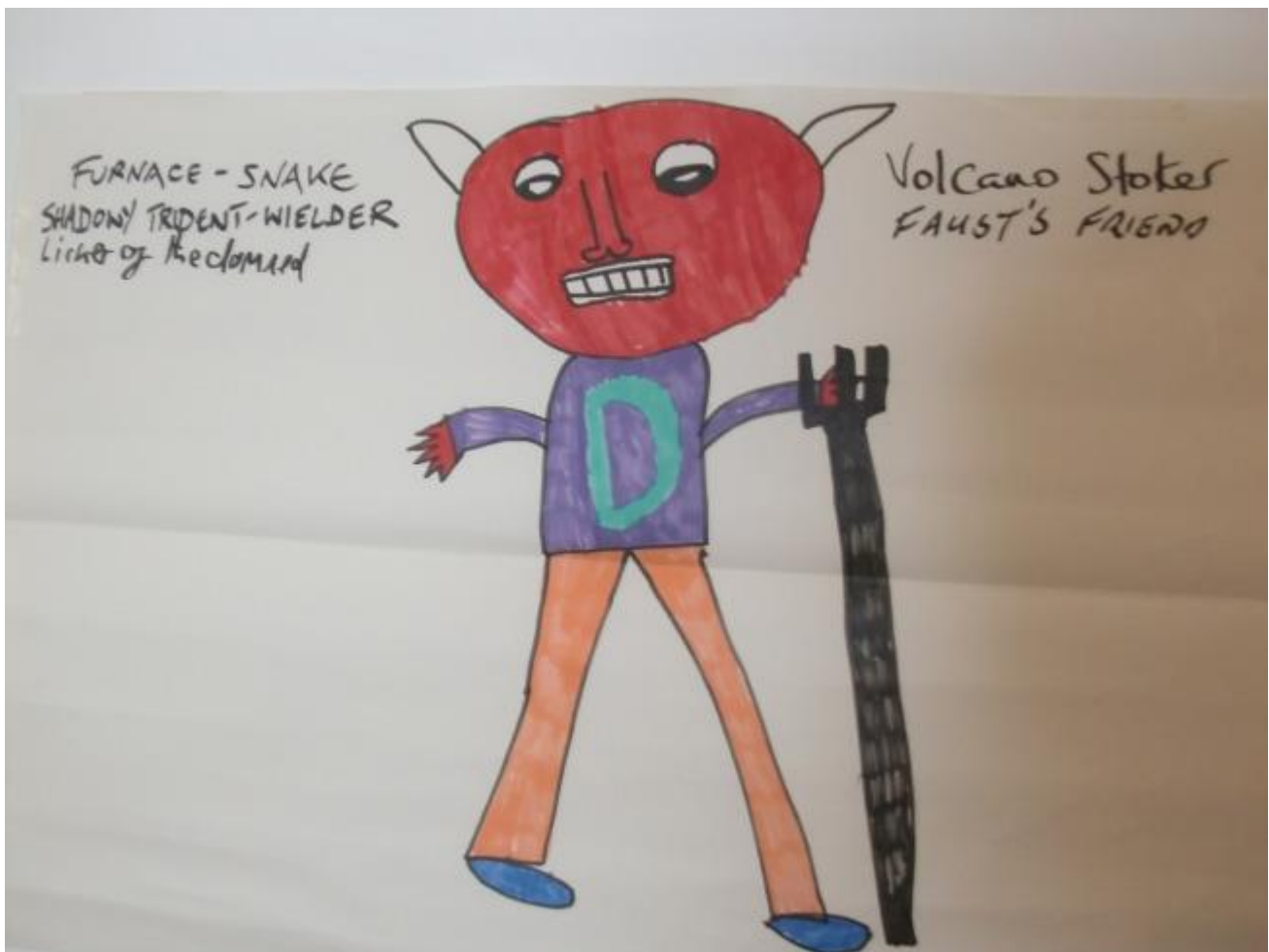


HOW TO WRITE LIKE A VIKING WARRIOR



1. Reading a passage from 'Kormak's saga' or another Icelandic family saga familiarises the class with the language, giving them a feel for Kennings. In my class, I allocated characters to some members (sticky labels come in handy to remember who everyone has become) and then let some people 'become' the translation of the kenning – ie. One person was 'woman', another was 'gold' and so on (again, sticky labels are useful!). When a kenning for 'woman' came up in the text (as the other characters were reading), the appropriate member had to stand up when they heard theirs. It's a fun way to start a class off and get everyone interacting.
2. Another great exercise is to draw pictures of objects such as a fire or a ship on a big bit of paper and stick it up on the wall. Mine were folded over with the related Kenning written on the back ie. 'Destroyer of the wood pile'. I then asked the class what they thought this might be. After the 'reveal', I asked the class to write their own Kenning for the image. They then had to write it up on the image itself. Here is the picture for 'Devil' (by Flo).



