

“War” and other five-line poems. A great idea from the internet

(ab Klasse 8)

Notes for the teacher

Objectives

This is an opportunity for the pupils to combine their grammar and poetry skills.

Topic

This is an idea taken from the internet. The author is Andreas Lund at the University of Oslo. The address is <http://home.online.no/~anlun/gram-po.htm>.

On this site you will find many more poems as well as the names of the pupils who sent them in. Of course, your pupils can also mail their poems to Andreas Lund (anlun@online.no). He says that good poems will be published on his website for all the visitors to read. I think most of your pupils might want to contribute something, once they have started on the task. So this is an idea for a whole-class-activity, but you might also reserve it for a group of pupils who have a special interest in writing. The instructions are simple and straightforward, and the examples make it quite clear to the pupils what they are expected to do.

Suggested treatment

Recite the poem “War”. Tell them it was written not by a poet or an established writer, but by someone like them. Write it up on the board, and get the class to define the linguistic structure, line by line. The first line is made up of a single noun etc.

Tell your class about the website from Norway and hand out worksheet 1. Read the instructions. Ask individual students to read out the poems and give the meaning of unknown words. Then get them to compose their own texts as indicated on the worksheet (individual work or pair work, as they choose).

You may also show them worksheet 2 and explain to them that they were composed by university students in their early twenties. Encourage them: they can do as well or even better.

Variant

Read only two poems from the worksheet. Then the pupils turn the worksheet over. Then make one poem with the class. Decide yourself on a topic for the noun in the first line. Then let the pupils suggest the subsequent lines, with various pupils making various suggestions, and write everything on the blackboard. Then get the class to select the best lines by voting on them.

Worksheet 1

Write a 5-line poem in the following manner:

1. On the first line write a **noun** of your choice
2. On the second line write **two adjectives** joined by **and** to describe this noun
3. On the third line write a **verb** and an **adverb** (or adverbial phrase) to describe this noun in action.
You may also take a verb and its complement.
4. Start the fourth line with **like** or **as** followed by a comparison
5. Start the final line with **if only** followed by a **wish**

Here are some examples as to how to write your own poems:

War

bloody and inhumane

killing relentlessly

like the Black Death

if only people understood its senselessness

(D.R.)

Ice
cold and blue
lying everywhere
like a carpet
if only summer would take its turn

Mother
warm and caring
smiling at me
like the sun
if only this moment could last forever

Athlete
brave and disciplined
winning always
as a lion king
if only I could be a little Simba

Baby
cute and tiny
sleeping all day
like a little flower
if only I could be a baby again

English
interesting and funny
taught cleverly
like a superstar in the class test
if only I were a superstar

My younger brother
small and clumsy
looking up to me
like no one else has ever done
if only I could protect him forever

Time
deaf and blind
passing quickly
like a frightened horse
if only "then" could be "now"

A dictionary
abundant and knowledgeable
consult conveniently
like a tutor
if only I could remember all vocabulary

Smoke
bitter and sweet
being soaked into my lungs
like an ink spot on the transparent water
if only I could stop to save my poor lungs

Boat
smooth and fun
taking us into the sea
like a breeze after the rain
if only I could own it

Now it's your turn. Write 5-line poems using the following words as nouns:

Lemon
Cadillac
Me

Family
Dreams
Beach

Lessons
My friend
Night

Romance
Sun
Sports

You can also think up your own word to start the poem.

Solutions

(mostly taken from the Internet and slightly revised, sent in from various pupils all over the world)

Lemon
fresh and green
tasting lovely
like an acid emerald
if only I could eat one every day

Family
fondness and support
loving me unconditionally
like a love song
if only everybody could have one

Cadillac
fancy and fine
cruising smoothly
like an angel in the sky
if only I could buy one

Dreams
relaxing and resentful
coming softly every night
like dust in the wind
if only I could remember them

Me
lonely and sad
wanting love
like everyone else
if only I could get the guy I want

Beach
blue and immense
beating silently
like each beat of my heart
if only I could be a powerful wave

Lessons
boring and tiresome
passing slowly
like eternity
if only I could play basket ball now

My friend
kind and nice
patient and loving
like the stars in the sky
if only I never lost her

The night
dark and silent
covering up what the day could reveal
like a mystery
if only my weaknesses could be hidden

Romance
breath taking and powerful
coming unprepared
like a storm
if only I were a little part of you

Sun
beautiful and intense
waiting always for the moon
like a lover
if only they could be together

Sports
running and sweating
trying to be faster
like Michael Jordan
if only I could win

Worksheet 2

Additional poems written by students of *Anglistik* at Aachen University

Music
gentle and mild
ruling peacefully
like no sovereign was ever able to
if only it could warm the coldest heart.
E.G.

Languages
foreign and exotic
spoken naturally
like words of love
if only I could speak them all.
C.S.

Sunshine
golden and warm
always cheering us up
like chocolate
if only it didn't rain so often
A.P.

Clown
funny and clumsy
crying secretly
Like my little sister after the maths test
if only I could look behind his mask.
M.H.

Rain
Wet and warm
pouring endlessly

like the death of good mood
if only I could be the burning sun.

M.B.

GOD

UNCONDITIONAL AND UNEXPLAINABLE

HAVING NO SECOND CHOICES

LIKE NO ONE ELSE I KNOW

IF ONLY THE WORLD COULD INTERNALISE THIS MYSTERY.

A.K.