



Handout 4: Poetry toolkit

The toolkit focuses language play and detailed recreation of closely observed experience. Develop simple forms to draw upon when writing (e.g. list poems, free verse, shape poems, haiku, rap) and experiment with new shapes and forms. Actual toolkits will be particular to the model and subject.

- **sound effects** – repetition, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm and rhyme, soft and hard sounds
- **visual effects** – creating imagery, simile (like/as), personification, metaphor, using the shape of the poem to reflect or add meaning
- **word choice** – powerful and precise nouns, adjectives and verbs
- **word combinations** – that are new and surprise the imagination and illuminate the truth of experience
- **repetition** – to create emphasis and musicality

To create effective detailed recreation of closely observed experience and keep the reader hooked you might want to:

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
• Invent funny sentences, playing with words and rhymes • Look carefully at experiences, make word collections and choose words to describe • Use simple repeating patterns and shapes	• Invent impossible ideas, e.g. magical wishes; experiment with alliteration to create humorous and surprising combinations • Observe details of first-hand experiences using the senses; make adventurous word choices; experiment with similes • Use a repeating pattern or shape on the page	• Invent fresh similes; experiment with word play and alliteration; playfully exaggerate or pretend • Use well-chosen nouns, adjectives and verbs to illuminate first-hand experience; use similes and metaphors, avoiding clichés • Write free verse; borrow or create a repeating pattern; experiment with simple forms such as haiku	• Invent nonsense words and situations; experiment with unexpected word combinations; use language imaginatively to create surreal and inventive poems • Use carefully observed details and apt images to bring subject matter alive; avoid clichés; use metaphors and personification based on real or imagined experience; compress word choices; use repetition and 'sound' of words for effect • Write free verse; borrow or invent patterns or forms to match meaning and own voice

Useful ideas for teaching poetry – always co-construct the toolkit with the class

Model all aspects of the toolkit and display word banks, sentences and ideas on prompt cards, washing lines or learning walls. Note that poems and rhymes that provide depth for exploring through reading do not always make appropriate models for writing. Poems chosen as writing models should liberate creativity and not constrain. Poem of the week – EYFS/KS1; Poem of the day – KS2. Perform with percussion, etc.

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
• Model playfulness with language • Use new experiences – images, objects, animals, etc; observe, ‘say what it looks like’, list words and similes before shared writing of descriptive sentences • Develop the use of the 5 senses and related language through specific experiences, e.g. feely bag, curiosity corner, nature table, nature walks, etc. • Observe, draw and paint first-hand experiences, constantly modeling descriptive language.	• Shared writing of playful sentences, e.g. <i>In my magic box ...</i> • Observation, brainstorm; share write • Paint and draw objects, animals, scenes, etc; develop use of 5 senses through science • Use collections; reinforce language, e.g. <i>shiny things, soft things, colour tables</i> • Collect interesting descriptive words, similes and sentences from quality books and ‘bank’ for future use	• Teach drawing – close observational work • Develop language and observation through science • Use short-burst ‘spine’ writing to practise observational writing • Brainstorm vocabulary; use magpie books; gather ideas from poems	• Focus on avoiding overwriting; show how to trim/ tighten sentences • Show how to avoid repeating ideas (except for effect) or stating the obvious (<i>hot flames</i>) • Gather creative imagery into banks and discuss effects on the reader • Innovate on poems, adopting patterns, techniques or poetry ideas • Engage class in learning and performing poems chorally and individually – make CDs and film clips