Nonsense or creativity

Introduction

This activity is designed to help students explore the concept of creativity and its connection to people. In the activity, students explore two poems. One is created by a computer and the other by a human.

Students have to try to identify the one created by the computer. They then share their views about creativity and whether a computer can be creative. They can also use a free website to use artificial intelligence to help them make a poem.


Level: B1+ Secondary

Time: 30 – 45 minutes

Aim: To encourage students to think and talk about creativity.

Preparation:

- Make copies of the two poems in the materials section.

Procedure

- Ask the students if they know any poems.

- Ask the students if they can recite a poem from memory and if they can get a few students to recite their poems.

- Ask the students what kind of person becomes a poet and what qualities a poet needs.
Get the students to discuss this together and then tell you what they think.

Next, ask the students if they think a computer could create poems.

Give the students the two poems and ask them to try to decide which one they like best and which they think was created by a computer.

Give the students time to read and discuss, then get a show of hands about which they think was written by a real person. (The answer is Poem 2 was written by a real person and Poem 1 was generated by a computer using random sentences based on the style of a well-known poet – Emily Dickenson)

Now that the students know poem 1 is a ‘fake’ ask them whether they think it is creative or not and what makes the work by a human creative and the work by the computer not creative.

If you have time and access to the internet, you could give the students a link to the site where the poem was created, and they could create their own:

https://sites.research.google/versebyverse/

Materials:

Poem 1
To you, I must say,
Pale as a rainbow's raiment,
Of the never happy thing.
Swift as a purple creature
Eyes of water, in the air
Spend me with patriot hands.
Yield the blue, and dust the night.

Poem 2
It was midnight in November
One October last July.
The moon was shining brightly
And the sun was in the sky.
The flowers were gently singing.
And the birds were in full bloom,
When I went up to the cellar
To sweep the attic room.

Additional resources

Using poems, quotations and proverbs

Learning a language does not just mean saying something new. It also helps to practise saying words and sounds.

Using poetry

- Any authentic material exposes students to some 'real English' and can be very motivating for your students, provided they are supported throughout the task. The other great thing about poems is for students to have the opportunity to see the language work creatively and freely. Poems can be used in many ways, and the more you use them, the more uses you’ll find for them.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/using-poetry

Kids and poetry

- Using poetry in the classroom may seem daunting at first, but below you’ll find steps and tips to help you get your learners appreciating and writing poems.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/kids-and-poetry

A Handful of Poems by Tony Mitton

- The four poems in this collection are all by Tony Mitton. Each kit includes the text and audio of the poem as well as learning activities, teacher’s notes and visual support.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/handful-poems-tony-mitton

Creativity in the language classroom

- The focus of this book is on practical activities which can help to nurture, develop and motivate our students. The activities will help teachers to explore the role of creativity in the classroom, both in the sense of helping students to express their unique creative identity and also by helping them to think about and use language in a creative way.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/creativity-english-language-classroom