

EXERCISE ONE: Warm-up writing exercise – The Police Alphabet

<https://twitter.com/gosportpolice/status/1244619824162013189>

Look at the Police Alphabet. Write a piece/poem/story using as many of the words in the Police Alphabet as possible. Or choose a word and use it as a title for a piece of writing. Or just use people's names in a story. You may repeat the words in your piece. This is an exercise to get brains working and pens moving!

EXERCISE TWO: The theme for this exercise is OCULAR APPARATUS / EYEWEAR

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasses>

<https://allabouteyes.com/see-past-fascinating-history-eyeglasses/>

Introduction

Glasses are typically used for vision correction, such as with reading glasses and glasses used for nearsightedness.

Sunglasses allow for better vision in bright daylight, and may protect one's eyes against damage from excessive levels of ultraviolet light.

Specialized glasses may be used for viewing specific visual information, for example 3D glasses for 3D films (stereoscopy). Sometimes glasses are worn purely for fashion or aesthetic purposes.

People are more likely to need glasses the older they get with 93% of people between the ages of 65 and 75 wearing corrective lenses.

Corrective lenses bend the light entering the eye in order to alleviate the effects of conditions such as shortsightedness (myopia), longsightedness (hypermetropia) or astigmatism. The ability of one's eyes to accommodate near and distant focusing alters over time. Few people have a pair of eyes that show exactly equal refractive characteristics; one eye may need a "stronger" lens than the other.

History

The Oculist's Stamp

I have attached images of The Oculist's Stamp on display at The British Museum. You can also find it with this link: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1931-0211-1
A replica of it is held at Hereford Museum.



Curator's comments: This small stone stamp was used for marking semi-solid sticks of eye-ointment or salve before they hardened. The sides of the stamp are engraved with abbreviated Latin inscriptions in reverse. When stamped into the ointment, the impressions could be read correctly.



The stamp bears the name of Titus Vindacius Ariovistus, probably the maker of the ointments. He is one of few named Roman people from

Herefordshire. The name 'Ariovistus' suggests he originally came from Germany. The sides of the stamp have names that would identify different types of salve. The name cut into the two faces may be that of a healer who used the stamp.

It was found in 1842 in Kenchester, Herefordshire by Dr Bull and Richard Johnson, Town Clerk of Hereford.

It dates from AD 1st to 4th Century and is made of stone.

Height: 39 millimetres

Thickness: 9 millimetres

Width: 39 millimetres

Inscriptions on the faces are in Latin and read SEMUR and SENI.

Inscriptions on the sides are also in Latin and read:

T. VINDAC.ARIO

VISTI ANICET

T.VINDACI.AR

OVIST.NARD

.VINDAC.ARI

OVISTI.CHLORON

T.VINDAC.ARIO

VISTI.-----N-

ANICET may stand for Anicetum or aniseed used in the treatment of cataracts. NARD indicates Nardinum, an aromatic plant of the Valerian family used as a medicine, perfume and in religious contexts. CHLORON is one of seventeen Latin words meaning 'eye-salve'. The fourth side is damaged so we do not know which eye-salve it names.



Reading Stones

A reading stone is a hemispherical lens that can be placed on top of text to magnify the letters so that people with presbyopia (leading to a failing ability to read text as you get older) can read it more easily. Reading stones were among the earliest common uses of lenses.

The regular use of reading stones began around AD 1st Century.

Early reading stones were manufactured from rock crystal (quartz) or beryl as well as glass, which could be shaped and polished into stones used for viewing. The function of reading stones was replaced by the use of spectacles from the late 13th century onwards.

Eyeglasses

Independently of the development of optical lenses, some cultures developed "sunglasses". Flat panes of smoky quartz were used in 12th-century China. But while sunglasses were first innovated in China during the 12th century, they were not for vision or for protection from the sun. Instead, they were used to obscure the eyes of judges in court so no one could determine their expressions.

