Introduction to Christmas poems

Compose a very short, simple verse, and write it on the board. You don’t need to be a great poet, just make something that rhymes and has rhythm. However, if you doubt your artistic skills, here are a couple of verses that I have invented and used in the past:

*It’s Christmas soon and there’s lots of snow.*
*It’s cold and frosty and nice.*
*We’ll kiss beneath the mistletoe*
*And drink whisky, or brandy, on ice!*

or:

*I love the big green Christmas tree,*
*The carols, food and wine.*
*But most of all I love the gifts,*
*Especially when they’re mine!*

Students should understand that it’s OK for their poems to be humorous or serious, as they wish.

Identifying rhyme and rhythm

Elicit the rhythm in the poem you wrote, and mark the stressed words on the board. Also check that students understand rhyme and mark the rhyming words in a different colour per rhyme, as above.

Of course some students may argue (quite rightly!) that poems do not have to possess these qualities. However, you’ll need to make it clear that on this occasion they should compose a poem that does!

Rhyming words

Now elicit Christmas and winter words. For each word, brainstorm other words that may be used to rhyme with it. Students may need help at first, but once they get into the activity they’ll come up with good ideas. If you need some inspiration, here are some to get you going:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>star</th>
<th>king</th>
<th>sleigh</th>
<th>tree</th>
<th>snow</th>
<th>wine</th>
<th>deer/reindeer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>far</td>
<td>sing</td>
<td>way</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>blow</td>
<td>fine</td>
<td>here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>car</td>
<td>wing</td>
<td>say</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>mistletoe</td>
<td>pine</td>
<td>fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thing</td>
<td>pray</td>
<td>see/sea</td>
<td>glow</td>
<td>sign</td>
<td>clear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing a poem

Students feel more confident at this stage if they work in pairs and share their ideas. Give students at least 20 minutes for this stage, and give help where necessary. Some students will have plenty of ideas; others will have none at first.

Afterwards, ask students to write their poem neatly on a piece of paper (you can use the templates to prepare festive paper for them to write on), and pin all the poems to the wall so that students can have a chance to read each other’s work. Finally, have a vote for the best/funniest/most thought-provoking poem, depending on the level of the group and the type of poems they have produced.