

# SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH POETRY

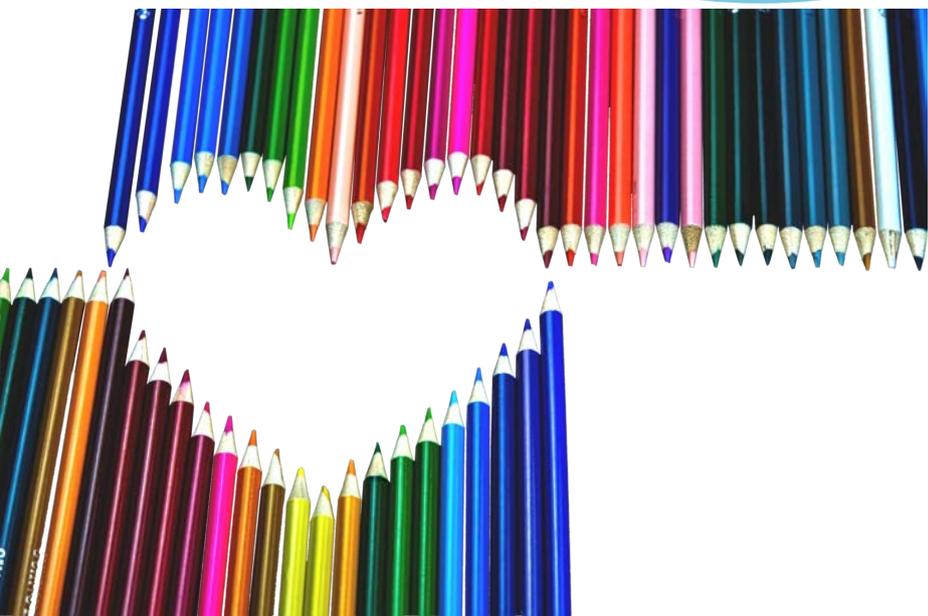
PILOT ACTION ACTIVITY HANDBOOK

NEW ABC - Belgium ACE Team

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Networking the  
Educational World:  
Across Boundaries for  
Community-building



*Self-expression through Poetry. Pilot action activity handbook.*

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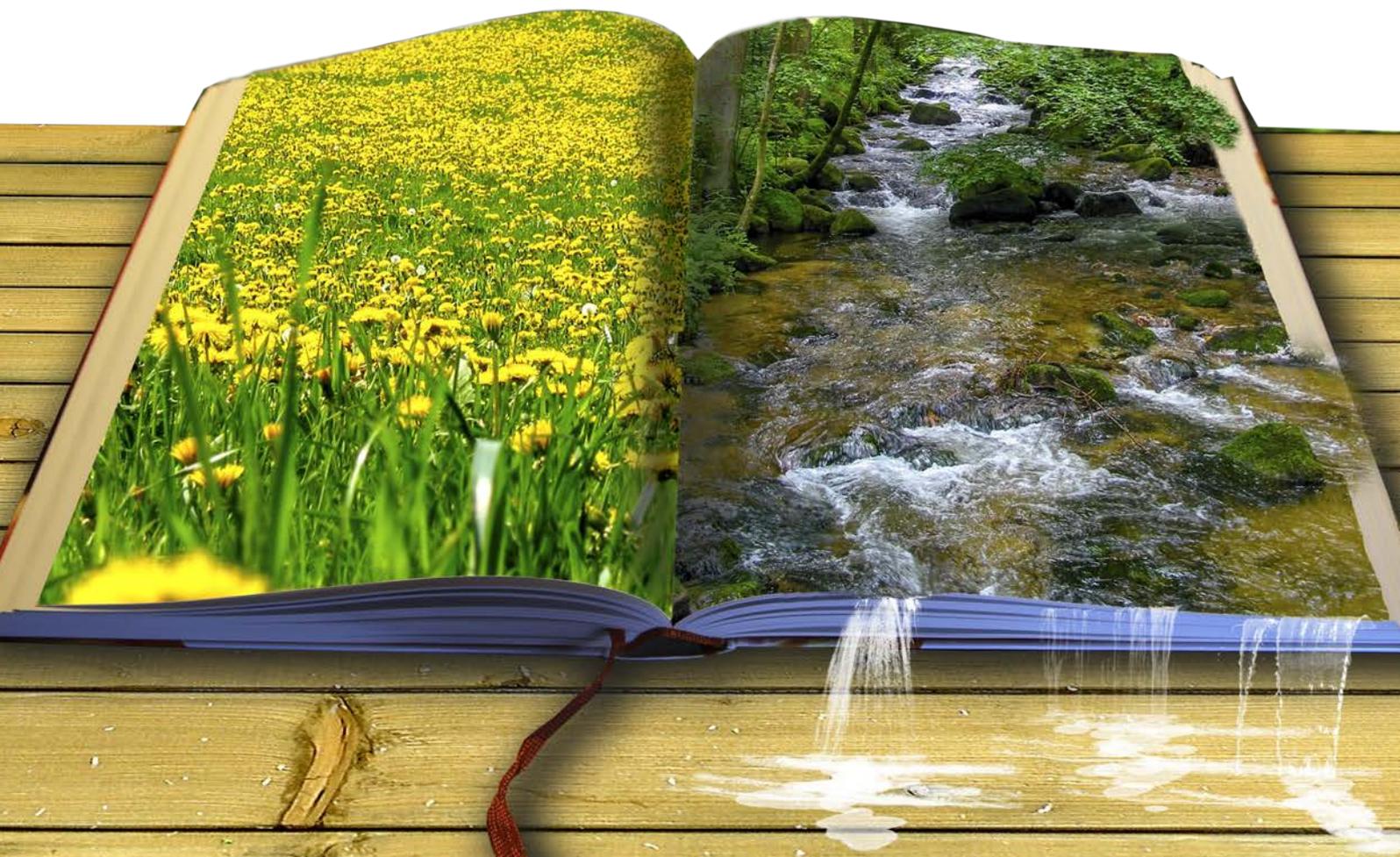
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 Active Citizen Europe



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The NEW ABC project in a nutshell .....	6
What is co-creation? .....	6
About the Self-Expression Through Poetry pilot action .....	7
What the Handbook includes .....	7
How should I use this handbook? .....	7
LET'S GET STARTED! .....	8
Testing the water: Getting familiar with the context .....	8
Let's dive in! Aims and objectives .....	8
HOW TO... .....	10
Step 1   Setting up your poetry pilot action .....	10
Step 2   Developing partnerships .....	12
Step 3   Recruiting participants .....	13
Step 4   Creating a safe environment .....	13
SeP: ACTIVITIES AND LEARNING AIMS .....	15
Overview of the workshop sessions .....	17
Session 1: Introduction focus group .....	18
Session 2: What is poetry? .....	21
Session 3: What is rhyme? .....	25
Session 4: Something different – Free verse poetry .....	28
Session 5: So how long is a poem? .....	30
Session 6: Tone, theme and metaphor .....	33
Session 7: Final creative writing and exit focus group .....	35
EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION .....	37
Developing your own evaluation strategy .....	37
Disseminating your activity .....	39



# INTRODUCTION

## The NEW ABC project in a nutshell

NEW ABC is a project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, and brings together 13 partners from nine European countries with the aim of developing and implementing nine pilot actions that foster youth engagement and belonging in their communities. All NEW ABC pilot actions include children and young people, as well as teachers, families, communities and other stakeholders in education, as co-creators of innovation to empower youth and enable their voices to be heard.

If you want to learn more about NEW ABC this is the link to the project website where you can find information on the other pilot actions too:

[newabc.eu](http://newabc.eu)

## What is co-creation?

Before we introduce the activities co-created with children for the *Self-Expression Through Poetry* pilot action, we would like to explain in just a few words the basic features of co-creation.

