

Poetry PD with poet Lia Hills

As English teachers, we love poetry or, at the very least, have experienced at some point in our lives a deep and sudden connection to its power. Whose vision of war was not shaped by Wilfred Owen? Whose notion of love not forever altered by Shakespeare?

Why then is the teaching of poetry as a literary genre, or as creative writing, so often such a terrifying thought? Is it because we had bad experiences as students of poetry? Are we doubtful about the possibility of teaching something as elusive as creativity? Or do we feel that we need to be good poets ourselves to guide others in the writing of poetry?

Fear no more. After years of working with teachers in the classroom guiding their students through poetry workshops, I have put together a series of professional development workshops that will help your staff address these questions and gain a newfound confidence in teaching poetry.

I tailor the day to your staff's needs, taking into account student age, your school's culture and curriculum. The focus is on providing practical examples and drawing from the collective experience of participants. In the course of the day, participants will go from experiencing what it is like to be a student asked to produce a piece of creative work within a structured environment, to discussing the profound pedagogical implications of what we are trying to achieve when we engage with poetry.

I look forward to reawakening your love of poetry so that you can carry it forward into your classrooms.

Warm regards,

Lia

Lia Hills is a poet, novelist and French translator. Her work has been published, translated and performed in countries as varied as Japan, Switzerland and the US, alongside poets such as Seamus Heaney, Robert Pinsky, and Paul Muldoon. Her first collection, *the impossibility of flight*, was released in 2008, both the collection and individual poems garnering awards. In 2009, Lia's debut young adult novel, *The Beginner's Guide to Living*, received rave reviews and was shortlisted for the Victorian, Queensland and Western Australian Premiers' Literary Awards, and the NZ Post Book Awards. As the director and co-editor of Moving Galleries, a poetry and art project on Melbourne's trains, Lia has been involved for many years in bringing poetry to the wider community. She has taught students ranging from 5 to 75, barons to the Russian mafia, in universities, schools, pubs and cafés, both in Australia and overseas. She loves nothing more than witnessing the moment when someone experiences the power of language to move and exhilarate, that quiet dawning on the face.

Poetry PD with poet Lia Hills: sample full-day program

1. Poetry reading: we begin the day with a poem to immerse ourselves in language.
2. Warm up: A quick writing exercise to get everyone thinking creatively.
3. Guided group discussion: Why teach poetry at all.

In this discussion, we draw on the joint experience of participants and the poet, and explore the important relationship between studying and writing poetry. Also covered is the importance of teaching creativity and its cross-disciplinary relevance.

4. Practical stuff: a myriad of workshops and tools for use in the classroom, including tips on getting started, editing, how to navigate contemporary poetry, and keeping poetry relevant.

Morning tea

5. Guided workshop: participants experience firsthand a poetry workshop, the trials and joys of being asked to work creatively within a structured environment (followed by a debriefing, and TLC if required)

Lunch break

6. Warm up: A quick, creative writing exercise to make sure everyone is back on task after lunch.
7. Guided group discussion: Key concepts in teaching the writing of poetry.

Tips provided on helping set up a conducive writing environment, transitioning from analytical to creative thinking, helping students when they get stuck, moving from quantity to quality as a key motivator in your students' work.

Afternoon tea

8. How to assess a poem (rest assured, there will be no graphs à la the ripped pages in *Dead Poet's Society*)

In groups, we look at a student's poem and discuss the delicate balance between assessing for set criteria and that more elusive element of creativity. We also practise some of the techniques covered during the workshop.

9. The final word

A recap of important elements covered during the day, topped off with a reading: a favourite line from each of the participants written during the workshop.

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To book Lia Hills, contact Booked Out on bookings@bookedout.com.au or 03 9824 0177.