DEVELOPING THE INDIVIDUAL VOICE

BY FIONA SAMPSON

The key points about this group activity are that it’s concentrated and it makes the familiar strange.

Getting inspiration
Ask the group to think about an object or a place, real or imagined, and, in silence, to come up with words to describe it, using all the senses. Then agree on a subject as a group, and make a list of suggestions for ways to describe it.

Making connections
Now tell the group to forget the original subject and to suggest other things which are that colour, then that texture, etc.

Inspiring structures
Talk about riddles. Ask the group for definitions and examples. Read one. Point out that riddles are one of the earliest forms of poetry in English. Discuss riddle formats and their use of the first person. Apply the riddle format to material gathered during the first part of the activity. Discuss simile and metaphor: I’m as yellow as tinned apricots / I’m the yellow of tinned apricots. Why one rather than other? Talk about metaphors as ‘speeded-up’ similes and discuss how they can cover a poet’s tracks.

Start writing
Now ask the students to write riddles of their own, remembering the subjects they thought of originally and the words they used to describe them, sense by sense. Ask for volunteers to read out their riddles and, as a group, try to guess the answers.

POET’S TIP
Encourage students to experiment as wildly as they wish.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Y5 TO WRITE METAPHORS FROM ORIGINAL IDEAS OR FROM SIMILES
Y5 TO INVESTIGATE METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS AND FIGURES OF SPEECH FROM EVERYDAY LIFE
Y6 TO EXPERIMENT WITH LANGUAGE, E.G. CREATING NEW WORDS, SIMILES AND METAPHORS
Y6 TO PRACTICE AND EXTEND VOCABULARY, E.G. THROUGH INVENTING WORD GAMES SUCH AS PUNS, RIDDLES, AND CROSSWORDS