POETRY 1-2-3

A poetry program for releasing young persons' creativity

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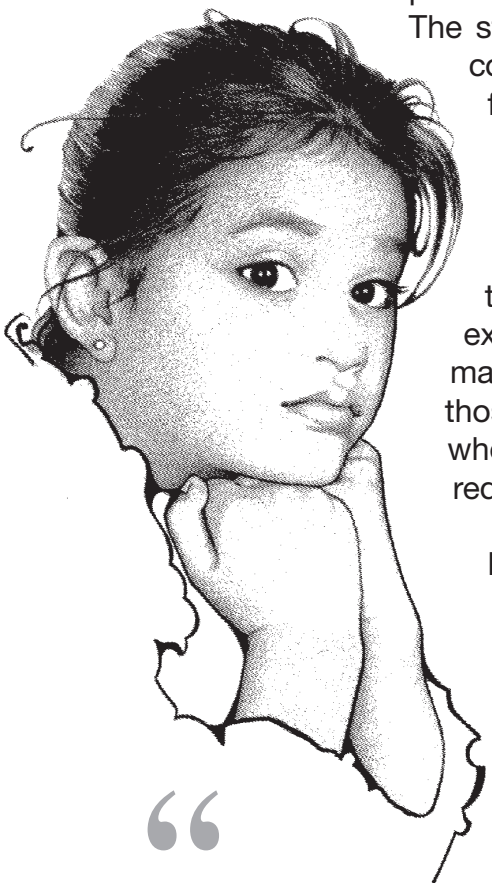
Why was POETRY 1-2-3 written?

A few years ago I was invited to join my daughter at a summer retreat for gifted students from grade 4 through grade 8. The school system's gifted coordinator designed this retreat as a forum, presenting several instructors who conducted sample classes. The students attended as many classes as they wished, and, consequently, they were able to determine the gifted curriculum for the following school year. Although many interesting and challenging options were offered, classes in creative writing were not included. I approached the coordinator and asked if she would be interested in presenting a poetry writing session. That was the beginning. Since that time I have been teaching poetry writing to gifted students and students who excel in creative writing. Throughout this book, whenever I make reference to gifted and talented, I am including not only those who have been labeled "gifted," but also those students who are creatively gifted, but have not necessarily met the requirements of gifted programs.



"... I conducted research on the gifted student ..."

Before the actual teaching began, I conducted research on the gifted student, as well as on books for teaching poetry to the gifted. I had been teaching creative writing to university students for some time, and a few of the teaching approaches used in those classes could apply to the gifted student. However, I found that there are certain characteristics of the gifted student that have definite implications to the process of poetry writing. Although I was able to find a few fine books on teaching poetry to elementary students, these books in their entirety were insufficient.

Why is there an absence of instructional material?

The most obvious answer is because poetry classes are not commonly offered for the gifted. Although gifted programs have expanded their curriculum dramatically in the past few years, most began as mathematics programs. Several gifted programs were sponsored by universities to supplement state and local programs. In 1972, Johns Hopkins began The Johns Hopkins University Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youths, at that time limited to Maryland's mathematically gifted students. Since that time, several universities have developed programs for the gifted, accepting students from all parts of the country. Mathematics and sciences, however, are still the emphasized subjects.

Obviously courses in humanities, history, foreign language, expository writing, and math and science courses are vital for gifted students. However, I believe these same students have an often untapped potential. *They need opportunities to be creative with words.*

Should gifted students write poetry?

This question will be quickly answered for you once you see your students' work. After reading a selection of my 5th grade students' first day work, an associate asked, "How did you get them to this advanced point so quickly?" The answer is twofold. First, I am fortunate to have students who are interested in poetry. Poetry writing is not imposed on students; it is presented by choice. Second, *children are natural poets.* Children have not yet constructed barriers to their responses, and the sensory aspect of poetry is particularly related to children. They respond quickly and enthusiastically.

Another relevant facet to this question is the process by which gifted students are determined/selected. The first criteria is high scoring on standard achievement tests like the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* or the *California Achievement Test.* Students whose scores are above predetermined averages then take the Scholastic Aptitude Test, required for admission to most universities. From this point, qualifying scores for gifted programs vary, but most often they require scoring above the mean for college-bound seniors. These tests are designed to measure mathematics skills and verbal skills. Of course, these kinds of tests do not measure creativity, which is nearly impossible to measure. However, you will usually find high vocabulary scores for gifted children. Typically these vocabulary scores are examined in terms of the student's ability to understand complex directions/problems, and, in turn, to relate answers to instructors. These high vocabulary scores also mean that these students possess a great storehouse of language waiting to be used creatively.

ADVANCED VOCABULARY

"... is just one characteristic of the gifted student ..."

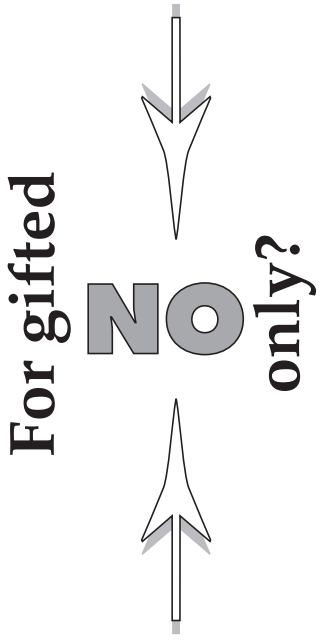
Advanced vocabulary is just one characteristic of the gifted student that has a positive effect on poetry writing. Gifted students are also alert observers who need little external motivation to follow through in work which they find interesting. They also need little direction from teachers. They display a good deal of intellectual playfulness, fantasy, imagination, and manipulation of ideas and language.

Why are there so few poetry classes for the gifted?

I'm sure quite a few factors are involved. One of these is the importance educators place on math and science. Another factor is the lack of instructional material. And perhaps most influential—who wants to teach poetry writing? Instructors are afraid of poetry, it is a puzzlement to some and a mystery to others. "How can I teach poetry writing when I don't understand poetry, and I have no background in it?" many teachers may lament. The purpose of this book is to resolve the teacher's dilemma. Each exercise is presented with thorough notes on structuring the exercise, evaluating the exercise, and examples are included.

It may be helpful for you to read through an anthology of modern poetry. *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* is the most comprehensive. Appreciation grows with exposure to poetry. If you have not already done so, you need to dismiss the misconception that poetry needs to "teach a lesson," and that poetry is always sentimental. Good poetry allows the reader to re-create, as nearly as possible, the same feelings/experiences that the poet felt when writing the poem.

Think of yourself as a guide rather than an instructor when approaching these exercises. You will find yourself sharing the poetry experience with your students as together you discover and enjoy its offerings. The more able you are to enjoy yourself, the more your students will do likewise. Enthusiasm is contagious if it is genuine.



Is POETRY 1-2-3 intended only for gifted students?

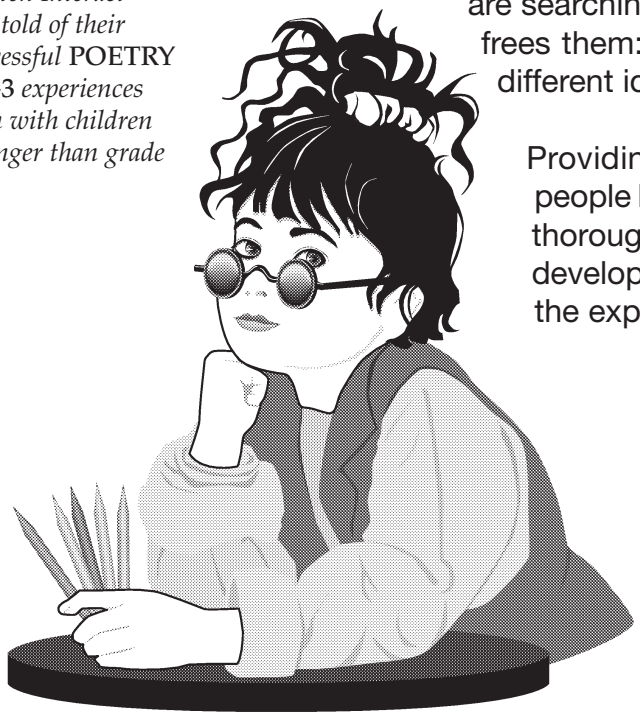
Most definitely not. Admittedly most of my experience with this program has been with quite capable students. A class identified as *gifted* usually responds more enthusiastically and more creatively from the beginning than a heterogeneous class. I have found, however, that all young persons will respond to the challenge and music of poetry when they get to create poems that reflect their own world.

Teaching tip →

Teachers have written Interact and told of their successful POETRY 1-2-3 *experiences even with children younger than grade 4.*

For what age group did I write POETRY 1-2-3?

The age group that I have worked with on these exercises is grades 4 to 7. This is a frustrating time for most children. While at one moment they want to be like everyone else, the next moment they are searching for a personal identity. Writing poetry frees them: they can express opinions and try on different ideas.



Providing this vehicle of creativity for young people has been a rewarding experience. I have thoroughly enjoyed watching students grow by developing their confidence and ability. I believe the experience will be as rewarding for you.

USING POETRY 1-2-3 - 1

Overview

1. Notice that this poetry writing program has 12 exercises and that each exercise contains three sections:
   - Structuring the exercise
   - Examples of the exercise
   - Evaluating the exercise

2. Each exercise is intended *for approximately one* hour's instruction. Of course, the amount of time required will vary, depending on class size, students' age and ability, and how deeply you have students respond to one another's creations.

3. Immediately below is some further explanation about each of these three sections.

Teaching tip →

If you use this program in a "pullout" gifted program with a small class, you will likely find that one hour is a sufficient amount of time. However, if you are teaching a regular sized class and therefore use my grouping suggestions, the one hour time will likely be too short for what I have recommended in the various lessons.

Structuring the exercise

1. This section contains instructions necessary to prepare your students to write each exercise.

2. Sometimes these instructions will be verbal, sometimes you will need to use a blackboard, and other times you will need to read from the information contained in the lesson.

3. Whichever of these approaches you use, I have worked to provide sufficient information to help your students succeed and therefore enjoy the exercise.

Examples of the exercise

1. This second section presents examples of each completed exercise from my previous students. These "examples" will give you some idea of what to expect from your students.

2. Occasionally you may choose to read one or two such examples aloud to your class. The examples I have included represent some of the most outstanding work from my students, as well as a few that are not as poetically strong.

3. The poems your students write will delight you. You will want to put copies of particularly successful ones in each tabbed section so that you can use them the next time you teach POETRY 1-2-3.

Evaluating the exercise

1. The final section contains information that will help you and your students discuss the poems.

2. At first you may find your students are reluctant to read their poems aloud. When this situation happens to me, I read my student's poems aloud for the first few sessions, not revealing the names of the authors. I then point out and offer praise for the use of poetic convention, vivid imagery, unique language, and so on.

3. After this initiation, students become increasingly willing to read their own poems aloud and to offer comments on their peers' work.

4. I have included suggestions to help you use cooperative learning techniques while your students work on various exercises.

5. One of your real pleasures will be watching students' faces' glow as their confidence grows while sharing their poems.

6. Some final words about evaluation.
   a. An experienced creative writing teacher commented that when you hold a budding poet's first poem, you should imagine yourself holding an energetic kitten in your hands. Squeeze only a little and you feel the bones. Squeeze some more and you crush the kitten. The following suggestion then is crucial: *be careful that both you and other students do not negatively criticize students' beginning efforts.*
   b. Nothing inhibits the free flow of writing like the fear of being ridiculed or of writing something "bad." Many young students—particularly the gifted—are by nature self-critical as they strive for perfection. Such individuals are not easily satisfied with their own speed or products. You can help students overcome these barriers by providing a calm, creative atmosphere in which students feel it easy to explore.

Teaching Tip →

I have loved the personal relationship that has developed between some of my students and me as a result of our writing poetry together. I have even had students enjoy POETRY 1-2-3 so much that they have repeated the course with me in a later year!

Studying this unit

Examine all 12 exercises carefully before proceeding with this unit.

Study each exercise's three sections:

- Structuring the exercise
- Examples of the exercise
- Evaluating the exercise

Note that the items you are to duplicate for your students appear at the end of each tab section in the notebook.

Duplication

1. Decide if you intend to use all 12 exercises.

2. Remove those exercise sheets and duplicate them in sufficient quantity for your number of students.

Some students will want to please you so much that they may try to "borrow" from poems in these books—particularly those which you have told them you really admire. Be sure to emphasize that the best thing about poetry is the uniqueness of each poet's individual voice.

Room environment

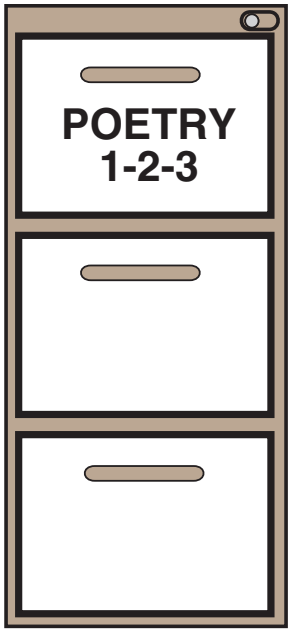
1. Gather several books containing your favorite poets and poems that you feel might also appeal to your students. There will be moments when you suddenly want to reach out, pick up a certain poem, and either read it to the whole class or show it to a particular student.

2. Consider bringing in some actual poetry recordings (or songs with effective lyrics).

3. Also organize a bulletin board for your poetry teaching unit. Here you might place some favorite poems, some definitions/ examples of poetic devices, and headings such as Our POETRY 1-2-3 Poems.

4. Decide where you wish your students to keep all your handouts and all their written work. You have several options:
   a. You can give every student a plain folder to decorate.
   b. You can plan to ask each student to create and decorate a "folder" out of large sheets of colored paper you provide.
   c. You can ask each student to bring in a three-ring notebook which will be used only for this unit.
   d. You may also wish to set up a box or file drawer where students are asked to keep their folders or notebooks.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 2



Writing environment

1. These exercises should be written in class and collected each day after completing an exercise.

2. Place their folders or notebooks in the box or file drawer you have organized for this purpose.

3. I have found that students not only enjoy writing this way, they are also more productive. When students are required to write poems at home, the experience becomes “homework” and is much more likely to be negative. When poems are written in class, students come prepared to write, to explore, and to enjoy themselves and one another.

4. In summary, the advantages of writing in class are: your students learn while sharing and you are present to support them and give information.

Working in groups

1. I suggest you have your students work in groups regularly to share their efforts during the Evaluation phase of each exercise.

2. Examine the cooperative learning philosophy presented in Cooperative Learning on pages 1:10-1:12.

3. The evaluation phase of each exercise contains suggestions for you to consider.

Grading

1. The exercises contained in this text were designed or adapted specifically for gifted students and for students who display a keen interest and aptitude in creative writing.

2. The Evaluation section discusses how certain characteristics of such students may affect how they write each exercise. There is also an examination of the “Examples” offered in each exercise to serve as a sample evaluation.

3. What about poor word choice or phrasing? You may notice some spelling and grammatical errors in the "Examples." If a word or phrase in a poem is unclear, ask the student to explain what he/she meant, but do not specifically ask or force the student to change the word or phrase.

4. I do not, and I recommend that you do not, correct or grade your student's poems.

5. Students will receive the evaluation they need from the feedback provided by class discussion. If you give them a letter or number grade for their poems, I feel you will defeat the purpose of POETRY 1-2-3.

6. Although I give no letter grade, I do send a report to each student's parents after completing the poetry writing unit. In this brief written comment, I evaluate the student's performance, trying, if possible, to comment specifically on at least one portion of one poem.

Culminating activities

1. **Students' pride:** Students are going to be proud of their poems. Therefore, some culminating event or happening is appropriate. You might like to do one or more of the alternatives below.

2. **Students' "collected works":** After collecting the poems at the end of each session, consider taking these poems home. There you will be able to type them so that at the end of the session, you can distribute the "collected works" of the class.

Teaching tip →

Send copies of the class anthology to your principal, appropriate district administrators, and a local newspaper columnist.

3. **A class anthology:** The best poems for each exercise might be collected in a Class Poetry Anthology. *Be sure that each student's work is represented.* The anthology could be "published" by placing it in a glass case on campus, by sending it home to parents, and by sending a class set to other classes.

Students love any kind of " happening." If your students do not make a video recording, you could just as effectively have some students read a favorite POETRY 1-2-3 *poem during open house or a PTA meeting.*

4. **A video presentation:** You might have each student video record two poems: a favorite poem plus his/her favorite poem created while experiencing POETRY 1-2-3. This video recording could be presented to the principal and a class of younger students you might be teaching next year. It would also be an effective item for you to play for parents during an open house.

Grouping

Having students occasionally work in support groups to share what they have written is an important aspect of this poetry writing program. In a group students can pool knowledge and experience, create a group spirit, and encourage one other to achieve. Children like to talk together. Sharing ideas often opens up ideas and leads a writer to consider alternative solutions. Encouraging your students to rely on themselves and one another will help them to develop responsibility and gain confidence and independence.

Heterogeneous grouping

Teaching Tip

Note: *Be sure you read my* ***T****eaching* ***T****ip comment about grouping on page 1:11.*

I recommend that you as teacher group your students *heterogeneously*—regardless of whether or not your students have already been *homogeneously* grouped. Select at least one capable student for each group. The heterogeneous grouping will involve the lower-ability students and challenge them to model themselves after the higher-ability students.

Commitment to cooperative learning

It is important to get all students *involved in* and committed to the cooperative learning process. If your students have not had much group work experience before, you should assign roles to group members at first.

Monitoring

Be sure you monitor groups as they work so they stay on track and so each student is involved in the task. Specific behaviors performed by all group members help the group complete the task and feel good about each other when the task is finished. You may wish to sit down with each group occasionally and discuss briefly with them how they are getting along as a work group trying to help one another write better poems.

What makes cooperative learning work?

- Students learn to care about each other's growth and knowledge.
- Students discuss the material, including the relationship of present learning with past learning.
- Every member of the group becomes accountable for learning. No one can sit and let others do the work.
- Students are taught leadership and communication skills.
- Groups assess how well they are working together and look for possible improvements. This helps students to reflect on and integrate learnings from one group experience to the next.

Social skills

Your students also need to be instructed in the social skills that help them complete their tasks within their groups. Encourage your students to do the following:

- Contribute to the group by talking to one another.
- Be willing to consider other persons' opinions.
- Openly acknowledge that others have something valuable to contribute.
- Praise one another.
- Actively listen to one another.
- Explain disagreements in an agreeable way.
- Encourage quieter, more retiring persons to contribute.
- Take turns.
- Work as a team toward a common goal.
- Set individual goals within a group.
- Stay on task.

Teaching tip →

Although I recommend cooperative learning in groups, I want to caution you to watch out for certain pitfalls.

1. *Writing poetry is one individual striving to work with language—alone. The actual writing is not a group effort. (Imagine a group watching Frost write a poem and telling him what to do!)*

2. *My reasons for recommending occasional group work are that students need to feel that others care about what they are trying to say ... and some reluctant students need a spark to get started. Other classmates can be that spark.*

3. *Be careful that students within their groups do not defer to the most popular (or most talented) students and suggest that only these persons' work be read to the class.*

A final word

Of course, all of these group skills are not always easy to learn, but spending time on them while engaged in this program can have a ripple effect that positively enhances a classroom environment. Students who work successfully in support groups show positive feelings about their class as a community.

"Students who work successfully in support groups show positive feelings about their class as a community."

LESSON 1 - 1

How Many Ways to Say? What is Poetry?

Introduction

1. Duplicate the following pages which introduce the art of writing poetry:
   - HOW MANY WAYS TO SAY?
   - WHAT IS POETRY?

