

Keep on writing: ideas for writing poems and stories exploring State Library Victoria's collections

A resource for young writers, teachers and families, for ages 8 – 14.

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Welcome!

This resource can be used as a starting point for generating new writing as an individual or class group.

Activity 1: Free Writing

Use this as a warm-up activity to get your writing juices flowing so that you are ready for more writing.

- **Pick a single word** at random from a book, a screen or ask someone else to give you a word. Set a timer for 3 minutes.
- **Write down everything** that comes into your head when you hear that word. Don't worry what your writing looks like on the page.
- **Write without stopping** until your timer bleeps.
- **Stop and read back** through what you have written.
- **Circle or highlight any words** or phrases that surprise you or that you like.
- **Share some words or phrases aloud** if someone is with you, but only those you feel comfortable sharing.
- **Save your bank of words** for use later. They might inspire you to write a whole poem or a story.
- **Repeat the activity** with a new word if you would like to.

Activity 2: Writing from a different point of view

Poetry and stories can be written from all sorts of different points of view. There are many fascinating objects in State Library Victoria's collections, with thousands of items discoverable online.

Library staff have made a series of short videos about some of them called [Mystery Box](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/stories/mystery-box) (www.slv.vic.gov.au/stories/mystery-box). These videos could get you thinking about the history of these objects and the stories they might have to tell.

Whether you are writing from the point of view of a chocolate tin, a pair of roller skates or a key to Melbourne Zoo, you can decide for yourself what the object thinks and feels about...

- the story of their life
- how they came to be made
- what they once contained

- who owned them at different points of time
- how they arrived at the Library
- where the object is now
- what they can hear, touch, smell and taste around them
- other objects they are connected with, or sit next to
- being catalogued and kept in the State Library of Victoria

The key thing to remember is that **you speak in your poem or story as if you were that object**. You can give them a voice and make them come alive through your words.

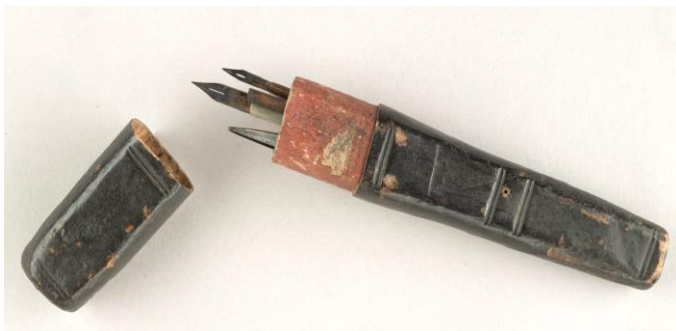
Here are some objects to try Activity 2 with:



