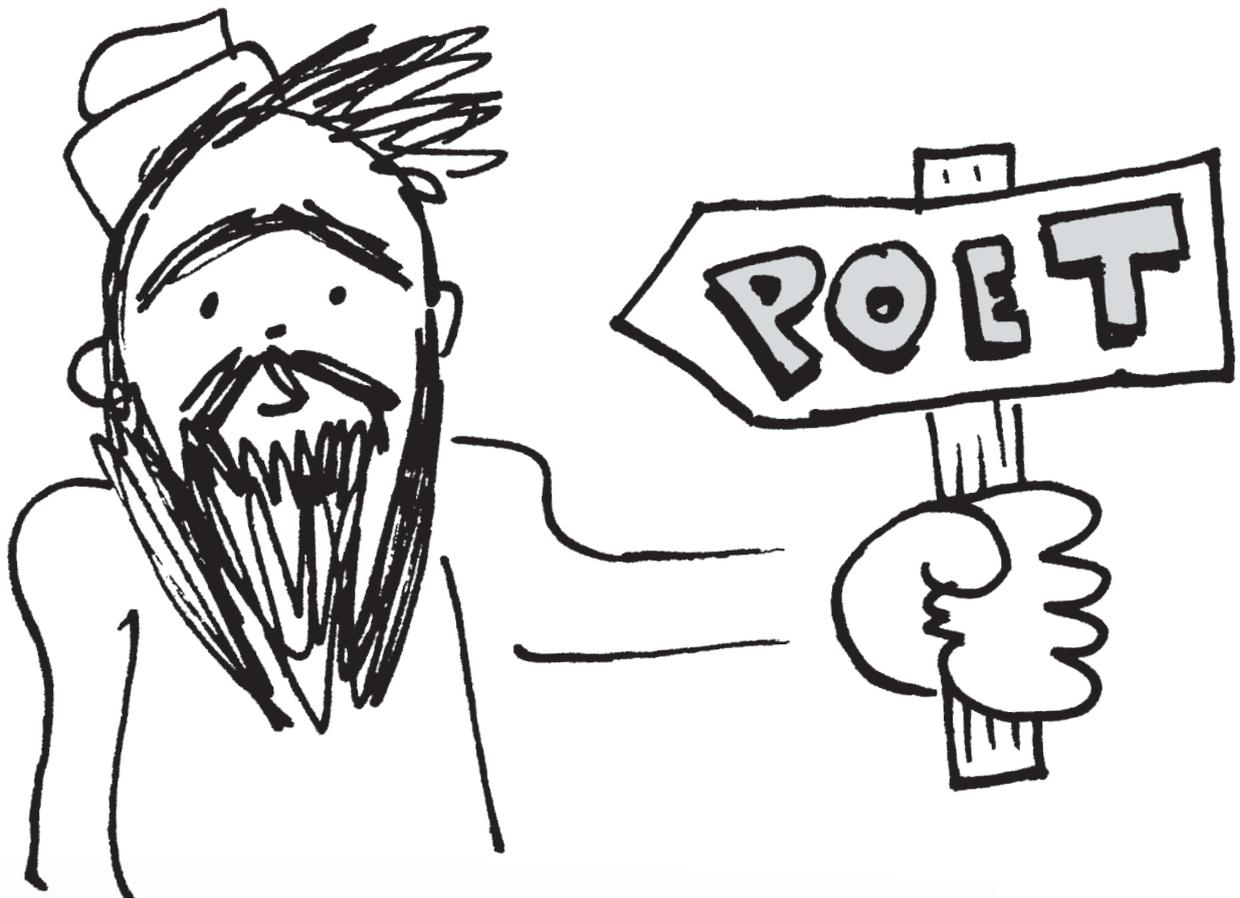# powerful words

Top Tips for Teacher's

by John Berkavitch

Good writing is the right words
in the right order.
Good poetry is the best words
in the best order.

the spark

arts for children

Here are my top tips for writing poetry.

Poetry Tool Kit.

I have 6 things in my poetry tool kit that I consider every time I'm writing a poem.

1. Rhyme
2. Simile and Metaphor
3. Personification
4. Alliteration
5. Repetition
6. Rhythm

Rhyme.

Rhyming is when two words share the same end sound.

One of the most straight forward ways to look at this is with pure rhyme.

E.g. cat – hat, rhyme – time,

I find there are also more interesting ways to look at rhymes.

I always try to encourage people to use their own accent.

Words that rhyme in your accent might not rhyme in others.

For example in a London accent "giraffe" and "scarf" rhyme.

In a Leicester accent they don't.

Try to encourage young people to explore what rhymes in their accents.

Simile and Metaphor

Simile: Describing something as being like something else.
Metaphor: Describing something as being something else.

Using similes and metaphors can be a great way to create imagery in your poetry.

I like to look at Simile and Metaphor in 3 stages.

1. Sensory: What do they look, feel, taste, smell or sound like?
        What else looks, feels, tastes, smells or sounds like that?

2. Functional: What job do they do?
        What else does that job?

3. Emotive: How do they make you feel?
        What else makes you feel like that?

Personification

Personification: Giving an object a personality.

Personification can be a tricky one to add into a poem but is a great way to help young people write in a different voice.

Essentially it works like building a character profile.
I start by holding up a pair of scissors and asking the young people to tell me what the scissors voice would sound like.
Then I hold up a glue stick and ask the same.
Then I ask who these objects are friends with and who they don't like.

Once we've established how it works I ask the young people to chose an object of there own and ask them lots of questions about their objects to build a poem.