Co-creation is a method used to develop democratic partnerships between researchers and local/community stakeholders by promoting their involvement in the design of practices that are tailored to a specific context and responsive to the needs of the community and the participants they serve.

**Co-creation is particularly apt in increasing engagement** and participation on behalf citizens in policy-making because it:

-  places end-user value at its core
-  gives particular relevance to the implementation of co-created practices
-  includes broader dissemination strategies as part of the design from inception

All the activities presented in this handbook have been planned and implemented together with pupils and parents, headmasters, and researchers by taking the children's perspective and allowing them to voice their dreams and needs.



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## About the Self-Expression Through Poetry pilot action

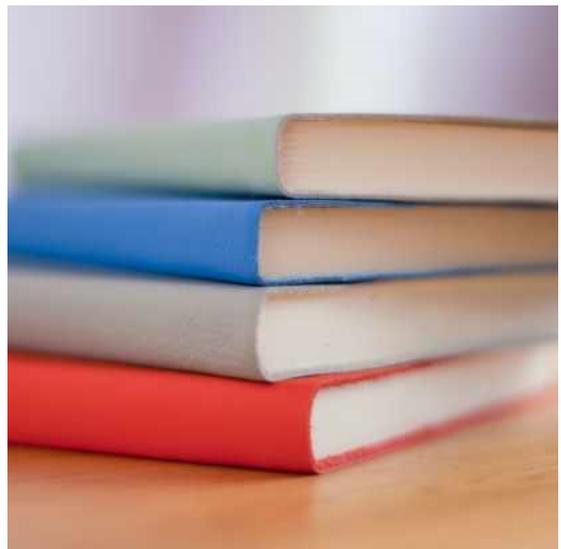
The *Self-Expression Through Poetry (SeP)* is an activity-based intervention for young people in school which equips them creative and practical skills in expressing their voices and sharing their stories through the writing and sharing of poetry.

### What the Handbook includes

This handbook aims to provide a step-by-step overview of all this pilot's activities, including co-creative activities, the pilot action aims and objectives, the learning involved and suggested resources (e.g., activities, materials, and audio-visual content) to support your replication journey.

### How this handbook should be used

This Handbook is intended as a guide to the *Self-Expression Through Poetry* pilot action piloted in Belgium. This handbook offers a detailed overview of the full pilot action process. It was born as a co-created project and is not intended to be prescriptive - you are encouraged to create your own unique, local version. How much time you put in, how you structure the modules, and how you share or later disseminate the outcomes is entirely up to you. You might decide to develop your own activities to better respond to the needs and interests of your students or youth stakeholders, and that is fully in keeping with the spirit of the project. The main ideas to bear in mind are that activities should be co-created with the various stakeholders (especially the children themselves), and that the overarching aim is to foster social inclusion and belonging. The scope is wide, and we hope you will stretch and build on ideas and activities as relevant and appropriate. We hope you enjoy it!



**A note about information:** Where literary devices are defined and examples given, I have included the weblink from where the information is taken. This is all in English, and you may need to seek out similar resources in your language of instruction. As of the finalising of this Handbook, the linked pages are accurate, but please use due diligence as things can change.



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# LET'S GET STARTED!

## Testing the water: Getting familiar with the context

If you are not familiar with the context, the first thing to do is to get some information about your school/organization. These might include how many students and teachers attend the school, the composition of the student body if it is available (e.g., how many native and non-native students), previous projects and activities, possible funding and so on.

This general 'reconnaissance' of your school will help you calibrate your initial approach and tailor it according to the specific situation of the context. A knowledge of the needs, challenges, and strengths of your school will enable you to develop activities that are closer to the 'real' situation of the context you work in.

For example, the activities in this handbook were co-created in a secondary school that has a strong Dutch language immersion programme for newcomers (OKAN), in a town that has for some years benefited from leadership that champions diversity and inclusion. We were therefore prepared to work with children with possibly weak (Dutch) language skills but nonetheless learning in a supportive environment that is sensitive to and accepting of social diversity. As a result, we were able to include and celebrate work in their own native languages, to help create a sense of representation and acceptance.

## Let's dive in! Aims and objectives

The main aim of this pilot action is to produce a participatory co-creative learning programme that engages young people to express their identities, histories and stories through the writing and sharing of poetry. In particular, the activity-based intervention focuses on the following **objectives**:

-  To introduce the poetry and poetic forms as a succinct and powerful form of expression
-  To **enhance** young people's **social, cultural, and emotional well-being**
-  To give children the **tools** to explore, express and **share their stories**
-  To be a springboard to foster dialogue
-  To encourage listening and supporting through the buddy system
-  Through it all, to become more adept at using language to express their thoughts, feelings and identities



## This is important because...

- o Young people are not always given a platform to excavate their experiences and share parts of their stories with their peers, teachers or broader community, but being heard is crucial to a feeling of belonging
- o Young people may not have the tools to express certain things or process strong emotions, and learning and practicing the crisp format of poetry writing helps them to do so
- o Young people may not have the dedicated safe space to explore and discuss identity or belonging, and this pilot action creates that safe space



### Why poetry?

- *Poetry can be succinct or wordy, descriptive or reflective, heavy or light, and yet impactful and relatable.*
- *It can be undertaken without requiring mastery of the language used to write it.*



## A note about participation and legal requirements

You can't wait to get started on this journey, but first do check what are the legal or school regulations concerning obtaining consent and the collection of personal information. This might entail:

- obtaining permission from the school principal and possibly from the school governing bodies;
- checking that there are no constraints regarding participation;
- making sure that the ethical procedures are all in place:
  - o In many countries, extra-curricular activities will require specific parental consent if involving minors
  - o In some countries, for activities held in classroom premises, the school itself grants consent, so individual parental forms may not be needed
  - o Before any consent is taken (whether from school, parents, or students), ensure that you have explained what the project is about and what participation will mean in practical terms, and that this information is clear to all involved
  - o A sample consent/assent form, with explanatory background information on the project, can be found in the appendix of this Handbook
  - o In some countries, anyone working with children will need to obtain a police clearance form – if you are, or will work with, facilitators who are not school staff, check if this is a requirement
  - o Ensure that you are aware of, and enforce, all data protection (GDPR) regulations, especially sensitive with data of minors
  - o If needed, ensure to get a signed consent form from children's parents (according to your school practice and procedures they may have already signed this form at the beginning of the school year) as well as other participants
  - o If you want to truly co-create with your pupils, ask them to 'sign' an assent form



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# HOW TO...

## Step 1 | Setting up your poetry pilot action

The pilot action *Self-Expression through Poetry (SeP)* may function as a long-term weekly activity or as a more focused project held over a fixed number of workshops. The main focus is the creation of a safe, shared space for co-creation, dialogue and creative expression that invites young people to come together and share their experiences through the medium of poetry.



