



**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**  
[www.applesandsnakes.org](http://www.applesandsnakes.org)

## 2012

### 1.

You've read about the future. It's measured in numbers  
you can't comprehend. Millions of square feet.  
Thousands of new homes. Hundreds of hectares. Acres.

Your tongue struggles to taste the true meaning  
of the words: sustainability, urban  
regeneration, renaissance, transformation.

Change. Now there's a simple, honest word that fits  
easily in the mouth. A recognisable shape.  
Something you know.

### 2.

There was a girl's school at the end of your road.  
You remember when it thrummed, alive  
with uniforms, all the girl's boys

hanging from the rails, or over the street,  
waiting for the end of the day. You remember  
going back one year to find it closed.

Gone. The scars it left, the unexpected  
space. How empty the flat, broken ground felt  
without it. But you remember just how quickly

that ground was reclaimed. How it changed, sprang back,  
strong and green, reaching towards the sky.  
And now, you can hardly remember it any other way.

### 3.

Maybe that's how you claim it, this vision  
of a future - make it your own.  
You've been all over the city, seen

Some of its darker corners, forgotten nooks,  
wastelands. And you've been high enough above it  
to gain a perspective, see it all laid out,

how it must have grown, endlessly reinventing itself.  
Maybe that's what these words and numbers mean.  
Where they talk of a village,

rail land reclaimed and acres of empty track  
made new, you see it in simpler terms.  
It is your city, sprouting again, opening

like a flower or fluttering eyes. You define  
the numbers, 2012, for yourself, see the landmark  
of a finish line. A flowering of glass

and steel, a rising up. A new heart.  
A quickening pulse. The firing snap  
of a starter's gun. Something to celebrate. Pride.

And you'll be there, still capable of being surprised  
by the way a newly risen sun can change  
concrete, crown your city with gold.

## **A personal experience**

When people talk about the future, and the things that are planned to happen, they sometimes use lots of large, grand words. And it's good to hear that all of these great new things are going to be happening, but sometimes it's difficult to see what they are talking about. Sometimes it's difficult to see how these great new things are going to change your everyday life.

Let's talk about the Olympics, for example. Everyone knows something about the Olympics. It's all about athletes, isn't it? And trying to be the best? But do we really know what it means to be an Olympian? Do you really know what it feels like to stand on the track, with other athletes, and everyone's eyes are on you, and all that pressure to prove that you are the best in the world? Maybe you do...

## **Free-writing**

Free-writing is a challenge to write freely, without fear of making mistakes or conscious control of direction. The only edict is to explore with the writing. Allow five minutes for each free-writing session - use the time limitation to encourage students to write without fear. Remind them that they can always edit later.

Free-write about a race, or any other Olympic event that you know anything about. You can use your imagination, but try to be as specific as you can.

What kinds of things do you think you would be able to hear? The sound of the crowd, cheering, or the sound of your feet pounding the track, or blood rushing in your ears? Try not to concentrate on the story of the race - concentrate on the descriptions.

Next, free-write about a challenge you have had to rise to meet. A time when you have been under pressure. Was it a test or exam? A fight? A time when you were under pressure to do the right thing? Describe the moment as best as you can.

Here's the interesting part. By themselves, you may have written two interesting individual pieces of writing, but what happens if you put the two together? Interweave lines from your Olympic event with lines from your own, real, personal moment, so you have the two things happening simultaneously.

What happens?

## **A bridge to the future**

In the year 2012, true to the spirit of the Olympics, you're going to be the best at what you do. Right now, you have an opportunity to interview your future self. What kinds of things do you think your future self might say?

Free-write through the interview.

**What is it like, sitting face to face with your future self?**

**How have you changed?**

**What kinds of questions might you ask your future self?**

**What kinds of things would you like to know?**

**What kind of advice do you think your future self will give you?**

**What will your future self say to you to inspire you, to keep you strong through any difficult challenges you might have to face?**

When you've got some ideas down through the free-write, now you can write the piece. You don't have to stick to interview format - try to write it up as a poem.

## **Our city is a winner**

Make a list of all the things that are important in London. All of the things that define London for you - the things that are unique to the London you know. Things like the London Eye will probably end up on your list, as well as the Tower of London, and Big Ben, Oxford Street, maybe? That's all great - but what about the London you know? Your local tube or bus station? The local fast food place that everyone hangs out at?

It's not only people that deserve medals and awards - the city has as much character as any athlete, and perhaps more than most! But what kinds of medals can you award buildings and shops? Try to think of a medal for as many of the items on your list as possible. For example:

**A ribbon of children's laughter for the local playground**

**A ray of sunshine for Big Ben's clock face**

**A crowd of cheers for Trafalgar Square**

Pick your favourite lines, and write them out as a list poem.

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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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