**Mother Tongue Other Tongue – Resource for Year 4, 5 and 6 – could also be adapted and used for older age groups in secondary schools.**

**The Art of Gathering ingredients for poems and writing the Couplet.**

This resource will provide students with the skills to brainstorm, enabling them to gather, edit and organise the material that they will use to write their own poems. It also provides strategies for constructing a poem. These exercises can then be used for the students to gather material from their parents (mother tongue) or from a language that they are learning (other tongue) to organise and write their own poems.

Aimed at year 4, 5, and 6 but could be adapted and used for older students in secondary schools.

Learning Outcomes:

* Creative Brainstorming
* Imagery, details and description
* Writing non-rhyming poems
* Writing Portrait poem/ List poem
* Anaphora / repetition
* Couplets
* Familiarity with texts from other cultures

Resources

* 1 Blank A4 or A3 paper
* 1 lined A4 paper
* Pencil rubber
* YouTube and printed copy of the selected poem

Poem:

* *I Remember My Father’s Hands* by Lisa Suhair Majaj

Gathering Ingredients

1. Set the students the task of drawing a big palm on a blank A4/ A3 sheet of paper.
2. The hand must be huge and not the size of their own hands. The hand will be used as a visual aid.
3. Ask students to think of a favourite family member/ person – could be your mother/ father/ grandmother etc.
4. Ask them to write the person’s name down on top of the paper
5. Ask the students a series of questions (this can be oral or written on the board). The students will write each answer in one of the fingers of the palm. The first answer will be in the thumb.

Questions:

**Explain to students that poetry is about observing the ordinary, everyday details that are so familiar that they stop seeing them. For instance this exercise demands that we paint a picture of the person that we love through their hands. Poetry is making the ordinary extraordinary.**

1. What are the person’s fingers like? Their initial response / thick/ thin / stubby/ - ask them to write it down. Then prompt them or push for a simile (thin like what? - a pencil?), prompt simile, metaphor and adjectives.
2. Ask them to write down any details they remember about the hand, nail varnish, skin colour, hair on palms, watch on wrist, rings on finger (prompt for as much detail as possible)
3. How does the hand move when angry – action it makes. Flicks her finger/ clenches fist/ raps on the table/ (sometimes the students say I do not know so ask them to act it out – they might tap their finger against their lip – draw attention to what they are doing and enable them to describe it. Once they articulated this – you can push for imagery - flutters wildly like a bird (can they be specific – do they know what bird?
4. What every-day action does the hand make? – stir the pot of curry/ use the phone/ change the tyre/ turn the door key. Once they have written their initial responses then prompt them for more description and detail – stirs the pot like a whirlpool, kneads the bread knuckle pressing into the dough. A student recently wrote that their little sister punches the air like Muhammad Ali.
5. How does the hand show you love? Strokes my forehead, holds my hand – again after that initial prompt please push for more details, descriptions and imagery. Feather touch on your forehead, clasping your hands in theirs when you are crossing the road. Cupping your cheek.
6. What does the hand usually hold and how do they hold it? Initial response - a baby, a cup, their phone. After prompt - hands curled around the phone,
7. The last two responses could be written in the palm of the hand – as the students have now run out of fingers.
8. Is there anything that you would compare these hands to, like an animal, object, bird? Initial response – a robin, butterfly, again push for details and descriptions - flutter like a robin, stirs curry like a tsunami.
9. If you were to lose this (hand) family member – never see the hand again – what emotion would you feel? Anger, sad, hurt – again once you have been given that initial answer – prompt for an image – what would that anger look like, taste like, feel like, sound like? – there is no sun in my sky.

Provide the Template

The students have now gathered ingredients towards creating their own poem. The next step is looking at a template, which will suggest structure.

**Reading the poem** – each student will be provided with a copy of the text and will be asked to actively read the text while you read it out aloud. This is done by underlining phrases that they like, in particular, those that are striking, unusual or surprising.

