



# Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

## Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



### Alien Poetry

by Katja Foreman-Braunschweig

DURATION: 1.5 hours  
GRADE LEVEL: High School  
WRITING LEVEL: All levels

FOCUS: aliens, point of view

EXAMPLE POEM  
[Monologue for an Onion](#)  
by Suji Kwock Kim

**FOR TEENS, BY TEENS**  
A lesson plan from InsideOut's Youth Advisory Board

Check in | 15 minutes

#### What is your favorite planet and why?

Write a few sentences about it. Maybe draw the planet. If you are doing this exercise with others, share your planet.

Resource Building | 15 minutes

Make a few lists:

- **3 or more inanimate objects** that represent how you feel at the moment.
- Think about layers — layers of meaning, layers of clothing, layers of personal barriers, etc. **Make a list of 3 or more examples of layers in your own life.**
- Write from the perspective of an alien. **Make a list of 3 or more observations about humanity.** These can be serious or wacky or anything in between.

Close Reading | 20 minutes

READ | [Monologue for an Onion by Suji Kwock Kim](#)

#### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

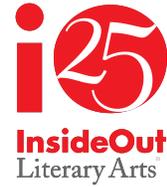
- What does it mean to be human in this poem? What does it mean to be human to you?
- How do the line breaks in this poem affect the meaning?
- Think about the idea of a heart and layers. Do you think this poem has a "heart" of meaning, like the humans it is criticizing?
- What is your favorite line and why?

BONUS POEM (OPTIONAL) | [Martian Sends a Postcard Home by Craig Raine](#)



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### Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

**Write a poem from the perspective of something or someone non-human.**

#### TIPS

- Consider using the first list you came up with, if you need!
- Use this perspective to explore humanity: its fallacies, beauties, everything in between.
- For a challenge, use enjambment (a poem that uses line breaks in the middle of sentences to add meaning).

#### EXAMPLE

*the apple was so  
good  
that i cried*

Instead of saying, "the apple was so good that i cried", next line.)

### Share Out | 15 minutes



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### Monologue for an Onion

by Suji Kwock Kim

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I don't mean to make you cry.  
I mean nothing, but this has not kept you  
From peeling away my body, layer by layer,  
The tears clouding your eyes as the table fills  
With husks, cut flesh, all the debris of pursuit.  
Poor deluded human: you seek my heart.  
Hunt all you want. Beneath each skin of mine  
Lies another skin: I am pure onion — pure onion  
Of outside and in, surface and secret core.  
Look at you, chopping and weeping. Idiot.  
Is this the way you go through life, your mind  
A stopless knife, driven by your fantasy of truth,  
Of lasting union — slashing away skin after skin  
From things, ruin and tears your only signs  
Of progress? Enough is enough.  
You must not grieve that the world is glimpsed  
Through veils. How else can it be seen?  
How will you rip away the veil of the eye, the veil  
That you are, you who want to grasp the heart  
Of things, hungry to know where meaning  
Lies. Taste what you hold in your hands: onion-juice,  
Yellow peels, my stinging shreds. You are the one  
In pieces. Whatever you are meant to love, in meaning to  
You changed yourself: you are not who you are,  
Your soul cut moment to moment by a blade  
Of fresh desire, the ground sown with abandoned skins.  
And at your inmost circle, what? A core that is  
Not one. Poor fool, you are divided at the heart,  
Lost in its maze of chambers, blood, and love,  
A heart that will one day beat you to death.

[Monologue for an Onion by Suji Kwock Kim, Academy of American Poets](#)



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### A Martian Sends a Postcard Home

by Craig Raine

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Caxtons are mechanical birds with many wings  
and some are treasured for their markings —  
they cause the eyes to melt  
or the body to shriek without pain.  
I have never seen one fly, but  
sometimes they perch on the hand.  
Mist is when the sky is tired of flight  
and rests its soft machine on ground:  
then the world is dim and bookish  
like engravings under tissue paper.  
Rain is when the earth is television  
it has the property of making colors darker.  
Model T is a room with the lock inside —  
a key is turned to free the world  
for movement, so quick there is a film  
to watch for anything missed.  
But time is tied to the wrist  
or kept in a box, ticking with impatience.  
In homes, a haunted apparatus sleeps,  
that snores when you pick it up.  
If the ghost cries, they carry it  
to their lips and soothe it to sleep  
with sounds. And yet, they wake it up  
deliberately, by tickling with a finger.  
Only the young are allowed to suffer  
openly. Adults go to a punishment room  
  
with water but nothing to eat.  
They lock the door and suffer the noises  
alone. No one is exempt  
and everyone's pain has a different smell.  
At night, when all the colors die  
they hide in pairs  
and read about themselves —  
in color, with their eyelids shut.

[Martian Sends a Postcard Home by Craig Raine, Poetry by Heart](#)