

# Dean Parkin

The guide takes you through the processes Dean uses when creating both his own poetry and preparing his public workshops.

From sources of ideas and what he does when he's stuck, through to editing and developing his work, the Guide draws on many of the examples you will find in the MORAG website, and is intended to give you an easy, downloadable resource to inspire and support your own writing.



## Think about it

### Word, lists and phrases

- A simple phrase mentioned in passing
- A line from an old song on the radio
- A headline on a magazine in a dentist's waiting room
- Can a poem be a list?

### Treasure Hunt - things around you

- Overhearing a conversation on a bus, in a café or on an escalator
- Noticing a lost stripy scarf on a bench
- A sleeping collie dog tied up outside the bank
- Remembering a painting of an owl that used to hang up on at the top of your gran's stairs
- Watching the person without an umbrella not running for cover because it really starts to rain

All of these things can inspire ideas and starting points. Carrying around a notebook to record the little things that you see, hear or occur to you can help. That's like having your fishing line in the water.

### Materials, patterns and textures

- Pen
- Paper
- Notebook
- Keyboard
- Screen
- Printer
- Plus commitment and time

The right notebook is the one that makes you eager to write in it and want to start to fill its pages.

## Make yourself at home

Once you have an idea, allow yourself time, give yourself permission to sit down and put the words down. There might be a time of day when you work best - late afternoons, late evenings, early mornings?

## The last thing you did

Simply living your life is the best research – that's where the best details come from.

## Feelings

Writing a poem often leads to a discovery – finding something you thought you'd forgotten or making some sense of the past. It may jog memories and help you recall objects, people and places.

Sometimes it might not feel comfortable writing. If this is the case you could use a voice recorder or ask someone you trust to help you get things down on paper.

Writing can sometimes stir up thoughts and stories that might be upsetting. Make sure you have someone you can talk to if this happens.



## Get going

### Warm up

- Make a list of songs with colours in their titles
- Make a list of imaginary paint colour names
- Read the poem *Yellow Table* – by Alicia Stubbersfield, from 'The Yellow Table' published by Pindrop Press 2013

### Make a mark

- Write down a line or a short paragraph describing a particular item you've had in your life that is that colour.
- Record a particular detail/s about it.

### Play

Explore and play when you are developing ideas. The poem, or anything that you create, has to have that electrical charge, that special piece of heart, that bit of you, to bring it to life.

- Restart an old sentence
- Try another angle
- Start at the end – work up
- Move on

Remember - a poem doesn't have to rhyme.

### Start anywhere

There are no right or wrong ways – just start to write.

If you wait for a big idea then you could be hanging around for a long time. William Matthews, a wonderful poet from the USA, used to say 'We *need* to write our bad poems, because if we don't write them, how will we get to the next one, which might be a good one?'

On small pieces of paper write down as many names of colours that you can think of. Fold each one in half and put these in a bowl. Pull a colour out of the bowl.

### What's in your space?

Look around your space for colour inspiration – what catches your eye?

### Don't know?

Sometimes ideas for poems come whole and you know what the last line will be. Although when you get there, you might find that that the last line actually happens three lines before that!

Once you've got an idea you might know roughly where it's going to go, but part of the fun – the discovery – is finding out how to get there.



## Keep going

### Add in and take away

Read the poem *Number 32* by Dean Parkin

Write down 6 household objects, choose your favourite one and then write something about that particular object and its colour – it could be an object that you've owned in the past, or one that you've encountered in your life.

Edit your writing. What works well together, what will you take out?

- Which are the best words?
- Which are the best beginnings?
- Are the words saying what you meant?

### Chop & change

Add more objects to your list. If you get stuck have a look around your house for inspiration.

Living room, fireplaces, oven, bed, armchair, toothbrush, rug, stool, newspaper, dog, teapot, flowers.

Keep adding, choosing your favorite and writing about them.

### Questions?

What would happen if you wrote about different kinds of the same object, e.g. different kinds of tables?

- dressing table
- desk
- work bench
- kitchen table

What would happen if you were to put different parts of your writing together? Can you connect any of the colourful objects with colourful people?

## Don't stop

Read *Ten Places I See My Mother* by Jennifer Copley from 'Unsafe Monuments' published by Arrowhead Press 2006 <http://www.poetrypf.co.uk/jennifercopleypage.html>

Now make a list of people you know or have met. Write something about them -

- Something about their face
- Something they might do
- Something about what they might say
- A particular colour that you associate with them
- A particular song that you associate with them (remember them whistling or singing)
- A particular TV programme they might watch
- What shoes did they wear?
- On the move – on a bus, on a bike, reversing a car. a van, walking a dog
- Something of theirs (an object)

## Emergency restart

Stuck? Read what you've written back to yourself

Restart an old sentence



## How did it go?

### How do you know when it's over?

Have you included everything you wanted to say?

### Any surprises?

How did the process feel? Tears are OK and so is laughter.

### Did you enjoy it?

Did you get so wrapped up in it that you were not aware of time passing?

### What were the best bits?

What made you feel really great? What was the most satisfying part of the process?



## What next?

### Choose another starting point

Think of different ways you can think about colour -

- Colourful places
- Colourful moments

## Tell a friend

How about sharing your writing with a friend?

## Give yourself a challenge

Play with variations – how about writing about a colourful year?

## External links

<http://www.deanparkin.co.uk/>

<http://deanparkin.podomatic.com/>

<http://www.poemhunter.com/>

<http://www.thepoetrytrust.org/>

Yellow Table by Alicia Stubbersfield from 'The Yellow Table' published by Pindrop Press 2013

[http://www.pindroppress.com/?page\\_id=544](http://www.pindroppress.com/?page_id=544)

Ten Places I See My Mother by Jennifer Copley from 'Unsafe Monuments' published by Arrowhead Press 2006

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