

A CELEBRATION OF POETRY

Ideas for Teachers

from
Jemez Springs Public Library

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How and Why They Teach

In the following, some teachers share their thoughts and ideas on teaching poetry.

J. C. Todd:

At first, I like to offer poems in quantity, 40 or so poem opportunities for a class of 25. [That might mean a listening station with earphones.] Brief poems on the board or flip chart. Poem-posters. Fifteen or so individual poems and 20 poetry journals and books. I log on to Poetry Daily [www.poem.com] or another poetry source, or I show a poet reading on video. I want a critical mass that gets attention. Poems everywhere, displayed with wit and whimsy.

Betty Lies:

Fill the room with poetry. Read a poem at the beginning of class, not to analyze, but just to listen to. Encourage students to bring in poems they love, to give to the class, either by reading aloud or putting up on the walls. Read poems that share some theme with other parts of the curriculum. Find poems that speak to events that are going on in the school, the community, the world.

Karen Banks:

I teach poetry for a very selfish reason: I love it. I love the way the words feel in my mouth when I read a poem to my students; the sound of it in my ears and the silence in the room; the sight of lines and white space and faces lost in thought; and the immeasurable joy of sharing a moment of truth with an unseen and unknown person and 30 amazed and astonished teenagers.

I first have students bring all of their preconceived notions to the table. I ask them to take five minutes to respond to the following journal prompts:

1. Poetry is ...
2. The subject(s) or theme(s) of poetry is...
3. I think poetry...
4. I wish poetry...

We then create a list of some of the responses, which, in and of itself, stimulates a lively discussion on their conflicting views.

Doug Goetsch:

Jane Hirshfield (poet and essayist) identifies the two stumbling blocks to effective writing as unwillingness to reveal the self and not knowing the tools of the trade. Every exercise I use is designed to work on one of these stumbling blocks. I use a battery of free-writing exercises to coax students into revealing the self. If they write freely, and frequently, they are likely at some point to startle themselves, and that moment is usually the seed of a good poem. As for the tools of the trade, I start with accurate physical description. I find that precision in description leads to precision in other areas -- diction, thought, emotion, even rhythm. The other thing I do is write with them -- always.

How kids progress in the arts is often anything but logical and systematic. So I also go at things unsystematically, showing them as many different models and ways of writing as possible. The sequencing probably isn't that important . . . There's more than one way up the mountain, there's no rush, and they don't have to be good -- though they're usually very good.

Richard K. Weems:

My class is open for discussion. Sometimes we write things in our private notebooks. I tell my students, "Write a poem you will never show anyone else to someone you would never normally write a poem to." It never fails that they want to read aloud these poems they never want to show anyone else. Sometimes we combine our efforts onto poster board and make group poems we can all take credit for. Once we made pop-up books, inspired by Nick Bantock's pop-up version of Kubla Khan. . . . Each day I have each student tell me something he or she liked from someone else's work.

These comments were once posted on "Fooling with Words with Bill Moyers: Teaching Strategies."

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12 More Ways to Teach Poetry

1. Ten minutes' silent reading of poetry on regular basis.
2. Build lessons on poetry based on something in a textbook.
3. Students copy poems on word processor and post in the classroom.
4. Students copy poems by hand, individually or in a group and post.
5. Students, individually or in small groups, make a poetry notebook.
6. Students in small groups read poems to each other.
7. Pairs of students read a poem by each reading an alternating line.
8. Play word games like Scattergories.
9. Students read poems chorally before a video camera.
10. Post a poem of the day.
11. Display poems in a special section of your school or classroom and invite others to come and enjoy them.
12. Set aside time for a class poetry reading where children can share their individual poems with one another, invited parents, and/or another class in your school.

For more tips, go to Top Tips for Teaching Poetry at <https://poetrysociety.org.uk/competitions/foyle-young-poets-of-the-year-award/top-tips-for-teaching-poetry/>

Editor's note: Many of these lessons were found on the Internet when this booklet was originally written 15 years ago. Some of those websites have been taken down or altered, but the ideas remain helpful. Current URLs are provided when possible.

The Writing Process

PREWRITE/EXPLORE

Generate all the ideas you have on your topic. This will give you lots of material and information from which to start writing.

Methods: Webbing, listing, talking, visualization.

ORGANIZE/WRITE THE FIRST DRAFT

Select the ideas you want to include and decide in what order you will present them.

