

Poetry Live

with Andy Craven Griffiths

Andy opened his workshop by performing some of his own poetry, then discussing poetry slams, and different ways of performing poems to a live audience or video camera. See part of his introduction by watching the clip "Poetry Live with Andy Craven Griffiths".

He then introduced the following exercises:

Tongue Twisters

Divide the class into groups of four per table. For an icebreaker, ask the students to write tongue twisters using their own names, to practice alliteration and vocal delivery. (See also the "Tongue Twisters" video clip.)

If Love Was...

This exercise is designed to encourage students to write unconventional love poetry lines. Fill in the gaps:

If love was.....
I would be.....

The gaps are filled in with two things that go together or are somehow related.

Two rules:

- 1) Write from you (subject must be personal/interesting/fun to the writer)
- 2) Write with details ("Ford Ka" or "Mercedes F1 car" rather than "car")

See also the "If Love Was..." video clip.

Simile and Metaphor

Practice generating metaphors and similes, by asking how a thing affects you, and what else affects you that way.

- 1) How does it affect your senses?
- 2) What is it used for / what does it do
- 3) How does it make you feel?

During the session, the students found metaphors and similes for the following: mirror, baby, sea, clock, tree and fire. Here are two of the results:

"Babies are minute alarm clocks from hell."

"A tree is a soldier looking up at the stars, a camouflage for the ground below."

Rhyming

Discuss rhyming, share some perfect rhymes and put them at the end of lines. Ask each team to come up with words they think are hard to rhyme with. Improvise some lines using those rhymes. Give some starting rhymes for students to try to half-rhyme with (e.g. orange / circus / silver / citrus). Explain how half rhymes work thanks to shared vowel sounds.



Discussing "The Voice"

At this point Andy introduced the theme of the festival, and invited the students to discuss ways they might interpret it through their own writing. (Obviously, any theme can be chosen, so long as it is sufficiently open to inspire a diversity of work from the class.)

He allowed 15 minutes writing time, followed by readings and a discussion of vocal delivery. Many began planning how their work would be recorded on video. One girl planned on having multiple voices (of bullies) coming from off-screen, another wanted paper/cards, with parts of the poem written out to hold up to camera.

All students read their own work out loud. This was done in a variety of ways, to practice a range of deliveries and give some scope within which they could hone their own delivery. They read in a whisper, a shout, an accent, a sad way, an excited way, whilst making eye contact with another, and finally in the way they thought the pieces should be expressed on video.

Learning Progressions

Given more time, the students could build on their achievements by making copies of their poems and swapping them around to work as "guest editors" of each others' work. They do not have to abide by the suggestions made by guest editors, but it may help tighten up their writing and generate some new ideas.