



**Poetry resources to inspire creativity**  
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## Poetry resources to inspire creativity



### QUICK FACT

**Travelling inkstand and pen nibs, 1800s.**

This leather bound case contains a travelling inkstand and pen nibs.

Museum galleries are full of wonderful objects waiting to reveal themselves to you and offer up inspiration for poetry writing. We hope these activities complement your museum experience by offering new methods of looking at our objects, expanding vocabulary and thinking creatively.

We suggest activities that can take place both at the museum and in your classroom. Structured around the use of metaphor, we want your students to use museum objects for their English studies.



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## Activity ideas

Summary of poetry resources

### Resource One

#### Classroom activity: poetry and metaphor

This resource can be used to introduce poetry and metaphor at the beginning of a poetry unit or as the start to your Museum of London poem adventure. It includes word and text level activities. The extracts are differentiated for abilities.

**Suggested materials:** enlarged copies of the poetry extracts for annotation, pen and paper for writing.

### Resource Two

#### Gallery activity: writing object poetry

This is a gallery resource that guides you through the process of finding, examining and exploring a museum object. It can then be used to begin creating your poem. It includes a model of word-mapping and the resulting poetic lines. You can go through the steps in class to avoid the need for the worksheet in the gallery.

These pages can be printed and given to your students.

#### Key learning outcomes

- Exploring language using visual stimuli
- Creating an object-based poem

**Suggested materials:** blank paper, clipboards, pencils for drawing, mapping (camera).

### Resource Three

#### Classroom activity: using museum objects

This resource provides images of actual objects from the Museum of London and Museum of London Docklands, along with background information. You can use this one with Resource Two to build a poem in the classroom.

**Suggested materials:** resource images, pen and paper for writing, mapping (camera).



#### QUICK FACT

**Model of prototype telephone box, 20th century.**

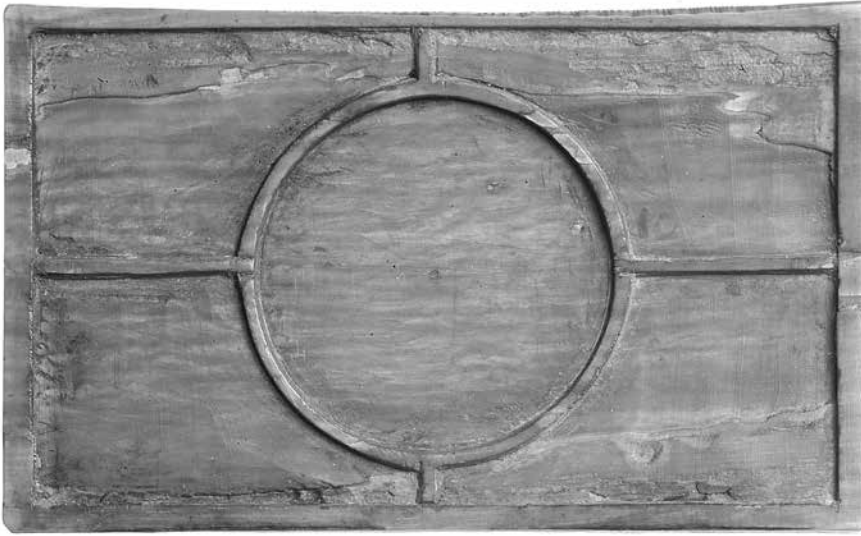
This prototype is a model of the K2 telephone box, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.



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# Resource One

## Poetry and metaphor



### QUICK FACT

**Ivory writing tablet, 14th-15th century.**

This is the reverse of a writing tablet. Tablets of ivory or wood, with wax filled compartments, were used as a handy notebook for the ephemeral jottings of the day.

### Key learning outcomes

- Exploring what we mean by poetry
- Understanding the term 'metaphor'

### What is a poem?

A poem expresses feelings and ideas. It can take many forms. It doesn't have to rhyme, but it does have to use words in a creative way. Writing a poem is a wonderful way to experience the world around us differently, vividly.

Here are some definitions of poetry from some great poets.

"Poetry is the **clear** expression of **mixed** feelings."

*W.H. Auden*

"Poetry: the **BEST** words in the **BEST** order."

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

"Writing a poem is **discovering**."

*Robert Frost*

#### Activity:

Think/Pair/Share

- Which of these quotes do you like the most?
- Can you explain why?



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# Resource One

## Poetry and metaphor

### What is a metaphor?

A metaphor is an example of **figurative language** that describes a person or object by comparing it to something that has similar qualities.

We may not realise it, but we use metaphors every day in speech.

When we first meet people, we talk about **breaking the ice**. As we get to know people we assign them metaphorical qualities, such as **'she's a trooper!'** or **'he's a dark horse'**.

#### Activity:

Try finishing some of these sentences:

The city is ...

Love is ...

