

# **Teachers' Ideas Pack for 'Write around Air Street'**

## **Introduction**

The Write Around Air Street competition is a great way to get children inspired about writing. You might want to begin by explaining about the fantastic prize available for the five winners and four runners-up, whose poems and stories will be transformed into a sculptural story trail in the centre of Brighton, just by the clock tower. The story trail will be launched to the public in April 2008, and will be there for years to come.

This Ideas Pack has been put together to give you some ideas on how to approach the Write Around Air Street competition with your class. We are looking for a variety of interesting and original writings on the theme of 'air'. The form can be a short piece of prose or a poem - free verse being less restrictive for children. For some older and more confident writers, a mind map may be enough of a stimulus to generate independent writing. For most pupils however, the guidance below might be useful.

## **Getting Started**

As a group have a brainstorm on the subject of 'air' and create a mind map of thoughts and ideas that arise from the pupils' suggestions. Possible groupings may include:

- 1) Things that travel through air (e.g. seagulls, planes, balloons, seeds, sounds - including words, litter, clouds, rain, fireworks)
- 2) Our sensory and emotional experiences of air ( Can we taste air? How does it make us feel?); properties of air (its fluidity and force)
- 3) Uses of air ( plants, animals, pollution, wind power)
- 4) Words associated with air (movement words, e.g. float, flutter, spin, swirl)
- 5) Air and seasonal weather (e.g. spring breezes, sticky summer thunderstorms, autumn fog and fireworks, biting winter winds).

## **Whose Voice?**

You may want to write from the point of view of a bird or insect flying through the air, describing what the streets and people appear like from above. You could comment on the world of humans from an animal perspective. Or you could be a balloon floating away from its owner's grasp. Do you feel pleased to escape? Sad? Or you could be a storm cloud, the fog, a piece of litter tumbling down the street, the wind itself. You can speak in a boastful voice, joyfully, menacingly, apologetically...the possibilities are endless!

## **Addressing the Reader**

You may want to address the passing reader directly - make them stop, read and think for a while. You could include instructions relating to the air within your writing. 'Look up...', 'Listen carefully...', 'Watch...', 'Taste the air...', 'Stop...' etc. You could even write an advert or jingle, offering free air to passers by, describing the benefits or drawbacks to Brighton air! By describing some aspect of the air in interesting detail, the reader themselves become more aware of the sensory experience that air gives.

## **Reporting from the Scene**

You could write as if reporting a snapshot in time, like the description of a still photograph or a short sequence of events that might happen in Air Street or around its

corner. It doesn't have to be outlandish images, there are many interesting and poetic moments that happen in Brighton quietly and in the small detail of people's lives. An overheard conversation on a mobile, an image of a small child crying over a lost balloon, a seagull pecking through discarded rubbish, a seed falling to the ground and taking root - or all of those things happening at the same time. You might even choose to play with this idea by placing the image in a particular area around Air Street, beginning your description with 'Upon this spot...', 'Around this corner...', 'By this wall...' , 'Here...' etc.

### **Shape Poem**

You could write a poem in which the shape of the poem or the layout of the words reflect some aspect of air. Tornadoes, clouds, rain falling on the ground and birds flying upwards are just some examples of subjects that would make a good shape poem.

### **Haiku**

You could try writing a modern haiku, a short poem of three lines consisting of 5,7,5 syllables. Haiku often include some aspect of nature and our response to it. You might try to write a sequence of four haiku about the air in each season. Every syllable counts in a haiku so it is important to choose your words carefully!

### **Write a Riddle**

You could write a piece of prose or a poem describing some aspect of air or something that is in the air without actually naming it, leaving the reader to guess what is being spoken about. This gives plenty of opportunity for using metaphor or similes, building up a picture for the reader to work out. Think about what that thing does, an aspect of its look, how it moves, its emotions or personality, the sound it makes, how people respond to it, etc. It can be written in the first or third person and for younger or less confident writers, it can be written in the form of a list.

### **Key Stage One**

Younger or less confident pupils will need more adult direction with their writing. There are a number of ways in which you can help engender independent creative writing.

- 1) Keep the task specific and break it down into manageable stages. Focus on one subject or angle relating to the air and discuss it as a group. Highlight any original comments or ideas the children suggest, any interesting words used, similes made, emotional responses given. You may want to refer back to these comments when working as a group or individually.
- 2) Create a piece of group writing to use as a model for their own piece of prose or poetry . Have a sentence template on the white board. Be sure to emphasise that there is no 'correct answer' and that a number of alternative responses could be used.
- 3) Use a similar photocopied template for individual writing which pupils can then add to. This allows them to focus on their own ideas whilst giving them a format to work within.

### **Example I am the Wind**

- 1) In a group, talk about the wind- what it does to people and objects, how it moves, where it goes, what it might feel like to be the wind.

2) Write a sentence on the board about each of the following:

The emotion of the wind. (happy? sad? angry?) A description of the wind ( its invisibility? Its power? Its feel?) Say something about the way it moves or where you find it ( does it hide in crevices? rise upwards?) Say something the wind does to things. ( something playful? naughty? destructive? helpful?) and how people react to it. (physically or emotionally)

3) Using a template based on the above sentences, children may produce quite different versions of the same poem/prose.

I am the excited wind.  
I am invisible.  
You find me spinning around on the pavement.  
I like to make the rubbish dance  
and tickle the children to make them laugh.

I am the angry wind.  
I am like a bully.  
You find me in the sky.  
I like to push the clouds  
and make grown-ups run back inside.

'I am the Wind' can easily be adapted to a variety of subject matter- snow, storm, seagull, fog, rain, litter, clouds.

'Write a riddle', 'Addressing the Reader' and 'Reporting from the Scene' (maybe with a sentence based around each of the senses) could also work well with younger pupils, using this format. You will need to adapt the focus of the sentences and begin them slightly differently. The main aim is to give the pupils a reassuring starting point but to leave room for their individual responses. And remember, younger or less confident writers are often more imaginative when speaking out their ideas. By having an adult scribe for them, they can focus on thinking creatively without the added pressure of having to write and spell out the words.

I hope the above suggestions are useful but they are by no means an exhaustive list of ideas. You might find other ways to incorporate 'Write around Air Street' into the work you are currently doing within Literacy, Science or Geography. If you are working on letter writing, for example, you might want to try writing a letter to the air - or even from the air! You may be discussing pollution and want to write a recipe for clean or dirty air. There are no limits or restrictions except to have a go and enjoy yourselves!