



LITERACY WITH THE LIONESSES

WRITING

ACTIVITIES

Resources for
schools to encourage
reading and writing
during the UEFA
Women's Euro 2017



WRITING THE GAME: EURO 2017 WRITING ACTIVITIES

This resource complements the *Literacy with the Lionesses* toolkit. It is a collection of three interviews with established writers – who all write about football in different ways (narrative, descriptive, non-fiction) for a living. Each writer provides top tips on writing styles and each interview is followed by an exercise for your pupils.

How to use these activities:

Read the interviews with the children, share the top tips, and then challenge the children to take on the exercises.

Resources needed:

We have supplied the interviews in full but, if you want to take any ideas further, you might wish to get hold of copies of the writers' work. Examples of our writers' work can be found here:

-  **Helena Pielichaty:** Helena's titles and blog can be found here: www.helena-pielichaty.com
-  **Amy Lawrence:** Amy's writing for The Guardian can be found here: www.theguardian.com/profile/amylawrence
-  **Jennifer O'Neill:** you can access the She Kicks magazine here: www.shekicks.net/home

NARRATIVE WRITING

with Helena Pielichaty

Author of the popular children's football series, *Girls FC*

Objective: to develop a piece of narrative, stage by stage

Helena Pielichaty's *Girls FC* books are loved by girl and boy football fans alike. Helena writes about the game she knows a lot about. Her aunty and her daughter were both excellent players – and Helena's books are just as good.

We asked Helena a few questions about writing narrative fiction. Then we used her answers to set pupils their own writing challenge.



Why do you write about football?

I felt football had so many good storylines and settings; cup runs, rivalry, friendship, loyalty, letting down others, empathy... A football team is like any family but with added mud.

But the game is in your blood too. Is that why you write so passionately about it?

Yes, I suppose so. My Auntie Pat played football in the 1950s for Yorkshire Copperworks. I don't think it was in a league or anything, but I was brought up knowing there was such family pride in her for doing that. My daughter, Hanya, has played since she was 9 and went on to captain her university team and to play in West Bromwich Albion Reserves, among others.

How did you find out about girls' football for your series?

I watched real matches. Locally or on TV. For *Girls FC* I followed an U11s team, the Lincoln Griffins. I attended their training sessions and home and away matches, got to know them. I also talked to their parents, listened to dialogue on the touchlines and emailed the coach with follow up questions. This is where many of my ideas came from.

So, are the *Girls FC* books about action on the pitch only?

No. I never forget that while the subject of your book is football, it still needs a good storyline to grip the reader. Pages of description of kicking a ball will make even the most die-hard fan fall asleep. What happens off the pitch is as important as what happens on it.

Is there anything you avoid doing in your books? As well as what you put in.

Yes. I try to avoid clichés, especially when writing about girls' football. Too many patronise girls in sport 'she's such a tomboy' – no, she's a good sportswoman! Or when the one girl on the team scores the winning goal to 'show up' all the boys. 'Oh, look – she can play better than the boys'. No! How are boys going to respect girls if they're being belittled in books? Don't make this a battle of the sexes – we've moved on. Girls today don't want to be compared to boys, they just want to be taken seriously.

Helena Pielichaty writes children's fiction and is the author of over 30 books. Her website is www.helena-pielichaty.com and you can follow her on Twitter at [@helenapielichat](https://twitter.com/helenapielichat).

Helena's top writing tips

1. Know your subject
2. Write about the players off the pitch as well as on
3. Avoid clichés

Once you have read Helena's interview together, work with the children to write their own football story.

Writing a story about an exciting football match

What thoughts are circling in her head?

Memorable quote

What does she need to hold on to?
Who/what would be considered her
'right-hand' woman?

What is her weakness?

Who or what has helped shape her
life up to this point?

