

As _____ (Adj. e.g. cold)	as
_____ enough (Adj.)	to
a _____ (Noun <i>person</i> e.g. woman)	is like
To _____ (Vb, e.g. run)	as if
(Vb) _____ ing	like a
As _____ (Adj. e.g. cold)	as
_____ enough (Adj.)	to
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To _____ (Vb, e.g. run)	as if
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To _____ (Vb, e.g. run)	as if
(Vb) _____ ing	like a

radish

slug

bindweed (Winde)

pebble

spider

rose

geranium

hyena

pipe

daisy

bed

bicycle

Wellington boot

pen

supermarket trolley

paper clip

book

kettle

cat

hat

gloves

briefcase

slippers

television

abiogenesis	footle	occiput	solander
abrade	fossick	ogee	spatchcock
abulia	frangible	omphalos	splenetic
adamantine	friable	oriflamme	stiggins
aegrotat	fubsy	osmic	strepitant
aglet	furbelow	oxter	struthious
agnate	furphy	palinode	subfusc
albedo	gardyloo	paparazzo	susurrous
ambisinister	gerrymander	patzer	switcheroo
amphigory	glabrous	pelf	syzygy
anthroponym	googol	penster	talion
antimacassar	gree	pergola	taradiddle
attar	gunk	petrichor	tardigrade
aubade	hallux	philomath	tattersall
auscultation	hebdomad	piacular	tessellate
balneal	high-muck-a-muck	pilgarlic	testudinate
barrator	horripilation	pinchbeck	thalweg
belay	idoneous	pintle	thenar
bibelot	illumine	plausive	thew
bloviate	indwell	Podunk	thirl
bombinate	intercalary	polymath	throttlebottom
bosky	interrobang	potatory	tope
buskin	joggle	prandial	tragus
cachinnation	jorum	primipara	triskelion
callipygian	kaffeeklatsch	proem	triune
caterwaul	katzenjammer	quacksalver	trunnel
cecity	kine	quiddity	tussive
chad	knurl	quodlibet	ubiety
chirk	lamia	quoin	ululate
clepe	landloper	raffish	ursine
cockalorum	lenitive	ramada	uxorial
comstockery	limbate	rebarbative	uxorious
congeries	logy	remora	vainglorious
contubernal	lollygag	retromingent	variorum
crinite	luteous	rostrum	verboten
crossbuck	maffick	rufous	vernal
declivitous	malapert	sabulous	vilipend
depone	marplot	samizdat	vomitorium
dibs	megrim	scabrous	vug
divagate	micturate	schlock	vulgate
edentulous	mingy	schreierpfeife	wainscot
eke	mittimus	scream	wattle
emprise	mondegreen	scuttlebutt	welkin
epenthesis	motile	sejant	widdershins
erg	moxie	sempiternal	windflaw
escutcheon	mugwump	seriatim	wowser
esurient	mumpsimus	shroff	xebec
exuviate	muzzy	sidereal	yare
factoid	nauruan	sipid	yegg
fantod	newel	skunkworks	zeitgeber
fardel	niddering	slimsy	zugzwang
ferruginous	nimiety	slipslop	zwieback
filibuster	nudnik	singlet	
fleer	objurgate	snollygoster	

Remembering Aunt Julia

- Objectives:
- a) to get to grips with a person from one's past
 - b) to make that person "tangible" to someone else by using "sensuous" writing
- Organisation: plenary, individual writing, discussion in groups
- Examples: Norman MacCaig's "Aunt Julia", Jackie Kay's "My Grandmother", Theodore Roethke's "Papa's Waltz"
- Notes:
- a) Participants need to work on sensuous images that make someone real for the reader.
 - b) It may be useful to focus on a woman, ideally connected with a loss, e.g. a departure, a death, an irreconcilable rift.