2. Since POETRY 1-2-3 is designed as a writing workshop, the definitions are brief. I've presented only what I feel to be the working basics. Of course, students can write poetry without understanding much terminology, but doing so is comparable to building a house without any plans.

Teaching Tip →

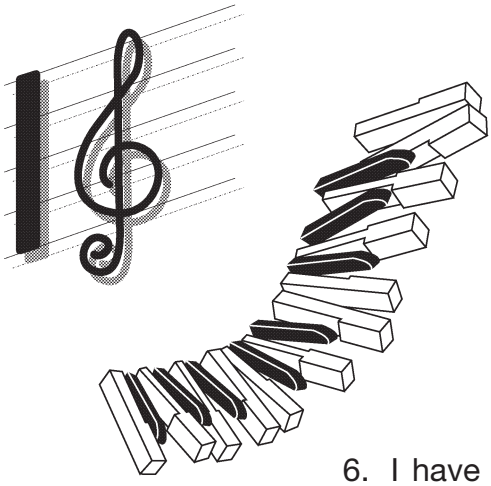
Keep your introduction to the program as light and playful as you can.

3. Hand out and then read the WHAT IS POETRY? pages aloud to your class. Tell them they do not have to memorize these terms, but knowing how to use them will make them better poets. Use the house building analogy if you wish.

4. When you feel they are ready, read to your students the "play a lick" poem (page 2:11) in which they look for sound devices. Having students work in pairs or trios is an effective cooperative learning activity while beginning POETRY 1-2-3.

Of course, when you use this poem, get excited and read the poem dramatically so that students are intrigued by the sounds of words and the imaginary music!

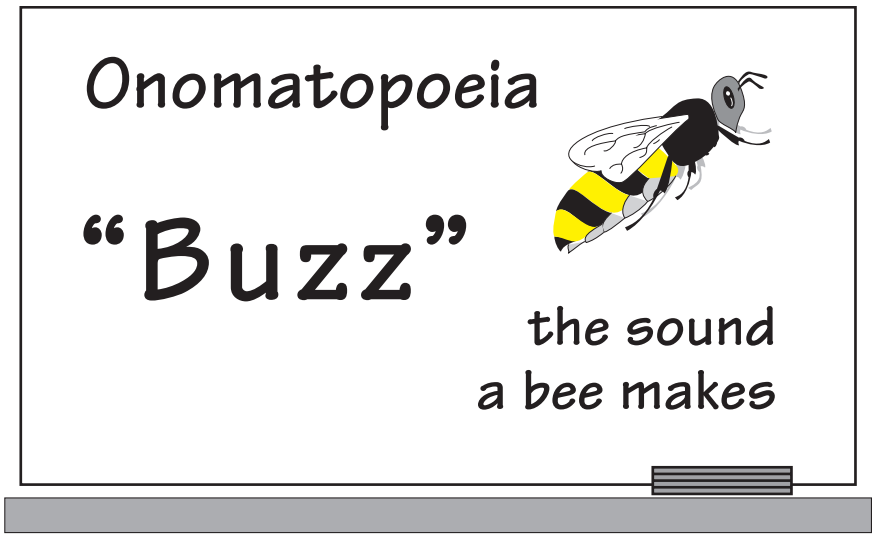
5. Here is the poem mentioned above with **bold ink** hints of what your students should be able to find with your help and the help of their classmates:



Pl**a**y a **l**ick on a **c**a**n**dy **c**a**n**e **cl**ari**n**et,
Beat on a g**u**m **dr**op **dr**um,
T**oo**t a l**oo**t on a lemonade flute,
Make that **f**udgey **f**rench **h**orn **h**um,
Sing a n**o**te l**o**w on an **o**range **o**b**o**e,
Synchronize with a **s**pun **s**ugar **s**axophone,
Bellow a **b**utterscotch **b**ase tone,
And when you're done,
J**u**st for f**u**n,
We'll eat the c**and**y l**and** b**and.**

6. I have used **bold ink** for most of the sound devices in the above poem. They do not appear in bold ink on the page for your students.

7. Ask your students to tell you what sound devices they found in this poem, and to identify them by term. Some examples for your benefit:
   - **Rhyme:** The regular correspondence of sounds, especially at the ends of lines; for example
     g**um**-dr**um**
     t**oot**-l**oot**-fl**ute**
     l**ow**-ob**oe**
     saxoph**one**-t**one**
     d**one**-f**un**
     c**and**y-l**and**-b**and**
   - **Alliteration:** The occurrence in a phrase of two or more words having the same initial sound; for example
     fudgey-**f**rench
     horn-**h**um
     synchronize-**s**pun-**s**ugar-**s**axophone
     bellow-**b**utterscotch-**b**ase
     drop-**d**rum
   - **Assonance:** The resemblance in sound, especially in the vowel sounds; for example
     g**u**m-dr**u**m
     t**oo**t-l**oo**t
     n**o**te-l**o**w-**o**b**o**e (not **o**range and **o**n, short vowels)
     j**u**st-f**u**n
     c**a**ndy-l**a**nd-b**a**nd
   - **Consonance:** The similarity or recurrence of consonants in two or more syllables; for example
     p**l**ay-**l**ick-c**l**arinet
     ca**n**dy-ca**n**e-clari**n**et
     d**r**op-d**r**um
     ca**nd**y-la**nd**-ba**nd**



- **Onomatopoeia:** The formation of a word that sounds like what it denotes; for example
  toot a **loot** (the sound a flute makes)

Teaching tip →

Rhythmical patterns are covered in detail in the exercise called RHYTHM AND RHYME.

8. At this time (or later—be careful not to overwhelm students with too much terminology at first) you may wish to discuss how poetry is also characterized by ***rhythmical patterns.***
   - **Stressed rhythms**: Stress the **bold ink** syllables as you speak.
     Iambic (ta-**tum**) hel**lo**; good**night**
     Trochaic (**tum**-ta) **morn**ing; **sun**shine
     Anapestic (ta-ta-**tum**) in a **wink**; of the **eye**
     Dactylic (**tum**-ta-ta) **hope**fully; **talk** to me
   - **Free verse rhythms**
     Typography (visual patterns of poetry which refer to the arrangement of words on the page so that they look like the subject they describe). An exercise in typography is included in your exercises.
   - **Syntactical rhythms**
     Elements of the sentence are arranged to create relationships such as the relationship of repeated words. Here is an example of syntactical repetition:
     Kiss me **again** and **again,**
     for **your love Is sweeter than wine.**
     How fragrant your cologne,
     How great your name!
     No wonder all the young girls love you!
     Take me with you; come, let us run.
     The king has brought me into his palace.
     How happy we will be!
     Your love is better than wine.
     No wonder all the young girls love you!
     The **bold ink** words and phrases are repeated in this passage from *The Song of Solomon.* Notice how the repetition gives a sense of rhythm to the words.
   - **Syllabics units**
     These units simply involve counting syllables as you do while writing or reading a haiku:
     Before summer rain (5 syllables)
     The air becomes so quiet (7 syllables)
     You can hear your heart. (5 syllables)
     —Pamela Ditchoff
   - **Breath units**
     These units are the loosest form of rhythm in poetry. The poet simply ends the line at the point where the reader would be expected to take a breath.

9. The final characteristic of poetry is **compression of statement.** This means that *poets say a great deal in a few words.* While writing poetry you must choose your words carefully and use them sparingly.

Teaching Tip →

Although many students enjoy the rhyme and humor of poets such as Shel Silverstein, I think most adult poetry is better to use. (The latter will help them get beyond simply writing "kiddie poetry." You will be surprised by how capable your students will become in writing more grown-up verse.) You can find good poetry in the **Atlantic, New Yorker, Paris Review, Southern California Anthology,** *and many university press' poetry* **anthologies.**

Reading some fine poetry

1. Now that you have finished an introduction to poetry, I suggest that you read some poetry written by professional poets.

2. Select some of your favorites, or visit the school library to find some contemporary poetry.

3. You can find good examples of poetry in anthologies such as *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry.* You may want to make copies of some poetry to hand out.

4. Read these poems aloud yourself or have willing students read these poems aloud. The oral experience helps them begin sensing the rhythms of poetry so that they feel more like poets.

5. At this point, make no comments about the *structure* of the poems. However, if your students comment on the poems, please encourage them to share their reactions.

6. When you have finished, turn to the exercise, HOW MANY WAYS TO SAY? (the page with the large mouth below the title).

Teaching tip →

I suggest that you have each student write as many words as he/she can think of (same meaning associations) **before** *you write the word on the chalkboard and before receiving any help from classmates.*

Structuring the exercise

1. Ask your students to write one word, one of their choosing, above the mouth. Recommend using a favorite word or an unusual word, but nothing too difficult or abstract.

2. Next ask each student to tell you his/her word and write these words on the board.

3. Now ask the class to offer as many words as they can think of that have the same meaning ... and any words they associate with the offered words ... and make a list under each word on the board. Here is an example:

Note: One of my students in Michigan wrote the Detroit example at the right. You may wish to make up a list of associations fitting your students' home town so that you can read it to your students. Of course, they can also add to your **list.**

gentle	**Detroit***
kind	Ren Center
soft	Cobo Hall
happy	Tigers
fuzzy	Canada
silky	crime
soothing	guns
smooth	graffiti
lullaby	Lions
kittens	Pistons
compassionate	Red Wings
grandmother	Greenfield Village
baby	cars
brand-new	zoo
mother	skyscrapers
father	apartments
cotton	suburbs
cocker spaniel	homeless
	gray
	black
	Greek Town

**Use your own town or city.*

4. When the lists are complete, instruct your students to write a poem on their chosen word. They may find the lists helpful in creating their poems. *(Most students should finish within 15 minutes.)*

5. You may chose to read the poems which follow at this moment. However, during future exercises, I suggest letting the students come up with their own ideas *first.*

Examples of the exercise

Gentle
The soft kind of hum
That promises security
Like the future prolonged
By faithful hands.
—Suzy (6th grade)

Detroit
Inside I may seem gray and dull
Underneath I am very colorful
Suburbs with their natural beauty
Only midgets matched up to me
Buildings high up in the clouds
Only add one-third the crowds.
—Adrian (6th grade)

Evaluating the exercise

1. This is a good beginning exercise because the students help each other find words to use in their poems. It is also fun for the students because it challenges them to draw on their personal vocabularies. One characteristic of the gifted student, and students with creative talent, is that they usually possess an unusually advanced vocabulary for age or grade level. However, I have found that gifted students will often choose abstractions such as "gentle" or "blue"; consequently, their lists may not be exceptionally long. Sometimes, the students will use only one or two words from the list and write a poem that is inspired by, rather than taken from, their word. *(See the **Gentle** poem example above.)*

Teaching Tip →

Reflect about your students' ability to use concrete and abstract words. Should your conclusions impact your evaluation?

2. As mentioned earlier, I think it is a good idea for students to share their poems with classmates. Your students will likely be less threatened at first if they share their poems within a cooperative learning group.

3. If you use such a group, you should write on the chalkboard a few things for students to listen for within their groups. Encourage them to have each student read his/her poem aloud to

other group members. Stress that members should be positive in their criticism. Ask them to tell the reader what they liked about the poem and how it made them feel.

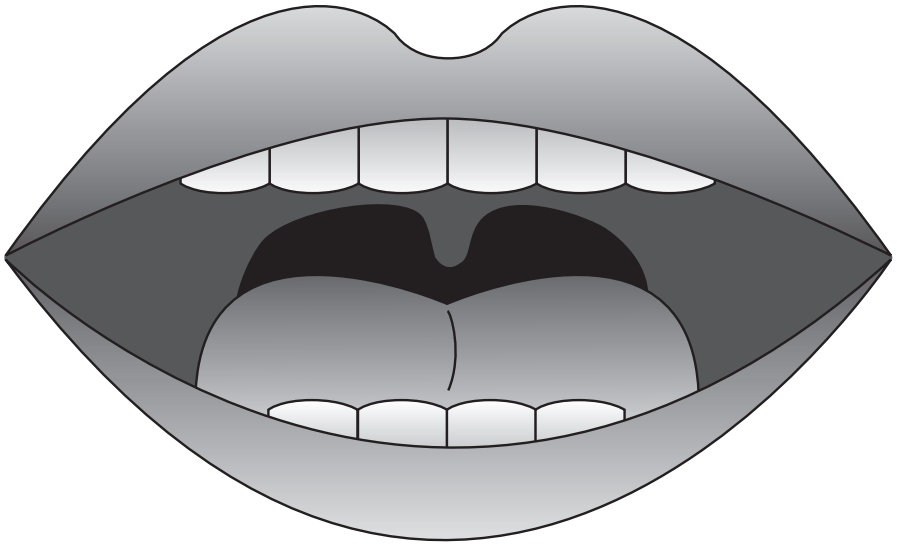
4. Have the various groups choose several poems to be read to the whole class. As you listen to them read, listen for things such as the number of words used from the list, use of sound devices, (alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, onomatopoeia), and how they made the "word" their own. Do the latter by showing, through example, what that word means to them *personally*, and then pointing out these things to the class.

5. Notice in the example poem on page 2:6 that Adrian used only two words from the "Detroit" list. However, he employed a rhyme scheme and also utilized personification to capture his feelings about the city. Suzy took only one word from her list to produce a sophisticated poem in which she used compression of statement for artistic effect.

Teaching tip →

Important: *Tell your students not to worry about using all these characteristics in any single poem they write. Doing so would be almost impossible. Encourage them instead to try using at least one or two. Doing so will make their poems more enjoyable for themselves and their readers.*

How many ways to say...



WHAT IS POETRY? - 1

Poetry is hard to define. Nearly every poet you ask will give you a different definition. The best way to learn about poetry is to read lots of poetry. But how can you distinguish poetry from other forms of writing?

You can see the ways in which poetry is different by looking at the specific characteristics of poetry. One thing that makes poetry different from all other forms of writing is that, in poetry, the length of the line is part of the art form. When you look at a poem on the page, you will notice that there are *lines,* not *paragraphs* as there are in a story. The length of a line in a poem can influence the poem's meaning, tone, and rhythmical pattern.

Poetry also uses many of the following devices more than other kinds of writing:

Five sound devices

1 **Rhyme—**Matching final sounds.

The brown, shaggy d**og**
jumped over the l**og**

2 **Alliteration—**Matching beginning consonants.

Sally, the **s**exy **s**nake **s**lithers
at the **s**esquicentennial

WHAT IS POETRY? - 2

3 **Assonance—**Matching vowel sounds within words.

He feels g**oo**d
when he carves w**oo**d

4 **Consonance—**Matching consonantal sounds within words.

The sea**l** swa**ll**owed she**ll**fish
with re**l**ish

5 **Onomatopoeia—**The word sounds like what it is describing.

The bee **buzzes** in the roses

Finding sound devices

How many sound devices can you find in this poem?

Play a lick on a candy cane clarinet.

Beat on a gum drop drum.

Toot-a-loot on a lemonade flute.

Make that fudgey french horn hum.

Sing a note low on an orange oboe.

Synchronize with a spun sugar saxophone.

Bellow a butterscotch base tone,

And when you're done,

Just for fun,

We'll eat the candy land band.

—Pamela Ditchoff

Varnack and Lolly

Introduction

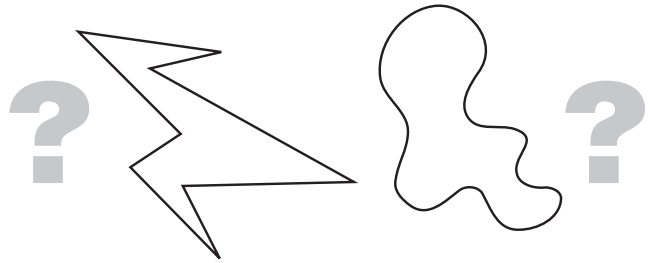
1. Duplicate the following student page:
   - VARNACK AND LOLLY

2. In the first exercise, HOW MANY WAYS TO SAY?, your students wrote a poem based on words associated with other words. This second exercise helps students understand that the English language is a language of association.

3. We all make certain assumptions about people, places, and objects, based on our associations with other people, places, and things. This is especially true of gifted and creative students who can quickly make valid generalizations about the world around them. They also tend to look for similarities and differences in people, places, and objects.

Structuring the exercise

1. Give each student the VARNACK AND LOLLY page you have duplicated for them. Underneath the title are the following two shapes:



Teaching tip

In each instance, have students raise their hands to indicate choice between Varnack and Lolly.

2. Ask your students to look at these shapes, and then ask them these questions:
   - If each shape had a name, which one would be *Varnack,* and which one would be *Lolly?*
   - Which one would be pale blue? Which one dark red?
   - Which one would be perfume? Which one ammonia?
   - Which one would be a peach? Which one a grapefruit?
   - Now listen to the shapes. Which one would be a trumpet? Which one a flute?

3. You will find that the majority of your students give the same answers for each question. After they have given their answers, tell them that 19 out of 20 people will give identical answers to these questions.

4. You may want to ask your students to guess why this happens.

5. Tell them the reason for persons giving similar answers is because human beings use a language of association. We associate certain shapes, colors, sounds, smells, tastes, people, animals, almost everything, with other things.

Teaching tip

*Write these **bold ink** directions on the chalkboard or whiteboard.*

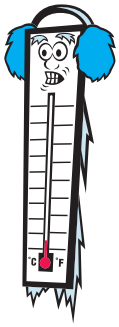
6. Now you are ready to ask your students to write a Lolly and Varnack poem. Ask students to include the following in their poems: **Lolly and Varnack** ... **a season or month** ... **a place** ... **a color**.

7. Just prior to having them write their poems, you will likely wish to read aloud some samples of my students' poems. After reading them, refrain from commenting on them or asking students to evaluate them.

8. I recommend that you do not impose a time limit on writing this poem. Students will most likely finish in 15 minutes or less.

Examples of the exercise

(seasons ... times of year ... places ... colors ...)



... the terrible cold month of January ...

Lolly is spring,
a time to run and play.
Lolly is an island deserted and cool.
Lolly is blue, the color of an imaginary breeze.

Varnack is loud and angry,
the terrible cold month of January,
piercing cold, clear as ice.
Varnack is a corner where you sit and sulk.
—Carmen (5th grade)

Lolly is where green trees grow.
You can find her in June.
Lolly grows on summer days
when orchards are in bloom.

Varnack is sharp, brassy tones.
When north winds blow in
December, he is all around.
Varnack knows where blue
feelings grow, you see him
all around. He goes where sadness

grows on trees all around.
You can see him in the moonlight
on a stormy night.
—Candace (5th grade)

In July Lolly's eyes are like
the blue Pacific Ocean.
Varnack's brown hair is like
being in the Rocky Mountains in August.
—Jason (4th grade)

Lolly—light blue April
country road.
Varnack—bright yellow
December highway.
—Anna (4th grade)

The great wondering sea smiled
like Lolly in the windy month of March
as the sun set in the west making pink clouds.
—Mike (5th grade)

Evaluating the exercise

1. After students have completed their first Lolly and Varnack poems, I suggest that you collect them and read them to the class. With the first portion of this exercise I usually choose not to read the poems' titles or authors. Of course, sometimes, a voice will pipe up, "This one's mine."

2. Ask your students if they heard any similarities between the poems. It may be difficult for them to remember each poem, depending on the size of your class. In this case, and/or after your students have offered their observations, point out similarities/differences you have found.

3. You may wish to comment on some of my students' poems. Notice that Lolly's season was often spring, her color blue. Varnack, on the other hand, was either cold winter months or hot summer months, and his colors were associated with those seasons. Places often reflected students' perceptions of the shapes' personalities. **Lolly:** a cool, deserted island, the blue Pacific Ocean, the great wondering sea, and a light blue April country road. **Varnack** is a corner where you sit and sulk, the Rocky Mountains, a bright December highway, and he goes "where blue feelings grow."