I encourage the idea of becoming your object.
Answering in first person as the object rather than answering as themselves about an object.

Alliteration

Alliteration: Where two or more words share the same starting sound.

There is always some confusion between starting sound and starting with the same letter.
The examples I like to use are Xylophone X-ray and Sloping Ceiling.
The first example both words start with the same letter but don't have the same sound and the second example reverses this.

I'd always suggest that focusing on sounds instead of letters will help these poems have more impact.

Repetition and Rhythm

Repetition and rhythm can really help your poems feel complete.

I always suggest finding a repeating line or phrase and using it to punctuate the poem.
It can work like a chorus in a song would or can serve as a sentence starter to help hold the whole thing together.
Repetition also helps to build the rhythm.

You can also try breaking the poem into chunks and using the repeating line to round off each section.

Try writing in blocks of 4 lines where lines 1,2 and 3 all end in the same rhyme and line 4 is the repeating line/chorus.

With all these things in their tool kits your students are ready to go. Remember to always encourage discussing their ideas with each other and reading things out to their groups or the whole class.

Here are some activities that you might want to use/adapt to help develop your students writing.

All of these activities are open to your own ideas and input. Think of them as a guide and adapt to suit the ability and enthusiasm of your students.

RHYME

Having established that the class understands what a rhyme is 3 words are written on the board and working in table groups the students have to find as many rhyming words for each of these as they can.

These words are

SCHOOL   CREATE   DIVERSITY

The teacher can go table to table offering suggestions and helping the students find answers. Sharing is encouraged.

After the time has passed each table counts up there words and prepares for the first battle.

Round 1.
Going table to table we hear all of our rhyming words for Diversity.
Rules: No repetition, No hesitation, It has to be an actual word.

Round 2.
This time students have to use their rhyming words for School. A slight change from the first round is now these words must be the last word in a sentence.
E.g.. Today is a day I go to School,
I like swimming in a pool.
Etc. etc..
Rules: No repetition, No hesitation, It has to be an actual word
and the sentence has to make sense.

Round 3.
This time students have to use their rhyming words for Create. A slight change from the second round is now have to prepare a rhyming couplet.
They may need a few minutes to write these before reading out.
Rules: Repetition and hesitation are not such an issue in this round but It still has to be actual words and the couplet has to make sense.

SIMILE
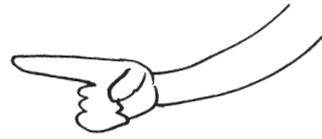
Having established that the class understands what a simile is they are given a few minutes for each round of the warm up.

1. Write as many similes as you can in 2 mins for "The Clouds are like" Establish who in the class has the most by show of hands and ask them to read out their list.

It is likely that most of these similes will be based in a visual comparison.

READ OUT AND SHARE

Introduce the idea of 3 stages of metaphor then demonstrate using Clouds as the example

Sensory: What do they look, feel, taste, smell or sound like? What else looks, feels, tastes, smells or sounds like that?

Functional: What job do they do? What else does that job?

Emotive: How do they make you feel?
What else makes you feel like that?

Discus the power of Emotive Metaphors. This doesn't just talk about the object but also talks of the writers relationship to that object.

Sensory: The clouds were cotton-wool.
Sensory: The clouds were sheep.
Functional: The clouds were my mum.
Functional: The clouds were a watering can.
Emotive: The clouds were my arguing parents.
Emotive: The clouds were New Years Eve.

2. Write as many metaphors as you can in 2 mins for "Home is"

READ OUT AND SHARE

3. Write as many metaphors as you can in 2 mins for "I am"

READ OUT AND SHARE

CLASS ACTIVITY

PERSONIFICATION

Have your students each chose an object and answer personal character building questions as their object.

Some examples of the kinds of questions I ask are below.

- Where were you born?
- How do you move?
- Do you make any sounds?
- What is your relationship to humans?
- What do you dream of?
- Who are your friends and family?
- Who are your enemies?
- What are you proud of?
- What scares you?
- How do you pass (most of) your time?
- What one thing would you change about yourself?
- What would you change about the world?
- Are there any famous examples of you?
- What sort of mood are you in most of the time?
- Who do you love?
- Who do you hate?
- If you had one wish what would it be?

READ OUT AND SHARE

CLASS
ACTIVITY

ALLITERATION

Once it is established that all students understand what alliteration is write the name of the school on the board.
Start with the first letter and ask students to suggest words that start with that letters sound. Use these suggestions to find 2 word descriptions for each letter.

E.g.. SCHOOL
Sloping ceilings
Crazy Kangaroos
Hollow halls
Oily olives
Ordinary orangutangs
Lovely lives

It can be useful if you use this as an opportunity to demonstrate using words that have different starting letters but the same starting sounds.

WRITING EXERCISE
Acrostic name poems.

Starting with their own names (or shortened versions of) the students are given some time to find as many words as possible that share the same starting sound as each letter.

Again this can also be a group activity and if any students are struggling with particular letters its worth asking the whole class for examples.

Once they have a decent amount of words the students can use these to create sentences for each letter of their names.

NOTE: not every word in the sentence needs to start with that letter/sound but the first definitely should. Aim to include at least 3 or 4 words with the same starting sound per sentence.

E.g.

The oily owl always obstructs the otters. – Doesn't work
Oliver the oily owl always obstructs otters. – Does
Australian Owls always obstruct oily otters. – Doesn't work
Oliver the owl always obstructs oily Australian otters. – Does

READ OUT AND SHARE

CLASS ACTIVITY

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