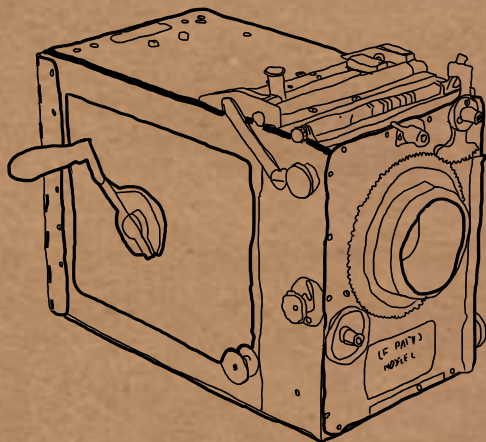


Red  
Room  
Poetry

Poetry in  
Meaningful Ways



# POETRY OBJECT

2017

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## ABOUT RED ROOM POETRY

*Red Room Poetry's* vision is to make poetry a meaningful part of everyday life. By encouraging curiosity, creation and participation across a range of forms and mediums including radio, live performance, installation and digital initiatives, we enrich engagement with poetry. Since 2003, our poetic arts projects and learning programs have provided creative opportunities for more than 780 poets and over 22,500 students across Australia and beyond our shores.

## ABOUT RED ROOM POETIC LEARNING

*Red Room Poetic Learning* unlocks meaningful engagements with poetry for students, teachers and school communities. Breathing life into traditional poetry teaching practices, *Poetic Learning* brings contemporary poets into classrooms across the country to foster fresh poetic perspectives. From page to stage and screen, *Poetic Learning* supports creative investigations and enriched curriculum outcomes. Each *Red Room Poetry* workshop encourages new modes of publication, releasing student poems to an authentic worldwide audience of more than 240, 000 online readers. **Book a workshop here**

# ABOUT RED ROOM POETRY OBJECT

Inside the cure there's the hope  
Inside the hope there's a smile  
Inside the smile there's the child

'CROCODILE TOOTH NECKLACE'

Winning Primary Poem by Niamh D.

*Red Room Poetry Object* is a free poetry competition for students and teachers across Australia and New Zealand. Since 2011, *Poetry Object* has invited young poets (Years 3-10) and their teachers to write poems inspired by special and curious objects.

The competition has ignited the imaginations of over 300 school communities and published more than 10,000 original poems by students and teachers. This year we've teamed up with the National Museum of Australia and their incredible collection of objects to enrich our free teaching resources. We've enlisted the poetic talents of Evelyn Araluen Corr (NSW), Joel McKerrow (VIC), Jeremy Balius (WA), Cameron Hindrum (TAS), Manal Younus (SA) and Anna Jacobson (QLD). A unique story writing activity from our friends at *Good Reading* will also ignite fresh perspectives.

In addition to all submitted poems featuring on our online *Poetry Object* library, winning Primary, Secondary and Teacher poems will be published on public transport, as part of our *Poetic Moments* project. With support from the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund (CAL), winners will also be awarded prize packs that include mentoring by professional poets as well as digital workshops. Travel vouchers, magazine subscriptions and book pack prizes are offered thanks to our generous partners and patrons.

Thank you for joining us on a new poetic journey. We hope *Poetry Object* 2017 not only nurtures imagination and creative practice, but helps to explore the poems hidden in the inner worlds of your treasured objects.

~ *Red Room Poetry*

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

1. Register your school [here](#)
2. Explore this resource to gain inspiration from poetic activities and writing prompts
3. Submit your poems [here](#)



## KEY DATES

### REGISTER NOW TO ENTER

- > COMPETITION OPENS  
Thursday 20 April 2017
- > SUBMISSIONS CLOSE  
Friday 22 September 2017
- > ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS  
November 2017

# PRIZES

*Red Room Poetry Object* awards prizes in the following categories:

- Best Primary Poem
- Best Secondary Poem
- Best Teacher Poem
- Best School Installation

See *Poetry Object* 2016 Winning and Highly Commended Poems [here](#)

## The CAL POP

We are celebrating young poets with the CAL Poetry Object Prize (POP), made possible with support of the Copyright Agency (CAL). The prize fosters excellence in poetry by supporting poets to deliver live and digital workshops to winning students, teachers and schools.

## Travel Prize

Generously supported by Craig and Joy Lawn, the Travel Prize offers \$1000 to each winning student and teacher to support the discovery of poetic inspiration in new places.

## Rex Regional Prize

In collaboration with Regional Express (Rex) Airlines, we are honouring the poetic voices of students and teachers in regional Australia. Students and teachers who reside in Rex destinations and submit poems for *Poetry Object* 2017 are automatically in the running to win this exciting new prize.



## Publication

Winning poems will be published in highly visible public platforms and all submitted poems will be featured in our online *Poetry Object* library.

## Poetry Prize Packs

Our poetry prize packs are made possible with generous donations from *Red Room Poetry* partners and collaborators: S&J Media, Regional Express Airlines, Copyright Agency, Corban & Blair, National Museum of Australia, Questacon, Kinokuniya Books, *Good Reading*, *Spine Out Magazine* and *PK Mag*.

## Best Student Poems (Primary and Secondary)

- > \$1000 travel voucher for the poet and their family
- > Family Pass to Questacon
- > VIP Tour of National Museum of Australia\*
- > Judging commendations and a poetry prize pack
- > Poem publication in *PK Mag* (Primary) and *Spine Out Magazine* (Secondary)
- > Free subscription to your choice of publication: *Good Reading*, *PK Mag* or *Spine Out Magazine*

## Best Teacher Poem

- > \$1000 travel voucher for the poet and their family
- > Family Pass to Questacon
- > VIP Tour of National Museum of Australia\*
- > Judging commendations and a poetry prize pack
- > Free subscription to your choice of publication: *Good Reading*, *PK Mag* or *Spine Out Magazine*

## Best School Installation and Highly Commended Poems

- > Judging commendations and a poetry prize pack
- > Publication of their poems on *Red Room Poetry* website

\*This prize includes

- > 1 hour tour of NMA galleries, guided by Education team member
- > Exploration of Open Collections
- > Valid for prize winner and immediate family
- > Valid until 31 December 2018
- > One tour per winner

# JUDGE'S NOTES

*Poetry Object 2017* will be judged by renowned poet Mark Tredinnick.

Twelve winning and highly commended poems will be selected by *Red Room Poetry*. The shortlist and judging will be informed by Mark's notes and quality criteria found on pages 6-7.

MARK TREDINNICK is a celebrated poet, essayist, and writing teacher. "One of our great poets of place," Judy Beveridge has called him. His chapbook *The Lyrebird & Other Poems*, first published in 2011 is just out in an updated edition (Picaro Poets Series; Ginninderra Books), and his poem "Skipping the Rope" appeared in the second edition of an international anthology of poems published by the United Nations on Happiness Day. His honours include the Montreal and Cardiff Poetry Prizes, The Blake and Newcastle Poetry Prizes, two Premiers' Literature Awards, and the Calibre Essay Prize. His poem "The Horse" won the ACU Poetry Prize in 2016; his poem "Panic Very Softly, Love" won the Ron Pretty Prize in 2017. This year, Mark is also on the judging panels for the Montreal Prize and the Blake Prize.

