

Once Upon a Time

What to do

- * This activity derives from an idea in the classic book *Wishes, Lies and Dreams* by the poet Kenneth Koch, an account of his time getting New York children excited about writing.
- * Ask children to work in pairs on a joint piece, sharing writing duties. It helps if each pair can have access to a picture dictionary.
- * Show the writers the repeated pattern of each line: *Once I was a ... but now I am a ...* with the **conjunction** *but* joining two **simple sentences** into one **compound sentence**.
- * Pairs agree who will write first and that person begins by writing the sentence opening, followed by any object of their choosing.
- * The partner now takes over by writing the second half of the sentence plus a new object. To make the poem interesting, the writer should aim to make their new object different to the first one. It should also begin with a different letter of the alphabet, as in Iris and Vivien's' *pencil* and *cloud* above.
- * The first writer then starts a new line with a fresh object starting with the same letter as the second item in line 1. So, *cloud* and *cake*.
- * The challenge to the writers is to feature different letters in every line they make.
- * Emphasise that writers are working as a pair and encourage them to go hunting for ideas at any time in their dictionary, always looking for variety in their choices. For every line they write, they'll be getting some good experience of using a **verb** consistently in its **present** and **past** tense.

Differentiation suggestions

- * Less confident writers should be encouraged to write just three- or four-line pieces and to focus on good word choices and enjoyable contrasts.
- * A good challenge for the most able children is to produce a poem of 13 lines, featuring 26 different items, each one starting with a different letter of the alphabet.