Methods: Connect or number ideas from Internet; list in order of logical sequence; make an outline of main ideas or categories.

Write a first draft, roughly following the organization you chose. Release all the information you have in your head about this topic or idea.

Method: Free-write without worrying about word choice, structure, or grammar.

REVISE/REWRITE

Go over the first draft and ask if it says what you want it to. Rewrite everything if necessary, or cut and paste. Revise until you are satisfied. Get feedback from others.

Methods: Writers' conferences; read aloud; use a checklist; review statement of purpose.

EDIT

Polish the final draft. Refine structure and word choice. Check spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar.

Methods: Peer editing; use a checklist; allow a cooling-off period before final edit. Consult reference books (dictionary, style guide, grammar text); computer spelling/style.

PROOFREAD/PUBLISH

Share your writing with others.

Methods: Get a friend or teacher to proofread. Share through author's chair, post on bulletin board or web site, share with one other person or small group, make a book; send to a friend via snail mail or email.

Adapted for writing poetry from *The Writing Process* developed by Cascade Mountain Writers, 1985.

Colors: A Beginning Poetry Lesson

Overview: This lesson introduces the use of imagery in poems and is designed to help beginning poets produce a short poem with a high degree of success using a prescribed format.

Objectives: In this activity, students will

-) Create a visual representation of a poetic idea.
-) Produce an original, four-line poem using a prescribed format.

Materials

1. Paper and pencil for each student
2. One sheet of white art paper, any size, for each child
3. Crayons, colored pencils or markers for the group

Procedure

1. Ask students to think of a color and to picture that color. They should try to picture it someplace where it may not be seen. They should record their ideas using the following fill in the blanks:
(color) (sensory verb) like the/a (nature idea)

For example,

Green feels like the bottom of the sea OR

Gray tastes like the rain

Encourage students to use sensory verbs other than “look”

2. Ask students to make a drawing using their color. Encourage them to include lots of detail (but see step 8 below). Point out that their color may only be a small detail of the drawing but that this will make it even more interesting than if they make their drawing mostly that color.
3. Using the idea format and the drawing, students are to write a poem using the following poem format:
 - Line 1: Have you ever (sensory verb) the/a (nature idea)
 - Line 2: (statement about color, observation or question about nature idea)
 - Line 3: (different statement, observation or question)
 - Line 4: (color) (sensory verb) like (nature idea)

For example,

Have you ever tasted the rain?
It's gray like the sky on a rainy day.
It feels cool on my tongue.
Gray tastes like the rain.

4. Revise poems by asking students if there are any words they can leave out without changing the meaning.
5. Publish by pasting poem lines onto drawings.
6. Have students share their published work in small groups or with class as a whole, perhaps in an Author's Chair format. Display on the classroom walls if possible.

Adapted from a lesson by Joanna Daniel

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Eye Spy

Grade level: 4-8

Objectives: Students will be able to

-) list descriptive words
-) create an original poem

Instructions:

1. Use a magnifying glass to examine your skin. Choose a spot to focus on and then draw what you see.
2. As you draw, write single words or short phrases about what you see.
3. Write a short poem using the words that you wrote down.

This lesson was used by 8th grade teacher David Grimes in a previous poetry contest. A number of similar lesson ideas can be found online using the I Spy books by Jean Marzollo.

Rhyming Words Activities

Grade level: K-3

1. Recognize Rhyming Words. Children identify words that rhyme in a series of activities. For example, "Put your thumbs up if these two words rhyme--pail-tail or cow-pig?" or "Finish this rhyme, red, bed, blue, _____."

2. Snap and Clap Rhymes. Begin with a simple clap and snap rhythm. Get more complex as children move along in rhyming.

Clap Clap	Snap <i>fall</i>	Clap Clap	Snap <i>ball</i>
Clap Clap	Snap <i>hall</i>	Clap Clap	Snap <i>small</i>

A variation is the "I say, You say" game:

I say fat. You say _____. I say red. You say _____.

3. Rhyming Word Sit Down. Children walk around in a big circle taking one step each time a rhyming word is said by the teacher. When the teacher says a word that doesn't rhyme, the children sit down:

she tree flea spree key bee sea went

4. Find rhyming words in songs, poems, and big books. As you do shared reading with the students, pause at the end of phrases and let the students supply the rhyming words. After you have read a poem together ask students to find the rhyming words. Generate other words that rhyme with these rhyming words.

