

**THE
RED
ROOM
COMPANY**



POETRY OBJECT

2016

CREATIVE LEARNING RESOURCE

CONTENTS

INFORMATION PACK 3

ABOUT POETRY OBJECT	3
ABOUT THE RED ROOM COMPANY	3
KEY DATES	4
BOOK A WORKSHOP	4
CATEGORIES OF ENTRY	4
JUDGE'S NOTES	5
PRIZES AND AWARDS	6
HOW TO REGISTER AND SUBMIT POEMS	7
PUBLISHING OUTCOMES	7
ABOUT THIS LEARNING RESOURCE	8
CURRICULUM LINKS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES	8

CREATIVE LEARNING RESOURCES 9

EXPLORING THE <i>POETRY OBJECT</i> 2016	
COMMISSIONED POEMS	10
WHAT IS A TALISMANIC OBJECT?	23
WAYS OF SEEING/DRAWING	25
WRITING PROMPTS	24
AVOIDING CLICHES	27
POETRY OBJECT POEM TEMPLATE	28
QUALITY CRITERIA	29
CONTACT DETAILS	31

FOSSIL

As the small bones
Live in their grave
In the deep dark ground
As the white sticks
Lay there
The mighty
Small creature
Plays.

Tyvian, North Sydney
Demonstration School

ABOUT POETRY OBJECT

Our special objects carry histories capable of teleporting us to memories and places. From handmade toys to scratched heirlooms and first teeth, these objects open portals that spark imaginations and help to inspire poems.



Red Room Poetry Object is a free national poetry-writing competition that invites students and their teachers from grades 3–10 to submit poems inspired by ‘talismatic’ objects that are special to them. Created by The Red Room Company, *Poetry Object* has connected over 300 school communities and published more than 7000 student and teacher poems. Now in its sixth year, we have reimagined and enriched the resource with reflections, new activities and poetic prompts from judge Jill Jones and our 2016 commissioned poets Chloe Wilson, Adam G. Pettet, Caitlin Maling, Ellen Van Neerven, Kathryn Hummel and Matthew Heffernan. With objects as intriguing as a box of sand and a Mexican spirit animal, we hope to spark and support the creation and publication of even more student and teacher poems across Australia and New Zealand.

In 2016 commissioned, winning, and commended poems will be exhibited at Big Fat Smile Gallery as well as on posters created in collaboration with Transport NSW trains as part of a new Red Room poetic arts project that gives voice to young writers by publishing poetry in unexpected places. With support from the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund (CAL), winners of the Primary, Secondary and Teacher categories will be awarded a prize pack that includes mentoring by professional poets. One school in each Australian state/territory and New Zealand will also be awarded with interactive digital workshops and teacher mentoring as prizes for highly commended poetry works.

We hope you enjoy working with the new resources and look forward to reading your original, surprising and risk-taking poems.

The Red Room Team

ABOUT THE RED ROOM COMPANY

The Red Room Company’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 700 poets and over 15,000 students across Australia and beyond our shores.

Red Room Poetic Learning works with students, teachers and communities to deepen their encounters with poetry. Nurturing creative practice through inspired, critical and imaginative investigation, our learning programs connect practicing poets with students to guide writing processes that unlock poetic ways of seeing, writing and responding. Red Room is committed to publishing these outcomes and providing a platform for young poets to share their work with wider audiences.

For more information
or to book a workshop visit
Red Room Poetry Object or contact
Head of Creative Learning, Lilly Blue
education@redroomcompany.org
or (02) 9319 5090

KEY DATES

➤ **COMPETITION OPENS**

Monday 2 May 2016

➤ **SUBMISSIONS CLOSE**

Friday 23 September 2016

➤ **ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNING POEMS**

From early October 2016

➤ **PUBLICATION OF POEMS**

On The Red Room Company website and NSW metropolitan trains from early October 2016

➤ **WINNERS ANNOUNCED AND PRIZES AWARDED**

November 2016

➤ **EXHIBITION**

at Big Fat Smile Gallery, Wollongong NSW

Saturday 12 November 2016 – Saturday 10 December 2016

CATEGORIES OF ENTRY

Students, Teachers and Schools can submit poems in the following categories:

Student submissions

Students from grades 3 – 10 can submit one poem about a ‘talismanic object’ special to them. The poem should have a title and be no more than 20 lines in length. Students may write in any form or genre. All poems are published on The Red Room Company website and participants receive certificates of achievement.

Teacher submissions

Teachers and staff from participating schools are encouraged to submit their own ‘talismanic object’ poem alongside their students. Poems should have a title and be no longer than 20 lines.

School installation

School, grade and class installations are encouraged to showcase the work of all participants in visual ways. Schools will need to submit a high resolution digital photograph of the group installation and a written explanation of 250 words outlining the approach of their group’s object poem installation. Examples of School Installations can be found on the *Poetry Object* website with additional resources.

RED ROOM POETRY WORKSHOPS

Take your poetry unit to the next level with a poet-in-residence program or workshop. Professional poets help unlock imaginations, guide creative writing activities and offer constructive feedback. We also offer digital workshops and can stream a poet into your classroom for a live, interactive experience.

“Wonderful! The students were from a wide range of ability levels and they all engaged with the poets and the activities. The quality of work produced was amazing and has flowed into the classroom...The two poets made the workshops enjoyable without dumbing it down or making it gimmicky! There was a real sense of artistic endeavour during the workshop. I would recommend this workshop: the use of the talismanic object made it concrete, personal and emotional.”