The first eyeglasses were made in Northern Italy by about 1290. A Dominican Friar, Alessandro della Spina of Pisa (d.1313) made eyeglasses. The Ancient Chronicle of the Dominican Monastery of St. Catherine in Pisa records: "Eyeglasses, having first been made by someone else, who was unwilling

to share them, he [Spina] made them and shared them with everyone with a cheerful and willing heart." By 1301, there were guild regulations in Venice governing the sale of eyeglasses. In the fourteenth century they were very common objects.

Glass blowers would make lenses of different thickness based on rudimentary vision testing. As these glasses became more popular, the Italian creations spread throughout Europe, mostly available to the wealthy. Because scholarship was a prized attribute during the Renaissance, glasses were status symbols of intelligence and prosperity.



The earliest pictorial evidence for the use of eyeglasses is Tommaso da Modena's 1352 portrait of the cardinal Hugh de Provence reading in a scriptorium. Another early example is a depiction of eyeglasses found in an altarpiece of a church in Germany in 1403.

Early frames for glasses consisted of two magnifying glasses riveted together by the handles so that they could grip the nose. These are referred to as "rivet spectacles". The earliest surviving examples were found under the floorboards at Kloster Wienhausen, a convent near Celle in Germany; dated to circa 1400.

The world's first spectacle specialist shop opened in Strasbourg (then Holy Roman Empire, now France) in 1466.

The American scientist Benjamin Franklin, who had both myopia and presbyopia, invented bifocals in the 18th century. He did this at first by cutting lenses in half and putting them together into one frame.

Over time, the construction of frames for glasses also evolved. Early eyepieces were designed to be either held in place by hand or by exerting pressure on the nose (pince-nez). Girolamo Savonarola suggested that eyepieces could be held in place by a ribbon passed over the wearer's head, this in turn secured by the weight of a hat. The modern style of glasses, held by temples passing over the ears, was developed sometime before 1727, possibly by the British optician Edward Scarlett. These designs were not immediately successful, however, and various styles with attached handles such as "scissors-glasses" and lorgnettes were also fashionable from the second half of the 18th century and into the early 19th century. "Scissor spectacles" were glasses that could be stored in the pocket and taken out when needed for seeing something important. Some men did not enjoy wearing glasses full time, so these were the answer: pocket glasses that could be folded up on a hinge like a pair of scissors.

As the 19th century dawned, glasses were still handcrafted and not available to everyone. But the industrial revolution was right around the corner, and mass production of both frames and lenses made it much simpler for working men and women to obtain necessary eye correction.

Fashion

In the 1930s, "spectacles" were described as "medical appliances." Wearing spectacles was sometimes considered socially humiliating. Eyewear is now created by designers, has reputable labels, and comes in collections, by season and designer. Glasses are no longer a social stigma, but a fashionable accessory that "frames your face."

Personal image

For most of their history, eyeglasses were seen as unfashionable, and carried several potentially negative connotations: wearing glasses caused individuals to be stigmatized and stereotyped as pious clergymen (as those in religious vocation were the most likely to be literate and therefore the most likely to need reading glasses), elderly, or physically weak and passive. In the United Kingdom, wearing glasses was characterised as "a sure sign of the weakling and the mollycoddle", according to the writer and critic Neville Cardus, writing in 1928.

Eyeglasses have become an acceptable fashion item and often act as a key component in individuals' personal image. Musicians Buddy Holly and John Lennon became synonymous with the styles of eyeglasses they wore to the point that thick, black horn-rimmed glasses are often called "Buddy Holly glasses" and perfectly round metal eyeglass frames called "John Lennon (or Harry Potter) Glasses." British actor Eric Sykes was known for wearing thick, square, horn-rimmed glasses, which were, in fact, a sophisticated hearing aid that alleviated his deafness by allowing him to "hear" vibrations. Some celebrities have used glasses to differentiate themselves from the characters they play, such as Anne Kirkbride, who wore oversized, 1980s-style round horn-rimmed glasses as Deirdre Barlow in the soap opera *Coronation Street*.

In superhero fiction, eyeglasses have become a standard component of various heroes' disguises (as masks), allowing them to adopt a nondescript demeanour when they are not in their superhero personae, eg: Superman is well known for wearing 1950s style horn-rimmed glasses as Clark Kent. An example of the 'halo effect' is seen in the stereotype that those who wear glasses are intelligent. This belief can have positive consequences for people who wear glasses, for example in elections. Studies show that wearing glasses increases politicians' electoral success, at least in Western cultures.

