

## NOTES ON THE POETRY TRANSLATIONS BY ELLEN ADAMS

When choosing which of Ruth Padel's poems to translate into BSL, it was odd that two of the three 'shape poems' were selected. Poem 8 takes the form of a curving snake, while Poem 13 is shaped like a Bronze Age kylix, or drinking cup. Did this attention to the visual nature of the English poem lend them more readily for a translation into a visual language? This question needs more research. Given the looser flow of poetry, the translation here is less literally tied to the English contents, and Zoë gave great directions for how the captions might reflect the original shape poem or the meaning (with increased funding, this could have become even more creative!).

### POEM 8

Here we have many elements of BSL that were present in the information videos, such as classifiers (for example, single index finger pointing upwards, which is conventionally understood to represent a human figure), role shift (switching between different characters in a story, like the guide passing the snake to the narrator), or using parts of the body to describe things and events (for example, the forearm 'becoming' the snake, and its pattern being marked on it). However, it is delivered with a different pace and flow, a subtle sway of Zoë's body matching the rhythm of spoken poetry.

### POEM 13

We also have many elements of BSL that we saw in the information videos, such as placement (setting the figurines side-by-side to compare them), role shift and embodying the characters (Lee the trainer, the narrator), and representing the figurines by their distinctive poses. Note how Zoë uses the 'eyes' classifier (index and middle fingers pointing outwards), and switches them around so she becomes the trainer looking at the figurines. The initial, longer part of the poem is like traditional story-telling, giving an account of an interaction in a vivid, embodied way. Then the poem becomes more metaphorical, and metaphors tend to work differently in sign languages. Here, Zoë's body is deployed to signal relationship between mind, body, and the earth, making the link somehow more internalised or psychological than the English.