### The basics of setting up

#### Who is this workshop for?

-  Anyone with basic speaking and writing skills in the language of instruction
-  Ideally for children aged 15 to 18 – but can easily be adapted for anyone aged twelve and up
-  Levels of participation and sharing are kept voluntary throughout to optimize feelings of safety and support
-  Smaller groups are easier to engage and manage, and if possible, we suggest one facilitator for groups of 10-12 children

o Develop a short project proposal ([download here](#)) that explains 1) what the pilot action involves; 2) the kind of activities young people would participate in and co-create; and 3) who is it aimed for and what will they gain from being involved.

o If you are not already working within a learning setting, you will need to find a **partnering school** or alternatively an after-school group (such as a Homework Club) to collaborate and share the co-creation adventure.

o Work with the **project partner** (head of school, teachers, club facilitators) to discuss the aims and shared benefits of achieving them, develop project workshop plans and discuss schedule, discuss and agree on learning objectives and paths to those objectives, and the overall framework and relevance of the pilot and NEWABC project goals. If you already work in a school, do you need to persuade any of your colleagues about the benefits of this activity?



o **Important to plan around:** ethics, safeguarding strategies, participant safety, and access opportunities. In particular, check out legal requirements – which may include police check and clearance of any facilitators who will work with the children, explanations to parents, signed authorisation from parents for their children to participate, and the like.

o Discuss with the school how participants will be recruited: possibly entire classes will participate due to engagement by the teacher. Equally, children may have to be recruited on a voluntary basis, in which case publicity flyers or posters should be distributed on campus or via *Self-expression through Poetry* activities, which will be open to further development with the young people through their feedback, preferences, and interests.

o **Get started!**



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## Step 2 | Developing partnerships

SeP embraces co-creation and participatory ways of working. The co-creation and participation of any and all stakeholders is encouraged, and this includes the adults through whom the child participants are accessed. In a school setting, partnerships should be built with teachers, head teachers and facilitators. If working in a non-school setting, types of organisations you might engage with would include youth centres/after-school clubs, charity organisations, or community initiatives. Pitch the pilot as a framework, and then let it evolve and take shape as discussion around it grows.



### Partnerships can...

- o First of all, provide access or an entry point to reaching child participants!
- o Support **the creative process** and offer opportunities for brainstorming and discussion, as well as building suggested reference poems and writing prompts.
- o Support **knowledge exchange** and **sharing of experiences** that may offer important insights such as understanding the needs of primary stakeholders, particularly with regard to special considerations or limitations in the functioning language of the pilot.
- o Support the **smooth development** of the pilot action **through different phases** including project promotion, participant recruitment and dissemination, and feedback and evaluation.



### Reminders

- o **Discuss what their roles and priorities are, and what they hope to gain from this collaboration?** – establishing co-creative relationships involves dialogue, communication, and transparency about what this means both in terms of responsibilities as well as outcomes. The project should ‘speak’ to the partner’s or colleagues’ priorities and areas of activity while also ensure that it has clear benefits to the young people they support (e.g., skills development, support mechanisms, learning opportunities etc.)
- o **Involve them from the start of the co-creative process** – once you have a clear idea of what your pilot action looks like, invite the interested parties to join you in finalising the structure and focus of the activities.
- o **Continue the conversation** – it is important to keep the dialogue ongoing through frequent ‘check in’ conversations and planning sessions. These will ensure that partners are actively engaged in the co-creative process and that their feedback and recommendations are ongoing.



## Step 3 | Recruiting participants

This step, while obviously the main one on which the success of the pilot hinges, can be the most challenging. Participant recruitment can take time as it requires relationship building and establishing rapport, and possibly letting children warm up to certain pilot activities, or even active participation. It is important that young people need to be aware of their own agency to participate in SeP and share their stories and writing, as well as their role in creating a safe and conducive creative environment for themselves and their peers.



### Top tips

- o As pilot facilitator, meet the child participants at their level and work actively to be sensitive to their interests, needs, difficulties, and be flexible and adaptable at all times.
- o Put together some promotional or explanatory materials ([download here](#)) to publicize the SeP pilot. Aim to use clear, visually-engaging and accessible 'text' that speaks to your audience. Focus on points of interest and relevance.
- o Make clear that if certain individuals resist participating or refuse to write or to share what they write, they will be allowed to step back and simply observe, and not be forced.
- o Explain clearly and simply the pilot's aims and objectives, and the benefits of participating (learning a new skill, having a space to write about things in any way that resonates, building friendships). Explain too, the wider aims of NEWABC and how their participation will be a significant step in reaching and helping more young people just like them across Europe.
- o Always be open to and encourage questions.

## Step 4 | Creating a safe environment

When collaborating with young people it is important to make sure they feel welcomed, supported, heard and, most importantly, respected. Young people may often feel that they are not respected, in the sense that their feelings or thoughts or ways of thinking are not equally valued. The pilot facilitator should endeavour to making this a central concept of the poetry workshop groups. This entails focusing on developing a nurturing physical space as well as a psychological space and creative space.



*Young SeP participants should be explicitly encouraged to...*

**Feel heard:** How the pilot activities, focus and group dynamics welcome everyone and provides opportunities for different kinds of engagement, creative interpretation and expression, and sharing.



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**Feel safe:** Is the SeP group following school guidelines/safeguarding structures and relevant national legislation? If appropriate, tell them. Is there a project-dedicated staff member that students can talk to if they have any concerns? Establish basic but important ground rules – such as speaking in turn and not interrupting, not criticising writing or expressed ideas, being sensitive to others' feelings, etc. Foster the right to self-expression, or to privacy, and the right of consent, including for participation.

**Work together:** Explain how and why the activities will be co-created.



## Important information to share

**Consent:** Depending on participants age group and the national legislation, you might need to obtain parental consent for them to be able to participate in the activities. Make sure that your consent form ([download here](#)) is clear (no technical terms), accurate, and detailed. It needs to explain how the young people will be involved in the pilot action activities and how the data (e.g., audio recordings of conversations, artwork, or podcasts) may be used for dissemination purposes (e.g., reports, presentations, exhibitions, social media posts etc.), and the overall purpose of the project.

**Privacy and anonymity:** Processes of co-creation and collaboration are based on relationships of trust.

For poetry that will be shared more widely or disseminated, discuss who will read them. Explain that any mention of their stories/experiences/personal information will remain anonymous- no one will know it was them, and within the smaller classroom/group environment, they will always have the choice whether to put their name on shared writing or not, and may write under a pseudonym if they wish. Writing under the anonymity of a pseudonym may in fact be freeing, as children may feel emboldened to share more of their inner world and more willing to deepen their creative process.

**Safety:** Think about safety on different levels:

a) **Emotional:** Think about how you can prevent any risk/harm caused by the pilot action activities - discussing difficult situations and/or conflict across participants, dredging of painful memories or trauma. Be especially watchful for the third element, and be ready to alter course (such as changing themes or topics) should anyone show discomfort or distress.

b) **Personal:** Ensure that students are not including their real names in materials, no photographs showing faces are taken; no disclosure of identifiable information (e.g., locations, names of people or specific physical characteristic).



# SeP: ACTIVITIES AND LEARNING AIMS

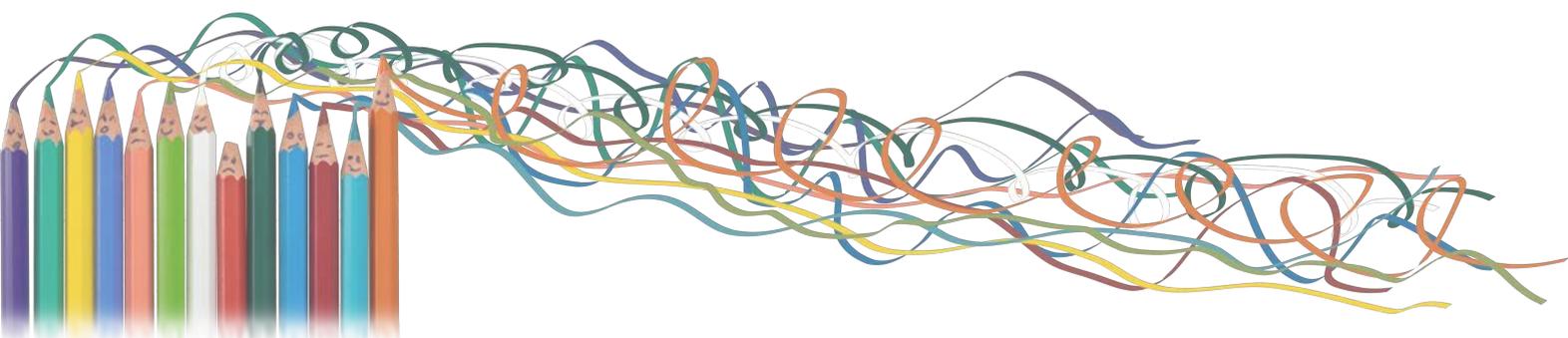
This section introduces the **SeP sessions** (see table below). Each section will introduce the **key learning themes**, **key learning processes** (capacity building, storytelling, and skills development) and provide a list of all **required materials**, to support a smooth replication and evaluation process.

