



## Writing warm-ups – classroom resource

### Free write

The most established and competent poets swear by free writes. An example of this would be to place objects through the classroom e.g. a leaf, an orange, a spoon, and challenge pupils to describe the object in a free write. They should write for five minutes without thinking and without stopping. If they get stuck, they just write 'and and and...' until the thought flows again. At the end of the free write, ask them to look back over their work and read out a phrase each.

Write these phrases down on the board as they read them out. Ask them to combine as many of the phrases as possible into a new piece of writing – it can take any form.

OR

Ask them to use the phrase they shared as the title of a new piece.

### Lists

I'm a great fan of lists as a way of brainstorming, getting a lot of information quickly. It's always good to put a clock on list making. List characteristics of someone in the room, of a famous person, or of a character from film or fiction. How long can you make your list before the person is recognised? This is a way of broadening descriptive vocabulary, but the characteristics must be objectively true.

Have pupils list an adjective for every letter of the alphabet, and then list a made-up adjective alongside. Even nonsense words can be descriptive.

Challenge the class to devise lists of things that are impossible to describe. Then swap the lists around and get each group to describe the impossible things they have been given. Marks for accuracy, yes, but also marks for creative inaccuracy. As they'll discover, nothing is impossible to describe.





## Creative imagery game

Pupils fold one sheet of blank A4 paper into quarters and number each quarter 1 to 4. Number 1 will be the top left, number 2 as the top right, number 3 as the lower left and number 4 as the lower right.

Pupils will need to write in each quarter:

- 1) Noun or object
- 2) Definition
- 3) Abstract noun
- 4) Definition

Examples to model:

- 1) Poem
- 2) A human construct, usually involving words, that bends language to get beyond it
- 3) Love
- 4) A positive emotion

or....

- 1) Carrot
- 2) A root vegetable
- 3) Space
- 4) We all live in it

Tip: Don't use dictionaries. Give your class permission not to worry about using the correct definition. Encourage them to choose things from their own experience and be as precise as possible in the description.

When everyone has done this, each person tears their paper into four pieces, being careful to keep the odd numbers separate from the even. All the even numbers go into container A, all the odd into container B. A volunteer takes one random piece of paper from container A and another from container B and reads out the 'new' definition, e.g. A carrot is a positive emotion.





## Exploring landscapes

Working with a partner, pupils explore photographs of landscapes and choose one to explore. They talk through the following prompts in preparation for sharing their findings with the class:

- Look closely at the image scanning it from top to bottom, left to right
- What is the most obvious thing about the portrait?
- Is there a tiny detail that others might miss?
- What is in the corners of the image?
- What do you notice about the mood and colour?
- If there are people or animals in the photo, where are they looking and what are they doing?
- What might happen in a place like this? How can you tell?
- Would you like to be in this place and why?

## Recycled poems

In preparation: print off a selection of poems and cut them into individual lines.

Give each pair or small group a shuffled poem. Set them the challenge of reassembling the poems in the way that they think makes most sense. The object of this game is to think about editing, about the active role of the reader and about how a poem's literal meaning can be obscure. Pupils will experience the poem through the filter of their own associations and therefore own their individual interpretations of a piece.

Provide them with the 'real' poem and ask them to reflect on the differences.

Alternatively: provide a selection of individual lines of poetry from more than one poem and have pupils rearrange them to make an original piece.

