



## Communique 1

### Teaching Notes

#### Overview

Communique one introduces poetry as an active, dynamic, ever-changing medium that can explore the past, present and future. We look at an extract from *The Tempest* and explore times changing; we study Robert Frost's poem *A Road Less Taken* and ask whether poetry can help us out of a sticky situation; we transpose the structure and subject matter of the *The End* by Robert Herrick into a twitter poem and send one off into the world. This session should focus on 'response poetry' - using a traditional poem as inspiration and a springboard to write your own work. The session/s conclude with students thinking about poetry in the future, the potential of e-publishing and becoming Twitter poets themselves. Through the introductory video, stickers, postcards and pamphlet the first session should introduce the ifso poets. It strengthens the project if the students are convinced that they are sending their work to outsiders whose voices and perspectives are very different to those of their teacher.

#### Website Content

<http://setpoetryfree.blogspot.co.uk/>

The website kicks off Set Poetry Free with a short video. The website also includes multimedia examples of poetry, a short essay by Inua Ellams explaining the thinking behind becoming a Twitter Poet and *The Reader* by Jacob Polley, which shows the editing process his poem went through.

## Objectives

- To introduce Set Poetry Free
- To encourage an experimental and critical approach to traditional poetry
- To understand the idea of ‘response poetry’
- To think creatively about poetry in the digital age and future poems

## *Be Not Afeard*, Extract from *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare

### Teaching Points

The poem was used recently in the Olympics opening ceremony to signify the beginning of the industrial revolution, huge progression in technology and industry, the dawning of a new day and the excitement and insecurity that comes with great change. Discuss and analyse the use of aural imagery, onomatopoeia and made up words. How does the extract convey a sense of business, newness, excitement and pace?

Discuss the imagery of sleeping and waking up. What techniques does the poem use to convey excitement and change?

Why do you think Danny Boyle used it in the opening ceremony?

Do you think it was effective?

Why or why not?

### Action

This is a chance to set your students thinking about what a poem in the future might look like: What would it be about? What range of publishing platforms and multimedia enhancements might poets use in 10, 100 or 1,000 years’ time?

What would a future poem include? You might want to think about new words and use of language e.g. text speak, shortening, slang, referring to new devices. Think about words like ‘tweets’ or ‘google’ that have come into common parlance recently. What would the subject matter of a future poem be? Are there moral lessons? Words of warning? Things to celebrate? How will we interact with poetry in the future? On Television, billboards, radio, in books, on the tube (poetry on the underground), performed in the street. ***BUT remember... the ifso poets want poetry to be set free:*** moving them out of books and away from pages. If possible, work with your students to make poetry films and new media writing. What about shouting them out of windows, writing them in the sky, tweeting them to a million followers, sewing them into a t-shirt, singing them at a concert or performing them on YouTube. How would your students get their poetry heard?

## *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost

### **Teaching Points**

Can poetry help us in times of need?

We are moving poems off the page and into our everyday world in the hope that they can change our lives! This is a good opportunity to develop the student's editorial skills and start them thinking about creative ways of mapping out their work and planning it. Try and encourage them to share the creative process with their classmates, making this as collaborative as possible. This is a good chance to refer to online content. Watch *The Reader* by Jacob Polley and read the ifso poets' tips about writing and editing. You could begin by having a discussion about what the students think of re-drafting.

Ask them what they think editing is?

Why is it useful?

Do they get other people to read their work?

Do they ever read their friends' work?

Do they offer good advice?

What advice do they have for younger writers?

### **Action**

This action demands getting the students to think about a difficult decision and what helps them make a decision. A time constraint may be useful here. Ask them to write a poem in a very limited time, give them 5 minutes, keep it simple, dealing with one problem and a couple of possible outcomes, then ask them to map out the decision visually. Look at examples on the website. There are a lot of ways that they could think about mapping this e.g. making a flow chart, literal path, detailed map, simple line diagram etc. They could then explain their route to a partner or to the whole class. Finally they need to rework their poem in light of the map they created and the discussions they have had with other people.

## *The End* by Robert Herrick

### **Teaching Points**

This is a chance to encourage the students to send their own work off into the world and use the online resources by reading the piece by Inua Ellams about twitter poetry.

Do you think a character/word limit helps your writing?

Can you really say anything in 140 characters?

Can it be more powerful to say less rather than more?

Haikus are of course a good example of this. Why do you think Inua thinks that streaming a poem in real time adds to the 'excitement and immediacy' of writing

poetry? Do you agree?

Inua talks about building up a community – what do you think he means by this? Do you think a community around reading and writing is only possible on social media? How would you create a community around your writing?

