



# SUMMER WRITING CHALLENGE



# DAY THREE




## TRANSFORMATIONS

Since time began, we've been telling stories of transformations. From the most ancient cultures to the most modern, we find tales in which humans shape-shift into creatures.

How many human to animal transformation tales can you think of? How about the Celtic myth of Selkies, creatures who slip between human and seal, or the Ethiopian Bouda who transform into hyenas?

Today we'll be exploring one of these magical transformations in our writing, uncovering what the animal brings to the human experience and what powers these changes might hold.



Read the example poems. As you enjoy the writing, consider what thoughts or feelings the creatures in these poems might express – anger, longing, joy, a secret self?

What creatures (real or imaginary) might be waiting inside you?

### The Selkie

The secret me is a boy.

He takes girlness off like a sealskin:  
something that never sat right on his  
shoulders.

The secret me is broad-shouldered;  
the sea can't contain him,

the land can't anchor his waves  
to its sand.

The secret me swims  
with the big fish, brash, he swaggers

like a mermaid, bares teeth

like daggers, barks at the moon when it's  
thin.

He's whiskered, that boy. Thick-skinned.  
Quick-finned, always turning tail.

He wears his own skin like a sail,  
lets it carry him to where

salt swallows mouthfuls of air.  
Let them find me there by the shore:

the girl-seal with a secret  
boy inside. Rough-voiced. Black-eyed.

Washed bare  
as the beach by the tide.



by Rachel Plummer from *Wain: LGBT Reimaginings of Scottish Folktales*  
(Emma Press)



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## TRANSFORMATIONS



The Language of Cat

Teach me the language of Cat;  
the slow-motion blink, that crystal stare,  
a tight-lipped purr and a wide-mouthed hiss.  
Let me walk with a saunter, nose in the air.

Teach my ears the way to ignore  
names that I'm called. May they only twitch  
to the distant shake of a boxful of biscuits,  
the clink of a fork on a china dish.

Teach me that vanishing trick  
where dents in cushions appear, and I'm missed.  
Show me the high-wire trip along fences  
to hideaway places, that no-one but me knows exist.

Don't teach me Dog,  
all eager to please, that slobbers, yaps and begs for a pat,  
that sits when told by its owner, that's led on a lead.  
No, not that. Teach me the language of Cat.

By Rachel Rooney

[Listen to Carl Sandburg Wilderness](#)



### WRITING CHALLENGE

Write a poem or an extract from a story in which you (or your character) transforms into a mythical or real-world creature. Try to make your writing vivid and concentrate on the physical changes that occur as well as what is happening within. You could illustrate your piece or record yourself reading it.

### AND/OR

Write a set of instructions (this could also be a poem!) for turning into another creature.

Share your Transformation writing with us:  
#SummerWritingChallenge2022

