



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Roses Are Blue

Author: Sally Murphy
Illustrator: Gabriel Evans
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NZRRP: \$18.99
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

Amber Rose and her family are dealing with tragedy and change. But sometimes hope blooms suddenly ...

Author/Illustrator Information:

Sally Murphy is a mother, wife, teacher, speaker, website manager, reviewer, and, of course, author. She was born in Perth and now lives in Dalyellup, Western Australia. In 2001 she decided to dedicate herself to her dream of becoming a children's author and has now published 28 books. As well as writing for children, Sally is a children's book reviewer who runs the review site www.aussiereviews.com. Her first illustrated verse novel with Walker Books Australia, *Pearl Verses the World* (illustrated by Heather Potter) won the children's book category for the Indie Book of the Year awards, 2009; was awarded Honour Book in the Younger Readers category, Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards, 2010; and won the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards, 2010, Best Book for Language Development, Upper Primary (8-12 years). *Toppling* (illustrated by Rhian Nest James) has won the Children's Book – Mary Ryan's Award, Queensland Premier's Literary Awards 2010 and the Children's Book category in the 2010 Western Australian Premier's Book Awards. It has also been short-listed for the 2010 Speech Pathology Australia, Book of the Year Awards, Upper Primary category and the 2011 Children's Book Council of Australia Awards, Younger Readers Books.

Gabriel Evans currently lives in Western Australia. He was very young when he picked up a paintbrush and discovered he could make marks on paper. Gabriel decided to make this new discovery his profession. Since then he has created paintings using watercolour, gouache, inks, pencils, charcoal and oil. Gabriel co-created a family greeting card line under the name "Creations in a Teapot". He's never had to buy a greeting card since. Gabriel's studio is very messy as he believes creativity is found in clutter. *Walker Stories: Annie's Snails* (written by Dianne Wolfer) was his first book.

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

These notes are for:

- Primary years 4-6
- Ages 8+

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Art

Example of:

- Verse novel

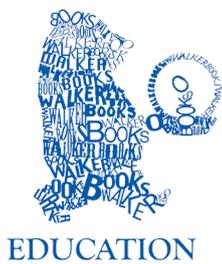
Themes/ Ideas:

- Family
- Relationships
- Overcoming difficulties
- Disabilities
- Bullying

National Curriculum Focus:* English content descriptions include:

Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
ACELA1475	ACELA1490	ACELA1504	ACELT1613
ACELA1478	ACELT1602	ACELA1512	ACELT1614
ACELT1594	ACELT1603	ACELT1608	ACELT1615
ACELT1596	ACELT1604	ACELT1610	ACELT1616
ACELT1599	ACELT1605	ACELT1611	ACELT1617
ACELT1600	ACELT1606	ACELT1612	ACELT1618
ACELT1601	ACELT1607	ACELT1798	ACELT1800
ACELT1791	ACELT1794	ACELY1698	
ACELY1675			

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.



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Sally Murphy on *Roses Are Blue*

I'm a bit of a different mother, and sometimes this can be embarrassing for my kids. I sing (badly) in public, talk to strangers in supermarket queues and laugh too loudly. I was thinking about this one day, and I wondered what it would be like if your mother was really different, and you didn't want your friends to know. The idea for *Roses Are Blue* came from this seed.



Also written by Sally Murphy



Pearl Verses the World
Illustrated by Heather Potter
9781921150937
AU\$15.95/NZ\$17.99
[Classroom ideas available](#)



Toppling
Illustrated by Rhian Nest James
9781921529429
AU\$16.95/NZ\$18.99
[Classroom ideas available](#)



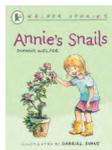
Do Not Forget Australia
Illustrated by Sonia Kretschmar
HB 9781921529863
AU\$29.95/NZ\$32.99
PB 9781922077097
AU\$16.95/NZ\$18.99
[Classroom ideas available](#)

Gabriel Evans on *Roses Are Blue*

Roses Are Blue was a beautiful book to illustrate. Inspired by the gently poetic text, I explored the world of Amber and her friends. Using traditional pencil, ink and watercolour, I began to design her world, initially through light, reflective sketches then creating the final paintings seen in the book.