Instructions to the participants

1. Think of a person in your past that has had an impact on your life, but who is out of reach now.
2. Make a list of elements and aspects that make this person unique on a separate piece of paper.
3. Make a second list about sensuous experiences associated with this person: smell, sight, touch, taste, hearing.
4. Now do the same with habits and/or appearances that are somehow "larger than life" in your memory.
5. Order the elements. (You can group them thematically, i.e. combining elements that are related "logically", or temporally. Use this structure to write a poem about that person.
6. Compare your text to Norman MacCaig's "Aunt Julia" Jackie Kay's "My Grandmother", Theodore Roethke's "Papa's Waltz".

Picture them

- Objectives:
- a) to imagine as rounded a character as possible from a picture in a magazine or a collection of photographs
 - b) to develop a situation with imagination, based on the characters
- Organisation: Individual work
- Material: pictures with people from magazines, portraits from a portrait gallery, postcards of paintings with people in it, old photographs
- Examples: “On finding an Old Photograph” Wendy Cope, “Three Paintings” Carol Ann Duffy, “Casehistory: Alison” U. A Fanthorpe.
- Note: For the poem or text to work, a reader should not need to know the picture.

Instructions to the participants

1. Select a character in the picture if there is more than one. Imagine what the situation shown in the picture may feel for the person.
2. Ask yourself questions about the person: What do they like/dislike? What makes them laugh or cry? What are their ambitions? What do they want at this point in time? What are they thinking? What happened before/is going to happen after the moment in the picture? What grabs me about the people in the picture? Add any other question you care to think about.
3. Use what you have put together so far for an interior monologue, dialogue, a story or a poem.

An old song resung

- Objectives: a) to rethink a popular story from the angle of a character
 b) to focus on an element that the popular story does not deal with
- Organisation: can be done plenary, however perhaps better in pairs
- Examples: “The Handless Maiden” or “Judith” by Vicki Feaver and the relevant passages from the Grimm/Russian fairy tale and the Bible, “Mrs Midas” by Carol Ann Duffy, “Sisyphus” by U. A. Fanthorpe.
- Note: Suggestions for stories can come from popular folk/fairy tales or myths as presented in Ovid (e.g. Ted Hughes or Robert Graves). With a multicultural group the interest may be on including myths from the participants’ own culture.
1. Brainstorm folk/fairy tales or myths which ideally contain an epiphany, e.g. the moment when Narcissus slips into the water that holds the mirror image with which he is in love. (Dali’s painting may help here too.)
 2. Find an aspect that is vital for this central moment/epiphany. (E.g. in Vicki Feaver’s “Handless Maiden” the moment, having rescued the baby, the maiden uses her newly grown hands to write down what happened.)
 3. Choose an angle (i.e. person or a moment in the story) from which to tell the incident you consider central.
 4. Write the story from that angle, possibly using the pivotal aspect in 2 as a clinching/final line.
- Extension:** Read Vicki Feaver’s poem “The Handless Maiden” (and, if you can lay your hands on them, the source texts) and discuss in what way the focus of the poem has shifted from the one of the fairy tale/myth, i.e. what is the prime focus of the tale, what is the prime focus of the poem.

Negotiating stories

Objectives: a) to draw up a set of characters, a conflict and an plot resulting from this
 b) to negotiate writing story in three phases (of interest in EFL)

Organisation: groups of three

Instructions to the participants

1. In groups of three, discuss a setting for a story (historically, socially).
2. Then suggest three characters, all of whom are interrelated either through personal attachment or through the events in the story.
3. Define a conflict between the three characters.
4. In the groups negotiate a synopsis consisting of (more or less) nine steps which brings this conflict out to the full. The end can be included in these nine steps or left out.
5. Write the text up either as a group or individually; the latter can be particularly interesting if the ending has been left open
6. Read and comment on each other's work, perhaps trying to write one story out of the three drafts.