3. The three images below were in the handout. I asked the class to write Kennings for each image and then link the four Kennings together to make a story/full poem. The results were pretty successful-

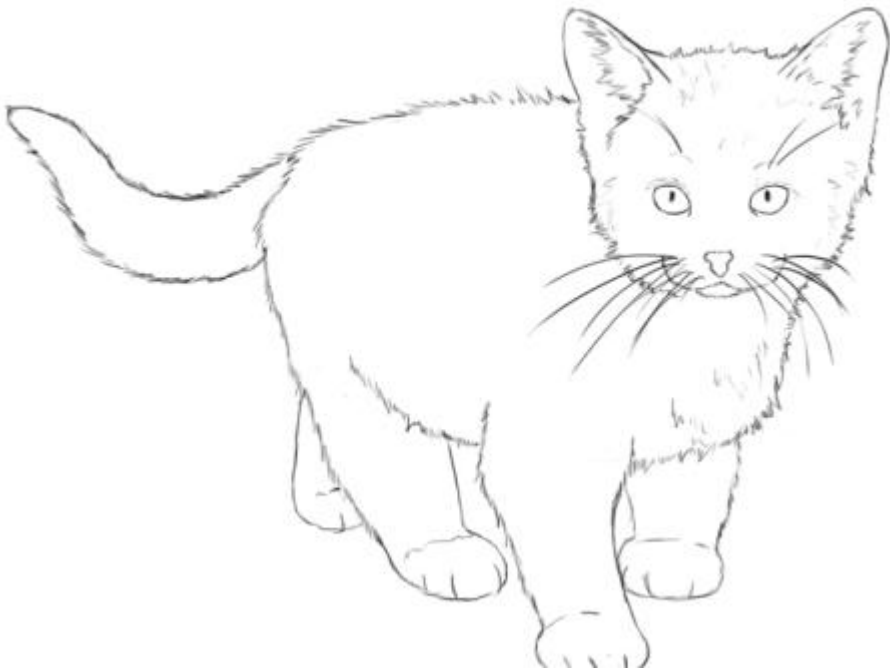
Churring clothes rebirther -
like the hyper-cheery
sofa stomper, ageing -
still churns out shame-coverers
fresh as the tongue's first
bubble-bath of the year
and soft as the fluffy
time-locust of the Internet.

(Andrew Smardon)