Poetry Cubes

Grade Level: Any

Overview: This lesson can be used with holidays, seasons, or themes to show how diverse and exciting poetry can be.

Purpose: To develop an appreciation for different styles of poetry. It is also an excellent way to introduce a holiday, season, or theme. Students will also learn different techniques for memorization.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Cooperate with other members of the group to read and develop a way to present a poem.
2. Demonstrate speaking and acting skills in front of an audience.
3. Memorize and recite a poem.

Materials:

1. Poems that illustrate the theme.
2. Milk cartons with the bottom cut out. Cut the bottoms off to create the size needed and put poems on all sides.

Procedures:

1. One person in the group rolls the dice to see which poem their group will be working on.
2. They can then do one of two things to present their poem to the class. Choral-read the poem or act the poem out in front of the class.
3. After they have been given time to practice, each group presents its poem.
4. When all presentations are over, students engage in different activities over the next couple of days to help them memorize their poem.

Examples:

- a) Have the poem on sentence strips and orally recite the poem over and over, covering up different words after each time until the whole poem is covered.
- b) Put poems on sentence strips for the students to put in order.
- c) Write the poem in their best handwriting. Illustrate.

Poetry Room

Grades K-6

Have students work in pairs. Each pair should choose an object in the library or classroom to decorate with poetry – a table leg, table top, section of floor, book shelf, chair back – anything is fair game. Each pair will measure the area and cut paper to fit the size and shape. Then each pair will design a poem about the object they are decorating. They will attach each poem with tape or other non-destructive fixative.

From *Rhymes and Reasons: Librarians and Teachers Using Poetry to Foster Literacy* by Jane Heitman; Linworth Publishing, Inc., 2003.

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Poetry Quilt

Grades K-6

Materials needed: 10" construction paper squares, art supplies, tape.

Cut 36 pieces of construction paper into 10" squares of various colors. Give each student one square. Help students use library and Web resources to find a poem that they like. Students decorate their squares with the poem and appropriate artwork, using art supplies and computer programs. Students sign their names to their square. Tape the poems together on the back so that the front resembles a quilt pattern. Display on the wall or bulletin board.

Extension: Students may use library and Web resources to find information about quilt patterns and try their quilt in a simple pattern.

Adaptation of Mood Quilt, p. 97

From *Rhymes and Reasons: Librarians and Teachers Using Poetry to Foster Literacy* by Jane Heitman; Linworth Publishing, Inc., 2003.

Animal Poetry

Grade level: 1+

Brainstorm with the students some facts about one of the animals they have studied or seen at the zoo. Write these facts and descriptions on a chart in front of the class (tiger, huge cat, gold and black, loud roar, large padded feet, rubbing against a lonely tree, prowling around habitat).

The entire group helps the teacher fill in the blanks of a poetry form (below).

Tiger!
You have a roar like thunder
You are fuzzy, gold, and black
You roam around on padded feet
You scratch your back on a lonely tree
You are the biggest cat I have ever seen
You are my favorite animal because you look so lovable
Tiger!

Next, the class is divided into cooperative groups and each group selects an animal. The students brainstorm facts about the animal they have chosen. One of the students is the scribe and makes a list of the ideas. After all the facts are listed, the most descriptive details are selected or modified and put into the poetry pattern.

(Name of animal)
You _____
You _____
You _____
You _____
You _____
You are my favorite animal because you _____
(Name of animal)

(The class is taking facts and fitting them into the form. This pattern can be used to review facts about any topic.)

Acrostics

Grades: K-6 (easily adapted for older students)

An acrostic begins with a word spelled out. Then each letter of the word is used to begin another word or phrase, creating a poem. Acrostic poems creatively reinforce letter recognition, spelling and vocabulary. In addition, the acrostic activities below help students evaluate tests and apply conventional language skills.

Acrostic poems can be created as a group or by individual students. Have students write their names, one letter on each line of notebook paper, one letter beneath the other. Then have them write a word or phrase beside each letter that begins with that letter and describes them.

Example:

JANE

Joyful
Animated
Neighborly
Energetic

Variations:

Use acrostics in content areas by choosing a word related to a specific subject, such as a science term, animal, historical figure or literature character.