Note 1: *This activity requires some familiarity with literature, i.e. it is recommended for more advanced students.
And, it needs a considerable amount of time.*

Note 2: *There are three phases to this activity which can be interesting language practice activities:*

- Phase I: negotiations (mainly using modals to describe the characters and how the plot evolves)
- Phase II: narration (using tenses of the past, perhaps occasionally the historical present, to narrate the story)
- Phase III: editing (again using modals, possibly past modals and hypothetical conditionals to discuss the stories and suggest amendments)

Value-Added Dialogue

Objectives: a) to play with language and to say things as concisely as possible
 b) to get a feeling for natural dialogue
 c) to develop a story in a very short dialogue

Organisation: pair work

Material: one sheet of paper per participant

Note: This activity works well as a light-hearted warm-up, but not only.

Instructions to the participants

1. Decide on the maximum number of words your dialogue will be working up to; it should be between 5 and 10 (6-7 works best).
2. Each participant writes out the beginning of a dialogue, consisting of one word only, on a sheet of paper.
3. Pass the sheet to your partner and respond to his or her opening, with one more word in your answer.
4. Continue passing the papers between you back and fourth. Every turn must have one word more than the previous turn, until you reach the pre-defined length (1-2-3-4-5-6 words, e.g.).
5. Continue with the above, working backwards in length (6-5-4-3-2-1 words, e.g.), until you finish with a one-word ending to the dialogue.

Conflict situations

Objectives: a) to assume a convincing voice in a dialogue

b) to keep the dialogue interesting by making it as convincing as possible.

Organisation: pair work

Material: one sheet of paper per participant

Note: This activity is quite flexible and can be done by learners with a comparatively limited command of the language.

Instructions to the participants

1. Sit together in pairs. Each participant gets a cue card of the type below. (Alternatively, the pairs can decide on situations themselves.)
2. Decide who plays which role and who starts for each of the two situations
3. Write what the first speaker in the conversation says, then pass the paper to your partner. Your partner does the same.
4. Respond to the utterance on your sheet and pass the paper back.
5. Continue until you feel that it is enough, or that the dialogue has come to a natural end.
6. Each pair reads out one of the two dialogues (the one it feels is the better one).

Extension: Extend the whole thing into a narrative, in which the dialogue is a part.

A person being drawn into a conversation by the slightly disturbing stranger sitting at the bar.	A customer finding out on arrival in the middle of the night that the hotel he booked is full.	A parent trying to explain the “facts of life” to the teenager who has known them for some time
One flatmate having a go at the other for having eaten the things that were to be made into a gourmet menu for her/his visitors arriving in half an hour	A head teacher explaining to a very influential parent that her/his son/daughter will be expelled	A teenager wants to go to a nightclub, which the parent thinks is seedy
A minor celebrity who wants to be admitted to an exclusive night club but the doorman isn't playing ball	A traveller caught at customs with too much duty-free booze, trying to negotiate with the customs officer	A parent promised to take the teenager to a concert but doesn't have time
A student having to explain to the teacher what happened to her/his homework	An agent explaining to a well-known writer that the publishing company has rejected the new novel	A person coming home after the holidays, only to discover that someone has moved into his flat in the meantime.
A woman explaining to her unsuspecting husband that she is leaving him	A customer who is not satisfied with a sun-powered garden-light complaining to the complaints department	A teenager has smashed up the parent's car
A man asking his girlfriend to explain the messages that were left for her on the answer phone by a man he doesn't know.	An airline passenger trying to explain at the check-in desk why s/he doesn't want to put her violin in the hold of the plane	A teenager comes home at 3a.m. instead of midnight

Poems for First and Last Lines

To be alive

To be alive: not just the carcass
But the spark.
That's crudely put, but...

If we're not supposed to dance,
Why all this music?
Gregory Orr

Mrs Frazer

Once a day, Mrs Frazer, eighty years old,
goes snorkeling on the reef,
which lies like a secret beneath
the dark waters across the road.

She enters in her dress, finding no need for any
unpeeling,
or showing of flesh;
she prefers to let the cloth billow about her,
until she floats, face down, in an impression of
death.

Sometimes, to swim through a wave,
she will spin on to her side
but mostly, she just lies still,
resting on the swollen stomach of the tide.