Also illustrated by Gabriel Evans



Walker Stories: Annie's Snails
Written by Dianne Wolfer
9781921720635
AU\$11.95/NZ\$13.99
[Classroom ideas available](#)

Discussion Questions and Activities

Before reading *Roses Are Blue*

In groups, have students find a definition and examples of one type of poetry and present this to the class. For example, ballad, ode, elegy, haiku, lyric. The following sites may be a useful starting point:

- Young Writers: <https://www.youngwriters.co.uk/glossary-poetry-types>
- Poetry4Kids: <http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/poetry-writing-lessons/>

Once you have reviewed a range of different poetry types, discuss the concept of free verse. How is it different to other types of poetry? What opportunities might this form present for writers?

View the front cover of *Roses Are Blue*. Based on the title and cover illustration, what do you think the book will be about? How do you think the girl on the cover is feeling? What tells you this?

Read Sally Murphy's author comment where she discusses the inspiration for the novel, stating: "I wondered what it would be like if your mother was really different, and you didn't want your friends to know." As a class, brainstorm some of the ways that the mother in the story might be different.



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Guided reading activities

Pages 7-9.

Look at the illustration of the different mothers with their children on pages 8 and 9. Based on Amber's description, which mums do you think are shown? Were there any which were harder to identify than others?

Page 9.

Stop at the end of page 9. Before reading on, write 3 possible ways you think Amber's mum could be different.

Pages 8-10.

The author has used repetition on these pages to emphasise the main ideas. What words have been repeated? What effect does this have? On a separate page of your workbook, draw up a table with two columns. Label these columns "Example of repetition" and "Effect". As you continue reading, record any other examples of repetition you come across and explain why you think the author has included these. For instance, do they emphasise a particular idea or character trait, or create a certain mood?

Page 10.

Sally Murphy uses contrast in the sentence: "My mum's legs are very, very still / but her hand sometimes twitches and twitters." Try saying the phrase "twitches and twitters" aloud. What language technique has the author used here? What is interesting about the use of the word "twitters"? (Hint: use a dictionary to check the meaning.) Why do you think the author has chosen to use this word?

Page 12.

"My heart drops / a little" is an example of metaphorical language. Why do you think the author has chosen to put a line break in the middle of this phrase? On a separate page, write a heading "Metaphors" and as you read, write down any other metaphors you come across. Think about how these metaphors are used to convey Amber's emotions.

Page 13.

Why do you think Amber doesn't want her mum at the high tea? Is there more than one reason?

Pages 14-15.

Look at the illustration of Amber's family taking her mother to the shops. What do you notice about the reactions of other people? Look particularly at their body language and facial expressions.

Page 16-17.

Write half a page showing the conversation the boy's mum might have with her son after Amber and her family leave the supermarket. Remember to use inverted commas (speech marks) for dialogue. Or draw a 1-2 page comic strip showing the conversation the boy's mum might have with her son after Amber and her family leave the supermarket. Remember, comic strip artists use speech bubbles for dialogue.

Page 18.

Why is Amber so upset by the incident in the supermarket?

Page 24.

What special skill does Amber have? Write a paragraph about something you love doing or are good at. Write about how you learnt this skill, what you enjoy about it and who supports you with this skill.

Page 25.

What does Amber choose to draw for the art competition? What would you draw if you were entering?

Page 33.

Amber says: "My thinking happens with a paintbrush." What does she mean by this? What language technique has Murphy used here? When there is something you need to reflect on or understand, what helps you to make sense of things? For instance, doing a particular activity, going somewhere special or talking to someone. Discuss your responses with a partner.

Page 38.

The "Roses Are Red" poem is written in a different font to the rest of the book. Why do you think this is? Why might this particular font have been chosen? Think about the feelings or emotions it evokes.

Look at the way the lines of verse have been laid out. Why are they arranged like this rather than in straight lines?

Page 40.

What caused the change in Amber's mum?

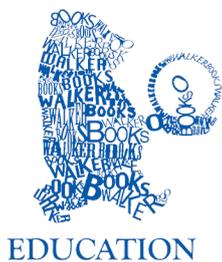
Page 41.

Look at the illustration at the bottom of this page. Why do you think the illustrator has chosen not to show Amber's face and to position her outside the room at a distance from her mother? Would the picture have had a different impact if the illustrator had positioned Amber inside the room next to her mother's bed?