SUZANNE MEALING, Teacher, Monte Sant’ Angelo College, NSW

**BOOK A RED ROOM
POETRY OBJECT WORKSHOP**
education@redroomcompany.org

JUDGE'S NOTES

Poetry Object 2016 entries will be judged by celebrated poet, Jill Jones.

Twelve winning and highly commended poems will be selected from a shortlist compiled by The Red Room Company. The shortlist and judging will be informed by Jill's notes and quality criteria found on pages 30 – 31.

Please note the judge's decision is final and no further correspondence will be entered into.

Jill Jones has published eight full-length books of poetry, and a number of chapbooks. In 1993 she won the Mary Gilmore Award for her first book of poetry, *The Mask and the Jagged Star* (Hazard Press). Her latest books are *The Beautiful Anxiety* (Puncher and Wattmann 2014), which won the 2015 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Poetry, *Ash is Here, So are Stars* (Walleah Press 2012), and a chapbook, *Senses Working Out* (Vagabond Press 2012). Other works include *Dark Bright Doors*, (Wakefield Press 2010), which was short-listed for the 2011 Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize, *Broken/Open* (Salt 2005), which was short-listed for The Age Poetry Book of the Year 2005 and the 2006 Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize, and *Screens, Jets, Heaven: New and Selected Poems* (Salt 2002), which won the 2003 Kenneth Slessor Prize. With Michael Farrell, she co-edited *Out of the Box: Contemporary Australian Gay and Lesbian Poets* (Puncher & Wattmann 2009).

The day that is saturated
the harbour that is bruised
wavelands of graffiti
and movements of poetry.

Excerpt from *The Skim* by
Jill Jones

"I will be looking for poems that aim for surprise and take risks, poems that see things/objects in a new way. We are looking for poems that work with the senses. Write so that the object can be seen or felt, touched or heard, even tasted, or give it a sense of movement. In other words, make your writing tangible rather than abstract. I welcome poems that play with form, not through stock standard rhyme and metre patterns, but in more unexpected ways, through visual effects such as line and stanza breaks, spacing and punctuation, or sound patterns such as alliteration, assonance, repetition, rhythm.

While objects may seem simple, perceptible things, they are full of linguistic as well material complexities and resistances. For instance, the Latin words that our word 'object' came from have, variously, ideas of throwing, hindering or placing, or the idea of a thing that is put before or presented to the mind. And, of course, the word 'object' is associated with dissent or opposition as well as purposes and ends. Therefore, we are interested in poems that push writing beyond representation into the intricacies of things in this world. So, surprise yourself, and explore what interests you, puzzles you, draws you to, or scares you about the object.

Poems are also objects. They are made of words. They have form as objects have form. Objects are put together in certain ways and connect to the world in certain ways just as poems are put together in certain ways through linguistic elements, sound elements, visual structures. Has your poem, as its own object, allowed something new into the world, your world?

The object may have an ordinary, day-to-day meaning or purpose, as many objects do, but it will also have a strange, or other meaning. Ask yourself what may be hidden, by it, in it, past it, because of it. Think about how you connect your words to the object you are writing about. Think about whether you want a minimal version, or a surreal version, a playful version, an emotional reverberation, a conceptual or formal viewpoint.

Objects also exist in time as does the reading and saying of poems. This idea of temporality may mean the object changes as you change and will relate to your memory and experience of the world. We will be looking for poems that show the many ways to experience the object in time as well as in place."

JILL JONES, Poetry Object judge 2016

PRIZES AND AWARDS

This year we are celebrating young poets with The **CAL POP Prize** made possible by the significant support of the Copyright Agency (CAL) and \$3000 worth of travel vouchers.

The CAL POP Prize

The CAL POETRY OBJECT PRIZE (POP) fosters excellence in poetry by supporting established poets to deliver live and digital workshops and professional development to students, teachers and emerging poets from each Australian state/territory and New Zealand.

2016 and 2017 POP winning and highly commended and poets will be supported to create works for inclusion in the 2018 *Poetry Object* digital anthology. This will be promoted as an Australian keystone poetry publication to a national and international market.

Travel Prize

Generously supported by Craig and Joy Lawn, the Travel Prize offers winning students and teachers the opportunity to find poetic inspiration in new places.

Publication

Winning poems will be published on posters across Sydney trains.

Big Fat Smile Gallery in Wollongong will also host a curated exhibition of all commissioned and selected poems in November 2016.

Poetry Prize Packs

Our poetry prize packs are made possible by the generous donations from Red Room Company partners Corban & Blair, DK Australia and Big Kids Magazine.

Winning Student Poem's (Primary and Secondary)

- › \$1000 travel voucher for the poet and their family
- › Judging commendations and a poetry prize pack

Winning Teacher Poem

- › \$1000 travel voucher for the poet and their family
- › Judging commendations and a poetry prize pack

Highly Commended Poems

- › Judging commendations and a poetry prize pack
- › Publication of their poems on The Red Room Company website

Best School Installation

- › Judging commendations and a poetry prize pack
- › Publication of their poems on The Red Room Company website

Everyone participating in *Red Room Poetry Object* will receive the mysterious gift that encountering poetry brings into our lives when we come to view the world tenderly and with heightened attention.



HOW TO REGISTER AND SUBMIT POEMS

Step 1: Register your school and receive a link to the online submission form.

Step 2: Download free Red Room Poetry Object Creative Learning Resources.

Step 3: Submit final student and teacher poems via the online submission form.

SEEKING PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR PUBLICATION

It is the responsibility of all participating schools to seek the permission of parents or guardians for their child's work to be published. Student work will be published on The Red Room Company website and may potentially be exhibited at a concluding event. Student work will only be identified by first name and school. No surnames will be published. All students and teachers retain copyright to their poems. A 'permission to publish' form can be made available on request.



