

KEY STAGE	AGE
KS1	5-7
KS2	7-11 ✓
KS3	11-14 ✓
KS4	14-16
KS5	16-18

AT A GLANCE
• SHORT POEMS
• REDRAFTING
• RIDDLES
• THE SENSES
• RELUCTANT WRITERS

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**POETRYCLASS: FRESH IDEAS FOR POETRY LEARNING FROM THE POETRY SOCIETY**  
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# TELEGRAMS

BY MARIO PETRUCCI

This simple exercise can work with any age group. As well as working as a generative exercise in its own right, it can be used in post-writing situations as it encourages writers to edit and redraft their work. It's fun, and builds skills of judgement, negotiation and close reading.

### Getting inspiration

Give out the accompanying sheet and ask the students to start a descriptive piece on something they've recently experienced, or that they know about. OBJECTS, ANIMALS or PEOPLE are best. Suggest a few examples for them to get the idea: 'My grandad', 'My pet piranha, Denture', etc. Reassure them that they don't need to pay any attention to 'form', they just write as it comes.

Set a tight time limit, and after two to five minutes ask everyone to stop writing. There are now two variants to the exercise, in which students either work individually or as a group.

### Distilling down the essentials

**A)** Tell the students they are going to 'send' their writing to the class as a telegram. You might have to explain what this is! They each have £1 to spend, and each word costs 10p. Give them a few minutes to decide which words and phrases are the most revealing, the most essential.

They then list these and read their telegrams to the class. They don't have to spend the whole pound! This is a good way, too, of turning their writing into a riddle.

**B)** Put them in groups of 'x'. Each group has 'x' pounds to spend, but it's still 10p a word – so they have to negotiate how much each 'poem' gets. This tends to be less heated if they swap writing within the group, but arguing a case is sometimes part of the benefit!

### Review and reflect

Afterwards, discuss the experience of writing the telegrams – was it difficult? What issues did it raise in terms of syntax, grammar and form? Was the telegram 'better' than the original? Was it interesting when the subject was unclear? As a follow-up exercise, students could repeat the activity, with words costing a different amount – how does this affect what they write?



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**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Y4 NOTEMAKING: TO EDIT DOWN A SENTENCE OR PASSAGE BY DELETING THE LESS IMPORTANT ELEMENTS**
  - Y5 TO REVIEW AND EDIT WRITING TO PRODUCE A FINAL FORM, MATCHED TO THE NEEDS OF A READER**
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# TELEGRAMS

**1** Start to write a description of something you've recently experienced, or that you know about. You could choose to write about an object, an animal or a person. Write as much as you can within the time limit you're given.

**POET'S TIP**  
Stick to the senses. If you get stuck, try making a list of facts or characteristics.

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**2** Send your writing as a telegram. Imagine each word will cost you 10p and you must stick to the budget you've been given. Choose the words and phrases that are the most revealing, the most essential.

Charges to pay _____, _____ d. <b>RECEIVED</b>	<b>POST</b>  <b>OFFICE</b> <b>TELEGRAM</b>	No. _____ <b>OFFICE STAMP</b>
At _____ m From _____ By _____	<small>Prefix. Time Handed in. Office of Origin and Service Instructions. Words.</small>	At _____ m To _____ By _____
<p>For free repetition of doubtful words, telephone "TELEGRAMS ENQUIRY" or call with this form at office of delivery. Other enquiries should be accompanied by this form, and, if possible, the envelope. <span style="float: right;">BorC</span></p>		

NAME: .....