lot of hiking and had this network of friends around the world. This holiday was her way of connecting with some of them.*

*Only trouble was, no-one had really consulted us.*

*Trent was plugging it into his tablet. Really? There was only one trail. Hard to get lost on the only path in town.*

*I should never, ever have thought that. You walk under the sanctuary of trees, smell the spice of leaves under foot, talk random stuff. 'Remember' was Mum's favourite word.*

*'Remember the school concert when ...'*

*'Remember when you fell off your bike and ...'*

*'Do you remember the Christmas when we ...?'*

*Good memories. Somehow it was easier to laugh under the trees. Even Trent was smiling.*

*'Which way now?' asked Trent. We had come to a clearing and two paths out. No sign. We picked the most trodden path.*

*'And now?' The next clearing was more overgrown, the paths narrower. I saw Mum bite her lip, look worried and glance at Trent's tablet. He shook his head.*

*'No connection,' he was looking slightly worried too. 'Nix.'*

*'Maybe we should go back?' I said.*

*Mum did the straightening of the shoulders thing again. 'No, it'll be fine,' she said. She had hiked the Grand Canyon, twice. But I suddenly remembered there were no trees in the Grand Canyon.*

## More complications and more problems

*There were scratches on my arms, bushes all around us and sweat on my face and back. In front I could see the back of mum's shirt wet with sweat and her face when she turned around to check on us was hidden in tension. The lines above her eyes were getting deeper and her voice was too bright and cheery.*

*'Mum.' Trent's voice stopped us. 'We're lost.' His voice was flat. We had headed to the top of the mountain, an hour of scrambling and sweat in the hope we could get a view of where to go. But mountains are old in Australia, worn down, not tall – and the trees still grew there, taller than ever. High and graceful – and hemming us in. We could see nothing.*

*Mum shook her head. Somewhere there was determination, denial and fear in that one small movement. I stepped forward instinctively. Were those tears in hereyes? Mum, who was always so brave, knew all the answers. Now her hands were shaking.*

*'It's getting late,' was all she said. And suddenly I felt fear too. I looked at Trent. It was long in the afternoon, the air was getting cooler ... and that meant night was on the way. How long would it take to walk to someplace, anyplace that had shelter? I looked down at the ground, the leaves that had padded our walk, the trees that had shaded us, these were the only things that would be there in the night to keep us warm ... Not much warmth at all.*

### The tension scene

*'Here!' Trent suddenly thrust his tablet into my hands and started scanning the trees around us. 'You're the tree person.' He kept scanning. Then he fastened on one tree, tall and high above the others. 'Climb up to top.' Was he carzy? It was huge.*

*'Why?' At least if I was going to risk my life I wanted to know why.*

*'Take photos,' he said. 'All around – 360 degrees. We can find some path or this place we're supposed to stay. You might even get internet access.'*

*I looked over at Mum. She just nodded slowly, the lines above her eyes were now deep and black. We were really in trouble if she was relying on a tree hugging daughter and a mainlining techo son permanently attached to his tablet to help out.*

*'It's getting dark,' was all she said. I took Trent's tablet, stuffed it into my shirt and started to climb.*

*Strange how many times I had climbed trees and loved them. Strange how in the sunlight trees were warm and safe and welcoming.*

*In the slowing dimming light of late afternoon, I felt fear of climbing huge hights, of the slipperiness of the branches ... yet somehow the security.*

*As the first of the twilight took hold, I reached the top of the tree and grazed out over the valley.*

*There was one bar of internet access. I hit Google Maps and Trent's incessant digital fingers and mind had stored the memory. Wilson Falls. I watched as the slow digital access unrolled the blue line of safety under my eyes.*

*Then just for double safety, I took photos of every mountain and every valley in every direction. Somewhere under all that we might find a way.*

### Exciting Ending

*We did. Two hours can mean the difference between tears and fears – and triumph. In the very last of the daylight we made it to the camp of Mum's friend. We stumbled out of the bush, cold and scratched and frightened. It was dark, we were shivering and I know all of us had tears in our eyes.*

## Character resolution

*Ahead of us there were bright lights, laughter and music. We should have run ahead to safety and warmth. Burst through the door. Yet strangely we stopped, and Mum was holding our hands.*

*'Remember this ...' said Mum. And she gathered us all close. I felt Trent nod. I did too. We would not forget.*

*Mum did her straightening stand tall thing and Trent was by her side. They were heading into the light.*

*By the door of the cabin was a small gum tree, a tiny seedling. I had just a few drops of water left in my water bottle and I unscrewed the lid and leant over and trickled it onto the tiny seedling.*

*'Thanks tree,' I said. Then I walked forward smiling into the bright lights.*





## 2017 NAPLAN Topic – Years 3 & 5

### Which Is Better?

**Write a persuasive text to convince a reader that one thing is better than another.**

*Note: This exemplar was written by Jen McVeity, creator of the Seven Steps to Writing Success and the author of over 20 books. She wrote this in the exact time that all children receive to draft and submit their NAPLAN writing test. We have not checked or changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time allowed.*

.....

