**Playing with Words PowerPoint - Slide Notes for Teachers 1.3**

**Week 1 Lesson 1 (Slides 1 - 9)**

As an introduction to the Scheme of Work, this lesson is very much about laughter, jokes and playing with words. The aim is to show students that language can be ‘stretched’ and manipulated for effect; and that poetry is an example of language at full stretch. You can customise these slides to include your own favourite examples of word play e.g. puns used in advertising, more examples of humorous spoonerisms, examples of palindromes, or your own examples of ‘playful’ poems. Encourage students to explore patterns in how words are used and the way that sounds and meanings work together, using terminology when helpful.

Suggestions are:

Edwin Morgan: *The Computer’s First Christmas Card*

Michael Rosen: *Playing with Words*, *Words are Ours*, *What is a Window?*

Roger McGough: *Watchwords, Potato Clock*

John Agard: *Rainbow*

Don Carlson*:* concrete poems *e.g. Poe’s Raven*

Useful websites:

[www.poetrylibrary.org.uk](http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk)

[www.poetryarchive.org/childrensarchive](http://www.poetryarchive.org/childrensarchive)

[www.fun-with-words.com](http://www.fun-with-words.com)

[www.vocabulary.co.il/wordplay](http://www.vocabulary.co.il/wordplay)

**Slides 7 - 9 Riddles**

Slide 7 is animated so that you can pose each riddle for discussion before supplying the answer. Slides 8 and 9 display *Bluebottle* by Judith Nicholls (from the *Poetry Archive* website), animated to show a verse at a time and then the final word which forms the solution to the riddle. Students’ follow-on task is to write a riddle of their own on a given object, so it will be helpful to look at how Judith Nicholls builds up clues in her poem that reveal the identity of the bluebottle. Stress the precision of her word choices which narrow down the subject.

Check students’ understanding of nouns as this will be important in the next lesson when they write a poem consisting of extended noun phrases.

**Week 1 Lesson 2 (Slides 10 – 11)**

**Timing:** Students will need at least 15 minutes to write their poem. This might be a slightly overfull lesson so be aware of this and keep the pace brisk in the first part of the lesson.

The noun phrase generator (1.6) is a playful way of helping students to see how noun phrases are created and built up, ready for the explanation of the noun phrases in the poem you provide as a model. Avoid explaining all the grammar; it’s the ‘blocks’ that are important and helping students see the patterns. One thing to highlight is that as a noun phrase this is an incomplete sentence (hence the ellipsis in the examples on Slides 10 and 11 and on worksheet 1.7) so try to read the noun phrases aloud in a way which implies that a main (finite) verb will follow.

Worksheet 1.7: Encourage students to look for patterns in how language is used e.g. repetition of ‘hearing’, ‘seeing’ which provides the poem’s simple structure. They could imitate this pattern when writing their own poem.

Rewriting the images as complete sentences will require them to alter the non-finite (-ing) verb into a finite (main) verb – and to provide a subject e.g. ***I hear*** *the laughter of barefeet children carrying water.* They will probably want to change present tense into past tense, in order to sound more natural e.g. ***We drank*** *cool water from a calabash gourd.* You can encourage discussion about the effects of such changes and use the exercise to highlight why the poet has chosen to use a list of extended noun phrases: each one paints a very strong picture and the use of non-finite verbs rather than main verbs gives the poem a very immediate, present feel.

Slide 11: You can use the poem on the slide as an example of the kind of thing you want students to produce: stress how the extended noun phrases give ‘snapshots’ of the family scene and emphasise the list-like structure.

**Week 1 Lesson 3 (slides 12 - 15)**

You will need to leave a good chunk of time for students to write their animal kenning poem, so keep up the pace when showing the slides that explain what kennings are. The important thing is to check they have understood that the most common pattern is for each kenning to be made up of two *nouns* (rather than adjective-noun) and that the second of these nouns often ends in *–er/-or* although it doesn’t have to. There are no hard and fast rules as to whether a compound noun is written as one word, two words or uses a hyphen so don’t get sidetracked by this issue. Kennings provide new coinings and are an important way in which language grows, so do use the lesson to encourage playfulness and inventiveness with language, and to boost students’ confidence in moving beyond literal descriptions to the metaphorical. The challenge in the writing task is to move beyond surface descriptions of students’ chosen animal to focus on its unique characteristics, and then to consider how to sequence and structure their kenning poem for best effect.

