

Focus on Poetry inspired by ICONIC PHOTOS

Activity: Write a poem from the point of view of any of the individuals portrayed in this slide show

Idea #1: Write a poem based on the style of Alden Nowlan's poem *Junkets*.

Alden Nowlan is a well-known Canadian poet. In this poem, Nowlan imagines that he is speaking to John Keates (1795-1821), a famous British poet. Keates was considered a genius whose life was cut short at 25 when he died of tuberculosis. "Junkets" was nickname given to him by another poet, Leigh Hunt, who was known for his puns.

In this poem, Nowlan imagines that he has the rare privilege of meeting someone he really admires. He begins by treating Keates very familiarly, calling him by his nickname, commenting on his red hair and short stature. (Keates was under 5 feet.) He imagines all the things he could do with Keates, and then becomes overwhelmed by shyness and awe.

A poem in which the poet addresses an absent person, idea or thing is called an apostrophe.

Write your own apostrophe by writing a poem in which you imagine that you are speaking to one of the people in this unit. Take your inspiration from Nowlan's poem. The emphasis should be on the connection between the person you are speaking to and war. (Read down the first column and then the second.)

Junkets

You magnificent
redhaired runt!

I could never
reach you.

I wish I could
telephone you
right now
and ask you over.

And even if
you were here
in town
I'd be afraid
of intruding:
I'm like that.

There's gin.

And we could
send out for
Chinese food,
if you liked.

Worst of all,
it would never
work,
Junkets:

I don't suppose
you've ever tasted it.

I'd keep thinking,
dear God,

But you're so far away.

I'm talking
with John Keates.

Source: Alden Nowlan, published in Cameron, Bob; Hogan, Margaret; Lashsmar, Patrick. (1983) *Poetry in Focus*. Toronto: Globe/Modern Curriculum Press.

Idea #2: Write a "found poem"

A found poem uses words that are already published, arranged into brief comments or descriptions.

The found poem below is by an anonymous writer. The language is taken from the *Warren Report*, the official investigation into the assassination of American president, John F. Kennedy. Kennedy was a young, charismatic president of the United States in the early 1960s. The nation was shocked when he was gunned down while travelling in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963.

Choose one of the people in this gallery, collect facts or statements about this person found in research, and assemble a 'found poem'.

John F. Kennedy

The body
is that
of a muscular
well-developed
and well-nourished
adult
Caucasian male
measuring seventy-two
and a half inches
and weighing approximately
one hundred
and seventy
pounds.

Source: *Anonymous*; published in Cameron, Bob; Hogan, Margaret; Lashmar, Patrick. (1983) *Poetry in Focus*. Toronto: Globe/Modern Curriculum Press.

Idea #3: Write a haiku

A haiku is a form of verse that was invented in Japan hundreds of years ago. The English version is three short lines of five, seven, then five syllables. Haikus focus on a mood, strong feeling or an atmosphere. They are often about nature but can also express a person's thoughts and emotions.

The best haikus are based on one simple observation, often using a surprising contrast.

Here are some examples:

What a pretty kite
The beggar's children are flying
High above their hut.

Issa

Everything I touch
with tenderness, alas
pricks like a bramble.

Issa

An old silent pond...
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.

Basho

Over the wintry
forest, winds howl in rage
with no leaves to blow.

Soseki

It's cold—and I wait
For someone to shelter me
And take me from here.

Demetrios Trifiatis

Oceans filled with tears
Shed by the angels weeping
For souls felled in war

Demetrios Trifiatis

War between nations
Rivers overflow with blood
The earth convulses.

Gail Doyle

Stars fall from the sky
Darkness overcomes the earth --
Screams fade to nothing.

Gail Doyle

End of days has come
All life has been extinguished
The earth is no more.

Gail Doyle

Write a haiku inspired by one of the people or situations in this gallery.

Idea #4: Write a poem about the death of Alan Kurdi modeled on Margaret Atwood's *Death of a Young Son by Drowning*

You will find this photo in 1.1.4

Death of a Young Son by Drowning [Margaret Atwood](#)

He, who navigated with success
the dangerous river of his own birth
once more set forth

on a voyage of discovery
into the land I floated on
but could not touch to claim.

His feet slid on the bank,
the currents took him;
he swirled with ice and trees in the swollen water

and plunged into distant regions,
his head a bathysphere;
through his eyes' thin glass bubbles

he looked out, reckless adventurer
on a landscape stranger than Uranus
we have all been to and some remember.

There was an accident; the air locked,
he was hung in the river like a heart.
They retrieved the swamped body,

cairn of my plans and future charts,
with poles and hooks
from among the nudging logs.

It was spring, the sun kept shining, the new grass
leapt to solidity;
my hands glistened with details.

After the long trip I was tired of waves.
My foot hit rock. The dreamed sails
collapsed, ragged.

I planted him in this country
like a flag.