Use seasonal words (spring, fall), holiday words (Valentine, Halloween), days of the week or months of the year.

Ask students to “act out” their acrostics, using their bodies to make the shape of the initial letter, then acting out the words they have chosen.

Create computer-graphically enhanced acrostics.

From *Rhymes and Reasons: Librarians and Teachers Using Poetry to Foster Literacy* by Jane Heitman; Linworth Publishing, Inc., 2003.

How to Write a Cinquain

Grade level: 1+

At the most basic level a cinquain is a five-line poem or stanza. Here are two variations.

1.

Line 1 - a one-word title

Line 2 - a two-word phrase that describes your title or you can just use two words

Line 3 - a three-word phrase that describes an action relating to your title or just action words

Line 4 - a four-word phrase that describes a feeling relating to your topic or just feeling words

Line 5 - one word that refers back to your title

2.

Line 1 - two syllables

Line 2 - four syllables

Line 3 - six syllables

Line 4 - eight syllables

Line 5 - two syllables

Some examples of cinquain by 4th – 6th graders:

Baseball

Team challenge

Hitting, running, throwing

Each inning, new chance

Excitement

Rainbow

Arch of color

Reaching, asking, joining

Blue, purple, red, green

Beauty

Cake

wonderful delight

arrangement of chocolate

happiness

Birthday

Parents

Crazy, bothersome

Fussy, demanding, punishing

“Clean up your room!”

Adults

Found at Can Teach, <http://www.canteach.ca/elementary/poetry5.html>

Knowing Ourselves and Others Through Poetry

Grade Level: 6-12

Purpose: Getting to know students and getting them to know themselves through writing.

Objective(s):

Beyond the stated purpose, students become more familiar with word usage; synonyms, the degrees(s) of emotion contained in words and the manipulation of language to impact meaning.

Procedures:

1. Begin a discussion of what feelings and emotions are. Then ask each student to write a word which describes how he or she feels today. Use this sentence: "Today I feel (emotion) because (give reason)." Explain that it is possible to have more than one emotion or feeling at the same time, either similar or opposite.

Example: *Today I feel worried because we are having a test. Also, I feel happy because today is Friday.*

2. To help students examine emotions more closely, use this exercise: After brainstorming a list of emotions, ask students to choose one and assign it a color. "Hate is black," or "Happiness is yellow." Use the following to further explore:

(Emotion) is (color).	Fear is red.
It smells like _____	It smells like fire.
It tastes like _____	It tastes like rotten peaches.
It sounds like _____	It sounds like car horns.
It feels like _____	It feels like being scared of dark.
It looks like _____	It looks like Freddy Krueger.
(Emotion) is _____	Fear is falling into a hole.
(give a metaphoric statement)	

Found at www.EduRef.org

<https://eduref.org/lessons/language-arts>, click on Writing

Auto-Bio Poem

Grade Level: 3-12

Overview: This activity is especially fun in the beginning of the year when we all need to get to know each other.

Purpose: In this lesson, the writer analyzes self to provide an introduction to the rest of the class.

Objectives: To analyze, to inform, to introduce.

Materials:

Paper and pencil

Sample autobio poem which teacher has written in advance of class

Procedures: Students write an eleven-line auto-bio poem after hearing/seeing the teacher's model. Following is an example.

<i>Line 1:</i>	Your first name	Nancy
<i>Line 2:</i>	Four descriptive traits	Honest, caring, curious, energetic
<i>Line 3:</i>	Sibling of...	Sister of Kenneth
<i>Line 4:</i>	Lover of (people, ideas)	Lover of laughter, learning, challenge
<i>Line 5:</i>	Who feels...	Who feels joy when traveling
<i>Line 6:</i>	Who needs...	Who needs sunshine every day
<i>Line 7:</i>	Who gives...	Who gives friendship, encouragement, and smiles
<i>Line 8:</i>	Who fears...	Who fears pain, hunger, and the end of summer
<i>Line 9:</i>	Who would like to see...	Who would like to see contentment for all living things
<i>Line 10:</i>	Resident of (your city)	Resident of Phoenix
<i>Line 11:</i>	Your last name	Haugen

Found at www.EduRef.org

<https://eduref.org/lessons/language-arts>, click on Writing

Writing W Poems

Grade Level(s): 4, 5

Writing “W” poems allows students to be creative in a structured environment. The students will learn that there are many different types of poems, and that this is just one way to write a poem.

