

Lesson 1: Writing an ode



Simon Mole: poems, raps and writing games for kids



Changing life stories

Learning objectives:

- Pupils will know what an ode is
- Pupils will be able to express initial ideas for a poem

You will need:

- “Yes, and” video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cninAGtPKsE&t>
- Lucky dip prompts (printed on slips of paper or ready to appear on the board)
- Ode prompt video: https://youtu.be/Q7bmeqJ_wXM
- Poetry ping pong video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz4Bm_gewwc
- Reading/watch list

Taster (5 minutes):

Explain to pupils that over the next five lessons 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>
With Simon's help the children will be writing an ode.

Definition: An ode is an elaborately structured poem praising or glorifying an event or individual, describing nature intellectually as well as emotionally.

For the purpose of today's lesson, an ode is a poem about something you *really love!*

Warmer (10 minutes):

Play the “yes, and” video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cninAGtPKsE&t>

Pupils play the “yes, and” game three times in pairs or small groups.

After the first game, ask the pupils whether they found it easy to ignore the ‘editors in their heads’? Did anyone have a moment where they didn't know what to say?

If so, perhaps the second time they play they could be brave enough to say “yes and...” before they know what they are going to say. Sometimes the act of moving your mouth to say those words makes some other words fall out!

Even if you just say “yes and... chair!” the next person could make that chair talk, or explode or run away.

Simon says:

“The game works well with all ability levels, but is particularly helpful for getting less confident or reluctant writers started. The activity will help children say yes to their own ideas, and support them to keep their critical inner voice quiet - but also remind them that the very same voice will be useful later on when editing.”



Lucky dip activity (5 minutes)

Pull out a prompt (or have them appear on the board) and read it to the class. Every pupil should write down in their books the first thing that comes into their head in relation to this prompt. Repeat at least five times. To ensure creative responses, you might choose to provide 'rules' such as: it can't be an electronic item, it can't be something money can buy or everyone on the class must write about a different topic.

Ask pupils to rank their top three ideas from this list and then to choose their favourite idea, which will be the focus for their ode.

If there is something they really want to write about but that isn't on their list, allow them to go with this idea. Choice is really important in poetry, and the prompts should help spark their imaginations.

Simon says:

"Competitive classes really enjoy pulling the prompts out of a hat in the middle of their table, working to respond to as many prompts as they can against the clock!"

Main writing activity: Ode prompt video (15 minutes)

Individually or in small groups, ask pupils to agree what they will write their odes about. Put that as a title at the top of the page. Remember that this must be something they feel strongly about.

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 ideas for an ode to something they love: https://youtu.be/Q7bmeqj_wXM

Simon says:

"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!"

"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. A pupil once told me he didn't care about anything except sleep, and ended up writing a poem about the Sleep Olympics!"

Poetry ping pong game (10 minutes)

Play the poetry ping pong video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz4Bm_gewwc

Ask pupils to pick a line they have written.

In pairs they will try and communicate this line in different ways.

Simon says:

“Poetry ping pong is a chance to have a bit of fun and reconnect as a group after the writing activity and it also helps build confidence and performance skills. The main takeaway is that so much of what we say is communicated in how we say something, as well as the words we use.”

Plenary (5 minutes)

Give every pupil the chance to share their favourite line they have written today. This could be done to the whole class, or in table 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.”