

Writing competition

Reading is magic and can transport you to amazing and curious places.

Write a short story about a wonderful and magical place.

Welcome To Pigspimples Magic-Reading School

Ahh, G'day reader, welcome to Pigspimples, the school of reading-magic. You will now be taking part in the magical reading graduation course. We will be transporting you to other worlds, so that you can meet new people and go on adventures between the pages of books. Our school was established in the tenth century when the first people started reading books. Learn with us and you will one day be able to read the oldest surviving books from the 10th century CE, belonging to the Buddhist manuscript tradition¹. While you take part in this course we will teach you all about this magic called reading.

LESSON 1, FEEL:

While you read stories you not only read about the characters in the story but also feel them. You understand them and what they are going through, you know them and you feel like you are there with them. You laugh, you cry, you scream, you smile all in your head while you read. When you read, you can feel the ground beneath your feet, whether it's dirt or sand or water or concrete. You can feel the air in your lungs, whether it's sulphurous, clean, or humid. The author or authors can create a whole new world in their books, and when you read about it, you get transported to that world. You become a cyborg, or an orc, or just a plain old human. You are scared or happy or sad. Now we are going to try to master this technique.

You are on a sandy white beach. The crisp mid-morning air flows smoothly through your lungs as you hear the most beautiful birdsong you have ever heard. Your bare feet plow into the serene, soft and perfect sand as the tide slowly laps against your ankles. There is now wind, the air is smooth and still, and the glittering ocean swirls in between your toes. The pure peacefulness just feels so calm. You bend down, and pick up a handful of beautiful white sand, you let the grains fall through your fingers. Then you turn and touch the turquoise calm water, it's warm to the touch.

Well done! You have passed your first lesson. Didn't it feel like you were there on that beautiful white sandy beach? Wasn't that magic? Now for your next lesson, voice.

LESSON 2, VOICE:

Ok, now we are going to go into accents, this is quite difficult, but I think that you have enough skill to master it.

¹Cummins, J. (2006). *History of books*, Wikipedia. Available at: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_books (Accessed: 04 August 2024).

So now read this in a heavy Scottish accent: "Aye, ye gutties ar wright bonnie, aintent they me lass? I ken ye ken what I'm kennin' ye hen. Thas wright, ye ken. Ye wee porridge bowl of a lad." Wasn't that weird? Who was that? That was you who was reading, but that wasn't your voice you were hearing.

Here's another one for you to try. Read this one in an old man's voice:

"Back in ma day, we didn' ave' all deez ere' fancy doo-dags you glued to, all we had was dirt and leaves to keep ourselves occupied, yessssssir, dirt an' leaves."

That was amazing, yet again, it was you reading but not your voice!

And now you are walking down busy, bustling Ashfield High Street, and a lovely, friendly red kangaroo hops up to you and asks, "G'day mate, any idea how to get to Ashfield library? I was looking to get a book for my joey, and I don't want to hop too far."

That is but one of the examples of how reading is MAGIC. You have never met a kangaroo, and you may never have been to Ashfield, but there you were, having a conversation with a kangaroo in my neighborhood. Congratulations! that concludes lesson 2. Next, we will be doing lesson 3. Good luck!

LESSON 3, SOUND:

What looks like a bunch of squiggles on paper can actually be translated into words and sounds that make sense. Just by looking at these letters, you can make words and sounds *in your head*. As I have already shown you, you can do any accent you want in your head. You can also change the pitch of what you are reading. For example, READ THIS PART REALLY LOUD! And read this part normally. Now read this part really soft...

That was sooooo cool! You changed the volume of words inside your head!

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE GRADUATED FROM PIGSPIMPLES!!!

Remember, not everyone goes to Pigspimples Magic Reading School. Did you know, as of 2024, according to UNESCO, 250 million children worldwide cannot attend our magic school of reading even though they are old enough to². Now, that is wrong!

Every child has the right to use this power, reading, no matter where they come from or who they are. Imagine that all of these letters just looked like squiggles on this paper. Imagine that you cannot understand the words that are in front of you. Imagine you are walking down your local town's high street. You can't read the names of the foods on a restaurant menu, or the signs on the street. You wouldn't be able to read a book from your local library or read the job description for a job application for your dream job. And no one deserves that. Not being able to use the magical power of reading will restrain you so much in life. You will miss out using this magic power that you should have access to as a human.

Reading is a gift, but 250 million of the world's children have not received it.
Reading is a superpower, but too many children cannot use it.

² UNESCO (ed.) (2024). *What you need to know about literacy*, UNESCO.org *What you need to know about world literacy rates*. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/literacy/need-know?hub=401> (Accessed: 04 August 2024).

Reading *is* magic, but there are kids out there like you and me who *cannot access it*. So, the final lesson we have to learn is to remember, you must now use your superpower for good. 'With great reading, comes great responsibility.'

You, and all of the Pigspimples students must make this world a better place and make sure that not only the rich and privileged come to our school but all of those 250 million children do, too. Reading is magic, and everyone should be able to use it.

Go forth to greatness, seize this opportunity by the throat and open Pigspimples to the world!

Thank you for participating in our magical reading program, and goodbye!