



Apples & Snakes is England's leading organisation for performance poetry.

We aim to stretch the boundaries of poetry in education and performance by giving voice to a diverse range of challenging and dynamic poets.

This resource was created as part of the London 2012 FriendShip Schools Day Project, funded by Creative Partnerships London East in 2005. It contains four commissioned poems from some of Apples & Snakes' most exciting artists, plus accompanying classroom activities providing ideas of how to extend the poems in the classroom and how to get your students writing. Each poet was commissioned to write a poem in response to these questions:

- Who will I be in 2012?
- What will London look like?
- What impact do I think the Olympics in London will have on me, and the city in which I live?

Whilst the poems have been written with particular key stages in mind, feel free to use them as best suits the young people you are working with. Similarly the exercises are just pointers and can be adapted and used however you like.

All the poems look at what the Olympics is and means, as well as what London is or might be like in 2012. In order to prepare the class before using these poems it would be useful to give some context to the idea of 2012 and London hosting the Olympics, what that means and what effect it could have.

Lisa Mead, Apples & Snakes
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London post-2012 Fantasy

(as seen by a wide-eyed ten year old me)

Lovely reborn city stretching out on every side, from Tottenham to All Saints, from Bow down to The Eye. From Kings Cross urban streets meet and crisscross, my city chitty chitty bang banged and doubled in size when it took on the Olympics, took the changes in stride, winning gold medals we shouted with pride.

Overhead automatic sidewalk tunnels rise and the view's amazing under clear blue skies, way above silver planes fly by. Under my feet new twisting transportation tunnels meet, bullet-sleek Tube trains silently zip and glide, an air-cushioned ride air conditioned inside.

New stadiums of glass and steel and bird-filled parks throughout the Lea have sprouted grass-like, fresh and green, filled with champions like you and me. London, where our cultures commingle and lock-intersect, where our languages blur and our ideas connect. We've created the future, oh, and don't forget there's the

Digital Doctor Who transportation box, blurring me up across vast city blocks, from the schools to the pools, from the parks to the docks, faster than jet-cars or the bendy red buses, faster than bicycles, pushcarts and trams, never again caught again in tight traffic jams.

Optic fibres transmit far and wide, from deep inside the Gherkin's hide, information and colour and transmit guides, redyellowbluegreenpinkblackandwhite, beaming out from BT Tower's belly linking video-phone calls through my Gran's telly. My mobi connects me to everyone, everything, schedules and websites and popstars that sing, to Mum and to Dad and my best friend Rod...maybe one day I can even call God.

Never happen? Couldn't be? Unbelievable, a dream? Just because it's something strange doesn't mean that life won't rearrange and shift and blur, mutate its shape. You never know how the city might change, and the dreams of some child become your future one day.

As you can tell from my poem about London, poetry doesn't always have to be serious, and it doesn't always have to rhyme. Mine is as silly as can be and only rhymes part of the time. Children can get freaked out at the idea of writing poetry and rhyming, but they need to be reminded that they listen to poetry every day and are surprisingly conversant with it, even memorising it; their favourite songs are simply poetry with music. Rap music is poetry, Rap originally stood for rhythm and poetry.

Poetry should be fun as well as a learning experience. One of the most important things for the students to understand is that poetry is alive and vital and weird and interesting and that it can speak to them in a language they understand. It's also really important for them to grasp the concept that there is no right answer when it comes to poetry. There is good and bad rhyme and understanding how certain poetic structures work (pantoums, acrostics, haikus etc), but in terms of the ideas and the actual creativity, their answer is the right answer. This helps them feel that they too can write poetry.

The structure around which I wrote London 2012 Fantasy is a poem form called an **acrostic**. Ask the children to choose a word, any word at all: their name, the name of their school, their favourite food, anything that you want them to write about. Mine is built on the word LONDON.

Ask the children to write the word you, or they, have chosen vertically down the left-hand side of the paper:

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Then ask them to write a poem about that word. The first word of each line starts with the letter it corresponds to. They can write it as a list:

Loud, lovely, lots of people.
Overcrowded, Oakwood, offices.
Northern Line, noisy, nan bread.
Dark, divine, damp.
Over-the-top, organised, Outkast.
Nike, neighbourhood, network.

Or they can write it the way that I did, in a more traditional poem format. The poem doesn't have to rhyme, but it does need to say as much as possible about the subject that they are writing about. It can be as long or as short as they like though the longer they make it the more material they have to draw from later. The list is a good way into writing the poem as it allows them to think about as many words that describe as possible.

Next you can ask them to go back and write another poem as an acrostic, using the same word but not as a list, instead incorporating some of the words that they used in their list version. This will help them make the next version of the poem even richer. Remind them that humour and absurdity are great ways to help them make their poems, and their language, richer.

In terms of making the language they use richer and more diverse, a poem I often use is called 'It Was So Quiet'. I'm using lines written by children in my classes as an illustration:

**It was so quiet I heard my thoughts
rustle like dry leaves in a paper bag.**

**It was so noisy I thought my ears would
explode like a big, booming, bass drum.**

**It was so bright that even the yellow
sun went blind and couldn't shine.**

**It was so dark that the black night
swallowed everything like a dragon.**

**It was so soft I thought that the world
was made out of light pink feathers.**

**It was so hard I couldn't push through
it no matter how hard I tried.**

The list of adjectives goes on and on, and you can give them as many as you like. Encourage them to be as imaginative and as descriptive as possible. 'Don't just tell me you heard leaves; what kind of leaves, what colour leaves, what were the leaves doing?'

A variation of this exercise is to ask the children to write a series of the same kind of lines but using themselves as the focus:

I was so angry I was like an exploding volcano.

I was so happy I was like a shining red sun.

They can then make metaphors out of these phrases by removing the word 'like' and switching the word placement:

I was so angry I was exploding volcano angry.

I was so happy I was red shining sun happy.

This is lots of fun and helps make their poetry more resonant.

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Creative Partnerships is a programme managed by Arts Council England, the national development agency for the arts in England.

It gives young people in 36 disadvantaged areas across England the opportunity to develop their creativity and their ambition by building partnerships between schools and creative organisations, businesses and individuals.

Creative Partnerships aims to demonstrate the pivotal role creativity can play in transforming education in every curriculum subject for children of all ages and abilities.

London East and London South were established as two of the first sixteen Creative Partnerships areas in 2002, delivering programmes with schools in Hackney, Greenwich, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets over a four year period. In April 2006 the two areas merged to form one Creative Partnerships area delivering a joint creative programme in eight boroughs.

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