PUBLISHING OUTCOMES

DIGITAL PUBLICATION

Red Room Poetry Object provides students with creative opportunities to compose and publish their own poetry. All submitted poems are published in the *Poetry Object* library.

EXHIBITION

An exhibition of winning and commended poems will be displayed at the Big Fat Smile Gallery at 98 Railway St Corrimal, NSW in November 2016. Big Fat Smile operates over 40 children centres across NSW. The exhibition will run from Saturday 12 November 2016 – Saturday 10 December 2016.

Schools are also encouraged to organise their own reading events and installations of poems and objects. We would love to hear about these events. Please email photos and stories to education@redroomcompany.org

ON TRAINS

Excerpts from selected poems will feature on posters in trains within the Transport NSW network. These posters will appear in late 2016 bringing young voices from across Australia and New Zealand into public spaces in unexpected ways.

ABOUT THIS LEARNING RESOURCE

We are this generation
We make this
We shape this
We break this
Our world is our sculpture
Lachlan, Dapto High School

"To construct and deconstruct, to paint with words, to feel with words, to touch and hear each other's voices and learn about a significant aspect of each other. They discovered each other's passions and secrets in an accepting and celebratory environment. When I showed the mother Angel's poem at parent teacher night, the mum cried with joy as she had no idea the gift she had given her daughter by getting her special ballet shoes."

CATHIE BELL, Teacher, QLD

The *Red Room Poetry Object* 2016 learning resource is designed to support students and teachers in developing imagery and technique before composing an object poem.

This resource can be used in a number of different ways to suit the needs of your students across age groups. The order of activities is flexible though we recommend delivery over 2-3 successive lessons where students are given time to reflect, conceptualise and respond.

In addition to judging notes and quality criteria developed by poet Jill Jones, new features of this year's resource include six poems, author reflections and writing prompts from our 2016 commissioned poets Chloe Wilson, Adam G. Pettet, Caitlin Maling, Ellen Van Neerven, Kathryn Hummel and Matthew Heffernan. These poetic examples and reflections not only expose students to contemporary Australian poets, their prompts provide insight and opportunity to broaden understanding of poetic practices, devices and a range of forms drawn from each poets unique creative process.

CURRICULUM LINKS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

As *Poetry Object* is open to students in grades 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: www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/english/Curriculum/F-10

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) (ACELY1714) (ACELY1715) (ACELT1800) (ACELY1717)

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

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

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

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

**For more information
about Poetry Object, resources, or to
book a poetry workshop or professional
development please contact us at:
education@redroomcompany.org
or phone (02) 9319 5090.**



**CREATIVE
LEARNING
RESOURCES**

EXPLORING THE POETRY OBJECT 2016 COMMISSIONED POEMS

Red Room Poetry Object commissioned six Australian poets to write poems in response to their own special talismanic objects including: a Mexican folk spirit animal, a found stone from a river bed, a warm cup, an oyster shell necklace, a desk fan and a small chest of sand. Each poet has also written a reflection about their writing process and shared prompts that may be explored by students to inspire their own reflections, ideas and writing.



ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Choose a poem and read it in different voices (aloud, silently, whispering, singing, with your eyes closed).
- ▶ Answer some of the following questions:
 - How did the poem make you feel?
 - What specific images came to mind as you were listening?
 - If the poem were a painting, what would it look like?
 - What poetic devices and language features can you identify in the poems? Circle or annotate examples of metaphor, simile, alliteration, allegory, imagery, personification, punctuation, symbols, assonance, caesura, tone, rhythm, rhyme, meter, form.
 - Discuss how the poet uses poetic devices. What affect do these devices have on the poem?

POETS

Chloe Wilson
Adam G. Pettet
Caitlin Maling
Ellen Van Neerven
Kathryn Hummel
Matthew Heffernan

- ▶ Read the poet's reflections. Did this change your interpretation of the poem? What questions would you like to ask the poet?
- ▶ Complete the companion activities for each poem, using this as an opportunity to test ideas for your final poem.

Be sure to explore past *Poetry Object* winning and highly commended poems as well as the library of student and teacher poems where all submitted works will be published <http://redroomcompany.org/poetry-object/poems/>



**CHLOE
WILSON**

Kahlo's Moustache

Kept her company. It stayed
though husbands, lovers, doctors
came and went. A thing darker in paint
than life. It sat for every portrait.

Though husbands, lovers, doctors
brought her flowers, death felt friendlier
than life. It sat for every portrait,
a skeleton in the bed, who

brought her flowers, death felt friendlier
than the man she loved. He saw her as
a skeleton in the bed. Who
held her tightly, more tightly

than the man she loved? He saw her as
an ex-voto brought to life. Our Lady
held her tightly, more tightly
than any parrot, monkey, leopard, which

an ex-voto brought to life. Our Lady
came and went. A thing, darker in paint
than any parrot, monkey, leopard
kept her company. It stayed.



To find out more about
commissioned poet
Chloe Wilson visit
[http://redroomcompany.org/
poet/chloe-wilson/](http://redroomcompany.org/poet/chloe-wilson/)

POET REFLECTION

The object I chose to write a response to is an alebrije (a Mexican folk-art sculpture in the shape of an animal, real or imaginary). Mine is a rabbit; I bought it from a workshop in Oaxaca.

It has not been my approach, in this poem, to describe the object in a direct way. In fact, I don't mention it at all. Rather, I thought about things I associate with this object; the alebrije reminded me of Mexico, which reminded me of Frida Kahlo's home, the Casa Azul, and of her paintings.

