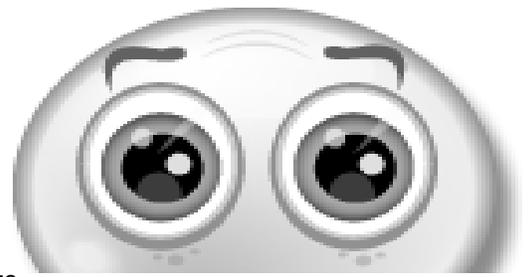


Startling Combinations

Judging from the title of this exercise, you can tell that you'll be thinking outside the box and going for surprise...Aha! Oh, wow!

To create this type of poetry you are thinking abstractly and metaphorically rather than realistically. Let's look at what well-known poet, X. J. Kennedy, wrote in "Instant Storm" and then at a couple of 6th grade student poems to help get started:



Instant Storm

One day in Thrift-Rite Supermart
My jaw dropped with wonder.
For there, right next to frozen peas,
Sat frozen French-fried thunder.
Vanilla-flavored lightning bolts,
Fresh-frozen raindrop rattle—
So I bought the stuff and hauled it home
And grabbed my copper kettle.

I'd cook me a mess of homemade storm!
But when it started melting,
The thunder shook my kitchen sink,
The ice-cold rain kept pelting.
Eight lightning bolts bounced round the room
And snapped my pancake turners—
What a blooming shame!
Then a rainbow came
And spanned my two front burners.



Silent War

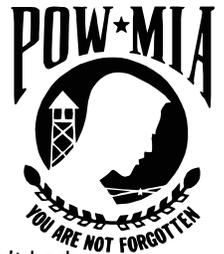
by Sean Murphy (6th)

In our hearts, a silent killer
In our eyes, a silent thriller
Wars kill us inside silently
When silence is over, we break down
Loudly.

Silent Hurricane

by Alicia LaMattina (6th)

During the night
the wind blew softly, but my dog didn't bark
as she usually did when it was dark.
The wind was blowing through my dog's hair
I got up in the morning to see if she was there.
In the yard there wasn't a sound
Not even the dog moving around
Now I know a silent hurricane
Blew in my heart
That night
she died.



Perhaps surprisingly, Kennedy's poem is light in tone while the young students' poems are not humorous at all. You may choose any tone and subject you wish for your poem. Hopefully it will work for your zine focus. You will need to pair two nouns or a noun and adjective to create a kind of friction between the words. Your poem describes and develops that friction, the startling combination. Try for a strong ending...the surprise or the something that might tie the words and images together at the end. Kennedy paired a grocery store food with a storm. Sean chose war and silence/breakdown and Alicia chose ...what do you think...death and hurricane? Silence and hurricane? Don't try to force your ideas into too rigid a mold...just show startling combinations in some clever way. You will probably be able to produce stronger rhythm and diction than the 6th graders did.