

The power of words

Just like a scientist might use a formula, or a chef follow a recipe, poets use particular language techniques to help convey a certain message or emotion. Poets use poetic devices such as metaphors, similes and personification to reveal thoughts and feelings. Poets also influence the reader through the use of sound devices such as rhyme and rhythm, and the use of particular vowel or consonant sounds to create a desired effect.

When you write poetry, the words you choose will be very important. If you use poetic techniques, the effect of your poem could be even more powerful. However, finding the right words to express yourself isn't always easy. It often takes several drafts to change your words and phrases until the poem begins to come alive for the reader.

Activity 2.1

- 1 Here are a few activities to help you find the words you want for a poem about yourself.
 - a Think of something that happened to you in the past. Picture the event in your mind: for example it could be the first time you rode a bike. On the right-hand side of your page, write down five words that describe that picture. Sometimes these five words alone can be like a short poem.

tyres
brother
falling
dad
bitumen

- b Now develop your poem by putting three descriptive words in front of each word in your list.

rubber, thick, charcoal	tyres
mimicking, know-all, annoying	brother
speeding, stumbling, lurching,	falling
quiet, helpful, supportive	dad
close, rough, scary	bitumen
- c Now add a comment, a noise or a bit of rhyme to finish off your poem.
Hold on... I can't... keep pedalling... I can't... crash!
- d Repeat this activity on another topic – for example, your first day at high school. Concentrate on finding the best words to get your meaning across.

Ordering words

Attention all
you words,
GET INTO LINE!
I've had enough of you
Doing what you want
ill,
STAND STILL!
There are going to be a few changes
Around here.
From now on
You will do
What I want,
THAT WORD!
You heard,
Stay put.
You come out to fast
Or perulate
amb
GET IT STRAIGHT!
You are here to serve me.
You are not at ease
To do as you please.
Whenever I attempt to be serious
You make a weak joke.
Always you have to poke
fun.

AS YOU WERE!
Don't stir.
If ever I try to express
My feelings for someone
You refuse to come out
Or come out all wrong
So sense make none they can of it,
Yet you're so good once they've gone!
Well,
I'm in charge now
And you will say what I tell you to say.
No more cursing
Or sarcasm,
Just state my thoughts clearly
Speak what's on my mind.
Got it?
Right,
F
A
L
L
OUT.

Ray Mather

- 1 Describe what is being 'ordered about' in Ray Mather's poem.
- 2 Identify some of the problems that Mather has with words.
- 3 Which of the following statements do you think he would agree with? Explain your answers.
 - a Words can be easily controlled.
 - b Words never really seem to sound the way you intend.
 - c It's easy to find the right word.
 - d Words are there to serve us.
- 4 The poet uses military style language. Choose two phrases or words that show this. Why do you think the poet has used this particular style of language?

Activity 2.2