

TALKING OBJECTS: USING PERSONIFICATION AND THE TECHNIQUES OF SURREALISM TO WRITE ABOUT THINGS

In this lesson plan from T&W teaching artist [Joanna Fuhrman](#), students are invited to create Surrealist poems in which two objects carry on a conversation.

Grade(s) Taught: Elementary and middle school

Common Core State Standard:

(Refer to the [Anchor Standards for Writing at English Language Arts > Writing](#))

- Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

Objectives: To introduce the concepts of personification, Surrealism in writing about objects.

Prompt: Excerpt from Robert Desnos' poem ["Sky Song"](#)

LESSON

Reading:

Read and distribute an edited version of Robert Desnos's poem, ["Sky Song."](#)

"Sky Song" (*excerpt*)

The flower of the Alps told the seashell: "You're shining"
The seashell told the sea: "You echo"
The sea told the boat: "You're shuddering"
The boat told the fire: "You're glowing brightly"
The fire told me: "I glow less brightly than her eyes"

Discussion:

"Sky Song" is written almost like a play. Each object talks as if it were a human being. Desnos is using the technique of personification here, assigning the qualities of a person to something that isn't human or, in some cases, to something that isn't even alive. Desnos was a Surrealist and like the other poets in that movement he thought of poetry as a kind of waking dream.

Writing Assignment:

Look at the objects in a painting or in the room around you and imagine you can hear them talking to you or to each other. What would each object say? You could also imagine the different parts of a single object talking to each other. For example, the lip of the vase might talk to the body of the vase.

Using "Sky Song" as a model, write a poem recording what these objects say to each other. Feel free to follow the structure of the poem and start each line with "The _____ told the _____" Don't worry about making sense, but write as if you were dreaming.