> "... where blue feelings grow ..."

4. Next ask your students to write a second Lolly or Varnack poem. This time say, "When you write your second poem about either Lolly or Varnack, I'd like you to make the poem yours. You say exactly what you want to say."

Teaching Tip

When students' poems are read aloud, I write LOLLY and VARNACK columns on the chalkboard. Under each I write responses such as seasons, places, months, and colors. Thus, students can compare ...

5. Look at the example poems below. My students tend to incorporate at least one of the devices, (color, season, place) into their poems. Often, there is a new twist, such as Sara's example where Varnack speaks directly to the reader, and Anita's example where Lolly serves as title only, personifying the autumn season. If appropriate, read some samples of my students' Lolly or Varnack poems.

- **Example poems**

Varnack
I love race tracks.
I love the noise,
All the booms, cracks, and bangs.
All of the boys ride red, black, and yellow cars
toward the middle of July.
—Sara (4th grade)

Teaching Tip

*Say something such as this to your students: "Imagine that you are either **Lolly** or **Varnack**. How would you see, feel, hear, speak if you were this person? Look closely at the two shapes. Imagine yourself as one of these shapes ..."*

Lolly
Leaves gracefully waltz to the ground
In dresses of red, brown, and orange.
The leaves scamper across the ground,
Flowing in the current of the wind.
As the wind dies, the leaves become tired,
Rest upon the hardening ground,
Dreaming of the days
They had to tolerate captivity,
Hooked onto their home,
Not free to frolic and run.
—Anita (5th grade)

Lolly
A pink liquid slithered down the hall,
Climbing into lockers,
Sliming books and boots, hats and mittens.
—Kumud (6th grade)

Teaching Tip

If your students' poems start to have some popular slang popping from the mouth of Lolly or Varnack, slang that you feel lessens students' uniqueness of expression, encourage them to try out other words or phrases so that they invent something new.

Varnack
A blue flash of lightning out
short from its source and
flashes too bright to be seen clearly.
Nasty to a human or a tree.
Sour as lemon juice and sharp as a pin.
Zonking us out.
Flying slothily through the air.
ZZZzzzzz gone out!
—Tara (7th grade)

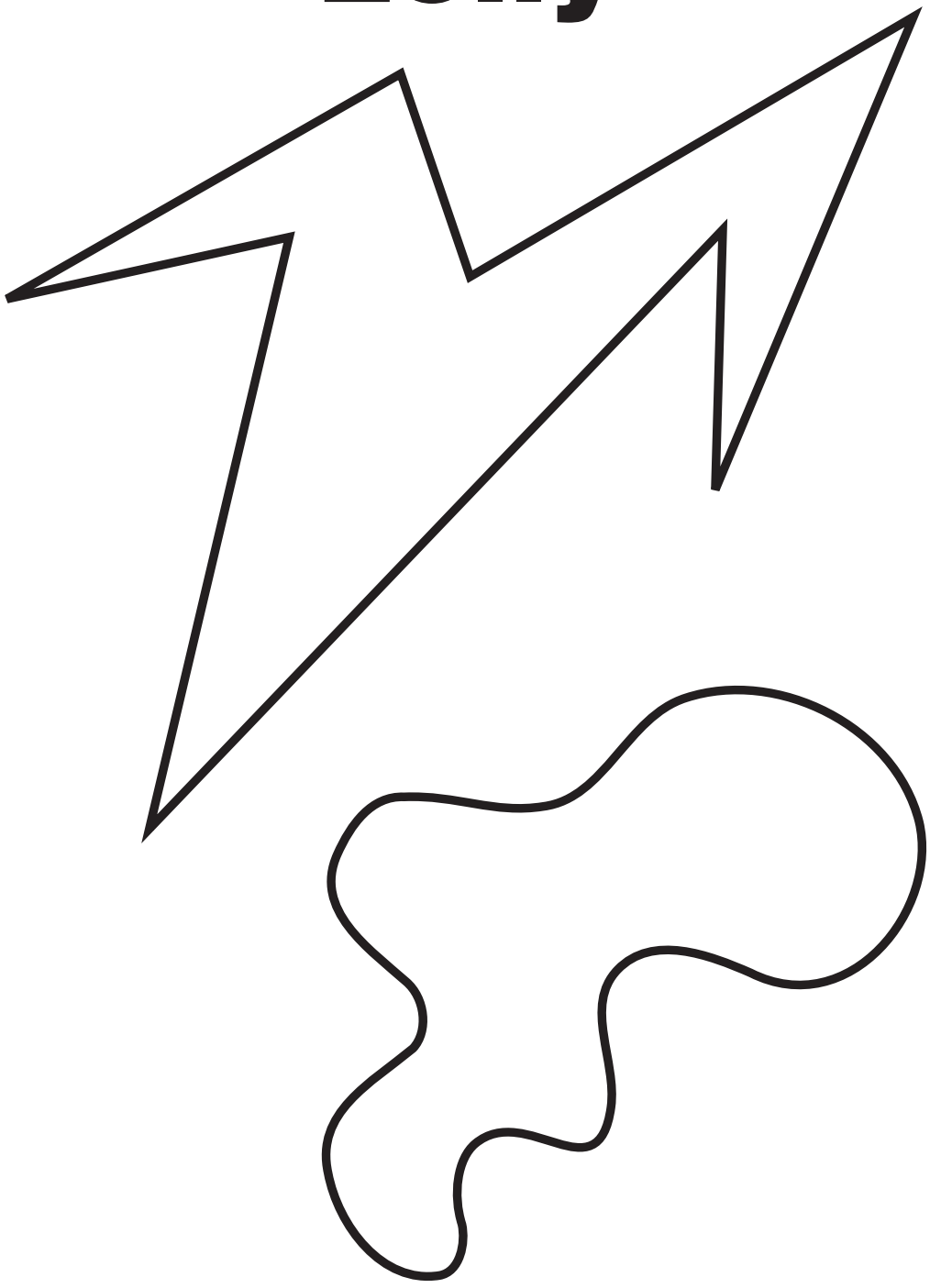
6. Once your students have completed their poems, place students in their cooperative learning groups. Write these directions on the chalkboard or whiteboard:

- Each group member reads his/her poem aloud.
- Say something positive about each poem.
- Look for similar ways that group members have described Lolly and Varnack.
- Write down similarities on two lists, a **Lolly** list and a **Varnack** list.
- Place these two lists on the whiteboard.

7. Give your groups time to complete their discussion (#6 above) and then to put their two lists on the chalkboard or whiteboard.

8. Have representatives of the various groups explain their chalkboard lists. Encourage them to read several samples of group members' poems to the whole class. Students really enjoy hearing what their classmates have written about their own Lolly or Varnack.

Varnack and Lolly



Animal Alliteration/Alphabet Zoo
Simile and Metaphor

Introduction

1. Duplicate these student pages:
   - ANIMAL ALLITERATION/ALPHABET ZOO
   - SIMILE AND METAPHOR

2. In this lesson you will help your students learn to differentiate **abstract** and **concrete words.**

Structuring the exercise

Teaching tip

Lesson 3 has several significant parts and will likely take considerably more time than one usual class "period."

1. Give each student the ANIMAL ALLITERATION/ALPHABET ZOO page. Then read the SIMILE AND METAPHOR page aloud as your students read along with you.

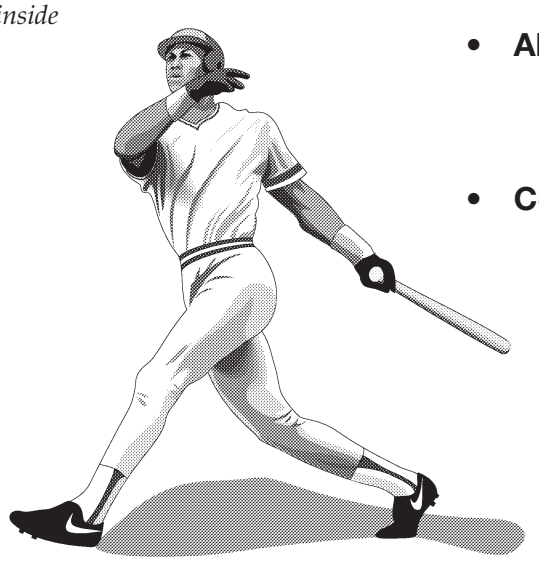
2. To reinforce the difference between simile and metaphor, go to the chalkboard and write down several other examples students give you.

3. When you go over the difference between **abstract** and **concrete words,** once again have students give several examples you can place in lists on the chalkboard.

Teaching tip

Consider having your students compare lists such as this one either by themselves or as a study pair or inside a group.

4. Lead your students to understand how abstract words enliven conversation and clarify expression. For example, if you ask them to give concrete examples of what the phrase *good athlete* means, they will likely mention concrete actions. In such a case you might write as follows:



- **Abstract idea**

  good athlete

- **Concrete words**

  runs fast
  jumps high
  has strong **legs**
  can do 50 **push-ups**
  hits a softball to the fence

5. Now you are ready to begin the ALPHABET ZOO exercise in which students begin with **A** and end with **Z**.

6. Here is your opportunity to have students use **alliteration**. Of course, this term may still sound foreboding to some students. However, this exercise not only puts alliteration into action, but it also is an exercise the students will really enjoy.

7. Begin by writing "**A**n **a**ngry **a**nt **a**te **a**pples" on the whiteboard or chalkboard as an example. Point out the alliteration (the **bold ink** letters). Ask students to make their zoo in *list* form.

Teaching Tip

Give them some help (not too much!) by writing the names of many animals on the chalkboard.

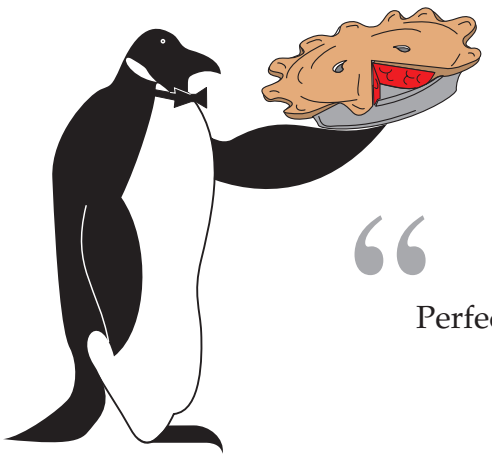
Encourage them to use classroom dictionaries. Having a classroom set really would contribute to this exercise.

Consider gathering many posters and other pictures of animal—playful and serious—prior to doing this exercise. Put them on bulletin boards to stimulate your students when they write their ALPHABET ZOO lists and their animal poems.

Examples of the exercise

Agricultural ants are away
Beautiful barracudas believe bears
Cute cats cut cans
Dead dogs don't use dyes
Exotic elephants eat electric eels
Fish find frogs from faraway
Gross groundhogs grind gorillas
Hippos hate having hats
Icky insects infect eyes
Jumpy jaguars generate germs
Kourageous kangaroos crush kings
Lazy lions leave lunch late
Monkeys make manufactured moms
Naughty nightingales know nothing
Octopuses on oars like oceans
Perfect penguins prefer pie
Quiet quails are queens
Rowdy raccoons race on roads
Slimy snakes sleep
Terrified turtles take turns turning wheels
Unimaginable unicorns eat uncut food
Vicious vampire bats
Winning walruses
Yodeling yaks
Zingy zebras

—Melissa (4th grade)

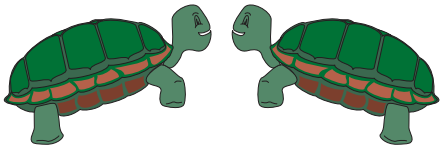


"Perfect penguins prefer pie ..."

"Elephants from Europe eat everything."

An acting ant argued awfully
Ban babbling baboons
Crackling crows cut crepe paper clowns
Dingy dolphins dive downward
Elephants from Europe eat everything
Four frogs fantasize feelings
Grasshoppers gallop gallantly
Hoarse horses hog hay hungrily
Itsy iguanas idolize insects
Jingling jackrabbits jive
Keep koalas away from kingdoms
Loving lions linger
Mingling monkeys march miraculously
New newts are nice
Orange octopuses
Perfect penguins predict precipitation
Quaint quails call
Rookie roosters recognize
Sly salmon sneak
Tiny turtles tango
Unicorns usually use umbrellas

—Lesley (5th grade)



"Tiny turtles tango."

Andy the aardvark angrily answered
Bounding bouncing blundering bunnies
Crooked crocodiles calmly caused crime
Dear deer dance divinely
Freddy the fat fancy fish fins fast
Geraldine the great green giraffe gracefully glides
Horace the horrible hippopotamus hates honeybees
Ingrid ibees and ickles
Jumping jungle rats
Kandi the krazy kat kipples
Laura the llama loves
Mari the merry monkey mingles mindlessly
Nirobe newt never neckles
Obey otter obles and ockles on the oboe
Peppy penguin pounces prettily

—Debby (7th grade)

8. To extend this exercise, ask each student to choose one animal on his/her list and then write an animal poem using as much alliteration as possible.

9. Consider reading this example of one of my students' work in order to stimulate your students' creativity. This example, written during Michigan's sesquicentennial year, shows a gifted student's poetic playfulness.

"She slithers secretly ..."

Sally the sexy snake slithers
    at the sesquicentennial selebration.
She is wearing socks, slippers,
    and a slicky slicker.
She slithers secretly,
Sometimes seasing sightseers
    into sneaking some Skittles.
Sexy snakes were suspiciously suspected.
Sally the sexy snake is very sophisticated.
    —Stephanie (6th grade)

Evaluating the exercise

1. Form groups and have students read their poems aloud to one another. Be prepared for giggles.

"Brutus, the bashful bear, blushes beautifully."

2. Circulate around the room and listen to what is happening. You will find in your student's work an amazing playfulness. Some of your students will likely demonstrate a lively, advanced vocabulary for their age and grade level. You will find certain of your students' verbal language characterized by a richness of expression, elaboration, and fluency that will surprise you.

3. My students demonstrated sophisticated humor while writing lines such as these:

   - "Dead dogs don't use dyes" ...
   - "Four frogs fantasize feelings" ... and
   - "Crooked crocodiles calmly caused crime."

   And I could nearly picture the turtles in this one:

   - "Terrified turtles take turns turning wheels."

   And three more visual impressions:

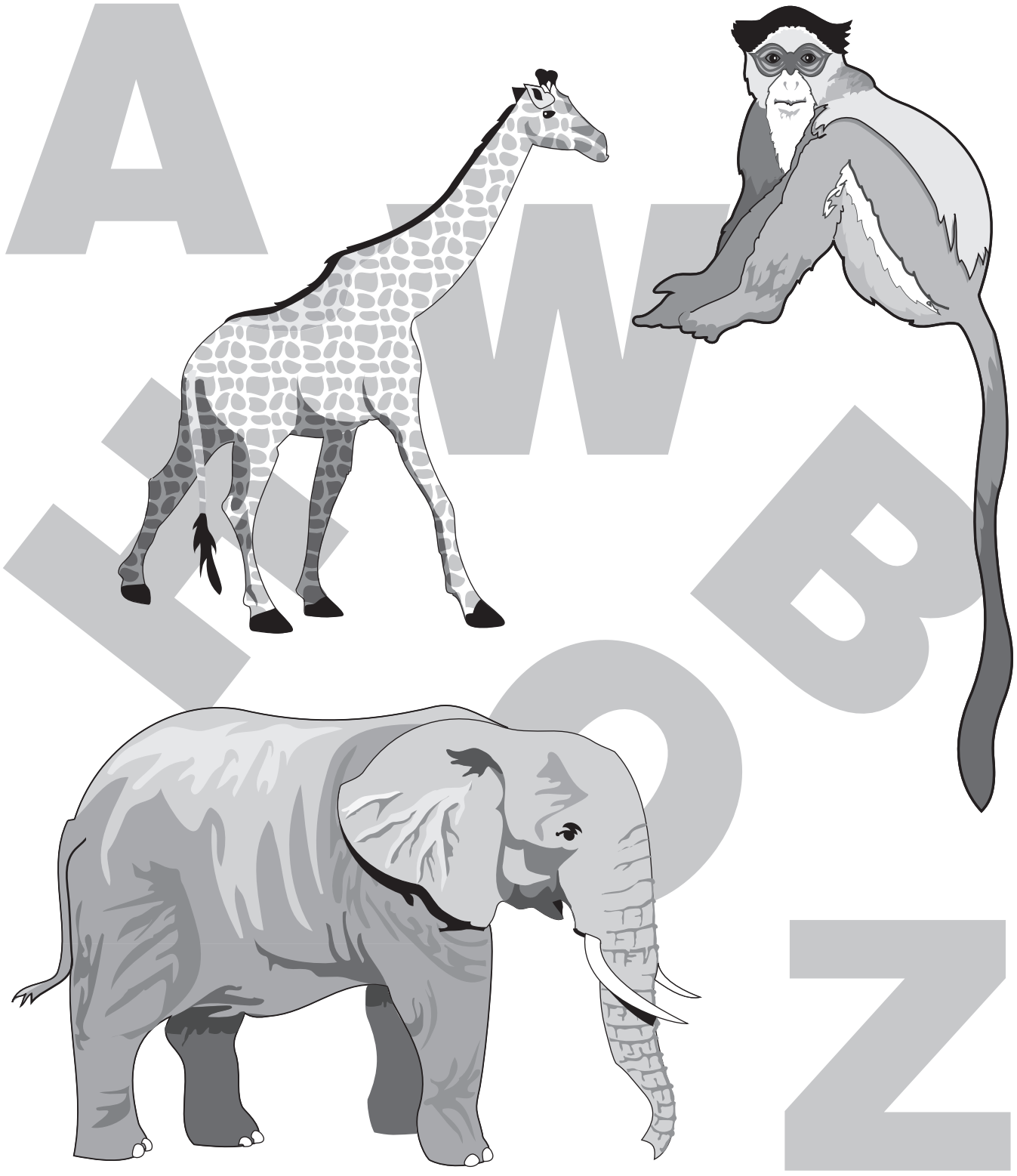
   - "Rowdy raccoons race on roads" ...
   - "Cackling crows cut crepe paper clowns" ... and
   - "Perfect penguins predict precipitation."

4. Encourage each group to select poems (or *portions* of poems if you are short of time) to read to the class. *Work to insure that all your students' work is being shared with the whole class.*

Teaching Tip

Sharing poems is a natural outgrowth of the creative process. Having students read their poetry to classmates helps enhance self-image.

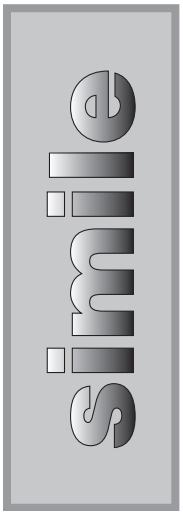
Animal Alliteration



ALPHABET ZOO

Simile

A simile is a figure of speech in which one item is compared with another which is different in all but a few significant respects.



You are speaking or writing a simile when you use either the word **"like"** or **"as."** Here are two similes:

He played **like** a puppy.

He's as playful **as** a puppy.

While the above statements suggest that the boy has a fun-loving nature, you realize they do not mean to suggest that he barks, whines, wags a tail, and uses paws and teeth to play. If you stop to think about it, you understand that the speaker or writer is also being playful by using similes.

Here are some more examples of similes:

The dress is as beautiful **as** a country meadow.

Grandmother's hair looks **like** clean snow.