While I was in Mexico, I also read a biography of Kahlo, by Hayden Herrera. In it, Herrera discusses Kahlo's famous moustache, which she frequently exaggerated in her paintings (and which, legend has it, she used to groom with a particular comb). Kahlo's connection to her moustache intrigued me, as it suggested defiance (against gender roles and ideals of feminine beauty), but also Kahlo's deliberate self-creation, or self-mythologising. The ongoing work of creating and maintaining an identity, a public persona, was one of the things that sustained Kahlo throughout her life, which was often beset by personal difficulty. It was a constant, while other things (her husband, her lovers, her health, her money etc) came and went.

The poem is in pantoum form. I chose this form because the repetition of lines allowed me to explore connections and tensions in Kahlo's biography - her passionate relationships and her sense of loneliness, her fear of death and her flamboyant embrace of it, her despair against her joy.

ACTIVITIES

1.

Write a pantoum without mentioning your object at all. Perhaps try writing about a memory, a story, an interesting fact, which is connected with the object somehow. Let the object take on different meanings, apart from what it means to you.

2.

Choose one of Frida Kahlo's paintings and write a list of absolutely everything you can see in as much detail as possible.

3.

Write an ekphrastic poem in response to Frida Kahlo's painting.

What is a pantoum? Originally a Malaysian song-form, pantoums were popularised in Europe by French poets and began to be used by English-language poets in the nineteenth century. The stanzas are made up of interlocking lines - the second and fourth lines of each stanza become the first and third of the following one.

In the final stanza, the first and third lines of the first stanza are re-used, in such a way that the first and last lines of the poem are the same.

*An ekphrastic poem is a vivid description or direct written response to an artwork or visual image.

The Pantoum Form

line 1 (new line)
line 2 (new line)
line 3 (new line)
line 4 (new line)

line 2
line 5 (new line)
line 4
line 6 (new line)

line 5
line 7 (new line)
line 6
line 8 (new line)

line 7
line 3
line 8
line 1



**ADAM G.
PETTET**

Wild Dawn

Beneath cold rushing water
lies a heart shaped stone
washed smooth,
grey,
a solid piece of storm.
Within this stone thrashes
all of the wild.

I was washed up too
on that river bank,
grey mist dawn,
a stone in my chest
black and cracked,
rough as my unshaven chin.
I burrowed into my mud,
dragging that cracked heart free
and slipped the wild dawn stone
in its place.
Sunrise,
gold,
spring morning.



To find out more about
commissioned poet
Adam G. Pettet visit
[http://redroomcompany.org/
poet/adam-Pettet/](http://redroomcompany.org/poet/adam-Pettet/)

POET REFLECTION

Early one morning, while living in the UK, I was walking downhearted and homesick by the banks of the River Usk in Wales. It was a grey and lonely morning as I wandered amongst spindly trees by the rushing riverside. But there is always something magical about quiet rural places of solitude and that feeling led me down to the waters edge where I discovered a small heart shaped stone that seemed to call out to me. I slipped the stone in my pocket and carried it through a number of European countries for another twelve months before bringing it home with me to Australia. It has never lost the grey dawn magic of that morning and I take it out every now and then if I need a little inspiration.

Writing the poem was a four-stage process.

1. Contemplation: *Trying to figure out what the object chosen meant to me and how I could convey that abstract 'magical' sense in a creative yet understandable way.*

2. Response: *The poem starts with the object. I never start with a title. I let the title evolve out of the work, sometimes the title can be a line from the poem or convey the overall feeling of the poem which can change through the writing process.*

3. Writing: *I write all of my poetry by hand first into a notebook without changing anything until complete.*

4. Editing: *I edit the first draft by hand then type my poem on a manual typewriter, I love to see the words come out into reality, not shimmer on a screen. This also means I don't lose any lines by deleting them forever, I may be able to use them again someday. I also read the poem aloud to find which lines and rhythms sound a bit clunky and then try to fix them. I edit a number of times then copy the final draft onto computer.*

'All things
can contain
a little
magic.
A stone, a
feather, a
wooden
spoon.'



"You write your first draft
with your heart.
You rewrite with your head"
Mike Rich
Finding Forrester 2000.

ACTIVITIES

1.

Contemplation

Find an object either natural or created no matter how ordinary it may seem. Write a list poem of all the reasons your object is important to you.

2.

Response

Delve into the object, what could its particular magic be? How is that magic wielded? Look at your object and then write freely for 2 minutes without stopping. Keep writing until you feel your ideas flowing. Describe colours, textures and smells etc. Write a spell or incantation inspired by the object to set its magic free!

3.

Writing

Write a small poem describing the object and its powers. Write your poem by hand with something you don't usually use like a crayon, a coloured marker or on a typewriter.

4.

Editing

Write your poem out and then cut it into differently sized and spaced pieces. Rearrange your poem. Does its meaning get stronger or is it more interesting? This is known as the 'Cut-Up Method' used most famously by American author, William S. Burroughs. He believed this method let magic into the language.

"when you cut into the present
the future leaks out."¹

¹ Break Through In Grey Room



CAITLIN
MALING

A small thing

The cup holds heat and foam
like the milky way caught on time lapse.
The inner porcelain white, the outer blue
like a planet coming into focus.
This morning I'm angry,
but not at this small kindness
smooth on the lips.
Although still I envy people
that forgive as easily
as my tongue compels me to swallow.
Who know that it's a matter of scale,
that what we hold, holds us,
until detergent and heat
ebbs away the stain,
so the cup, dried and stacked,
is indistinguishable, blank
and cold as any star.
I take more warmth in
and practice letting it pass,
unburdened, down my throat.