**Planning (5 minutes)**

**Writing (33.5 minutes)**

**Editing (6.5 minutes)**

.....

### Cats vs Dogs

#### Sizzling Start (5 minutes)

*Dogs. They welcome you home with mad barking, and a breath that smells like meat left out in the sun for a week. They lick their muddy paws (and then some more unmentionable parts) and then they lick your face. Uggg! Oh please – give me a cat anytime, quiet and purring and so glad to see you!*

#### Argument 1 (5.5 minutes)

*Cats are always so calm. They are the Zen pet, the ones who make you slow down and reset and appreciate the day. They curl up on your lap, instead of jumping up and scratching your legs and yak yak yak 'look at me, I'm so needy' an endless barking regime. No, cats come to your space, 'oh, you're home, lovely to see you. Oh let me snuggle beside you.' They purr with pleasure and somehow quiet your soul. And who can't resist running their hands over the soft clean fur of a cat, soothing both cat and human together.*

#### Argument 2 (6.5 minutes)

*Cats are the low maintenance queens and kings of the pet kingdom. Want to go away for a week? Book your dog into a kennel (\$300). Alternatively ask your neighbour to feed your cat once a day. (\$30 for a gift). A cat is not only independent, but also smart. It will figure out very quickly the new feeding arrangement, maybe make friends with your neighbour and certainly not bark incessantly for a week while you are away. Or if you were a dog family and you get home tired after a long day at school. Drop your back and head for the fridge, and there's your mum saying: 'Take the dog for a walk.' What again? 'Oh and don't forget the plastic bags to pick up the dog droppings.' Yuck, a walk with the dog in the howling wind with poo in a bag.*

### Argument 3 (7.5 minutes)

*It's Saturday morning and I'm trying to sleep in. Trying is the key word here. Bark bark bark. The neighbours are out and their dog is a needy greedy annoyance. Ten minutes of its owners away and you would think the world is coming to an end. Did you know the biggest neighbourhood complaint is about barking dogs? It would be on our street too, except mum bought me earplugs. Meanwhile, ever seen my neighbour's back yard? Or rather their back lot pit? Big holes in the garden the dog has dug, dead patches of lawn all over from the wee and let's not forget the small piles of poo on the lawn, for any unsuspecting kid like me running to the pool. I walk very carefully when I visit there.*

### Ending with Impact (9 minutes)

*It's cold, wet and raining. My family and I are curled up on the couches reading and chatting. Next door I hear the dog barking and complaining ... again. More barking. Then I hear their front door slam and a voice shouting; 'OK, alright, we'll go walkies.' There's a rustle as my friend Simon tries to attach the lead to the jumping dog and another slam and the voice of his mum 'Don't forget the poo bag.' I just shake my head and curl up closer on the couch with my cat. She purrs and the sound makes us all happy. A cat melds with you, comforts you and sometimes, my favourite time, she kneads you with her paws. I run my hands over her soft fur and smile. Quiet, soft, comforting – cats always make you feel content.*



## 2018 NAPLAN Topic – Years 7 & 9

# New Technology

**Write a persuasive text about a piece of technology that has been or will soon be invented that will make life so much better.**

*Note: This exemplar was written by Jen McVeity, creator of the Seven Steps to Writing Success and the author of over 20 books. She wrote this in the exact time that all children receive to draft and submit their NAPLAN writing test. We have not checked or changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time allowed.*

.....

**Planning (10 minutes)**

.....

**Writing (34 minutes)**

**Editing (1 minute)**

.....

### Sizzling Start

'Hello, Jane's Hairdressing.'

'Hi, can I book an appointment please for Tuesday?'

'Sorry, we have no appointments left. How about Wednesday.'

'Er ... OK, what times have you got Wednesday?'