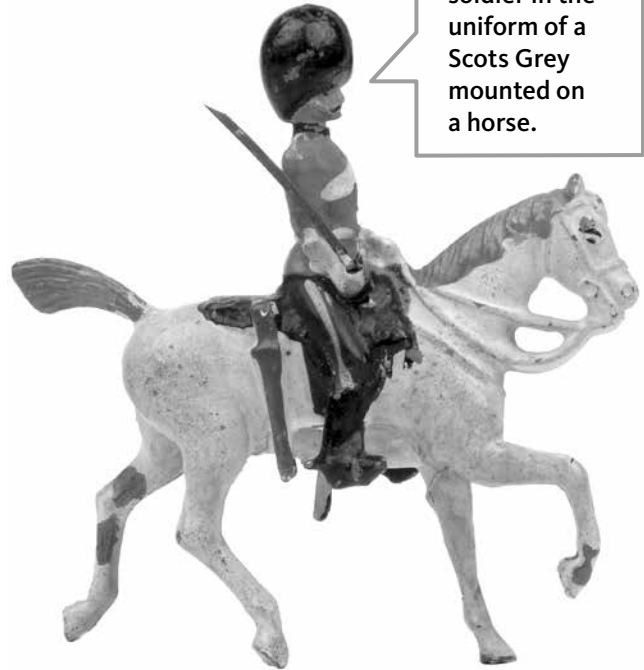
The sea is ...

Life is ...

#### QUICK FACT

**Toy soldier, 1894–1900.**

This is a toy soldier in the uniform of a Scots Grey mounted on a horse.



It would seem the human mind is already wired to use metaphor to describe the world.

We just need to practise the skill and refine it. Popular music uses metaphor too. Look at these lyrics from two London artists:

I'm blinded by your grace  
Through the darkness you came  
And I'll be alright  
*Stormzy – Blinded by Your Grace*

Dumb chunk of muscle with its claws out  
Throwing its oars out the dinghy in the middle of a gale  
*Kate Tempest – Circles*

#### Activity:

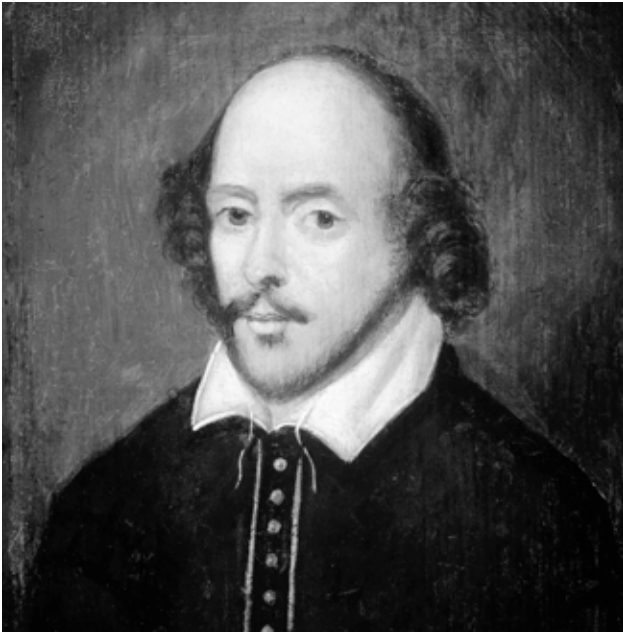
- Find and discuss the metaphors used in these two popular songs
- Compare the different emotions present – how does each artist feel in these lyrics?





# Resource One

## Poetry and metaphor



### Shakespeare and metaphor

Writers try to present the world in a new and exciting way. They use language to find new ways of describing familiar things. William Shakespeare would have been lost without them.

**Love** is a **smoke** raised with the fume of sighs...  
*Romeo & Juliet*

O, full of **scorpions** is my mind, dear wife!  
*Macbeth*

... this **world!**...'Tis an **unweeded garden**.  
That grows to seed.  
*Hamlet*

#### Activity: word-level analysis

- How can love be compared to smoke?
- What state of mind is Macbeth in?
- Why does Hamlet call the world an 'unweeded garden'?

### Poets use metaphor

Many famous poets have immortalised London in poetic verse. In the following two extracts, Louis MacNeice and William Wordsworth use metaphor to capture the essence of this remarkable city.

Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!  
*From Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*  
*by William Wordsworth*

The rain of London pimples  
The ebony street with white  
And the neon lamps of London  
Stain the canals of night  
And the park becomes a jungle  
In the alchemy of night.  
*From London Rain by Louis MacNeice*

#### Activity: text analysis

- Can you identify the metaphors in each poem?
- What different impressions of London do they give?
- Write your own metaphor for something quintessentially London

#### London weather

#### The River Thames

#### London people

**Challenge:** Turn your metaphors into a short verse of no more than six lines



## Resource Two

### Writing object poetry

Museum galleries are full of wonderful objects waiting to reveal themselves to you and offer up inspiration for poetry writing.