To find out more about
commissioned poet
Caitlin Maling visit
[http://redroomcompany.org/
poet/caitlin-maling/](http://redroomcompany.org/poet/caitlin-maling/)

POET REFLECTION

I write every day in the same way, with coffee in a café. I like to listen to the people around me, often their conversation filters into my work. Similarly I like the ritual of entering the same place, the baristas knowing your name and order, the predictability of the coffee. I do think of poetry as being a communication, so being immersed in some version on community is useful.

Sitting in my café, I first tried approaching the object poem through thinking about what objects have resonance in my life. Those things that hold history and emotion greater than their actual parts. Perhaps because of my interest in how poetry interacts with people, this led me to think about which objects embodied particular relationships, from small things like my wedding ring and old toys to larger objects like the craypots and fishing boats that tie me to my family. Often they were objects people had given me, not objects I had chosen for myself. I tried writing a series of different poems about these very important objects but none of them really seemed to stick.

One morning as my long black arrived, I stopped trying to write about a great object and focused the ordinary one I encounter every day—my coffee cup. I was drawn to how interacting with the cup on a daily basis made it a blank canvas for whatever was happening for me on that day. I was also struck by how the cup represented a distinct and personal experience for me but one that was also occurring in different ways for everyone around me. The cup then became a vessel for thinking sideways about how we form attachments to objects and to people and how ephemeral these connections are.

Whenever I try to write I am drawn to subjects I am truly ambivalent about, for which I feel competing and oppositional emotions. The cup allowed me to embody ambivalence over the idea of attachment. The key metaphors and images in the poem of different scales of physicality (from the cup to the universe) were ways of representing and interrogating ideas of what we choose to focus on and the effect that focus has. Trying to keep the focus on the cup, as opposed to the anger the speaker mentions, is what forms the struggle or tension in the poem.

ACTIVITIES

For a great totemic object:

Think about a present you have received or given to someone else.

1.

Hold the image of the gift in your mind, spend five minutes free-writing a description of all aspects of the present using all five senses. What does it look, smell, feel, taste and sound like? Make your description as detailed as possible.

2.

Spend five minutes describing the person you received the gift from or are giving the gift to. This can include aspects of your relationship but it is better to just focus on keeping the description limited to the person. What details about the person sum up who they are to you?

3.

Spend five minutes free-writing about your experience of the gift being opened. What sensations were present as you tore the paper or watched them peel back the tape?

Finally, take what you have free-written, re-read it and pull out the best bits. From these pieces construct a poem capturing the whole experience of receiving or giving the present.

For an insignificant object:

1.

List the ordinary objects you encounter most in your day-to-day life. Create a 'litany' or list poem out of small interactions with these objects.

2.

Focus on one object from your list. Describe it in as much detail as possible. Think about what this object does for you, does it perform the same tasks for other people? Think of a strong emotion you have experienced. Instead of describing the emotion, write a poem detailing your object and your daily experience with the object that is coloured by this emotion without directly stating it.

OYSTER SHELL NECKLACE

ELLEN
VAN
NEERVEN

Oyster Shell Necklace

I didn't fill the bay
or make the rocks
I didn't.

Hear Tassie's haunted
wasn't sure how I'd feel
I feel.

Water in your welcome
the clouds, the blood
water.

All feeds all
mud oysters, mutton birds
all feeds.

Parting gift
shell in your hands
now in my hands
on your neck
now on my neck.

Safe travel
with shell stringed close
heartbeat close.

To find out more about
commissioned poet
Ellen van Neerven visit [http://
redroomcompany.org/poet/ellen-
van-nerveen/poets/](http://redroomcompany.org/poet/ellen-van-nerveen/poets/)

POET REFLECTION

*Just as I had to wait for the shell to present itself
as my Poetry Object,
I also had to wait for the first line.*

I waited until the words felt like a wave.

*Often I don't trust myself,
and I have to move forward despite this.*

*No idea is a bad idea,
they all progress the work.*

*So I may write a line and end up deleting it down the track.
Or I may revise it,
or move it.*

This is all part of the process.

*Once I've got the first few lines I feel better. I know the poem
has started. Again, I can always go back and move lines.
It's about figuring out what fits together because often writing
a poem is about figuring out how you feel.*

*Revising is often also re-wording to fit into the language of
the poem. Each phrase has to feel like it fits together, and as
the architect of the poem, only you will know this. During the
process I will read the lines out several times, say them, feel the
musicality. It will be easy to tell if a word or line is out of place.*

ACTIVITIES

Writing Prompts

1.

Have you found and kept something from nature – like a shell, a rock, a piece of wood? Why did you pick it up? How does it feel in your hand? Is it different viewed away from its natural environment? What does it mean to you?

2.

What was the last thing someone gave you? Do you remember how you felt? Were you surprised or touched?

3.

Do you feel the need to wear things that mean something to you? Write about an example?

Revising in Colour

Once you have finished drafting your poem, it is important to carefully edit it.

Take out three coloured pens – green, blue and orange. Read out your poem out loud, and use the pens to mark up your poem in the following way.

Green – mark your favourite lines or words you feel proud of. You really nailed these!

Blue – colour the words or lines you feel are okay, but not quite right. You're not sure what to do here.

Orange – underline the words or lines that make you cringe a little. This is not the meaning you intended at all. They don't seem to 'fit'. You wish to revise these, if you can. Colour coding your poem will make it clear which areas of the poem need more attention and thought. Attend to the orange first – what don't you like about it and how can you

make it better or more like the green. Do this by writing in the margins of your poem. And then see if you still feel the blue areas need work – can you add more alliteration, imagery or unexpected words or metaphors?

