

Poetry in Translation

This is an invitation to produce a translation of a poem, when maybe you and your pupils don't speak the original language, but have a few suggestions from others that provide the gist of the poem. If one or two pupils do speak the language then there is a more nuanced chance for joint planning. Christian Morgenstern seemed a good place to begin here, but you will probably think of other poets that could be treated this way. I hope you do!

Please send your suggestions - one couplet will do or even a tweaked phrase will do. I'll add them to this activity and see whether it grows. If it does I'll suggest another poem and so of course can you.

Last updated 3rd December 2020

Der Lattenzaun

Es war einmal ein Lattenzaun,
mit Zwischenraum, hindurchzuschauen.

Ein Architekt, der dieses sah,
stand eines Abends plötzlich da –

und nahm den Zwischenraum heraus
und baute draus ein großes Haus.

Der Zaun indessen stand ganz dumm,
mit Latten ohne was herum.

Ein Anblick gräßlich und gemein.
Drum zog ihn der Senat auch ein.

Der Architekt jedoch entfloh
nach Afri – od – Ameriko.





A picket fence once could be seen
with space to look through in-between

An architect who knew the site
appeared quite suddenly one night —

and took the space out of the fence
and built with it a residence.

The fence, by then, looked rather mean,
with slats and nothing in-between.

Since everybody hated it
the Senate confiscated it.

The architect, though, ran away
to Afri- or Americay.

There was a fence with spaces you
Could look through if you wanted to

An architect came by one day
and took those spaces right away

He architected with great flair
And built a castle in the air

The fence was utterly dumbfounded
Each post stood there with nothing
round it

It was a terrible sight to see
They charged it with indecency

The architect then ran away
to Afri- or Americay.