

Snip, rip, copy, glue

Sometimes, poets put down their pens and pick up scissors instead. Just as artists snip out bright shapes and patterns to assemble into a collage, you can take whole lines from other poems to create something new.

Poems made up using lines from other poems are called **cento poems** or **collage poems**.

The Seafarer

*Teach me to hear mermaids singing,
That lift the deep upon their backs,
That in the murk and tongueless night
Do what the panther dare not.*

*Let me combine
The Milky Way, the bird of Paradise
To see both blended in one flood
Of balm, of oil, of spice, of ambergris.*

*Ask me no more if east or west
I'll go, and, by thy kind leave, leave behind.
In this strange labyrinth how shall I turn –
Which is the Mermaid's now, but shall be mine?*

The lines in this new cento poem come from these poets, who lived hundreds of years ago:
John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Robert Herrick, Anonymous.
George Herbert, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Robert Herrick.
Thomas Carew, John Donne, Mary Wroth, Ben Jonson.

More to read

"The Dong with the Luminous Nose"
by John Ashbery

Create your own collage poem here. You could copy out lines from books of poetry – or, if you prefer, cut out phrases and words from old magazines and newspapers to stick on the page.

Tips

Try to use lines from lots of different sources – not just a single poem or book.

Choose from poems on different subjects and in different styles.

It may help to start by reading lots of poems and jotting down lines you think are strange or interesting.

Don't feel your poem has to make perfect sense, or be perfectly grammatical. Let it be a little weird.

Usborne Activities

Discover more in **Write Your Own Poems**