By the end of the exercise, you will have a new draft, and will be one step closer to finalising your poem.

Make sure you're not too hard on yourself! There are green markings to be found in all poetry.



**KATHRYN
HUMMEL**

Revolair

Let me stream you a story, one of three speeds.
Follow the shadow undulating on the wall, sticking to my circuit as I fan
out the air in predictable directions. Where should we not hurry to go?
Smoothly tilt and round and up and down and oh-so smoothly
remember it's summer and the answer is nowhere, not at least
until the sun dies down.

Let me stream you a story in the frame
of the breeze I stir, in imitation tortoiseshell and flaking gold.
Circa nineteen-fifty: a background player with a bit part,
my silent role rotating glints of chrome into the noir.
Woman enters—strikes match—turns startled to the door.
That's me there, troubling a wave of Baby Bacall's hair over her shoulder.
Same again to the raven's-wing permanent of a Betty more familiar,
in the setting of a summer just like this.

Now let me stream yours: overhead, a ceiling affair
four weeping walls and the attar of monsoon billowing under your door?
Kindly continue dreaming backwards while I carve through
this hot and tender stone with my teardrop blades and tiger's purr.
Feel your bedsheet rippling now and then in waves.

I will always return to you—always.

To find out more about
commissioned poet
Kathryn Hummel visit
[http://redroomcompany.org/
poet/kathryn-hummel/](http://redroomcompany.org/poet/kathryn-hummel/)



ACTIVITIES

POET REFLECTION

When it came to writing about an object of significance to me, I immediately thought of my most useful objects—like my bicycle—that tend to stay with me for a long time. After my nan died a few years ago, I kept her vintage Revelair desk fan, which is still in good condition despite the fact it's around 60 years old! In the summer, I always switch it on when I'm writing or trying to sleep: it cools me down and makes me think about my nan and her life. Because of this, I chose it as my Poetry Object. I never asked nan about where she got the fan from, or whether it had ever belonged to anyone else. Before I started writing my poem, I did some internet research and found photos of fans similar to mine, as well as information about the fans' materials, manufacture and design. Armed with these practical details, I felt free to invent a persona and history for my fan; to study the way it behaves and imagine the way it might talk to me if it was suddenly able to speak.

1.

Think of the history of the object you've chosen to write about. When does the lifetime of an object start—when we come into contact with it, or before then?

2.

Can you create several different histories for your object, as a background to your poem, perhaps including the object's 'voice' so it can tell its story from its own point of view?

Using this history (real or imagined) write a short biography for your object.





MATTHEW HEFFERNAN

The small chest of sand

Aunty with her weathered hands,
smiling face, and fettered candour
reaches out with a gift,
of my manifested mantra.

A small chest, with speckled seeds,
crimson sand, and freckled beads
Its timeless OM, this stagnant seer
constructs my being and disintegrates fear.

a humble vessel, enveloped in scratches,
its sturdy geometry, threaded by latches
my attachment, transcends isolated
raptures.

Freedom, from the abattoir, of which I'm
a captive.


The crimson sand's fragrance, fluently
unassuming,
a little solace from the conspiring and
betrayal that is looming,
but from the rain's rage, and sun's kiss,
the unforeseen is blooming.

The genesis of a memory, for moments
worth stealing,
this essence that blankets, is my psalm
while I'm kneeling,
"thank you", the only words for the person
it's revealing,
my manifested mantra, I have found
my healing.

POET REFLECTION

My process for approaching Poetry Object involved sitting down by myself with a pen and pad, a cup of tea and some music. I'm at my most creative when I am about to sleep, so I try to recreate the feeling of calm and relaxation to get into that same state. I had to think about what objects are in my life, and whether they have any significance worth writing about, this included remembering how and why those objects came into my life.

I ended up choosing a small box of red sand, because it was a gift I received from a friend/mentor. She had collected the red sand from my "spiritual" home of Central Australia when she had lived and worked there. I was born in Alice Springs and my mother is Indigenous (Pintupi-Luritja) to the region. In our way of understanding, we have always existed on that land, going as far back as memory can serve until it is interlaced with mythology. In addition to this, I was going through a pretty tumultuous time at work, and the gift and also my friend's constant encouragement helped me get through that. I chose to write about this object, because it means so much to me. I didn't have to force myself to find significance or words. The meaning is already there, waiting to be written about, whether that's remembering how the red sand in central Australia smells after rain, or remembering it's profound connection to who I am as an Indigenous person.



To find out more about
commissioned poet
Matthew Heffernan visit
[http://redroomcompany.org/
poet/matthew-heffernan/](http://redroomcompany.org/poet/matthew-heffernan/)

The gift has a profound spiritual connection to who I am as a person and where I come from.

I want the reader to be able to find something in the words for themselves, whatever that is, joy, sadness, anger. I want it to be interpreted in such a way that it brings something to them, as the gift itself brought something to me.

I looked at how I wanted to structure then order my words, and whether I would follow a rigid or loose rhyme/syllable cadence. I started a draft version by writing out a non-rhyming and excessively wordy poem. This didn't flow for me, and when I read it out aloud, it didn't give me a sense of connection to the words. I decided that by giving myself the limitation of a rhyme structure and five, four line stanzas, I would be forced to write more carefully and choose my words sparingly.

ACTIVITIES

1.

Think about the moments where you're at your most creative, and try and imagine that environment for yourself when you begin writing. Do you prefer to be alone while listening to music? Or outside in a park or garden? This is different for each person, and there isn't any wrong or right.

2.