*One of these voices is an AI (Artificial Intelligence) voice, coded to be flexible, understand different accents and inflexions and run a conversation. Which one? Voice #2. Yes the one that even sounds like a human and says 'Er ...' It has been fed millions of voice transcripts and it has even learnt to code itself for human 'ummms' and 'errr ...'*

*AI is not the future, it is here and now. These are exciting times.*

### Argument 1

*Think of all the boring things you do every day. Grocery shop, drive cars, make appointments, balance the bank account. AI has the capacity to do all that. Out of milk, 'Siri, call up shoppig list.' Time to shop, 'Siri, send list to supermarket.' In the supermarket, robots can select and pack your order. A small robot or drone delivers. All possible now. What about driving – a tedious and sometimes dangerous and definitely time consuming task. No more. Thank you Elon Musk and Tesla and all the self driving cars. They are on the road testing now – with a dummy driver in the seat so we don't all freak out! Safer than human driven cars, and they can make the same moral decisions as humans. In peak hour traffic with cars all around you, do you serve to avoid a dog? Do you know the difference between a dog and a child. Yes, push in a million photos of dogs, everything from poodles to Great Danes. AI learns the parameters of a dog. And of a child. It is an easy decision from then. Call up the figures of your bank, AI will check them, balance them and BTW, let you know you have overspent on clothing the last month.*

## Argument 2

*The worry in humans is that jobs will be lost. Yes, jobs are always lost in progress. Mostly the boring ones. I rarely walk to the post box, email takes care of communication. Sorry posties. Robots took over factory assembly lines. Computers took the place of secretaries. Now, robots with a sense of humour can wait on tables.*

## Argument 3

*So what to do with all the free time so many more humans will have? 'Siri choose play list for mellow mood.' Settle down and read the amazing fiction chosen for your own taste. Learn new languages 'Siri, speak Japanese to me.' Explore the world 'Siri, book trip to Thailand.'*

*Yet even more than leisure time, we can achieve so much more in the world with the help of AI. There are diseases in the Third World that can be fought and won, cancer cures to be researched and tested fast and implemented. There are refugees that flee into countries and need food and medicine and safety.*

## Ending with Impact

*How amazing it would be to one day be able to say 'Siri, tell me three ways I can personally help end world poverty.' And of the trillions of information and facts and learning within AI, it would give you an answer.*



## 2019 NAPLAN Topic – Years 3 & 5

### The Gate

**Write a narrative (story) that involves a gate.**

**Who or what is on the other side of the gate? Is the gate open or closed?**

**Perhaps opening or getting past the gate leads your characters to something exciting or difficult.**

*Note: This exemplar was written by Jen McVeity, creator of the Seven Steps to Writing Success and the author of over 20 books. She wrote this in the exact time that all children receive to draft and submit their NAPLAN writing test. We have not checked or changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time allowed.*

.....

**Planning (3.5 minutes)**

**Writing (36 minutes)**

**Editing (4 minutes)**

.....

### The Gate

*Let me tell you about fate and the gate ...*

*You know all those books that tell you to set your goals, work smarter not harder, change in a day, cure how to procrastinate ... I swear I'd read them all.*

*In fact I'd read about five procrastinate books because Mum kept buying them for me. Odd that.*

*Time, that was another Top Topic of my reading list. I mean what happens to the time between school and snacks and Facebook, Snapchat ... and homework? Suddenly it is 10.00pm and it's time for bed. And no time to finish the assignment on the Feeding Habits of Frogs. I swear time expands and contracts ... It somehow just disappears when you most enjoy it – and least expect it.*

*It's hard to explain this to a company high achieving mum and a channel surfing dad I only saw on some weekends.*

*'But what are your goals?' Mum always asks. Help, she's got me in the 'kitchen deadlock', me stuffing just cooked muffins in my mouth and a pile of homework in my bag and I'm hoping she hasn't noticed I haven't unpacked the dishwasher – my job for the day.*

*'Ummmm,' I mumble between muffin crumbs, 'I'm thinking of applying to study Vet Science.' I mean I liked animals right?*

*'How long is the degree?'*

*'Ummmm.' Muffin crumbs make it hard to think.*

*'Hey Dad, I'll be around on Saturday for the footy match.'*

*'Don't be late!' It was a long-standing joke between us. There was that time disappearing thing you know. It happened at Dad's, too.*

*'I'll be there in time to see my team beat yours!'*

*I didn't get my homework done at Dad's either.*

*How did my friends get so organised? Meet you at 4.00 at the movies – and they were there. See you at 10.00 for breakfast and they were on their second coffee when I got there. They always had such great ideas about doing stuff. How did they fit it all in? Like tonight 'See you at Fed Square for the light show.' Right, just have to check my email and text a few people, grab a shower, try out some new shirts ... and now, the black hole of time has made me late again.*

*Oh and Mum is lurking and the dishwasher is waiting and now I am sneaking out the back door trying to escape again.*

*The side gate creaks. Damn, I was supposed to oil that. And she calls out:*

*'Empty the dishwasher before you go.'*

*Caught. I race inside and rattle dishes into drawers.*

*'And oil the gate too.' She was making cruel and unusual punishment. She knew it and I knew it. I grab the oil and smack it on hinges and grab my gear and go.*