Owen Sheers

Warming Her Pearls

Next to my own skin, her pearls. My mistress
bids me wear them, warm them, until evening
when I'll brush her hair. At six, I place them
round her cool, white throat. All day I think of
her,

resting in the Yellow Room, contemplating silk
or taffeta, which gown tonight? She fans herself
whilst I work willingly, my slow heat entering
each pearl. Slack on my neck, her rope.

She's beautiful. I dream about her
in my attic bed; picture her dancing
with tall men, puzzled by my faint, persistent
scent
beneath her French perfume, her milky stones.

I dust her shoulders with a rabbit's foot,
watch the soft blush seep through her skin
like an indolent sigh. In her looking-glass
my red lips part as though I want to speak.

Full moon. Her carriage brings her home. I see
her every movement in my head.... Undressing,
taking off her jewels, her slim hand reaching
for the case, slipping naked into bed, the way

she always does.... And I lie here awake,
knowing the pearls are cooling even now
in the room where my mistress sleeps. All night
I feel their absence and I burn.
Carol Ann Duffy

Voices from Old Stories

Judith

Wondering how a good woman can murder
I enter the tent of Holofernes,
holding in once hand his long oiled hair
and in the other, raised above
his sleeping, wine-flushed face,
his falchion with its unsheathed
curved blade. And I feel a rush
of tenderness, a longing
to put down my weapon, to lie
sheltered and safe in a warrior's
fummy sweat, under the emerald stars
of his purple and gold canopy,
to melt like a sweet on his tongue
to nothing. And I remember the glare
of the barley field; my husband
pushing away the sponge I pressed
to his burning head; the stubble
puncturing my feet as I ran,
flinging myself on a body
that was already cooling
and stiffening; and the nights
when I lay on the roof – my emptiness
like the emptiness of a temple
with the doors kicked in; and the mornings
when I rolled in the ash of the fire
just to be touched and dirtied
by something. And I bring my blade
down on his neck – and it's easy
like slicing through fish.
And I bring it down again,
cleaving the bone.

The Handless Maiden

When all the water had run from her mouth,
and I'd rubbed her arms and legs,
and chest and belly and back,
with clumps of dried moss;
and I'd put her to sleep in a nest of grass,
and spread her dripping clothes on a bush,
and held her again – her heat passing
into my breast and shoulder,
the breath I couldn't believe in
like a tickling feather on my neck,
I let myself cry. I cried for my hands
my father cut off; for the lumpy, itching scars
of my stumps; for the silver hands –
my husband gave me – that spun and wove
but had no feeling; and for my handless arms
that let my baby drop – unwinding
from the tight swaddling cloth
as I drank from the brimming river.
And I cried for my hands that sprouted
in the red-orange mud – the hands
that write this, grasping
her curled fists.

*In Grimm's version of this story the woman's
hands grow back because she's good for seven
years. But in a Russian version they grow as
she plunges her arms into a river to save her
drowning baby.*

Vicki Feaver

Pilate's Wife

Firstly, his hands a woman's. Softer than mine,
with pearly nails, like shells from Galilee.
Indolent hands. Camp hands that clapped for grapes.
Their pale, mothy touch made me flinch. Pontius.

I longed for Rome, home, someone else. When the Nazarene
entered Jerusalem, my maid and I crept out,
bored stiff, disguised, and joined the frenzied crowd.
I tripped, clutched the bridle of an ass, looked up

and there he was. His face? Ugly. Talented.
He looked at me. I mean he looked at *me*. My God.
His eyes were eyes to die for. Then he was gone,
his rough men shouldering a pathway to the gates.

The night before his trial, I dreamt of him.
His brown hands touched me. Then it hurt.
Then blood. I saw that each tough palm was skewered
by a nail. I woke up, sweating, sexual, terrified.

Leave him alone. I sent a warning note, then quickly dressed.
When I arrived, the Nazarene was crowned with thorns.
The crowd was baying for Barabbas. Pilate saw me,
looked away, then carefully turned up his sleeves

and slowly washed his useless, perfumed hands.
They seized the prophet then and dragged him out,
up to the Place of Skulls. My maid knows all the rest.
Was he God? Of course not. Pilate believed he was.