Goal:

Students will discover a new way to write a poem, by using: who; what; when; where; and why, to write their poems. Students will create two of their own poems.

Materials:

Animalia by Graeme Base

A Light In the Attic by Shel Silverstein

Letters of the alphabet in a hat (one letter per student if possible)

Paper and pencils

Introduction:

Today we are going to talk about poems. There are lots of different types of poems. There are short poems, long poems, poems that are about feelings, and poems that are about your senses. Just for fun I am going to read a couple of different types of poems to you from Shel Silverstein’s A Light In the Attic (pick two or three poems that are different and read them).

Pre-Writing Activity:

Today we are each going to write a poem of our own, but before we do, I am going to read Animalia to you (read Animalia and point out that it begins with a poem, and read the poem to the students).

You are each going to write a poem using a specific letter of the alphabet. Tomorrow after we have written our poems, we will use our poems to make a class book, kind of like Animalia.

For our class book we are going to write a certain type of poem called the W poem. Display the following information: Five W’s:

Line 1: Who (the subject)

Line 2: What (what happened)

Line 3: Where (where did it happen)

Line 4: When (when did it happen)

Line 5: Why (why did it happen)

Display the following poem:

Who: Xavier

What: Played his xylophone

Where: In the examining room

When: In his spare time

Why: While waiting for his x-rays

Here is a poem that I wrote using the letter X, and the five W’s. The who is Xavier. The what, is played his xylophone, etc. In order to read this poem, we need to cover up the five’s (do so with a piece of paper). Read the poem without the five W’s.

When you write your poems you may put the five W’s on the side of your page, but then for your

final draft you must take them off, and write just your poem. Remember to capitalize the beginning of every line.

Now we will do one as a class. What letter should we use? (Let students pick a letter to use.) Who has a who, or a subject for me? Continue until all five W's are answered. Cover up the Five W's, and ask for a volunteer to read the class poem.

Now I will let you draw a letter out of a hat. The letter you get is the letter you keep, no trading.

During Writing Activity

I will leave the five W's up for you to look at while you write your poems.

You may use your friends, your dictionaries, your thesauruses, and your teacher to find words if you get stuck.

You all have your letters, so you may start writing your poems.

When students finish one poem have them write another.

Post-Writing Activity

Have students edit their poems.

If time, and students are done, share with class.

Found at www.EduRef.org

<https://eduref.org/lessons/language-arts>, click on Writing

Using a Poem Model -- Knoxville, Tennessee

Grade Level: 6 - 12

Description: After reading the poem "Knoxville, Tennessee" by Nikki Giovanni, students will use the poem as a model to write poems of their own.

Objectives: Students will be able to

1. review and demonstrate knowledge of the poetic concept of "*speaker*"
2. identify specific phrases in the poem that identify the speaker of the poem.
3. identify words and phrases in the poem that indicate the speaker's attitude about the season of summer.
4. write a poem, imitating the form and language of the model poem.

Materials:

-) Text of a poem by Nikki Giovanni, "Knoxville, Tennessee" (www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/knoxville-tennessee)
-) Other sample poems which imitate the original poem
-) Plain white paper or construction paper.

Procedure:

1. As a class, read the poem together.
2. After reading the poem, define the term "*poetic speaker*" (the persona the author assumes in a given poem).
3. Determine as a class the age, gender, etc. of the speaker of "Knoxville, Tennessee" by identifying phrases from the poem that would indicate the identity of the speaker.
4. Discuss the words and phrases in the poem that show the speaker's attitude toward the season of summer.
5. Discuss the form of the poem--note items such as punctuation and word placement in the free verse poem. How do these things add to the identity of the speaker and the speaker's attitude?
6. The student's written assignment is to write a poem of their own about their favorite season, using the poem they just read as a model. They are to keep the free verse form and the first two lines similar: "*I always like (season) best*". Also, they should imitate Giovanni's free verse form, using placement of words for emphasis and similar punctuation.

Found at EduRef.org, click on Writing
<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/knoxville-tennessee>

Couplets

A couplet is a two-line stanza that rhymes.

Objectives:

The student will recognize the end-rhyme pattern of a couplet.

The student will write and illustrate a couplet.