Metaphor

A metaphor implies rather than states this same sort of comparison. As a result it becomes a statement which is literally untrue. But when the comparison is used successfully, it makes its own kind of sense. (A metaphor often becomes figuratively stronger than a simile.) Here is a metaphor:

When he played with his red ball, he was a **puppy.**

A person reading this statement does not take it literally because the reader recognizes it as a literary convention, a way of speaking which makes the comparison stronger and more real for the reader.

SIMILE AND METAPHOR - 2

Here are some more examples of metaphors:

She stood in the meadow, a **daffodil** in spring.

His heart is an **open book.**

The difference between abstract and concrete

A word that is **concrete** is one that makes a clear picture in anyone's mind.

A word that is **abstract** does not make a clear picture in anyone's mind.

For example, if you tell your teacher your grandmother is *beautiful, you* have used an **abstract word.** But wait a moment. Your teacher would be unable to clearly "see" in her mind's eye a picture of your grandmother's beauty because the word *beautiful is* **abstract.**

But what if you tell your teacher that your grandmother is beautiful because her **hair** is like **clean snow, her eyes** attract like **chocolate drops,** her **smile** is warm like **sunshine**? Your teacher would then see a clear picture because the **concrete words** *hair, clean, snow, eyes, chocolate drops, smile,* and *sunshine* all work together to make a clear picture.

When you are writing poetry, you must be careful about using abstract words. Usually try to avoid them while writing poetry unless you use a simile or a metaphor to help make the abstract words real—as you feel them—to your reader.

On the next page you will find abstract words. They can be made more effective while they are used in poetry if they are made more specific. Try to define these abstract words by getting help from **similes.**

SIMILE AND METAPHOR - 3

Bright as

Dark as

Tired as

Mean like

Loud as

Quiet like

Fragrant as

Odorous as

Soft like

Hard as

Hot as

Cold like

similes

metaphors

Using All Your Senses
Colors ... Scents

Introduction

1. Duplicate these student pages:
   - USING ALL YOUR SENSES
   - COLORS ... SCENTS

2. In this lesson you will help your students learn the importance of the five senses in appreciating their world and expressing this appreciation in their poems.

Structuring the exercise

1. To begin the lesson, you need to open up students' senses. I recommend that you bring into your classroom some fragrant items.

2. Choose objects small enough to conceal in your hands or place in a small paper bag. Ones I have used include:
   - nutmeg
   - almond extract
   - curry powder
   - peppermint oil
   - perfumes
   - bayberry
   - vanilla
   - incense

   (You want to stay away from items such as lemons or oranges, things that have strong color associations.)

Teaching Tip →

Of course, feel free to add other questions appropriate to your students' ages/abilities.

3. On the chalkboard write these two questions:
   - What color should each scent be?
   - Why do you feel this way?

4. Pass the objects around the room. (Assign a number to each item for easier reference.) Ask students *individually* to do two things: a) smell each item then write down what color they think each scent should be; and b) be ready to explain to their group why the scent should be that color.

5. Now have the groups form and choose a chairperson to lead the discussion. The chairperson should then choose a recorder to write down group members' reactions.

6. Next the groups hold a brief general discussion in which students share what they wrote down and why they feel as they do.

7. Next you lead a general discussion in which you ask different groups' recorders to tell the colors assigned to the various items. Encourage the recorders also to tell why their members assigned the colors they did to the various objects.

Teaching Tip →

Whenever I smell Smarties candy rolls, I think of riding my bicycle, along with my sister, a dime in my shoe, to buy a week's worth of penny candy at Ferguson's Store. What scent memory can you relate to your students?

8. Here is what you will likely find from this introductory activity. Children are generally limited in their color definitions. They tend to associate certain colors only with certain objects. This is one of the ways they learn vocabulary as toddlers: the sky is blue, the grass is green, the apple is red. The following exercise will help you break this pattern as you lead your students to fantasize about color and use their imagination.

9. Now hand out USING ALL YOUR SENSES. Read it aloud with your students, stopping wherever you wish to amplify the text with your own examples.

10. Give your students the COLORS ... SCENTS page. Ask them to choose one color, any color, and to list on the back of this page everything they can think of that is the same color *in 10 minutes.* (Giving them this much time provides them with the incentive to explore the color thoroughly.)

11. When time is up, ask them to use their color lists to write a color poem. To stimulate them, consider reading one sample color poem written by my students. Stress that their poems should communicate what each student thinks the color *feels like, sounds like, tastes* like, and *smells* like.

"Blue is beauty beyond the eye."

Examples of the exercise—color poems

Blue
Blue is the sky,
Lakes and waterfalls,
Blue is beauty beyond the eye,
Blue is much; this is not all.

Blue is cool,
But red is hot,
Blue is cold,
Red is not.

—Laura (4th grade)

“
...
stands
quietly
next
to
bossy
red
...
”

Orange
Orange is round, fat oranges.
Orange is carrots ready to eat.
Orange is streams of sunshine,
Orange, crazy hair running,
trying to break free from
their roots on the head,
is orange.
Orange is the little play fire engine
that a boy plays with.
Fuzzy peaches are orange.
At the front of the rainbow,
Orange stands quietly next to bossy red.
Orange is a neon light flashing
on and off, on and off, on and off ...
—Lesley (5th grade)

Violet
Rich and elegant
The soft cushions
in the Baltimore Castle
Grapes in a silver bowl
It’s my color.
—Carmen (5th grade)

“
...
makes
me
feel
cozy
and
sleepy
...
”

Pink
Pink makes me feel quiet and peaceful
Like the bright pink rose swaying in a gentle
breeze.

Pink makes me feel warm
Like when I have my pink jacket on.
Pink makes me feel cozy and sleepy
Like when I’m in my dark pink bed.
Pink makes me feel love,
Like when I’m holding my favorite pink bunny.
Pink makes me feel good
Like when I’m with all pink things I’m thankful for.
—Missy (5th grade)

Evaluating the exercise

Teaching Tip

Remember: *One thing to be concerned about is that the most popular or "poetic" students will consistently be chosen to read their work to the class. Insure that this does not happen by having different persons lead the groups during different lessons. These leaders could be told to insure that all students' work is read to the class at some time or other.*

1. After students have finished their color poems, have them join their groups and read their poems aloud. Encourage them to be positive in their reactions to one another's work.

2. Have the groups select some poems to be read to the whole class.

3. Conduct a general discussion of the students' poetic perceptions of color. (Numbers 4-7 below on my students' poems are examples of the kinds of observations you will likely make.)

4. Although most students will use some of the traditional definitions of color as in Laura's "Blue is the sky, Lakes and waterfalls," they will also incorporate the other senses that you have helped to open, as in Laura's second stanza, "Blue is cool, But red is hot."

5. You may find very specific uses from the lists as in Carmen's poem. This poem is a fine piece of visual poetry, almost like a photograph. In addition, she has given her color the abstract qualities of "rich and elegant."

6. Lesley's poem combines nearly all of the senses: the taste of round, fat oranges and carrots; the feel of fuzzy peaches; the sight of streams of sunshine. Lesley also makes her color more personal through personification: the orange sunlight dances on the floor, crazy orange hair runs, and orange stands quietly in the rainbow. Rhythms of free verse are also used in the form of repetition in the poem's closing line, "on and off, on and off, on and off..."

7. Although Missy did not use a combination of senses in her poem, she made her poem the most personal by telling the reader how pink makes her feel, using simile throughout.

8. Thus, while you and your students are commenting on other students' work on this exercise, you are all looking for combination of senses, unique interpretations of the color, and the writer's personal relationship to the color.

9. For the second half of this exercise, have your students write a scent poem, a task requiring about 15–20 minutes.

Teaching Tip →

You may think of other questions to ask your students.

10. Ask them to try to remember some particular smells that stick in their minds.
    - Can they remember where they were?
    - Can they remember whom they were with at the time?
    - Are the feelings associated with the smell of happy feelings, sad feelings, scary feelings, surprised feelings ... or?

11. You may wish to read *one* of my students' sample poems below as an example.

Examples of the exercise—scent poems

I went to the dentist,
It smelled like soft, soft, light red.
—Sara (4th grade)

The rose has a wonderful pink smell.
As it collided with the dinner
That filtered through the aired room,
Both became one,
And it was the greatest smell in the world.
—Mike (5th grade)

"... the smell of salt ..."

Turquoise is the smell of oceans.
Salty oceans.
The whipping wind smacks me.
It brought the smell of salt.
It was time to visit summer again.
Few days by the ocean I spent.
I felt as though I was in the midst
Of a great concert.
The wind and the water were hard and soft.
I wished I was free from relatives' control.
—Candace (5th grade)

"
...
an
old
carousel
...
"

At Lake Lansing's carousel on May 4, 1987,
My dad and I smelled a cool blue smell.
It was an old carousel.
—Jason (4th grade)

As I was walking through the forest,
I sat upon its soft needles.
Deep and rich it smelled.
I got the scent of pine.
It smelled green dark, dark green.
The smell crept and curled in my nose,
Forcing its way in,
Dark dark green.
—Carmen (5th grade)

"
... soft like
velvet
or fur ...
"

It smelled of my Grandma's cookies.
Her cinnamon cookies,
That's right. It was sweet.
A light blue, pink, or yellow.
It was soft like velvet or fur.
It had rounded edges like a circle,
And it was very kind.
—Marcie (5th grade)

12. After students have finished their scent poems, have them once again join their groups and read their poems aloud. Encourage them to be positive in their reactions to one another's work.

13. Have the groups select some poems to be read to the class.

Teaching tip →

Make certain that students get to hear all their classmates' work read aloud occasionally.

Such reading not only enhances self-image; it also provides an opportunity for you to help students learn to read aloud dramatically—and with feeling.

14. Conduct a general discussion of the students' poetic perceptions of scent. (In number 15 below you will find my observations on my students' poems. You and your students will likely make such comments about the poems shared in your class.)

15. Notice that students combined color with their scents. They also took the next poetic step—they identified the scent with a particular experience: Sara's poem associates going to the dentist with soft, soft red; Jason's poem associates a trip to a carousel at a lakeside park with cool blue. Finally, see how many different thoughts Candace associated with the color turquoise.

Teaching Tip

If you encourage your students to write about dramatic moments in their lives, they will surprise both you and their classmates with the power of their imagery.

16. Remind your students that effective poems' concrete language makes readers feel/experience, as exactly as possible, what the writer was feeling/experiencing.

"

I remember the sadly sweet scent
of my Uncle Ted's after shave lotion.

He hugged me goodbye on his
last trip to the hospital.

He died three weeks later.

The smell comes back to me
whenever I stop in our front
yard where he held me.

"


SCENT
SCENT
SCENT
SCENT
SCENT

USING ALL YOUR SENSES - 1

We make contact with the world in five specific ways:

- seeing
- hearing
- touching
- tasting, and
- smelling

Poets probably use these five senses more than most people. They are very *alive* to the world around them.

Sight

Here is the most frequently used sense in poetry. People who write stories often look for events that happen in a sequence or pattern.

Poets most often start with a fragment, a vision, an impression. Like photographers, poets are always looking for visual impressions that make people feel strongly about something.

The poet doesn't simply describe an object. The poet picks an image or impression because he or she *feels* something about that object. It possesses certain qualities, feelings, or associations which the poet then develops in writing.

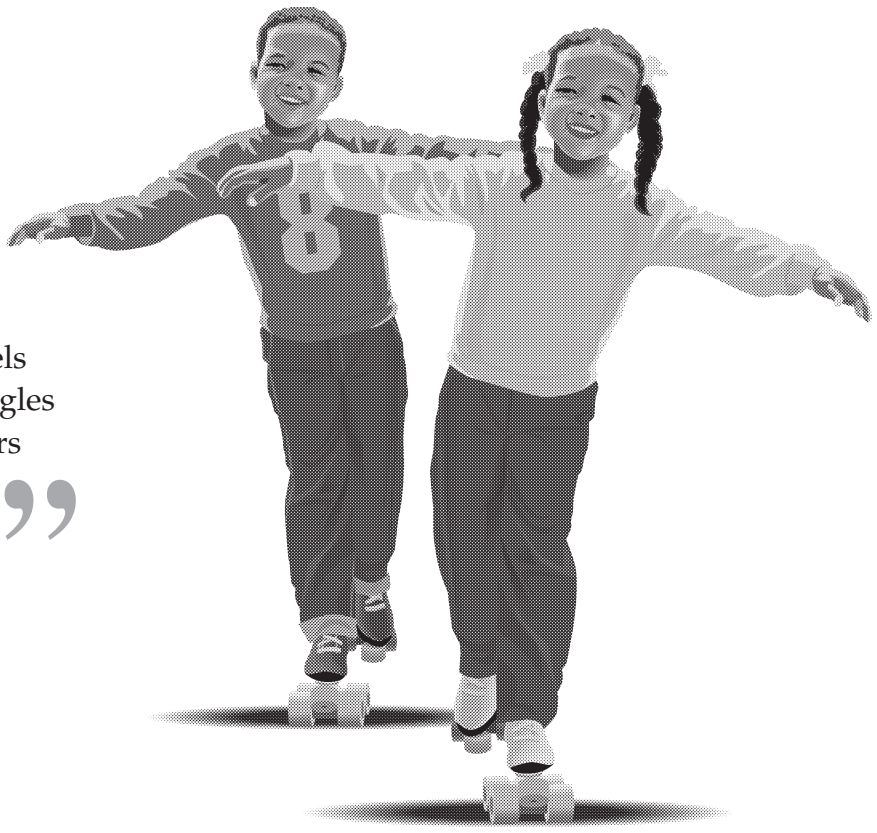
"My brother's love flowed
fingers into fingers ..."

USING ALL YOUR SENSES - 2

Sounds

You have also noticed that poetry has marvelous sounds. When you use sound in poetry, you must be specific. Referring to the "roar in the halls" won't do. "Roar" remains too abstract. What exact sounds are there? The poet focuses his/her attention, hearing the following:

- lockers being opened, closed, slammed ...
- books being dropped ...
- teachers shouting, "Be quiet!" ...
- students laughing, yelling, talking, walking, running, skateboarding ...



"Whirling, whining wheels
blend with bubbling giggles
as two earthbound rollers
RURRRRusshhhh by ..."

Touch, smell, and taste

These final three senses are not used as often as sight and sound, but they can greatly enhance the effectiveness of poetry. Try your best to bring one or more of these senses into the poetry you write.

Sounds

Introduction

1. Duplicate one student page:
   - SOUNDS

2. In this lesson you will help your students appreciate the wonder of sound and how it can help them write more powerful poetry.

3. Listening to music can produce some wonderfully creative results. You should select a recording whose unique sounds will really capture your students' attention.

4. I use Paul Winter's *Common Ground*. This album includes three songs which feature the cries of the humpback whale, the wolf, and the sea eagle. I strongly recommend this album. If you cannot locate it, I suggest something else that is out of the ordinary.

5. Many teachers have their students write while surrounded by symphonic recordings as musical wallpaper. Although there are certainly many lovely symphonic albums, your results will probably be more creative if you use unique recordings.

"
...
Paul
Winter's
Common Ground
...

cries of the
humpback whale
...
"

Structuring the exercise

1. Tell your students that for this exercise, while they are listening to some music they will be expected first to write down some thoughts and feelings. Then you want them to use this first writing to help them write a poem. Explain that the recording will be playing all the time they are writing.

2. Give your students the SOUNDS handout and ask them to write on the back of the sheet some feelings and thoughts they have while the recording is playing. Place prompts such as the following on your chalkboard:
   - How does the music make you feel?
   - Do you think of another place?
   - Do you think of another time?
   - Do you think of another person?
   - What weather does the music suggest?

Teaching tip

Of course, if you use a recording of animal sounds, you might ask: "How does the animal feel?" "What would it be like to live in the oceans? in the mountains? in the trees or sky?"

3. Play the recording and have students do some pre-writing while listening and looking at the chalkboard prompts. If you are using a colorful or appropriate album, you might want to pass the album jacket among your students.

4. Now tell them to go ahead and write their poems. If you sense they are having problems, you may want to give them a few examples of how the recording is affecting you. (Other students will then likely offer examples, too.) Of course, you may also want to read one of my students' poems immediately below in order to stimulate them.

Examples of the exercise

It sounds like somebody
trapped outside myths of winter.
The wolf feels soft, soothing, gentle,
but it's rough, harsh, and strong.
—Jon (4th grade)

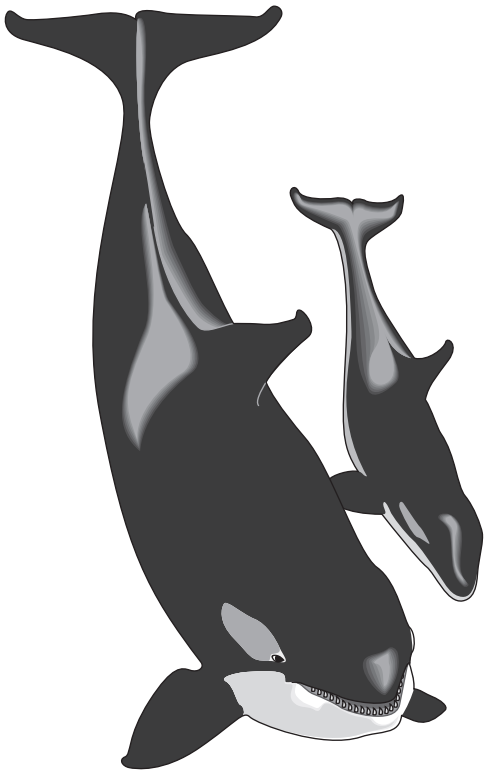
"The wolf

cries lonely
in the night ..."

The wolf cries lonely in the night,
His sorrow deep and sad,
Though the sight of him may be a fright,
he is not all that bad.
The wolf is panting,
There is nowhere to go,
Just to lay by a gate,
Because there's no space anywhere else,
Because humans are his fate.
—Laura (4th grade)

Sea Eagle

Wind, wind, wind, fly freely wind,
Leave wind leave me here alone,
I am alone now,
I am free from the wind,
I can do anything, anything alone by myself.
Lonely, lonely,
Come back wind,
Come, come freely.
—Candace (5th grade)



“
...
a sound
flowing with
joy and
mystery
...
”

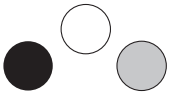
Flying high the sound of the wolves
Reaches upward into the sky,
Spreading its wings woven out of sound.
Cries of deep mystery dissolving for eternity,
Repeating itself throughout thousands
of its senders.
So similar yet different sounds
of strange howling spread,
Sending a spray of invisible colors so beautiful,
Flying high as sound erupts and escapes.
—Anita (5th grade)

Whales Cry

empty, lonely sounds
Humans could never make
The flowing sounds of a violin
a sound filled with agony
a sound flowing with joy
and mystery combined
a call longing for return
a howl of emptiness
longing for hope but useless
full of memories
an echoing sound that
reaches all animals small and large
The beating rhythms of waves
a call of helplessness
that echoes with no sound
but silence in return
something falling, falling
to a nearby beating and
a sudden death
The whales cry rings on forever
—Tara (7th grade)

"

...
possibly
form



trios
...

"

"

Their concern
for ecology and

preservation of
endangered
species becomes
evident here.

"

Evaluating the exercise

1. Consider varying your cooperative learning group size for students' SOUND poems. For example, possibly form trios (three students each). Tell students that after one student has read his/her poem, the other two listeners should comment on what the poem says and how it makes them feel.

2. Before they begin, however, point out to the trios that because of the emotional nature of this exercise, it may be difficult to talk about one another's poems.