Page 43.

What might the phrase "(I absolutely love her)" reveal about Amber's feelings towards her Mum? What purpose do the brackets and repetition serve? For example, do they suggest she is feeling guilty in some way or needs to reassure herself?

Amber has been through a significant change in her life and wishes things could go back to how they were before; however, sometimes changes can't be reversed and people have to deal with their new situation. In small groups, discuss ways you could help Amber accept her changed situation and feel better about it. Write down some of the ideas you come up with.



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Page 46.

Write down your impression of Leroy at this point in the novel.

Page 48

Amber says: "I have a confession / to make: / Not everyone thought my old Mum was perfect." Why do you think Murphy decides to include negative, as well as positive, details about Amber's mother?

Write down three adjectives you would use to describe Amber's Mum at this point in the novel.

Page 56.

Amber admits that she feels sorry for Jack because he doesn't remember what their mum used to be like. How does Amber try to make up for this? What other things could she do for Jack so he understands what his mum used to be like?

Overall, do you think the situation is harder for Jack or Amber to deal with? Why?

Pages 58-59.

What significant event occurs in this section of the novel?

Page 62.

In the past, Amber's mother paints a picture of her family from her perspective, explaining: "I'm the eyes of that painting, / showing the viewer what it is I see." If she were able to paint a typical picture of her family now, what might it show?

Page 67.

What important realisation does Amber reach at this point in the novel?

Page 69.

Amber confesses: "I am ashamed of myself / for being so mean / about my mum / who is still my mum / even though she is very different, / but I cannot change the way I feel." How do you feel about Amber when she says this? For example, do you blame her or understand why she would feel this way? Do you think having these complicated feelings makes her a more realistic and believable character overall?

Page 76.

Write what you think will happen at Amber's school tomorrow.

Pages 80-81.

Based on what she says to Amber, what words would you use to describe Aunty Fi?

Page 89.

Why is Saffron upset?

Write a list of some of the characteristics that make a good friend.

Page 92.

Why do you think Leroy was not initially excited about the high tea?

Page 93.

Amber realises she jumped to an incorrect conclusion in the shopping centre when Leroy bumped into her mum's wheelchair. Why do you think Amber was so quick to think that Leroy and his mum were disgusted?

Pages 97-98.

How does Amber show maturity? What are some of the other ways Amber has showed maturity throughout the novel?

Page 100.

Amber employs a simile when she says; "She is looking at me / as if I am the most beautiful rose / she has ever seen." What is the difference between a simile and a metaphor? Write some similes to describe members of your family.

Page 102.

What is the significance of Amber painting a picture of her mum "how she is now" compared to "how she's meant to be" (page 35)? What does this tell us about how Amber has grown over the course of the novel?

After Reading

English

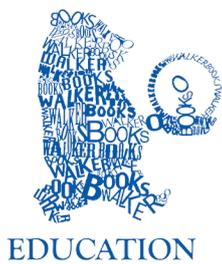
Language Style & Structure

Identify the main plot features in the novel: orientation, complication, climax and resolution. Create a graphic representation of the plot.

Roses Are Blue is a verse novel, meaning it is written in free verse, an open form of poetry that tries to recreate the rhythm of natural speech. How would the novel have been different if Sally Murphy had used a traditional prose (non-poetic language) style? Do you think you would have enjoyed the book so much? Why or why not?

Choose a section from the book and read it aloud, pausing at the end of each line. Then, reread the section, pausing only at commas and full stops as you would in a traditional novel. How does the story feel different when read in these ways?

A post on the Poetry Box blog which looks at two of Sally Murphy's earlier books offers this definition of a verse novel: "You could think of it as one very long poem! But it is more than that. It is a story in the shape of a poem. Think of it as a very long story with line breaks (so the words don't go to



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the end of the line). This gives the story RHYTHM! You might find lots of other poetry features as well (similes, metaphor, rhyme, alliteration, repetition)." Discuss this definition as a class. Is there anything you would add to it? (You may like to look at the full blog post at <http://nzpoetrybox.wordpress.com/2014/05/13/dear-sally-murphy-i-love-your-novels-in-verse/>)

Roses are Blue uses a first person narrative style ("I") and free verse to tell Amber's story. Choose a challenging experience from your own life and try recounting it in a similar style. You may like to experiment with some of the language techniques Sally Murphy employs such as metaphorical language and repetition. There are no rules for free verse, however, so you can be as creative as you like.

