

GROUP POEM ACTIVITY

This is a very simple activity that allows students to quickly compose a satisfying poem as a group task.

Instructions

Show students a special object (or an image of the object) and ask them to individually write a line, stanza or image in response to the object.

Ask students to compose a very short piece of writing. It could be a line or phrase.

Construct a group poem by arranging students' lines together. This could be created verbally, by each student reading their line, or on paper by writing the lines in an order that you all like.

The poem could also be randomly constructed by picking students in no specific order to come to the front of the room to read their lines to the class.

Extension

In small groups, give students the class' lines on separate pieces of paper. Ask students to experiment with ordering the lines, and decide on a structure that they like best. Many different poems can emerge from various arrangements of the same lines!

An example of a group poem, composed by a workshop of poets, is on the next page.

The inspiring object was this photograph:



The Lichen Rising

A Group Poem

Notice of Sale: Property of a Lady
(A Miss Havisham, Dorset branch)
Vacant possession: legatees seek
Immediate Settlement.
Note to Vendor: furnished.

*

Paint peels from the roof
like bark from the skin
of a dead
tree

I pull it down with the
weight of my body

So too
the past pulls me down

but with a less gentle
and less stately hand.

*

The skeletons of
ancient kings
play billiards
with
barren queens.

*

You see me here
four legs
but no way out
of ornate
I remember the night
he was hung
from the light
in trespassing shadows

*

craquelure of dry tongues
peeling
the lichen rising
a panther's quiet circle

*

The west wind blows
Its chill breath across
The bare, stripped boards.

Pulling apart plaster,
Stirring up dust and memories.
His angel wings shiver,

When the light fails.
There are no more candles
In this place, no more footsteps

That resound down the hall.
In the morning
It is just a painting

On the door—breathing,
Breathing in grey-
Green swirls

*

skin on the ceiling
and layers of luminous dust
decadence
as excess
and as decay.

*

seven years unopened when I returned
the doors, the curtains,
the wiling paint—
all which I recall was unperturbed—
now greet me
frozen beneath the cross hatched ceiling.