'Objects have a poetry in them - and poems are objects made of words.'

- Mark Tredinnick



**Why is a poem so good for saying the inner world of things, of objects, in particular?** A poem is an object, too: more than any piece of prose, a poem has a shape, has a form. **A poem is a sculpture of voice and story and song.** Like an object, a well-made poem, says a lot more than it seems to. If you've seen one pen, or watch or medal or coin or pair of boots or vase or stick-pin or diary... you have not seen them all. That's what your poem should aim to catch and sing: in its uniqueness, in the care you take to say your poem fresh, you'll wake

your readers to the worlds inside the curio or treasure; you'll wake the object to your readers and yourself.

I'm looking, as I always look, for poems whose language—in their speech music, in their rhythms, in their turns of sassy phrase, in their fresh-minted metaphors and striking imagery—seems alive to a world beyond merely what the language means. **A poem, in its language world, should imply a wider world**—of affection, story, tragedy, loss, continuity, mystery.

A poem divines whatever it deals with: it brings out what is hidden; it translates into memorable speech what the object—the artifact, the curio, the trinket, the trophy, whatever—contains, the memories embedded in it. **It speaks for the inner life as well as the outer life of things.**

Don't worry about rhyme, though you can rhyme if you want to. Rhyme is only one of the musical aspects of a good poem. **Resist clichés.** Coin your metaphors fresh; don't borrow them. If your language sounds commonplace, or if it parrots jargon you hear others speak, or if it sounds more like another writer, stop and start again. **And give it a form, a shape on the page, that does justice to the shape of the object.** Maybe not a shape that imitates the object. But a shape of lines at least as capable of holding a poem's sense and speech music as the object is capable of holding its secrets and stories.

**Read Mark's full judging notes here.**

# QUALITY CRITERIA

*Red Room Poetry Object* 'quality criteria' has been established by *Red Room Poetry* and judging panel in consultation with NSW Public Schools.

The purpose of the 'quality criteria' is to encourage students and teachers to explore, and experiment with, a range of poetic techniques as well as to ensure poems encourage excellence.

The 'quality criteria' aims to enrich the creation of excellent poems and acts as an evaluative framework that enables judges to award poems based on artistic merit, not subjectivities.

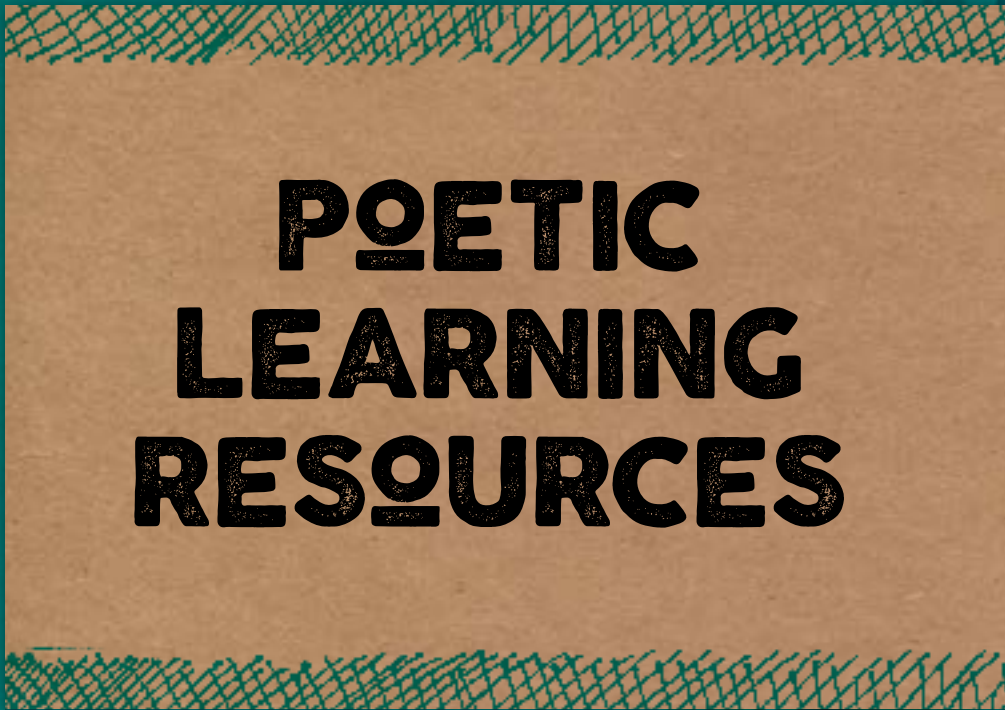
Quality Criteria	Below Standard	Benchmark	Outstanding
<b>PERSPECTIVE (AKA POINT OF VIEW, WRITER'S VOICE)</b>			
<p>The degree to which the poet establishes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a distinctive voice, persona, or speaker</li> <li>• clear OR purposefully ambiguous tone</li> <li>• extraordinary perception of the ordinary</li> <li>• insight into the talismanic object or the student's experience or world</li> <li>• attitude towards their choice of subject matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The focus of the poem is difficult to identify. Student seems unsure of their attitude to their object</li> <li>• Limited personal voice or clichéd perspective</li> <li>• Limited description makes it difficult to recognise or identify the talismanic object</li> <li>• Does not explore the significance of their talismanic object</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional perspective (there is a focus on an idea, feeling or experience)</li> <li>• Evidence of the poet's individual voice</li> <li>• Provides insight into their world or experience, even if unsophisticated</li> <li>• Effective description or evocation of the object</li> <li>• Intentional exploration of the significance of the talismanic object</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlled perspective</li> <li>• Distinctive voice</li> <li>• Perceptive insights about themselves or their world</li> <li>• Sophisticated or highly effective description or evocation of the talismanic object</li> <li>• Meaningful/affective insight into the significance of their talismanic object</li> </ul>
<b>COMPLEXITY OF THE POEM</b>			
<p>The degree to which the poet achieves:</p> <p><b>a) Tension in words and ideas through:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an engaging challenge, or paradox</li> <li>• effective ambiguity, multiple meanings</li> <li>• suggestion of connotations beyond the literal</li> <li>• defiance of predictable syntax</li> <li>• use of balance, parallelism, contrast</li> </ul> <p><b>b) Compression to create an intense poetical experience through:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• avoiding unnecessary words</li> <li>• economy of meaning</li> <li>• distillation, condensation of ideas or feelings</li> </ul> <p><b>c) Surprise through:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• challenging assumptions</li> <li>• providing a new way of looking at the object</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrates little understanding of the compressed nature of poetic expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unnecessary and/or unimaginative details OR vital detail is missing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates understanding of the compressed nature of poetic expression</li> <li>• Achieves complexity and textual integrity through the use of tension, compression and surprise which creates an intense and challenging poetic experience</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrates an exceptional poetic style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some tension</li> <li>• A sense of discovery</li> <li>• Writes with honesty and authenticity</li> <li>• Poetic style is appropriate and effective</li> </ul>