*'Running a little late,' I text Jake.*

*'Me too,' he replies. Well that's a relief. He's late too for a change.*

*And then I'm on the train and thinking nothing more at all.*

*Until the texts suddenly start piling in ...*

*'OMG, are you safe?'*

*'Tell me you you're OK!!!'*

*And from Jake 'Oh hell, I hope you were late. I hope you weren't there!*

*There's been a bombing in Fed Square.'*

*I got off the train. Cold and quaking and trying hard to breathe.*

*Told Mum I was safe. Jake was safe. We had been late.*

*Answered all the email and texts and FB posts. Tried not to snivel or cry or think too much about the deaths and the sadness. It would come later.*

*And then went home.*

*I expected some sort of ironic joke from Mum about being late saving my life. She didn't say anything, she couldn't seem to get any words out at all. She just held me so tightly for a long long time.*

*Time is such a strange thing. Sometimes it is fast and sometimes slow.*

*A few small minutes could hurt you – a car accident, a closing door ... a bomb.*

*A few seconds can save you.*

*Or change you.*

*Tick. Flick.*

*Time matters.*

*Don't waste it.*





## 2021 NAPLAN Topic – Years 3 & 5

# Following Tracks

**Write a narrative (story) about footprints, tracks or a trail.**

**The tracks in your story may be left by a person, an animal, a vehicle or something odd.**

**Perhaps the tracks are clues or lead your characters to something exciting or difficult.**

*Note: This exemplar was written by Jen McVeity, creator of the Seven Steps to Writing Success and the author of over 20 books. She wrote this in the exact time that all children receive to draft and submit their NAPLAN writing test. We have not checked or changed Jen’s spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time allowed.*

**Planning (6 minutes)**

**Writing (34 minutes)**

**Editing (0 minutes)**

### Sizzling Start

*Usually when the wind howls and the rain sleet down, I lie in my bed and feel warm and cosy. Tonight my bed was warm, and my room heated – and I was shivering and freezing. Fear did that to you.*

### Backfill

*Tomorrow morning we would be hiking the Great Ocean Road for three days – and three days of rain were forecast. Tonight was the last time I would be dry and warm for 100 hours.*

*‘Amanda?’ I called across the dividing wall in the hiking lodge. Amanda was my sort of sister. We were thrown together when my dad and her mum got married to each other – and we had nothing in common. She was 17, sup fit and loved the outdoors. I was 4 years yournger, into AI, environmental change and could count the muscles in my body on one hand.*

*‘Huh?’ There was a grunt from next door. Then nothing. I was on my own.*

### Start of the plot

*The arlam went off at 6.00am. I had seen the time on the clock often – and never used it. The rain was still pouring down. I could hear Amanda in the shower we shared and I swear she was singing. Though as she was tone deaf, it was hard to tell.*

*Breakfast came and went in a blur. Hiking gear so carefully packed by my parents were thrown on. Shirts, vest, parka, you name it, I put everything on. Then we headed out in the pouring rain with the guides and 8 other lunatic people who thought walking on the top of cliffs in the howling wind and rain was a good idea. It wasn't.*

*Step, step step. There wasn't anything to see except following the track and boring bushes. And looking at the pack and back of the person in front. Step, step, slosh. The rain was getting stronger. I could feel water running off my nose. The front of my hiking pants getting soaked. The tissue I had in my pants was useless, it too was soaking wet. At least my top was dry.*

*The guides stopped occasionally to tell us stuff. Like the names of plants, the history of the area, the limestone rocks. I couldn't wait for lunch stop and rest my shaking legs. And I was starving, I had barely stuffed down anything at breakfast.*

*Step, slog, slog. And this was supposed to be the easy day on the track. It was slush and slog and exhausting.*

*We made it back to the lodge at last. Endurance and stubbornness had won the day. Amanda was peeling off her gear and grinning.*

*'Did you see the middens?' she asked. 'Of the ancient indigenous people? All those shells?'*

*Nup. No. And who cares?*

## More backfill

*At dinner that night, in front of everyone, it came out why Amanda and I were there. Birthday presents. My parents were great believers in 'experiences' not 'stuff' so for our birthdays we each had to choose an experience. Amanda had chosen this Twelve Apostles hike. I hated it. For my birthday I was going to drag her to a Minecraft conference for three days for sure.*

## Transition – character growth of narrator and also connection to sister

*Day 2: Did I mention the rain? The 6.00am start? And this was a 14km walk day. Fun times. Not.*