**Week 3 Lesson 1 (slides 16 – 20)**

Your explanation of line length and line breaks, backed by the slides, is a key input so give it enough emphasis. Many students like new terminology, so encourage use of the key terms *enjambement* and *caesura* which are very precise in their meaning. Do, though, be prepared for students’ misconceptions. For example, students are often confused by the difference between a *line* of poetry and a *sentence* (which of course may run across several lines). Further, poetry can play fast and loose with the punctuation rules that apply to prose: for instance, Mick Gowar’s *Christmas Thank Yous (3.1)* uses very few commas and does not mark the end of sentences with full stops. The scheme encourages students to read poems aloud to consider sound and meaning, and this should help them ‘hear’ units of sense, even though these may not be punctuated conventionally.

The emphasis in the lesson is on play and experimentation and developing an ear for rhythms, as well as an appreciation of how poetry can manipulate line length and sentence punctuation to achieve different effects. It is genuinely difficult to explain such effects and important not to build frustration in trying to do so: not all students like the ‘open-ended’ nature of poetry and its lack of fixed rules! The purpose of the short reformatting task (*Prose to Poetry*, *3.2*), and comparison with the original, is to prompt discussion about choices and possibilities, rather than reconstituting the poem ‘correctly’. If you think it will be overkill after the *Christmas Thank Yous* task, then miss it out or replace with an alternative that will also generate discussion, for example:

* creating a ‘found poem’ by choosing words and phrases from a real-life text e.g. advertisement or news report and rearranging as a poem (see for example Adrian Henri’s *The New Fast Automatic Daffodils*);
* creating a ‘humument’, borrowing selected words and phrases from an existing poem or prose extract and adding own words as needed to form a new poem (*Wind* by Ted Hughes works well here).

You can supplement the examples on the slides with those from poems that are familiar to the class, and extend the learning by investigating how different poets vary line lengths and punctuation.

**Week 3 Lesson 2 (slides 21 – 23)**

The task using the exploded version of *Mirror* is quite challenging, not least because decontextualising words in this way highlights that some fall into more than one grammatical category (e.g. tears, swallow, speckles). However, the poem provides a rich stock of words with both literal and metaphorical associations and introduces the idea of personification, to help students with their own personification poem which they write in the next lesson. With weaker writers you could limit the number of words on the grid, showing some rather than all words from the poem.

Once you have modelled generating sentences from the exploded version of *Mirror*, and students have generated a couple of sentences of their own, your explanatory teacher input is very important. The *Playing with Words* PowerPoint supports this. Show how starting sentences with the subject, and using simple connectives, can be very ordinary and dull, especially if every sentence is the same length and the same pattern. To illustrate this, you could invite them to rephrase the first example on slide 21 in a ‘dull’ way, e.g. *I searched my face and I saw only tears*.

Explain also how altering what goes at the beginning of a sentence is a way of drawing the reader’s attention to different parts of the sentence, a way of making the reader see what you want them to see. The first sentence on slide 22 is the ‘ordinary’ one; the rest exemplify how you can alter this. You can make the reader wait for a key piece of information by moving it to the end of a sentence or you can foreground important information by pulling it to the front of the sentence. The third sentence links back to work on punctuation in Week 2 and shows that you can use both a different sentence start and punctuation to heighten the effect.

Slide 23 is a reminder that you are promoting sentence variety for the impact it has on sound and meaning, not just for its own sake. It might be helpful to stress that there is nothing wrong with ordinary, subject-first, sentences and sometimes they are exactly what’s needed.

You can encourage students to explore how different poets create sentence variety and to include that in their evaluation of poems, alongside the more usual focus on word choices or imagery.

**Week 4 Lesson 1 (slide 24)**

The final slide summarises techniques and terms referred to during the scheme and is designed to consolidate learning for students and support them when revising the three poems they have written: their extended noun phrase poem from Week 1 Lesson 2, their animal kenning from Week 1 Lesson 3 and their personification poem from Week 3 Lesson 3. The point of the group task, preparing an advice sheet for other students, is to encourage students to think about what they’ve learned and to articulate it clearly. Encourage them not just to provide lists of techniques (e.g. ‘*vary your sentences’* or ‘*use alliteration’)* but to give more detailed advice such as ‘*You could use alliteration over two lines to stress ideas that are closely connected’*. Encourage them to bring the advice alive (and show their understanding) by giving examples from published poems and from their own writing.

With weaker writers, it would be helpful to limit the list of techniques to three or four key ones that will closely direct them in revising their own poems, for example:

* using line length to play with meanings
* using punctuation to mark meanings or emphasis
* choosing exactly the right word

.