Divide the class into two and debate whether *Roses are Blue* is closer to prose or to poetry in style. Use examples and quotes from the book to support your argument.

Choose a section of the book and rewrite it as prose. Exchange your work with a friend. In what way is their version different to the original? As a reader, do you react differently to the two versions? How?

Choose an episode in another novel you have read and rewrite it in free verse.

In her author statement, Sally Murphy discusses how she is "a bit of a different mother, and sometimes this can be embarrassing for my kids". Think of a time when you were embarrassed by your mother, father or carer. Write a recount of this experience, focusing on exploring emotions and feelings. Now, recount the experience again, this time trying to present it in a humorous light. Exchange both versions with a classmate: What impact did the two versions have? Did they prefer one version to the other? Discuss the way language style changes the way readers react to a story.

How does Sally Murphy use a mixture of humour/light-heartedness and sensitivity/emotional depth in *Roses are Blue*?

On page 63, Amber's mum teaches her how "shadow / and shapes and shades / are so important / for making a picture." In what ways does Sally Murphy use "shadow" and "shade" as a writer?

Reread the description of the different mothers on pages 7-10. Using this as inspiration, write a poem with the first lines: "My Dad is different. Before you start/yes, I do know that all dads are different." You can either base the poem on your own life or make it up.

Amber's story is told in informal and colloquial language. What examples can you find? Why do you think the author has chosen this language style?

What does the title of this book mean? Does it have more

than one meaning? What literary device has the author used?

How can you tell when a character is speaking aloud in *Roses Are Blue*? How is this different to other books?

When somebody describes themselves as "feeling blue", what sort of mood are they in? Can you think of any other colours that have feelings associated with them?

Make a list of vocabulary or spelling words from the text for a friend. Once you have exchanged lists, use quizlet (<http://quizlet.com/>) to learn your wordlist.

On her blog, Sally Murphy and her online friends play a game of "poetry tag" where they give each other random collections of words and challenge them to write a poem using them. The poem can be in any form and on any subject, as long as it uses all the words. (Visit <http://poetrytag.wordpress.com> to see some of the poems they wrote.) Play this as a class by having all students write three words on individual slips of paper, place them in a hat, and then randomly draw out three new words to use in a poem. Alternatively, all class members could use the same three words and then compare the different poems they come up with.

Read another verse novel by Sally Murphy or a different author (Lorraine Marwood, Sherryl Clark, Sharon Creech and Steven Herrick are some authors you might like to look at). Draw a Venn diagram showing similarities and differences with *Roses are Blue* in terms of language style, themes, structure, character and perspective.

Character

Write a diary entry as Amber 6 months after the events at the end of the book. Consider particularly how her life and situation may have changed over this time. For instance, has her mother's condition altered at all? How are the other members of her family coping? What is her relationship with Leroy or Saffron like now?

Choose a key event in the book and rewrite it from the perspective of another character.

Create a fake Facebook page for Amber. (This can be done using Microsoft Word if you do not have access to Facebook.) Think carefully about her personality and the sort of information she would include on her page. Write a series of status updates as Amber.

Use Wordle (www.wordle.net) or a similar site to create a word cloud to represent a character from the text.

Debate the following statement as a class using quotes from the book as evidence: "Lola Jones is a bully".



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How has Lola's behaviour affected Amber? Imagine you are Amber and write a letter to Lola explaining the impact of her past behaviour and how you feel about her now.

Themes & Ideas

Discuss the saying "You don't know what you've got until it's gone" and how it applies to Amber's situation. Do you think this saying is true of real life? Make a list of some of the good things in your life you might take for granted or not fully appreciate.

Write a book review of *Roses Are Blue*, paying special attention to the themes and issues it raises. To add extra information to your book review, research the author and illustrator online.

Throughout the novel, Amber talks about the differences between her old and new life. Make a table showing the main ways Amber's life has changed over the last year. Label one column "old" and one column "new". Which of these challenges would you find most difficult to cope with?