*At least I knew enough to eat a big breakfast. And put the stuff I wanted to keep dry in my parka pockets. And I took the walking poles they offered. No time to think they looked dumb, 'they help by 5%' the guide said, and I grabbed them.*

*Step, poles, power downhill, stagger and slow uphill. More rain. I was kinda of getting used to it. At least this time we got to see some interesting views.*

*"The shipwreck Coast' it's called, said Amanda. 'Over 200 ships were wrecked on the reefs here.' I looked across the pounding surf and raging winds and shivered. It was real easy to see why. And to see the sailors so far out to sea, struggling against these same rains and winds – and dying.*

*'Chirrip,' I looked around. The rain had stopped for a change and a wren, tiny and cheeky had flitted onto a bush near us.*

*'You can eat this,' said our guide, handing around small pieces of a plant growing by the track. It tasked OK, you could feel the salt from the ocean in it's leaves.*

*That night, we sat outside in the late afternoon air and put band aids on our starting blisters and looked across at each other.*

*'Going OK?' Amanda asked.*

*I had made it through 14 kms of rain and tracks and still survived. And tomorrow was the last day.*

*I nodded.*

*'Yeah. Happy birthday,' I said to her.*

### **Character of narrator now is more outward looking – personal growth & action climax, end of the walk**

*Day 3: The end of the road. And there was this thing called sunshine peeking through the clouds and the rain had stopped.*

*Once more on the track we walked and sometimes I even managed to get the breath to talk.*

*'I hiked the Three Capes in Tassie last month,' said one of the group. You would love it.*

*'You into AI?' said one guy. Amanda must have been talking. 'Me too. We do a lot in my company. Give me a call.'*

*'See the top of that sand dune?' said Amanda. 'Race you to it!. She gave me a big head start.*

*And as we walked, slowly you could see in the distance the rocks that were standing sentinniel in the ocean. The Apolstles.*

*Huge, towering limestones rocks standing in the sea, battered by wnd and waves. And somehow beautiful.*

*They loked so far away. Days away. But distances can be deceiving. As we followed along the track, they slowly got closer and closer. One hour. Two. Then they were there. Powerful and awesome. And we were on the beach with them looming up proud in front of us.*

### **Character resolution**

*It was one of those times where you didn't really know what to say. How to feel. I was confused.*

*I walked along the sand and sat in a small cove, hidden from everyone.*

*Something was different now and I didn't know what it was.*

*'Hey.' Amanda was there and she was quiet. 'You OK.'*

*'How did you find me?' I asked. She looked at my clear tracks in the sand and pointed. I laughed.*

*'It was a good walk,' she said. And I smiled. That was it. Rain, wind, slog ... it had still, strangley been good.*

*'I've heard about the Three Capes in Tassie,' I said. Hear, that's a nice hike.*

*And suddenly she laughed, put out her hand and hauled me to my feet and gave me a hug.*

*'Let's do it!' she said. 'For your birthday?'*

*'Yeah,' I nodded. 'For my birthday.*



## 2022 NAPLAN Topic – Years 3 & 5

### Brave

#### Planning (7 minutes)

Here is Jen's plan, including her initial brainstorm of ideas for the topic and then her ideas for how the story will unfold.

Brave 4 mins.

---

Nar heroes  
 Adrenaline adventures - parachuting  
 - trapeze  
 Lost in bush / cave /

---

Journalists - truth, can be imprisoned  
 Stalker  
 Depression - constant. Fighting solo is so  
 - alone. harder.  
 - grey No end  
 No reward.

---

Speaking, huge crowds.  
 Sport - big match, father.

---

Topic 3 mins.

My cousin is the bravest person I know.  
 'I'm not.'  
 ...

---

Symptoms. Grogginess. Get out of bed effort  
 No reward. Adrenaline things there are -  
 No end.  
 Alone.  
 Medals.

## Writing (28 minutes)

Here is Jen's response to the NAPLAN topic. She wrote this in the time that all children receive to draft their NAPLAN writing test. We have not changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time available.

### Sizzling Start

*My coiusin is ht ebravest person I know.*

*'I'm not,' she said flatly. 'I'm not even close. You're the one who jumps out of aeroplanes. Does circus trapeze. Hikes mountains.'*

*Hard to explain about courage. I like to jump off things, do adventurous stuff, challenge myself. But there's always a reward for conquering that fear and nervousness. It's risk and then exhilaration. Fabulous stuff.*

*Sometimes my cousin showed far more courage than me, just to get out of bed.*

### Backfill

*Depression it's called.*

*She described it a few times.*

*'It's like everything grey, boring, there's no fun. Like life is ftal.'*

*Other times the tears welled up in her eyes.*

*'It all seems so pointless.' And I felt fear in my heart.*

### Pebble

*One day she just shrugged and sighed. 'Getting out of bed is the hardest thing. Why bother.'*

