

OVERCOMING CLICHÉ: EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

These activities encourage students to experiment with unique and unusual writing, to come up with their own expressions. This is an extension of the one-page Overcoming Cliché activity, featured in the 2018 Poetry Object learning resource.

Overcoming Cliché

Discuss what we mean by a **cliché**. Why do clichés make for bad writing? It may help to read Mauree Applegate's poem 'Be Specific' (found on the next page).

Cliché Alert

Complete the table on the following page by filling in the clichés and composing your own personal or specific images.

The personal and specific images can be used as the basis to create a poem! Play with the order of your images, starting with the opening and concluding lines.

You might also want to keep developing your images, by elaborating on them further. This can create an Imagist poem.

Feeling and Sensory Metaphors

This is a useful exercise for looking at the difference between direct and indirect comparisons. You can discuss the effect of a simile instead of a metaphor, for instance.

Your metaphors can be used as the basis to create a new poem.

You can also create a group poem. Put A3 sheets up around the room with a heading of a specific emotion. As a class, move around the room adding your own metaphors to the relevant sheet. Read the sheets: do you want to reorder or change anything, now that it's a whole? Read the final pieces aloud to the class.

Sharing

Submit your poems to Poetry Object!

Be Specific
Mauree Applegate

Don't say you saw a bird: you saw a swallow,
Or a great horned owl, a hawk, or oriole.
Don't just tell me that he flew;
That's what any bird can do;
Say he darted, circled, swooped or lifted in the blue.

Don't say the sky behind the bird was pretty;
It was watermelon pink streaked through with gold;
Gold bubbled like a fountain
From a pepperminted mountain
And shone like Persian rugs when they are old.

Don't tell me that the air was sweet with fragrance;
Say it smelled of minted grass and lilac bloom;
Don't say your heart was swinging;
Name the tune that it was singing,
And how the moonlight's neon filled the room.

Don't say the evening creatures all were playing;
Mention tree toad's twanging, screeching fiddle notes,
Picture cricket's constant strumming
To the mass mosquitoes humming
While the frogs are singing bass deep in their throats.

Don't use a word that's good for all the senses
There's a word for every feeling one can feel.
If you want your lines to be terrific;
Then do make your words specific,
For words can paint a picture that's real

CLICHÉ ALERT

Starter	Cliché	Specific Image	Developed Image
As bright as...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day • Paper 	The piercing glow of fluorescent blulbs in the 7/11 on Enmore Road at 2.30AM.	Brighter than torch beams, it scares the shadows from the city.
As cold as...			
As strong as...			
As good as...			
As comforting as...			
As difficult as...			
As soft as...			



FEELING AND SENSORY METAPHORS

Feeling	Sense	Metaphor
Surprise...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• is the taste• has the smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• of a birthday cake• of a fresh squeeze of citrus
Peace...		
Happiness...		
Anger...		
Excitement...		
Sadness...		