

IN ResiDENCE

Storied Away



Hello! My name is **Frances Stickley** and I'm a published picture book writer and the 2020 Author in Residence for Inspire: Culture, Learning and Libraries.

Every book that I've written for the last 3 years has been in rhyme! So, whenever I need a little bit of help or when I'm feeling a bit stuck, I often turn to other writers to find new ways of creating poetry.

Words are very important in poetry. The words that we use decide how a reader experiences our poem. Poets often give a lot of thought to the rhythms and sounds of words, a little bit like a musician would with music.

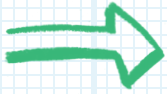
Poetry Pieces

Because poetry can feel like it has a lot of rules, it can seem a bit scary getting started. There are so many different ways to write a poem – how do we know where to start?

Here are some top tips for wordplay that will make your storytelling skills sparkle...



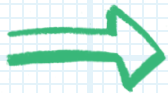
Top tips for Wordplay



1 Keep a dictionary:

Not a real one – a homemade dictionary all of your own invention. It could be nonsense words, or words that made you laugh, or just words that make you feel something; anything! You can dip into this whenever you need it. You don't even have to organise it alphabetically.

I like to keep a dictionary of my own that organises words according to the kind of story I'm telling (the genre and tone) so I have a funny section, a calm section, a rip-roaring adventure section, and so on.



2 Rhymes and rhythms:

It can really help to feel the rhythm of a word. Usually we can get a feel for this by clapping how many beats it has – or syllables.

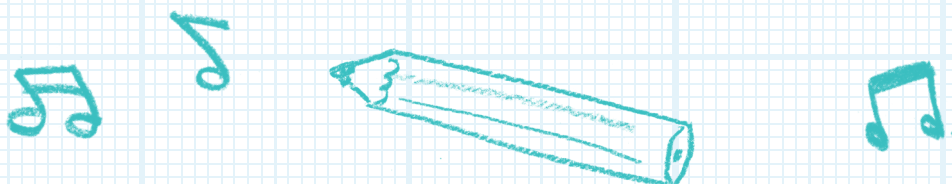
The more that you explore words using sound and music, the more you'll grasp the rhythms. Some people think that the rhythm of words is only important in poetry, but it matters in storytelling too. Next time you've written or told a story, revisit some of the words and swap them for others. This works well with adjectives or describing words.

Can you swap that adjective for a different one with a new rhythm? A word that might have 3 beats instead of 2. How does that change the sound of your story when read out loud?



3 Riddle me this:

Riddles are a great way of focusing on language, since they're about providing clues without giving too much away. The language here is so important! Why not have a story sack of different exciting items and take it in turns to choose one, hide it behind your back, and come up with a riddle for the rest of your family or friends.



Poetry Pieces

Here's a game I love to play whenever I get that stuck-and-worried feeling.

It's called the

cut -up technique

This method has been used by musicians, artists and poets for decades if not centuries. Artists like this method because it relies on luck, fate and instincts – it is, essentially, pulling words out of a hat and hoping that some magic happens.

1 Create a collection: begin to keep a collection of words.

It might be old magazine cuttings, ripped pieces of cereal boxes, a historical word you read on a church wall or an invented word that your little brother or sister came up with by accident. Keep all of these scraps of paper together.

2 Choose different sentences and words and piece them together.

You might want to experiment with the order of words and lines. You might want to use them in the order that you choose them – it's completely up to you.

3 Stick them down as you'd like them arranged.

And that's it – that's your cut-up poem complete! It might sound simple and a little bit strange, but famous artists and chart-topping musicians have actually created their masterpieces this way.

You don't just have to use words. This is also a great way to create artwork and image boards for stories and characterisation. If you're a budding illustrator, you could even use this technique to plot your settings, story and characters!

If you enjoyed learning about wordplay, you can find out more at www.inspireculture.org.uk/inresidence