KEY STAGE	AGE		AT A GLANCE
KS1	5–7		•LITERARY HERITAGE POETS
KS2	7–11	✓	• COMPARING TEXTS
KS3	11–14		• COMPREHENSION
KS4	14–16		• FIGURATIVE TEXTS
KS5	16–18		• FRIENDS AND FAMILY

POETRYCLASS: FRESH IDEAS FOR POETRY LEARNING FROM THE POETRY SOCIETY

HOW DO POETS USE LANGUAGE?

BY JOSEPH COELHO

This exercise enables students to understand how detailed use of language can open up new meaning and reveal why writers use the language they do.

It is aimed at **years 5 and 6** and considers **how writers use language, including figurative language, and the impact on the reader**, as specified in the National Curriculum for English (2013).

Read and discuss
As a class, read my poem 'If all the world were paper'. A copy of the poem is included overleaf. Discuss with the class what I say about family and the world in the poem. What shows readers what I feel about my family? Go through the poem and find examples of figurative language (including metaphor, alliteration and sibilance), and consider why I chose to use these techniques. This should lead into a consideration of the impacts of these devices on readers.

You could also try some of the actions described in the poem to consider what effect they create- for example, try folding a piece of paper to see how the action feels. I wrote about folding up my Gran because I care for her greatly, and folding is a very delicate and careful action. Remember to look for metaphors, too- I used the metaphor of dog-eared books for my grandfather because he would tell the same stories over and over again, like a book that had its pages marked by many readers.

Examining the text
To capture thoughts about the effects of the poem's language, create a table with two columns: one to list words or sentences from the poem that especially stand out to the class, and one to cconsider what I might be trying to tell you by choosing to use these specific words and phrases. An example is started on the photocopiable handout included overleaf.

Create a figurative language poem
I chose to write a poem about family. Get the students to create a spider diagram (template overleaf) with ideas around a theme of their choosing: emotions, friendship, injustice, school, or anything they like. Urge the class to consider what impact they want to have on readers of their poem- do they want to give them feelings of anger, joyfulness, amusement?

Continues overleaf.
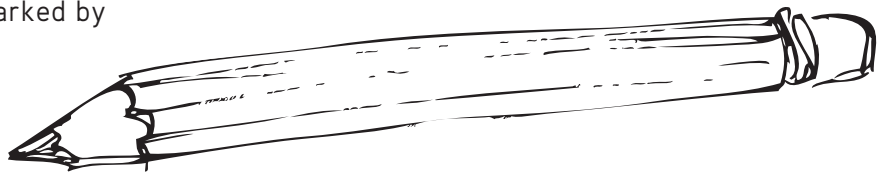
Whilst writing this poem I drew a spider diagram of things associated with paper and used this as a bank of ideas to include in the poem. Have the students use the second spider diagram for ideas about something that the world could be made of (e.g. glass, metal, jelly, candyfloss…). They should try to choose a substance that will help them to express their theme- e.g. if their theme is anger, they might like to make their world made of barbed wire or broken glass.

They can then make connections between the two spider diagrams to get ideas for lines for their poem. The link I made between my spider diagrams inspired my first line, as you can see below (the line was: 'If all the world were paper/ I would fold up my gran and take her everywhere I go').
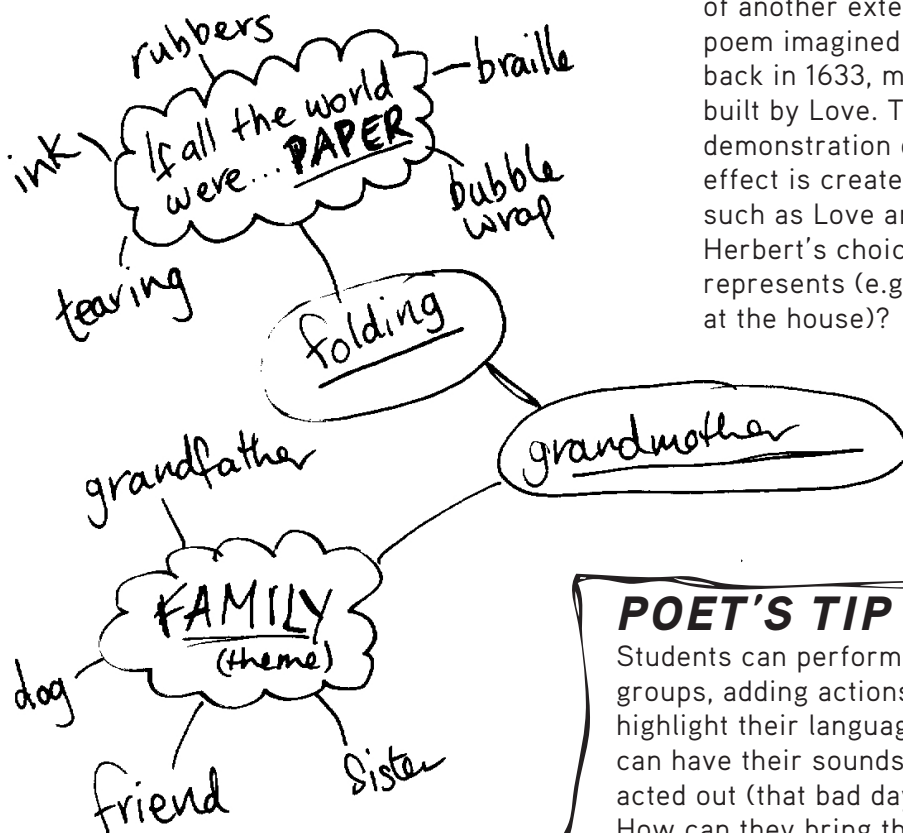
Remembering the reader
Ask students to write their poems. Ask them what emotions look like, and what they would do to a bad day in their world; in a world of glass they could smash, shatter and scatter it to demonstrate just how much they dislike it!

