

Unit 1

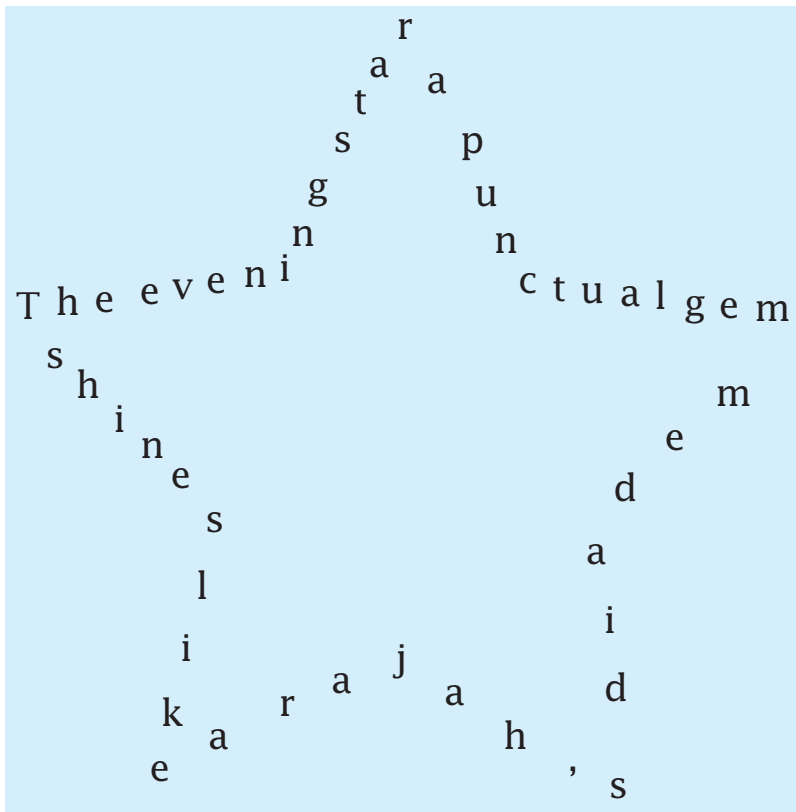
PLAYING WITH WORDS

All poetry is playing with words. Writers play with letters, consonants and vowels; with sounds, rhythms and rhymes; with comparisons, associations and layout. All of these things may contribute to the meaning of a poem and to the picture that the words conjure up in our minds.

A poem might be light-hearted word-play, like a riddle or a nonsense verse, or it might be serious play in a poem about war or love or religion. Whatever the subject, the play with words aims to capture afresh a picture, a feeling or an idea so that we see or hear it in new ways.

Poems often make familiar things seem strange.

1 The Evening Star



Guillaume Apollinaire

2 Tall Poplars in Stormy Weather

Green as the stream flows,
Flickering whipcord in the wind,
Lombardy thrashes.

Elisabeth

3

A bather whose clothing was strewed
By breezes that left her quite nude
Saw a man walk along
And, unless I am wrong,
You expect the last line to be rude.

Anon

4 Guitar

MY NECK IS LONG
My sinew's
strong Fine
wood my trunk
is made with No
arms, no toes
a bridge, no nose.
I may be a guitar-well
who knows? I fret, though
I am played with. How can
it be I have no eyes
yet I can C? How
is it that though
I am round I
can B flat?

Kevin Dickson

5

A pattern of waves
Across my bedroom curtains
Like a lazy sea.

John

6

My breast is puffed up and my neck is swollen.
I've a fine head and a high waving tail,
ears and eyes too, but only one foot;
a long neck, a strong beak, a back and
two sides, and a rod right through my middle.
My home is high above men. When he who moves
the forest molests me, I suffer a great deal of misery.
Scourged by the rainlash, I stand alone;
I'm bruised by heavy batteries of hail,
Hoar frost attacks and snow half-hides me.
I must endure all this, not pour out my misery.

Kevin Crossley-Holland