

The logo for the 2020 Schools Programme is located in the top right corner. It features the text '2020 SCHOOLS PROGRAMME' in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this, in a smaller font, it says 'SUPPORTED BY THE FREEMASONS FOUNDATION', 'AUCKLAND WRITERS FESTIVAL', and 'WAIWAI O TĀMAKI'. At the very bottom, in the smallest font, is 'WRITERSFESTIVAL.CO.NZ'. The entire logo is set against a white background with a diagonal orange triangle on the right side.

2020  
SCHOOLS  
PROGRAMME

SUPPORTED BY THE FREEMASONS FOUNDATION  
AUCKLAND WRITERS FESTIVAL  
WAIWAI O TĀMAKI  
WRITERSFESTIVAL.CO.NZ

## Karlo Mila: Teaching Notes

### 1.

#### Part A: Years 7-13

For example:

- ‘All my outside world-words / were pegged on a clothesline / blowing in the wind without me.’
- ‘The departed, / fresh on our faces.’
- ‘Te roku-o-whiti quivering like a bird’s wing’
- ‘hands that lick the ebbing tide.’

Get your students to feed these answers back to the class, or in groups. Discuss what each metaphor is, and why it works. Discuss the fact that these are interesting, original images, free from cliché.

#### Part B: Years 7-13

##### **Avoiding Cliché**

Often, we use clichés (or tired/stock language) without even realizing. It becomes so natural to us – they’re so easy to grab. Consider running your students through a couple of examples before starting this exercise. Let them fill in the blank with the verb they most expect. (I do this verbally.)

- Her brow \_\_\_\_ (furrowed)
- The rain \_\_\_\_ (fell)

Offer them alternatives. How about:

- She scrunched up her forehead like a tissue
- The rain scattered itself in the dirt?

This is a whole class exercise. I divide a whiteboard into three and go word by word. I only reveal to them at the end that they can't use the words they're coming up with.

The main ones to make sure they get for each category are:

- A tree

*Green, leafy, limbs for branches, fingers for twigs, skeletal, naked, an army of trees, sentries, wise, old, gnarled, whispering, grandfathers, family trees and family roots.*

- A smile

*Crooked, twisted, beaming, shining, lighting up a room or a face, cheek to cheek, eye to eye, reaches the eyes. infectious, warm, broken, sinister, splitting or cracking a face, a half smile.*

- The night sky

*Starry, inky, dark, endless, the ocean, a blanket, velvet, indigo, anything about feeling small while looking at it.*

You may need to prompt them (e.g. 'Beaming is good – can you think of any more to do with light,' or 'What about when a tree has lost its leaves?') I often talk with them as I go about how ubiquitous some of these are (i.e. 'limbs') and how grotesque some are, without us even noticing (e.g. a smile reaching someone's eyes).

Ask them which of their descriptions was their favourite (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>). Often, it is their third. It's a good way to prove to them that they can revise their work to make it fresher on the page. They are not tethered to the first stock image they think of.

Students read aloud. Give feedback as a class.

**2.**

## **Part B: Years 7-13**

### **A Poem in Seven Parts**

This is an exercise in telling a story through images alone. Make sure these images are concrete and specific. This is a good follow-up to the 'Avoiding Cliché' exercise, as you want them to experiment with language. It's best if you can get them to privilege the words on the page over semantic meaning. The images will still evoke a feeling, an atmosphere, even if the specifics or chronology of the story are lost.

Students read aloud. Give feedback as a class.

## **Part C: Years 9-13**

If you're skipping Part B, still get your students to brainstorm life-changing events. Explain what enjambment is and encourage them to use it. Remind them that it will emphasize the end word of that line, and the first word of the next line, so they want to make sure these are good words (e.g. 'hands / weaving' instead of 'are / the').

If possible, get them to go outside and read their poems aloud to edit them. Make sure they pause with the enjambment. They will hear the different rhythms created by the different modes of writing within the one poem.

Students read aloud. Give feedback as a class.

### 3.

#### Part A: Years 7-13

They should be able to identify that they start with the same word 'each', but you may have to prompt them. Name this device – it's not just repetition but anaphora, which means starting a sentence or line or phrase with the same word or words.

#### Part B: Years 7-13

##### **Timed Free Writing**

This should be done with paper and pen. Only let those with medical reasons use computers. If anyone stops writing, tell them to stop thinking so much.

I usually have them write for ten minutes, but if you don't have the time, you can go down to five (anything below that is too short). I usually set a timer to make it more intense.

#### Part C: Years 7-13

##### **Anaphora poem**

Ideally, this is with paper and pen again.

Anaphora poems generate energy through their list-like quality. The rhythm is important, which is why writing them quickly helps. Encourage them, in their editing process, to cut the original phrase in places. This will stop the poem from starting to feel 'tired' by the end, particularly if they vary where they cut it and where they keep it.

Students read aloud. Give feedback as a class.

**4.**

## Part B: Years 11-13

If they're confused by what 'personal meaning' the word might have in their life, ask them why they chose it? Does someone they know use that word? Does it describe an aspect of their life? This is a deliberately broad category. Steer them back toward concrete language and specific examples if they get too abstract.

Students read aloud. Give feedback as a class.

## 5.

### Part A: Years 9-13

Make sure they use <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/> for translations, if possible. It's the best online (and possibly offline) Māori dictionary.

### Part B: Years 9-13

Students read aloud and give feedback as a class.

## 6.

### Part A: Years 7-13

#### **Editing exercise**

I like to end classes with this exercise, because one of the main problems I see in student poetry is ‘filler language’. It quickly flattens rhythms and turns a poem prosaic. They should be striving to be precise and concise with language. Learning to carve away a poem, until only the strong lines remain, is a useful skill. This will mean they may need to let go of aspects of narrative or meaning – but often, these aspects are unnecessary to the poem anyway.

Students read aloud and give feedback as a class.

Read the World exercises and teaching notes created by Ruby Porter, a prose writer and poet. She teaches creative writing at The University of Auckland and was the inaugural winner of the Michael Gifkins prize for her debut novel *Attraction*.

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