Coping with change is one of the key themes of the novel. Think about some major changes you have encountered in your life. For instance, changing school, moving house, the death of a family member, separation or divorce or getting a new sibling. Choose one example from these experiences and design a pamphlet which aims to help other children who may be going through a similar change. Arrange your ideas in short sections such as "Background information", "Tips for coping" and "Where you can learn more" – you may even like to include your own experiences as a case study or real-life example.

On page 92, Amber realises that she has jumped to an incorrect conclusion about Leroy's and his mother's behaviour. Are there any other occasions in the book when Amber makes an assumption or reaches a conclusion that turns out to be wrong? Has there ever been an occasion when you've done the same thing in your life?

Discuss your experiences in small groups, then use your discussion as inspiration for a cautionary tale entitled "The danger of jumping to conclusions". (A cautionary tale is a short story warning of a particular danger. Many fairytales, myths and legends are examples of cautionary tales.)

Cross-Curriculum Connections

Drama

Choose one of the supporting characters in the book such as Leroy, Saffron, Amber's father, or Aunty Fi. Write and present a monologue to the class as this character. You may like to use costumes or props.

Music

On page 38, Amber recalls a special song her Mum sang to her when she was little. Can you remember any songs you were sung or stories you were told when you were young? Discuss these in small groups.

In small groups, compose a tune to accompany the "Roses are Red" lyrics. Think particularly about capturing the mood or feel of the lyrics and of the book as a whole. Perform your musical piece to the class. You may like to incorporate musical or percussion instruments, body sounds, dance or movement into your performance.

Choose a favourite song or rhyme from your childhood and type it into a word document. (If you can't remember a song, then find one in a book of nursery rhymes or lullabies.) Use the font tab to experiment with different fonts, thinking about the mood or atmosphere each creates. (Remember, Amber's special song is presented in a different font to the rest of the book.) Once you have chosen a suitable font, print your song or rhyme and illustrate it with a picture representing your childhood. As a class, bind all the songs and rhymes together to create a class treasury. You may like to present a copy of this to a local preschool or kindergarten, or even arrange an excursion where class members can teach their contribution to the children.

Art

Look at Gabriel Evans's illustrations. How would you describe his style? What is unique about it?

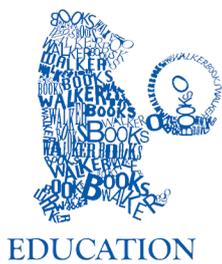
Choose one page of the story and illustrate it in your own style.

Imagine that the publishers wanted to choose an alternative title for the book. What would you call it and why? Design a new cover for the book with this alternative title. Consider how you can use font, colour, pictures, layout and other visual techniques to give an impression of the mood, themes and content of the book.

Use the program Toondoo (<http://www.toondoo.com>) to turn a key episode from the book into a comic strip.

Colours have different feelings and ideas associated with them. What do you associate with the colour blue? Use the internet to work out the symbolic meanings of the colour blue and other colours.

Amber's friends all have names which refer to colours. As a class, discuss what your names mean. (You may need to use the internet to research it.) Put all class members' names and their meanings in a hat. Have each student draw one out and then create a decorative name plate for that person, using font, colour, images and other visual techniques to convey the meaning of their name. Create a collage or visual representation of *Roses are*



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Blue, using pictures, symbols, text and found objects to show your understanding of the book's subject, themes, characters, mood and style. Alternatively, you might like to create an online photostream on a site such as www.tumblr.com

Reread page 22 where Amber creates a special card for her mother. Using this section as inspiration, make a card for your mother or someone special. On the front, draw a picture of their favourite things, similar to how Amber draws a bunch of flowers her mother would love. Inside, write a short poem about the person. You may like to use a free verse style like Sally Murphy.

On page 62, Amber's mother does a painting of her family from her perspective. Do your own painting or drawing of your family as you see them through your eyes.

The artist Pablo Picasso went through a period of painting using blue as the main colour. Research his "blue period" online. How do you think he was feeling when he created these paintings?

The website <http://www.webexhibits.org/colorart/picasso.html> allows you to alter the colour and tone of one of his most famous blue paintings, "The Tragedy". How does this affect its mood?

Create a portrait of a family member using one main colour. Write an explanation of why you have chosen this colour and how it reflects your feelings about your family member.