Carol Ann Duffy

Mrs Icarus

I'm not the first or the last
to stand on a hillock,
watching the man she married prove to the world
he's a total, utter, absolute, Grade A pillock.

Carol Ann Duffy

Sisyphus

‘The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.’ Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

Apparently I rank as one
Of the more noteworthy sights down here.
As to that, I can’t judge, having
No time to spare for tourists.

My preoccupations are this stone
And this hill. I have to push
The one up the other.

A trivial task for a team, an engine,
A pair of horses. The interest lies
Not in the difficulty of the doing,

But the difficulty for the doer. I accept this
As my vocation: to do what I cannot do.
The stone and I are

Close. I know its every wart, its ribby ridges,
Its snags, its lips. And the stone knows me,
Cheek, chin and shoulders, elbow, groin, shin, toe,
Muscle, bone, cartilage and muddied skinprint,
My surfaces, my angles and my levers.

The hill I know by heart too,
Have studied incline, foothold, grain,
With watchmaker’s patience.

Concentration is mutual. The hill
Is hostile to the stone and me.
The stone resents me and the hill.

But I am the mover. I cannot afford
To spend energy on emotion. I push
The stone up the hill. At the top

It falls, and I pursue it,
To heave it up again. Time not spent
On doing this is squandered time.

The gods must have had a reason
For setting me this task. I have forgotten it,
And I do not care.

U. A. Fanthorpe

Memories

My Papa's Waltz

The whisky on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

Theodore Roethke

Aunt Julia

Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic
very loud and very fast.
I could not answer her—
I could not understand her.

She wore men's boots
when she wore any.
—I can see her strong foot,
stained with peat,
paddling the treadle of the spinning wheel
while her right hand drew yarn
marvellously out of the air.

Hers was the only house
where I lay at night
in the absolute darkness
of the box bed, listening to
crickets being friendly.

She was buckets
and water flouncing into them.
She was winds pouring wetly
round house—ends.
She was brown eggs, black skirts
and a keeper of threepennybits
in a teapot.

Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic
very loud and very fast.
By the time I had learned
a little, she lay
silenced in the absolute black
of a sandy grave
at Luskentyre.
But I hear her still, welcoming me
with a seagull's voice
across a hundred yards
of peatscapes and lazybeds
and getting angry, getting angry
with so many questions
unanswered.

Norman MacCraig

Pictures and Poems

2 The Virgin punishing the Infant

He spoke early. Not the *goo goo goo* of infancy, but *I am God*. Joseph kept away, carving himself a silent Pinocchio out in the workshed. He said he was a simple man and hadn't dreamed of this.

She grew anxious in that second year, would stare at stars saying *Gabriel? Gabriel?* Your guess. The village gossiped in the sun. The child was solitary, his wide and solemn eyes could fill your head.

After he walked, our normal children crawled. Our wives were first resentful, then superior. Mary's child would bring her sorrow... better far to have a son who gurgled nonsense at your breast. *Googoo. Googoo.*

But I am God. We heard him through the window, heard the smacks which made us peep. What we saw was commonplace enough. But afterwards, we wondered why the infant did not cry. And why the Mother did.

Carol Ann Duffy (from "Three Paintings")

Standing Female Nude

Six hours like this for a few francs.
Belly nipple arse in the window light,
he drains the colour from me. Further to the
right,
Madame. And do try to be still.
I shall be represented analytically and hung
in great museums. The bourgeoisie will coo
at such an image of a river-whore. They call it
Art.

Maybe. He is concerned with volume, space.
I with the next meal. You're getting thin,
Madame, this is not good. My breasts hang
slightly low, the studio is cold. In the
tea-leaves
I can see the Queen of England gazing
on my shape. Magnificent, she murmurs
moving on. It makes me laugh. His name



is Georges. They tell me he's a genius.
There are times he does not concentrate
and stiffens for my warmth. Men think of their
mothers.

