

Mushrooms

Screen image

Driving Question: What is the title of the poem?

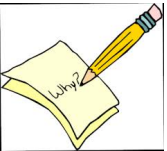


Teacher talk

Explain to students that they are going to assemble a poem to decide what it is about and try to determine its title.

Commentary

Students must read closely and distil their thinking. They have to hold ideas in their heads and listen actively to others, posing exploratory questions. Finally they are being asked to adapt and revise their initial thinking



Student Action

- 11 pairs. Each pair given a stanza at random from Plath's poem.
- 2 minutes to explore meaning and speculate about what the poem is about.
- 2 minutes, turn their stanza face down, leave their partner and meet with as many other students as possible to ask them what their stanza was about
- 2 minutes, return to seats and share information with their partner.

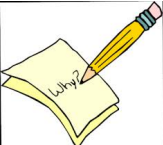


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Emerging hypotheses

Commentary



Reflective thinking is essential at this point. Teachers will need to ensure that students take time to consolidate reflective thought and are dissuaded from rushing into action.



- **Teacher talk**
 - *'What are you beginning to think about the poem's subject?'*
 - Type up emerging ideas on the screen.
 - Be inclusive of all suggestions and non-committal.



Student Action

Students reflect on and share ideas about the poem's subject.



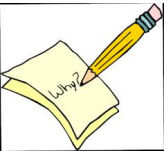
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Planning action



- Teacher talk
- Provide each pair with entire poem, cut into 11 stanzas
- Give students 2 minutes to generate an outline plan for sorting the stanzas



Commentary

Teachers will need to ensure that students take time to consolidate reflective thought and are dissuaded from rushing into action.



Student Action

Students have 2 minutes to generate an outline plan of action which they share with other members of the class before opening their envelopes



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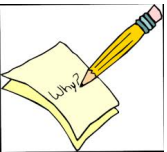
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Generate – Sort - Connect



Teacher talk

- *'You will have 10 minutes to manipulate stanzas, but be aware that I will set a fresh focus challenge in four minutes.'*
- Circulate to nudge, prompt, encourage reflection. Avoid leading questions or steering students towards the right answer



Commentary

All possible solutions are welcome provided they can be justified



Student Action

Pairs to manipulate stanzas to create order and sense in line with the driving question:
What's the title of the poem?



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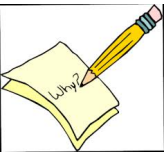
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How does the poem start?
How does it end?



Teacher talk

- *'Here comes your next challenge: decide on the opening and closing stanzas. You have 1 minute to distil and justify.'*
- Do not reveal Plath's opening and closing stanzas at this stage.
- *'What are you thinking the title might be? Has this changed?'*



Commentary



Student Action

Decide on opening and closing stanza: decision making with need to provide persuasive reasoning.



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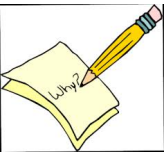
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How does the poem start?
How does it end?
Discussion.



Teacher talk

- *'Let's share ideas for opening and closing stanzas. You will need to provide persuasive arguments'*



Commentary

Teacher challenges and probes so that students can present clear reasons that show a deeper reading of the poem and its intent.



Student Action

Pairs are selected to explain their choices. Cross-class discourse, questioning and disagreement/agreement is encouraged.



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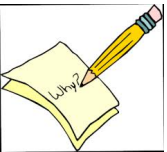
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What do the metaphors in the poem suggest?



Teacher talk

- *'I want you to continue working on the poem, but now focus on the metaphoric language.'*



Commentary

Students are being required to be forensic and hypothetical in their reading of the poem.



Student Action

Adapt poem, noting on paper the metaphors they are noticing and what they seem to suggest about the poem's subject matter.



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I think this.... You think that...



Teacher talk

- *'Now find someone else to pair with. You've got three minutes to agree on the title of the poem and an order that makes sense.'*
- Engineer new pairings to ensure the right levels of support and challenge for individuals.

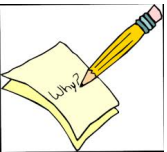
Student Action



One person stays with the poem and is joined by someone from another pair. They look at the poem's order and come to a collective decision. They will need to justify their decision or agree to differ and be able to represent their new partner's point of view whilst being able to justify their own opinions.

Commentary

Key reflective and collaborative learning habits are being progressed: open-mindedness, compromise, decision making.



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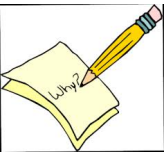
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(The first and last stanzas of the poem, revealed one by one)



Teacher talk

'Here are Plath's opening....and closing stanzas. Do these change your order or would you stay with your order and justify your selection?'



Commentary

The challenge is for students always to justify their reading and think differently as meaning emerges.



Student Action

Consolidation, review and revision. The students adapt accordingly and now have to decide whether to stick with their own reading or defer to Plath's.



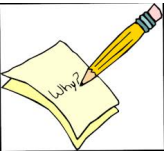
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Teacher talk

- The image on the screen prompts students to realise that the poem is called Mushrooms.
- *'Ah ha! Now analyse the effectiveness of the metaphors to describe the process of overnight growth.'*



Commentary

Students' reading is now moving towards a critical appreciation of the poem – structure, diction, syntax, rhythm.



Student Action

Re-read the poem with the title in mind. Note on paper the metaphors and descriptions they think to be particularly effective. Identify strengths and weaknesses in the writing.



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But is it about something else?



Teacher talk

'Consider whether the poem using mushrooms as a metaphor for something else? Plath was often seen as a feminist writer – could this poem be read as a feminist poem?'

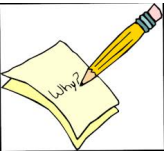
Commentary

Students are now being stretched to think outside the box and see the wider relevance of poetry – beyond accurate descriptions of the visible world.



Student Action

In groups, generate hypotheses, make links, justify thinking.



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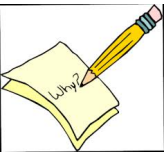
So how could we write about this poem?



Teacher talk

'Work in groups of 4 to make a plan for writing about the poem. This could be a spider diagram, or a flow chart. We'll refine them next lesson.'

Commentary



One Y10 student: 'We usually get told about the poem, make notes around the outside, then learn it or the exam... this way, I wouldn't have to revise it because I've learnt it now.'



Student Action

Group-work planning of a piece of writing that sums up what the poem is about and how effective it is.

