



The Poetry Object

Group Poem Activity Inspired by an Image or Object

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

Instructions:

Students are shown an image of an object and asked to individually write a line, stanza or image in response to the object.

This could be any image or object. This resource contains images of a decaying room and a woodcut picture by Durer of a rhino that you might use with your classes.

Stress to students that they only need to compose a short piece of writing. It could be a line or phrase.

The group poem is constructed when the lines produced by students are assembled into a poem.

This could be a class poem created when each student reads their line or writing around the room or in alphabetical order.

A poem could be constructed by randomly picking students from around the room and then asking them to come to the front of the room to read their lines to the class.

You could pick a row or table to read their lines. You could ask all the boys or girls or all the people with brown eyes or short hair. The selection is up to you.

No matter what arrangement of readers or line you select this activity tends to produce a unified poem because all the writers are responding to the same image or object.



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You could give small groups of about ten the same lines and ask them to arrange them into a poem. It is interesting to see how different poems can emerge from differing arrangement of the same lines.



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A GROUP POEM BY PAPER CUTS POETS THE LICHEN RISING

The following poem was composed during a group exercise led by poet Lindsay Tuggle at the briefing and training session for poets that took place as part of the Poetic Excursion Education Fundraising event hosted by KPMG (23 November 2010).

Papercuts poet Lindsay Tuggle kindly shared an example of the type of activity that might be used by poets when conducting workshops with students participating in the Papercuts program.

Each participant was asked to look at a photograph of a decaying room and spending a few minutes composing at least one line or stanza of a poem inspired by the image. Some participants wrote in pairs, while others wrote as individuals. Each member of the group reading their contribution aloud to the group created the poem. Tony Britten compiled the poem in consultation with Lindsay Tuggle.

The participants were (in alphabetical order):

Craig Billingham
Tony Britten
Michelle Cahill
Fiona Curran
Eileen Chong
John B. Fairfax (AO)
Toby Fitch
Johanna Featherstone
Tom Lee
Sheryl Persson
Joel Scott
Lindsay Tuggle





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tumblr_l791ytjn2P1qzmws8o1_500.jpg





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THE LICHEN RISING

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.





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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.

*

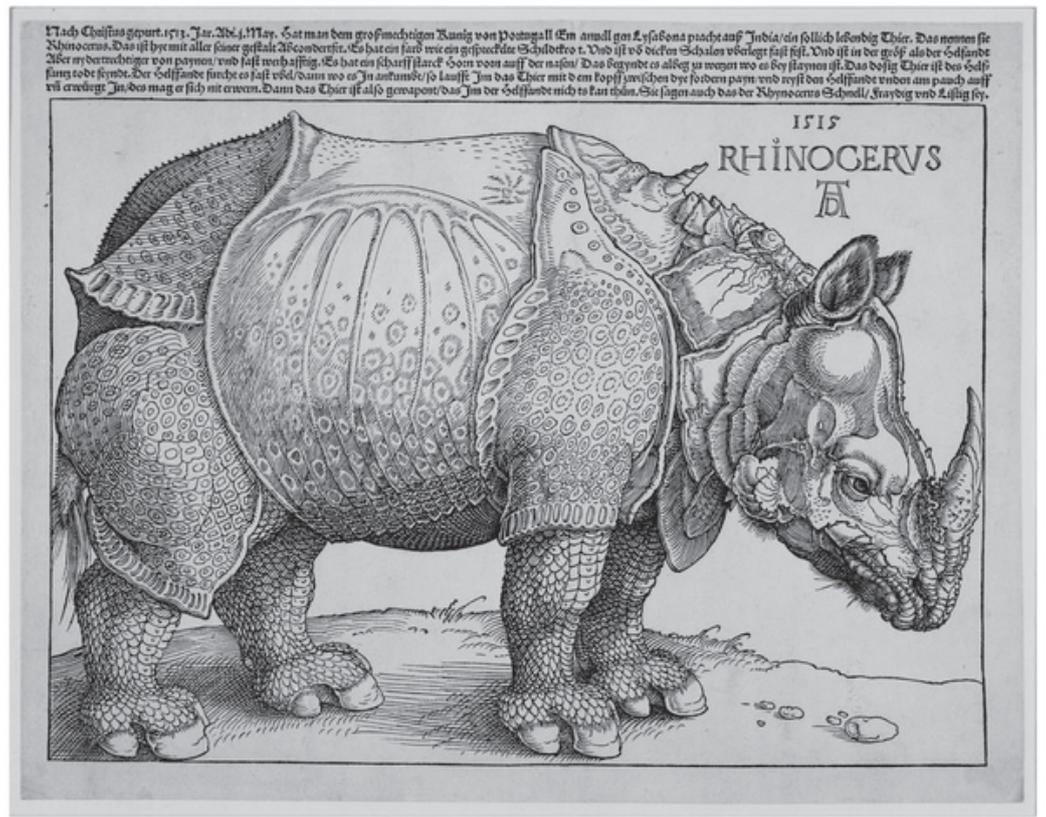
seven years unopened when I returned
the doors, the curtains,
the wiling paint-
all which I recall was unperturbed-
now greet me
frozen beneath the cross hatched ceiling