3. At this moment you might demonstrate how they could talk about one another's poems. Your demonstration could consist of your reading one of my student's poems above and then, with their help, commenting on it. Such comments might cover certain characteristics of poetry such as these:
   - the use of alliteration in Jon's poem (the "s" sound);
   - the rhythms of free verse in Candace's poem as well as the repetition which gives an impression of flight;
   - the exquisite use of metaphor in Anita's poem: "...wings woven out of sound" ... and combined with alliteration in "**S**o **s**imilar yet different **s**ounds of **s**trange howling **s**pread, **s**ending a **s**pray of invisible colors."

4. One characteristic of your more sensitive students at this age is that they are becoming concerned with many adult issues. Their concern for ecology and preservation of endangered species becomes evident here.

5. As before, have the trios decide which poems to share with the whole class. Expect some unique poetry from this exercise.

SOUNDS

LESSON 6 - 1

Shell ... Music Box ... Kaleidoscope

Introduction

1. Duplicate one student page:
   - SHELL ... MUSIC BOX ... KALEIDOSCOPE

2. In the two previous exercises, your students explored different dimensions of color and scents and sounds in relation to poetry. In this exercise they will concentrate first on the visual aspects of an object. Finally, they will imaginatively combine these aspects within an original poem.

Teaching tip →

It is important to follow this exercise's sequence step by step.

Structuring the exercise

1. First, bring into the classroom the following:
   - a variety of shells (Try for a minimum of one or two large, interesting ones.)
   - a music box (Any variety will do ... I have one with a small crank on the side.)
   - a kaleidoscope (You can find inexpensive, cardboard varieties in dime stores or gift shops.)

Passing tangible objects around the room will stimulate your students. Feel free to use other interesting objects you have at home. In addition to these three, I have used a crystal, a string of bells, a multicolored glass egg.

2. Allow the students a few moments to examine the objects. Explain that they will be writing about these objects. Tell them, however, that they do not have to write on these particular objects. If they own or remember a particular shell, music box, or kaleidoscope, they may describe that object from memory. (I have tried both approaches, but find I receive better results if students get to handle objects I have brought into the classroom.)

3. Hand out the SHELL ... MUSIC BOX ... KALEIDOSCOPE page as a cover sheet for this exercise. See that they have two or more sheets of paper for the writing they are to do today.

4. Explain that they have only 10 minutes to write a description of what one object ("their object") looks like. They are to begin with the word: "Outside..."

5. After the students write about the outside, ask them to put themselves *into* the object as they write for 10 minutes on what the object looks like. They are to begin with the word: "Inside..."

6. After this 10 minutes, they are now prepared to move out of literal description into personal writing. *Make certain there is no discussion between stages.*

7. Next ask your students to begin with the words: "If I sleep with my *(object)* under my pillow I will dream ..." Allow the same 10-minute time limit.

8. By now, your students should be very involved in their subject and should feel a possessiveness toward what they have created. Now ask your students to give their object away. They are to begin with the words: "If I give my *(object)* to you ..." Again, allow only 10 minutes.

9. Finally, you will discover your students' emotional reactions to having given away their object. Have them write the final section beginning with these words: "Without my (object) ..." Again allow only 10 minutes.

Examples of the exercise

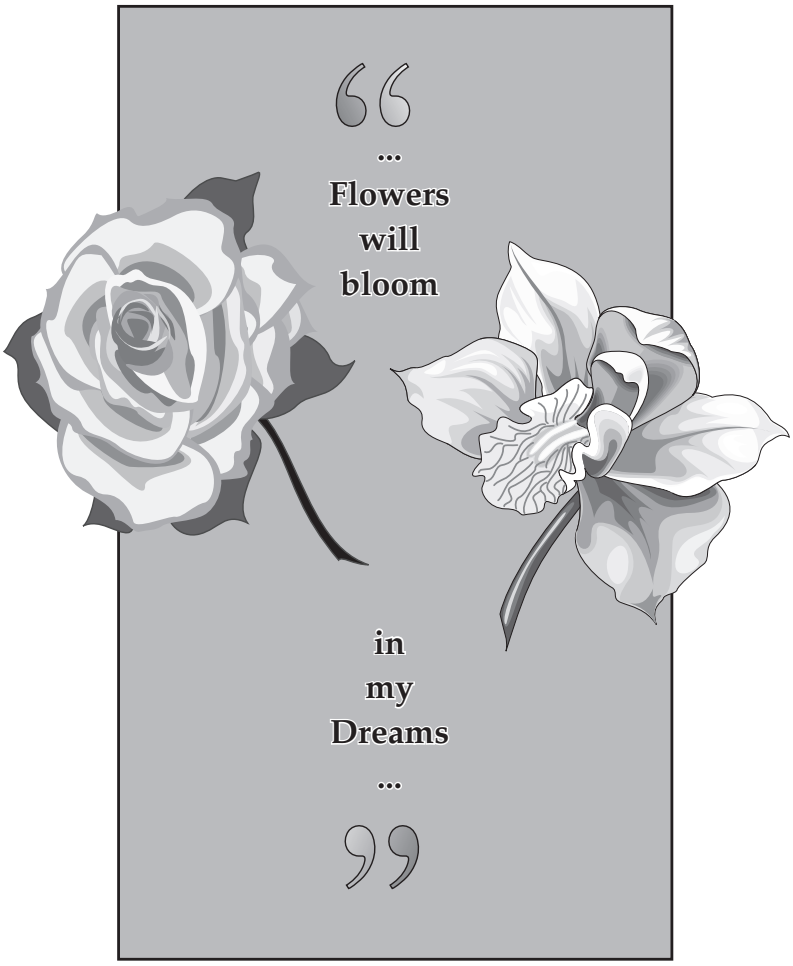
Here is a student named Sarah's first and second writings:

Outside on a kaleidoscope, clowns in brightly colored costumes dance joyfully. A scattering of stars all over it helps you imagine your dreams.

Funny purple dogs in hats dance around with green rabbits and yellow bears. Brightly colored designs are hidden among the stars while the word KALEIDOSCOPE in children's writing is printed on it.

Inside, a small shaft of light falls through the hole at the top. Brightly colored pieces of plastic bloom when people turn it, forming flowers or whatever your imagination holds in store for you.

Sarah's actual poem is on page 7:3.



If I sleep with
My kaleidoscope
Under my pillow
Flowers will
bloom in my
Dreams,
Shining,
Glittering,
Catching the light
Really the sun light
Shining through my window.

If I give you my
kaleidoscope,
my precious dreams
will be gone.

Those little bits
are precious,
each holding
a part of me,
each holding a dream.

Without my
kaleidoscope
I would be lost.
Those little bits
of color
holding
magic,
A special
magic that
will leave
suddenly,
fluttering away.

—Sarah (5th grade)

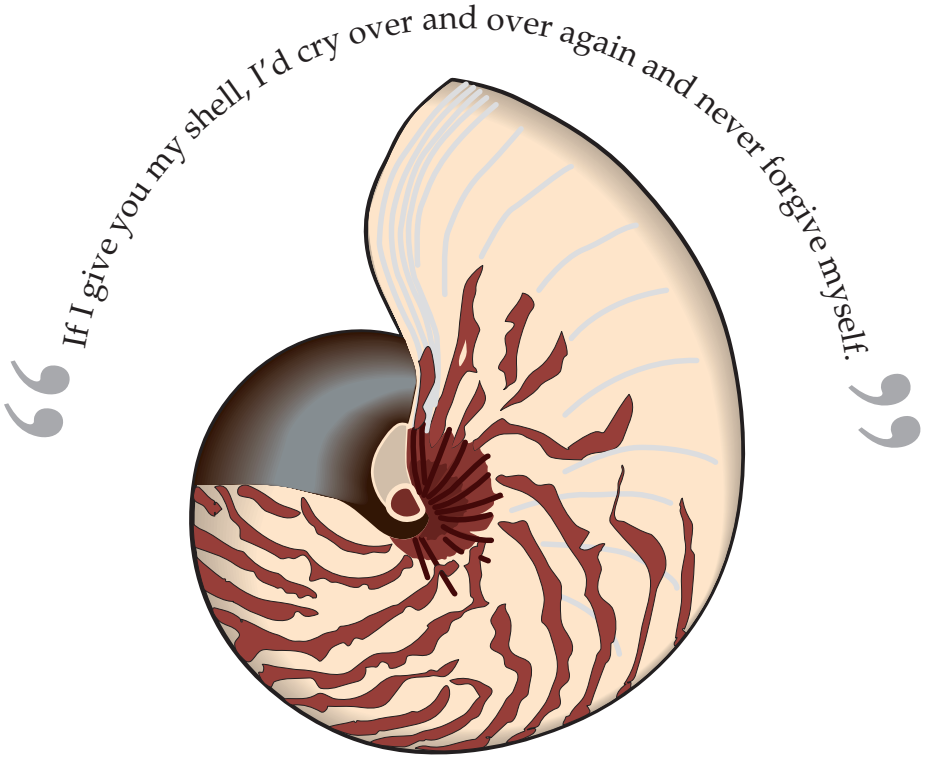
Outside the shell
waves roll
gently with the warm breezes
while it ripples in whiteness,
opening,
closing,
ever beautiful.

Inside, I see outside
then inside again
open,
shut,
bored!

With a shell under my pillow
I'd scream in pain
because of the scratch
of the lion's paw

If I give you my shell,
I'd cry over and over
and never forgive myself.
My shell was covered in whiteness
and filled with black and red.

—Candace (5th grade)



Evaluating the exercise

1. Form groups and direct students' attention to questions such as these, which you have written on the chalkboard or whiteboard:

> - **"Could you feel what it was like to be inside a (the object) while hearing (student) read?"**
> - **"What particular words or phrases caught your attention in your classmate's writing. Why?"**

Teaching tip →

Expect some interesting comments. Students love writing these poems. Group members will likely be eager to share them among one another and with the rest of their classmates.

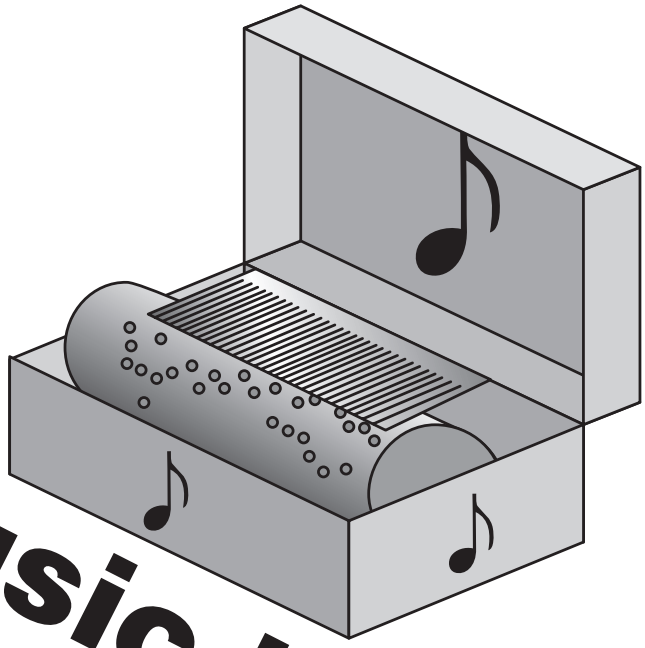
2. Have the groups listen to one another's series of poems. Encourage them to comment on their peers' work.

3. Ask the groups to have members stand and read their series to the class. After each item is read, have a general discussion on the questions you placed on the chalkboard.

4. I believe you will find very precise definitions on the "Outside," and perhaps the "Inside" also. Many students this age are sensitive to beauty and attend to aesthetic characteristics of objects. In addition, they enjoy discovering the *how* and *why* of things, trying to understand material by separating it into its respective parts.

5. Here are some comments on my student Sarah's poem. Possibly they will help you in leading a discussion of your own students' words.
   - In Sarah's poem, notice the thorough description of the outside. After describing the plastic as "brightly colored," she adds that the pieces "bloom" when people turn the object. Even into the personal section of sleeping with the object under a pillow, she remains practical, ending with "Really the sunlight shining through my window."

shell



music box

kaleidoscope

Syllabics/Acrostics

Introduction

1. Duplicate the following student pages:
   - SYLLABICS/ACROSTICS
   - SYLLABICS—Cinquain/Haiku
   - ACROSTICS

2. These exercises begin a series on form of poetry. Your students will likely enjoy the challenges inherent in writing a cinquain, a haiku, and an acrostic.

Structuring the syllabics exercise

1. Hand out SYLLABICS—Cinquain/Haiku pages and read contents aloud with your students.

2. Discuss how syllabics is defined as a rhythmical pattern, a free verse rhythm.

Teaching tip →

Consider placing on the board several topics that you feel might inspire them. Examples: a sport they love playing; something beautiful in their daily environment; their feelings for their pet; a moment of wonder they remember; their love for a person or object.

3. When you are ready to have your students write their cinquain and haiku in the provided spaces, tell them they are not restricted to any topic. Encourage them to write about whatever they desire. The SYLLABICS/ACROSTICS handout will be a cover sheet for the poems they write.

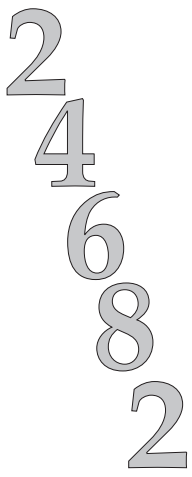
4. Caution them to search for the right word and not to choose a word simply because it has a certain number of syllables.

5. Tell students to avoid adding articles or adjectives in order to fill in a syllable count.

6. On page 8:2 are some examples of cinquains and haiku my students have written. You may wish to read or show them to your students while they are writing their own poems or after they've completed their own poems.

Examples of the syllabics exercise

Cinquains:



A friend
plants a seed in
the heart of their best friend
and touches their life, so sweet, it's
friendship.

—Anita (6th grade)

A snail
slowly getting
to a place faraway,
a place in a mystical land,
a snail.

—Sarah (6th grade)

Haiku:

Trees, swaying so high
with leaves floating brown and red
With gold gilt edges.

—Anita (6th grade)

Dew in the morning
Soft and fine like woven silk
Detailed in sunlight

—Candace (6th grade)

Evaluating the syllabics exercise

1. Group your class into discussion pairs and direct students' attention to questions such as these, which you have written on the chalkboard:
   - Does each poem have the correct number of syllables?
   - Do the words seem to really fit *in meaning,* or were they possibly chosen because they had the right number of syllables?
   - Can you find places where a great amount of meaning or feeling is compressed into a word or a few words? (This is called **compression of statement.**)

2. Have paired students read their poems to one another. Then ask them to check each other's poems with the preceding questions in mind.

3. Walk around the room, listening for effective examples of compression of statement. Compliment the students who have accomplished this essential of poetry.

4. Because cinquains and haiku are fairly short, I like to have students write some of their work on the chalkboard. Therefore, have each choose at least one cinquain and one haiku to squeeze onto one of your chalkboards. You will probably see fingers and lips moving, counting the number of syllables as they write their poems on the board.

5. Now hold a walkaround. All students should cruise the room, reading poems in other groups. Ask them to write down several poems which successfully use compression of statement.

6. Hold a general discussion in which students compliment one another for using just "the right words" (i.e., the number of syllables is correct and the meaning fits as well).

7. Here are examples of the type of comments you will be attempting to elicit from your students"
   - "My student Candace's haiku on page 8:2 offers a vivid visual impression—I can see dew sparkling in the morning sunlight and almost feel the spider's web, 'soft and fine like woven silk.' Anita starts her cinquain with effective words that create a strong image: 'A friend plants a seed in the heart of their best friend ...' Grammatically, 'their' should be 'her' or 'his.' I feel using one of these pronouns would also make the poem more personal. However, she abandons the seed image. A logical poetic continuation would be a reference to the seed growing into something. Perhaps she could come up with a simile on friendship."

Teaching tip →

Be as positive as possible, encouraging and suggesting—without dictating.

Teaching tip →

You will likely do this lesson during a second classroom session.

You may want to add another sheet of acrostic fill-ins that reflect current concerns such as the homeless, AIDS, and gun control.

Structuring the acrostics exercise

1. Hand out the ACROSTICS page and read the contents aloud with your students. Like the previous exercise, this one is explained in a beginning paragraph. This exercise is also followed by an example, one I wrote, which gives my impression of 12-year-old students.

2. Instead of vertical numbers down the page, I have provided alphabetic letters of one topic for students to fill in: Homeless.

3. To warm up your students for this exercise, I suggest you do what I have found so successful: Write your students' names on the chalkboard, vertically, as the acrostics are on the exercise page.

4. Now ask the class to offer words to fill in the acrostics that best describe their classmates. Here are some examples from my class:

S miling
U nderstanding and full of
Z ip. That's S-U-Z
Y.

C ute, cute
A player of the flute
N ever stopping 'till she's
D ropping
A lways
C aring
E lectrically charged.

A mazing Anita
N ice and new wave
I ntelligent
T o the limit
A pplies herself to poetry.

5. After this warm-up is complete, ask your students to fill in the acrostics on the exercise page. Again, stress that they are to think carefully, searching for the right words, not just words that begin with a letter that fits the acrostic. Also encourage them to invent their own acrostic on the back of the exercise page.

Teaching tip

Of course, one thing that students particularly enjoy is hearing you read some poems you have created in the patterns suggested in each lesson. Therefore, share with your students some acrostics poems you write.

6. When I have asked students to write their own acrostics, I have yet to encounter a student who didn't try to write at least one. Below are some other acrostic examples my students have written which you may want to share with the class either collectively or individually.

Examples of the acrostics exercise

N ot warm, an
U gly subject
C old to the world to end its
L ife in this
E ra of
A rms
R aces and

W ishing it would end,
A lways in fear of WA
R

—Anita (6th grade)

L ittle children
I nky hands
B oys and girls
R otating tables
A nd working on
R eports due
Y esterday!

—Sarah (6th grade)

P erfect
E qual
A nybody
C an accept it
E xceptional

—Candace (6th grade)

P ortable
U nruly
P unny but
P uffy
Y o-yo
—Suzy (6th grade)

Evaluating the acrostics exercise

1. Have your students move into discussion groups where they share their acrostics poems by reading them aloud. Expect some rather serious, deeply felt comments about the world, particularly if you are working with quite capable students. Research indicates that gifted and talented children tend to worry more about adult issues than their peers. Judy Gailbraith in *The Gifted Kids Survival Guide* states that fully 80% of gifted students interviewed said they feel more strongly than their peers about world problems—things such as home-lessness, the continuation of war around the world, pollution, alcoholism, world hunger, international relations, and the economy.

2. This exercise allows students a forum for dealing with these issues, many of which are not commonly discussed in the classroom. Sensitive, caring students need opportunities to express their concerns about ideas and problems which they feel are more important than hair styles and sport and music celebrities.

3. Have the groups choose several acrostics to write on the chalkboard or read aloud.

4. End this acrostics lesson by having students share their feelings about the ideas presented. You will find you will not have to encourage them very much to get students talking about issues troubling them.

SYLLABICS

Answers to questions

Come easily to students who

Read and write more than

Other

Students who

Tend to play N

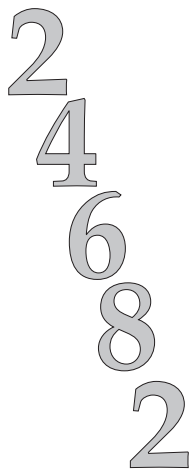
INTENDO and watch TV

Cartoons and commercials NON-

STOP

SYLLABICS - 1

Syllabics involves counting syllables.



One form of syllabics is the **cinquain.** This poem has five lines:

- The first line has two syllables.
- The second line has four syllables.
- The third line has six syllables.
- The fourth line has eight syllables.
- The fifth line ends the poem with two syllables.

Here is an example of a **cinquain**:

Are you
ready to write
a subtle summation;
a poem that's like an equation?
Cinquain.
—Pamela Ditchoff

Now write a **cinquain** of your own.

