



Harps North West
Charity number 1093441

Bite size Composition

THEME - Using Poetry and Prose

In the same way a **title** can guide your musical decisions when composing, text of any kind can also offer guidance.

The **meaning** of the text, you can make decisions on the **character** of your piece but you can also follow it quite literally, a bird flying away up an ascending scale for instance.

The layout and rhythm of the text can also give structure and rhythm to your piece. Look for length and layout of lines, repetition, meter, the pulse and drive of the poem or prose and see how you would replicate that in your music.

Exercise

Use a piece of text to create a melody.

- Write out the text.
- Underline the syllables.
- Circle or highlight where you feel the strongest beats are.
- Put a bar line in front of the strongest beats.
- Say the poem out loud and try tap a pulse or clap along with it.
- How many beats in a bar is it suggesting? Regular or irregular?
- Mark in the beat numbers.
- Follow the rhythms of how you would say it out loud.
- Sketch out a straight forward rhythm first, you can play around with this around later.
- Choose a key and start filling in the notes.
- Try it out at the harp, use your ears and voice to guide you. Think about over all shape of phrases (Lines of poetry/sentences in prose) Remember each degree of the scale will have a certain feel or effect, think about repetition, sections.
- Maybe try and incorporate any phrases or patterns that came out of your noodling exercises.

Ideas to try.

There once was a beetle called Fred.
Who fell out of a tree on his head.
He said “ow that was sore,
I shall do that no more”
And he walked on the pavement instead.

April, April.
Laugh thy golden laughter,
Then, the moment after
Weep thy golden tears!

William Watson

Nigella Lawson’s “Devil’s Food Cake”

“Forget the name, this cake is heavenly. The crumb is tender, the filling and frosting is luscious. It never quite dries to the touch but this is, in part, what makes the cake so darkly luscious. Goo here is good.”