## The learning and doing process

The learning programme should be understood as an underpinning framework and helps you focus on the pilot action's key aims and objectives. The activities are designed to incorporate **three key components** that support the pilot's objectives: **a) Language skills development** (language manipulation and expression, vocabulary building, written and oral presentation); **b) Storytelling** (exploring selves through writing prompts and discussion with peers and facilitators and teachers); and **c) Community building** (through the creation of safe spaces, poetry sharing, and buddying) (see Table 1).

Table 1. An overview of the key components of the pilot activities

Learning component	Aim of activities	Path
 Language skills development	Encourage focused skills development in the form of a mini project	Ice-breaker discussions, presentation of themes, guided and interactive creation of word maps, building of vocabulary/synonyms, introduction of poetic tools.
 Storytelling	Provide opportunities for dialogue and creative expression while establishing rapport between club members	Creative writing of poetry, aided by readings, discussions, and writing prompts; guidance and encouragement of orally presenting and sharing poetry, sharing of poetry or stories from their own cultures or languages.
 Community building	Invite sharing and exchange of personal stories in a safe and respectful environment	Pair up buddies to create dedicated spaces to encourage active listening, sharing work with the class, having open dialogue based on ground rules.



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## Important design information

Ideally, the pilot be run on at least two groups, with 6-7 sessions each.

Please note that this is and should **remain flexible** in order to facilitate participation (time- out from the normal class syllabus, for example). Depending on how the workshops are organised and scheduled, session activities can be combined and compressed if needed. Certainly, if extra time is available, then the learning can be adapted to deepen writing practice and oral presentation and more traditional forms can be introduced and similarly tackled.

Sessions ideally are introduced or underscored by a reading of a poem curated by the workshop facilitator in collaboration with the teacher(s). While general themes are suggested below, they are flexible. The choice of themes, exemplar poems to be read aloud, writing prompts and even the choice of poets presented, should be carefully considered to be appropriate for the target group, not only in terms of **age-appropriate** but also **subject matter-appropriate**. It should be considered carefully and sensitively. Difficult topics should perhaps be avoided – although participants can explore those in their own expression of course.

The sessions (see Table 2) have been planned so that they build on each other, in terms of complexity, nuance or skill. However, in the spirit of co-creation, this too can be adjusted or changed entirely to fit the interests, aims or abilities of the workshop participants.



Every “non-lesson” or more accurately, integrated learning session, will end with a writing prompt that you carefully choose to build coherence into the flow of your sessions followed by ten or so minutes of silent writing, and optional time to share their writing aloud. The only exceptions are the first and last (focus groups) sessions: in the first, there is no writing; and in the last, there is writing but no specified prompt. At the end of each session, spend the couple of minutes recapping the session, and informally and verbally asking for feedback – what did they most enjoy, what did they least enjoy, what would they liked to do more of, what else might have been fun? Note the comments in a field notebook, and try to incorporate the general ideas for next activities.

Finally – while there is an element of teaching/learning, these workshops should not aim to be pedagogical in nature. A balance should be struck so that the **learning happens in the midst of lively and interactive discussion**, and the tone of each session should remain collaborative and rich in exchange of thought.



Table 2. Overview of the workshop sessions

Workshop Sessions	Title	Aims & Objectives	Learning Sessions
Session 1	<i>Introduction Focus Group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce pilot action context and process</li> <li>• Set stage for co-creation</li> <li>• Get to know each other</li> <li>• Create the buddy system (if appropriate)</li> </ul>	1.1 Introduction of SeP and participatory research Discussion 'safe space' and co-creation of house rules 1.2 Icebreaker activity – Chinese Whisper 1.3 Icebreaker activity – who are you?
Session 2	<i>What is poetry?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess general understanding poetry</li> <li>• Identify group level of familiarity and technical knowledge</li> </ul>	2.1 Sharing of prepared poem and discussion of poets/poetry they know 2.2 Exploration of structure and purpose - feelings 2.3 Exploration of rhythm
Session 3	<i>What is rhyme?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss prevalence in everyday life</li> <li>• Explore what it accomplishes</li> </ul>	3.1 Discussion of nursery rhymes, rhyming sounds 3.2 Efficacy of memory, transmission 3.3 The fun factor
Session 4	Something different: <i>Freeform poetry</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provoke discussion of this form – is it familiar? Common? Pleasant or not?</li> <li>• Discuss merits and/or limits of this form</li> </ul>	4.1 Reading of prepared poem 4.2 Discussion of reaction to, resonance with, this form
Session 5	<i>So how long is a poem?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of forms based on length -examples</li> <li>• Introduction of <i>haiku</i></li> </ul>	5.1. How much do you think you can write? 5.2 Examples of well-known texts that are long 5.3 Reading of haiku – what's different?
Session 6	<i>Tone, theme and metaphor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of how poems are experienced</li> <li>• Exploration of how poems are effective</li> </ul>	6.1. Heavy, light, dark, bright 6.2. Metaphor
Session 7	<i>Final creative writing and exit focus group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture participant engagement</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for reflection, feedback, and revision</li> <li>• Reflect on the PAR/co-creation journey and evolution throughout the pilot</li> </ul>	7.1. Discuss workshop experience, relevance and importance of feedback and evaluation 7.2 Final writing prompt and all invited to read aloud (if they want)



## Session 1: Introduction focus group

<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>	Introduce pilot action context and process Set stage for co-creation Get to know each other Create the buddy system (if appropriate)
<b>Learning Sessions</b>	1.1 Introduction of SeP and participatory research Discussion 'safe space' and co-creation of house rules 1.2 Icebreaker activity – Chinese Whisper 1.3 Icebreaker activity – who are you?

By the end of this Chapter young people will have...

-  Been **introduced to the project** and had the chance to **find out more** about what it involves
-  Participated in **presenting and interactive dialogue-based activities**
-  Learnt about the **Buddy System**
-  Jointly discussed and created **house rules**

### Session overview, aims & objectives

Workshop Session 1 sets the stage for this pilot. A relaxed feel should permeate the presentation of the pilot and its components. A combination of icebreakers, presentation and interaction will offer opportunities for the group to establish rapport and get to know each through sharing stories. A note about the consent forms: if participants are recruited through their classrooms, then the teacher should send out the consent forms and explanatory letter ahead of the first session for parents to sign. If consent is not required in the classroom setting (as is the case in Belgium, where the school essentially gives consent) then assent forms should be printed instead, introduced and signed by the students and collected.

#### List of materials

Blackboard or whiteboard

To print:

Sign-up sheet ([download](#))

Feedback materials

Consent forms (if required); otherwise, assent forms

([download](#))





From this very first session, endeavour to make sure the physical space as inviting and enabling as possible. Desks might be arranged in a circle rather than in rows. Students may be permitted to walk freely around. If allowed under classroom rules, drinks or snacks can be permitted as well, to differentiate and set this time apart from formal and structured learning time.

At any point, pass around the 4 column the signup sheet around – with clear instructions that they should write ONLY their first name, age and country of origin and language of origin. No other identifying information should be written, and explain that this information will not be shared but only used for pilot purposes, such as curating material that would appeal to the majority of participants.



