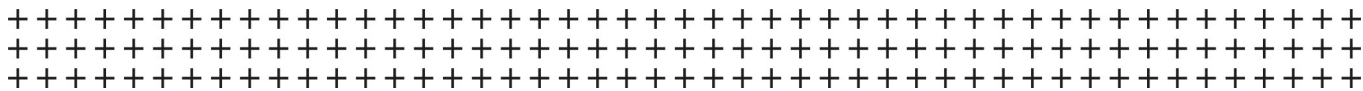


Create#4 // Off By Heart

by Lynn Whitehead



Challenge yourself to learn a speech or poem off by heart. One of the questions that people often ask actors is 'How do you learn the lines?' Well, there's no magic elixir that makes it easier. You just have to put in a few dedicated sessions.

You will need

- A poem or speech of your choice
- Paper for making notes

Activity

- Start by printing out a copy and reading the piece at least three times.
- Make some notes on the paper. Give yourself some hints and scribble them alongside the text.
- Doodle around the words you want to emphasise, or that you find tricky. Actually putting these doodles and notes on the page will help you remember what comes next - you remember the *pictures* as well as the words.
- I like to write it out by hand too - again, this carves a different path to the memory.
- Make connections and look for patterns - let the rhymes help you guess what the next line is. Does the rhythm tell you you've missed a word out? Are there three 's' words in a row? Get those rhymes, rhythms and patterns into your head before you let go of the paper.
- Always say it out loud. There's no point in rehearsing 'in your head'. It doesn't make its way to your lips and your vocal chords by 'thinking' it. When you get to - 'I KIND of know it...' then put the paper down...
- The most important tip - be brave about putting the paper face down on the table

Off By Heart

Learning something off by heart is really good for the brain - and there are lots of techniques to help you achieve it. Keep trying until you can confidently recite your piece - even if it's only to amuse the cat. When you've got the words done and can recall them easily, play around with how you deliver them, adding pauses, emphasis etc. Go ahead, make a drama out of it! You can choose a piece from my list, or find a similar length item yourself. Don't be over ambitious; keep it short and achievable. When you're happy with it, why not record it as an audio or video recording on your phone and email it in, we'd love to hear it. Or you could write us a little paragraph about how you got on.

and actually seeing how much you have retained. If you keep looking at it, you never give your brain a chance to make it work.

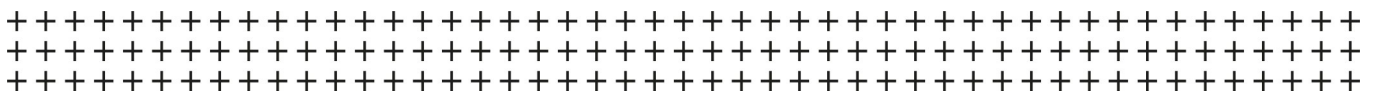
- The first time through will be a mess. Don't worry, it always is! And that will help you work out what you need to think of to get nearer the next time.

Exploration

Here are my suggestions, all based on 'place', but feel free to find your own.

Lines from 'Under Milk Wood' by Dylan Thomas (go on, try a Welsh accent!)

Come closer now.
 Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the slow deep salt and silent black, bandaged night. Only you can see in the blinded bedrooms, the combs and petticoats over the chairs, the jugs and basins, the glasses of teeth, Thou Shalt Not on the wall, and the yellowing, dickybird-watching pictures of the dead. Only you can hear and see, behind the eyes of the sleepers, the movements and countries and mazes and colours and dismays and rainbows and tunes and wishes and flight and fall and despairs and big seas of their dreams.
 From where you are, you can hear their dreams.



CONTACT

For more information on any of these activities, or if you would like to receive our activity packs in the post, please contact Carrie or Candida:

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From 'On a Lane in Spring' by John Clare

A Little Lane, the brook runs close beside
 And spangles in the sunshine while the fish
 glide swiftly by
 And hedges leafing with the green spring
 tide
 From out their greenery the old birds fly
 And chirp and whistle in the morning sun
 The pilewort glitters 'neath the pale blue sky
 The little robin has its nest begun.

Description of a ride through the countryside between Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds from 'Pickwick Papers

As the coach rolls swiftly past the fields and orchards which skirt the road, groups of women and children, piling the fruit in sieves, or gathering the scattered ears of corn, pause for an instant from their labour, and shading the sun-burned face with a still browner hand, gaze upon the passengers with curious eyes, while some stout urchin, too small to work, but too mischievous to be left at home, scrambles over the side of the basket in which he has been deposited for security, and kicks and screams with delight.

Please send us recordings or notes about your Off By Heart moments, so that we can share them with everyone on the blog site.

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