

Questioning the value of a piece of writing is best done in this order so that the mistakes EAL learners often make does not cloud judgement.

1. Is the overall meaning clear?

Are the main ideas developed?

Does the writing reflect the writer's other recent language experiences? i.e. what she or he has read or talked about in class?

What is your overall impression compared with other things that the learner has written?

2.

What kind of writing is this?

Is it appropriate for the writer's purpose?

Has the writer written this text type before?

3.

Is the overall structural organisation appropriate to the text type?

Are any stages missing?

4.

Are the ideas linked with the appropriate connectives?

Is there an appropriate variety of these connectives?

Are pronouns used correctly?

Do pronouns have a clear referent?

5.

Is appropriate vocabulary used?

Is there appropriate semantic variety? e.g a good mixture of saying verbs in a narrative text

6.

Is sentence grammar accurate? e.g. subject verb agreement, correct use of tense, correct use of word order

7.

Is the punctuation appropriate? (e.g. paragraphs, headings, dialogue etc.)

Is the spelling accurate?

If the writer does not produce correct spelling, what does she or he know about spelling?

These questions you ask yourself (or colleagues) when examining a piece of writing have been produced in this way so that they can be used for training. Either different groups can respond to different questions, or the cards can be dealt with in order by one group. I chose a sample of writing where mistakes in tense choice and pronouns 'conceal' a strong, energetic, appropriate, cohesive piece of writing that demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose of narrative.

A long long time ago is the greek have a king with adult prince.

One day his fathere said to him "you got to marry so he said he going to choose his a girl to marry for himself. He go around the country greek to find the girl but he haven't find her yet. He go home and he so sad. One day he was sit in his room and look outside, it was storm day and thunder, Sudenly he heard the door knock he open the door and he she the girl and she said she was a princess, He bring he inside the room. In the morning he going to tell his fathere about that. And his mother said "I going to made a bed for her sleep and I put a little peanut under the twenty pillow for he sleep that way. If her can't sleep she was a princess and the night came every body sleep and in the morning, every body have a breakfast. The Queen ask the princess "Have you got a good sleep? The princess said "No! I haven't got a good sleep, I think like a very big stone under my head. And every body laf and said the Queen try to test you see you a real princess and they are marry.

1.

Good.
Clear and easy to understand.
Reflects understanding of the story which was read to class.
Ideas could be more fully expanded.

2.

Good.
Narrative and the writer has chosen the most appropriate way of writing.

3.

Good.
All parts of the characteristics of narrative are included but all could be expanded

4.

Cohesion good.
Appropriate use of time connectives.
Referents are not always clear and pronouns are sometimes confused.

5.

Appropriate vocabulary used and taken from story.
Needs to develop vocabulary for saying verbs

6.

Needs help with tense especially past tenses.

7.

Needs help with paragraphing and setting out dialogue.

Here are some possible responses to the sample of writing illustrated. Obviously when you are examining a piece of writing in context and from a pupil you know you will be able to respond in more detail than here.

It is a good idea to try this out with the sample provided and then do the same with a piece of writing from a pupil you know