Materials:

A copy of the following (display for class or individual handouts):

Adventures of Isabel by Ogden Nash (<https://allpoetry.com/Adventures-Of-Isabel>)

Eletelephony by Laura E. Richards (<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/eletelephony>)

Examples of couplets from Shakespeare

(<http://theshakespeareblog.com/2012/10/shakespeares-rhyming-couplets/>)

Index cards

Procedures:

Introduction: Read *Adventures of Isabel*. Ask the students what they notice about the poem. (It is not true. It is funny. Every two lines rhyme.) Explain that couplets are two-line stanzas that rhyme.

Group Practice: Display *Eletelephony*. Point out to the students that when the author needed rhyming words she just made them up! Have the class read the passage aloud noting the end rhymes. Brainstorm school words and words that rhyme with them. For older students, share a few of Shakespeare's couplets.

Independent Practice: Give each child an index card. Have them write a couplet about school.

Closure: Ask students read their couplets aloud to make one long poem about school. Type a compiled list of couplets for the students to place in their poetry folder.

Similes

Similes are a way to compare two things using 'like' or 'as'. For example, if I want to say that somebody *swims well*, I can say they *swim like a fish* because fish swim well. There are two basic patterns that you can use. Make a poem using similes to describe a person, an animal, or an object

Pattern 1:

like

verb + like + noun

Examples

She swims like a fish.
He looks like an ogre.
She plays like a pro.
He walks like a duck.
She acts like a fool.

Pattern 2:

as

as + adjective + as + noun

Examples

He is as tall as a giant.
She is as fast as a rocket.
He is as graceful as a swan.
She is as sneaky as a fox.
He is as quiet as a mouse.

Easy Examples of Similes for Kids:

The use of simile, for kids, is a bit abstract. However, elementary kids can understand similes if they use easy vocabulary and the connection and imagery are clear. If you teach your kids about simile by encouraging them to imagine how something is first and then have them think about what those things are like, they will be well on their way to understanding this fun literary device.

-) The breeze was gentle like a butterfly.
-) She danced lightly, like a fluttering butterfly.
-) You are as pale as a white sheet.
-) Your hands are as cold as the Arctic.
-) His mind is like an encyclopedia.
-) It was as light as a penny.
-) He soared like an eagle.
-) It was damp like dew in the morning.
-) He was as lost as a sheep.
-) She worked as hard as an ant gathering his harvest.
-) She was as prickly as a cactus.
-) The puppy wagged his tail like a toddler who just got a lollipop.
-) The children were as happy as a hog with fresh mud.
-) The burglar looked as sketchy as jelly with green fuzz on top.
-) She moved as gracefully as a prima ballerina.
-) They ran around, going this way and that, like leaves on a blustery day.
-) Her teeth were as white as pearls.

A more sophisticated example of similes used in a poem:

My Family

By Stacy Zeiger

My mom is like a fire.
She's always warm, but sometimes she gets too hot.

My brother is like a tornado.
He always moves fast and spreads destruction wherever he goes.

My sister is like a snowstorm.
She's pretty to look at and icy at times, but with a little sunshine, that iciness melts.

Together we are like a partly cloudy day.
We have our moments of darkness and gloom, but the sun always peeks through.

Activity:

How could I say that somebody:

runs fast
is pretty
jumps well
is strong

How could I say that something:

is hard
feels soft
is sweet
feels rough
is heavy
sounds noisy
is light

Word Karaoke

Level: Middle School

Instructions:

Sometimes, you want to say something and you're not sure exactly how. Sometimes, there's a song or a poem that you think is better than anything you could ever write—or, maybe, there's a song or a poem that you could do better.

That's the jumping-off point for Word Karaoke, a way of getting students inspired when they say they're not. We start by asking the students, "What's your favorite line from a song?" Get some suggestions. Write them on the board. Offer some of your own. Encourage more generalized, ambiguous responses; "Oops! I did it again" works much better than "My name is Shaa-dy"—although, for the purpose of this exercise, any suggestion is useful.

Once we've got their brains grinding (they will probably start out slowly, then, as they realize what's going on, produce a maelstrom of suggestions), call for a halt—a *temporary* halt—and separate the class into pairs. Make sure each student has a pencil and paper. Then, ask every pair to write a short poem or song (one side of a page is plenty) using one of the lines on the board, or their own idea. Suggest that they use their original line in another context—"Oops, I spilled the paint again," or "My name is mud." Get them to understand the idea behind karaoke: that, given a line of a song, they can create or change the meaning to whatever they want. They can start their verse with the "sample," or alternate that line with their own lines, going back and forth like a call-and-response.