Science

Flowers have different symbolic meanings. Use the internet to find out the symbolic meaning of a rose. Do you think that Sally Murphy may have been thinking of this meaning when she named her characters? Why or why not? Make a poster with pictures of other common flowers and what they symbolise.

What would some of the challenges be of caring for someone like Amber's mum after her accident? Use the internet to research ways of coping with these challenges. In the character of a doctor, nurse or physical therapist, write instructions for Amber's father when he takes his wife home from the hospital. Think about such things as nutrition and feeding, bathing and hygiene, moving about, exercise and mental stimulation.

Maths

Reread page 24 where Amber talks about her passion for drawing. Take a survey of the class to find out what each student's special skill or passion is. Transform the results into a bar graph or pie chart.

PDHPE/Food Science

Working in small groups, plan a menu for a high tea for your class. Because "all mums are different" and like different things, try to ensure that there is something everyone can eat including:

- vegetarians (people who don't eat meat)
- vegans (people who don't eat any animal products including dairy and honey)
- people who can't eat gluten (gluten is found in bread and other food made from wheat)
- people who are trying to eat healthy foods.

Use a design program such as Publisher to create an invitation or menu card for your high tea. Think about the use of colour, positioning, font (the type that you use), frames and borders and images.

Amber and her classmates make cupcakes for the Mother's Day high tea. Make or decorate cupcakes for your mothers or other people who care for you.

Additional Resources

- Sally Murphy's tips on how to write a poem: <http://www.dorothea.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Sally-Murphy-An-Easy-Way-to-Write-a-Poem.pdf>
- Sally Murphy discusses why she writes "sad" novels: <http://readingforaustralia.blogspot.com.au/2014/05/why-so-sad-by-sally-murphy.html>
- Sally Murphy's blog: <http://sallymurphy.com.au>



Roses Are Blue



Poetry writing activity sheet

In *Roses are Blue*, Sally Murphy uses free verse to explore how Amber copes after her mother's accident and to celebrate the love between them. Write a poem celebrating your mum, grandmother or someone else you care about.

The following steps will help you generate ideas for your poem. Do the activities as quickly as you can – sometimes the first thing that comes into your mind is the best. (If you're not writing about your mother, simply substitute the appropriate word for 'mum'.)

The raw material

Write down 5 adjectives which describe your mum.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Write down 5 verbs you associate with your mum.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Write down 5 objects you associate with her.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Complete the following statements into your workbook then complete them any way you like. There is no right or wrong way to interpret them – what you write is up to you.

- My mum is _____
- She isn't _____
- If mum were a colour, she would be _____ because _____
- Her smile is like _____
- Once she _____
- Most mothers _____
- But my mum _____
- My mum is like a (insert a type of animal) _____ when _____

- She loves _____
- She can't _____
- She can't stand _____
- She always says _____
- One day she'll _____
- She must be the only person on earth who _____
- My mum is a _____ (hint – try to use a metaphor which sums up your mum overall)

Listen to your teacher reading the following passage aloud. Make sure you have a paper and pen close at hand for the end of the activity.

Close your eyes and conjure up a picture of your mother in your mind... Where is she?... What is she wearing?... What objects can you see around her?... Imagine her moving, possibly just a small gesture... What does she do?... Look closely at her as if you were drawing a portrait... What expression does she have on her face?... What might she be thinking about?... Try to imagine the words that are going through her head...

Open your eyes slowly and pick up your pen. Now, without thinking, write a paragraph describing your mother as you have just imagined her. Don't worry about planning your ideas or about spelling and punctuation: just get the ideas down as quickly as you can. You will have 3 minutes.

The process

Once you have completed these steps, read back over your work and highlight sentences, words and phrases you particularly like. Reading them aloud might help. Cross out any weak or boring words, as well as any unnecessary words or "padding". When you've finished, you should have a collection of strong, vivid words and phrases which paint a picture in your mind. This will be the material you build on in your poem.

Write each phrase or word on a slip of paper. Is it possible to tell a kind of story through them? Experiment by shuffling them around or placing them in different orders, paying particular attention to your opening and final lines. Try varying your line length, using a combination of longer lines and short – even single-word – lines. Also play around with line breaks to give your images and ideas more power. You may want to cut out more words as you go, or add or change things slightly: this is absolutely fine.

Once you're happy with your poem, either paste the slips of paper onto a fresh page or copy it out neatly.