*There's no reward for getting out of bed.*

*There's medals for war heroes. There's money for sporting heroes holding trophies high above their head. There's TV shows and blogs and You Tube clips about adventurers, winf suiters, mountaineers, survivors, ...*

*What is it like to face the hardest thing when there is no motivation.*

*'You just get up,' she said. 'Because soonr or later you have to.'*

*No medal in sight.*

## Rock

*Once, I learnt the hard way about loneliness.*

*Watch the movies, the characters overcoming against all odds, always have a side kick. I tried to be a side kick to Sange. But you can't be there for so many times. You can't call in for breakfast, do lunches, walk in parks, even jump out of planes for 24/7. You have your own life to live. Ang'es parents did too.*

*They watched her, talked endlessly to her, took her places and got her help of course.*

*Research shows if you have at least one friend, you are more supported and more resilient.*

*But in the end, everyone in life has a lot of solo time. You are often alone.*

*And alone in a grey flat world is scary.*

## Boulder

*There's lots of definitions of bravery. But to me time is a huge element of courage. It's easy to be brave for an hour when you jump out of a plane. It's more gut wrenching to be scared of standing up in front of a crowd of hundreds of people to give a talk. I lost a weeks sleep on that one. But again, there's that reward thing again.*

*Sange has no reward.*

*She doesn't even know when the greyness will end. When slowly one day, she will feel a familiar lightness of spirit. Laugh. Look forward to the day.*

*Day after day, she faces the grey. And she does not know when, if ever it will end.*

## Exciting Ending

*Four years it took. Four years of enduring, of exhaustion, and trying to find a way through. I could see the flatness in her eyes at family dinners, the effort of her smile when someone made a joke, the determination when walking into a room and the slump of her shoulders when she thought no-one was watching.*

*She endured.*

*Slowly, infinitesimally, she improved.*

*That's why Sange is my hero. She's so brave. Alone and for so many years she endured. And she fought the grey and pointlessness.*

*'How did you fight that for so long?' I once asked. And she just shrugged.*

*'It's not like you have a choice. You just live one day and the next. And you keep telling yourself: Maybe tomorrow will be better. I will try.'*

## Editing (5 minutes)

Here are the changes Jen made in the time available for editing at the end of the NAPLAN writing test.

### Sizzling Start

My ~~cousin~~cousin is ~~the~~ bravest person I know.

'I'm not,' she said flatly. 'I'm not even close. You're the one who jumps out of aeroplanes. Does circus trapeze. Hikes mountains.'

Hard to explain about courage. I like to jump off things for sure, ~~do adventurous stuff~~, ~~challenge myself~~. But there's always a reward for conquering that fear and nervousness. It's risk and then ~~exhilaration~~exhilaration. Fabulous stuff.

Sometimes my cousin showed far more courage than me, just to get out of bed.

### Backfill

Depression it's called.

She described it a few times.

'It's like everything's grey, boring, there's no fun. Like life is totally flat.'

Other times the tears welled up in her eyes.

'It all seems so pointless.' And I felt fear in my heart.

### Pebble

One day she just shrugged and sighed. 'Getting out of bed is the hardest thing. Why bother.'

There's no reward for getting out of bed.

There's medals for war heroes. There's money for sporting heroes holding trophies high above their head. There's TV shows and blogs and You Tube clips about adventurers, winning suiters, mountaineers, survivors, ...

What is it like to face the hardest thing when there is no motivation.

'You just get up,' she said. 'Because ~~soon~~sooner or later you have to.'

No medal in sight.



## Rock

*Once, I learnt the hard way about loneliness.*

Watch the movies, the characters overcoming against all odds, always *seem to* have a side kick. I tried to be a side kick to Sange. But you can't be there for so many times. You can't call in for breakfast, do lunches, walk in parks, even jump out of planes for 24/7. You have your own life to live. *Angie's Sange's* parents did too.

They watched her, talked endlessly to her, took her places and got her help of course.

Research shows if you have at least one friend, you are more supported and more resilient.

But *in* the end, everyone in life has a lot of solo time. You are often alone.

And alone in a grey flat world is scary.

## Boulder

There's lots of definitions of bravery. *But no-one ever talks about time – But to me time is* a huge element of courage. It's easy to be brave for an hour when you jump out of a plane. It's more gut wrenching to be scared of standing up in front of a crowd of hundreds of people to give a talk. I lost a week's sleep on that one. But again, there's that reward thing again.

Sange has no reward.

She doesn't even know when the greyness will end. When slowly one day, she will feel a familiar lightness of spirit. Laugh. Look forward to the day *ahead*.

