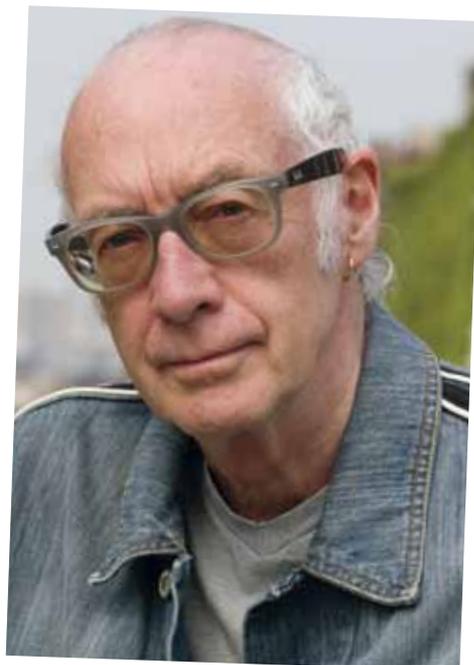


Roger McGough: Liverpool Poet

About the writer

Roger McGough is a British performance poet, playwright, broadcaster and children's author. McGough was born in 1937 near Liverpool. He studied French and Geography at the University of Hull. After university, he became a member of the pop group The Scaffold. The group had several hit records. McGough wrote the lyrics for many of the group's songs. He was one of the 'Liverpool Poets'. They were 'pop-poets': they liked to present their poetry on stage, using simple vocabulary.



Before you read

- 1** Finish the sentence below in your own way using the expressions below and your own ideas.

a dream a football game a chess game war
a dance a journey madness

Relationships between couples are like... because...

Reading

- 2** Read texts A, B and C and answer the following questions.

– How many differences can you find between them? – Which one is a poem? Why?



A There was once a middle-aged couple and they were playing tennis; when the game finished, the score was 40-love; they went home, but the net was still between them.

B middle-aged couple playing tennis when the game ends and they go home the net will still be between them

C

40-love	
middle	aged
couple	playing
ten	nis
when	the
game	ends
and	they
go	home
the	net
will	still
be	be
tween	them

Roger McGough

- 3** Read the poem again and answer these questions.

- 1 What does the name of the poem mean?
- 2 Who are the people playing tennis?
- 3 Are the people happy? Why/Why not?
- 4 What is symbolised by the net?
- 5 Read the poem silently and then read it aloud: does the way the poem is written affect the way it sounds?
- 6 Why do you think the poet wrote the poem like this?

Speaking

4 Agree or disagree with the following statements, then compare your answers with a partner.

- The people in the poem are young.
- The couple are friends.
- The couple are married.
- The couple have children.
- The couple met at the tennis court.
- The couple like to compete.
- They get upset when they lose.
- They talk a lot during the game.

Listening

5  **2** Listen to these people talking about the poem '40-Love'. What topics do they mention? Tick the boxes A, B or C.

	A	B	C
The net is like a wall.			
The shape of the poem.			
The distance between the people.			
The competition between people.			
People don't talk.			
The age of the couple.			

6  **2** Listen again and fill in the gaps with the correct words.

This poem has a very (1) _____ shape; it makes your eyes fly over the (2) _____ like a tennis ball. The (3) _____ of the poem makes us think of a tennis court. '40-Love' is a score in tennis. It means that one person (4) _____ all the points and the other person has none. It is a strange thing to say because normally we think of (5) _____ between a married couple as something real but in tennis 'love' is a score of (6) _____. Basically, they have no (7) _____. No love. They compete for everything, and one always wins while the other always (8) _____.

STUDY SKILLS

Understanding poetry

In poetry, we can use metaphors, similes, rhythm and rhymes.

- A **metaphor** is a comparison between two things. For example: 'the game of love.' Here, the metaphor is that love is like a game.
- A **simile** is a comparison using the word 'like'. For example:

'Oh, my love is like a red, red rose.'
(R. Burns)

- **Rhythm** means that we stress some words and we don't stress others in a systematic way, it is like music. For example:

'To be or not to be: that is the question.'
(W. Shakespeare)

- We use **rhyme** when the endings of words sound the same. For example:

'In the room the women come and go,
Talking of Michelangelo.'
(T.S. Eliot)

Some modern poets do not use these techniques: they write **free verse**.

'A child said, What is the grass? fetching it to me with full / hands;
How could I answer the child? ... I do not know what it / Is any more than he?'
(W. Whitman)

Writing

7 Write a description of why relationships between couples are like (a) a football game, (b) a chess game, (c) a dance, (d) a good meal. Follow these steps:

- Write your description in prose, like an ordinary composition.
- Divide the lines into shorter units (sentences and phrases), like a poem.
- Add metaphors and similes.
- Add rhythm.
- Add rhyme, if you can.
- Write out the text to look like a poem.

8 Read your texts to each other. Read the prose version and then the poetic version.