

My Grandpa's Beard

with Joshua Seigal

The students who took part in Josh's workshop had two hours in which to write, rehearse and perform their poems on camera. However, they produced some very impressive results, given the tight time frame.

Josh first led a warm up game to raise the energy in the classroom:

Stand Up, Sit Down

Issue commands to the group, insisting they do the opposite of what he asks. As the game progresses, gradually introduce more conflicting commands in more rapid succession.

e.g. "jump" means "clap" and vice-versa
"make a noise like a dog" means "make a noise like a cat"

Optionally, people are out if they make a mistake until a winner remains.

Emotions

Josh performed some poems from his book *My Grandpa's Beard*, which take different emotions as their themes.



He then led this exercise:

Choose some good emotion words. (e.g. ecstatic, cheerful, relaxed, lonely, bored, excited.)

Pick one of those words, close your eyes and imagine its taste. In two minutes write a description of that taste without using the word selected.

Now, close your eyes and imagine a pile of that emotion in front of you. What does it feel like? Can you compare it to other things? In two minutes, write a few sentences describing what you have imagined.

Next, imagine what your emotion looks like. Can you see it on the horizon? Is it in the room? Write about what you can see but don't mention the word itself. What does your emotion smell like? What details can you use to describe its smell?

What noise is your emotion making?

Invite volunteers to read out what they have written. The rest of the class tries to guess the emotion being described. Here is an example from the day:

Angry

It tastes like red paint

It tastes like blood

it tastes like pain

It feels hot

It feels like a devil in you....

Next, choose a partner and read your poem to him or her. Ask your partner to comment on your delivery in preparation for performing to camera. Swop roles.

Poetry Is

As students took their turns in front of the camera, Josh led this exercise:

Make a list under each of these headings in turn:

Happy Memories

Beautiful Things

Funny Things

Really Weird Things (e.g. a house made of baked beans, garlic flavoured golf clubs)

Now, turn some of your ideas into metaphors to define what poetry is. Poetry can be about memories. It can be beautiful. It can be funny. It can be weird. It can be all of these things.

Start with the phrase *Poetry Is....* then develop and edit what you have already written, adding interesting vocabulary and further ideas as they come to you.

Practice reading your finished poem, before recording it on camera.