

Create#18 // Easy Poetry with Kennings by Lynn Whitehead

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Just like the Anglo-Saxons and Norsemen before us, we litter our language with *kennings*—it's the way we have of using two words where one would do!

You will need

- Paper for making notes
- A willingness to have a go

Poetry with Kennings

Who hasn't described a dull accountant as a 'bean counter' or a 'pen pusher'?

Haven't we all enjoyed that amazing song in a musical as a 'show stopper' and decried a loud person as a 'motor mouth'?

In the poem 'Beowulf', which dates back to the first century, the combination of words is used to great descriptive effect.

The author uses 'whale-road' to mean the sea, 'sky-candle' for the sun and how awfully evocative is 'raven-harvest' to mean a corpse?

Activity

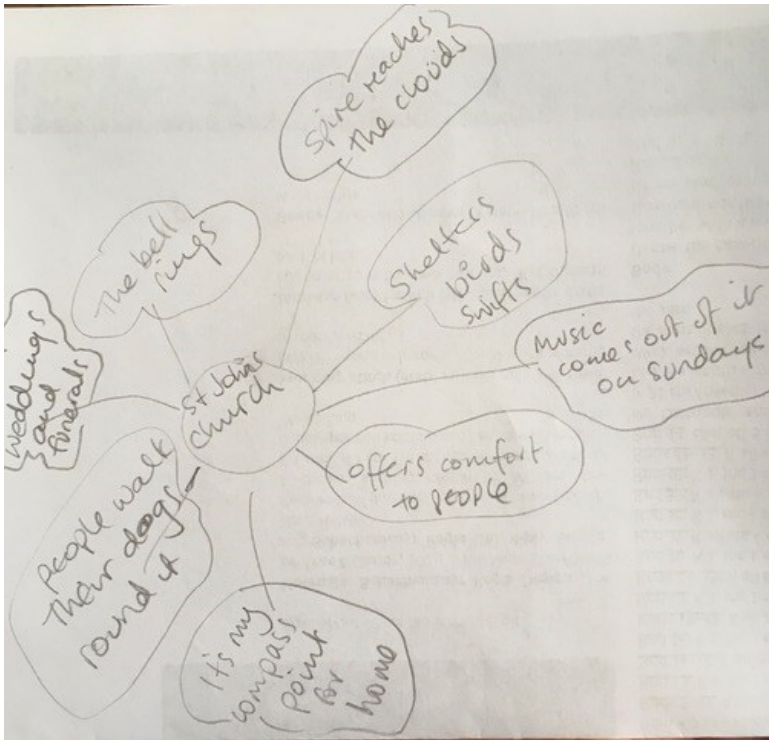
To make a short poem, decide on an element of your garden or your village.

It might be a stream, a path, a bush, a church, a barn, a road - it's up to you, and it could be anything.

Make a spidergram to collect up all the words that describe the many things your element DOES, what it offers and the many purposes it serves.

Don't try to write the *right* thing. Write everything you can think of, however big or small. You can select out the bits you like best later on.

Have a look at mine - I live right opposite a church, and that's what I wrote about.



Play around with different words to say what you've written on the spidergram.

I started with 'Bell-dinger' but thought 'Chime-tower' sounded more poetic.

Once you've got five or six *kennings*, move them around to see if that changes the emphasis of the poem.

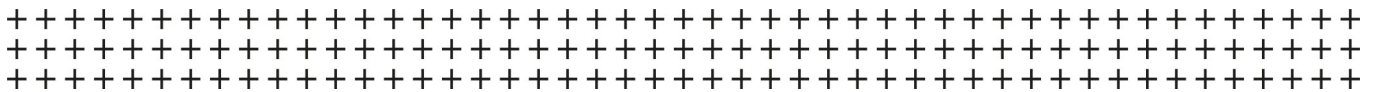
I switched 'Home-mark' to the end of my list because that's the most important element to me and I liked the two different 'homes' together.

Then try to list some of those qualities using the double-word kenning idea.

- Comfort-house
- Dog-path
- Chime-tower
- Cloud-pointer
- Swift-home
- Home-mark

Please send us your kenning poems, so that we can share them with everyone on the blog site.

- Email mdf@suffolkartlink.org.uk
- Text to 07857 002974



CONTACT

For more information on any of these activities, or if you would like to receive our activity packs in the post, please contact Carrie or Candida:

Telephone 01986 873955 or 07857 002974
 Email mdf@suffolkartlink.org.uk
www.makedoandfriends.co.uk