### **Action**

Get them to think about how Herrick manages to say so much in such a short space of time. It might be useful to mind mapping their poems on ‘winning’: coming up with lots of good words, phrases and imagery that depict winning - You could link back to the Olympics here. Some examples might be: the colour gold, the smell of success, the sound of the crowd, being the highest/at the front/on top, words such as urging/straining/striving etc. Get them to compose their own poem linking back to the importance of editing work down. they may need to write something longer then pare it back, only keeping in the most effective elements.

If you tweet the poem, please let us know and/or include @ifsopoets in your tweets.

## Communique 2

### Teaching Notes

#### Overview

In this communique we look at place and setting, encouraging the students to think about location. We ask them to think about where inspires them creatively, how you can sum up an interesting or important place in a poem and we dare them to try and break out of the confines of the classroom and use poetry to send a message out into the world. In this e-communique we will look at *Composed on Westminster Bridge* by William Wordsworth to be inspired to go and find a place to write about; *In Prison* by William Morris to contemplate how we would smuggle our poetry out, and we consider power, place and status through *Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

#### Website Content

<http://setpoetryfreenow.blogspot.co.uk/>

We will also have a think about where the best place is to create poetry and be inspired by some top tips from an ifso poet. There are also some fun web links to maps and mapping projects to start the students thinking about how to visually depict their poetry and how this might help their creative process.

#### Objectives

- To analyse and understand setting in traditional poetry
- To think about space and place in their own work and writing
- To make more poetry ‘interventions’

### *Composed on Westminster Bridge* by William Wordsworth

#### Teaching Points

Wordsworth’s poem is a great text to spark responses and new ideas. The unlikely description of central London as calm, glittering and beautiful might not be everyone’s impression! This could lead to lots of exercises such as getting the students to consciously include surprising or seemingly contradictory imagery in their poem. You could start a discussion about the dichotomy between rural and urban settings and different conceptions of beauty.

What is a narrative poem?

What is a prose poem? Give examples.

Ask them to think about the merits of each kind of verse and which they think would be more powerful for their poem.

### **Action**

This action might be best set as homework but it can be planned out and the poem can be written in class. Using Wordsworth's poem for inspiration the task is to discuss how a place impacts on you and your poetry and to think carefully about how you can write about a place convincingly and interestingly. How are they going to document their place? Do they have a phone or camera that they can take? If not, they could draw a picture or point to the place on a Google map. They could post it up like a lost cat poster or write it in chalk on the floor. It might be easiest if they do this in groups or pairs. It would be great for the ifso poets to be sent evidence of poems pinned up in exciting places!

### ***In Prison* by William Morris**

#### **Teaching Points**

This is a good chance to think about how the overall structure of a poem as well as the rhyme scheme and line length can work together to convey a mood or message.

How does Morris put across a sense of boredom and monotony in *In Prison*?

This poem lends itself to discussing / thinking about the way poetry and writing can get messages out, transcend walls and convey a political message (this leads nicely into the next poem). You could introduce other examples such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

#### **Action**

This action asks the students to write a poem whilst following very specific rules. They will need to read the action carefully here. Of course, in keeping with the ethos of the ifso poets, they could always encourage them to subvert the rules! You might want to ask them to write their poem out on a small slip of paper and send us a picture of that, then they could slip it in into someone's pocket during lunch or break.

### ***Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley**

#### **Teaching Points**

This is Shelley's most famous sonnet which revolves almost exclusively around the image of a bleak landscape and a fallen statue of a once revered but arrogant and fallen leader. Thus it lends itself to a great range of juicy discussion points and topics.

Why do you think poetry has often been used as a medium to discuss/comment on politics?

Do you think it is an appropriate medium?

Gandhi said, "Possession of power makes men blind and deaf" Do you agree?

Do you think power always corrupts?

Do you think you have ever been corrupted?

In what circumstances could you imagine you could be corrupted by power?

What would bring you back down to earth?

This is a sonnet, a poem of fourteen lines that is written in iambic pentameter but it has an unusual rhyme scheme, no stanzas and an odd structure in places. This can be interpreted as Shelley challenging the literary status quo by reinventing the traditional sonnet.

### **Action**

MPs are obliged to answer letters they receive so (hopefully) this action will be made all the more exciting by the students receiving a response! You could call on your students to take on two different sides of the argument, asking them to read out their poem and then the response from the MP. Your local newspaper could be a useful source of real current issues to debate.