Quality Criteria	Below Standard	Benchmark	Outstanding
<b>VOCABULARY, SOUND AND SYNTAX</b>			
<p><b>The degree to which the poet effectively uses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fresh and effective vocabulary</li> <li>• unconventional syntax</li> <li>• syntax that generates the use of sound devices, which includes rhythm and may include alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, repetition, refrain and rhyme</li> <li>• awareness of the oral-aural connection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mundane, unimaginative, imprecise and/or ineffective use of vocabulary</li> <li>• No rhythm evident. Sounds like prose</li> <li>• Clichéd and ineffective use of sound devices</li> <li>• Constrained by rhyme scheme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imaginative, thoughtful, fresh use of vocabulary</li> <li>• Rhythm is mostly consistent with the sense of the poem</li> <li>• Syntax that generates sound qualities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Precise and/or evocative use of vocabulary</li> <li>• Rhythm complements and enhances the mood of the poem</li> <li>• Creative, evocative, musical syntax, which includes disharmony if appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>IMAGERY AND FIGURATIVE DEVICES</b>			
<p>The degree to which the poet effectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• includes similes, metaphor, personification and other figurative language</li> <li>• selects and arranges concrete sensory detail</li> <li>• employs images to represent abstract feelings, ideas</li> <li>• suggests uncommon connections between images and figurative meaning</li> <li>• demonstrates “metaphoric thought” through implied analogy</li> </ul>	<p>Simplistic and/or unimaginative figurative structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of imagery OR a clichéd or confusing use of imagery</li> <li>• Abstract statements divorced from concrete imagery</li> </ul>	<p>Figurative structures (which are mostly original) show the relationship of the concrete to the abstract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear images are used to portray ideas</li> </ul>	<p>Well crafted, effective and original figurative structures which may illustrate metaphoric or symbolic thought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vivid, detailed images that create impact</li> <li>• May be experimental in use of imagery</li> </ul>
<b>SPATIAL DESIGN</b>			
<p>The degree to which the poet demonstrates a visual concept through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the spatial arrangement of words, phrases, lines and white space</li> <li>• choices of spacing, enjambment, punctuation, caesura</li> <li>• indentation, upper/lower case letters, typography</li> <li>• stanzaic pattern</li> <li>• experimentation with punctuation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unintentional or random design</li> <li>• Visual layout inconsistent with the content of the poem</li> <li>• Visual layout distracts the reader</li> </ul>	<p>Intentional design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of visual layout to assist the reader to access meaning in the poem</li> </ul>	<p>Careful and/or subtle design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberate crafting of visual layout to enhance the reader’s response to the poem</li> </ul>

Red  
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Meaningful Ways



**POETIC  
LEARNING  
RESOURCES**



# ABOUT THE RESOURCE

In collaboration with poets, teachers and the National Museum of Australia, we've developed a new learning resource focused on exploring the inner worlds and secret languages of special objects.

This flexible learning resource is designed to support students (Year 3-10) and teachers in understanding and applying a broad range of poetic techniques and pre-writing activities before composing a 20-line poem and creating a school poetry installation (optional activity).

Pre-writing activities can be used in multiple ways, read aloud or as homework tasks, so choose those that best suit the needs of your students.

Some schools use *Poetry Object* for 2-3 successive lessons where students are given time to respond, select their own special objects, conceptualise, compose, edit and publish their poems. Others use the resource to create term-long enrichment programs and poetic school installations/cabinets of curiosities.

Examples of winning school installations include

- > **The Sole of a Poem**
- > **Red Room Antiques**
- > **Poetree Forest**

In addition to quality criteria, features of this year's resource include objects from the National Museum of Australia, six newly commissioned poems, linked author reflections and new pre-writing prompts.



## CURRICULUM LINKS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

As Poetry Object is open to students in Years 3-10 across a diverse spectrum of schools, teachers are encouraged to select and adapt activities to best suit the needs of their students. [Australian Curriculum \(English\)](#) outcomes supported by Poetry Object activities include:

Yr 3 (ACELA1475) (ACELT1596) (ACELT1598) (ACELT1600) (ACELY1676) (ACELY1678) (ACELY1679) (ACELT1791) (ACELY1792) (ACELY1683)

Yr 4 (ACELT1602) (ACELT1603) (ACELT1605) (ACELT1606) (ACELT1607) (ACELT1606) (ACELY1690) (ACELY1695)

Yr 5 (ACELA1512) (ACELT1608) (ACELT1610) (ACELT1611) (ACELY1704) (ACELY1705) (ACELT1798)

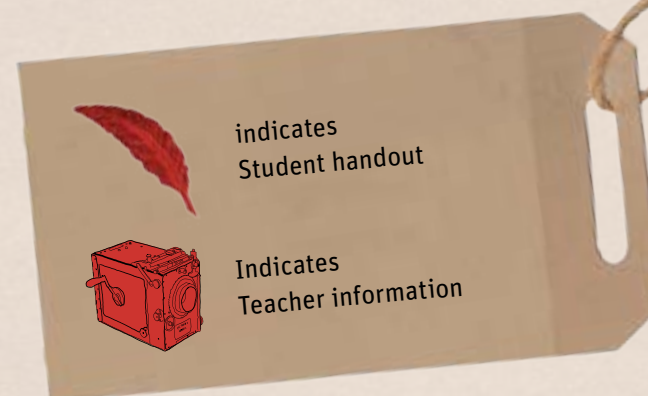
Yr 6 (ACELA1518) (ACELA1520) (ACELT1614) (ACELT1615) (ACELT1617) (ACELT1618) (ACELY1714) (ACELT1617) (ACELT1618) (ACELA1523) (ACELA1525) (ACELT1618) (ACELY1715) (ACELT1800) (ACELY1717)

Yr 7 (ACELT1625) (ACELT1803) (ACELT1805) (ACELY1725) (ACELY1726) (ACELY1728) (ACELT1623)

Yr 8 (ACELA1542) (ACELA1547) (ACELY1810) (ACELT1768) (ACELT1630) (ACELY1738) (ACELY1810) (ACELY1738)

Yr 9 (ACELA1553) (ACELA1770) (ACELA1557) (ACELT1637) (ACELT1773) (ACELY1747) (ACELY1748) (ACELT1635)

Yr 10 (ACELT1644) (ACELY1753) (ACELT1641) (ACELT1814) (ACELT1815) (ACELY1757)



# WHAT IS A CURIOUS OBJECT?

Shiny as the scars  
on a dragon  
The totem cup was like  
a child staring

'THE TOTEM CUP'  
by Thomas A.



*Poetry Object* encourages students and teachers to write poems inspired by curious objects that are special to them.

Curious objects are intriguing items that invite a variety of questions: Could this object be from another world? How was this object made? Why does it look like this? What kind of person would own this curiosity? If this object could speak, what language would it use?



A few examples of curious objects are mystical lamps, sundials, folkloric carvings, totems and talismans that can find a home in one's pocket. Within this learning resource lies a treasure trove of curiosities: the *dân tre*, a musical instrument made of found materials, an abstract painting full of chaos and wonder, an engraving on sacred Indigenous land, and much more.

Other examples of special objects and school installations can be found in our online ***Poetry Object Library***

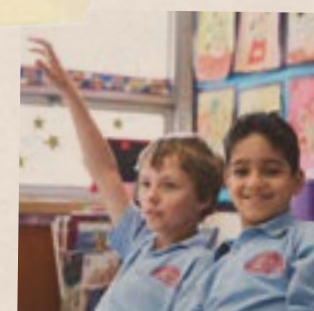


## FOR TEACHERS

Before inviting students to bring a special object to class for the composing tasks, we recommend introducing the concept of curious or 'talismatic' objects via examples from the National Museum collection and selected commissioned poems.

