

# NATIONAL POETRY DAY

25th  
anniversary

3RD OCTOBER 2019

## 6 Ways to Look at The Very Hungry Caterpillar

1. An educational story about the natural process of a maturing caterpillar.
2. A tragic tale of a teenage caterpillar with a love for food, who becomes obsessed about her appearance, overeats when trying to lose weight, goes into depression and dies but ascends to heaven.
3. The insect world's version of Man vs Food.
4. A thriller about a caterpillar and his race against time to become a butterfly within one week, breaking the previous world record
5. A children's story that I think about far too much for a seventeen year old.
6. A comedy about a grumpy, jealous little man who finds himself through his love for food and blossoms in later life.

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A commended winner of the *Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2015*

## Truth

A National Poetry Day  
resource created  
by The Poetry Society

## Key stage 4

## THEPOETRYSOCIETY

The Poetry Society was founded in 1909 to promote “a more general recognition and appreciation of poetry”. Since then, it has grown into one of the UK's most dynamic arts organisations, representing British poetry both nationally and internationally. Today it has more than 4000 members worldwide and publishes *The Poetry Review*. [www.poetrysociety.org.uk](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk)



[www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk](http://www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk)

## Activities:

Sit students in pairs. Ask students to briefly tell the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle: a popular children's picture book in which a caterpillar eats through different foods throughout the week, growing and growing until it pupates into a butterfly.

Now read Andrew Telford's '6 Ways to Look at The Very Hungry Caterpillar' (commended Foyle Young Poet, 2015). Which of the six ways most appeals to students and why?

## Principal Tasks

Rather brilliantly – or perhaps rather frustratingly – the truth is a complicated and deeply subjective thing. Often, several very different and sometimes conflicting 'truths' about the same object, event or interpretation can exist.

Telford's '6 Ways to Look at The Very Hungry Caterpillar' shows us six distinct, equally valid, responses to the truth of a simple children's story.

Using Telford's work as a springboard, ask students to **individually** write a draft of their own poem called **6 Ways of Looking at an Orange** in which they present 5 different interpretations of what an orange is and how it might be perceived.

Some students might like to borrow Telford's listing structure in their work. If they do, they should think about the ordering of the items on the list carefully. Other students might choose to organise their poem in a different, more surprising way – it's entirely up to them!

When writing, students should **especially** think about using **inventive figurative language** – especially similes, metaphors and perhaps personification – to present different truths about this orange. Once students have completed this, ask them to **swap poems with their partners**. They should **add a new, sixth way of looking at an orange to their partner's work**.

What will their addition contribute to their partner's poem as a whole? They could try to make their final section seamlessly 'fit in' with the rest of the text and imitate their partner's style, or maybe their addition will sharply contrast the rest of the poem.

## Plenary/Reflection

At the bottom of their partner's poem, ask students to write a brief sentence or two explaining what they think their additional sixth line brings to the text.

## Extension

Keen and curious learners might search for Wallace Stevens' poem 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird' online and read it through several times. Telford has played with Stevens' poem to create his own winning poem.

Ask them to write a paragraph explaining which of the thirteen perspectives moves and/or excites them, encouraging them to use lots of quotation from the text in their work.

