



## Unit 10

# All Sorts of Poems

*In the following poems, the poets try to conjure up images by choosing and using words carefully to describe sights and sounds.*

## Ant

Black is his colour  
And he comes out of darkness  
To a space of light  
Where the grass rattles  
And the wind booms.

In his home underground  
The stones are silent  
Roots and seeds make no noise.

Like fine wires  
His legs tremble  
Over the ground.  
Raindrops hiss and explode  
Around him  
But he runs zig-zagging  
From their cold touch.

At last one raindrop,  
Bright balloon of water,  
Burst on his back  
Becoming his own flood.  
Frantic, he spins,  
Finds ground again, and scurries  
Towards some crack in an  
enormous Ark.

Zoë Bailey



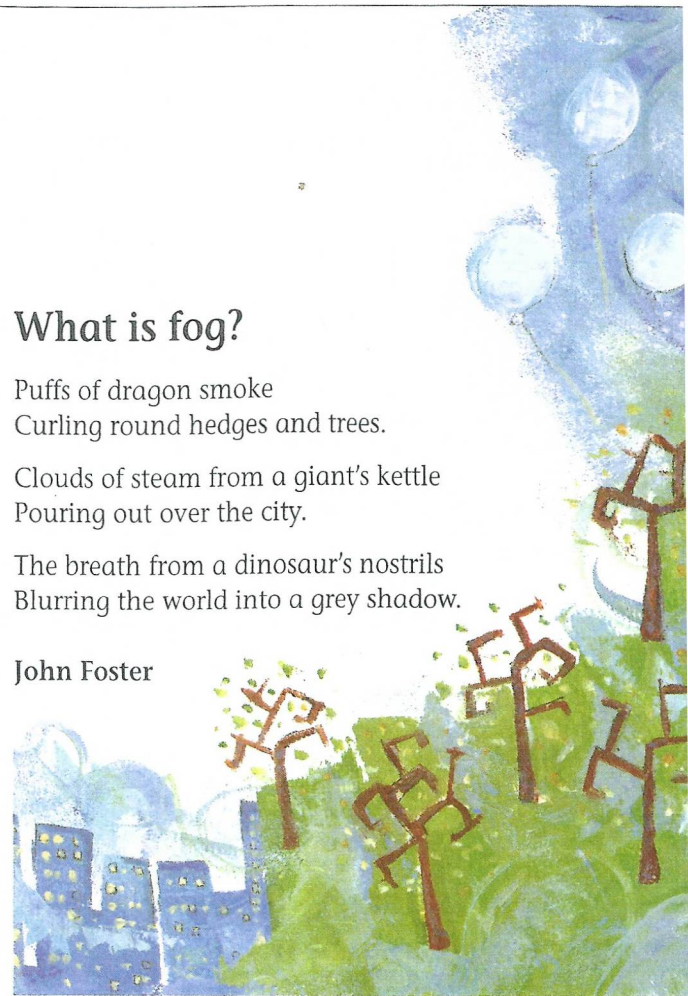
## What is fog?

Puffs of dragon smoke  
Curling round hedges and trees.

Clouds of steam from a giant's kettle  
Pouring out over the city.

The breath from a dinosaur's nostrils  
Blurring the world into a grey shadow.