Object selection prompts below and the *Poetry Object* PowerPoint resource may also be useful introductory scaffolds.

- *Is there an object in your life that might seem ordinary to someone else but is very special to you?*
- *What makes this object special to you?*
- *Was it passed down to you by a family member?*
- *Does it have a secret power, purpose or past life?*
- *How does it make you feel when you hold it?*



# NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA: GUIDE TO CURIOUS OBJECTS

This guide is designed to assist students and teachers in discovering curious objects of cultural significance, before choosing their own special objects to write about.

## DÀN TRE



Dàn Tre, 1981, a bamboo musical instrument designed and made by Minh Tam Nguyen. National Museum of Australia.

### Context

*The Vietnam War. Minh Tam Nguyen's country torn apart. The risk of capture and long years of imprisonment. Fleeing Vietnam with his son by boat across dangerous seas. The hardship and uncertainty of life in a refugee camp. Safety in Australia. The long, lonely wait for his family. Finally, the comfort brought by a musical instrument made from scavenged materials.*

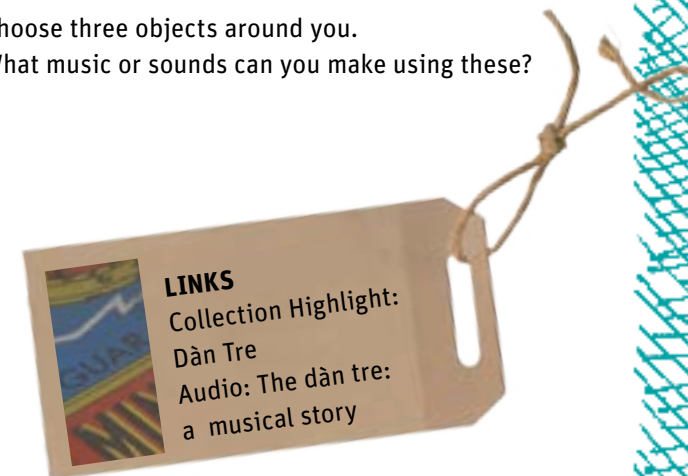
This *dàn tre* tells the story of one among thousands of Vietnamese refugees who sought a new, safer life in Australia. Whilst imprisoned in a Vietnamese 're-education' camp, Minh Tam Nguyen used his skills and the resources around him to invent, build and play the *dàn tre* – a 23 stringed bamboo musical instrument. When he played his *dàn tre*, Nguyen felt connected to his wife and children whom he was forced to leave.

After his release in 1981, he fled with his son to the Philippines by boat. There Nguyen made a second *dàn tre* to help him cope with his loneliness. In 1982 he brought this *dàn tre* with him when he and his son settled in Australia.

Minh Tam Nguyen and his family were reunited in Australia after 15 years apart. It was only then that he felt able to part with his *dàn tre*. He donated it to the National Museum of Australia in 1990.

### Questions

- What is this object made from? Why do you think Nguyen used these materials?
- Look closely at the *dàn tre*. How do you think this musical instrument is played?
- Choose three objects around you. What music or sounds can you make using these?



### POETRY WRITING PROMPT

Write a poem about the ways your object connects you to special places and people in your life.

# FRANK HURLEY'S CAMERA



Debie 'Le Parvo' model L 35-mm motion picture camera, about 1922, used by Frank Hurley. National Museum of Australia.

## Context

*I unpacked three cases containing my cinematograph gear which has been shipped... from France.*

*The instrument, which is by Debie, is a glorious piece of mechanism and the ideal of perfection for my work*

*Frank Hurley, Diary, 1929.*

So wrote Frank Hurley, one of Australia's most famous photographers and film makers. Hurley bought this camera in the 1920s. He made silent films on it and later, when 'talkies' became popular in the 1930s, the camera was adapted to record films with sound. Hurley went on to use the camera for over 30 years.

In Antarctica, the snowy and icy conditions proved to be a challenge for the camera. Hurley used it to record life aboard ship, the intriguing wildlife and majestic icebergs, as well as the scientific work of the expeditions. Throughout the 1930s, he captured films about life in Australia, including the building of Sydney Harbour Bridge.

During the Second World War, he used it to film Australian troops in the Middle East and North Africa. This camera worked hard in sand and dust, cold and ice. Filming in these conditions could clog the camera mechanism and obscure the lenses. For over 30 years, it travelled to many and distant places to record iconic moments of Australian history.

## Questions

- What evidence of adventure/use can you see on the camera?
- Look closely at the camera. How do you think it would work?
- Why is it important to record history? How do you record your history?

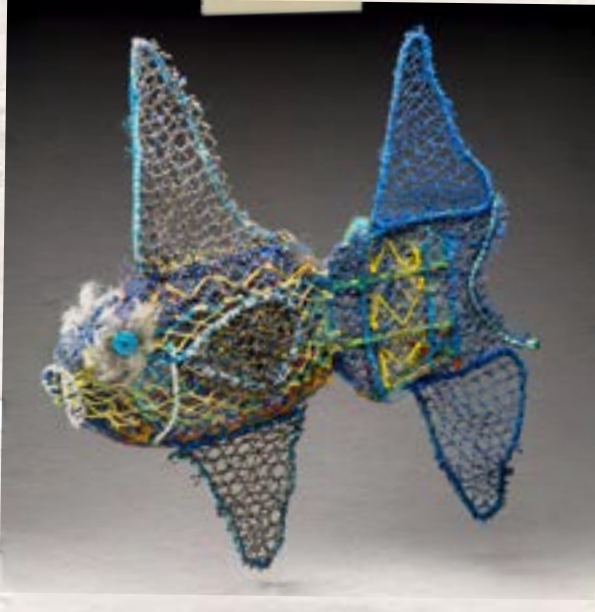
## LINKS

Collection Highlight:  
Frank Hurley's Camera  
Collection Explorer: Robert  
and Irene Goard Collection

## POETRY WRITING PROMPT

Experience the world through your object's eyes. What does it see and experience everyday?

# THE BUTTERFLY FISH



**Pedeg (butterfly or angel fish), 2014, ghost-net sculpture by Emma Gela, Erub (Darnley Island). National Museum of Australia.**

## Context

*The ghost net is a recycled thing... It's a spoil of the marine life here – kill fish or turtle or dugong. But there's still more coming, so we decided to use the net to do artwork. As soon as we run out of nets and rope they (the rangers) send more, lots and lots of it, they wanna get rid of.*

*Racy Oui-Pitt, Erub, 2014*

*In our oceans drift lost, discarded or abandoned fishing nets – so-called 'ghost nets'. Made from long-lasting, manmade materials, they not only trap and kill sea creatures, they also get tangled in the propellers and engines of boats and ships, leaving people stranded at sea.*

Yet from this dangerous waste material, Indigenous artists are creating amazing sculptures. Indigenous rangers collect *ghost nets* that wash up in northern mainland Australia and on the islands of the Torres Strait. They pass the ghost nets on to communities of artists who use them to create unique sculptures. This butterfly fish was hand-crafted by Emma Gela at the Erub Arts Centre.