Colonel Winslow's Roller Skates 1908



Princess Mary's Chocolate box given to soldiers in 1918



A portable pen set



A small illustrated box

Idea: Weird and wonderful creatures

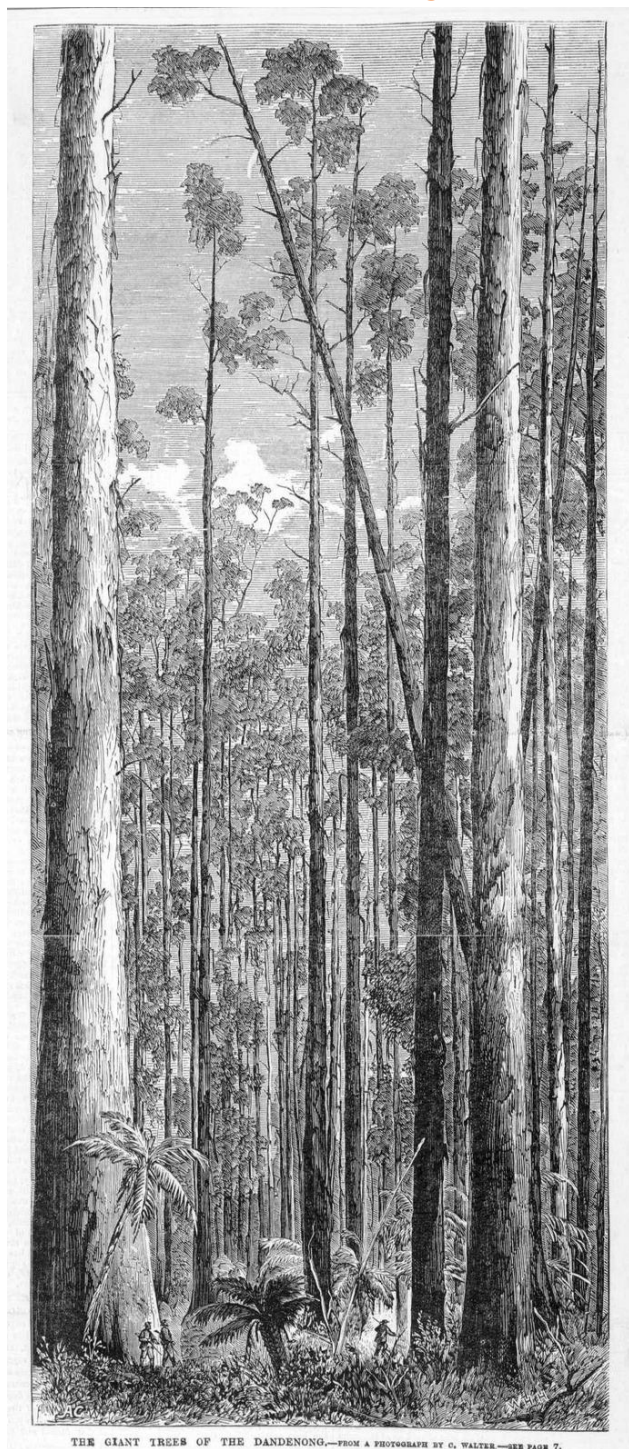
You could also have a look at the weird and wonderful creatures at <https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/search-discover/galleries/weird-wonderful-creatures>
Could one of these perhaps be a character in your story?

Activity 3: Using archive photos as starting points for poems and stories

Below are some photos from the State Library of Victoria collections that you could use to inspire your own writing.

Notice that all of the photos are black and white or sepia (brown) which means that you can use your imagination to fill in whatever colours you like.

1. Choose one of the images below.



Clockwise: 'The giant trees of Dandenong' printed wood engraving, 1868; The Wardell children, photo, 1909; Boxes and belongings on elevated platform, photo, c.1909-20.

2. **Imagine you could bring that photo to life and perhaps bring people into the scene.**
3. **Jot down your ideas about the following questions. Ignore any you don't want to answer:**

- What is this place and where is it? Invent a name for it.
- What has happened in this place just now or many years ago?
- What sounds can you hear?
- What smells?
- What is time of day is it?
- What's the weather like?
- What is the place like? Pick out some parts of the photo and try to describe the surroundings.
- Who is visiting the place? Why are they there?
- How did they travel to it?
- What do the visitors think of the place?
- What will stick in their memory when they leave it?

You might also want to browse the [sport and games collection](https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/search-discover/explore-collections-theme/sport-games) of photos at <https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/search-discover/explore-collections-theme/sport-games> for other photos to use as starting points for your writing.

Once you have your first ideas and answers to some of the questions listed above, you will need to decide what has captured your interest the most.

- **What is it you really want to write about?**
- **Circle the ideas that grab you the most.**
- **Use these to help you write the first draft of your poem or story.**

Once you have a draft, you might want to share your draft with someone to get their thoughts about your writing. Show them the photo that you are writing about. They might give you some extra ideas to consider, or let you know which bits are working well.

I hope that you can have fun with your writing.

If you would like to know more about the poems I have written during my virtual residency you can view my website suedymokepoetry.com

If you would like to share any of your finished poems or stories with me, please ask your teacher or guardian to send them to me at: sue.dymoke@ntu.ac.uk

Happy writing, Sue.