

## WORKSHEET: SHORT, SHARP SCIENCE STORIES

Communicating science in a clear and engaging way is an important skill for science students and scientists. In this exercise, students will be challenged to consider ways that you can communicate a scientific topic using established formats that contain very few words. We also strongly recommend an excellent exercise published in the journal, *Science Communication*<sup>1</sup> called 'Half-Life Your Message: A Quick, Flexible Tool for Message Discovery' as an excellent exercise for use with students of science communication, or indeed anyone who would like to develop skills in research communication or communication more broadly.

### Exercise

1. Share some examples of well known series/movie synopsis from Netflix/Apple and the blurbs from the back of well known books. Ask students to guess the title of the film/series/book.
2. Ask students to choose the topic they would like to communicate and their chosen audience and purpose.
3. Challenge students to write a maximum 75 word summary of their topic in the style of a Netflix summary.
4. Invite students to share their summary with the class.
5. Next, show students examples of excellent/humorous newspaper or article headlines or titles. Choose a selection from tabloid press through to broadsheets, particularly highlighting those featuring puns or wordplay that convey the topic.<sup>2</sup>
6. Challenge students to write a headline for their chosen topic.
7. Invite students to volunteer to share their headline with the class.
8. Finally, share examples of Haiku poems with students. We recommend some that are about science (e.g. Mary Soon Lee's excellent Element Haiku)<sup>3</sup> and some on other topics.
9. Challenge students to write a Haiku on their chosen topic.
10. Invite students to share their Haiku with the class.
11. Invite students to reflect on what they've learnt during the exercise.

### References

1. Aurbach EL, Prater KE, Patterson B, Zikmund-Fisher BJ. *Half-Life Your Message: A Quick, Flexible Tool for Message Discovery*. *Science Communication*. 2018;40(5):669-677. [doi:10.1177/1075547018781917](https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547018781917)
2. Credit to Marcus Strom, Media Advisor at the University of Sydney for this idea. I first saw him use it in a workshop for academic colleagues in 2018.
3. Mary Soon Lee, *Elemental Haiku*, *Science Magazine*, Aug 2017, [www.vis.sciencemag.org/chemhaiku](http://www.vis.sciencemag.org/chemhaiku)

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