Day after day, she faces the grey. And she does not know when, if ever it will end.

## Exciting Ending

Four years it took. Four years of enduring, of exhaustion, and trying to find a way through. I could see the flatness in her eyes at family dinners, the effort of her smile when someone made a joke, the determination when walking into a room and the slump of her shoulders when she thought no-one was watching.

She endured.

Slowly, *unbelievably, infinitesimally, infinitesimally*, she improved.

That's why Sange is my hero. She's so brave. Alone and for so many years she endured. And she fought the grey *and pointlessness*.

'How did you fight that for so long?' I once asked. And she just shrugged.

'It's not like you have a choice. You just live one day and the next *and the next*. And you keep telling yourself: Maybe tomorrow will be better. I will try.'



## 2022 NAPLAN Topic – Years 7 & 9 The Journey

### Planning (8 minutes)

Here is Jen's plan, including her initial brainstorm of ideas for the topic and then her ideas for how the story will unfold.

Describe a journey. 8 mins

---

Physical - Nepal  
 - Europe - 20. Freedom  
Responsibility  
Inner journey.  
 - Grand Canyon & snow. Chris hypothermia

---

Sport  
 Business  
 Skiing.  
 Dyslexic  
 - letters don't move on page.  
 blur, jumble. Not sunk in.

---

Cooking 4bs. tsp.

Spelling  
 Nursery rhymes  
 Drops - short terms memory.  
 Books scared me. Exhausted me.  
 Non fiction ok. Short. lots of car files  
 Phrases. Blue glasses. Dictation. tests  
 Numbers good. Stayed put. asmita. faki.  
 Good at sport.

## Writing (27 minutes)

Here is Jen's response to the NAPLAN topic. She wrote this in the time that all children receive to draft their NAPLAN writing test. We have not changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time available.

### Sizzling Start

*When your mum's an author and she finds out you can't read, well, it was all going to go downhill from there.*

*'What do you mean the letters jump around?' she demanded.*

*Try explaining that when you were six. Didn't everyone have trouble pinning those pesky little black shapes on a page and not let them move.*

*'Letters don't move,' Mum insisted. Huh. Oh yes they did. They swirled if you didn't concentrate. Swopped places. And by the time you got to the end of a sentence, it was hard to remember what the start was.*

### Backfill

*There began a lot of trips in the car, to doctors, psychologists, speech therapists, all with encouraging smiles – and no help at all. There were lots of visits to libraries too, as if somehow I could learn to read by osmosis. Uggg. Even walking into a room full of books was a nightmare.*

*'It will improve with age,' the wrds came time and time again. Oh great, by the time I was a grandfather I would be able to read a whole novel. Not exactly top of my life's to do list.*

### Experience 1

*The trouble is, our whole world runs on words, written words. You want to plan a trip with friends, screens full of words flash up. Watch TV and you get happy family scenarios where parents and kids are cosied up with a book. On the trains and buses, people are there, reading magazine, textbooks, tapping into some mysterious world of knowledge and pleasure I can't crack. At school, every single thing is about words. 'Finish reading that for homework/write an 800 word essay/research the edible plants in Victoria/take this down in notes....' Every hour, every day is a constant denial of this secret world of wrds I can't unlock.*

*Are you dumb, just because running a marathon is easier than reading a book?*

### Experience 2

*They tracked it to ear infections I had as a kid. I mean if you can't hear words properly, how can you lay down the sounds of words.*

*'Let's go catl pak,' mum would speak, and that's what I heard. It was only when we arrived that I realised she was saying the Castle Park. My life was full of mysteries.*

### Experience 3

*There were some frindge benefits of course. I got good at maths, those little black numbers 1–9 stayed right in their place on a page. I learnt to ready people’s body language and emotions, because that was visual decoding. I escaped out of the classroom and enrolled in every sports team out, so I got some excellent training running after balls and swimming and jumping and getting good friends. Most of all, I found ways to learn. Ask me about Tesla and solar power, data crunching, solar energy, long term economic and societal impact of global warming.*

*Let me go back to my mum – did I mention my mum wrote for a living? A strange contrast the two of us. But my mum also knew one thing: ideas are inside you, they are formed in your brain and in your sould and in your experience. And you need to share those ideas to others – somehow.*

*So she shared with me TED talks, we watched mvies, You Tube clips, we laughed over sitcoms and comedy festivals. Siri became my best friend. Postcasts became my teachers, knowledge flowed at last back into my world.*

### Exciting Ending

*It’s been a strange journey, hard, puzzling, frustrating. I don’t know if I will every really want to read a book. I definitely won’t write one.*

*But maybe a TED talk? Maybe some You Tube clips? Maybe I’ll start small with a blog.*

*Because I have some stories to share and some ideas that might help the world – and I’ll get those out somehow.*

## Editing (5 minutes)

Here are the changes Jen made in the time available for editing at the end of the NAPLAN writing test.