Remind the students to always consider what effect they wish to have on their reader, and what words, images and techniques they can use to create that effect. For example, if their world is happy, how will they show this with their language? In my poem I use gentle language when describing my family to express how I feel about them (e.g. I "paperclip" families together and "lay" my sister in "fairy-tale book pages").

Extension activity: making comparisons
Extracts from George Herbert's 'The World' (included here) can be used as a comparison of another extended metaphor poem. Where my poem imagined a world made of paper, Herbert, back in 1633, made the world into a house built by Love. The poem also gives a useful demonstration of personification in action. What effect is created by turning abstract nouns such as Love and Sin into nouns, and what does Herbert's choice of noun tell us about what it represents (e.g. Sin is a winding plant that 'tore' at the house)?

rubbers
ink
braille
If all the world were... **PAPER**
bubble wrap
tearing
folding
grandmother
grandfather
FAMILY (theme)
dog
friend
sister

POET'S TIP
Students can perform their poems individually or in groups, adding actions and sound effects to support and highlight their language use. Lines using onomatopoeia can have their sounds fully realised and metaphors acted out (that bad day can be smashed and shattered). How can they bring the world of the poem to life?

IF ALL THE WORLD WERE PAPER

If all the world were paper
I would fold up my gran and take her everywhere I go.
I would laminate my baby sister in bubble wrapand lay her to
sleep in unbound fairy-tale book pages
and should she get scared:
Rip every fear,
Shred every scream,
Tear every tear.

If all the world were paper
I would re-bind my grandfather,
smooth out the dog-ears to all his stories,
place his younger days in a zoetrope
and flush the harrowing chapters
down an ink-gurgling well.

If all the world were paper,
kind deeds would be post-it notes
that stuck to the doer in ever growing trails,
so we would always remember,
friends would come with perforated lines
so you could keep their best bits with you at all times.

If all the world were paper,
Christmas wrapping foil and birthday cards
would follow you to school.

If all the world were paper
dreams would be Braille
so we could read them whilst we slept,
nightmares would be shopping lists
because shopping lists are so easy to forget.

**Continues overleaf...**

IF ALL THE WORLD WERE PAPER ctd

If all the world were paper
arguments would rustle before they started
and could be put right with a little tape.

If all the world were paper
we could paperclip families together,
draw smiles on all the sad faces,
rub out the tears,
cover our homes in Tipp-Ex and start all over again.

All the world is not paper
but whilst we can imagine it were
we can recycle the rough times
knowing we will never - ever fold.

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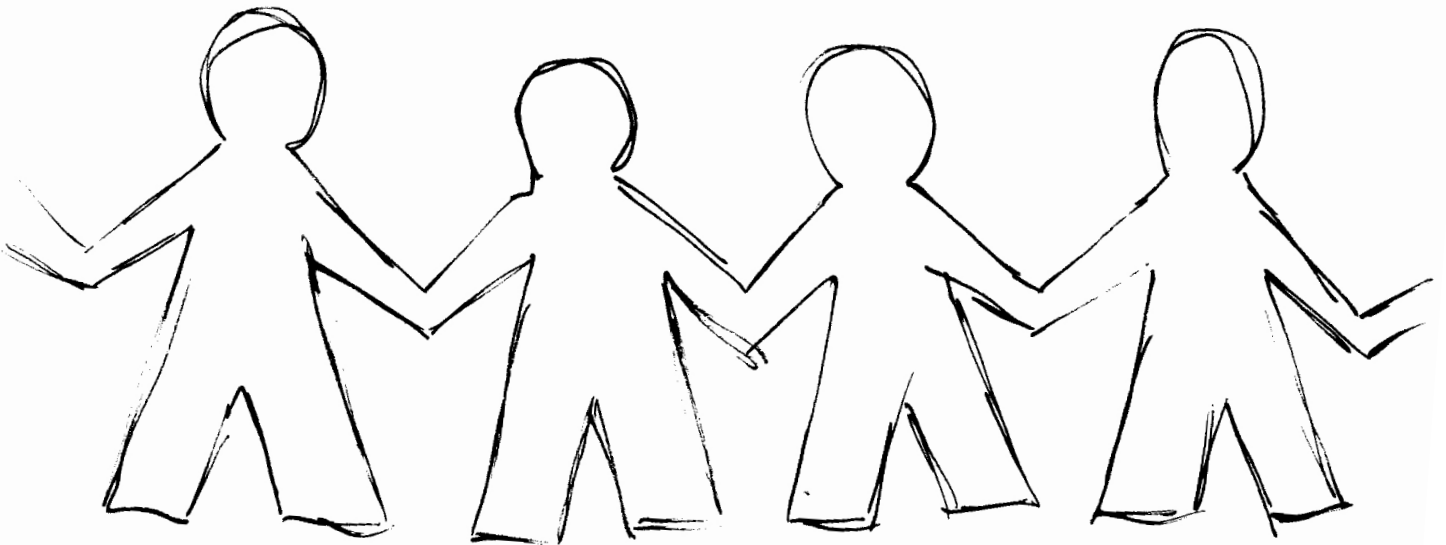
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