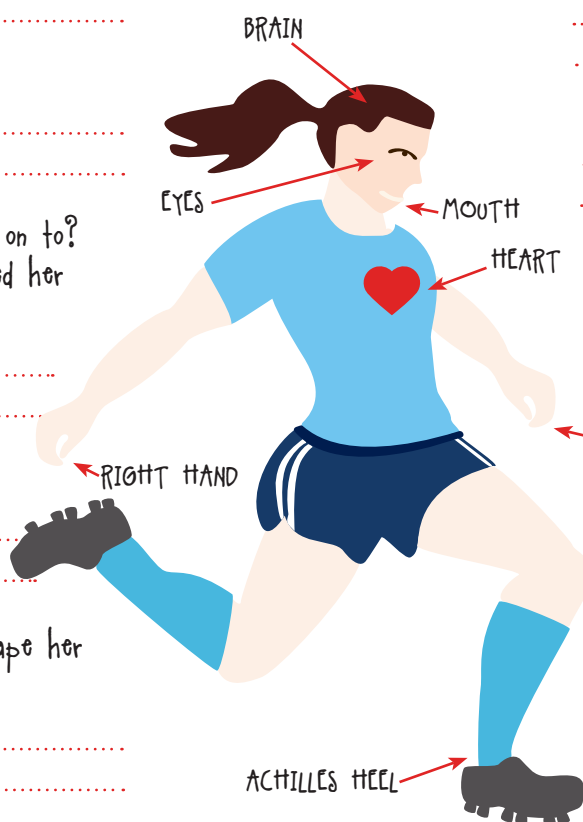
What significant events has she experienced?

How does she see the world?

What burdens does she carry?

What does she care about most?

What has she 'left' behind?



THE ROAD—lifeline

These exercises are available as a downloadable  worksheet from www.literacytrust.org.uk/lionessesresources.

Objective: to develop a piece of narrative, stage by stage.

Here is a story starter sentence...

"As the whistle blew, the crowd waited to see if the girl would get up from the tackle."

What mood or feeling does it create? Who is the girl? What might happen next?

Exercise 1 Add sample adjectives and adverbs to improve this simple sentence and capture the interest of your reader.

Exercise 2 Write your second sentence. This is a good time to show whose point of view the story is from, by introducing a first-person or third-person narrator.

Exercise 3 Develop your main character's personality with a spider diagram.

Exercise 4 Decide in your writing how the story develops. Think of three points for each paragraph that bring to life details about your main character. Can you think of a surprise ending?

Paragraph 1

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

Paragraph 2

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

Paragraph 3

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

Paragraph 4

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

Paragraph 5

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

Now write a story expanding on each paragraph using descriptive detail and dialogue.

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

with Amy Lawrence

The deputy football correspondent for the *Observer* newspaper



Objective: to develop a piece of descriptive writing

Amy Lawrence is a football reporter. Her job includes going to watch football and describing matches for fans to read in the newspaper and on the internet.

We asked Amy about her exciting job and how she makes her descriptive writing as interesting to her readers as possible. Then we used Amy's answers to set you a writing challenge.

What's the best thing about being a sports writer?

It's the thrill of attending live matches. You get the chance to describe unscripted drama, and knowing you have the opportunity to record the occasion, to try to bring it to life, always gets the heart beating a bit faster!

What do YOU read to help stay at the top of the game?

All sorts of things. Newspaper interviews with players and managers, tables and statistics, blogs on the internet from fans to get an idea of the mood at a particular club, and social media like Twitter to keep up-to-date with what is going on.

And how do you make sure you have hard facts to put into your descriptions?

I note down any key statistics that might be helpful and relevant. If a certain player is top scorer, or the team are on a great run of six wins from seven matches, or the away team hasn't won at this ground since 1959, it is useful to have that information to hand to adapt and include if needed.

How else do you try to make your reports interesting?

I try to think about the story the game throws up. Not just descriptions of match action. A story gives any match report more impact. Why does this result matter? Who does it mean something for? This kind of material brings emotion to a match report, especially in the all-important introduction.

How quickly do you have to write a match report?

Most reports need to be ready to send the moment the final whistle blows. So one of the most important aspects of match reports is the ability to write quickly, under pressure, to a tight deadline, as the drama is unfolding in front of you. It can relieve that pressure if you have the safety net of some words prepared before kick-off which you can use or amend if you need to. For example, a paragraph on why the manager is under pressure or how important a particular player has become in recent weeks, or some interesting context about the team selection and why someone has been dropped, or given a chance. This kind of material should work whatever the scoreline.

Amy Lawrence writes for The Observer newspaper.

You can follow her on twitter at [@amylawrence71](https://twitter.com/amylawrence71)

and read her journalism at

www.theguardian.com/profile/amylawrence.

Amy's top tips

1. Write about something you are excited by
2. Gather facts before you write description
3. Think of a story to hook the piece of descriptive writing to

Writing a description of being in a crowd at a match

Objective: to develop a piece of descriptive writing

Here is a picture of a crowd.



