

# Magical Powers

A KS1 Activity by David Harmer

- rhyme
- imagery
- imagination
- simile



## Where The Fairies Are

Wild laughter, tiny wingbeats  
Ripples on the lake  
Whispers chatter through the hedgerows  
Springtime fairies wake.

Gentle heat-haze on the meadows  
Floats across the sky  
From cowslip bells and dandelions  
Summer fairies fly.

Frosted nights and golden sunlight  
Wood smoke scents the day  
Falling leaves flame red and orange  
Autumn fairies play.

Snow and ice freeze up the farmland  
Silent, drifting deep  
Far away inside the forests  
Winter fairies sleep.

*David Harmer*



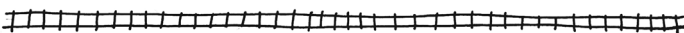
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The idea of writing about fairies can put off some students, especially boys, but by looking at magical powers, imps, spirits, gremlins and the like, there is nothing to stop the whole class finding something to excite them. Plus it can be an excellent springboard into looking at nature, the weather and other topics. The structures and frames provided here are a starting point, and you should feel free to adapt them to suit your class, or remove them altogether as you and your students grow more confident in writing poetry together.

### Getting started

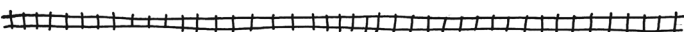
Discuss with your class where else fairies can be found. In our homes? Under the bed? Next door? In the road? In the corner shop? The supermarket? Inside our televisions? Where do they hide when they are in these places?

Talk to the children about what a simile is and, to get their ideas flowing, ask for their ideas to complete this frame, including as many similes as possible.



### Simile

A simile is a phrase that describes something as being like something else: e.g. as slow as a snail.



*I found a fairy in my...  
It looked like...  
Smaller than...  
Its hair was...  
Its wings were...  
They sounded like...  
It flew towards...  
It landed...  
I saw it lift its wand and say...  
Then...  
And then it was gone*

### Write an 'If I was a...' poem

Ask the children to imagine themselves as the subject of the model poem 'Where The Fairies Are' and make a poem of their ideas. Encourage them to talk about the things they would do if they had magic powers. What would it be like to fly? How would you use your magic powers? Would you help other people? What tricks would you play and on whom would you play them? What would your parents or carers say and do?

Using a simple bit of repetition can give these thoughts a poetic shape, like my example below. You and your class can either continue on from my example or more able students could be challenged to imagine themselves as a magical creature and create their own poem.

### If I was a fairy

*If I had magic powers  
And I could make spells  
This is what I'd do  
Yes this is what I'd do  
I would...*

And so on.

### Write a class poem

Another idea is to ask the class to list all the strange events of that week: lost jumpers, broken pencils, missing footballs, tumbles in the playground, litter suddenly appearing, books nobody can find, mistakes in spelling, in sums, buttons coming off clothes and so on. Each child in the class could be a line of the poem, their name followed by the calamity!

*Georgia's lost her pencil  
TJ lost a button  
Hamza got a sum wrong  
Sky has fallen over*



A repeating refrain every four lines, blaming the calamities on a mischievous goblin, for example, can give the poem some form:

*There's a goblin in our school  
Just hear what I say  
I haven't seen it yet  
But I will one day.  
It's really causing trouble  
Why won't it go away?*

Using this device, children can complete a class poem that they've each made a contribution to. More able students can be stretched by asking them to produce the refrain.

### Magical nature and beyond

This activity can be used to develop one of your earlier poems. Here the similes are more complex and they enrich the poem by adding more detail to the picture the poem creates. In my example, each line takes a specific aspect of a leaf and links it to a simile, building this poem up from the more simple ideas used in the list poem.

This example chooses the seasons from the model poem, but any feature of this or any other poem can be similarly used.

*My leaf is golden like...  
My leaf is orange like...  
My leaf is as red as...  
My leaf is as crunchy as...  
My leaf is as yellow as...  
My leaf curls like...*

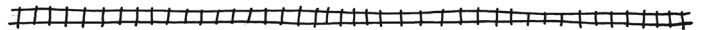
And so on.

Other poems could look at the dark, the sun, the wind, ice, snow, rain, storms and so on. Students could begin to explore personification and begin to imagine and describe these elements as people. I like to stretch the definition by including monsters, dragons, animals etc as well as people. Poems about the ideas mentioned above could

easily use this device. The wind becomes a giant, the rain is his or her tears. The icy wind is a monster and he or she is breathing cold air. A hot day poem could begin like this:

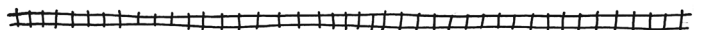
*The sun is like a dragon smiling  
The clouds are...  
The heat is like...*

Really what these frames are doing is extending the idea of each aspect of the weather into fantasy, using simile and metaphor. Simply make your own and allow the children's imaginations free rein.



### Personification

When objects and events are given the characteristics of human beings and turned into living things it is called personification.



**Write a rhyming poem**

Rhyme isn't an easy tool to pick from the poetry toolbox but it can add music and rhythm as well as confirm expectation and add to meaning. Young children often want to use rhyme, but you need to ensure that its inclusion doesn't trivialise the poem or bend meaning into terrible contortions. An easy way to help with this is to make a class rhyming dictionary on a big piece of paper and stick it on the wall. Some preparation is needed because the technique is to take a word and then go through the alphabet, e.g bake: ache, brake, break, cake, cornflake, fake, etc...

There may be others; some may be unsuitable. Perhaps you could limit your rhyming dictionary to four or five rhymes each time. Then make a simple frame, say about the weather that day, and explain that the poem is going to be six lines long and that lines two, four and six have to rhyme.

*Today the rain is pounding down  
I am very wet  
.....  
.....[rhyme with wet]  
.....  
The wetter I will get!*

This is all arbitrary and any rhyming rule will do. The more you do this with your class the less you will need to scaffold this process.

**POET'S TIP**

A quick way to develop a frame for a rhyming poem is to take a simple rhyme, a nursery rhyme perhaps, and write class versions of it, changing the words but keeping the sense of rhyme.

Of course, as with all poetry, the more poems of every kind that the class hear, read and write for themselves, the more familiar they will become with these ideas.

**Now try this**

Other poems that can work for this age group and with similar activities include: 'Johnny Come Over The Water' by Charles Causley, 'The Wind and the Sun' by Julia Donaldson, 'Wizard' by Richard Edwards and 'Season of Trees' by Julie Holder. All included in *The Works Key Stage 1*, Chosen by Pie Corbett (Macmillan Children's Books, 2006).

'The Princess's Treasure', 'A Few Frightening Things' and 'Fairy Names', all by Clare Bevan, 'Monisha' by David Horner, 'Listen and Look' by Patricia Leighton, 'Mermaid's Purse' by Kate Sedgewick and 'Never Pick A Fight With A Fairy' by Roger Stevens, all found in *A First Poetry Book*, Ed. Pie Corbett and Gaby Morgan (Macmillan Children's Books, 2012).

'Ten Things Found In A Wizard's Pocket' by Ian McMillan from *Orange Silver Sausage, A Collection of Poems Without Rhymes from Zephaniah to Agard*, Compiled by James Carter and Graham Denton (Walker Books, 2009).