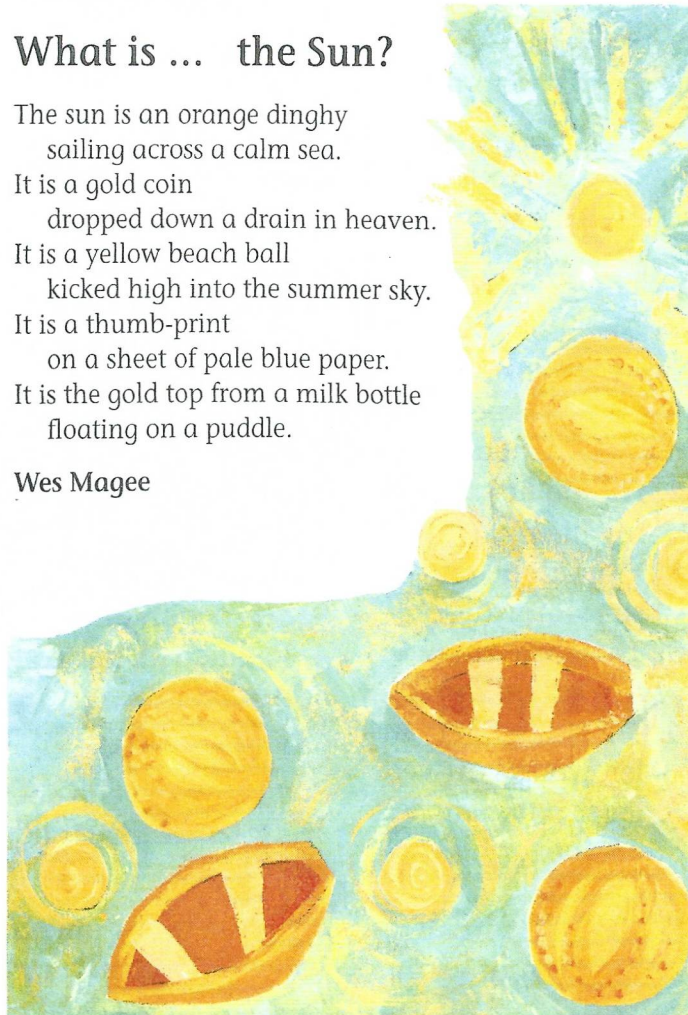
John Foster



## What is ... the Sun?

The sun is an orange dinghy  
sailing across a calm sea.  
It is a gold coin  
dropped down a drain in heaven.  
It is a yellow beach ball  
kicked high into the summer sky.  
It is a thumb-print  
on a sheet of pale blue paper.  
It is the gold top from a milk bottle  
floating on a puddle.

Wes Magee





## Word pictures

Read the poems, then write a sentence in your book to answer each question.

### A

1. What is the ant doing at the beginning of the poem?
2. What is he doing at the end?
3. What sounds does he hear?
4. List three things that fog is.
5. Explain how the sun is like "a thumb-print on pale blue paper".

### B

1. "What is . . . the Sun?" has five pictures. Which picture do you like best? Why?
2. Which picture do you like best in "What is fog?" Why?
3. Explain how a single raindrop is a flood to an ant.
4. What is the "enormous ark" in "Ant"?
5. How does the poem "Ant" make you feel?

**C** Which poem do you like best? Which lines in that poem do you think are particularly good? Explain your answers fully.

## Similes and metaphors

A **simile** is a word picture which **compares** one thing to another. Similes contain the words **like** or **as**.

The legs of the ant tremble **like** fine wires.  
**As** silent **as** the grave.

A **metaphor** is an unusual and effective way of **describing** something. A simile says something is **like** something else, but a metaphor says a thing **is** something else.

The sun **is** a yellow beach ball.  
Fog **is** the breath from a dinosaur's nostrils.

**A** Copy and complete each of these well-known **similes** with a word from the word bank.

lion    bee    lightning  
fire    mouse    ice  
peacock    iron    fox

1. as brave as a \_\_\_\_\_
2. as busy as a \_\_\_\_\_
3. as quick as \_\_\_\_\_
4. as proud as a \_\_\_\_\_
5. as hard as \_\_\_\_\_
6. as cold as \_\_\_\_\_
7. as hot as \_\_\_\_\_
8. as crafty as a \_\_\_\_\_
9. as timid as a \_\_\_\_\_

**B** Find these **metaphors** in the poems on page 30. Write what they are metaphors for.

- |                                |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. dragon smoke                | 2. a gold coin            |
| 3. an orange dinghy            | 4. a balloon              |
| 5. steam from a giant's kettle | 6. a gold milk bottle top |

Similes can be changed into metaphors by saying that something **is** something else, instead of **like** it.

**C** Change each simile in **A** into a metaphor, and use it in a sentence.

Do it like this: He was a lion on the battlefield.





## Writing poems

Read these poems from India, Japan and the West Indies, then write poems of your own using the ideas on page 33.

