

# Pen to Paper – Creative Writing Exercises

## Make It Real

Choose an object or document in the gallery and describe it in great detail. The aim is to make the item present for your reader in language rather than in physical space. Imagine what the item would smell, sound, feel, and taste like if you could get it out of the case. In order to do this, you will need to evoke its setting, which might be its current placement in the gallery or an imagined setting from its past. You may wish to develop characters to interact with the item or write the point-of-view of the item as it speaks about its past or current setting and interactions. Write in any genre you like – prose, poetry, or script.

## Connections

Some of the objects and documents in the gallery are linked to each other. Gallery items can be related to each other through a shared time period or subject matter, and sometimes they are linked only because they happen to be on display at the same time. Select 2-3 objects, whether they are linked directly or indirectly, and start writing a narrative (either in prose or verse) that brings them together in some way. The story might even end with you looking at the items in the gallery. Along the way, try to bring in all five senses and use words that sound interesting and appropriate to the item's context and journey through time. Don't worry too much about accuracy, be creative!



## Found Words

Sometimes writers create new texts by rearranging words they *find* instead of coming up with new word combinations entirely on their own. This can be a liberating approach to creative writing. Write a ‘found’ piece of your own that uses the caption text from one or more items on exhibit as a source for words. If the item you choose is a document, you can borrow words from that as well. Select the words and phrases that stand out to you and start recombining and rearranging them in your notebook. Think about the sound of the words and what they evoke when you remove them from the context of a caption. Aim for the interesting and unexpected in sound and form.

## In Their Voice

You might not have considered it before now, but writers speak in voices. In order to take on another character or persona, a writer has to try to inhabit a person’s way of speaking, feeling, and thinking. Read about one of the items in the gallery and imagine the person who owned or created it. What is their attitude toward this item? How would they feel if it was lost or destroyed? What would they think about their item being on display at the University of Leeds? Now write in the voice of this person speaking about the item. You might also try to imagine the person talking about other aspects of their life. Write in any genre you like – prose, poetry, or script.



## Free Association

Writers often use their own experiences and work associatively, drawing upon their personal associations with a particular subject matter to write imaginatively. You can work associatively with the items in gallery. Choose an item and start freewriting in response to it. Write down whatever comes to your mind – memories, thoughts, feelings, associations, questions. Don't worry about what it means or whether it sounds any good. Don't stop writing for 10 minutes. Now read through what you've written and underline the bits that stand out to you as potentially interesting. How might you develop these into a story, poem or script?