### Activity 1: Introduction

Introduce Self-Expression through Poetry as a series of workshops that will be undertaken together over a number of days. Emphasise the co-creation focus, and invite active collaboration and sharing of suggestions, thoughts and preferences. After everyone has had the chance to grab a drink and some snacks, briefly introduce yourself and share a few words about the pilot action's aims and overall structure. Encourage questions, and be open to differing perspectives and reactions. Next, introduce the concept of



“Safe space” and allow children to discuss or question it until they have a clear idea of its expectations. Allow time for this, all the while generating discussion and writing down all ideas on the board. Finally, lead the discussion to what behaviours would create such a safe space for everyone, and the simple rules that would enable it.

These will become the co-created House Rules which will govern all SeP workshops. Be sure to lead towards questions of respectful listening, not interrupting or correcting, not criticising; being tender and respectful of personal information and history that is shared; decency, confidentiality, right to privacy, and the right to consent or withdraw consent, including in the context of their participation in this pilot.





### Activity 2: Chinese Whisper

Start by linking poetry as a subset of language studies by explaining and playing one or two rounds of Chinese Whispers. Everyone sits in a circle. You start, by whispering a short phrase to the person on your left (keeping language simple and accent neutral). The person receives it, then whispers it on to the person on their left – and so on, until the whisper has made a full journey around the room. The last person receiving it then says it aloud – is it anything like the original phrase you set? Usually not, and this is good for a few laughs!



### Activity 3: 'Who am I?' and Buddy System

Assign students to split into pairs – not with their friends but someone they do not sit near. This will be their Buddy for the remainder of the workshop sessions. Take a few moments to explain the Buddy System: it is a pairing within the framework of the pilot only, and will be the partner with whom each session they will have a chance to either share their written work with, or if they prefer not to, then discuss their ideas with. The Buddy System will operate under the House Rules to be established together – the idea is to encourage sharing and dialogue in a respectful and engaged manner.

The facilitators and teachers present should play as well, pairing with students. They will then be given about ten minutes for a paired discussion. The rules are simple: Each member takes a turn speaking, answering the question "Who am I" with little facts they are comfortable sharing. Stress that they should share information, even trivial things, that they are comfortable having everyone know. Examples might be – what is your favourite breakfast, or where were you born? Or the information shared could be abstract ones such as: would you rather be a fish or a bird? They should aim to share between 5 and 10. The students take turns sharing, while those not sharing listen without interrupting or speaking. At the end of the allotted time, everyone returns to their seat. Everyone is then called out in sitting order, and their pair buddy will have to share back what they remember about their partner from the introduction.

The feedback form will be a collective one filled in by the facilitator or teacher capturing all the discussion generated and the house rules agreed on, as well as a sense of where interest, knowledge and curiosity lie.



## Session 2: What is poetry?

<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>	Assess general understanding poetry Identify group level of familiarity and technical knowledge
<b>Learning Sessions</b>	2.1 Sharing of prepared poem and discussion of poets/poetry they know 2.2 Exploration of structure and purpose - feelings 2.3 Exploration of rhythm

By the end of this Chapter young people will have...

-  A feel for **what poetry is** and how to identify it
-  Their own ideas of **what a poem does**
-  An understanding of **basic rhythm** and its role in language and poetry

### Session overview, aims & objectives

**Session 2** aims jump right into the heart of the pilot by introducing poetry, and building learning, sharing and activities around it. Start the session by giving each participant a small new notebook that will be dedicated to the poetry writing. They can be inexpensive, but aim for something bright and inviting! Have the children write their names on it in any way they feel like.

Once the notebooks are distributed, have everyone sit back in their chairs and, if they want, to close their eyes. Tell them you will read a poem that you like and want them to listen.

#### List of materials

1. Laptop
2. Post-it notes
3. Coloured markers
4. Scissors
5. Small ball for icebreaker activity

#### To print:

- Consent forms ([download](#))
- Attendance sheet ([download](#))
- Feedback materials



#### Poetry

- “literature that evokes a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound, and rhythm.”

[Learn more](#)



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### Activity 1: Reading and discussion of poem

You will have spent time thinking about what poem to introduce first. It will be informed by input from the teachers who know the students and their previous exposure to literary texts, as well as to your own feeling for the general language proficiency of the group as a whole, perhaps their interests or pre-occupations, perhaps a shared background. Whatever the case, choose and print a poem that you feel is age and subject appropriate. They can of course be from any poet, in translation, but where possible, it would be encouraged to present something written in the language in which you are working.

To keep to the general framework of inclusion and belonging, it may be useful to choose poems with relevant themes. Suggestions include, but are not limited to:

- poems about homeland or home
- poems about a place that makes you happy
- poems about activities that you enjoy, such as sports or music
- poems about friendship
- a poem about family in general (avoid specifics such as 'grandmother' as we don't know what actual experiences are in the group of specific relationships, and the wrong type may create an incongruence between the intended message and the interpretation. Should this happen anyway, despite your best efforts, incorporate a discussion of precisely the subjectivity of images and words, and how they influence our reception of poems, songs, or speeches!)

Or for slightly older children, more abstract themes would work as well:

- poems about place, including distant places
- poems about time
- poems about identity or self-reflection
- poems about memories

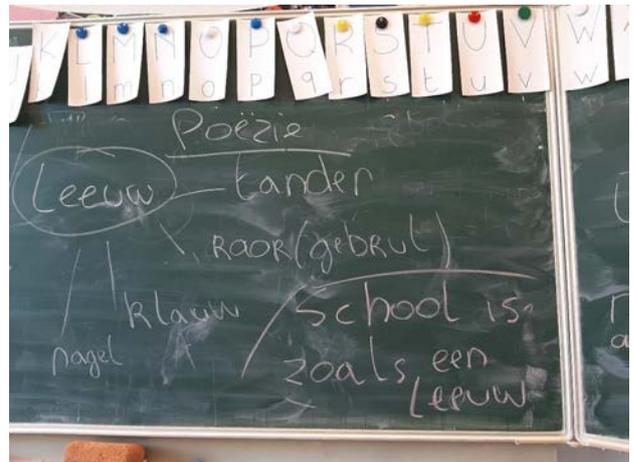




## Activity 2: Exploration of structure, purpose, feelings

After you've slowly read the poem aloud, lead a discussion and let the children take over. Discuss what they felt the poem was about? How did it make them feel? And then dive deeper – how did it manage to make them feel that way? Was it words that were chosen, images that were described? A cadence in the lines? Really have everyone think about it, line by line or word by word and articulate how it is doing what it is doing. And given all that, what makes a poem a poem, setting it apart from other literary forms? The shortness? Something else? Leave it open.

Develop the captured fragments into a mind map on the board, adding to its complexity. If the children are unfamiliar with mind maps, take a moment to explain how it is made and the aims of capturing related facets of a topic. At the end of the discussion, encourage students to copy the mind map if this poem into their notebooks. Distribute the poem copies and ask them to fold or glue it into their poetry notebooks.



### Mind map

"A Mind Map is an easy way to brainstorm thoughts... a diagram for representing tasks, words, concepts, or items linked to and arranged around a central concept"

[Learn more](#)





### Activity 3: Exploration of rhythm

For the session's last activity, have everyone stand up, lead a few stretches, get them out of their chairs and the blood flowing! And then – recite a few lines of a well-known nursery poem that has a strong rhythm -preferably in iambic pentameter as that is distinct. Recite the lines at a normal pace with even rhythm. For instance – “Mary Had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow...” Stop. Now tell them to pay attention to the rhythm and listen as you recite it again. Then stop. For the third and last recitation, have them clap their hands or snap their fingers to the rhythm on the stress. This is usually enjoyable for everyone to do, so go a few rounds.

