



Simon Mole: poems, raps and writing games for kids



Changing life stories

Learning objectives

- Pupils will be able to express initial ideas for a poem

You will need:

- Truth prompt video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1FW6IGsiog&t>
- Poetry ping pong video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz4Bm_gewbc
- Reading/watch list

Taster: (5 minutes)

Explain to pupils that they will be working with a poet to write their own poem. The poet won't be physically in the classroom but speaking to them via YouTube.

Share one of Simon's poems, this one is about Pacman: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRBPOZviuk0>
You might then want to ask the group what they liked about it; get them to be as specific as they can. Why was it good? Which bit was funny? Or exciting? Was there anything that stood out which they remember?

Then ask for suggestions for improvements, or things they would have changed.

Warmer (10 minutes):

Working in pairs or small groups, pupils play the game "two truths and one lie". Each takes a turn to tell the rest of the group three statements about themselves. Their classmates have to guess which of the three is made up.

It might also be fun to explore if lies that are close to the truth are harder to spot.

Simon says:

"Ideally model this yourself to the whole class first. It will be fun to find out a couple of surprising things about you, but also help them to think what kind of category of thing they could use themselves (siblings, places they've visited, achievements, favourite things, pets etc.)"



Main writing activity: Truth prompt video (25 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1FW6IGsiog&t>

The activity video focuses on quickly generating the raw content that will form the heart of a poem, guiding your young writers through a series of simple prompts to gather sensory descriptive detail about a memorable event or moment from their own life; something that actually happened that they can picture clearly.

Each time you pause the video, it will help to remind the group of the main prompt and then remind them to be as specific as they can with their answers. Remind them to say yes to their own ideas!

Towards the end of the video pupils add an imagined detail; something made up, and possibly magical. It is crucial that the element of the poem they make up connects with the key emotion of the memory. Something that represents the feelings at the heart of the experience will help readers FEEL what the poem is actually all about, as well as just understanding the facts. Can a poem feel *more* true because of something you've made up?

The video ends with an instruction to read their notes aloud in an order that they think will sound good. Some pupils may feel they are finished at this point, the poem is done, whereas others may wish to spend some time editing and developing their writing on a new page.

Pupils who have finished could play **poetry ping pong** in pairs: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz4Bm_gewc

Simon says:

“Resist telling the pupils that their idea isn't right or that they've misunderstood – trust them to write about something they want to write about. Even if pupils seem to be wilfully obstructive, try challenging pupils to incorporate that energy or idea into their poems. One of the funniest poems ever produced in one of my workshops was a detailed poem about “a boring poetry workshop with an annoying teacher”.

Plenary (5 minutes)

Give every pupil the chance to share as much of their writing as they want to, in pairs or small groups.

Simon says:

“It might be helpful to establish what a good audience does before you start – perhaps focus on the difference between being quiet, and listening.”

Additional support:

If your pupils are struggling to think of things to write, try the ‘Yes and’ game: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cninAGtPKsE&t>

Next lesson:

To support your pupils through the drafting and editing process, try the ‘Developing your poem’ lesson, which is the second in the sequence of [Digital Poet in Residence resources](#) produced by Simon Mole and the National Literacy Trust.