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DURER'S RHINO: A VERY SPECIAL OBJECT STIMULUS FOR A GROUP POEM



"All kinds of wonderful objects, more beautiful to me than miracles"- Dürer on seeing art works and objects from the New World

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_image.aspx?image=ps090470.jpg&retpage=21369

"... brought from India to the great and powerful King Emanuel of Portugal at Lisbon, a live animal called a rhinoceros. His form is here represented. It has the colour of a speckled tortoise and it is covered with thick scales. It is like an elephant in size, but lower on its legs and almost invulnerable. It is also said that the rhinoceros is fast, lively and cunning."
–translation of the writing by Dürer at the top of the woodcut





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A 2010 project by the British Museum used objects in its collection to tell the history of the world.

A History of the World in 100 Objects used special objects chosen by Mark Pilgrim, the director of the British Museum. When he visited Australia recently he was asked which of the objects from the project was so special to him that he would like to be able to take it home with him.

He instantly replied: "Dürer's rhino."

In 1515, the German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) made a woodcut picture of an Indian rhinoceros, an animal few people living in Europe had ever seen. This picture is now in the British Museum in London. It is only a small image: about twenty centimetres by thirty centimetres, or about the length of a ruler.

Making a woodcut print requires a lot of skill: and Dürer was very good at it indeed. He first had to draw a picture of the rhino onto a piece of soft wood and then carve or cut the wood away, leaving only the lines of the drawing. These raised lines can then be inked and used like a stamp, printing his picture over and over again. The hard part is that the artist has to be able to draw the picture the back to front so that it prints the right way around.

The rhino Dürer drew was a present from Sultan Muzafar II, ruler of the state of Gujarat in western India, to the governor of the nearby Portuguese colony. The governor decided to send this special gift back home to his king, Manuel I of Portugal.

So the rhinoceros (weighing one and half tonnes!) was put onto a sailing ship with a cargo of spices and other gifts. It made the sea journey of 120 days across the Indian Ocean, and around Africa to Portugal. The rhino had already been in a zoo in Gujarat and his keeper fed him on a diet of huge amounts of rice during the sea journey. The rhino even wore a collar of green velvet decorated with flowers!





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The rhinoceros landed in Portugal on 20 May 1515, to enormous excitement. The horned rhino reminded people of magical beasts such as the unicorn.

King Manuel already had his own private zoo. It contained elephants, but no one in the capital city of Lisbon had ever seen a rhino. The king tried to arrange a fight between the rhino and an elephant, but the elephant ran away.

King Manuel decided to give the rhino to Pope Leo X. He had sent the pope a white elephant named "Hanno" the year before. Unfortunately the ship taking the rhino to Italy sank on the way and it was drowned.

The poor rhino was a very good swimmer, but he was chained to the deck of the ship and sank with it. The rhino's body was found and its skin was stuffed with straw and sent back to the pope as a present.

Without ever seeing a rhinoceros in his life Durer made two pen and ink drawings and then a woodcut image. He had only read a description of the rhino in a letter sent from an eyewitness in Portugal to people he knew in Germany.

The woodcut of the rhino was extremely popular with people fascinated by the exotic new world of Asia. As the rhino was dead the only way most people could see a rhino was to buy a copy of Durer's woodcut. It sold about 4-5000 copies in Durer's lifetime. The invention of woodcuts meant that images could be made quickly and cheaply for the first time.

Given Durer never saw a rhino his woodcut is a very good attempt at a portrait. However it is not an accurate image of a rhino. You might like to compare Durer's woodcut to a photograph of a rhino and make a list of what he got wrong. Despite his errors Durer's woodcut was used as an accurate picture of a rhino in school textbooks in Germany up until the 1930s!





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http://www.travelpod.com/travel-photo/mo_mike/1/1256724511/indian-rhino.jpg/tpod.html

