



This writing idea is to help you create a *concrete/abstract* poem. You will do this by playing a game in which definitions of both concrete and abstract things are mixed up and interchanged. Here is an example:

What Is?

What is the moon?
It is the burning of anger.
What is a door?
It is the looking forward to happiness.
What is a river?
It is an opening into another room.
What is hatred?
It is a car slamming into a wall.
What is hunger?
It is the winding of water.
What is an accident?
It is the reflection of sun in the sky.
What is hope?
It is an emptiness inside.

As you can see, there are some unusual answers to the questions in this poem! Mixing up all of the original questions and answers causes these. The random pairings that are produced by this mixing can create new and sometimes dramatic meanings.

Can you match the questions to their original answers?

Some questions and their new answers will not necessarily be startling. However, notice how some do work particularly well together, for example:

- *hatred is a car slamming into a wall* - this works literally
- *hope is an emptiness inside* - this works because having hope or being hopeful can leave you feeling empty until it is fulfilled



Writing the Poem

First stage: This can be done individually or in a pair. If working individually, you ask and answer your own questions; if working in a pair, one person asks the question and the other provides an answer.

You should make sure that you have an equal mix of both concrete and abstract questions and answers:

- your **concrete** question will ask about something that someone can see, hear, smell, touch or taste [for example, *stone, sausage, house, trumpet* and so on]
- your **abstract** question will ask about something that does not have any of these material qualities for someone to sense [for example, *love, happiness, silence, indecision* and so on]

Each question must be written as *What is a/an _____ ?* and each answer must be written as *It is a/an _____*

Consider carefully the tone of the poem you hope to write. You will get comic and entertaining results if you mix things like *sausages* and *indecision*! If you want to keep it serious, be selective about what you ask and answer.

The way you answer questions will also help to determine the likely tone of your poem. A *river* can be described as *moving water* or *the winding of water*; *hatred* can be described as *being angry* or *the burning of anger*.

Second stage: When you have the number of questions and answers you want, cut these out and put them in their separate piles face down on a table. These should then be shuffled. Next, you turn them over, a question first and then an answer, and write what they now say in full on a separate sheet of paper. Because of the random nature of this part of the exercise, there should be some interesting combinations (and there will be times when you get the original, actual answer to a question!).

Final stage: When you write your concrete/abstract poem you can lay it out as in the example you have seen. This can either be written in the sequence you produced during the second stage of this exercise, or you can rearrange pairs of questions and answers to produce the most interesting contrasts and comparisons.

You can also edit out any lines that are just not interesting.

The exercise outlined here is totally random. However, you can vary this by making sure that only concrete questions can be given abstract answers and vice versa.