**Cats**

There is a poem by Eleanor Farjeon called, simply, Cats. It begins

Cats sleep  
Anywhere,  
Any table,  
Any chair  
Top of piano,  
Window-ledge…

<http://catymology.blogspot.com/2006/07/cats-sleep-anywhere.html>

It has a beautiful simplicity and could make a good starting point for some original writing which is based firmly on knowledge and observation. Pupils might like to suggest variations, such as:  
 Dogs bark   Flies buzz   Mozzies bite

After the observational stuff, time for some flights of imagination:    
 Ghosts hide (or glide)   Orcs lurk   Dragons ravage  
Or   
 Teachers nag   Mothers moan   Fathers fuss

Mosquitoes bite  
Everywhere  
On your arms  
In your hair  
On your ankles  
Round your waist  
Everywhere  
They like a taste…

And just for fun, some Chaucer!

**Ye Catte**

Lat take a cat and foster hym wel with milk  
And tender flessch and make his couch of silk,  
And lat hym seen a mouse go by the wal,  
Anon he weyveth milk and flessch and al,  
And every deyntee that is in that hous,  
Such appetit he hath to ete a mous.

*Geoffrey Chaucer (from the Manciple’s Tale)*

This seems very strange and difficult but it’s really pretty simple. Your students might like the challenge of codebreaking a bit of 500 year old text.  In groups or pairs they can see how much sense they make and then report back their findings. Encourage them to read aloud (quietly) to hear what is usually a common enough word (e.g. deyntee and ete) and if possible, provide the text on a word processor so that they can make a copy and then alter it bit by bit.

Lat take a cat and foster him well with milk  
And tender flesh and make his couch of silk,  
And lat him seen a mouse go by the wall,  
Anon he weyveth milk and flesh and al,  
And every dainty that is in that house,  
Such appetite he hath to eat a mouse.

See how much they can work out from context of what words like weyveth and anon mean. Then see if they, or the class together if you have a projected version of the text, can manipulate it until it becomes smooth and clear to a modern ear.

You can take a cat and provide him with milk and tender meat and make his bed of silk - but let him see a mouse go by and immediately he’ll leave his milk and meat and everything that’s tasty in your house - because he’d rather eat a mouse!

And then there’s room for some cod-Chaucer, of course:

*Lat take a ladde and foster hym wel with frootes  
And tender flessch and make his cel wel ayred,  
Yet lat hym seen a bag of cryspes at al,  
And he despyseth froot and flessch and al good fayre…*

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