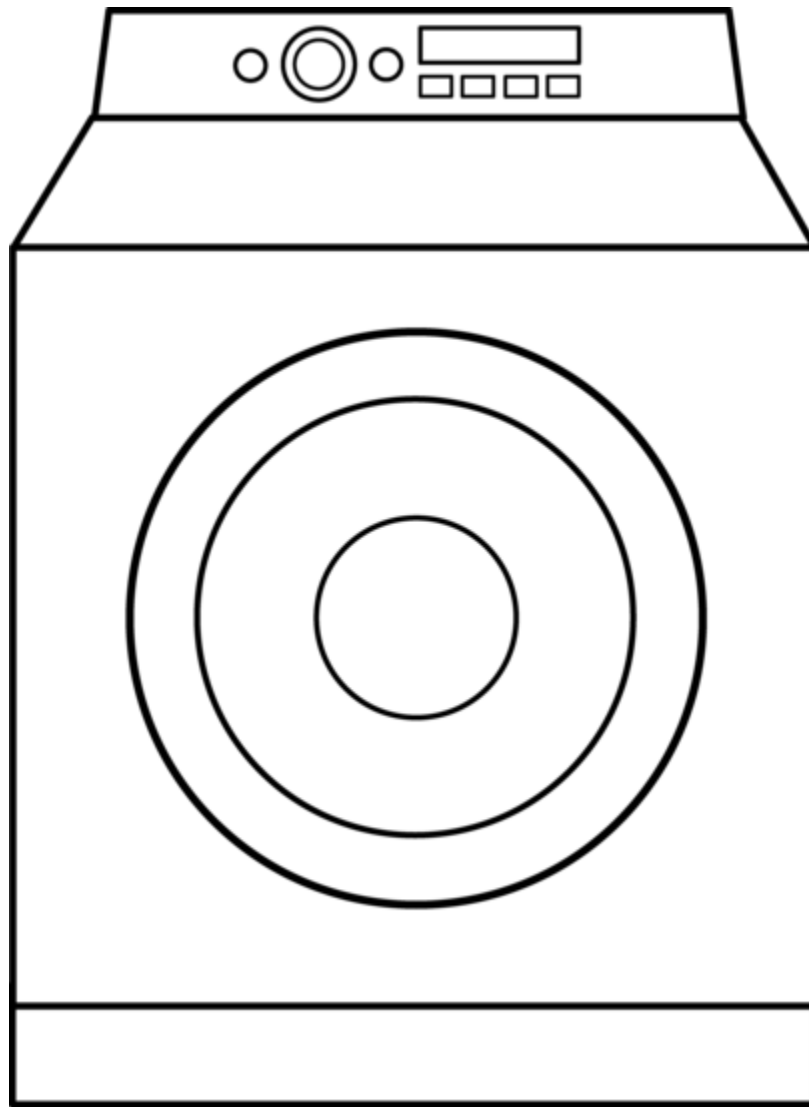
Listing with the dizzymaker
of fizzing surf, he leans to pet
his Stalin of the songbirds,
before slumping down to watch
the Daz- vortex begin its cycle.

Another Friday night
in Hollywood. Oh, Napoleon
of the Odeons, where did it all go wrong?

(Joe Turrent)



KITTEN



WASHING MACHINE

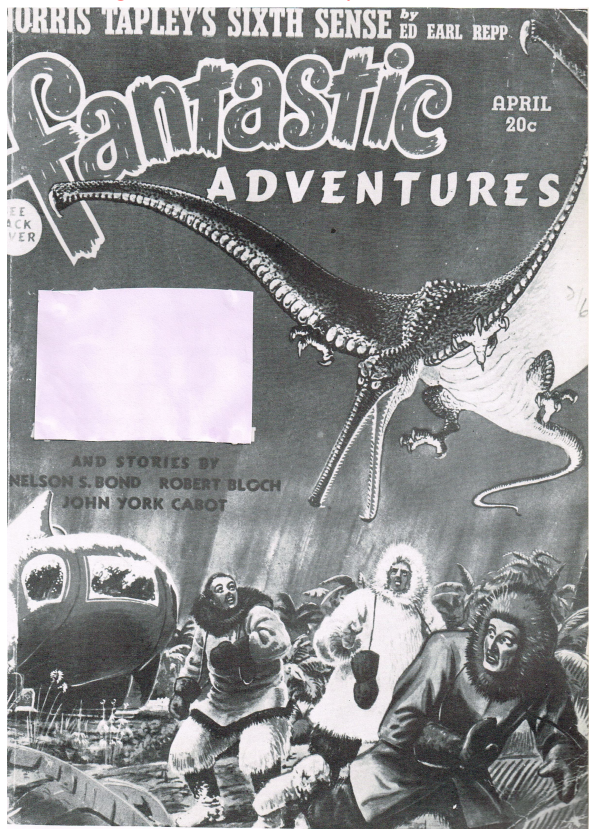


TOM CRUISE



CHAMPAGNE

4. 'Sci-Vi'. I took images from a book on Science Fiction Illustration and asked members of the class to write a Kenning to express what was happening in the picture. I liked the idea of juxtaposing something futuristic and something ancient in this way, to create new and surprising idea



Paul's renderings of imagined life on other planets ran on the back covers of *Fantastic Adventures* for several issues. 'Life on Jupiter', dates from January 1940. The heavy Jovian reptiles have that unmistakable warmth and humorlessness which the artist instilled into so many of his creations. The background architecture, resembling a penguin ramp at a zoo, seems perfectly suited to the life-form.



\$300.00
For the BEST
Stories Written
Around this
Picture
SEE PAGE 677

5. We rewrote an extract of Beowulf using modern colloquialisms. This proved to be quite difficult but in a way reversed the process of thinking involved in creating Kennings. On reflection, it is probably good to go through the extract first and explain what is happening within it.