Start thinking about how it feels to stand alongside lots of other people watching a match. What do you think you would be able to hear, see, smell, feel and taste? Think about what is near and far, on the ground, at eye level and then above and around you. This will help you to describe it.

Exercise 1 Create a vocabulary bank using this table about how it feels to be in this crowd.

	Nouns	Adjectives	Verbs	Adverbs / metaphors
Sight	hands	outstretched	waving	like a
Smells				
Touch				
Mood				
Weather / time of day / time of year				

These exercises are available as a downloadable  worksheet from www.literacytrust.org.uk/lionessesresources.

Exercise 2 Write practice sentences choosing one idea from each column on your vocabulary bank. Try to vary your language, starting sentences with an adjective, adverb or verb. Or end with an exclamation or question mark.

e.g. The fans' arms waved like branches from a great forest of trees tossing in the wind.

Exercise 3 Plan the structure of your writing and how the narrator's focus shifts in viewpoint and from one sense to another. Use short paragraphs to keep your reader's interest. Try not to overload your sentences with too much description. Remember what Amy said about telling a story as well, to keep the reader's interest.

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 2

Paragraph 3

Paragraph 4

Paragraph 5

Now write your descriptive piece expanding on each paragraph using detail and dialogue.

NON-FICTION WRITING

with Jennifer O'Neill

Jennifer is the editor of *She Kicks* magazine

Objective: to develop a non-fiction story

Jennifer O'Neill is the editor of the leading magazine about women's football. Her job includes choosing and researching the stories to cover for her magazine and making sure her readers are enjoying them. But even though much of her writing is referred to as stories, in the case of *She Kicks*, they are very much non-fiction.

We asked Jennifer about *She Kicks* and how she plans, writes and edits her non-fiction stories. Then we used Jennifer's answers to set you a writing challenge.



How do you choose what to cover in your magazine?

It depends what big games are coming up or have taken place since the last issue, or if any particular players have a story that we don't think others have covered. We try to include the leagues and players just outside of that coverage - we want to include fans and younger players who love the game too and we try to have a balance from elite to grassroots and geographically too. Across the board, I think balance is the key.

How do you find out what your readers enjoy reading about most?

We try to be open and approachable but I'd be lying if I thought we knew 100% what people wanted and that we got it right in giving them what they want to read. We try to gauge reaction from social media engagement and feedback via emails and the occasional letter.

When you are preparing to interview a player or manager, what research do you do beforehand?

I have the background knowledge and may have seen some of them play many times or even have played against them or with them. For players where this is not the case, the internet is invaluable. Club, FA and league websites can be helpful starting points, Wikipedia too (though you have to be wary of its accuracy) and our own website and back catalogue of magazines have lots of stories and news items from seasons gone by. You will check to see how their recent form has been, playing record, that kind of thing. Sometimes you may ask a manager about a player beforehand, or even speak to a fellow journalist, to get an idea of how good the interviewee may be at speaking.

You can find out more about *She Kicks* and read some of the magazine's brilliant articles and news by visiting www.shekicks.net.



Jennifer's top tips

1. Write non-fiction stories about a broad range of subjects
2. Listen and think about what facts your readers want to know
3. Find information from lots of sources for your non-fiction story

Challenge the children to write a non-fiction story using Jennifer's advice.

Talk in groups or pairs about something you have seen or read or heard about that you find interesting. It could be about football. Or about the news, or animals, or something at school. This is how magazine writers work as a team to choose the best stories.

Once you have decided what your non-fiction story is going to be about, ask three people in your class what they think about it. Gather other people's opinions. Make sure you choose different people. Adults as well as children. Boys as well as girls. Make notes.

Then spend a little time searching your subject in the library or on the internet. Make a few more notes. Now you have lots of facts, as Jennifer O'Neill suggests.

Make a list of the best three ideas you have taken from your own thoughts, the thoughts of others and your research. Think of each one as a paragraph in your non-fiction story. Put them in an order you think is the best for your story. Then add an introduction and an ending or conclusion.

This is your non-fiction story structure:

Introduction

Write down your three best ideas

Idea

Idea

Idea

Now put them in order

Idea # 1

Idea # 2

Idea # 3

Conclusion

Now, using your structure, try to write your non-fiction story. Don't forget to read it over so that you can improve it when you write the second draft.

These exercises are available as a downloadable  worksheet from www.literacytrust.org.uk/lionessesresources.