2-

4-

6-

8-

2-

SYLLABICS - 2

A **haiku** is another form of syllabics. It is an unrhymed and unmetered poem with three lines.

- The first line has five syllables.
- The second line has seven syllables.
- The third line has five syllables.

Here is an example of a **haiku**:

Beavers

Flat-tailed beavers work
Scurrying, hurrying fast
Long-toothed carpenters.
—Bob (6th grade)

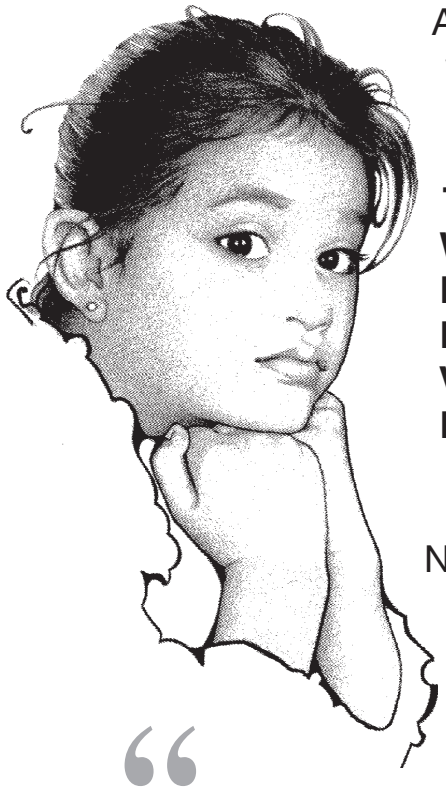
Now write a **haiku** of your own.

5-

7-

5-

ACROSTICS



An **acrostic** is a verse or arrangement of words in which certain letters in each line, such as the first or last, when taken in order spell out a word or words.

T oo old for toys.
W aiting for something.
E ager to
L earn. A
V olcano about to
E rupt
—Pamela Ditchoff

Now try writing your own acrostics—one using the eight prompting letters below and a second that is totally original. Write the second acrostic on another sheet of paper.

H

O

M

E

L

E

S

S

“
...
A
Volcano
about
to
Erupt
...
”

Visual Patterns
Painting With Words

Introduction

1. Duplicate the following student pages:
   - VISUAL PATTERNS
   - PAINTING WITH WORDS

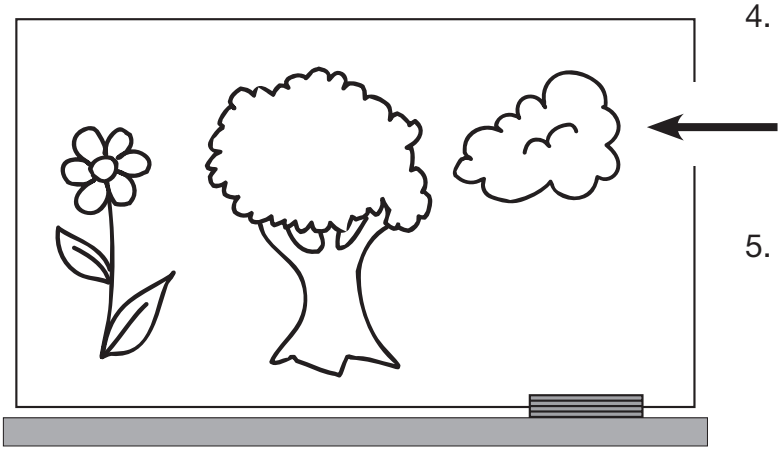
2. Poets disagree on the validity of the shaped poem. Some feel that as a poem begins to rely more on visual shape, it becomes less concerned with sound devices, rhythmical patterns, and metaphorical language. Shaped poems were very popular in the 17th century and, more recently, with contemporary poets such as Allen Ginsberg. My students always find this exercise to be an interesting challenge.

Structuring the exercise

1. Hand out the pages you have duplicated for your students. Tell them they will use the VISUAL PATTERNS page as a cover sheet for their shaped poems.

2. Read the PAINTING WITH WORDS page aloud with your students.

3. Go to the chalkboard or whiteboard and draw some interesting shapes to capture your students' interest and stimulate their creativity. For example, first you could draw shapes corresponding to the objects and foods listed on the handout (flower ... tree ... clouds ... etc.). Then you could suddenly shift to more difficult ones: a sun rising ... a mushroom cloud (nuclear bomb exploding) ... an ocean wave ... a key ...

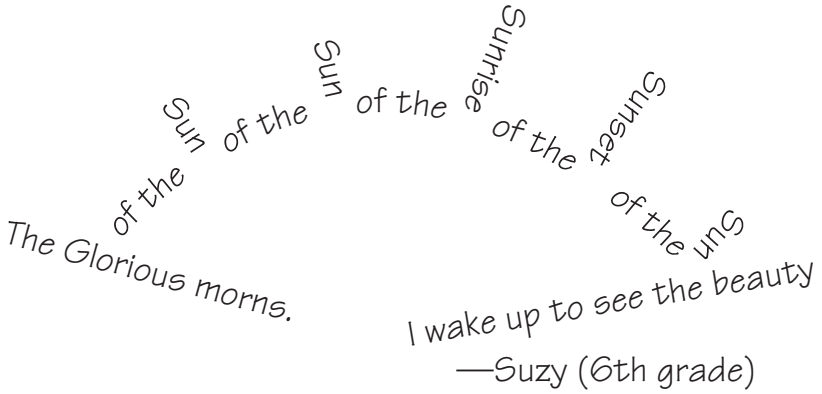


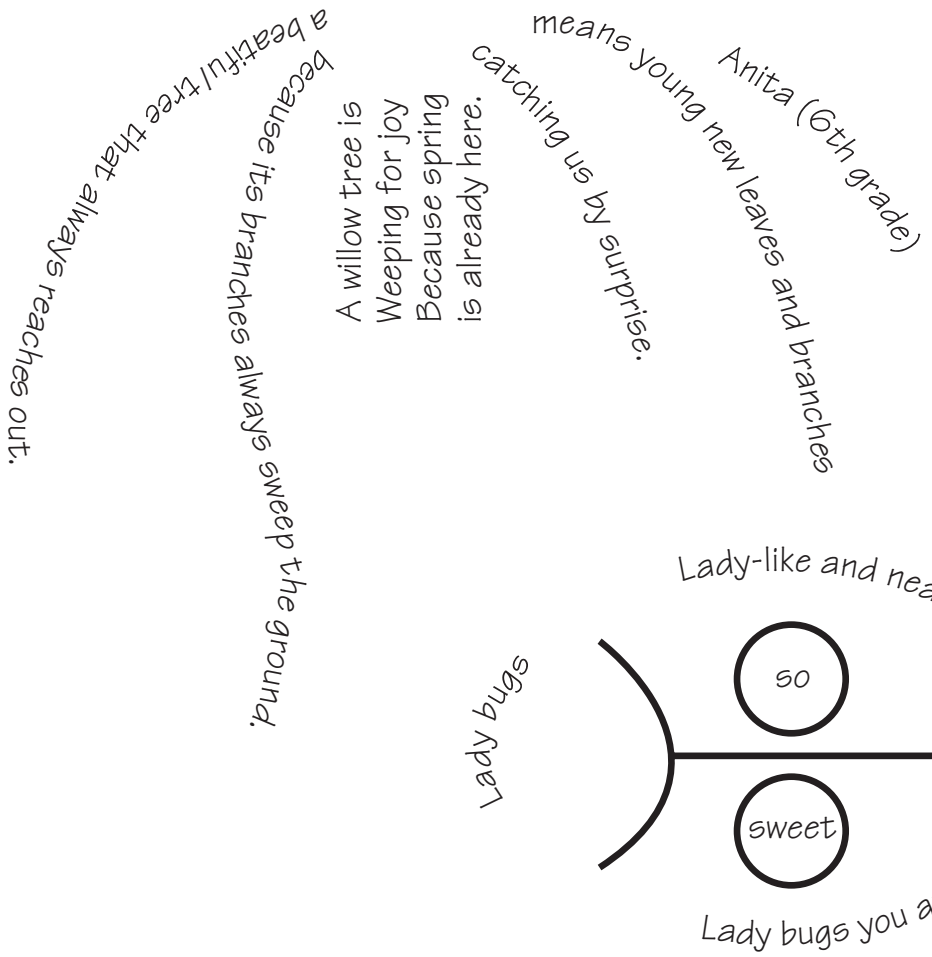
4. Encourage students to shout out identifications of the objects you are drawing on the board. Then ask, "Would it be possible to use words to write a shaped poem for *this one?"*

5. You may want to have copied some of my students' shaped poems found on page 9:2 to pass around or display on your chalkboard, whiteboard, or bulletin board.

6. Ask students to create one or more shaped poems. Because of its difficulty (getting an idea and starting is the biggest obstacle), this is the one exercise that I have allowed students to complete at home and then bring to class.

Examples of the exercise





Evaluating the exercise

1. Your students will be anxious to see the shaped poems their classmates have written. Group them at first to share what they have written.

2. Expect a wide spectrum of neatness. Wander the room, examining what they have created. You may wish to encourage students to recopy a poem if neatness would tighten or clarify the shape they were intending to create.

3. If time allows, have the groups write members' poems on the chalkboard.

Teaching tip →

Encourage students to practice reading their poems aloud prior to their actual reading their poems to the class.

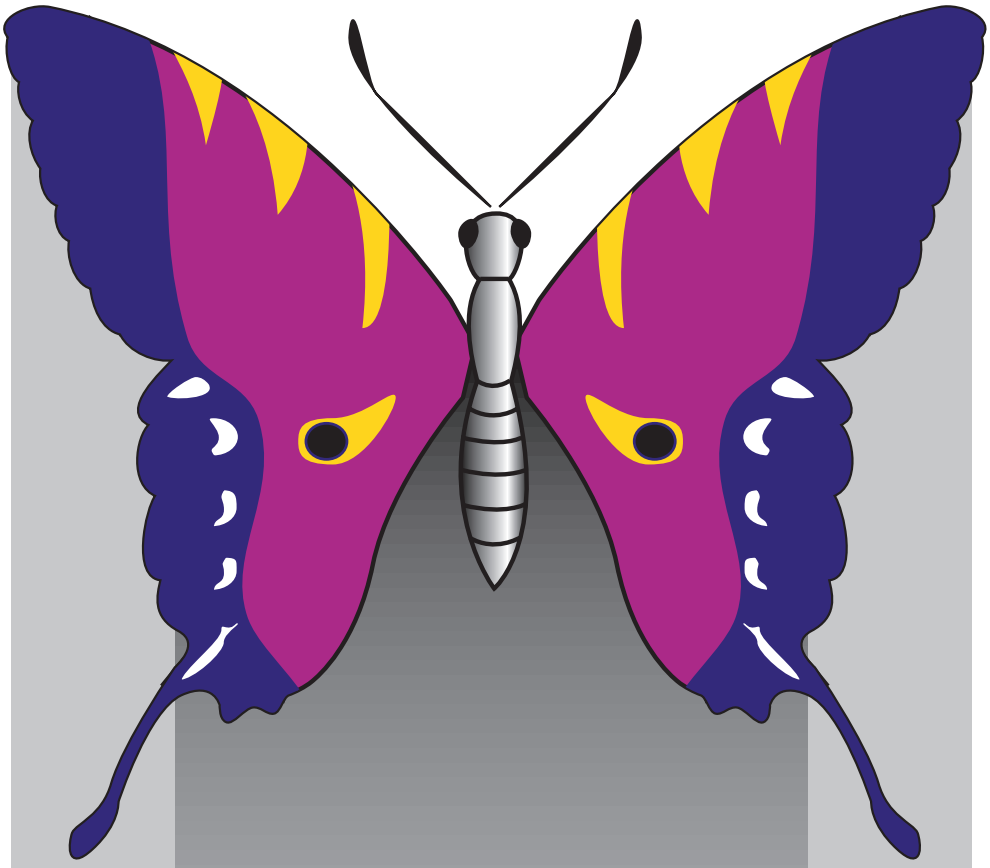
Students can pair themselves for such practice.

You should likely demonstrate some techniques readers use to read poetry effectively.

4. Now have the authors read them aloud. There will most likely be a wide variety of subjects and levels of poetic application. Lead a discussion to point out achievements such as I do in the following comments on my students' poems on page 9:2.
   - Notice how Anita uses many poetic conventions: rhyme with "sweep weep"; syntactical rhythms of repetition with "because," "branches"; and assonance with "means-leaves."
   - Suzy's poem also follows poetic convention with the syntactical repetitions of the phrase "of the Sun." This repetition is most effective because it describes the feeling one has while watching the sun set or rise, seemingly in spurts.
   - Candace's poem is not as poetically complex. Her love of drawing shows in her representation of a lady bug. In stanza form, however, this poem would be a rhyming couplet.

> **The most important part of this exercise is that your students enjoy finding a new way of expressing poetic form.**

VISUAL PATTERNS



PAINTING WITH WORDS

Sometimes a poet who is writing *free verse* wishes to use words like an artist uses paint. The poet uses typography to create **a shaped poem** by shaping the words to look like the object they are describing. *Spring Hunger,* the poem below, is a **shaped poem** written by Pamela Ditchoff, POETRY 1-2-3's author.

Spring Hunger

Duck
slicing the
water like a dull
knife
through
butter
I sit on the banks of the Red Cedar
watching spring prepare her
feast of sights and sounds
and colors and knowing
now the duck's hunger
I open my cellophane bag and toss the bread upon the water

What can you see?

Try writing your own shaped poem. Need some ideas?

Think of objects you like to look at ...

- a certain type of flower or tree ...
- a favorite animal ...
- things in the sky (clouds, birds, balloons, stars, airplanes) ...

How about your favorite foods?

- an ice cream cone ...
- a hamburger ...
- a baked turkey ...

Words are the most important!

You should probably write your poem in traditional line form first. Then try shaping your words to fit the outline of the object. ***But remember this:*** *No matter how unique your object's shape may be, the words and what they say to the reader are the most important part of the poem.*

Personification
Poetic Personification

Introduction

1. Duplicate the following student pages:
   - PERSONIFICATION
   - POETIC PERSONIFICATION

2. Most of your students will understand the term "personification." They may have used the word in language art classes. The POETIC PERSONIFICATION handout introduces your students to the term. They will write their own personification poem.

Structuring the exercise

"
...
have them
circle up
and

face
one
another
...
"

1. Divide your students into trios and have them circle up and face one another in their cooperative learning circles.

2. Give students the PERSONIFICATION handout. Tell them they will use this graphic page as a cover sheet for the personification poem they will write today.

3. Then distribute the POETIC PERSONIFICATION handout. Read my poem "Oak Outside My Window" to your students. Ask the trios to carefully study the poem in order to locate the words in the poem which give *human characteristics* to the tree.

4. Have the students write these words or phrases in the space provided under the poem. Circulate around the room and give help where needed.

5. Once sufficient time has elapsed, hold a discussion of the tree's *human characteristics.* As you find these characteristics, help your students understand the poem's meaning.

6. If your students don't include these points, mention them:
   - The tree is referred to as "her," a female human being.
   - The tree taps her fingers, as a human being would.
   - The tree throws back her scarf, as a woman might do.
   - The tree is given the human characteristic of sight when she "watches over" the narrator.
   - The tree drinks and stretches, two things that human beings do.

7. End this introduction to personification by having students write a definition of the literary term in the space provided. Here is a possible definition you might have them write: ***Personification*** *is a figure of speech in which a thing, quality, or idea has human characteristics.*

8. Now tell them they are going to write their own personification poem. Before you have your students begin, stimulate them by making a list on your chalkboard of potential personification objects. Here are some ideas for making this list:
   - First have them look at the PERSONIFICATION cover sheet. Call their attention to the Italian sports car there. It would likely stimulate any student who loves cars.
   - Here are other items to consider putting on your list which I've found students can identify with: sailboat, clock, chair, house, old coat, tennis shoes, gloves, a fruit or vegetable.
   - Ask the students if they would like to add any other items.

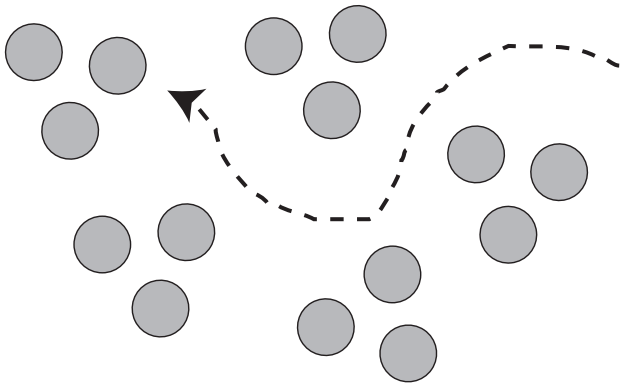
Teaching Tip →

The larger the list, the better chance you have to interest all students—and to receive poems on many subjects.

9. Choose one item from the list and ask questions such as these:
   - "What words would help a poet describe the *human characteristics of* this (object)?" For example, if you selected **clock,** students would reply "face" and "hands."
   - Then you might ask, "Do different clocks wear different expressions?" and "How about voice? Do clocks speak?" and "Would wrist watches speak differently than grandfather clocks?" and "If clocks could think, what would they think?"

10. Now, ask your students to move their chairs out of their trio circles and write their personification poems.

"Circulate around the room ..."



11. Circulate around the room, giving help as needed. You will find that your students enjoy working on these poems.

12. To extend this exercise, ask your students to turn back to the ACROSTICS poems they wrote earlier. Suggest that they choose one of those they wrote as a subject for a second personification poem. To give them examples, consider reading these samples which my students wrote for this second part of the exercise.

Teaching tip →

You might like to read aloud some of my student samples or show them to students having trouble getting started.

Examples of the exercise

The Crescent Moon
The moon's Cheshire Cat grin,
Drinking up the night
Slowly letting stars
Seep through his teeth.
Then the rest of him, The
Cheshire Cat, appears in a fog,
Sitting in a tree made of stardust
Still smiling down on me.
—Anita (6th grade)

"Swirled and twirled with Parmesan cheese ..."

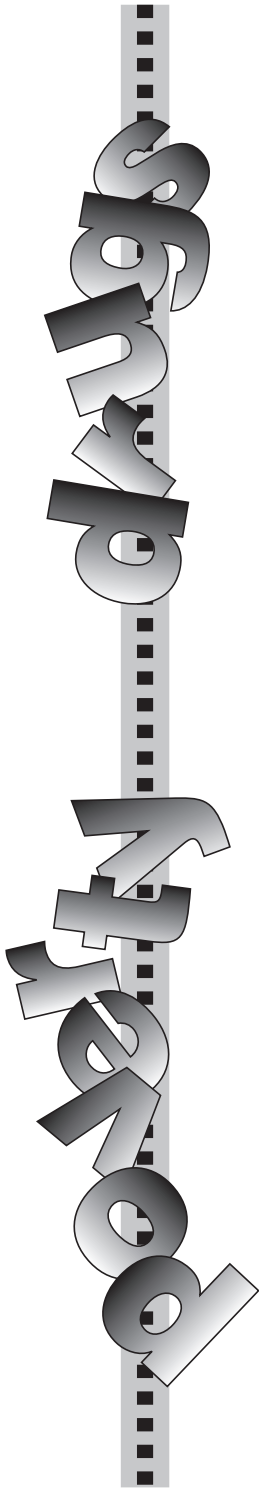
Spaghetti With Meatballs
Spaghetti with meatballs on top
Swirled and twirled
With Parmesan cheese
With lively meatballs and a noodle on
top to indicate a SMILE.