BEOWULF



King Hrothgar of Denmark, a descendant of the great king Shield Sheafson, enjoys a prosperous and successful reign. He builds a great mead-hall, called Heorot, where his warriors can gather to drink, receive gifts from their lord, and listen to stories sung by the scop, or bard. But the jubilant noise from Heorot angers Grendel, a horrible demon who lives in the swamplands of Hrothgar's kingdom. Grendel terrorizes the Danes every night, killing them and defeating their efforts to fight back. The Danes suffer many years of fear, danger, and death at the hands of Grendel. Eventually, however, a young Geatish warrior named Beowulf hears of Hrothgar's plight. Inspired by the challenge, Beowulf sails to Denmark with a small company of men, determined to defeat Grendel.

Hrothgar, who had once done a great favor for Beowulf's father Ecgtheow, accepts Beowulf's offer to fight Grendel and holds a feast in the hero's honor. During the feast, an envious Dane named Unferth taunts Beowulf and accuses him of being unworthy of his reputation. Beowulf responds with a boastful description of some of his past accomplishments. His confidence cheers the Danish warriors, and the feast lasts merrily into the night. At last, however, Grendel arrives. Beowulf fights him unarmed, proving himself stronger than the demon, who is terrified. As Grendel struggles to escape,

Beowulf tears the monster's arm off. Mortally wounded, Grendel slinks back into the swamp to die. The severed arm is hung high in the mead-hall as a trophy of victory.

Overjoyed, Hrothgar showers Beowulf with gifts and treasure at a feast in his honor. Songs are sung in praise of Beowulf, and the celebration lasts late into the night. But another threat is approaching. Grendel's mother, a swamp-hag who lives in a desolate lake, comes to Heorot seeking revenge for her son's death. She murders Aeschere, one of Hrothgar's most trusted advisers, before slinking away. To avenge Aeschere's death, the company travels to the murky swamp, where Beowulf dives into the water and fights Grendel's mother in her underwater lair. He kills her with a sword forged for a giant, then, finding Grendel's corpse, decapitates it and brings the head as a prize to Hrothgar. The Danish countryside is now purged of its treacherous monsters.

The Danes are again overjoyed, and Beowulf's fame spreads across the kingdom. Beowulf departs after a sorrowful goodbye to Hrothgar, who has treated him like a son. He returns to Geatland, where he and his men are reunited with their king and queen, Hygelac and Hygd, to whom Beowulf recounts his adventures in Denmark. Beowulf then hands over most of his treasure to Hygelac, who, in turn, rewards him.

In time, Hygelac is killed in a war against the Shyolfings, and, after Hygelac's son dies, Beowulf ascends to the throne of the Geats. He rules wisely for fifty years, bringing prosperity to Geatland. When Beowulf is an old man, however, a thief disturbs a barrow, or mound, where a great dragon lies guarding a horde of treasure. Enraged, the dragon emerges from the barrow and begins unleashing fiery destruction upon the Geats. Sensing his own death approaching, Beowulf goes to fight the dragon. With the aid of Wiglaf, he succeeds in killing the beast, but at a heavy cost. The dragon bites Beowulf in the neck, and its fiery venom kills him moments after their encounter. The Geats fear that their enemies will attack them now that Beowulf is dead. According to Beowulf's wishes, they burn their departed king's body on a huge funeral pyre and then bury him with a massive treasure in a barrow overlooking the sea.

EXCERPT FROM BEOWULF

Shield was still thriving when his time came
and he crossed over into the Lord's keeping.
His warrior band did what he bade them
when he laid down the law among the Danes:
they shouldered him out to the sea's flood,
the chief they revered who had long ruled them.
A ring-whorled prow rode in the harbour,
ice-clad, outbound, a craft for a prince.
They stretched their beloved lord in his boat,
laid out by the mast, amidships,
the great ring-giver. Far-fetched treasures
were piled upon him, and precious gear.
I never heard before of a ship so well furbished
with battle tackle, bladed weapons
and coats of mail. The massed treasure
was loaded on top of him: it would travel far
on out into the ocean's sway.
They decked his body no less bountifully
with offerings than those first ones did
who cast him away when he was a child
and launched him alone out over the waves.
And they set a gold standard up
high above his head and let him drift
to wind and tide, bewailing him
and mourning their loss. No man can tell,
no wise man in hall or weathered veteran
knows for certain who salvaged that load.