But how do you find an object that speaks to you? Sometimes it helps to let the object find you. Walk around the galleries and let the experience wash over you. Maybe you will be drawn to something.

### Examine and describe

Choose your object, turn over these notes and make a detailed sketch of it. Leave space to annotate around it, noting down lots of details.

What colour is it? What shape?

What material is it made from? Rough or smooth?

Is it decorated? Is it complete or incomplete?

What era does it come from? Who made it? What is it used for? Who might have used it?

### Explore and imagine

Start extending your annotations further. Can you think of any other words which link to your chosen objects? Does it remind you of any other objects?

### Build and create

Now start picking out words and ideas that appeal to you. Can you go inside your object? Wear it? Speak to it? Or even speak through it?

Your object might symbolise something else to you. Can you think of your object as something different? Does it remind you of a person? Or might it trigger an emotion, memory or image?

### Reflect and refine

Now you have your ideas you can begin writing your poem. Think very carefully about your word choice. Who is the voice in your poem. Is it yours? Does it belong to the object? Or someone else entirely? Do you want your poem to rhyme or not?

Try starting with your opening and ending lines. Remember to take your time – change words, shorten or lengthen lines and restructure until it works for you.



## Resource Two

Writing object poetry

Use this page to make a sketch of your object. Leave lots of space to annotate and make notes around your drawing. This will help you to construct your poem.

**DRAW**



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# Resource Two

## Victorian Walk post box

### Different feelings

Hope, anticipation,  
loneliness, happiness,  
success, failure

.....  
Families, lovers,  
friends, businesses

..... **Used by**

### Birthdays, presents, weddings, holidays

Celebration, joy

.....  
Letters, cards,  
postcards, packages,  
contracts

..... **Used for**

### Deaths, funerals, expressions of love

Loss, grief, sadness,  
memories

### Yet, incomplete

Disused now, different  
ways to communicate

Complete .....  
**Complete /  
damaged**

### Communication by post

Hand-written, acid paper,  
ink, no texting, no email. ....  
Tear-stained letters,  
perfumed, pressed  
flowers, packages

Victorian era ..... **When used**

Importance, status,  
relevance, respected,  
Queen's symbols

Royal cipher, hood,  
collection plate in door



.....  
Love, blood,  
passion, violence

Colour ..... Bright red

.....  
Bright, attention-  
seeking, notice,  
forgotten, lonely

.....  
Shiny, cold,  
metallic, sound

Material ..... Metal

.....  
**Hole – like a mouth**  
Feed, letters as food,  
emotions as flavours.  
Good news – sweet,  
sad – bitter

Rough / smooth ..... Smooth

Box, rectangle,  
with hole/slit

Shape .....  
**Box, vessel**

.....  
Has a soul, voice,  
empty v full,  
hungry v gorged

### Finished example

Once

Smooth metallic

belly full and warm,

gorged once on a rainbow

of feelings, letters tear-stained

with grief, posy scented words of love

bitter-sweet treats, filled to the brim

and complete

Now wind moans and roams  
in the echoing, empty room

Hollowed, abdicated

ignored and lonely,

clawing hunger

consumes

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## Resource Three

Using museum objects



### Flat iron

19th century

This is a Victorian flat iron. A flat iron was often heated in front of an open fire. A flat iron is displayed in the pawnbrokers in the Victorian Walk at the Museum of London. A pawnbroker/pawnshop offers cash loans to people, using items of their personal property as collateral.

Can you imagine how poor you would have to be to trade your iron for additional money? Consider the changes in technology and how the iron in your home is different from this one. What might that tell us about Victorian London?



### Docker's bag hook

18th century

This is a docker's bag hook. A docker is someone who worked on the docks moving cargo from the ships to the warehouses. The Museum of London Docklands tells the story of the docks in London. When unloading cargo contained in sacks or bags, a docker would use one of these in each hand. It made lifting and gripping the cargo easier.

Can you imagine working on a dock unloading cargo all day? How heavy do you think the cargo might have been? Where do you think the cargo was coming from? What type of journey did the cargo have?



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## Resource Three

Using museum objects



### Brown leather boxing gloves

1920–1945

These are a pair of brown leather boxing gloves. They were made by J. Rose & Son who were based in Southwark.

Consider what it might have been like to make these boxing gloves – do you think it was skilled or unskilled work? Would you want to wear these boxing gloves? Do you think wearing the gloves would make you feel scared or brave?



### Fishporter's hat of Billingsgate Market

1930–1969

This is a typical fish porter's hat. It has a flat top so that cases of fish could rest safely on top of the head. The rims along the side direct any leaking water and fish guts away from the porter's face and onto the ground behind him. The hat is made from leather. There would be around 240 porters all starting work at 5am.

What do you think it would smell like to work in a fish market? What do you think you might be able to hear? Who do you think would buy fish from a market open from 5am?



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