Monocles

There are three additional styles of monocle. The first style consists of a simple loop of metal with a lens which was slotted into the eye orbit. These were the first monocles worn in England and could be found from the 1830s onwards.

The second style, which was developed in the 1890s, was the most elaborate, consisting of a frame with a raised edge-like extension known as the gallery. The gallery was designed to help secure the monocle in place by raising it out of the eye's orbit slightly, so that the eyelashes would not jar it. Monocles with galleries were often the most expensive. The wealthy would have the frames custom-made to fit their eye sockets.

The third style of monocle was frameless. This consisted of a cut piece of glass, with a serrated edge to provide a grip and sometimes a hole drilled into one side for a cord.

Only the rich could afford to have a monocle custom-fabricated, while the poor had to settle for ill-fitting monocles that were less comfortable and less secure. The popular perception was (and still is) that a monocle could easily fall off with the wrong facial expression. This is true to an extent, for example raising the eyebrow too far will allow the monocle to fall.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the monocle was generally associated with wealthy upper-class men. Combined with a morning coat and a top hat, the monocle completed the costume of the stereotypical 1890s capitalist.

Monocles were most prevalent in the late 19th century, but are rarely worn today. Famous wearers of the 21st century include astronomer Sir Patrick Moore, and former boxer Chris Eubank.

Look at the following poems:

Eye For An Eye by Sara-Jane Arbury

<https://hereabouts poets.wordpress.com/2020visions/>

(There are lots of poems here on the theme of Vision by members of The Hereabouts Poets also known as the Herefordshire Stanza, a poetry group affiliated with the Poetry Society)

Glasses Good, Contact Lenses Bad by John Hegley

<https://thirat-atthiraride.tumblr.com/post/100489874214/glasses-good-contact-lenses-bad-by-john-hegley>

Poem About Losing My Glasses by John Hegley

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/2012/10/john-hegley-poems-about-dogs-and-glasses/> (scroll down to read the poem)

(The Scottish Poetry Library says: *It's not just the humour we respond to in Hegley's work. At its best, he channels a beguiling vulnerability. Hegley says: 'Poetry is a natural part of our lives... It's in those lovely phrases like "pleased as punch" or "wide awake" or "a lick of paint" – that's beautiful poetry because the brush is like a tongue. Poetry is everybody's.... For me, it's completely natural to take poetry and try to make it popular and populist.'*)

When you were sewing with your perfect vision what did you stitch? by Mary Mulholland

<https://poetrysociety.org.uk/membership/members-poems-2/>

(A winner of the Members' Poems competition in the Autumn 2020 issue of Poetry News. The competition was on the theme of 'Vision')

EXERCISE THREE: Ocular Poetry

Write a poem inspired by the items shown here, items you may have and/or theme.

Clockwise from top left: scissor glasses, monocle with gallery, 1920s glasses, modern glasses.



Here are some suggestions for ways in to writing:

Write a personification poem from the point of view of an object (a pair of glasses/magnifying glass/binoculars/sunglasses... Write your poem imagining the object is 'alive' and has the same attributes as a human being. What would it say? Think about the function of the object, where it is situated, what it sees, smells, hears, touches etc. What does it think about/dream about?

Memories?

Write a poem inspired by the theme that evokes a personal memory for you, maybe involving another person or a personal story.

Write an ode to an object – a poem in praise of an object; a thank-you poem – taking into account its function, how it makes you feel, what it can make you do. Praise details about what it looks, feels, sounds like.

Maybe use a poetic form or style from the poems you've looked at, eg: a declamatory tone (*Glasses Good, Contact Lenses Bad*), short, simple lines, experimental rhymes and internal rhymes (*Poem About Losing My Glasses*), experimental form featuring two 'voices' (*When you were sewing with your perfect vision what did you stitch?*), conversational style of wordplay that tells a story (*Eye For An Eye*).

And, of course, you may write a poem about the items and/or theme in your own way and in your own style! ;-)

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