Everyone can sit down again, as you open an exchange of ideas on rhythm. Had they noticed it before in this nursery rhyme? What does it do – to the speed, flow, momentum? What is the effect on reciting something with cadence -easier or harder? Does it possibly facilitate oral transmission of poems? A brief preparation on examples of very old lines of verse (religious texts, Chaucer, etc) can feed into insights on how oral tradition superseded the writing of literature, and how the form, rhythm, shortness or length of lines may all contribute to the ease of transmission? If the group has enough previous exposure, examples can be brought in on the English sonnet's structure and iambic pentameter in relation to the ease of breathing while reciting. For contrast, have them recite the same nursery rhyme introduced earlier without breaking at the stresses, and see how quickly they fatigue or run out of breath. Continue to engage them – do they like music? What kind? What is the rhythm like? How about rap – is it like poetry? Let the discussion lead where it wants, as the only learning outcome here is a more intimate awareness of rhythm in speech.

In the last ten or fifteen minutes of the session – allow time for the writing of one poem that they do not have to share – it is their first after all! Keeping with the earlier suggested themes, set a writing prompt that can build towards identity and belonging, but it light: 4 to 8 lines to describe themselves, a favourite room in their home, or a pet, for instance. But have them choose their words to create the cadence we call rhythm.

**Reminder: get and note informal session feedback!**



## Session 3: What is rhyme?

<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>	Discuss prevalence in everyday life Explore what it accomplishes
<b>Learning Sessions</b>	3.1 Discussion of nursery rhymes, rhyming sounds 3.2 Efficacy of memory, transmission 3.3 The fun factor

By the end of this Chapter young people will have...

-  **A clear understanding of rhyme**
-  Deepening understanding of how components like rhythm and rhyme aid in the transmissibility of the spoken word
-  Practice rhyming words

### Session overview, aims & objectives

**Session 3** introduces rhyming poetry. This is a natural progression from the previous session on rhythm as the two are often closely associated. Begin by recapping the experience and conclusions from the previous session on rhythm.

Have everyone relax in their chairs, eyes closed if they want. Ask them to listen to what you will read, and pay attention to what feature stands out.

#### List of materials

Notebooks  
Coloured markers or pencils  
Blackboard or whiteboard

#### To print:

A couple of examples of curated rhyming verses – enough copies for everyone



#### Rhyme

- Rhyme is defined as the repetition or correspondence of similar sounds, especially as used at the end of lines of poetry.
- See an example from a traditional American nursery rhyme on the right:

Star light, star bright,  
The first star I see tonight;  
I wish I may, I wish I might,  
Have the wish I wish tonight.



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### Rhyme scheme

- Rhyming sounds at the end of each line are designated by a capital letter. I have a cat. (A)  
I have a mouse. (B)
- Common schemes are ABAB and ABBA. I have a hat. (A)  
I have a house. (B)
- See an example on the right:

[Learn more](#)



### Activity 1: Listening to and analysing the feel of rhyming poems

Next, read two different poems or extracts that feature rhyming verse. Discuss the poems again – how do they sound, how do they feel, how do they move? Let the realisation of rhyming words, couplets or alternating lines arrive at their own pace. It can be helped along by writing out the lines on the board as well.



### Activity 2: Rhyme and memory

Once again, lead the discussion of how, this time, rhyme helps with speaking, reciting, memorising verses? Does it help, hinder or neither? Does rhyming verse sound pleasant and harmonious, overly forced, neutral? Do you think it is harder or easier to write rhyming verse? Why?



### Activity 3: The Fun factor

Still working with rhyming verse, read an example of a silly or nonsense verse. An example in English could be a limerick. Whatever is chosen, touch briefly on the form and features, and the tradition if distinct (such as an Irish limerick). Then write it out on the board, writing the rhyming words or pairs of words in the same colour. Let the pattern emerge.





### Limerick

- A form of traditional, usually humorous verse (poem) from Ireland, that contains exactly one stanza of five lines and has the rhyme scheme AABBA.
  - Well-known example, by Edward Lear's "The Book of Nonsense", on the right
- There was an Old Man with a beard  
Who said, 'It is just as I feared!  
Two Owls and a Hen  
Four Larks and a Wren  
Have all built their nests in my beard!

Finally – have them try their hand at writing rhyme! Choose a light but relevant topic for your writing prompt – prompts must always be given for the children to anchor their thoughts and words too, otherwise the exercise can quickly become overwhelming! Again, based on language aptitude and abilities, have them try to write a poem working with the prompt but with the element of silliness or humour (like a limerick) have them each write 4 or 8 lines of rhyming verse. Have them use the coloured pencils or markers to underline (in the same colour) all rhyming words. You may leave it to them whether they want to try writing couplets, after you've explained it, or whether they want to rhyme every line – anything goes!



### Couplet

- A pair of successive lines of verse which rhyme.
  - A famous example comes from William Shakespeare's play, "Romeo and Juliet":
- Good night! Good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow  
That I shall say good night till it be morrow

Stop writing ten or fifteen minutes before the end of the session for anyone willing to share their silly poems aloud with the group to do so.

**Reminder: get and note informal session feedback!**



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## Session 4: Something different – Free verse poetry

<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>	Provoke discussion of this form – is it familiar? Common? Pleasant or not? Discuss merits and/or limits of this form
<b>Learning Sessions</b>	4.1 Reading of prepared poem 4.2 Discussion of reaction to, resonance with, this form

By the end of this Chapter young people will have...

-  **An understanding of freeform poetry**
-  Articulated their preference for freeform vs rhyming poetry
-  Some exposure to freeform poetry

### Session overview, aims & objectives

**Session 4** is intended to shake things up! After several sessions discussing poems that fall together logically, musically and harmoniously through rhythm and rhyme, and all the discussion of how those techniques are useful in very practical terms – we will now explore free verse!

#### List of materials

To print:  
A couple of examples of curated freeform verses – enough copies for everyone



- **Free verse**
- A modern, open form of poetry that
- has no fixed metre or rhyme scheme.
- See an example on the right:

I followed the moon / or did it follow me?  
I tried to trick it / in the shadows I hid.  
Now was my chance.  
I don't quite know.

[Learn more](#)

[See more examples](#)



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### Activity 1: Reading of prepared poem

They know what to do – sit back, eyes closed if they want – and listen. Keeping to relevant topics and themes, read aloud curated verses or extracts that are strongly free flowing.

Stop, wait a moment. Then recite again, a bit more slowly.



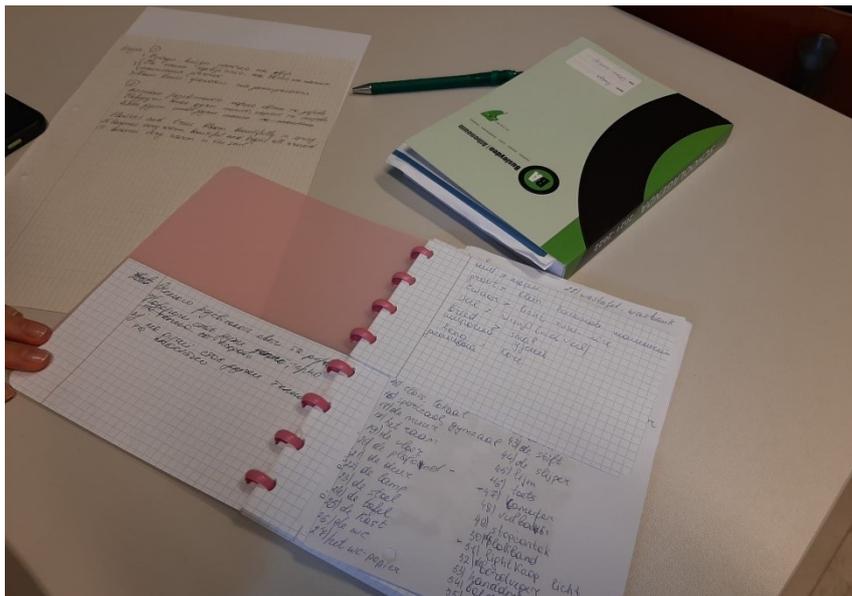
### Activity 2: Discussion of this form – why?