As the meatballs did a little jig,
the Parmesan clapped and soon
the noodles join in.

But the festivities would soon
be OVER
As a big Italian man gobbled them up.
You cannot hear their quiet sobs
So just to get even, slunk, slip
and slid down the wrong side.
—Suzy (6th grade)

"Dancin' shoes ..."

Dancing Shoes
Walking and prancing after dark
Dancing in big circles
Tiptoeing hollowly
Down the streets
Stubborn leather
Doing only what they want
As free as the wind.
—Candace (6th grade)



Drugs

I always smile on the outside
Telling lots of lies, “I won’t hurt you”
“I’ll make you feel better.”
Oh—but I trick
I trick
I sneak around
I get a hold of you,
You don’t know
right from wrong.
You hurt
you hurt
I like to trick
you. I always
smile
On the outside, that
is, on the inside I’m
rotten.

—Sarah (6th grade)

Poverty

A scrawny woman in a box
on the street
Quietly pleading for help.
Sadness and Hunger
are her parents.
She gives the kiss of death
to those who come near her.
She is thousands of men and
women out of work.

—Candace (6th grade)

Evaluating the exercise

1. Ask your students to rejoin their trios and to "circle up." Have them read their personification poems aloud to one another.

2. Have the trios select each student's best poem and have the poet read it to the class.

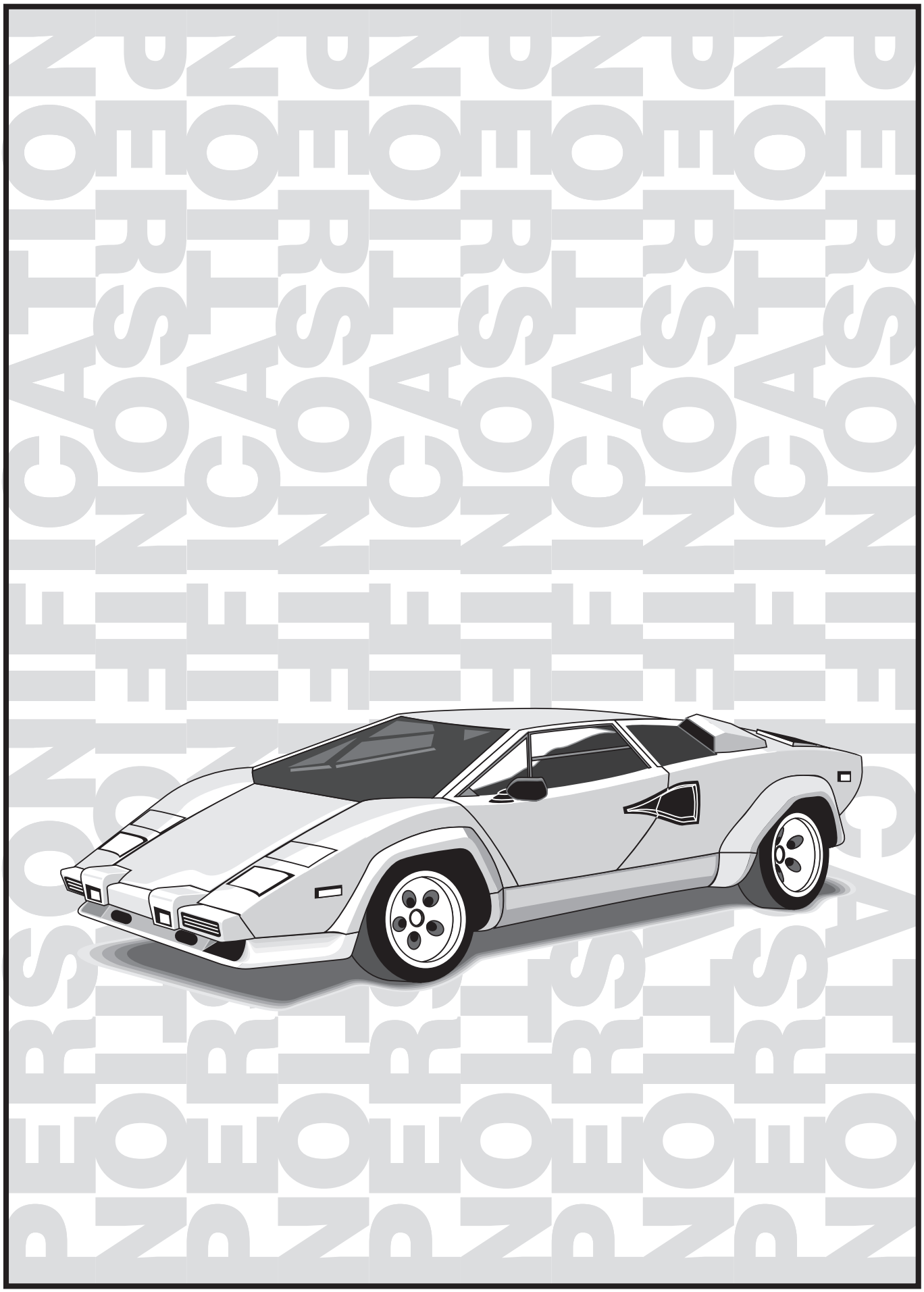
3. After each student has read his/her poem, ask the class questions such as these:
   - What words were used to make the subject come alive with human characteristics?
   - What kind of mood is created by the way the writer chose to personify the subject?

"What words were used to make the subject come alive with human characteristics?"

4. Lead them to make observations such as these, which I offer on my students' poems:
   - Anita's moon "drinks" up the night, "slowly letting stars seep through his teeth." (Notice the alliteration.)
   - Suzy's meatballs dance a jig and the cheese and noodles clap along.
   - Candace provides a vivid visual impression of dancing shoes on a dark, empty street. She also cleverly uses language with dual meaning in "stubborn leather."
   - Candace has also written a powerful personification poem on poverty.

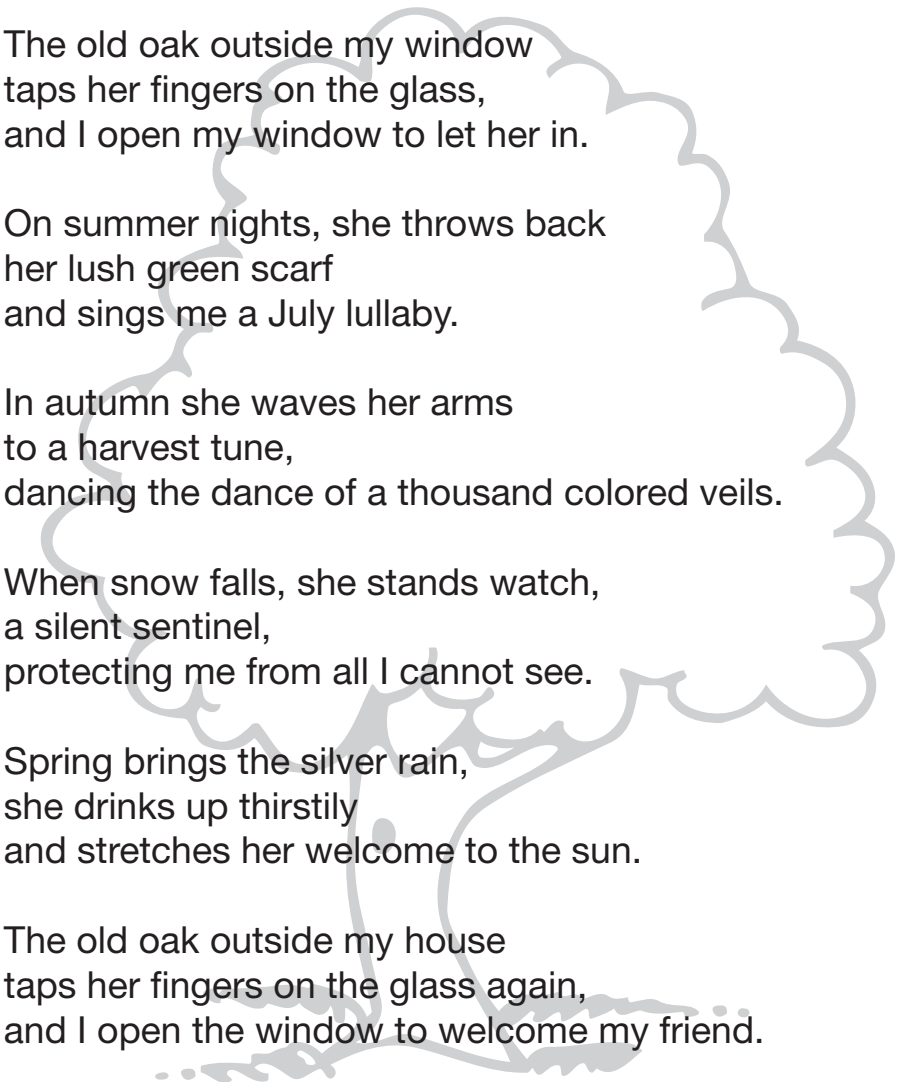
5. Help students realize that personification poems are difficult to write because they are, for the most part, abstractions. I find that students usually make the abstraction totally human.

6. Finally, you may want to discuss what type of human beings these personifications become and why your students have portrayed them in the ways they have.


PERSONIFICATION POETRY

POETIC PERSONIFICATION - 1

Oak Outside My Window



The old oak outside my window
taps her fingers on the glass,
and I open my window to let her in.

On summer nights, she throws back
her lush green scarf
and sings me a July lullaby.

In autumn she waves her arms
to a harvest tune,
dancing the dance of a thousand colored veils.

When snow falls, she stands watch,
a silent sentinel,
protecting me from all I cannot see.

Spring brings the silver rain,
she drinks up thirstily
and stretches her welcome to the sun.

The old oak outside my house
taps her fingers on the glass again,
and I open the window to welcome my friend.

—Pamela Ditchoff

1. Find the **human characteristics** of the tree in "Oak Outside My Window." List them below.

POETIC PERSONIFICATION - 2

PERSONIFICATION

2. Continue your list of the **human characteristics** you found in the poem on the previous page.

3. Write your definition of **personification** here.

Rhythm and Rhyme
Rhythm Scheme/Rhyme Scheme

Introduction

1. Duplicate the following student pages:
   - RHYTHM AND RHYME
   - RHYTHM SCHEME
   - RHYME SCHEME

2. Here you and your students enter the fascinating world of rhythm and rhyme.

Structuring the exercise

1. After giving your students the RHYTHM SCHEME handout, have them *silently* read the quotation "I wake to sleep and take my waking slow." Then ask them to read *aloud* the quotation in unison.

2. Next ask them to reread it, stressing the syllables that need to be stressed. Now it is your turn. Read it aloud to your class, stressing wake ... sleep ... take ... wak(ing) ... slow.

3. Now remind your students that the English language is a language of stress; most words are pronounced with a heavier emphasis on one syllable than on others. For comparison, read aloud the quotation at the top of their handout in a monotone voice.

Teaching Tip →

*To teach **rhyme** and **rhythm,** have your students read plenty of both aloud so that they get the feeling of what each contributes to poetry.*

4. Explain that each unit of stressed and unstressed syllables is called a "foot." Ask your students to look at the handout table describing the types of feet. Read through them aloud. Ask if they can tell you what type of foot is used in the quotation. The answer is iamb (ta-tum ... I wake).

5. Now tell your students that in addition to types of feet, a certain number of feet is used per line. Read through the table of feet aloud.

6. Introduce your students to iambic tetrameter with the materials on the handout and have them write four such lines. Repeat with trochaic tetrameter and anapests.

7. Hand out the RHYME SCHEME sheets. Read aloud to your class the section on rhyme scheme, stanzas, and sonnet. (Include examples of varying rhyme schemes as you read.)

8. After you have completed reading the sonnet, have students follow the directions by writing four stanzas of rhyming couplet, then two stanzas of triplet, and finally, a rhyming poem in any pattern they wish—with any number of lines they wish.

Teaching tip →

*Keep your antenna out so that you are aware of students' responses to this work on **rhythm** and **rhyme**. Bring in examples you really like as well as poems you have written using both.*

9. ***Note well:*** *This is not an easy exercise for certain students.* Therefore, wander the room and give them plenty of support and extra help. You may wish to read aloud some of my students' work immediately below.

Example of the exercise

Iambic:

The world's on fire when day comes back
From night, the black and white of stars.
—Anita (6th grade)

She might just go and play
and sing outside today.
—Sarah (6th grade)

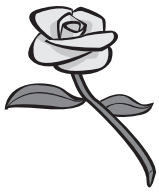
Trochaic:

Flowers cover spring-time beauty
Loving people ev'ry daybreak.
—Anita (6th grade)

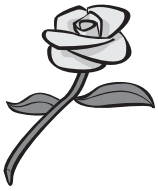
Flowers growing in the
sunny window.
—Sarah (6th grade)

"

... flowers cover



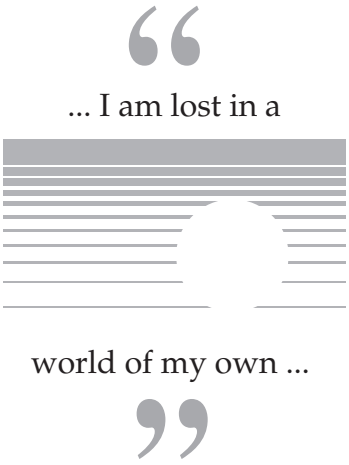
spring-time



beauty ...

"

Anapestic:



When I sit
and I watch
young kids walk
through the rain,
getting wet
I feel sad
for those kids.
—Candace (6th grade)

When I read
in my books
I am lost
in a world
of my own.
—Sarah (6th grade)

Rhyming couplet:

When the wind sweeps
Leaves into heaps
In the very late fall
Before winter's call

Then the sky weeps
While knowing summer sleeps

Finally, standing tall
Autumn is to fall
—Anita (6th grade)

The beautiful sun gave way
to the moon, the dogs beginning to bay.

And the men shoved back their chairs
Grabbed their guns and got into pairs.

Unleashed the dogs and kissed their wives
The only light was the lantern, like a beehive.

And they were off on the hunt following the dogs
Only one would come back from the bog.
—Sarah (6th grade)

Triplet:

Come, let us play
Come, let's race
Come, let's welcome May.

Fly like the bird
Fly, welcome May
Fly, spread the word.
—Candace (6th grade)

Rhyming poem:

When the dark falls into a trap of light
It gives a struggle, puts up a fight
Yet the dark is mean and light is sweet
They both have matches to meet
One fights, the other charms
One always smites the other holding arms
When will it end?
When will they be friends?
—Anita (6th grade)

The numbers jumble
All in a mumble

Confusing pluses
All in musses

Minusing is tough
Multiplying is rough

Math is hard
like a tub of lard.
—Sarah (6th grade)

> The problem is that rhyme
>
> 
>
> can block the flow of reactions and emotions ...

Evaluating the exercise

1. I chose not to use rhyme until very close to the end of the exercises. There are a few reasons for this choice. Gifted and talented students often look for formulas to solve a problem; they are often conditioned in this manner. Rhyme provides a formula they can lock into. Such students also like to organize and bring structure to things. Again, rhyme is a form of organizing words. The problem is that rhyme can block the flow of reactions and emotions, forcing the writer to stop looking for the right idea as he/she struggles to find words that rhyme.

2. When your students have completed all of this exercise's assignments, have them share their poems in groups prior to sharing them with the whole class.

3. Regardless of my comments in #1 above, I believe you will find that your students will learn to handle rhyme and rhythm extremely well. All the exercises they have completed up to this point have given them a storehouse of poetic devices to employ in rhyme and meter.

4. You and your students should give all the poems specific praise comparable to these comments which I have included about my students' poems:
   - In Anita's iamb example, she uses internal rhyme with "back-black," "night-white"; alliteration with "fire-from," "back-black." Then, Anita uses personification in her example of trochee with "flowers loving people."
   - Candace uses consonance with the "t's" in her anapest example "sit-getting-wet," and alliteration with "when-watch-walk." This example is also a very strong visual and emotional poem.
   - Anita's rhyming couplet has a beautiful example of personification: "The sky weeps knowing summer sleeps."
   - And talk about compression of statement! Sarah's couplet example uses action words which involve the reader: baying dogs, shoved chairs, kissed wives, grabbed guns. It is a narrative poem, complete with a beginning, a middle, and an ending.
   - Candace uses syntax, a free verse rhythm, in her triplet, repeating the words "come" and "fly" in each stanza.


rhythm
rhyme
rhythm
rhyme
rhythm
rhyme

RHYTHM SCHEME - 1

"I wake to sleep and take my waking slow."

Type of foot	Stress pattern	Example
iamb	ta-**tum**	ex**cept** ... she **might**
trochee	**tum**-ta	**Mi**das ... **lost** it
anapest	ta-ta-**tum**	disap**point** ... lower **down**
dactyl	**tum**-ta-ta	**hap**pily ... **sing** to me

Types of meter

- **monometer**—one foot to each line (very rare)
- **dimeter**—two feet to each line (rare and usually comic)
- **trimeter**—three feet to each line (fairly common)
- **tetrameter**—four feet to each line (often combined with trimeter)
- **pentameter**—five feet to each line (most common in English)
- **hexameter**—six feet to each line (seldom used in this century)
- **heptameter**—seven feet to each line (rare)
- **octometer**—eight feet to each line (a heavy, very rare line)

Don't let these terms scare you. They give rhythm to poetry and are here for you to experiment with while you stretch yourself as a poet.

Rhythm

RHYTHM SCHEME - 2

Iambic tetrameter

Choose any topic you like and write the **iambic** pattern *four times* in single lines. When you repeat the iambic pattern *four times,* you will be writing lines of **iambic tetrameter.** Here is what your lines will "sound" like in its stress pattern:

ta-**tum**, ta-**tum**, ta-**tum**, ta-**tum**.

Don't worry about rhyme. Just concentrate on the **rhythm**. Here is a sample:

- When **moth**er **threw** the **ball** to **me** ...
- The **teach**er **turn**ed and **smiled** at **Ted** ...
- The **glass** re**flect**ed **gold**en **light** ...
- His **ang**ry **words** cut **both** of **us** ..

Write your four lines of **iambic tetrameter:**

-
-
-
-

Trochaic tetrameter

Now try shifting your poetic rhythm to **trochaic tetrameter** such as this example:

- **John**ny **lost** the **mon**ey **Fri**day.

Write four lines of **trochaic tetrameter:**

-
-
-
-

Anapests

Next, try a few lines of **anapests**, which have this rhythm:

ta-ta-**tum**

Here is an example of lines such as you might write:

I am **here**
By my**self.**
Will you **come**
Where **I am?**

Write your lines of **anapests:**

•

•

•

•

RHYME SCHEME - 1

Most poets who use rhyme use it in a regular pattern. We call this pattern a **rhyme scheme.** The word **scheme** means that the poet uses a recurring cycle: he/she repeats the rhyme pattern over and over. The basic unit of this repeating cycle is called a **stanza.** A stanza is a cluster of lines that work together. The stanza is as important to poetry as the paragraph is to prose. Both work to hold together ideas that relate to one another.

There are many types of rhyming stanzas:

1. **Rhyming couplet:** The rhyming pairs are aa, bb, cc, etc. Each stanza has two lines.

   Leathery toad that ruts for days on end. **a**
   Or cringing dribbling dog, man's servile friend **a**

   Or cat that prettily pounces on its meat, **b**
   Tortures it for hours, then does not care to eat. **b**

2. **Triplet or Tercet:** The rhyming pattern is **aba**, **cdc**, **efe**, and so on. A variation of the triplet is the terza rima where each stanza is linked to the next one, forming an interlocking rhyme in this fashion: **aba**, **bcb**, **cdc**, and so on. Three lines are used in each stanza.