Many people love the shapes and colours of these art works. Yet these ghost net sculptures are more than just beautiful art. The artists use them as a vital tool to tell stories and share information. They use weaving techniques passed down to them and pass these skills on to younger generations. By using ghost nets to create sculptures like the Butterfly Fish, artists share messages about the ways we are damaging our oceans.

## Questions

- How do you think the artist made this sculpture?
- Look closely at the Butterfly Fish. What part do you think would be the trickiest to make?
- What artworks can you create using objects recycled from your local environment?

## LINKS

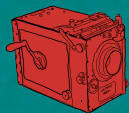
Encounters Classroom Resource: Erub (Darnley Island) Collection Explorer: Erub Erwer Meta Collection no.1

## POETRY WRITING PROMPT

Write a poem about the ways you preserve and care for your object.

# THE SPIRIT OF THINGS

## SOUND OF OBJECTS



### WATCH & LISTEN TO 'LONGING, WANTING'



**Spear thrower from Mapoon, Cape York, Queensland. Donated by E.J. Bryce in 1958**  
**Photographer: Oliver Perkins**  
**Rights: © Australian Museum**

#### Song Writing Prompt

Think about what your special object remembers and the music it carries within. Write a song about your object's experiences as though you were the object telling your own story.

#### LONGING, WANTING

Longing, Wanting  
My edge, a blade  
Slice through air, slice through air  
No breath, no rain  
Stay in wait and wait to fade away

Wanting, longing for  
That arm, that fingernail

My edge, a blade  
No breath, no rain  
Stay in wait and wait to fade away

Wanting, longing for  
That arm that fingernail  
Wanting, longing  
That arm that fingernail

My edge is a blade of steel  
Revered I reveal a man of pride  
I hang proud at his side  
I began again and again  
With hand, finger, nail

Etched in fine line  
Wood, tooth, sinew, shell and twine  
Combine to launch and strike  
I kill divided evermore through time  
I lie, wait and wail  
His hand, finger, nail

Wanting, longing  
That arm, that fingernail  
Wanting, longing for  
That arm, that fingernail  
longing for

*The Spirit of Things - Sound of Objects* is a research, history, arts and cultural project of Australian Museum. The Spirit of Things Collective, comprised of the musicians **Stiff Gins** (Nardi Simpson and Kaleena Briggs) and Syd Green, use their passion for culture, history and storytelling to investigate the living worlds of their chosen objects. Through musical responses to Aboriginal cultural objects, The Spirit of Things Collective sings displaced objects back to their ancestral country.

In the song **Longing, Wanting**, The Spirit of Things give a voice to the separation of a spearthrower from its ancestral home and the lasting ties between the object and the man who once used it.

EVELYN  
ARALUEN  
CORR (NSW)



Born and raised on Dharug country, Evelyn is an exciting new voice in Australian poetry. She is a poet, educator and activist of Bundjalung descent. More about Evelyn [here](#)

# COMMISSIONED POEMS

K1: YELLOMUNDEE

Beyond your stage  
the audience murmur  
men and women weep  
and silk their skin bare,  
for here and gone and taken.  
Held by mostly mountains now  
you wear crowns  
of returning eucalypt:

I can't see your lashes  
but feel them still soft  
like that skin they try to skin  
to wear you with words  
and all them names they reason  
and rub out.

All this might be lonely  
unmarked and highway side  
but then the stars come here  
to shine the shape of song  
and hear you say  
it's nice  
to have someone  
to talk to

## REFLECTION

*My father asked me to write about her. This place is called Yellomundee, after Yarramundi, a great man of the Boorooberongal from Dharug country, where my family have lived for many generations.*

*She's easy to miss; the council forbids the maintenance of this engraving, even though this site has been vandalised many times. The stripping bark and flailing tree limbs evoked the dramatics of public weeping for me. I experimented in finding a way to describe these surroundings; it is such an open and big sky space, but what came to me was theatre and audience. I found it difficult to balance the strength and endurance of culture with the sadness of what has been lost. I wanted to be respectful so I shared many drafts with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.*

*Like so much of our culture, she is subject to debate and disagreement. Hunting site, men's site, women's site, and then of course, what should we call her? In archaeological terms, she is K1. I wanted to use language in this poem, but we don't really use names when we visit. We take our shoes off and we listen.*

See activities inspired  
by Evelyn's poetic  
process [here](#)

# JEREMY BALIUS (WA)



Born in Texas, raised in Basel Switzerland and Gießen Germany and educated in California, Jeremy is a poet, artist, collaborator and father. More about Jeremy [here](#)

## SUBSUMED; JUNE CELEBRATION

After Peter Upward

out here being

speaks of making  
now as afterward  
or at least another

across a landscape  
defined by absence  
not defined, but  
within possibility

casually subsumed  
codetta: I say looks like  
we started something  
we couldn't finish

amid frozen gesture  
hoarse, but hopeful  
Nathan turns, saying  
here comes the tension

unravelling  
coda: who can say  
what will come next  
if at all

### Notes:

'June celebration' refers to the painting: Peter Upward, *June Celebration*, 1960, 213.5 x 411.5, purchased 1972 by National Gallery of Australia

'frozen gesture' refers to the retrospective exhibition catalogue: Upward, Peter; Dean, Christopher (ed), *Frozen Gestures: The Art of Peter Upward*, (Australia, Penrith Regional Gallery & the Lewers Bequest; 2007)



# JEREMY BALIUS (WA)

## REFLECTION

*When thinking about the objective of Red Room Poetry Object, it was important to me to revolve my writing around an object that could be experienced by many, and yet the interaction can be a private act.*

*Peter Upward was an Australian artist who contributed to a movement of abstract art in Australia. Born in Melbourne in 1932, educated at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Julian Ashton School in Sydney, he was a member of the 'Sydney 9' alongside abstract artists John Olsen, John Passmore and Leonard Hessing. He painted 'June Celebration' in 1960. More information about Upward and 'June Celebration' can be found at National Gallery of Australia.*

*Generally categorised as Abstract Expressionism, and while certainly influenced by the American Abstract Expressionists of the 'June celebration' seems to go beyond this as he abandons representation of emotion and is focused on gestural expression, process and form. It's a minimalism that plays with semiotics and what appear to be symbols. There's an allusion there of written communication through bursts of Japanese calligraphy-influenced painting.*



*"June Celebration" by Peter Upward, 1960*

*While a codetta (a small conclusion to a musical theme or section) and coda (the conclusion that looks back to end the musical piece) are most commonly associated with the sonata form of the Classical era, these devices are common in jazz. Upward's process and form was heavily influenced by jazz.*

*The poem is in part an imagined conversation between the narrator and/or myself with poet Nathan Shepherdson, or at least a characterisation of him. I'm deeply indebted to him for his poetry and am convinced that his work is vital.*

See activities inspired  
by Jeremy's poetic  
process [here](#)

# JOEL McKERRROW (VIC)



Joel is an internationally-touring writer, speaker and activist based in Melbourne. With a passionate performance style, he spends much of his time inspiring students across the country through poetry workshops. More about Joel [here](#)

## LITTLE WOODEN DUCK

They call it a symbol. A sacrament. They call it sacred.