COLLOQUIALISMS

- 1 Round the hat rack, generally means a bit barmy, or not all there.
- 2 Lost the plot means that you have no idea what is going on.
- 3 As much use as a chocolate fireguard or as a chocolate teapot. Hopefully this one is self explanatory. No? Well it means the person or thing referred to is useless.
- 4 I'll make you smile on the other side of your face. This generally refers to a cheeky grinning child, threatened with a slap. Hopefully this one is becoming extinct.
- 5 Its like the black hole of Calcutta in here, refers to a place that is very dark. I guess this one dates back to the days of Empire. The black hole of Calcutta was where prisoners were held back then.
- 6 A bit of Aggro or Bovver refers to a fight or some such trouble.
- 7 If he or she has been ASBO'ed they have received an Anti Social Behaviour Order from the courts or police.
- 8 As Mad as a Hatter.
- 9 One of my mother's funny expressions was about a person who was not very nice looking. He, or she, looks as if his Mother stood on his face to wind the clock up. Sorry this is not a nice expression but it still makes me laugh.
- 10 A lick and a promise is not as exciting as it may sound. It simply means a job done in a hurry and not thoroughly.
- 11 Your not backward at coming forwards are you?, may be said to someone who is definitely not shy.
- 12 I'll give you something to cry about. This used to be said to a child who was crying, for no reason, and could mean that the child was in for a slap.

HOMEWORK RE-WRITE

LIFE BY DES'REE

Life, oh life, oh life, oh life,
Life, oh life, oh life, oh life

I'm afraid of the dark,
especially when I'm in a park
And there's no-one else around,

Ooh, I get the shivers
I don't want to see a ghost,
It's a sight that I fear most
I'd rather have a piece of toast
And watch the evening news

I'm a superstitious girl,
I'm the worst in the world
Never walk under ladders,
I keep a rabbit's tail

I'll take you up on a dare,
Anytime, anywhere
Name the place, I'll be there,
Bungee jumping, I don't care!

Life, oh life, oh life, oh life,
Life, oh life, oh life, oh life

So after all is said and done
I know I'm not the only one
Life indeed can be fun, if you really want to

Sometimes living out your dreams,
Ain't as easy as it seems
You wanna fly around the world,
In a beautiful balloon

6. For a Homework exercise, I asked the class to rewrite the lyrics to a pop-song- in this case the song 'Life' by Des'ree. It has quite mundane lyrics and I wanted the class to witness the power of the Kenning- by turning something terrible into an epic poem. This was one of the most successful exercises and produced some really amazing poems. I plan to start a blog up to exhibit the various results and open the challenge to the public.

IAN CROCKATT

Can you unwrite these Kennings?

CHIMERAS

The swirl and wash and pearl-
hard water-drops whacked yards
by frenzied whale-pods; up-
ended flailing tail-flukes
decimating glimpsed cod-
shoals in these polar seas:
mind-thrill over matter;
glimpsed theatres of thought.

CUIL CLIFFS

The wall of Cuil Cliff is
crammed with gannets, jammed in
cracks or lodged on ledges,
wedged in wave-lashed caves. Flight,
and their slick vertical
stoop through the arcs and scoops
of deflected seas act
on imaginations

as tongue-tips do on spines -
may such ardent touchings
deluge and delight you.
The debt the gannet owes
to these seas implies each
possesses awareness.
No, they're sapped and now-swept
as my sea-wolf's love-cry.

7. 'Unwriting' Kennings- reversing the process to try and really understand how Kennings work and also what the writer had in mind. I used Ian Crockatt's poems to introduce 'modern' writing that also uses Kennings or at least kenning-like phrases.

8. We looked at the tropes found in Snorri Sturluson's 'Prose Edda' to break it down and make it more familiar for a modern reader.

Prologue

Canon Welding: The Prologue tries to connect Norse Mythology to Classical legend (which was at the time accepted as history).

Sufficiently Advanced Alien: The Trojan refugees are so culturally advanced that the primitive Northmen think they are gods.

The Trojan War: The Aesir are refugees from Troy.

"Gylfaginning"

Adam and Eve Plot: No less than three instances:

Arrow Catch: When Frigg made all things swear they would not harm Baldur, the gods make a game of shooting arrows at Baldur, with Baldur catching them from the air for fun.

Death By Despair: When Baldur is laid on the pyre, his wife Nanna dies from a broken heart.

