

## **Worksheet 7: Quick words, instant poems**

### **Introduction**

Here are a few quick words activities that work quite well as stand alone activities or might fit into a more determined storywalk (**Worksheet 6**)

### **Hints**

There are no rights and wrongs: explain the activity as concisely and clearly as you can and then hope

**Materials:** given for each activity

### **4-shout**

Useful for covering distance and getting people started. Probably works best where there is a clear direction of travel or you can find a group scattering in all directions!

**Materials:** none

**Time needed:** 5 - 10 minutes

Get into groups of 3, 4 or 5 people and link elbows into a line

*Take 4 steps. Stop. Close your eyes then click them open like a camera taking a photo and name something that you see. Point at the thing you are naming - but since most of our hands are gathered up, use a foot. You don't need to politely let each person take a turn at the naming, just all shout together*

This is easy

*But try to always name something new - never name the same thing twice - and if you are feeling very confident, don't name anything that anyone else in your team has named*

**At the end:** watch the dynamic of your company closely - once they reckon they've named everything they'll start to run out of steam and that is a good point to gather together again

There might be a discussion to have about how many things they can see and how many things they actually named. Or you might just like to play a quick cumulative word game: "*we went to the woods and as we walked we saw a.....,*" repeating and adding to the list with every new voice (maybe not do the whole group or you'll be there all day!)

But you might invite people to choose one of the things they named or something they can see now and write a riddle

## ***Riddles and Kennings***

Riddles are ancient word-games and are lots of fun. A riddle isn't a "joke". It is a puzzle: describing something familiar but looking at it sideways so that while descriptions are true to the nature of the riddle's object the metaphor side signed to really make you think.

**Examples:** look at the chapter "Riddles in the Dark" in J R R Tolkien's *The Hobbit* for a lovely riddle game. There are often riddles in poetry anthologies

### **Kennings**

To "ken" is to know in Old English and in Old Scots, so a kenning is "a knowing". Like a riddle, it is a metaphorical or obtuse description but kennings are simpler (sometimes subtler) and often work best as pairs of words: maybe 4 in total....

**Materials:** a postcard and a pencil for everyone (people might prefer to work in pairs)

**Time needed:** 10 - 15 minutes

**What to do:** easiest for things you can find and take a good look at, finding either pairs of words (kennings) or phrases that describe: what it looks like, what it feels like, how it behaves

These ones are not traditional - they came out of workshops:

### ***Riddle***

*A flicker of fire  
Runs through the trees,  
Collecting summer's richness  
Against winter's freeze  
(Red Squirrel)*

### ***Kenning***

*Wood-runner  
Deer-killer,  
Mountain-climber,  
Moon-singer  
(Wolf)*

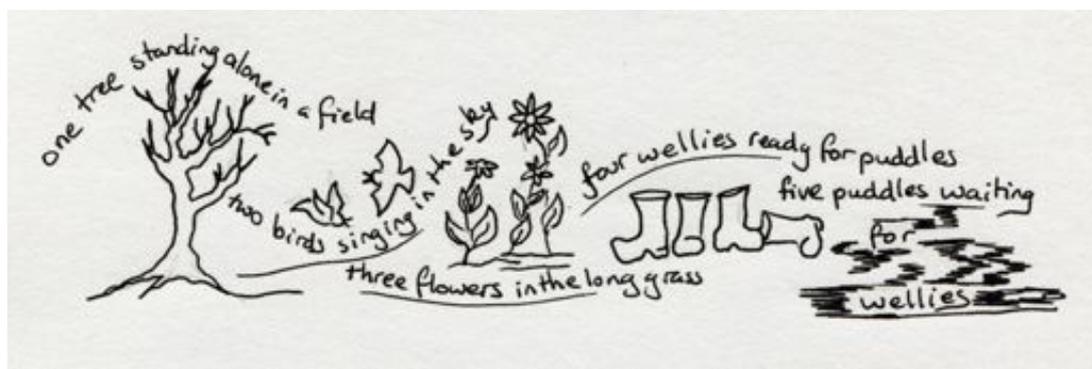
Kennings and riddles don't need to rhyme but encourage people to listen to the rhythm of their words so that the finished piece sounds good when spoken

### ***A riddle game***

And when you have a few, try riddles quietly on a friend. Then as a company have a riddle game: a riddle can be spoken 3 times and there are 3 guesses at the answer (so check your guess with a friend before pitching in). The

correct guess gets to say the next riddle - or the victorious riddler can choose the next riddler

**Bigger stories:** both riddles and kennings can be incorporated into bigger stories. Riddles might be clues that heroes can solve or kennings might be the speeches that a character uses to introduce themselves: *We are the wood runners, the deer killers. We are the mountain climbers, the moon-singers. We are the wolves and we are here*



### **1-tree, 2-trees**

Another activity for covering distance - or at least that was the plan, but people get very dreamy with this activity and it tends to become a pleasant ramble rather than a determined march.

**Materials:** a postcard for everyone and a pencil (people might prefer to work in pairs)

**Time needed:** 10 - 15 minutes

List numbers 1 - 10 down one side of your card (I often start with 1 - 6 with younger group and then we keep adding more). Then, as we walk, watch, listen, touch, sniff and add features by their numbers

*1 tree standing all alone in the field*  
*2 birds flying across a blue sky*  
*3 puddles waiting to be jumped in....*  
....and so on

Push for descriptive phrases: use the observation to fuel the sentence

At the end, build a new count as a company: *when our adventure began there was one..... We saw two.....Then three.....*" and so on

### **Senses poems**

A good way of giving people time to stop and appreciate a moment.

**Materials:** a postcard and a pencil for each person

**Time needed:** 15 minutes

Invite people to choose a special place (there are lots of options here - anything that gives people the chance to find somewhere that feels distinctive should work) and stop there. Sitting down is best if possible.

There, pause, listen, look.

Take time to write (or draw) a few things that you hear, feel, smell or see and add how you feel at the end. Encourage descriptive phrases rather than a simple list. An opening line can help offer some structure: *Sitting by this tree, I can hear...can feel....*using that opening line to start each new verse with a verse for each sense

Quietly call people back together: keep it quiet, invite people to share their lists with each other. If people have gone for phrases and opening lines, then the resulting pieces often stand on their own as instant poems. Like kennings, they can also become speeches, or sections to fit into bigger stories

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
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