Look at the poem – *I Remember My Father’s Hands* by Lisa Suhair Majaj

The text:

http://brian-moses.blogspot.com/2017/09/i-remember-my-fathers-hands-because.html#!/2017/09/i-remember-my-fathers-hands-because.html

A Visualisation of the poem on YouTube for Educational purpose

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-Kp1IjjSzA>

I have provided two options above: I would suggest that you begin with an active reading of the poem, followed by a viewing of the visual on YouTube.

Discussion

The reading should be followed by a discussion as a way to determine students reaction to the texts:

* What did they underline and why?
* What lines did they like and why?
* How does the poet feel about their father?
* What is the effect of speaking about someone you love through their hands?
* What is a portrait and why is this a portrait poem?
* What is a list poem and why is this a list poem?
* Notice that there is no rhyme. The rhythm hinges on the repetition at the beginning … because… This is called Anaphora – how does this affect the poem or why does the poet do this.
* Look at the ending – how does the poem end?
* The poems are in couplets. Who can guess what couplets are?
* See if the students can link the poem to the ingredients that they gathered in their hand.

Writing their poem using a framework

The students will write their own portrait poem using the ingredients gathered in the hand.

Remind them that the poem should be written in couplets.

Here are a couple of frameworks for the students:

I miss my mum/ dad/ sister

As she

My mums hands are

She moves

I love my mum/ dad

The way she

The way her hands

As she

Ending

The poem should end with the response to question 9 above – if I lose these hand I would feel.

**Students now have a template to brainstorm and create their own poems. This planning strategy can be used for brain storming ideas for other types of creative writing as well.**

Homework – related to Mother Tongue Other Tongue

Students can use the same planning framework to gather stories, sayings and poems from their home in order to create poems for Mother Tongue Other Tongue. Now they could be tasked with making notes in the hand to capture ideas/ ingredients about language, in order to write their own poems.

Gathering Ingredients

1. In class set the students the task of drawing a big palm on a blank A4/ A3 sheet of paper.
2. Ask the students to think of the language/ languages that they speak at home?
3. Write the language at the top of the paper.
4. Take it home to gather their ingredients.

**Please note: The questions below can be modified for the students writing a poem in a language that they are learning (Other Tongue).**

Questions

1. Is your name in another language and does it have a meaning?
2. What is your language like? What does it sound like? What is it like to feel like on the tongue? Is it hard, soft, smooth, if so like what? Smooth like velvet.
3. At home who speaks your language? Where is it spoken? Prompt for further details and stress the need for specific details and descriptions. Grandma, at the blue wooden table etc.
4. How does your language move? Prompt if it were a \_\_\_\_\_\_ it would move like\_\_\_\_\_
5. Are there any words in your language that you and your family use every day? What are they? Write them down, What are these words like – prompt if they were an animal or object, or bird what would they be like? Stones always there, heavy and dependable.
6. How does your language show you love? The terms equivalent to dear, sweetie, etc. Lullabies, rhymes, jokes, songs, poems.
7. In the palm – What would it be like if you were to lose your language, never be able to hear it or speak it again? What would that sound like, look like, feel like, taste like. This question enables an ending, and invites the student to end with a simile or metaphor.

Remind the students that they can work on this with their parents – who can help them if they are stuck on any of the words.

Provide the Template

Look at the Poem: Search for My Tongue – Sujata Bhatt

<https://www.johndclare.net/English/Bhatt-revision-notes.doc>

Writing their poem using a framework

Once they have gathered their ingredients the students can write a celebratory poem about their language that is both a celebratory poem and a list poem. Remind the students to use their gathered ingredients to write the poem.

Here are a couple of frameworks for the students

My Language is a

It sounds

We speak a

It is

Every day we say

Like a

Language is a

Because

Teachers

Please note - you can also use the Sujata Bhatt poem to write your own prompts for the student to respond to, using my prompt as a template.

Important - remember that the Mother Tongue Other Tongue poem should be written in one language. So please ensure that you adhere to this although you are using the Sujata Bhatt poem as a starting point.