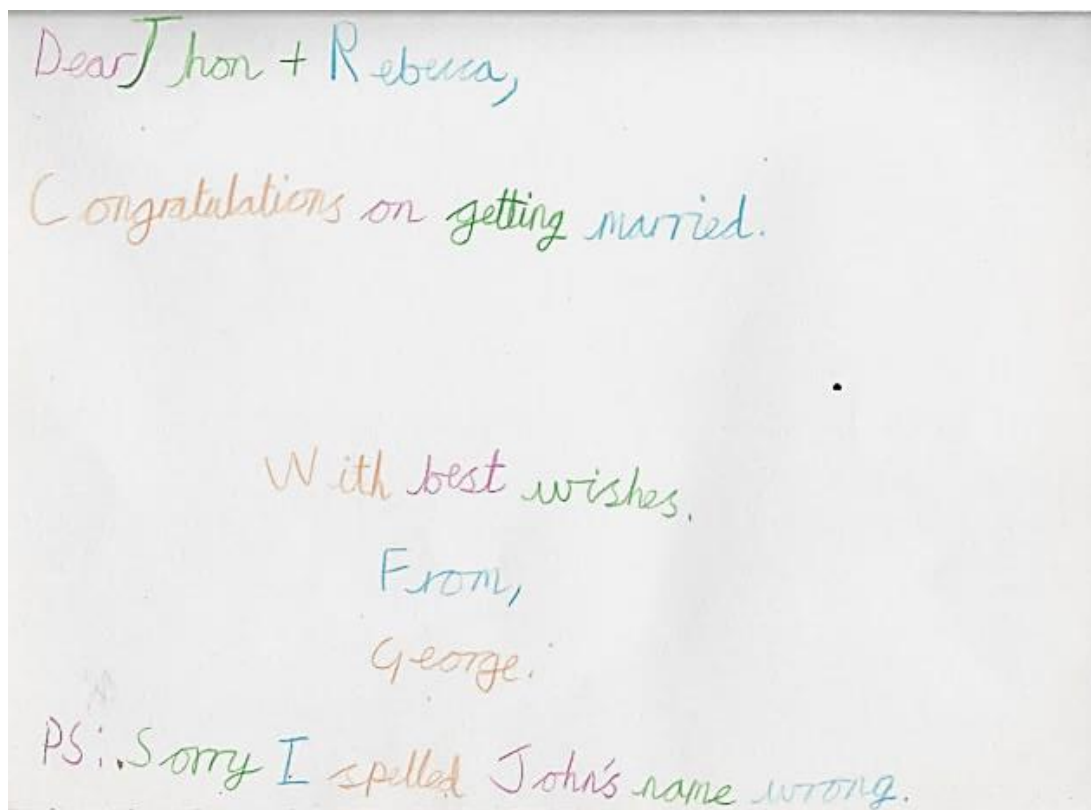


Children's writing development: analysing a greeting card

This card was produced by George, aged 9 years 2 months. Explore what it shows about George's developing writing skills, by answering the following questions in as much detail as you can.



1. What evidence is there to show that George understands the conventions of the greeting card genre?
2. George has used a mixture of print and cursive handwriting. Why is this, do you think?
3. George uses a variety of punctuation. Select and analyse at least three examples of punctuation marks used by George, considering why he has used each one.
4. What evidence is there that George understands how to use upper and lower case letters?
5. George makes an orthographical error by writing the proper noun 'John' as 'Jhon'. Analyse the possible reasons why he has made this error.
6. What evidence is there of self correction?
7. George can spell the polysyllabic word 'congratulations'. Is this a phonetic or non-phonetic spelling?
8. Can George write ascender and descender letters with accuracy? What does this imply about his fine motor skills?
9. What else do you notice about George's developing writing skills?

Teaching notes

1. George seems very familiar with the greeting card genre: note the cover design, with a mix of text and image; the spacing of the main text, the use of a salutation, the message in the centre, the formal 'with best wishes', the use of the postscript.
2. He can use cursive handwriting with confidence but has chosen to use print on the cover of the card, probably to emphasise the message of the card and to add variety.
3. Exclamation mark ('Happy wedding!') to convey excitement; colon to introduce postscript; full stop to demarcate sentence.
4. He consistently uses upper and lower case letters standardly, for example he uses upper case at the start of proper nouns and for the first person singular pronoun 'I'.
5. This may be a virtuous error, because the name 'John', when segmented and sounded out, can seem to have a 'Jh' sound. This is partly dependent on individual pronunciation. Alternatively, it may be an error of transposition.
6. In the postscript, George shows awareness of his error in writing 'Jhon', and also shows that he can write 'John' correctly.
7. 'Congratulations' is a non-phonetic spelling, showing that George is making good progress in his orthographical development.
8. George can write ascenders (such as 'b') and descenders (such as 'y') with consistent accuracy. This implies that his fine motor skills are well developed, as he has good control of the writing implement and can shape the letters clearly and accurately.
9. Possible areas for further exploration are George's ability to use a variety of word classes, his use of the abbreviation '+' for 'and', his non standard use of 'wrong' instead of 'wrongly' in the postscript, etc.