



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*

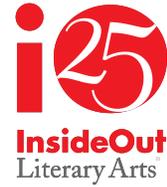
Instead of saying, "the apple was so good that i cried", next line.)

Share Out | 15 minutes



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Monologue for an Onion

by Suji Kwock Kim

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

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](#)