As time allows, students can perform their verses together. Encourage creative methods of presentation—one person can recite the sample line, and the other can recite the rest of the verse, or one can recite while the other performs an interpretive dance (be careful when offering this option to certain classes).

As an additional exercise, or for homework, students can write a new piece, either using the same verse from class with a different idea, or coming up with their own, new piece. For a real twist, get students to listen to one of their parents' songs and rewrite it from their own viewpoint!

This lesson plan was written by Matthue Roth for *Don't Forget to Write: for the Secondary Grades* (Jossey-Bass, 2011), a collection of lesson plans compiled by 826 National, a network of nonprofit organizations dedicated to helping students, ages six through eighteen, with expository and creative writing, and to helping teachers inspire their students to write.

Recognizing Poetry in Popular Music

Grade level: 7-8

Objectives:

To appreciate and recognize poetry and poetic language in popular music

To see a use for poetry in modern life

Directions: Each student or pair of students chooses an appropriate song. (No sexual or violent content.) They copy down the words, and make enough copies for each student in the class. Then, each student, or pair of students gives a presentation to the class. They identify the similes, metaphors, alliteration, figurative language or written words that appeal to the five senses. They interpret the song and state what they feel is the theme or purpose for writing the song. They identify if the song entertains, informs or reveals hidden information.

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Rap It Up!

Grades K-6

Materials needed: Music with a rap beat

Students are familiar with rap music, which depends on its beat and heavy bass. Collaborate with your music teacher to find a rap beat background (such as those found on electronic keyboards) or play instrumental music with a rap beat. Play it for students and say nonsense words (da-da-DUM or tra-la-LA, for example) to the beat. Keep the beat playing and have students write their own rap about something they are studying. Have students perform their raps when they are done.

From *Rhymes and Reasons: Librarians and Teachers Using Poetry to Foster Literacy* by Jane Heitman; Linworth Publishing, Inc., 2003.

Quatrain

A quatrain is a four-line rhyming poem in a pattern. This lesson introduces the AABB, ABAB, and ABCB patterns of poetry.

Objectives:

1. The student will recognize the AABB, ABAB, and ABCB patterns.
2. The student will write a quatrain using one of the three rhyming patterns.

Materials:

1. Copy for display and/or individual copies of the following poem:
The Crocodile by Lewis Carroll (<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/crocodile>)
2. Sentence strips with the following lines written on one each:
I like candy.
I think it's dandy.
It's good to eat.
It's just too sweet!
It's my favorite.
3. Five envelopes containing quatrains cut into individual lines.

Procedures:

1. Introduction: Have four students come to the front and hold the sentence strips so that the poem reads:

I like candy. (A)
I think it's dandy. (A)
It's good to eat. (B)
It's just too sweet. (B)

Put the letters A, B and C on the board. Have the students name the first pair of rhyming words and write them under the letter "A." Write the second pair of rhyming words under "B." Point out the AABB pattern to students.

Rearrange the students holding the strips so that the poem reads:

I like candy. (A)
It's good to eat. (B)
I think it's dandy. (A)
It's just too sweet! (B)

Ask the class to describe the new pattern. Exchange “I think it’s dandy” for “It’s my favorite” so the poem reads:

I like candy. (A)
It’s good to eat. (B)
It’s my favorite (C)
It’s just too sweet! (B)

3. Group Practice: Give each team an envelope containing five individual lines and have them put it together in patterns:

I like to drink pop. (A)
I just can’t stop! (A)
I always drink diet. (B)
I want you to try it! (B)

I like to drink pop. (A)
I always drink diet. (B)
I just can’t stop. (A)
I want you to try it! (B)

I like to drink pop (A)
I always drink diet. (B)
Zero calories (C)
I want you to try it! (B)

Review poems and name their patterns.

Diamante

Grade level: 4-12

Students may tell you that a Diamante is a singer and the name of her band, but before she was well known, it was a seven-line, diamond-shaped poem based on contrasting words:

Winter
white and silver
fading, sleeping, slowing down
March exchanges vows with April
nodding, rising, waking up
green and goldburst
Spring

When you write your poem, follow this outline to create a diamond shape.

