Animated poem

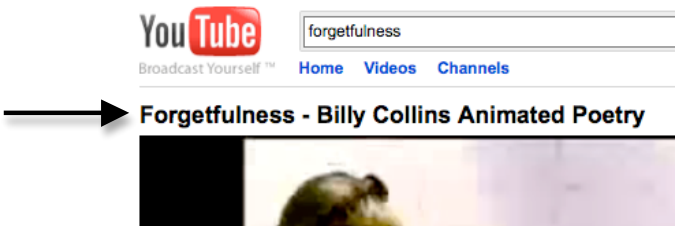
Language level:	Intermediate; Upper intermediate (B1; B2)
Learner type:	Adults
Time:	45 minutes
Activity:	Speaking; Reading
Topic:	School; Memory
Language:	The suffixes *-ful, -less* & *-ness*
Materials:	Video; Worksheet

Preparation, materials and equipment

1. For this activity, you will need an animated poem by Billy Collins titled ***Forgetfulness***. To access the video on YouTube, click on the following link:

   http://bit.ly/fcUSWw

2. The activity involves students guessing the title of the poem. If you use the video on YouTube, this will not work since students will see it displayed.



To get around this, download the clip using an application such as www.savevid.com This will allow you to change the name of the video file. Note however, that downloading videos from YouTube is against the site's Terms of Use.

3. Another thing to bear in mind is that the title of the poem is seen and heard in the first second of the video clip. Set the video up so that you can start play at 0.03 (i.e. three seconds into the clip).

4. For each student, make a copy of the **Poem** worksheet on page 6.

Decide how you are going to display the video in class. Possibilities include:

- Laptop or desktop (good for small groups)
- Computer, projector + screen
- iPhone or other mobile device (good for one-to-ones/intimate classes)

Lesson plan

1. Write the following on the board before your students enter the room:

I	**Maths:**	Can you solve this quadratic equation? **$3x^2-3x-6 = 0$**
II	**Science:**	Can you name the planets of our Solar System in the order of nearest to furthest from the sun?
III	**Geography:**	What is the capital of Paraguay?
IV	**Geography:**	What is the state flower of New York? (Have a guess!)
V	**Art:**	Who were the nine muses?

2. Tell your students that this is a test. Ask them to consider the answers in pairs or small groups (Note: It doesn't matter if no one knows what a quadratic equation is – including yourself).

3. Go over the answers:

I	**X = 2, -1**
II	Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune (Pluto was relegated to the status of dwarf planet in 2006)
III	Asunción
IV	The rose
V	In Greek mythology, they are the goddesses or spirits who inspire the creation of literature and the arts.

4. Ask your students if they would have scored better when they were at school. If so, ask them what other type of knowledge they possessed when they were studying at school that they have forgotten since.

5. Tell students to forget this test for the moment. Tell them that you have a poem for them. Dictate the following phrases / expressions from the text:

- *A dark mythological river*
- *A little fishing village where there are no phones*
- *A love poem that you used to know by heart*
- *Kiss someone goodbye*
- *Pack your bag*
- *The address of an uncle*
- *The memories you used to harbor*
- *The southern hemisphere*

6. Put students into pairs or small groups and ask them to guess what the poem is about. Let everyone share ideas.

7. Tell your students that the poem is animated. Ask them to continue to guess what the poem is about as you play the video clip with the sound down. Again, let everyone share ideas.

   Note: Make sure that you do not play the video from the very beginning – see point 3 in **Preparation, materials and equipment**.

8. Give out copies of the **Poem** worksheet. Play the clip again from 0:03, this time with the sound up. Let students read the poem and listen at the same time.

9. Ask students to guess the name of the poem. Offer help with unknown words and language whenever necessary (see glossary on next page). After a few guesses, play hangman with the title.

F O R G E T F U L N E S S

Glossary / quick explanations

Obscure	*Unknown*
Oblivion	*Nothingness / unconsciousness*
To slip away	*To leave secretly*
To harbor	*To store*
Poised	*Positioned*
Lurking	*Hiding*
Drift	*Move aimlessly*
Spleen	*An organ*
By heart	*If you learn a song, poem, etc, by heart, you can remember all the words without reading them.*
Tip of your tongue	*If a word or name is on the tip of your tongue, you know it but cannot remember it at the time you are speaking.*

10. Ask students whether or not they like the poem. Ask them to read it again and discuss (in pairs) the parts of the poem that they can relate to.

Follow up

Use the title of the poem to introduce other words that end in –*ful* and –*fulness*. Then move onto words that end in –*less* and –*lessness*. Some examples:

Adjective	Abstract noun	Adjective	Abstract noun
-	-	*Ruthless*	*Ruthlessness*
Careful	*Carefulness*	*Careless*	*Carelessness*
Colourful	*Colourfulness*	-	-
-	-	*Effortless*	*Effortlessness*
Forgetful	*Forgetfulness*	-	-
Helpful	*Helpfulness*	*Helpless*	*Helplessness*
-	-	*Homeless*	*Homelessness*
Painful	*Painfulness*	*Painless*	*Painlessness*
Thoughtful	*Thoughtfulness*	*Thoughtless*	*Thoughtlessness*
(*Un*)*grateful*	(*Un*)*gratefulness*	-	-
Useful	*Usefulness*	*Useless*	*Uselessness*

Poem

Can you guess the one-word title of this poem?
Write your answer here: _____

The name of the author is the first to go
followed obediently by the title, the plot,
the heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel
which suddenly becomes one you have never read,
never even heard of,

as if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor
decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain,
to a little fishing village where there are no phones.

Long ago you kissed the names of the nine Muses goodbye
and watched the quadratic equation pack its bag,
and even now as you memorize the order of the planets,

something else is slipping away, a state flower perhaps,
the address of an uncle, the capital of Paraguay.

Whatever it is you are struggling to remember,
it is not poised on the tip of your tongue,
not even lurking in some obscure corner of your spleen.

It has floated away down a dark mythological river
whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall,
well on your own way to oblivion where you will join those
who have even forgotten how to swim and how to ride a bicycle.

No wonder you rise in the middle of the night
to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war.
No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted
out of a love poem that you used to know by heart.

Billy Collins