What’s the point? What does it accomplish (or not)? How might it be effective or impactful? Ask the children to start their own mind maps in their poetry notebooks, and then call out ideas for you to map on the board. Does it make sense? Does it make sense for some situations, or some types of poems, but not others? How does it make the listener feel? What, in fact, does it do through its form?

Notebooks out – ten minutes to create a freeform poem of any length – the only rule is that it must evolve from the writing prompt you give.

At the end of the writing time, allow willing participants to share their creations aloud with the class.

**Reminder: get and note informal session feedback!**



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## Session 5: So how long is a poem?

<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>	Discussion of forms based on length -examples Introduction of <i>haiku</i>
<b>Learning Sessions</b>	5.1. How much do you think you can write? 5.2 Examples of well-known texts that are long 5.3 Reading of haiku – what's different?

By the end of this Chapter young people will have...

-  An appreciation for the diversity of poetry structure
-  An understanding of how structure and form and linked to how poetry is experienced
-  An introduction to the Japanese haiku form

### Session overview, aims & objectives

As part of our pilot action we wanted to provide an opportunity for our members to bring all their creative work together as part of a mini project. This had the added benefit of finding a way to showcase their work in a creative and interesting way. In our pilot action the young people really liked the idea of creating their own website as part of their mini project, which enabled them to tell their stories digitally through their various activities.

#### List of materials

Blackboard or whiteboard

#### To print:

Three examples of curated haiku – enough for a copy each



- The ancient Indian epic poem, the Mahabharata, was written over 2400 years ago, and might be the longest poem ever written, with over 200,000 lines.
- Many **epic** poems are very long.
- Epic is a long, often book-length, narrative in verse form that retells the heroic journey of a single person, or group of persons.

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### Activity 1: Exploring long poems

Much of the poems we have read (and written!) so far are short – does anyone know of longer poems? Be prepared to lightly touch on texts from different parts of the world, different languages or different religious traditions (aim for representation and inclusivity). Examples could include of course the Greek Odyssey, the Gilgamesh, the Canterbury Tales, the Inferno, the Mahabharata – may be useful to have physical examples of these tomes. What they have in common? -They are hardly short poems.

The discussion should segue into the observation that there are no rules about how long poems should be, and some of our oldest poetry is very wordy indeed! What does a longer poem allow the writer to accomplish that a shorter poem cannot do? And vice versa?



### Activity 2: Introducing the haiku!

And just when you thought you were getting the hang of things – sit back, close your eyes if you want, and listen to a Japanese haiku!

Introduce the history of a haiku, before then reading three different curated examples. What is noticeable – what stands out? Short, yes. Questions that you may want to ask or discussion with your group are:

- o Is there any pattern, rhythm? Any rhyme?
- o Any words missing, articles perhaps? The language is very pared down.
- o What does it do by being so bare?
- o What topics does it cover, and what does it seem to say? How does it say it?
- o Are any words missing, articles perhaps? Why?
- o How is the paucity (bareness) of words and sounds seen across the page and felt in the ear?
- o What does it evoke, or evoke differently compared to some other poems we have read?





### Haiku

- An old Japanese form of poem that is arranged in stanzas of 17 syllables across 3 lines. The traditional 5-7-5 pattern is 5 syllables for the first line, 7 for the second, and 5 on the last line.
- However, many haiku, especially written in or translated into English, do not follow that pattern. There will, however, always be three lines.
- Haiku are sparse poems about nature and seasons, and describe a brief moment in time.

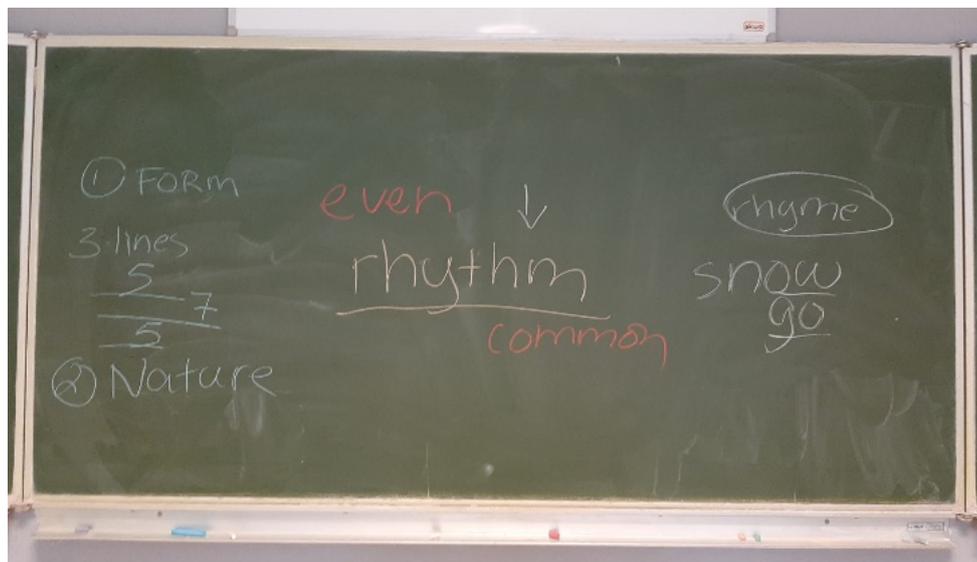
[Learn more](#)

A famous example by Matsuo Basho: **The old pond  
A frog leaps in.  
Sound of the water.**

Following the discussion, write out on the board the 5-7-5 form, and have everyone copy it into their notebooks. They should make notes of all highlight you write concerning structure and theme.

As always, reserve the last segment of the session to writing in silence. Ten minutes should do it – it may help to be fairly limiting or precise with the prompt, so that the participants can instead focus on putting words together effectively in such a counter-intuitive way.

Encourage those willing to share their haikus aloud with the class. Facilitators and teachers should always consider writing and sharing as well!



**Reminder: get and note informal session feedback!**



## Session 6: Tone, theme and metaphor

<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>	Exploration of how poems are experienced Exploration of how poems are effective
<b>Learning Sessions</b>	6.1. Heavy, light, dark, bright 6.2. Metaphor

By the end of this Chapter young people will have...

-  An understanding of the concepts of tone, theme and metaphor
-  Exposure in utilizing these literary devices to convey emotions or messages effectively

### Session overview, aims & objectives

Session 6 introduces and gives a name to three common literary devices – tone, theme and metaphor. Here, a slightly more pedagogical approach works well in order to explain what these things are, and definitions should be written on the board and copied individually into notebooks.

A little extra planning will be required for this session. The facilitator should arrive equipped with simple but clear definitions of the three terms, and many examples drawn from well-known poems (in the working language of the pilot).

#### List of materials

Blackboard or whiteboard

To print:  
Nothing

i

#### Tone

The language and choice of words that gives a piece of writing its characteristic feel, such as playful, dark, etc.

#### Theme

Refers to the central meaning of a piece of writing.



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## Metaphor

Compares two different things to show their similarities.  
An example, again from Shakespeare, from his play "As You Like It".