Every night we take off our skins and hang them upon the line,  
drying out the stain of day in the cool of night.  
We pray for moon to shine kindly upon us,  
for the sun always glares and we are seen too easily in the daylight.

They call it a symbol. A sacrament. They call it sacred.

So I sit small upon the roof and my skin is blowing in the wind  
and in my palm I hold a little wooden duck.  
This duck. My duck. I cut her. I carved her.  
Took knife to wooden block and sculpted her.

They call it a symbol. A sacrament. They call it sacred.

There is nothing quite so unassuming as a little wooden duck.  
I stopped everything that was on my list of what must be done  
and I sat on the front porch  
and slowly cut and slowly cut until she emerged.

They call it a symbol. A sacrament. They call it sacred.

Now I sit this night with muscle and flesh bare to a wind that carves me  
and I hold her, my duck,  
but somehow she holds me.  
I stare at the duck and I am staring at God who is staring back at me,  
just a small duck in the big wide world.

They call it a symbol. A sacrament. They call it sacred.

# JOEL MCKERROW (VIC)



## REFLECTION

*As a poet I am pretty obsessed with words. In fact, I love them. The job of the poet is to take what has become so familiar to us and make that thing unfamiliar again. Cause people to look at it once more in a new light. It is using words to remind people of the beauty and the agony of our lives. Yet, sometimes, as a poet, I lack the words. I can't find them. They seem to hide away in a shy refusal. It was during one of these times of frustration that I picked up a carving knife of my dad's and I started to carve something. I hadn't done so since I was kid. But I quickly found a rhythm and that carving became a duck. This duck. The duck of the poem. And with the emerging of the duck so came the emerging of my words once more. It was as though I had to do something entirely different, something creative, but with nothing to do with words, for me to be able to find the words again.*

*I sat the following night out in the open air with my duck in my hand and had such a beautiful, fulfilling experience I simply needed to write it down. This poem is what I wrote down. A moment of not having the words, into a moment of carving, into a transcendent moment of connection with the duck and with God and with the world around me. This, I understand, is what they call a symbol. A sacrament. They call it sacred.*

See activities inspired  
by Joel's poetic  
process [here](#)

# CAMERON HINDRUM (TAS)



Cameron Hindrum is a poet, playwright, novelist and teacher. More about Cameron [here](#)

## OCEANS

*Finally I came to regard as sacred the disorder of my mind... — Brett Whiteley*

I have this black and sacred book  
Spanning the years like an

ocean

On opening it, I cast a look  
At ideas all set in tidal motion  
Drifting out on ebbs of suggestion,  
When each day opens like a question

This is the vessel of my want,  
The assembled trove of all my

fears

The treasured source of all détente,  
When the Muse offers nothing and sneers.  
These are my words, yet tied to shore —  
Unless I can make of them something more.

I adore this chaos, this disorder:  
This revelation that oceans

have no border.

## REFLECTION

*The sacred object which inspired 'Oceans' is my little black Moleskine journal, which has been my constant companion as a writer since 2008. In it, I've recorded notes for poems and draft ideas for stories; kept journals of trips I've made; written character sketches for novels; written and rewritten drafts of poems; brainstormed endlessly about things that might be worth developing later, and on it goes. On a couple of its pages, my daughter has traced around her hand. The line referring to days opening up like a question is taken from the very first notes I scribbled in this journal, in early October 2008.*

*Contrasts fascinate me as a writer, and in terms of learning to write poetry I think forms are a very good place to start in that they provide a framework, a means of shaping and structuring language in a specific way. 'Oceans' follows a fairly traditional sonnet form, being composed as two sestet (verses of six lines) and a couplet (a rhyming pair) which follows an ordered rhyme scheme and metre; however, I have broken this slightly with the formatting of selected words against the right-hand margin, providing their own rather more minimalist take on the poem.*

See activities inspired by Cameron's poetic process [here](#)

# ANNA JACOBSON (QLD)



Anna is a celebrated poet, writer, artist and photographer based in Brisbane. She has been shortlisted in a number of prestigious literary awards, including the Queensland Premier's Young Writers Award. More about Anna [here](#)

## NANA'S SHOWER CAP BROOCH

i.

Mum gives Nana a shower cap  
disco ball sequins sewn on top  
aqua brooch pinned above the frilly trim.  
'I got one for my birthday too.'  
Nana's laughter makes the diamantes dance.

ii.

The music stops and I'm not ready.  
A nurse tells us to collect Nana's things.  
Presents I once gave her  
photos

stories

Chanukah cards

drawings

returned to sender. Among the objects  
is Nana's shower cap, still full of laughter  
and glitter-memory.

iii.

The Synagogue walls are woven with prayers  
and men's shushing. A layer of tradition  
from Nana's time. 'Lovely brooch,  
was it your grandmother's?'

One of the men shushes the women's section.  
My brooch winks light into crystal chandeliers.  
I smile and whisper after the Rabbi's blessing  
that it came from Nana's shower cap.

## REFLECTION

*When I thought about writing the poem 'Nana's Shower Cap Brooch', memories that were connected to the brooch floated to the surface as images and scenes. I wrote them down as they spoke to me. These stories, moments and memories all became material for my poem. After I had the draft of the poem, I sat at the computer, rearranging the words to make the poem as clear and condensed as I could.*

*I keep drafts of all the different versions of my poems in case I prefer an earlier version and this also allows me to take leaps and risks in my writing. I read the poem aloud to hear how it sounds and its rhythm.*

*If there's anything clunky, it will stand out and I can work on it. Giving the poem some space and rest can also help and the changes I need to make often become clearer. By the end, there is a point when I look at the paper or screen and know I have a poem that expresses what I want to say in a creative or unusual way.*

See activities inspired  
by Anna's poetic  
process [here](#)

# MANAL YOUNUS (SA)



Manal is a poet and storyteller of Eritrean origins. A State Finalist for Young Australian of the Year in 2016, Manal uses her poetry to discover and strengthen her identity. More about Manal [here](#).

## MESHREFET

I watched my grandmother weave  
She'd sit on the concrete  
Her henna covered soles  
Pressing down on the plaited lakha reeds  
Smooth beneath her foot

I watched her weave her story  
With patience, precision  
the wit of a woman  
Her fingers tangled in the loose ends  
Leading them in and out of each other

I would try to keep up  
She would whisper, in my mother tongue  
*ghes beli* - don't rush  
Then share with me wisdom from our history  
She, illiterate  
Only had her memories  
And what her own hands could conceive

I watched her weave  
Tales of contentment and longing  
defeat and glory  
Seeped into the braided reeds

I watched her weave  
With absolute conviction  
That my own roots were captured  
in these interwoven contradictions

## Glossary

**Meshrefet** - This is a circular mat-like object that is hand-woven from reeds. There are different sizes used for various purposes. For example, the smaller ones are used in the process of making coffee - a daily ritual - and the larger ones are used for making injera, an East African flatbread.

**Lakha** - Grown by the rivers, this is a plant used to make many household items and decorations in Eritrean culture, including meshrefets, baskets and brooms.