He possesses me on canvas as he dips the brush
repeatedly into the paint. Little man,
you've not the money for the arts I sell.
Both poor, we make our living how we can.

I ask him Why do you do this? Because
I have to. There's no choice. Don't talk.
My smile confuses him. These artists
take themselves too seriously. At night I fill
myself
with wine and dance around the bars. When it's
finished
he shows me proudly, lights a cigarette. I say
Twelve francs and get my shawl. It does not
look like me.

Carol Ann Duffy

Not My Best Side

(Uccello: S. George and the Dragon)

I
Not my best side, I'm afraid.
The artist didn't give me a chance to
Pose properly, and as you can see,
Poor chap, he had this obsession with
Triangles, so he left off two of my
Feet. I didn't comment at the time
(What, after all, are two feet
To a monster?) but afterwards
I was sorry for the bad publicity.
Why, I said to myself, should my conqueror
Be so ostentatiously beardless, and ride
A horse with a deformed neck and square
hoofs?
Why should my victim be so
Unattractive as to be inedible,
And why should she have me literally
On a string? I don't mind dying
Ritually, since I always rise again,
But I should have liked a little more blood
To show they were taking me seriously.

II
It's hard for a girl to be sure if
She wants to be rescued. I mean, I quite
Took to the dragon. It's nice to be
Liked, if you know what I mean. He was
So nicely physical, with his claws
And lovely green skin, and that sexy tail,
And the way he looked at me,
He made me feel he was all ready to
Eat me. And any girl enjoys that.
So when this boy turned up, wearing
 machinery,
On a really *dangerous* horse, to be honest,
I didn't much fancy him. I mean,
What was he like underneath the hardware?
He might have acne, blackheads or even
Bad breath for all I could tell, but the dragon –
Well, you could see all his equipment
At a glance. Still, what could I do?
The dragon got himself beaten by the boy
And a girl's got to think of her future.



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III
I have diplomas in Dragon
Management and Virgin Reclamation.
My horse is the latest model, with
Automatic transmission and built-in
Obsolescence. My spear is custom-built,
And my prototype armour
Still on the secret list. You can't
Do better than me at the moment.
I'm qualified and equipped to the
Eyebrow. So why be difficult?
Don't you want to be killed and /or rescued
In the most contemporary way? Don't
You want to carry out the roles
That sociology and myth have designed for
you?
Don't you realize that, by being choosy
You are endangering job-prospects
In the spear- and horse-building industries?
What, in any case, does it matter what
You want? You're in my way.

U.A. Fanthorpe

Poems from Photos

Casehistory: Alison (head injury)

(She looks at her photograph)

I would like to have known
My husband's wife, my mother's only
daughter.

A bright girl she was.

Enmeshed in comforting
Fat, I wonder at her delicate angles.
Her autocratic knee

Like a Degas dancer's
Adjusts to the observer with airy poise,
That now lugs me upstairs

hardly. Her face, broken
By nothing sharper than smiles, holds in its
smiles
What I have forgotten.

She knows my father's dead,
And grieves for it, and smiles. She has digested
Mourning. Her smile shows it.

I, who need reminding
Every morning, shall never get over what
do not remember.

Consistency matters.
I should like to keep faith with her lack of faith,
But forget her reasons.

Proud of this younger self,
assert her achievements, her A levels,
Her job with a future.

Poor clever girl! I know,
For all my damaged brain, something she
doesn't:

I am her future.

A bright girl she was.

U. A. Fanthorpe

On Finding an Old Photograph

Yalding, 1912. My father
in an apple orchard, sunlight
patching his stylish bags;

three women dressed in soft,
white blouses, skirts that brush the grass;
a child with curly hair.

If they were strangers
it would calm me – half-drugged
by the atmosphere – but it does more –

eases a burden
made of all his sadness
and the things I didn't give him.

There he is, happy, and I am unborn.

Wendy Cope