

The imagery trick - teacher's notes

Year:	Year 7
Ability:	All
Unit:	Poetry or Poetry in Performance
Time:	2-4 lessons (lesson length 60 mins)
Aims:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pupils learn that inspiration comes from a variety of sources when writing a poem. Pupils write a class poem based on their ideas and then an individual or paired poem based on the lessons.2. Reinforce understanding of verbs, adjectives and adverbs.3. Practise word order for meaning.4. Reinforce understanding and importance of punctuation.
Skills:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Working in pairs or in small groups. Speaking and listening.2. Thinking of meaning and choosing words for effect.3. Whole class participation - it can get noisy.4. Responding to an unseen poem.5. Working in groups to dramatise poetry.
Resources:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pictures of trapeze artists and acrobats and some items to help with the idea of how things move.2. Planning sheet for own poem.3. CD player for background music when performing the poem.4. Props for acting.5. Page 76 'The Imagery Trick' by Gillian Clarke, (from <i>There's a Poet Behind You</i>, Morag Styles, Helen Cook and Caroline Holden (eds), A & C Black, 1988, 0-7136-3056-6).

The Acrobat – Imagery trick

Lesson 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The class suggests a variety of topics about which they will write their class poem. List the selection on the board: animals, bugs, cars, sports, different jobs, school, etc. I drew my students towards insects and arachnids.2. List the scariest creepy-crawlies on the board.3. Then I asked them to tell me as many things as they could think of which are like the spider. i.e.: ‘Think of a person who is like a spider’, ‘Think of a machine ...’, ‘Think of something to do with the weather, or nature, or your house ...’.4. There were many good ideas, like acrobat, architect, builder, electric whisk, sewing machine, knitting needles, God, the moon, a snowflake. I chose acrobat.5. Complete a spider diagram of these ideas on the board.6. Tell students that you’re planning to go with the acrobat idea for now.						
Planning the poem	<p>On the board write the title ‘The Acrobat’ and start them off with three columns (verbs and adjectives and adverbs). They have to list eight to twelve movements or emotions, etc. that the acrobat can demonstrate.</p> <table><thead><tr><th>Verb</th><th>Adjective</th><th>Adverb</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Cartwheels across the floor</td><td>small</td><td>gracefully</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>Rearrange for meaning: Gracefully, the acrobat cartwheels in small circles.</p>	Verb	Adjective	Adverb	Cartwheels across the floor	small	gracefully
Verb	Adjective	Adverb					
Cartwheels across the floor	small	gracefully					
Writing the class poem on the board	Class provide ideas about: emotion, movement, how the acrobat gets across the ring, what s/he hears, sees, smells, etc. Discuss punctuation for effect.						
Read around the class	Read around the class. Emphasise pace, intonation and volume. At the end, cross out the title ‘The Acrobat and replace with ‘The Spider’. Discuss the link between the person and the arachnid. Which works better?						
Lesson 2: Responding to a written poem	Introduce the concept of using quotations and revise similes, metaphors and onomatopoeia. Read the poem ‘The Acrobat’ (either the one you created last lesson and answer task one and extension one.)						
Lesson 3 : Writing own poems	Plan and write the response to extension 3. Illustrate main picture and border for own poem. Plenary - ask for definitions and examples for metaphor, simile, onomatopoeia and how punctuation adds to the text.						
Lesson 4: Poetry in performance	Dramatise own/class/printed poem in small groups. One student to be the narrator, one to be the Acrobat/spider, one to be the bug caught in the web or to add sound effects. Go over drama techniques like freeze frame (tableau), different levels, voice projection, awareness of body position to the audience. Write up self-assessment.						

Year 7 Poetry in performance

The Acrobat

Beautifully balanced, no wobble -
Carefree on a tightrope.
Smoothly, toe to heel,
Gliding over the weave.
No pole, perfect posture,
Executes a 180° turn,
Tap dances back, surefooted.
Stops, turns, launches
Into a double back flip.
Gracefully lands on the thin wire
Legs bent, body centred,
Knows her limits.
Alert. Aware. Another
Weight on the rope.
Body needs to compensate,
Realign the balance.
The mass wobbles the spaghetti string,
Flailing, still struggling to
Regain composure.
The acrobat pirouettes towards
The panic-stricken lump.
Closer, closer, she clip-clops
Like a Lipizzaner competing in dressage.
The heap, limbs waving frantically,
Tumbles down into the safety net.
His limbs twitch, involuntary spasms.
The acrobat wraps her legs around
The rope, glides gracefully down
To investigate.



By Melanie Henderson

weave	– fibres which are woven together to create a piece of material
executes	– performs
compensate	– balance out
flailing	– limbs that thrash about the place because a person is panicking
composure	– to be settled, calm
pirouettes	– a body spin on the ball of the foot
Lipizzaner	– a special breed of horse that is well trained in the art of dressage (nearly always grey)
dressage	– method of training a horse to respond to the rider's body signals
involuntary spasms	– unable to control movements of the muscle

Now answer the following questions in full sentences

*When quoting from the text, use inverted commas to show that these are not your words:
e.g. ‘Like a Lipizzaner competing in dressage’. Make sure you include the punctuation exactly as it appears in the poem.*

1. What is the acrobat likened to?
2. What are the other names used to refer to the tightrope?
3. What image or idea do you get of the other being on the rope?
4. What words best describe the acrobat and the ‘mass’? Refer to specific words in the text to help you.
5. What do you think ‘the mass’ is?
6. What is the safety net?
7. Why is the acrobat going to investigate?
8. Are there any similes or any onomatopoeic words in this poem?
9. If you changed the title, ‘The Acrobat’ to ‘The Spider’, would it alter your opinion of the poem?
10. How does new title change the meaning of the poem?

Extension 1:

1. Pick five images that give a clear impression of what the spider is like.
2. Pick five images that give a clear impression of what the bug is like or how it is reacting to being caught in the web.

Extension 2:

Now pick your own subject to write about. Think of as many different things as you can about the subject. Ask yourself who or what is like your subject, or think of a machine, think of something to do with the weather, or nature or your house that you can liken your subject to.

Look at the planning sheet over the page to help you. In ‘The Acrobat’ I have chosen to compare the subject with a person, but you can change this. Don’t forget to put the ‘trick’ title down first so we can guess what your poem is about. Afterwards, make sure you put the real title upside down at the bottom of your page.

The Imagery Trick

Planning your poem