Explore objects in your life that resonate strongly with your emotions, whether that's anger, happiness, fear or sadness. Write a list of those objects and the emotions you associate with them.

3.

Think about who you are as a person and write a list of 5 things that make you unique? How each person sees beauty or the sacred is different. Is your object functional, aesthetic or both? Does the object have a religious or spiritual significance to you? Write down the keywords for why/how this object is a part of who you are as person.

4.

Write down what you want from your *Poetry Object* poem. How do you want the reader to feel? Do you want them to have a giggle or feel moved? Write the same poem in two different ways so evoking very different emotions.

5.

Write a list of words that rhyme and then compose a rhyming version of your poem.

Keep a dictionary and a thesaurus handy, sometimes you can have a word on the tip of your tongue, or the word you have in mind doesn't fit. These are both really useful resources, plus, it will help you expand vocabulary too.

WHAT IS A TALISMANIC OBJECT?

Talismanic objects are felt to be magic and said to bring protection or good luck. A talismanic object can also be something that has personal significance, a long history or is special to you for secret reasons.

Some people carry feathers, heirloom jewelry or other palm-sized objects that can be tucked into a pocket for safekeeping.



PROMPTS

- › What are some examples of other talismanic objects?
- › Is there an object in your life that might seem ordinary to someone else but is very special to you?
- › What makes an object special?
- › What is the most poetic object you can think of? Why?

My talisman is
my shield and
my protection.
Ana, Glenmore
Road Public School



CHOOSE AN OBJECT THAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU

In my cold hands
I clutch my bird book.
Helena, Albuera Street Primary

Now that you have explored different talismanic objects it is time to select your own. To complete your poem you will need to bring your special 'talismanic' object to class.

At home walk silently through your room or house and notice whether anything invites you to pick it up. Choose an object that feels special or significant to you.

Your object could be a smooth stone you found in a crevice of the playground, a lost tooth, a handmade gift, or the worn wooden spoon that your grandmother uses to mix your birthday cakes.

Talk to your parents about bringing your object to school. They may prefer you bring a photograph if it is very valuable or delicate. If the object belongs to someone else, or you share ownership, you must get their permission before bringing it to school. Remember you need to take responsibility for the object so follow your teacher's instructions on how to best look after your precious object.



READING YOUR OBJECT: WAYS OF SEEING/DRAWING

Hold it to your ear,
let it breathe out its secrets.
Its trace of salty scent,
hovering poignantly in the air.
Sian, Glenmore Road Public School

Your object can be seen in many different ways.
Drawing in a variety of styles can help you see your object in new ways and discover something unexpected about its personality and story.

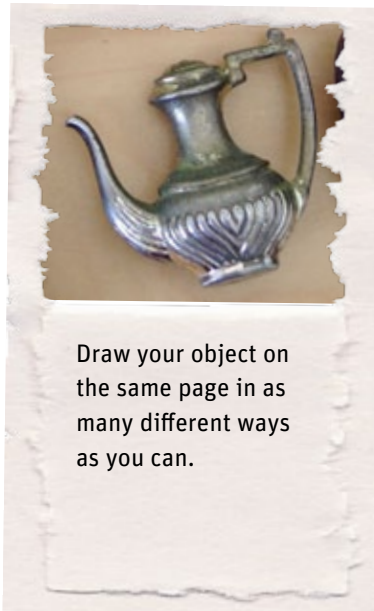
- › Cradle your object in both hands with your eyes closed and notice how it makes you feel.
- › Hold it to your ear. What stories does it whisper when you listen deeply?
- › Open your eyes and discover it as if for the first time imagining that you have never seen it before.

DRAWING PROMPTS

Materials: Pencil and blank paper

Draw your object in the following ways

- › Using your left hand
- › With your eyes closed
- › Holding your breath
- › In great detail
- › Using only shading
- › With very scribbly lines
- › Without lifting your pencil from the page



EXPLORING YOUR OBJECT: WRITING PROMPTS

My father's hand, a map of callouses.

Cameron, Kamaru High School

- ▶ Write as many obvious adjectives as you can to describe your object and collect them into a long list. Don't use any of these words in your poem.
- ▶ Imagine you have to describe your object to a person who is blind or to someone who you are talking to over the phone. What are the things you would describe to them?
- ▶ Describe the memories that live inside your talismanic object: How did the object find you? What special experiences have you shared with your object?
- ▶ Write a poem about your talismanic object as fast as you can. Cut out each line and then collage it together in a different way.
- ▶ Write a letter to your object in a secret code.

BEGINNING YOUR POEM: AUTOMATIC WRITING

The whole universe is in your tiny mouth.

Saieesha, Methodist Ladies College

Automatic writing is like pouring your brain onto the page in front of you and sifting through scribbled debris to find meaning and relevance. Writers and artists often do this before beginning a new work to uncover ideas, memories and feelings that fear, judgement and distraction can make it impossible to hear.

Remove everything from your desk front except for a pen, paper and your talismanic object. Set a timer for three minutes and begin writing in response to your object without censoring your stream of consciousness.

- ▶ Write silently
- ▶ Write fast
- ▶ Keep writing even when your hand gets sore
- ▶ When you run out of things to write, keep writing
- ▶ You might spend a few moments writing *I don't know what to write* until your imagination kicks in again and takes you in a new direction
- ▶ After five minutes take a moment to read through your automatic writing. Circle words or sentences that are interesting, unusual, original or meaningful to you and write them onto a separate page
- ▶ Write a draft of your poem beginning with your collected words and phrases.



7. BEING SPECIFIC AND AVOIDING CLICHÉS

“pointy ears like little corn chips,
a long snout like an ice-cream cone”

Natasha, North Fitzroy Primary

A cliché is a phrase or simile that is very common and has lost its originality or impact having been used so many times.