### Sizzling Start

*When your mum's an author and she finds out you can't read, well, it was all going to go downhill from there.*

*'What do you mean the letters jump around?' she demanded.*

*Try explaining that when you were six. Didn't everyone have trouble pinning those pesky little black shapes on a page and not let them move.*

*'Letters don't move,' Mum insisted. Huh. Oh yes they did. They swirled if you didn't concentrate. Swopped places. And by the time you got to the end of a sentence, it was hard to remember what the start was.*

### Backfill

*There began a lot of trips in the car, to doctors, psychologists, speech therapists, all with encouraging smiles – and no help at all. There were lots of visits to libraries too, as if somehow I could learn to read by ~~ozmosis~~ osmosis. Uggg. Even walking into a room full of books ~~gave me a headache~~ was a nightmare.*

*'It will improve with age,' ~~everyone said over and over~~ the wrds came time and time again. Oh great, by the time I was a grandfather I would be able to read a whole novel. Not exactly top of my life's to do list.*

### Experience 1

*The trouble is, our whole world runs on words, written words. You want to plan a trip with friends, screens full of words flash up. Watch TV and you get happy family ~~senarios~~ scenarios where parents and kids are cosied up with a book. On the trains and buses, people are there, reading magazine, textbooks, tapping into some mysterious world of knowledge and pleasure I can't crack. At school, every single thing is about words. 'Finish reading that for homework/write an 800 word essay/research the edible plants in Victoria/take ~~this~~ these down ~~these~~ in notes....' Every hour, every day is a constant denial of this secret world of ~~wrds~~ words I can't unlock.*

*Are you dumb, just because running a marathon is easier than reading a book?*

### Experience 2

*They tracked it to ear infections I had as a kid. I mean if you can't hear words properly, how can you lay down the sounds of words?*

*'Let's go catl pak,' mum would speak, and that's what I heard. It was only when we arrived that I ~~reastied~~ realised she was saying the Castle Park. My life was full of mysteries.*

### Experience 3

There were some ~~fringed~~ benefits of course. I got good at maths, those little black numbers 1–9 stayed right in their place on a page. I learnt to read people's body language and emotions, because that was visual decoding. I escaped out of the classroom and enrolled in every sports team out, so I got some excellent training running after balls and swimming and jumping and ~~getting~~ making good friends ~~on the teams~~. ~~Most of all, I found ways to learn. Ask me about Tesla and solar power, data crunching, solar energy, long term economic and societal impact of global warming.~~

Let me go back to my mum – did I mention my mum wrote for a living? A strange contrast the two of us. But my mum also knew one thing: ideas are inside you, they are formed in your brain, ~~and~~ in your ~~soul~~ ~~and in your~~ experience ~~and in your soul~~. And you need to share those ideas to others – somehow.

So she shared with me TED talks, we watched ~~movies~~ movies, You Tube clips, we laughed over sitcoms and comedy festivals. Siri became my best friend. ~~Podcasts~~ Podcasts became my teachers, knowledge flowed at last back into my world.

### Exciting Ending

~~Finally, I found those ways to learn. The secret word empire had a back door. Ask me about Tesla and solar power, data crunching, solar energy, long term economic and societal impact of global warming.~~

It's been a strange journey, hard, puzzling, frustrating. I don't know if I will every really want to read a book. I definitely won't write one.

But maybe a TED talk? Maybe some You Tube clips? Maybe I'll start small with a blog.

Because I have some ~~stories to share and some~~ ideas that ~~maybe, just maybe~~ might help the world – and ~~that~~ need to get those out somehow.

## A simple guide to NAPLAN writing

- Uncover insights into the NAPLAN writing task and ACARA's expectations.
- Learn what to focus on in the lead-up to NAPLAN to make the biggest difference to your students' writing.

[View guide](#)

## NAPLAN planning activity – Fast Ideas

Try this activity to get students generating as many ideas as they can within a short time frame. The more they practice, the easier it gets and the more creative their ideas will be!

[View Action Activity](#)

*Don't teach to the test. Teach great writing.*

## Skyrocket engagement & writing results

Learn our simple, proven approach to teaching writing on Seven Steps Teacher Hub. Our online subscription platform includes:

- Bite-sized, actionable professional learning on demand.
- 100s of curriculum-aligned teaching resources.
- Easy-to-use tools for stress-free planning and assessment.

[Try it for Free!](#)

