



# **NATIONAL POETRY DAY TOOLKIT**

## **FREEDOM**

# **5. HOW TO PLAY OULIPO BY SOPHIE HERXHEIMER**

**1 HOUR, KS2**

## HOW TO PLAY OULIPO

Looking for a fun way to free your thinking and create a poem?

National Poetry Day ambassador Sophie Herxheimer suggests a game of OULIPO.

OULIPO is a way of playing with words and letters and comes from France. Every year poets and mathematicians meet and dream up funny new rules to hatch ideas about how to think and write. The idea being, if you make some rules it gives you new freedoms. It makes you find words you'd never use otherwise.

**Warning:** it won't make any sense but it might put pictures in your head.

# ACTIVITY

Put every letter of your whole name into a big flowerpot as if each one was a little seed. Then add every letter of the name of your favourite animal and/or football team.

**e.g.** for Sophie, it would be

**SOPHIEMARYHERXHEIMER / POODLE / CRYSTAL PALACE**

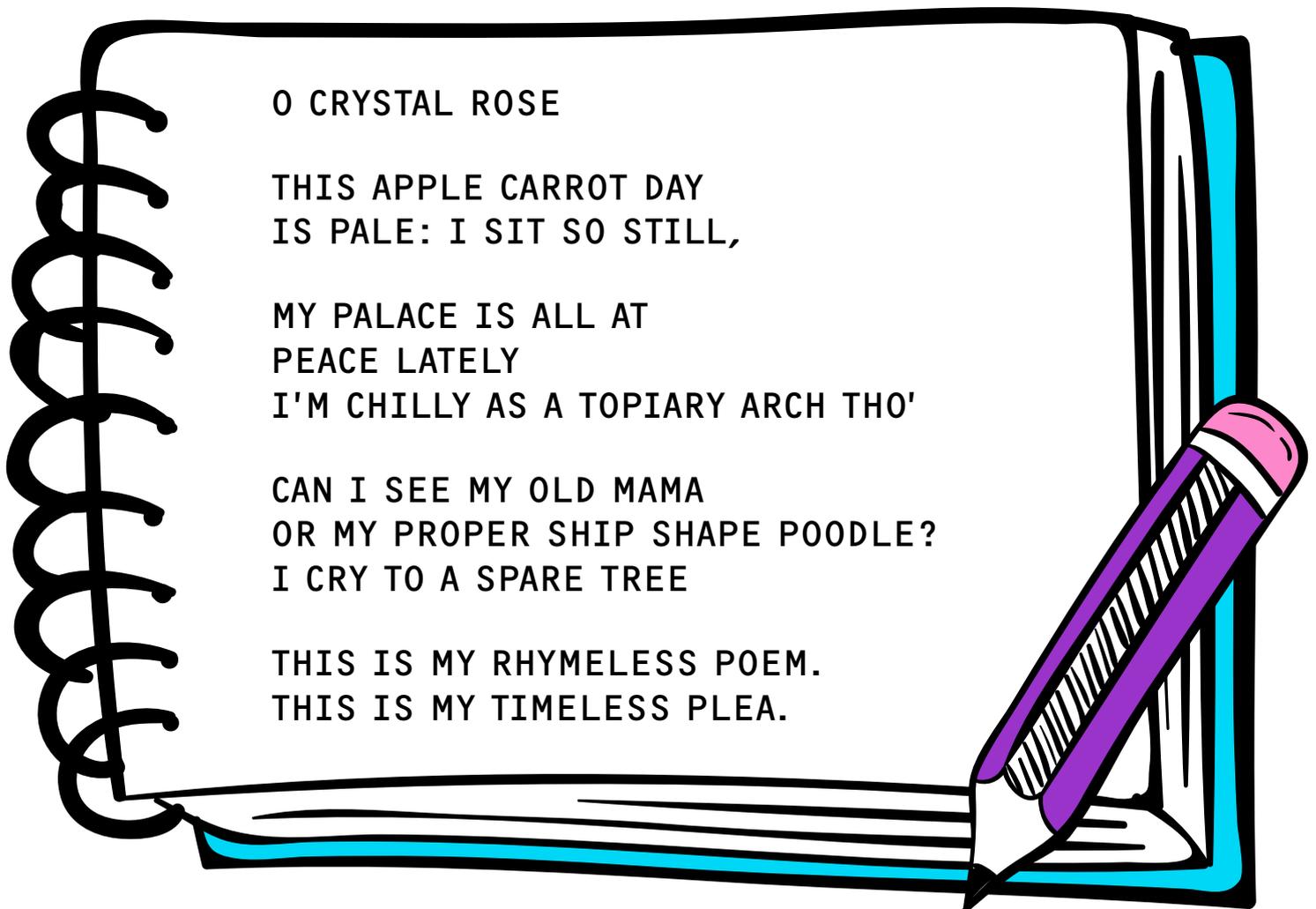
but all mixed up:

**RXSHCERYSPOERIARPALYHEHEIMCTALAOOPDLEME**

It helps if you have a lot of vowels!

What can you find? There's happy, moody, see, loop, poem, rhyme, peace, cries, simpers, me, topiary(!), heat, heath, health, hermit, polite, mercy... and of course, crystal, poodle and palace.

Maybe Sophie's poem goes:



O CRYSTAL ROSE

THIS APPLE CARROT DAY  
IS PALE: I SIT SO STILL,

MY PALACE IS ALL AT  
PEACE LATELY  
I'M CHILLY AS A TOPIARY ARCH THO'

CAN I SEE MY OLD MAMA  
OR MY PROPER SHIP SHAPE POODLE?  
I CRY TO A SPARE TREE

THIS IS MY RHYMELESS POEM.  
THIS IS MY TIMELESS PLEA.

I wonder what poem you can write or find if your name is  
ADRIANLYNDONPOTTS and you like MANCHESTERUNITED and CATS?

Or if you are called NADIA MOHAMMED and you're fond of the  
RHINOCEROS... still you'd have to do without an L or a W...

And if your name is very short and you don't care about  
football, you could make up a fancy middle name, or use  
the name of your favourite film.



## THANKS

This resource was developed by poet Sophie Herxheimer for  
National Poetry Day with children at Ings Primary School, Hull.

Discover more:  
[nationalpoetryday.co.uk](http://nationalpoetryday.co.uk)