Fairy Godmother: After naming the norns Urd, Skuld and Verdandi, the guardians of the Well of Urd, "Gylfaginning" continues (ch. 15):

There are yet more norns, namely those who come to every man when he is born, to shape his life, and these are known to be of the race of gods; others, on the other hand, are of the race of elves, and yet others are of the race of dwarfs.

These norns who visit newborn children to "shape their lives" are functionally the same beings as the "fairies" making wishes (or curses) at Sleeping Beauty's baptismal feast.

Glamour: King Gylfi's mysterious dialogue partners and the entire city of Asgard disappear before his eyes, revealing that everything was only a magical illusion.

Nutty Squirrel: The squirrel Ratatösk ("Drill-Tooth") is constantly running up and down the tree Yggdrasil, transmitting insults between the eagle at the top and the dragon Nidhoggr at its root.

To Hell and Back: When Baldur has died, his brother Hermod rides to the Underworld to ask Hel to release Baldur.

Viking Funeral: Baldur's pyre is built on a ship which is pushed out to sea as the pyre is kindled. Trope Codifier.

"Skaldskaparmal"

Artifact of Doom: *Snorra Edda* is the oldest work that mentions the cursed ring Andvaranaut, which later became the central motif in Richard Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* operas.

Dragon Hoard: After Fafnir killed his father for a pile of gold, he transformed into a dragon to guard the treasure. Snorri explicitly traces the *kenning* "dragon's bed" (*dreka beðr*) for "gold" to Fafnir's treasure.

Expecting Someone Taller: Hrolf Kraki of Denmark supposedly received his epithet when a Swede, Vogg, saw the king for the first time and exclaimed:

"I heard say that King Hrolf was the greatest man in the Northlands, but now here sits on the throne a little kraki [a pole ladder], and they call it their king!"

Groundhog Day Loop: The armies of the kings Hedin and Hogni are caught forever fighting each other on the island of Hoy.

Just So Story: The story of the magical mill Grotti explains why the sea is salt.



PRUFROCK

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question. . .
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,

And time yet for a hundred indecisions
And for a hundred visions and revisions
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
[They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!"]
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
[They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!"]

Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all;
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
[But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?

Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?

.

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worthwhile,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say, "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worthwhile,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—
And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worthwhile
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."

.

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

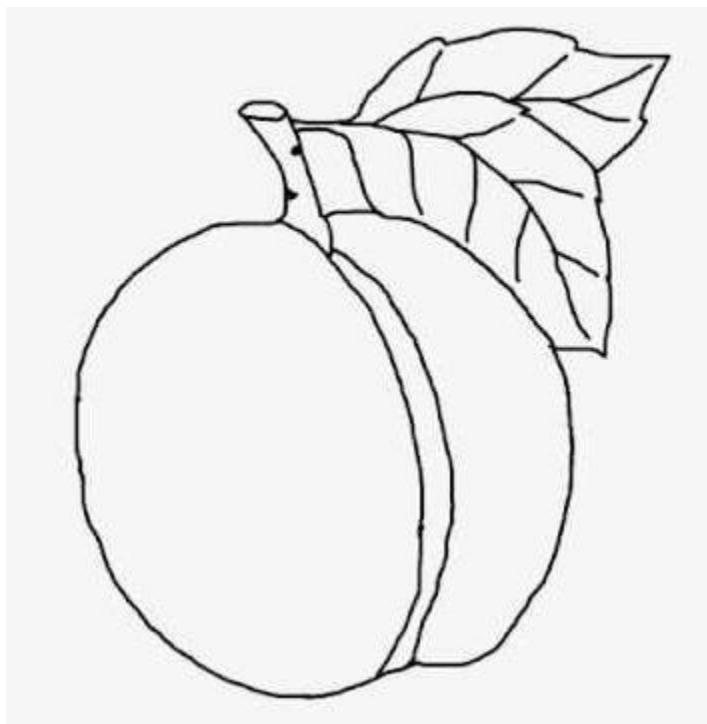
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

9. We rewrote 'The Lovesong of J Alfred Prufrock' by TS Eliot, using Kennings each taking a stanza (or two). It was challenging and a good final exercise as it really makes you use everything you've learnt. The results were pretty impressive and we plan to put them all together to create the full poem.





FURNACE-SNAKE
SHADY TRIDENT-WIELDER
Like of Medusa



Volcano Stokes
FAUST'S FRIEND