See page 29 for  
activities inspired by  
Manal's poetic process

# MANAL YOUNUS (SA)

## REFLECTION

*These words are in my mother tongue, Tigrinya. It is the first language in Eritrea also widely spoken in Ethiopia. Many of the things listed here are common to many East African cultures but many have other names in different languages.*

*My grandmother raised me for the first few years of my life before I came to Australia. After we parted, each time I saw her, communication became harder as the language and cultural gap between us grew. The last time I saw her, I could barely speak, so I would listen. We bonded over making meshrefets together.*

*Meshrefets are such an important part of our cultures because they are used in all of the daily activities. I was often alone with my grandmother. Half the time was spent listening to stories about our hometown and my father's childhood. The other half was spent sitting in silence, watching, learning, experimenting, understanding.*

*The way they are made is so intricate and particular like everything my grandmother does.*

**Process:** *I always say my poems aloud while I am writing as rhythm is a big part of my writing process. Because I don't plan the poem, I don't know where it's going as I'm writing it. After I have built the bulk of a poem, I go over it and refine it, remove what no longer needs to be there and change some words, rearrange some stanzas and decide how the poem will end.*

**Advice:** *I think it's important not only to think about why your item is important, but also think about why it is important for you to write about and share it.*



 FOR STUDENTS -  
ALL STAGES

# CHOOSING YOUR SPECIAL OBJECT

let it breathe out its secrets.  
Its trace of a salty scent,  
hovering poignantly in the air.

'COWRIE SHELL'  
by Sian R.

Now that you've learned a little more about the curious and special objects of others, it's time to choose your own that will inspire your 20-line object poem.

In order to complete this task you will need to bring your special object to class on a specified date. If you do not have your talismanic object in class for the required lesson you may find it harder to complete the task.

Your object could be an old musical instrument, a stone from a far away land, a tooth, a gift given by an old friend, anything that is special just to you.

To choose your special object, look around your room or house.

What object stands out to you?

Why did it catch your attention?

How is it different to other objects in the room?

What memories does it hold?

If it could speak what would it say just to you?

Once you have selected your special object, ensure you have permission to bring it to school for the *Poetry Object* writing activities.

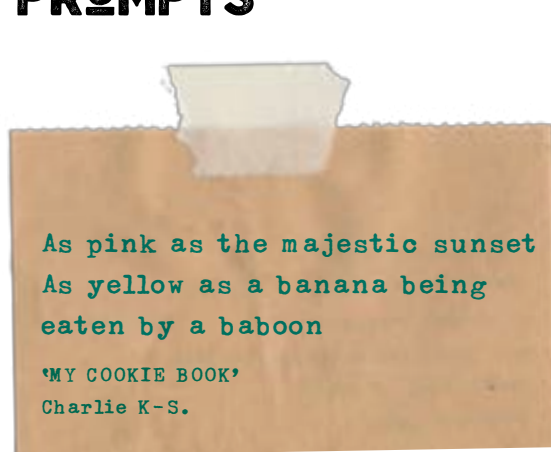
**I will bring my special object to school on  
the following date**

— / — / —





## PRE-WRITING PROMPTS



For this activity you will need a pen and a piece of lined paper. Clear off your desk so that you have nothing on it except for your pen, paper and your special object.

- Close your eyes and hold the object in your hands. Slowly feel its nooks, crannies and curves.
- With your eyes closed, imagine the adventures your object embarks on when you're not watching.
- Whisper a secret to your object and rub its surface to seal it in. Hold it to your ear – what secret does it share with you?

## FREE-WRITING WARM UP

Free writing is an activity that lets you write continuously without editing fresh ideas. It allows you to fill the page with a constant stream of words without questioning or doubting yourself. The goal of this activity is to write as much as you can and overcome the main block we often face when we write: *I don't know what comes next.*

After five minutes of writing, read through what you've written. Circle words, sentences or ideas that are surprising, original, poetic or poem-like.

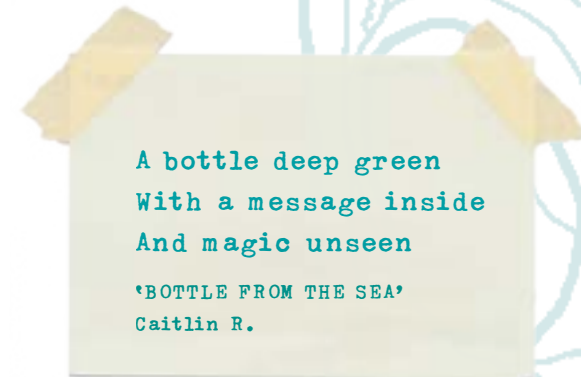
These may be the first building blocks of your *Poetry Object* poem!

## STORY WRITING

*Good Reading* presents a unique writing prompt to get your imaginations ticking.

Choose three special objects that you would put in a time capsule that will be opened 100 years from now. Introduce yourself and the objects in a letter that will be included in the time capsule. How would you explain what the objects are and what they were used for? How would you tell the reader about the objects' significance to you?

## WAYS OF SEEING/DRAWING



Draw your object on the same page in as many different ways as you can.

- Eyes closed
- Fast
- Unstopping line
- Use different materials

How does this affect the appearance of the object? Does it look like a completely new object?

### SUBMIT YOUR DRAWINGS

For a chance to be featured in next year's *Poetry Object* learning resource, send your drawings to [poetryobject@redroomcompany.org](mailto:poetryobject@redroomcompany.org)



## PRE-WRITING PROMPTS

Set a timer for three minutes and respond to each of these guided questions:

- Explain why this object is special or curious to you.  
Is it from a faraway place? Is it handmade?
- Imagine you can see the invisible inner world of your object. Describe it in as much detail as you can.
- What is the secret of your special object?  
What memories does it carry?
- Imagine the flavour of your object. Describe what it would taste like. Would different flavours burst from it, depending on where you sink your teeth into?



- Explore the object using all of your senses. Use similes to describe your object (A simile is a comparison between two things using like or as or than).  
Example: *rhythmic like the sputtering of an old engine*
- Use a metaphor to describe your object (A metaphor is a direct comparison where one thing is said to be another).  
Example: *the camera lens is a teleportation device*
- Script a conversation between you and your object. Your object may speak another language or make sounds only you can decipher. This is a chance to give your object a voice and sound effects through onomatopoeia. The conversation can be as serious or as ridiculous as you like.

- Has your object changed in appearance since you first owned it? Write about the transformation.
- Imagine you had to give this object away. Who would you give it to? Why?
- Explain how you would feel if you lost the object or it was destroyed. Why do you think you would feel this way?





FOR STUDENTS –  
 (STAGE 2-3)

# CREATIVE STORYTELLING

Create a list of unusual adjectives or riddles that describe your object without mentioning what it is directly.



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Can you guess what objects these young poets have written about?  
 Answers on the margin.