## Communique 3

### Teaching Notes

#### Overview

In this communique we will study *The Eagle* by Tennyson, *The Schoolboy* by William Blake and *The Haunter* by Thomas Hardy which is accompanied by *The Haunter Haunted* and an essay by WN Herbert. We ask them to explore how a poem is a vehicle for your own voice and how it can facilitate taking on the voice of an ‘other’ – whether this is an animal, mineral or vegetable! This pamphlet furthers the idea of ‘response poetry’ by presenting a whole host of examples.

#### Website Content

<http://setpoetryfreeagain.blogspot.co.uk/>

Communique 3 is supported by a lot of fantastic web content. We have response poems from Young Poets Network competition winners. There are a lot of resources and optional activities around this pamphlet - you could choose to space out your work on this section over several weeks. The YPN winners are examples of response poems from modern and traditional poems such as *Batman* by Simon Armitage, *Mine* by Sylvia Plath and John Donne’s *Good Morrow*. These response poems offer a good chance to invite your students to study the original poem (we have included links to multimedia readings and videos on the website), study the response poem by the YPN winner and then have a go themselves. We have also included a brilliant response poem by WN Herbert on Thomas Hardy’s *The Haunter* accompanied by an essay by the poet discussing why the poem has had such a profound effect on him.

#### Objectives

- Analyse voice in poetry
- Practice adopting a different voice when writing poetry
- Think about response poetry by studying WN Herbert’s essay and poem ‘*The Haunter’s Haunted*’ and YPN winners response poems

### *The Eagle* by A. Tennyson

#### Teaching Points

How does Tennyson convey movement, suspense and stillness?

Why do you think he chose to write about an eagle?

What symbolism do you attach to different animals?

One way to lead into the action would be to probe the voice in *The Eagle*.

Who is the speaker?

How are they able to take such a close look at the eagle?

Are they a bird watcher, another bird or animal?  
Is the speaker in admiration of the eagle?  
Do you think the voice is effective?  
What other voices could you write this poem in?  
How would that change the poem?  
You could write it as a hunter/from the perspective of the eagle/its prey etc.

### **Action**

The first part of this action might call for watching a video or looking at images, and could be set as a homework. It should encourage them to consider an animal in great depth – this is a good chance to remind them of all the senses and ask them to include them in the planning stage.

## ***The Schoolboy* by William Blake**

### **Teaching Points**

This is quite a simple poem that is enjoyable to study because Blake takes on the voice of a sad school boy. Again, you could lead into this action by interrogating the voice in the poem.

What is the schoolboy sad about?  
What would he rather be doing?  
Who does he blame for his predicament?  
Do you feel sorry for him?  
What do you think his teacher would say in response?

You could also analyse Blake's use of natural imagery in the poem, looking at the dichotomy it sets up with the great outdoors and the confines of school.

### **Action**

Now the students are asked to write about where they would like to be if they were not in school and what a 'Manifesto of You' would look like. You could push this further and ask them to design a whole election campaign - why would someone vote for them?

## ***The Haunter* by Thomas Hardy**

### **Teaching Points**

Hardy chooses to write the poem in the voice of his dead wife. What effect does this have on the poem? Why do you think Hardy decided to write this poem from Emma's perspective? What does it convey about his emotional state and his relationship to his

wife? What other techniques does he use to emphasise the narrative voice? Do you think the poem is successful in its creation of a narrator? What impact does it have on the overall tone of the poem? How does the narrative voice allow Hardy to explore themes of loss, guilt, love, missed opportunities and the role of poetry?

## Study '*The Haunters Haunted*' by WN Herbert and accompanying essay

### Teaching Points

What do you think it means to “exteriorize your own inner most feelings”?

How does the narrative voice in a poem enable a poet to do this?

What is the relationship Herbert highlights between love and time? Why does he think it is paradoxical?

What do you think characterises a typical love poem?

What makes *The Haunter* different?

Do you think *The Haunter* is less emotional than a poem that depicts being ‘in love’?

Why does Herbert think the narrative voice adds irony to Hardy’s poem?

How can writers use irony and what does it enable them to do?

What are the two things writing a response poem made Herbert think about poetry?

Thinking back to *The Reader* (the Jacob Polley poem on the website which includes all the drafts leading up to the final poem) what do you think the strength and weaknesses are when a poem unveils its process to the reader?

### Action

Here we get the students to bring voice in poetry back to their own experience. It can lead to a discussion about the way writing can help us to understand and deal with our own feelings and experiences. You could do a stream of consciousness exercise: asking them to write down everything that they imagine would come into their head if they were wrongfully accused of shoplifting. You could also look at examples of monologues here.