

KEY STAGE	AGE
KS1	5-7
KS2	7-11
KS3	11-14 ✓
KS4	14-16
KS5	16-18

**AT A GLANCE**

- ART
- WRITING IN ANOTHER VOICE
- HISTORY
- CELEBRATING DIFFERENCE
- THE SENSES

**POETRYCLASS: FRESH IDEAS FOR POETRY LEARNING FROM THE POETRY SOCIETY**

# POETRY FROM PORTRAITS

BY CHERYL MARTIN

This exercise uses visual stimuli as the basis for writing poems. In my workshops I have used hundred-year-old photographic portraits of Native Americans in full traditional dress to inspire emotional and thoughtful responses.

You could use any postcards, art or photos, and vary the prompts on the accompanying sheet to describe the pictures in interesting ways. Let the students choose a portrait to work on, either individually or in small groups of two to four.

**Developing empathy**

Tell the students they can choose to imagine themselves as the person in the photo, as the photographer documenting a disappearing people for history, or as modern-day descendants of the people depicted, looking at their own history.

**Considering imagery**

To get the students to think about using imagery throughout the poem, and truly think themselves into the world of the portrait, give out copies of the sheet attached and ask them to write their responses into each section.

**Drafting verse**

To create a poem based on these responses, the students can put them into any order they like. They can write them down verbatim, on successive lines, which usually works best in terms of vivid imagery, or by including every image/response in a poem that they create by adding lines, making it rhyme, making it into an acrostic, or whatever they prefer.



**POET'S TIP**

Before you write, get the group on their feet to do something physical, to get them energised.