1. Hung in homes for good luck,  
 The metal, cold and heavy  
 in my palm  
 MADELEINE C., YEAR 6
2. Its thick speckled coat  
 covered its juicy soul.  
 It smiled at me thinking  
 I was its friend  
 TIANA D., YEAR 7
3. It's like you run away when  
 I buy things.  
 You make me feel as safe  
 as a dog,  
 You remind me of that great  
 Albany holiday.  
 ISAAC R. YEAR 3
4. The white feathers sink  
 like anchors  
 the leather tightly clasps  
 around the hoop  
 MEGAN T., YEAR 7
5. Reflecting in the  
 shattered disks  
 Purple broken by roses,  
 pastel icing  
 A coral reef, an imposing  
 city, pink faces  
 SOPHIE B., YEAR 7

## OVERCOMING CLICHÉS

As a class, list the obvious images and reasons why clichés make for weak writing.

Students then complete the final column by composing a personal and specific image.

### Tip

It may help to read *Fog* by Carl Sanburg or Maureen Applegate's poem *Be Specific* before you begin this task.

### STARTER CLICHÉ

Example: *As black as night*

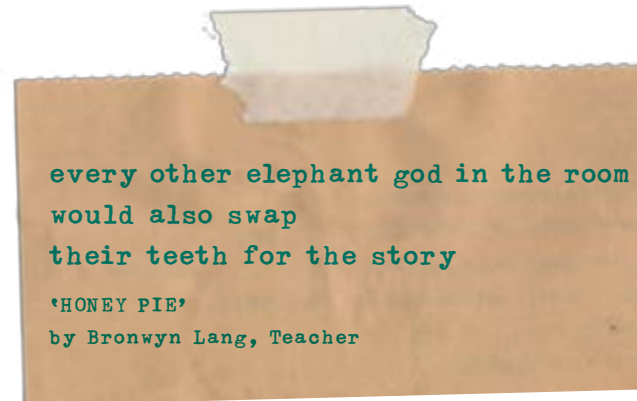
As white as .....

As fragile as .....

As loud as .....

As spiky as .....

As dry as .....



### ORIGINAL AND UNUSUAL IMAGERY

*As black as a trail of ants carrying onyx treasure*

As white as .....

As fragile as .....

As loud as .....

As spiky as .....

As dry as .....

- Compose a sentence about your object that contains three adjectives. Underline each adjective.
- Compose a line about your object that contains alliteration.
- Compose a sentence about your object that contains assonance.
- Compose a sentence about your object in which you use the device of personification.
- Compose a nine word sentence about your object. Now indicate where you might use lineation, line break or lineation to start a new line or stanza in your poem.



There are more NAPLAN-style resources available on our website. Explore them [here](#)

**FOR STUDENTS –  
(STAGE 3-5)**



**ACTIVITIES INSPIRED BY  
EVELYN  
ARALUEN CORR**

- 1.** Hold your object close to your ear and close your eyes. Write about the stories and secrets it tells you.
- 2.** Write a poem about the world around your object. What sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feelings surround your object?
- 3.** Write a poem about how your object was made. Was it carved into the ground? Was it assembled by hand? What does its design tell you about the creator of the object?



**ACTIVITIES INSPIRED BY  
JEREMY  
BALIUS**

- 1.** Block-Out Poem: **(a)** Write a micro-story about your object. When you finish, choose words and phrases that you want to stand out from the rest of the text. With a marker, cross out the lines that surround your chosen words and phrases.  
**(b)** Consider the block-out poem you have just created. Now try adding words and phrases to these words and avoid using the same ideas you used in your micro-story.
- 2.** List down five main words you would use to describe your object. Avoid using these words and try for unique synonyms instead. You can use similes and metaphors to express yourself.
- 3.** Write an ekphrastic poem. This is a poem inspired by an image or artwork.



**ACTIVITIES INSPIRED BY  
JOEL  
MCKERRROW**

- 1.** Write a draft poem about your curious object and underline a powerful line or statement. Use this as a refrain and re-write your poem.
- 2.** Imagine you had invented your object by hand. Write a poem about this process and describe the different materials you used to create your object.
- 3.** Write a poem about how your object guides you through everyday life.

**FOR STUDENTS –  
(STAGE 3-5)**



**ACTIVITIES INSPIRED BY  
CAMERON  
HINDRUM**

- 1.** Explore different examples of sonnets written by authors such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Berryman or Wanda Cole. **Write your own sonnet** without mentioning your object at all. Describe the experiences and important memories you share with your object.
- 2.** Think about how you want to make the reader feel when they read your poem. Do you want them to be surprised? Amazed? Amused?
- 3.** Write a poem in different tones. These tones will have different effects on your reader's emotions.
- 4.** Write a poem about the adventures that you and your object have yet to embark upon.



**ACTIVITIES INSPIRED BY  
ANNA  
JACOBSON**

- 1.** Imagine the places your object had travelled before reaching you. Write a poem about the different worlds and owners your object has visited.
- 2.** If your object was given to you by a loved one, write a poem about the experience of receiving your object. This experience can include your reaction to receiving it and what it means to you.
- 3.** Go back to your free-written draft about your object. Read it aloud and see which parts sound good and which lines you can remove from your poem.



**ACTIVITIES INSPIRED BY  
MANAL  
YOUNUS**

- 1.** Think about three important memories that you have with your object. “Braid” these together in a poem that tells these stories.
- 2.**
  - a.** If your object could carry a message, what would that message say? Write a poem about what that message would say and who you would share it with.
  - b.** Translate lines of your poem into another language that you are familiar with.
- 3.** Write a draft of your poem. Cut up the paper so that the lines of your poems are separated. Experiment with the arrangement of the lines and see how the meaning of your poem changes.

# OBJECT POEM ACTIVITY

To enter the *Poetry Object* 2017 competition, your task is to compose an original poem inspired by your special object. Your poem should be no more than 20 lines in length and should incorporate some of the poetic techniques you've used in pre-writing activities.

After drafting your poem, you may like to edit individually or as a group.

Once your school has been registered for *Poetry Object*, check with your teacher for submission links to the **online publishing form**.

**Deadline: Friday 22 September  
5:00pm AEST**

\*All poems submitted to *Red Room Poetry Object* will be published on the *Red Room Poetry* website.

Name: ..... Title: .....

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### Contact Us

If you would like to discuss any aspect of *Red Room Poetry Object* or book a poetry workshop please contact:

### Red Room Poetry

Eunice Andrada

Poetry Object Producer

Office: (02) 9319 5090

Email: [poetryobject@redroomcompany.org](mailto:poetryobject@redroomcompany.org)

You can also read more about *Red Room Poetry Object* and *Red Room Poetry* via the links below:

[redroomcompany.org/projects/poetry-object/](http://redroomcompany.org/projects/poetry-object/)  
[redroomcompany.org/education](http://redroomcompany.org/education)

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i2i DESIGN

S&J  
Smith & Jones



SpineOut

PKing

Kinokuniya

national  
museum  
australia

Australian Government  
Catalyst—Australian Arts and Culture Fund

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Jeremy Balias, Manal Younus, Anna Jacobson,  
Cameron Hindrum

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Angelene Karas, Cameron Hindrum, Halee Isil Cosar,  
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Images: National Museum of Australia, Tawfik Elgazzar,  
Christopher Phillips, Guillermo Batiz

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Manager – Poetic Learning: Kirli Saunders

Producer – Poetic Learning: Eunice Andrada

Content Manager: Kristy Wan

*Red Room Poetry* would like to thank our volunteers and interns for their contributions to all things poetic. Their continued support and generosity is instrumental to us.