

FIRST STORY

TEACHING RESOURCES



**“When I’m trying to get
to sleep at night these
sentences start forming
in my head”**

VICKY FOSTER
POET



**INSIDE the
WRITER'S MIND**

STIMULUS

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We experience so many different things every day: the world around us through our senses; people and conversations and relationships; our thoughts and feelings and emotions.

We are going to create a cut-up poem made from all these different aspects of our lives.



Fold a piece of A4 paper in half, then half again, then unfold it to create four boxes. You are going to write FIVE short sentences in each box (so 20 in total) about different aspects of your experience. Try to make each line a complete thought, different from the others.

- 1** In box one: write five short descriptive sentences about what you can see out of a nearby window.
- 2** In box two: write another five short sentences about what each of your senses is experiencing right now — sight, smell, touch, taste, sound.
- 3** In box three: write five short sentences about how you have been feeling lately, perhaps using a simile or metaphor for your different emotions.
- 4** In box four: write down five things you've heard or read today eg. conversations you've had, or something someone has said to you. You could even grab a book and write down sentences that sound interesting, or look around the room to see if there are any phrases you can use!

- 1 We're going to mix these lines up to create a poem. Read through all your sentences and pick one that feels like the first line of a poem.
- 2 Now review the rest of the lines in the other sections: what works well next to it? Use your instincts and don't worry if it doesn't make total sense. The only rule here is that you can't put two lines from the same box back-to-back. Number each of your sentences for where it appears in the poem. Repeat until you have at least two lines from each section included. What feels like a last line?
- 3 You now have a cut-up poem! Write out the full version on a new piece of paper. Read through the poem as if you're reading it for the first time. Does it make sense? What do you take away from the poem? Read it out loud. What's the rhythm like? Do any parts feel jarring? Think about where the line breaks are; what happens when you change these around? Finally, go through each line and evaluate each word: is it needed and adding something to the poem? Use these techniques to write a final version.

RESOURCE AUTHOR

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This resource is by Dan Simpson, an accomplished writer, performer, producer, educator, and First Story Writer-in-Residence.

Dan has been Poet-in-Residence at Glastonbury Festival, Waterloo Station, National Trust Stowe, Imperial College London, and St Albans Cathedral. His two collections of poetry are *Applied Mathematics* and *Totally Cultured* (Burning Eye Books).

Dan delivers primary and secondary school classes around the UK. He also runs both creative writing and professional development sessions for adults.

Find out more at dansimpsonpoet.co.uk.



DAN'S RECOMMENDED READING

A Poetry Handbook
by Mary Oliver

The Poetry Toolkit
by Rhian Williams

Poetry in the Making
by Ted Hughes

This resource is one of six published in 2022 by First Story, in partnership with BBC Teach.

These resources complement a new collection of short films about creative writing, *Inside the Writer's Mind*, produced by BBC Teach.

Featuring fantastic contemporary writers and packed with tips and insights, discover all eight of the films among the English Literature resources on the BBC Teach website, [here](#).

Explore all six of our accompanying free resources at firststory.org.uk/bbc-teach.

FIRST STORY

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