3. **Quatrain:** The rhyming pattern is **abcb** in each stanza. This pattern is often used in narrative poems (poems which tell a story). Song writers wishing to put their lyrics to music also often use this **abcb** rhyme scheme in their four-line stanzas. Here is an example:

   I think my brain is going to bust, **a**
   I'll never get any rest, **b**
   Every Friday it's the same, **c**
   Another social studies test. **b**

   You might think the weekend **a**
   Would be a time for fun play, **b**
   But rain or shine, everytime **c**
   There's a history test on Monday. **b**

RHYME SCHEME - 2

4. **Quintet:** Here an odd-numbered stanza is sometimes rhymed with a couplet at the end: **ababb**. Each stanza has five lines.

5. **Sestet:** Rhyme patterns vary in this six-line stanza, commonly used in sonnets.

6. **Septet:** This famous seven-line stanza, often called the "rhyme royal," has an **ababbcc** rhyme scheme.

7. **Octave:** This stanza has eight lines. Known as the "ottava rima," it has an **abababcc** rhyme scheme.

Now we come to the sonnet, a most famous poetic pattern. A sonnet is a metered poem of 14 lines, usually in iambic pentameter which means there are five "feet" with iambic stress:

ta-**tum** ta-**tum** ta-**tum** ta-**tum** ta-**tum.**

Here are two lines of iambic pentameter:

Her **beau**ty **caused** one **thous**and **bat**tered **ships**
To **sail** a**cross** the **deep** and **ang**ry **seas** ...

In a sonnet the first eight lines are known as the **octave;** the last six lines, the **sestet.** Rhyme schemes for the sonnet vary.

After reading the following sonnet, ask and answer these three questions:

1. *Exactly who* is speaking?
2. *Exactly who* is the "he" in the poem?
3. *When* is the poet speaking?

RHYME SCHEME - 3

Bathroom Mirror

He's there, inside the glass, behind my eyes,
his face recalled from days and years I've saved.
When I was small, and he was tall, I'd rise
and run to take my seat and watch him shave.
The brush would clink against the cup until
the foam rose up in peaks like egg meringue,
and then he'd dab it on his face and fill
the bath with joy, as pure and clear he sang.
I hid the razor, secret in my drawer,
Between my socks and gloves and now and then,
I'd smell the memories green and good it stored
and wonder when I'd hear his song again.
"When donkeys fly," was her sincere reply.
But Mother lied, he's here behind my eyes.

—Pamela Ditchoff

Now with your teacher's help, begin your experimenting by writing four stanzas on other sheets of paper. Work to put **rhyming couplets** in each stanza. A couplet is two lines of poetry which rhyme. Here is a rhyming couplet in iambic tetrameter:

I looked outside and all **around**
I saw snow falling to the **ground**.

In each stanza try to use several couplets working together to express a unified thought. You do the same thing as you use several sentences to express a unified thought whenever you write a paragraph.

For adventurers who like challenges:

- Write two stanzas of **triplet.**
- Write two or three stanzas of **terza rima.**

And everyone ...

- Choose whatever pattern you like and write a rhyming poem. Use any number of lines you wish.

I Wish . . .

Introduction

1. Duplicate the following student page:
   - I WISH ...

2. Within this exercise students feel free to express their secret wishes. Too often caring students are so involved with performing, studying, achieving high marks, pleasing parents, and pleasing teachers, that they don't stop and think about what they would wish for. Hopefully, this exercise will help students explore some of their fantasies.

Structuring the exercise

1. Hand out the I WISH page to your class. Ask your students to use this as a cover sheet for any I Wish poems they write.

2. Explain that this is a patterned poem in which each line begins with the words "I wish ..." Ask for a minimum of four lines, (length is not usually a problem) to ensure some thoughtful exploration.

3. At this time you may wish to read some samples of I WISH poems my students wrote. If you do, comment on the spectrum of wishes—from materialism to idealism. *(Before reading the final poem, "Seventh Grade Society," be sure you read my comment on how/why it was created.)*

Examples of the exercise

"I wish the world

would have peace."

I wish I lived in a mansion.
I wish the world would have peace.
I wish the poor wealthy.
I wish everyone in the world was healthy.
—Melissa (4th grade)

I wish that the
dark blue
humpback whale
does not become extinct.
—Soleil (4th grade)

“I wish everyone had a home ...”

I wish for summer days
with a brightly colored sun.
I wish for a better life
in a different place, far from
Earth’s confusion and noise.
I wish everything was in bloom
and every month was June.
I wish for days to be all right
because at night
they fight for freedom.
I wish for the world to stay away.
—Billy (6th grade)

I wish everyone was well fed
I wish everyone had a home
they could call their own
and would shelter them through
sleet, rain, snow, hail.
I wish there were no nuclear weapons.
I wish world peace would come around the corner.
I wish people wouldn’t die from stupid mistakes
or walk away if someone got hurt.
I wish everything is better in the year 2000.
I wish people had more courage and confidence.
I wish people were more generous.
—Lesley (5th grade)

I wish there was world peace...
I wish there was love throughout the world...
I wish that I will have a little cottage...
I wish there would be happiness...
I wish that I will be able to visit many places...
I wish I could do better in math...
I wish I had more time to myself...
—Sarah (5th grade)

I wish everyone was treated with equal respect.
I wish discrimination didn’t exist.
I wish I could float away to paradise.
I wish my life were perfect.
I wish I could communicate with animals
in human or animal language.
I wish that people could understand my feelings.
—Anita (5th grade)

Teaching tip

I am especially proud of this poem. It won a blue ribbon in Michigan Youth Talent Competition. Debbie is my daughter.

Seventh Grade Society

Genera, Forenza,
Coca-Cola and *Esprit*—
All those brand names in a magazine.
If you don't have them, you're no good.
If you don't have them, you really should.
Go ahead!
Go out and buy the most expensive trash
you can find.
Go ahead, be exactly like everyone else,
you don't have a mind
of your own.
Why doesn't anyone want to be
unique or different?
Maybe they're afraid they'll
get laughed at.
Unfortunately,
they're absolutely right.

—Debbie (7th grade)

Evaluating the exercise

1. Decide whether or not you wish to have your students share these poems within a group. Some students write I WISH ... poems at a high intimacy level and might not want to share with classmates what they have written.

2. But don't keep students from sharing these poems if their authors want to do so. Ask for volunteers to read aloud.

3. Gifted and talented students will reveal in these poems how they worry about adult issues and how they hope for solutions to world problems. Unlike most children in their age groups who are naturally self-involved, such students are worried about world peace, world hunger, poverty, nuclear war, outer space, and pollution. You will likely find as I did that many of your students' poems reflect their concerns about their world.

4. Notice my student Lesley's poem as an example of what I am talking about. She shows poetic sensitivity while being completely void of self-concern. It is difficult to believe a fifth grade student could have so much insight into the shortcomings of adults. Note how she also writes, "I wish people wouldn't die from stupid mistakes or walk away if someone got hurt" ... "I wish people had more courage and confidence ...I wish people were more generous ..."

5. One student, Debbie, chose to write an additional poem, "Seventh Grade Society." She developed it from her I Wish ... poem. One item on her list referred to wishing students wouldn't judge other students on the basis of the clothes they wear. She not only used many poetic characteristics in her poem; she also made a powerful social statement as well.

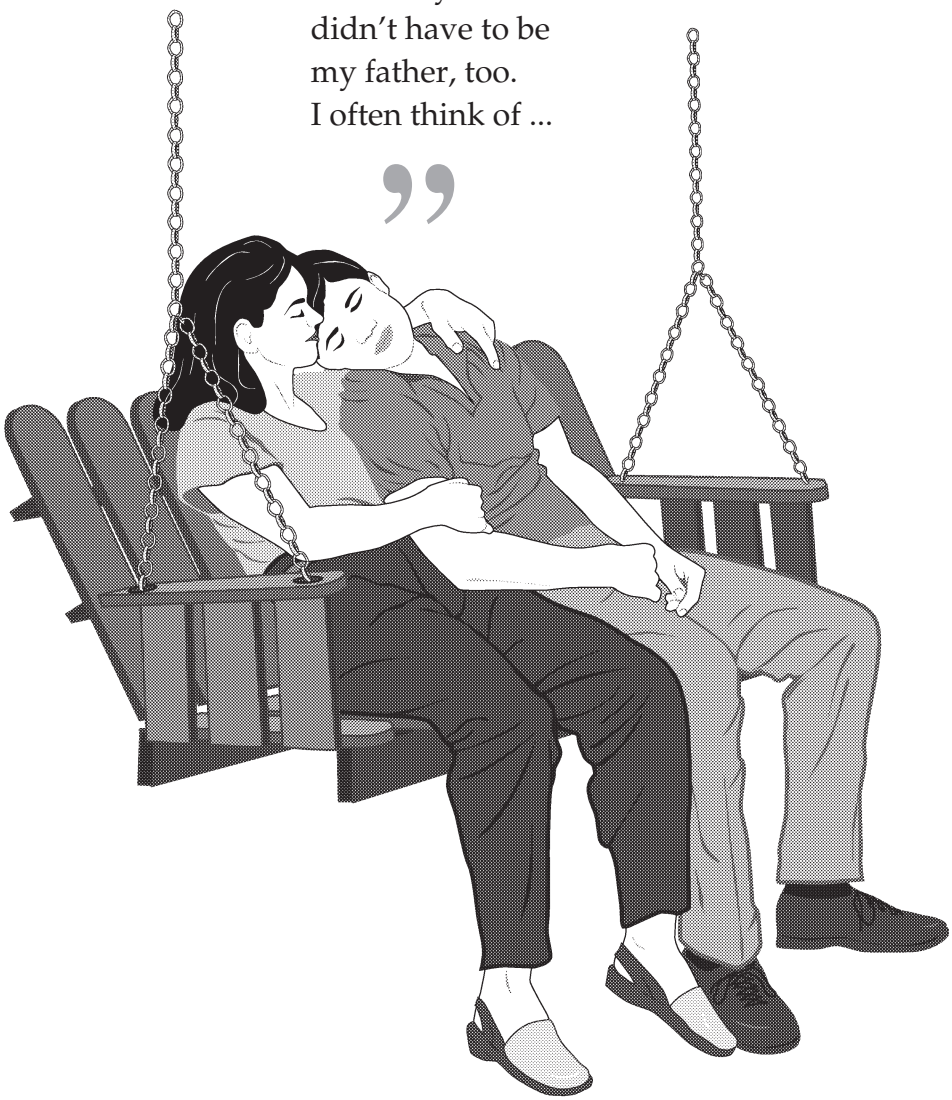
6. Consider explaining to your students how Debbie came to write her poem, and then ask if any students wish to select one wish from their lists, write down some more ideas about it, and then write a poem in which they explore that wish in depth.

7. Because the I Wish ... poems often are personal and powerful, consider posting as many as possible on your bulletin board to show your approval of their concerns and their talent.

Teaching Tip →

Naturally students can write their I Wish ... poems about sad subjects as well as happy ones. However, don't post poems whose subject matter might embarrass your students or the poems' subjects.

"I wish my mother
didn't have to be
my father, too.
I often think of ..."



“I wish...”
“I wish...”
“I wish...”
“I wish...”
“I wish...”
“Aruff...”

Submissions
Submitting Your Poems for Publication

Introduction

1. Duplicate the following student pages:
   - SUBMISSIONS
   - SUBMITTING YOUR POEMS FOR PUBLICATION

2. There's nothing more encouraging to a poet than to see his/her work published. The disappointment of having a poem rejected, however, can be equally discouraging if hopes are high and the probability of publication is not put in perspective. Be certain to explain that students are not required to submit poetry for publication. Read aloud the "Do I need to submit my poetry" section after handing out page 13:6.

3. I like to build a class exercise on the submission process.

   The first year that I taught this class, I asked my students to select the poem they thought was their best work. I entered these poems in The Michigan Youth Talent Competition. Five students entered; five students won ribbons—two first place, one second place, one third place, and one honorable mention. The second year poetry class met with equal success.

   This competition is no longer held. Many magazines written for children, however, sponsor poetry contests. I encourage you to help your students enter.

4. On the session before the last class meeting, I tell my students that, for the next session, we will learn how to submit poems for publication. I ask them to look for magazines that publish poetry written by students and, if they find any, to bring them to the next class.

Teaching Tip

Writing poems in class discourages students from finding "help" in poetry books or from well-meaning friends and relatives.

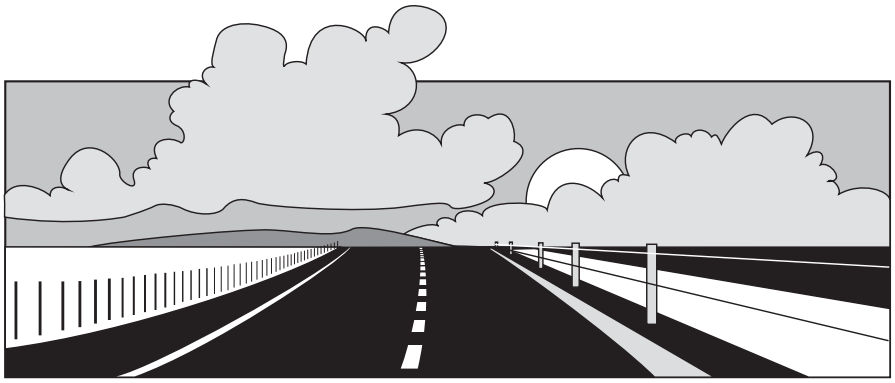
5. Here are examples of what you may find. One season, *Cricket* magazine held a poetry contest on the subject of "My Dream Dog." Since the deadline for submission was within three weeks, I had each student write a "dream dog" poem in class. I reminded them of all the different poetic devices we had used so far—alliteration, acrostics, syllabics, and so on.

6. I had a small class, so I provided blank envelopes and postage stamps. (You may want to ask each student to bring in two stamps and two blank envelopes.)

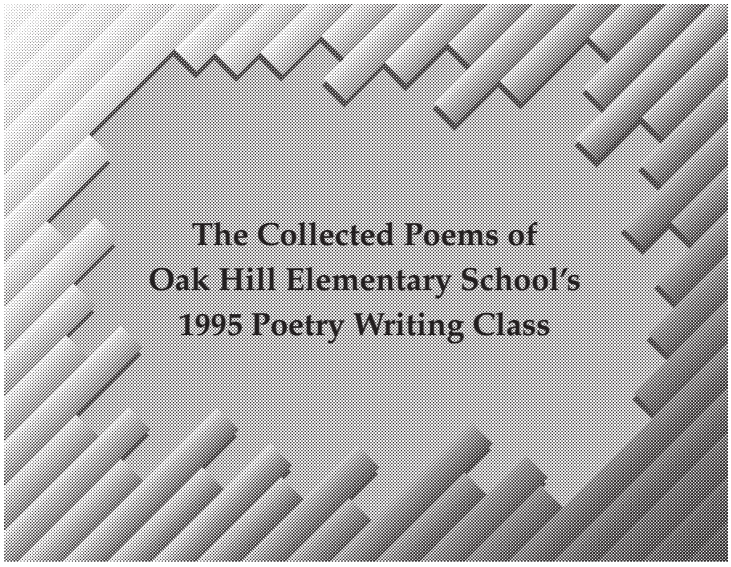
7. After students wrote their poems, I read through the sample submission letter with the students. Then I asked them to write their submission letter to *Cricket* magazine.

8. After students wrote their letters, I gave each student two envelopes: one on which to write their home address and place a stamp (SASE: self-addressed, stamped envelope), and one addressed to *Cricket* magazine.

9. Students then placed their poem, their submission letter, and their SASE in the envelope, and I mailed them the following day. Even though we had no winners in this contest, I was certain to tell them they were all winners for completing this poetry class. At such a moment you can quote some appropriate poetic saying which you feel relates to the circumstance. In this case Willa Cather's marvelous statement in the art below may be appropriate.



"The end is nothing; the road is all."



10. Remember how I recommended earlier than you take home your students' poems and look for particularly effective ones each student has written? I do this throughout the term and type representative poems from each student as the students write. Then during the last class meeting, I distribute to each student a copy of the class' best poems. (I ensure that every student's work is fairly represented.) I always give the booklet a title. For example, on the left is one example of a title you might type for your students:

11. Students and parents love having this booklet to keep. It also is an excellent item to have available for open house. And of course, I enjoy having copies available for my next year's students to examine while they are writing.

12. Be sure you reread the comments made earlier on page 1:9 (a poetry anthology ... a video recording ... an open house presentation). There I discuss other ideas about how to culminate this writing experience for your students.

13. When you have completed POETRY 1-2-3, I am certain you will feel the same pride of accomplishment that your students will be feeling. Congratulations! You may have started down the poetic path the next Emily Dickinson ... Robert Frost ... Adrienne Rich ... James Merrill ... or ?

Submissions

SUBMITTING YOUR POEMS FOR PUBLICATION - 1

This is only a model. Feel free to write the letter as you wish. However, show it to your teacher before you mail it.

Your teacher will help you plan and write a letter in which you submit one or more of your best poems for publication. Use the materials in this handout to help you.

A model for your submission letter

May 25, 1995

Telisha Anderson
298 Elm Street
Oskaloosa, Iowa 23412

Creative Kids
Post Office Box 6448
Mobile, Alabama 36660

Dear Editor:

Enclosed find three poems I am submitting for **Creative Kids** magazine.

My name is Telisha Anderson. I am eleven years old. I am in Mr. VanderBilt's sixth grade class at the Ivan Kennedy Elementary School. Its address is 45692 C Avenue, Oskaloosa, Iowa 23412.

Below is a statement attesting to my poems' originality signed by my teacher. I have included a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which you can return my poems if they are not accepted for publication.

Thank you for your consideration.

Telisha Anderson

This is to certify that the three poems Telisha is submitting were written in my class and that they are original poems.

John VanderBilt

Telisha Anderson's teacher

SUBMITTING YOUR POEMS FOR PUBLICATION - 2

Magazines which publish poetry

The following magazines publish poetry written by elementary and secondary students:

Submissions Editor, *Creative Kids*
P.O. Box 8813
Waco, TX 76714-8813

Cobblestone®
30 Grove Street, Suite C
Peterborough, NH 03458

Stone Soup
Submissions Department
P.O. Box 83
Santa Cruz, CA 95063

Submissions Editor, *Cricket*
Carus Publishing
70 East Lake Street
Suite 300
Chicago, IL 60601

> "My mother's face lights up my world. She always ..."

Some of these magazines sponsor poetry contests for which you must write on a certain subject or theme. Check the most recent issues in your library.

Are there other sources?

Of course there are. Check your school and city libraries for other publications looking for young persons' poetry to publish. (For example, your local newspaper likely will accept a poem around certain holidays if your poem's subject relates to a holiday such as Mother's Day.)

Do I need to submit my poetry?

Absolutely not. Many young writers hopefully send their poems in the mail, and very few are published compared to the number submitted. For each poem I've had published, dozens have been rejected. Remember, the real joy of writing poetry is in the creative process and in the pride of accomplishment!

Teacher Feedback Form

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Please use the release form on the following page.

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Address: _____

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E-mail: _____

Interact Unit: _____

Comments: _____

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Release Form for Photographic Images

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To help illustrate to others the experiential activities involved and to promote the use of simulations, we like to get photographs and videos of classes participating in the simulation. Please send photos of students actively engaged so we can publish them in our promotional material. Be aware that we can only use images of students for whom a release form has been submitted.

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I give permission for photographs or videos of my child to appear in catalogs of educational materials published by Interact.

Name of Student: _____ (print)

Age of Student: _____ (print)

Parent or Guardian: _____ (print)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Address:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Phone: _____

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