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts

[Learn more](#)



### Activity 1: Introducing common literary devices

Play with the examples curated – give examples and call on people to explain what the examples demonstrate – theme, tone or metaphor – and how they know? Challenge the group to think in terms of a poem's mood – happy or sad, or hurt and angry – and how the moods can be thought of in terms of colour – dark/light tones. Discuss whether the actual words chosen build up the portrayed mood – pay attention to the choice of words in the examples you share. Spend some time on metaphor as well – and encourage students to come up with their own metaphors pertaining to common things in life. Have fun with it!



*"school is a lion"*



### Activity 2: What a poem communicates

Bring the discussion whole circle to how everything fits in together, so that the poem can say something. The message contained is the theme. Do all poems have a theme?

For today's writing exercise – have participants work with your given prompt and ONE of the devices looked at today. Aim for 8-12 lines of poetry for those who feel daring. Allow time for those willing to read their work aloud at the end of this penultimate session.



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## Session 7: Final creative writing and exit focus group

<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>	Capture participant engagement Provide opportunities for reflection, feedback, and revision Reflect on the PAR/co-creation journey and evolution throughout the pilot
<b>Learning Sessions</b>	7.1. Discuss workshop experience, relevance and importance of feedback and evaluation 7.2 Final writing prompt and all invited to read aloud (if they want)

By the end of this Chapter young people will have...

-  An overview of their poetry pilot journey and growth
-  Participated in **more detailed evaluation and feedback**
-  **Written and presented a final poem**

### Session overview, aims & objectives

**Session 7** aims to wrap up the pilot smoothly. Recap the reasons that this pilot was designed and launched in the first place, and what the research team hopes to accomplish with the pilots.



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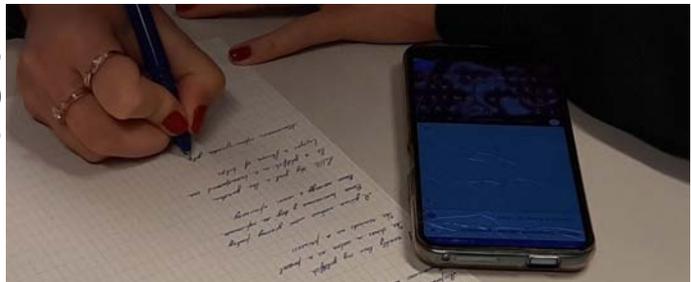
### Activity 1: Detailed evaluation

Explain why more detailed evaluation and feedback would therefore be helpful and valuable. This final evaluation can take any form, but should include feedback from the primary stakeholders, ie the pilot participants, as well as secondary stakeholders who can be accessed – teachers, assistant teachers, head teachers if relevant, parents if possible. The informal oral feedback sought at the end of each session will be delved into more deeply, and participant feedback and overall impression captured. There should be elements of qualitative, open-ended feedback reflecting on the past few weeks or building. Self-reporting questions can consider how participants felt they may have evolved or improved with regard to an understanding of poetry, an appreciation of poetic form, some level of comfort in creating poetic writing, some level of ease or comfort in presenting it aloud and sharing with peers. Pay attention to what seemed to have been enjoyable and worked well, and what seemed to be less enjoyable or did not work well. If there is an adequate level of language command, some written feedback would be good to gather, as feedback would be in the participants' own words.



### Activity 2: Final writing exercise

Final writing exercise utilizing any form, structure, length and theme desired – no prompt! Everyone encouraged (not forced) to share their creation aloud with the group!



## Well done to everyone!



# EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION

## Developing your own evaluation strategy

Whether you follow the suggested 7 sessions, or end- up compressing the pilot into fewer sessions or expanding it to include additional ones, at some point the collaboration between you and the partnering school/teacher/community group will come to an end – if for no other reason than the start of school holidays! It is important to evaluate the pilot's success or failure by way of overall impact, efficacy or engagement. Both positive and negative feedback are valuable: remembering the NEWABC came into being to develop tools to aid inclusion and participation of migrant children to build their capacities and raise their voices. By evaluating the pilot at the end of a run, we can assess what has worked well, what can be improved, what can be discarded, and so on. Evaluation is a means of learning and continuous improvement, and should be undertaken with as many stakeholders as possible.

In addition to the guiding questions below, the manner of seeking feedback can vary. You are best suited to decide what form the evaluation should take: whether it makes more sense to have a general verbal conversation as a group, with someone taking notes of all points raised, or have a proper focus group where participants are methodically asked for their impressions and suggestions. Another format is to ask for written feedback, which can be a series of yes/no questions, multiple answer questions, or open-ended questions requiring participants to formulate their own opinions. Written feedback can also be delivered either in person at the final session, or online via an email or electronic survey distributed by the teacher. Brief written surveys are suggested if feasible at least once for the anonymity as well as the link to computerised learning.

Below are examples of useful parameters and indicators that can be used and adapted to seek feedback. Use the indicators or combination of indicators that work for you, because they are most relevant, most accessible, and most helpful.

### Children's participation

Were children eager to talk and participate? Were they displaying enthusiasm and willingness to be part of the activity? Did you notice an increased participation over time of individuals and the group generally?

### Networking in the school

Did you manage to involve a group of teachers in the project? How are your work relationships after the activity? Will they utilise or embed any of the pilot activities in their own lesson plans? Did the teachers learn anything new in terms of subject, engaging children in dialogue or other? Did they feel the activities of the pilot directly impacted or supplemented their regular teaching goals?



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## Parents' involvement

Did you manage to involve parents in some steps of the activities? Were parents asking you about some specific things that children told them at home? Were they curious about the activities that you were implementing? Were they helpful in supplying requested texts if any?

## Policy makers' involvement

Did you manage to inform local authorities about the activities that you implemented? How was their reaction? Were they willing to take part in the activity in some capacity?

## Professional development

Have you developed new skills during the activity? Do you think you improved your professional competences? Have you learned something?

## Overall impact

Are there many people interested in your activities? Did you manage to disseminate them through various channels? Are your colleagues asking you about the activity? Are some colleagues from other schools willing to re-do your activity?



## Disseminating your activity

The final stretch of this journey is to make the pilot available and accessible by anyone. The pilots constitute tools that were created, co-created, tested and evaluated for the sole purpose in enhancing and stretching ways migrant children can promote their own inclusion with their own agency. It is our aim to share what we learn, as widely and freely as possible, so that others may benefit from them too.

There are several strategies that you can deploy to enhance the visibility of your activity. We divided them into two macro-areas:

### LOCAL LEVEL

At the local level, you can start disseminating the activity while you are implementing it. For instance, after every 'session' you can give students something tangible to bring home (e.g., a piece of paper with a sentence that summarizes the activity, or a small origami, a drawing and so on). You can also involve other people by illustrating the activity through posters and informal chats with children's parents, colleagues, and the headmaster). You can also organize final events that allow to showcase what you have done – an exhibition of printed poems or an oral poetry slam, for example - invite local authorities and policy makers to these events!

### (INTER)NATIONAL LEVEL

You can use various digital channels to present your activities to a broader audience. This could be through any of the online multi-purpose platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram as well as more limited scope platforms such as the school website, student or parent ambassadors, etc. Do keep in mind privacy and safety issues highlighted at the beginning of the handbook, and ensure compliance with relevant local, national and international regulations.



**Thank you very much for reading this Handbook!**

We hope you enjoy engaging young people in their own Self-expression through poetry!

If you have run this Self-Expression through Poetry Workshop, in part or in full, we would be happy to hear from you with a few words with your thoughts or experience or any interesting adaptations you have made to suit your purposes!

[Contact Active Citizen Europe](#)

For further information, questions or suggestions

If you have any questions about running this pilot action, please contact [contact@activecitizeneurope.org](mailto:contact@activecitizeneurope.org) and we will try to assist you.

**Acknowledgements**

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