

### ART FORM

Creative Writing

### LEARNING AREA

Language and Literacy

### SUBJECT

English

### TARGET GROUP

Key Stage 1 + 2

### MATERIALS

Pen/pencil and paper for everyone

### SPACE

Class room

### DURATION

You can use the range of exercises as a menu for a one-off session or a long-term project.

### ARTIST'S INTRODUCTION

All of these exercises I have used with the Key Stage 2 age group. I have also used them in very different contexts; with senior groups, with individual playwrights, with community groups. My philosophy is that any constituency can take on board the most sophisticated tasks, if they are presented in an appropriate way.

With all of the exercises included here, my guiding lights (in terms of the age group) have been to (a) take on board the language-experience of the group, and (b) the life-experience of the group. Adapt the exercises to the needs/experience of the class. I have been constantly amazed at the way in which primary students can grasp the basic principles of 'what makes a story work'.

My advice to the teacher is to try the work out on yourself first. This might seem a bit of an arduous task, but it will bear gold.

**NB Developing the Use of Words is the second stage in the five part series of workshops. It is advisable to begin this session with a warm-up exercise from Warm-ups.**

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Communication Skills – discuss, list, classify and shape words. Perform original poetry. Interview other pupils.
- Creative Skills – develop rhythms for words, build soundscapes, invent characters and write poetry and stories.
- Decision Making and Thinking Skills – make judgements and draw conclusions, select and organise appropriate information, and represent words in appropriate forms.
- Managing Information – work with a focus and follow directions in relation to a task.

### INSTRUCTIONS

It is advisable to begin this session with a warm-up exercise from Warm-ups.

#### Instant poem (Allow 2-5 minutes)

1. I am a wizard and in a moment I will make all the words that exist in the world disappear ... except four words. Choose the four words you are going to save and write them down.
2. I am a wizard and I've decided to be generous... you can keep four more words. Choose them and write them down.
3. You now have eight words and soon they will be the only eight words in the world. If you turn those eight words into a poem then all the other words will be saved.
4. You can repeat words if it helps the poem, but you can only use those eight.
3. You will write the first word in the column. You will immediately write a short phrase or sentence (never just one word) - a thought, a question, a memory a piece of nonsense - which the word sparks off for you. Do not include the word itself in the phrase or sentence. *[Example 1 below]*
4. You have ten seconds to write each response. After ten seconds you will move on to the second word. Stop writing the first phrase, write down the second word in the column, and start writing the second phrase.
5. Keep writing don't plan, and if your mind goes blank just write 'I am writing, I am writing, I am writing', until something else arrives.
6. Read out some of the phrases.

#### Outcome

Well done you have saved all the words in the world. I am no longer a wizard but you are a poet.

#### Responding to the word ( Allow 4-10 minutes )

Instant writing can be liberating for any writer, and shows early stage writers that to produce interesting phrases and original uses of words, they do not have to sit and stare at the sheet of paper waiting for inspiration. Indeed 'waiting for inspiration' is the last thing we should be doing; the sitting and pondering comes very far down the list, when we are re-drafting and re-structuring work.

The first task is to get it down in whatever shape or form, in order to give our critical mind something to work on. This next exercise takes us further along this path.

1. Draw a column down the left-hand side of a sheet of paper.
2. At the end of the exercise you will have a list of single words, which I will have given you.

Here is the list:

Green	Ice	Television
Red	Sand	Love
Religion	Banana	Telephone
Death	Dolphin	London
Shoe	Mother	Sea
Plane	Summer	Hamburger
Pink	War	

[Note to group leader: I usually have a list of 20 - 25 words, with a good mix of colours, feelings, objects, abstracts and place names. I never include pronouns. I always try to create a list of words which all members of the group will be familiar with]

### Example 1

If the word is 'Green', I might write, ' That tatty old school blazer' (because my school blazer was green and my mother sewed leather arm-patches on it).

### Example 2

Here are some phrases written by one group I worked with:

Green	The Emerald City, I am writing, the city.
Love	Pain and swelling, envy and blossoming.
Banana	Ridicule and madness.
Telephone	Revelations and gossip.
Death	Darkness, sorrow, fear, I am writing, I release.
War	Dark, ragged edges, holes in fabric ,tears.

### Outcome :

This exercise opens the door to a conversation about a very basic aspect of writing: that we, all of us, have our own individual ways of expressing ourselves through words.

The description of war as holes in fabric is a brand new image of that event, wholly unique to the person who wrote it. The exercise encourages the writers to trust their own inner voice, and to recognise that their own original work- even if it is 1 phrase in 25 or so, is far more interesting than mimicking and reproducing what they have heard or read before.

Once again, the 'instant' nature of the exercise means that they have had the experience of doing it as opposed to worrying about it.

1. **Collective Poems (Allow 10-20 minutes)**
2. Take the first word from 'Responding to the word' (e.g. 'Green'). Go round the circle and hear from the writers at their individual responses to it.
3. There is often much hilarity the first time around, so go back over the word again, this time asking the writers to speak a little more boldly and listen carefully to the different responses.
4. Discuss the following: Which images stand out vividly? What is the overall feel and mood? What lines work well next to each other?
5. Read around the circle again. Repeat the process for each word. What will emerge is a series of collectively created poems - the Green Poem, the Love poem etc.- each built on a range of individual perceptions.

### Poem into Performance (Allow 10-20 minutes)

1. Read one of the poems from 'Collective poems' again. Work on it in a bit more detail. It is now more than a collection of written lines, it is a whole piece. What sort of mood and rhythm comes out? How do the lines sit with each other?
2. Everyone now writes down each line of the poem. When the words 'I am writing' occur, keep them in as they are part of the poem. Everyone now has the same copy of the collectively written poem [*Example below*].
3. Do the same thing with a few of the other words.
4. Divide up into small groups of 3-5. Each group takes one of the poems.
5. Devise a manner of presenting the poem, in whatever style you choose. Add movement, sound, repetition, choral speaking etc., keeping in mind that the main aim is to bring the poem to life.
6. Share the results with the whole group.

### Example:

From key word 'Green'

The Emerald City, I am writing, the city  
Apples and trees and rain  
Trees and grass, I am writing, I am  
Envy and sitting in a corner  
Grass and the grey clouds over the green,  
etc

### Outcome

The group will now have had the experience of

1. individual writing,
2. collective writing,
3. working collaboratively in small groups, and
4. putting a piece of own- written text "on its feet".

### FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

You are now ready to move on to Creating a Character.

**Don't forget to send feedback to [toolbox@youngatart.co.uk](mailto:toolbox@youngatart.co.uk)**

**[www.youngatart.co.uk/toolbox](http://www.youngatart.co.uk/toolbox)**