### Paper Boats

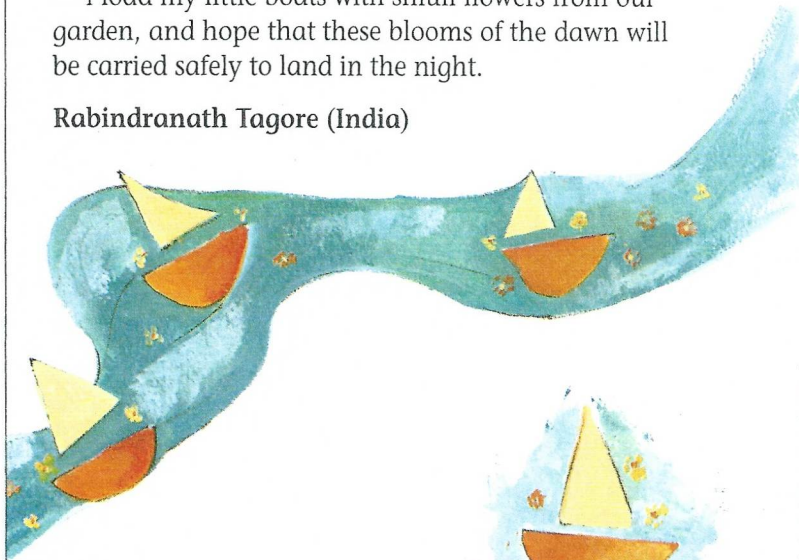
Day by day I float my paper boats one by one down the running stream.

In big black letters I write my name on them and the name of the village where I live.

I hope that someone in some strange land will find them and know who I am.

I load my little boats with shiuli flowers from our garden, and hope that these blooms of the dawn will be carried safely to land in the night.

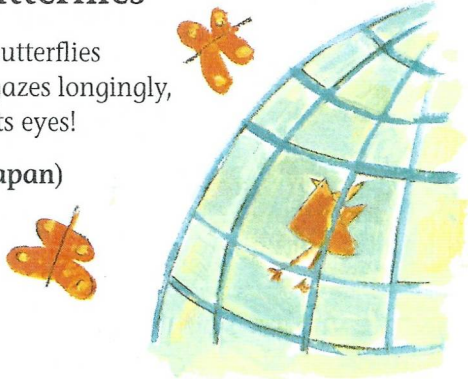
Rabindranath Tagore (India)



### At the butterflies

At the butterflies  
The caged bird gazes longingly,  
Watch its eyes!

Issa (Japan)



### Steel Band Jump Up

I put my ear to the ground,  
And I hear the steel-band sound:  
Ping pong! Ping pong!  
Music deep, rhythm sweet,  
I'm dancing tracking the beat;  
Like a seashell's ringing song.  
Ping pong! Ping pong!  
Moving along, moving along,  
High and low, up and down.  
Ping pong! Ping Pong!  
Pan beating singing, round and round,  
Ping pong! Ping pong!

Faustin Charles  
(West Indies)

### At Kisagata

At Kisagata  
A cherry tree is covered  
At times by the waves:  
Fishermen must row their boats  
Above the cherry blossom.

Matsuo Basho (Japan)





Use some of these ideas for poems of your own.

## A metaphor

Write a metaphor poem similar to “**What is fog?**” or “**What is . . . the Sun?**” using one of these subjects: snow, the moon, a cloud, a rainbow, ice, the wind.

Make a list of the things they remind you of, e.g. snow: a blanket, a sheet of paper, icing sugar, an overcoat for a tree, a sparkling carpet under street lights, feathers falling from a pillow in the sky.

Choose your best ideas and use each one in a short verse.

## A busy creature

Choose a busy creature such as a bee, butterfly, spider, bird or squirrel. Write a poem about the things they do, and what they remind you of. Brainstorm ideas and use the best ones in your poem. Choose your words carefully.

## A haiku

The poem “**At the butterflies**” on page 32 is a haiku. A haiku has just three lines. The first line has 5 syllables, the second has 7 or 8 and the last line 3, 4 or 5.

Choose a subject for your haiku, e.g. an insect, a small animal, the sun, fog, frost, etc. What does it look like? What does it do? How does it make you feel? Choose words carefully to express your feelings and ideas.

## A paper aeroplane

Write a poem about a paper aeroplane. Perhaps it has a message written on it? Where will you fly it? How does it fly? What does it remind you of? How does it make you feel?

## Music

Write a poem about a musical instrument, or a type of music you enjoy. What does it sound like? What rhythm does it have? How does it make you feel? Include all these ideas in your poem.