Line 1:
topic (noun)
Line 2: two adjectives
Line 3: three action words
Line 4: a four - word phrase
Line 5: three action words
Line 6: two adjectives
Line 7: rename
the topic

Writing Activity:

Choose a word pair from a list of opposites generated during class discussion as the focus for your poem. Alternately, you may choose a word from another list we created while discussing an assignment and choose a synonym for this word for your second word. Another alternative is to create lists of powerful words that we've compiled for descriptive words that you can add to your poem. Remember that powerful, passionate words will make the contrast. Your finished diamante should capture the powerful relationship between the two words that you've chosen as your focus.

Found at www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson258/Power_assignment.pdf

Writing Poetry Using Poems by Langston Hughes

Grade Level: 9

This lesson involves looking at two Langston Hughes poems, “Dream Deferred” and “Theme for English B.” Students read the poems and discuss the poetic devices used by the poet. Then students use the two poems as models for writing their own poetry.

Goals:

- To acquaint students with poetry by an African American poet from the Harlem Renaissance.
- To familiarize students with different poetic forms.
- To serve as a springboard for student written poetry.

Materials:

- poems: “Dream Deferred” and “Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes (see Internet sites below)
- paper and pencil

Procedure:

Students will evaluate two poems by Langston Hughes, “Dream Deferred” and “Theme for English B.” In “Dream Deferred”, discuss what it means when something is *deferred* and how that may relate to not only African Americans historically, but to anyone who puts their dreams off until another time. Discuss how the poet uses simile in this poem to create sharp, visual images for the reader. Students are then asked to write their own poem using “Dream Deferred” as a model, creating their own similes. In “Dream Deferred,” students begin the poem: What happens to a dream deferred? Does it _____ like a _____, filling in their own similes.

Next, discuss narrative poetry. Read “Theme for English B” and discuss the point of view of the author. Discuss what it might be like to be in a situation that is different than what we might be used to experiencing. Discuss how each of us has a story inside of us, and we can tell that through the use of a narrative poem. Students are asked to write their own narrative poem using “Theme for English B” as a model. In “Theme for English B”, students follow the same wording as Langston Hughes wrote but fill in their own personal information and create their own narrative poem.

Assessment: Students’ poems can be assessed by using the following rubric:

- The poem has an absence of grammatical and spelling errors.
- The poem follows the format of the model poem.
- The poem shows creative use of similes.
- The poem was evaluated by at least three members of the editing group.
- The final draft was turned in on time.

Useful Internet Resources:

- [Langston Hughes – Dream Deferred, www.nku.edu/~diesmanj/hughes.html#dreamdeferred](http://www.nku.edu/~diesmanj/hughes.html#dreamdeferred)
- [Langston Hughes – Theme for English B, www.poets.org/poems/poems.cfm?prmlD=1478](http://www.poets.org/poems/poems.cfm?prmlD=1478)

Comment: This is a writing lesson used by the ITWWP (Indiana Teachers of Writing Workshop Partnership), whose members participate in the National Writing Project. Found at www.EduRef.org, <https://eduref.org/lessons/language-arts>, click on Writing

Memorial Day Poster Poem

Social Studies/Language Arts

Children create a Memorial Day word web and use it to create a poem about Memorial Day.

What You Need

-) Writing paper and pencils
-) Poster paper
-) Crayons and markers
-) Cluster word web

What to Do

1. Hold a discussion about the meaning of Memorial Day and why we observe the holiday in the United States. Explain that this is a special day set aside for all Americans to remember the people who have died in wars. Originally, the holiday was called Decoration Day because people decorated the graves of soldiers who died in the Civil War with flags and flowers. Today communities across the nation hold parades and lay wreaths on monuments to those people who died in different wars. People remember the bravery of those soldiers who died fighting for their country.
2. Have children work in pairs filling in the Cluster Word Web with ideas related to Memorial Day.
3. They can review the words in the web and underline the best words for their poems.
4. Have children write the first draft and share it with their partner.
5. Then they can revise their poems, making suggested changes and checking spelling and punctuation. Remind children that poems can be powerful if they use colorful words, or if they have interesting sounds or rhymes.
6. Have children reprint the final draft of the poem neatly on poster paper and illustrate it.

Found at Houghton Mifflin Education Place, <http://www.eduplace.com/activity/memorial.html>