This lesson plan explores Cia Mangat’s ‘Love Poem to Myself’, a winning poem from the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2019.

The activities can be used in a single session, or over a series of sessions.

The activities stimulated by reading Cia’s poem should inspire students to think about themselves and look to a variety of love poems as a rich source for prompting poetry writing.

Before revealing the poem title, fill in the blank with ideas of typical subjects for a love poem, and then progress to more inventive ones.

Love Poem to ........................................................

Examples: Love Poem to my Husband, Love Poem to my Dog, Love poem to my Toaster
Paired discussion

Discuss the following extracts from love poems. If giving copies on a worksheet, ask students to annotate around them – what is interesting about the words and phrases used? Who is speaking in the poem and what is their tone of voice? What are they saying about love itself?

Alternatively, do a similar activity with the extracts on A3 sheets of paper placed around the room and make sure students note down at least one comment on each sheet, circulating around the room.

‘How Do I Love Thee’ by Elizabeth Barrett Browning
“How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach [...]”

Sonnet 18, William Shakespeare
“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate.”

Why not try and find your own examples, for instance Bruno Mars’ contemporary love song ‘Just the Way You Are’ and Lemn Sissay’s poem ‘Love Poem’.

Read aloud ‘Love Poem to Myself’ by Cia Mangat.

First impressions activity
While listening, students should tape their table/shake their paper copy/something else that makes a reasonably contained noise(!) when they hear a word that they think is significant. Now, discuss which words stood out and discuss as a class why this might be.

Comprehension activity
Make a list of the things the poet loves about herself. Do any stand out from the others?

Make bullet point notes on your thoughts: does this poem fit into some of the ideas about love that we saw in the other poem extracts? How is it similar/different?

How might a love poem to yourself be different to a love poem to someone else? Why do you think the poet chose to do this?

If you would like to do a P.E.A. (Point Explanation and Analysis) style paragraph to practise analytical writing, you could use the title ‘How does the poet feel about herself and how is this shown through the way she writes?’

Glossary
• Thee – you
• Breadth – width
• Temperate – mild, pleasant
Make a quick bullet point list of five things about yourself that you like/find interesting and individual. Be sure you cover your personality and skills as well as your appearance, as the poet did.

Then, use this list to draft your own love poem to yourself. It may help to follow the same format as Cia Mangat’s poem:

your .................... continues to surprise me [after/when] ...................... / like................................................................. / I could listen to you ........................................ for days / and tell you ............................................. for even longer / if I pause to consider .......................... / I too blush with .................... and .................... / your .................... are ..................... / and therefore impossible to improve / when I chance upon .................... I am overcome by the urge to .................... / as if we are both ..................... / but ................................................

Discuss what you came up with and how you found doing this activity. Is it difficult to address your poem to yourself?

**Extension/challenge yourself**

- What do you think is the effect of having the forward slashes ( / ) instead of line breaks?
- Why do you think the poet put her ideas in this specific order?
- How would it change the effect or meaning of the poem if it was arranged differently?
- Research a love poem online. How does the way this poem presents the loved person compare and contrast with the way the poet presents herself in ‘Love Poem to Myself’.
Cia Mangat
Love Poem to Myself

your hair continues to surprise me in its texture after every single wash /
like the shock of a photocopier lid realising the other side when it beams
white light / I could listen to you listing your banned foods for days / and
tell you bad jokes about music as the food of love for even longer / if I
pause to consider how long it takes nurses to find your veins / I too blush
with warm pride and joy / your ears are unremarkable / and therefore
impossible to improve / when I chance upon your face in the curvature
of a kettle I am overcome by the urge to blow you kisses / as if we are
both tethered to the ground / but neither of us want to take off

Cia is a top 15 winner in the Foyle Young Poets of the
Year Award 2019, as well as a top 15 winner in 2017
and 2018, and was a commended Foyle Young Poet in
2016. She is also a commended poet in the meme
challenge, written and judged by poet Rishi Dastidar,
on Young Poets Network; is commended in the Riddle
Me This poetry challenge; and is a runner-up in the
BBC Proms Poetry Competition 2017.
Enter the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2020

Cia Mangat’s poem was a winner of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2019. Now your students are writing their own poetry they can enter the competition themselves.

The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award is the most prestigious award for writers aged 11-17. It is an annual competition that welcomes poems on any theme and entry is completely free.

Since it began in 1998, the Award has kick-started the career of some of today’s most exciting new voices. Past winners include Sarah Howe, Helen Mort, Jay Bernard and Caroline Bird.

Winners receive a fantastic range of prizes, including mentoring, a residential Arvon writing course, Poetry Society membership and books. The Poetry Society also continues to support winners’ development with performance, publication and internship opportunities.

To find out more, to receive copies of the wonderful Foyle Young Poets of the Year Anthology, Your Voice Crosses the Ocean, and the beautiful competition poster for your classroom or library, simply email educationadmin@poetrysociety.org.uk

Be sure to enter your students’ work by 31 July 2020 at foyleyoungpoets.org