Complete the table by filling in the cliché before composing your own original or specific image.

STARTER CLICHÉ

Example: As black as night

As slow as
.....
As bright as
.....
As smooth as
.....
As strong as
.....
As delicate as
.....

YOUR OWN SPECIFIC OR UNUSUAL IMAGERY

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

As slow as
.....
As bright as
.....
As smooth as
.....
As strong as
.....
As delicate as
.....



8. WRITING YOUR OBJECT POEM

Write a final draft of your poem that is no more than 20 lines in response to your talismanic object, and enter it into the 2016 *Red Room Poetry Object* competition.

Gather sentences, feelings, memories and ideas from the activities and use them in your final draft. Remember to include your name and give your poem a title.

Name: Title:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

16.

17.

18.

19.

20.

Think about the rhythm, structure and layout of your composition. Some lines might only have a few words and others might be longer.

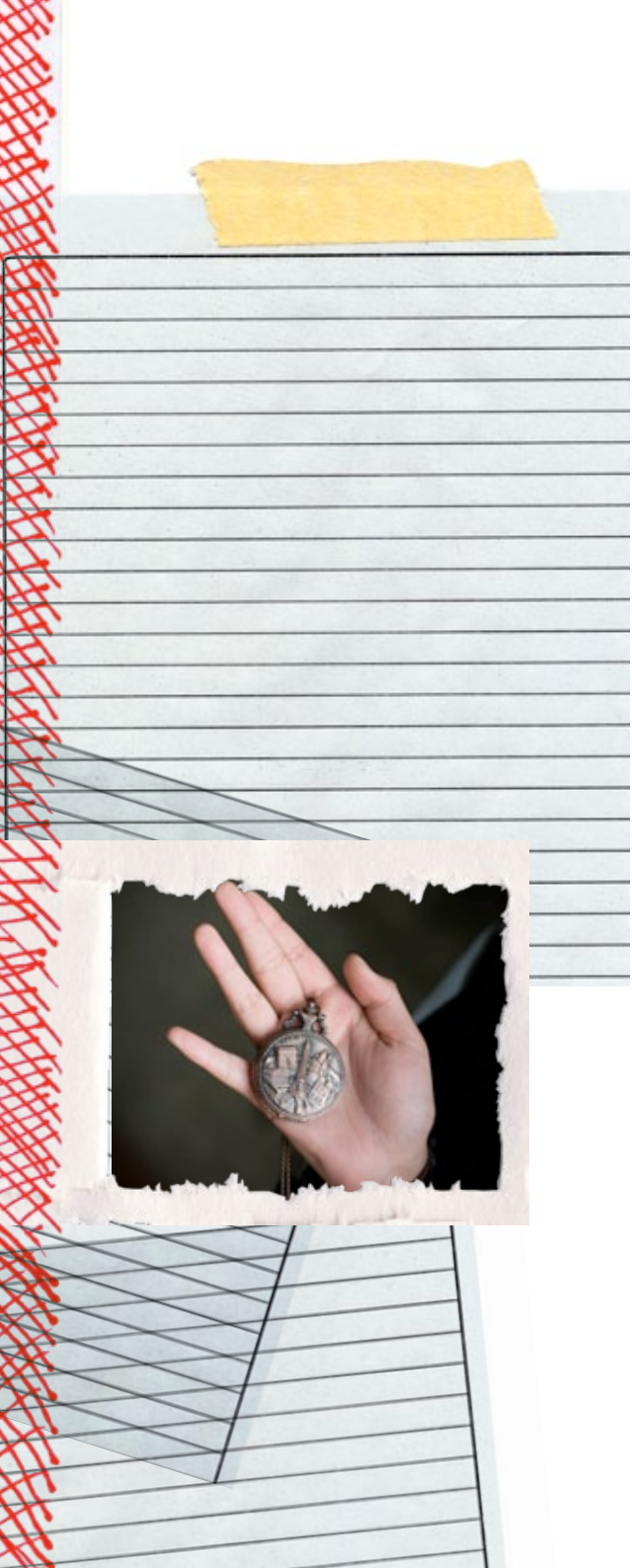
To register for Poetry Object visit
<http://redroomcompany.org/projects/poetry-object/>
or contact Head of Creative Learning,
Lilly Blue lilly@redroomcompany.org
02 9319 5090

QUALITY CRITERIA

Red Room Poetry Object 'quality criteria' has been established by The Red Room Company 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 meet exhibition standards.

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



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

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

THE RED ROOM COMPANY

Lilly Blue

Head of Creative Learning

Office: 02 9319 5090

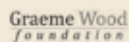
Email: education@redroomcompany.org

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

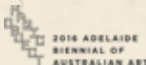
redroomcompany.org/projects/poetry-object/

redroomcompany.org/education

Red Room Poetry Object is supported by:



i2i DESIGN



Contributors:

2016 Poetry Object Judge and Poetry Editor: Jill Jones
Commissioned Poets: Chloe Wilson, Adam G. Pettet, Caitlin Maling, Ellen Van Nerveen, Kathryn Hummel, and Matthew Heffernan

Resource Editors: Dr. Tamryn Bennett, Lilly Blue, Micheal Do
Design: i2i Design
Artwork: Louella Pieffer

The Red Room Company Staff

Executive Director: Dr. Tamryn Bennett
Head of External Relations: Sally Marwood
Head of Creative Learning: Lilly Blue
Producer – Creative Programs: Micheal Do
Content Manager: Kristy Wan
Unlocked Producer: Rob Osborne

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