

# IDEAS FOR WRITING POEMS IN A PANDEMIC

From **Carol Jago**, author of *The Book in Question: Why and How Reading Is in Crisis*

A Note  
from  
Carol Jago



**SO MANY THINGS** that we have always taken for granted are suddenly in question.

Who could have imagined that school would be canceled?

How is it conceivable that we are all working from home?

What will tomorrow bring?

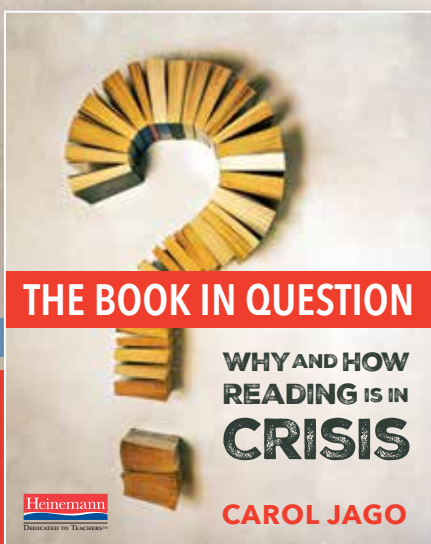
Much of what we have grown used to doing is different today.

Here is a lesson that invites students to reflect upon the changes they are experiencing. Ask your students to make two lists — one with all the things they used to do in school, on the playing fields, with friends; another with the things they do now instead. Suggest that each list include at least ten things.

Then have students read Quincy Troupe's poem "Flying Kites." In this two-stanza poem Troupe compares flying kites as a child with flying words as an adult, contrasting what he used to do with what he does today.

All my best,

Carol



Learn more about *The Book in Question* at [Heinemann.com](http://Heinemann.com).



Connect with Carol on Twitter @CarolJago.



# FLYING KITES

By Quincy Troupe

we used to fly rainbow kites  
across skull-caps of hours  
holes on blue wings  
of the canvas of sinking suns  
running winged eyes locked to wind  
we'd unwind the kite string up & away  
then run them down blue tapestry  
up the sky again, then down  
until a sinking sun rolled  
down into a swallowing sky

today, we fly words as kites  
across pages of winds, through skies  
as poems we shape from holy, bloody  
adjectives & nouns  
we loop into sound circles, ringing  
like eclipse, the sun's tongue

"Flying Kites" is reprinted with permission from Quincy Troupe

**TRY THIS:** Using Quincy Troupe's poem as a mentor text, ask students to use ideas from the two sections to write a poem of their own. No need to use all the ideas generated, only the ones that stirred up the most vivid images.

I believe this kind of writing can help students reflect upon how their lives and the world around them is changing. The lesson is an invitation to pause and take stock of where they have been and where they are now. We are all traveling uncharted waters.

Here's a template to help students get started:

**We used to** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Today, we** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Once students finish writing, remind them to give the poem a title. If the platform you are employing for online learning permits it, have students share what they have written with one another.

**For more poems by Quincy Troupe**

The Poetry Foundation <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/quincy-troupe>

Quincy Troupe's website <http://www.quincytroupe.com/>