



WATCH THAT TITLE !

AIMS. To transform scientific items into creative writing. To gain a strong idea/ poem quickly.

Suitable for: Year 9 + ; creative writing courses & MAs; adult writers. Youngest users may need guidance.

1. Think of an **object** or **substance** from *any* branch of science or technology. You can use physics or chemistry, astronomy, biology or medicine, geology, ecology, computing, engineering... Try to choose something most of us have heard of. If you get stuck, grab one of these:

Magnet	Jupiter	Blood	Amoeba	Laser beam
Chunk of coral	Black hole	Silicon chip	DNA	Haley's comet
Enzymes	Time machine	The sun	Virus	Flying saucer
Rare orchid	Fossil (<i>of what?</i>)	Molecule	A DVD	Granulated zinc ...

2. When you've picked something, write it down at the top of a sheet of paper – as a **title**.
3. Underneath that title, **describe** your item *plainly*. Focus on its most simple physical features. Use every sense you can. Make short, punchy sentences. Don't edit yet! Some examples...

THE SUN

It is yellow.
It has spots.
Eventually, it sets.
It can blind you ...
... etc.

BLOOD

It's red and thick.
Spilt, it's horrible –
but worse if it's yours.
It's best kept inside ...
... etc.

GRANULATED ZINC

It is shiny.
It is hard, with sharp edges.
In acid, it gives a dangerous gas.
It is kept out of reach in a jar ...
... etc.

DNA

It is invisible to the naked eye.
Without it, we couldn't exist.
We try to unravel its secrets.
It is two snakes embracing ...
... etc.

If what you chose is really a total mystery to you, ask for help, improvise, or try another object.

[GROUP WORK] Read out some of the results. Get a sense of what other people have done.

4. Now for a change of tack. On a sheet of paper, make a list of **emotions** and **abstract nouns**, both positive and negative. Get at least 20 of these. (If working in a group, brainstorm on a flipchart or whiteboard.) If you run dry, feel free to select from the examples below (or their opposites):

Anger	Jealousy	Happiness	Regret	Hope	Old age
War	Falling in love	History	Pride	Fear	Self-belief
Respect	Advice	Duty	Loneliness	Fate	Decay
Curiosity	Luck	Energy	Revenge	Hunger	Friendship
Memory	Justice	Sleep	Death	Time	Surprise ...

5. This is a key moment. **Cross out your title**. Yes, cross it out! Next, **replace it** with any abstract/emotion from your list in '4'. Choose whatever gives an interesting effect. For instance:

~~THE SUN~~ PRIDE

It is yellow.
It has spots.
Eventually, it sets.
It can blind you ...

~~BLOOD~~ ADVICE

It's red and thick.
Spilt, it's horrible –
but worse if it's yours.
It's best kept inside ...

~~GRANULATED ZINC~~ LUCK

It is shiny.
It is hard, with sharp edges.
In acid, it gives a dangerous gas.
It is kept out of reach in a jar ...

~~DNA~~ SLEEP

It is invisible to the naked eye.
Without it, we couldn't exist.
We try to unravel its secrets.
It is two snakes embracing ...

6. You can leave the new piece exactly as it is, or try to improve it. Maybe it's stronger with something added or cut out? Perhaps it builds more convincingly if you change the order of the lines? You might feel some lines don't *really* work under the new title (how can advice be "red and thick"?). Or do you think some of these 'wrong' bits are the best of all? If so, why?

7. **[GROUP WORK]** Read the re-titled pieces out. Discuss results, and any thoughts from '6'. How is it that changing *one* word (in this case, the scientific title) can transform your piece of writing?

8. For a variation on the theme, replace the title with a memorable event in a person's life, e.g.:

First day at school

Breaking a bone

First kiss

A first job

Giving birth ...