

15 Minute Writing Sample

Administration Guide

1. Write a brief story starter on the board.

For example: My heart was pounding in my ears and I was gasping for breath, when suddenly.....

I looked around. The place was deserted. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye I saw.....

2. Have a brief brainstorm of ideas but don't write anything up on the board. Discuss ways to make stories interesting—using adjectives and adverbs to help paint a picture with words. Encourage students to make their stories exciting and to use interesting words. If students are not sure how to spell the words they want to use, tell them to write them the way they sound.

Time: About 10 minutes

3. Students write for 15 minutes.

4. At the end of 15 minutes, students add up the number of words they have written and write the total at the bottom of the page. Include the story starter words written on the board. Swap books with a neighbour and double check totals. If there is a discrepancy, add up again.

Time: About 5 minutes

5. Students now proofread their own story to check for and correct errors in punctuation and spelling. Make changes with a red pen.

Time: 10 minutes

6. Teacher marks stories and highlights spelling errors. Count up the number of spelling errors in each story. Take note of errors identified and corrected—these are not included in the error count. Take note of errors identified but not corrected accurately—these are included in the error count. Take note of errors copied from the board incorrectly.

7. Work out the percentage of errors in the following way:

Number of errors multiplied by 100 and divided by the total number of words written.

For example: 159 words written, 15 spelling errors.

$$15 \times 100 \div 159 = 9.43$$

Approximately 9% errors

8. Use the writing analysis sheet and record students' spelling errors and intended words. Tick the appropriate column to identify the nature of the spelling error.
9. Check the column that records whether the errors were high-frequency words (core vocabulary) as this will influence your proofreading focus. You can check to see which are high-frequency words using the lists in the *English Spelling Dictionary*, pages 100-103.
10. Record the nature of errors and focus for instruction and proofreading.

Note: The design of the 15 Minute Writing Sample was developed with reference to Spelling is not a Health Hazard (Traill, L., & Symes, A., Longman: Melbourne, 1995) which in turn was developed with reference to the analysis sheet in Diagnostic and Remedial Spelling Manual (Peters, M., Macmillan, London, 1975).

