



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2003 Volume III: Teaching Poetry in the Primary and Secondary Schools

Making Connections across the Curriculum through Poetry

Curriculum Unit 03.03.05
by Zoila M. Brown

Introduction

I am currently teaching English/language arts in an inter-district magnet middle school that focuses on both arts and academics. The student body is diverse, comprising of approximately 560 students from different towns and many cultural backgrounds. The cultural diversity produces many students who are English language learners. I teach four fifth grade classes with a total of 95 students grouped heterogeneously. As a result, a variety of language competencies exists within each class. For example, some students speak and write English fluently, but struggle with reading comprehension. Others comprehend what they read although they have difficulty with choice of words or pronunciation, as evidenced in their speech.

Poetry, with its rhythmic style, seems to be a great stimulant for language acquisition and development. Throughout my teaching career, I have observed that many students who have difficulty engaging in sustained reading of a novel show more interest when reading poetry. The fact is that poems are generally shorter. Consequently, students are able to complete reading a piece at one sitting and maintain enough interest so that they will even read some poems repeatedly. In addition, students may more readily retain the content of specific concepts written in a poetic form. For these reasons, poetry is an integral part of my teaching.

I had never studied poetry formally during undergraduate or graduate programs, so I am taking this seminar, "*Poems on Pictures, Places, and People*," to enhance my own skills for teaching English, with an emphasis on poetry. I know it will aid in developing my analytic and critical thinking skills.

The purpose of designing this unit on poetry is to integrate the arts and other disciplines in the English language curriculum **throughout** the year. I have studied the curriculum map for my grade level, and have discussed it with teachers of the other disciplines to determine the main themes they usually emphasize. Consequently, the poems selected are relevant to specific themes or particular historical periods, and are connected, in one way or another, to the various academic disciplines taught at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School. One motto in this school is "learning through artademics." This means the faculty strives to integrate the arts with the academic subjects or vice versa. The integration does not stop with the arts but reaches across to all subject areas. Lessons are included to facilitate comparing, contrasting, and connecting multicultural

and other social experiences. Teachers may use this unit to help students develop interpretations that enable them to create pictures they visualize from poems, as well as

compose poems from visual art forms. Connecting multicultural and other social experiences will help students develop a critical stance by becoming aware of values, customs, ethics and beliefs. Consequently, the implementation of this unit will facilitate teaching and learning that conform to the standards and objectives of language arts.

The unit also contains lessons that will help teachers of middle school students, or teachers in the upper elementary self-contained setting, teach the forms and patterns of ballads, narrative, and free verse poems while introducing or reinforcing particular language devices. All three kinds of poems tell a sequential story, but each has its unique characteristics. A ballad is a stanzaic saga that tells a story, usually with a catastrophic ending. Narrative poems, sometimes referred to as dramatic narratives, tell a single story with beginning, middle, and end, but occasionally with more than one tone or voice. Free verse, as the word 'free' implies, lacks the rigidity of a specified structure, or form. It does not have a set meter, and does not usually rhyme. The length and placement of the lines can vary, but the arrangement of the words on the page should still convey the intended message in a poetic manner.

The selected poems focusing on themes are works of both traditional and contemporary poets, such as **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Myra Cohn Livingston, Nancy Byrd Turner, Carl Sandburg, Arnold Adoff,** and **Eve Merriam** . Poems of other poets will be used as resources to guide or develop instruction in specific skills.

Objectives

The unit is designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To motivate English language learners and reluctant readers
2. To teach diction
3. To guide students in creating factual poems, using concepts from textbooks
4. To improve students' abilities to read and write
5. To facilitate high order thinking
6. To help students create imagery from words and use words to create imagery
7. To integrate poetry with drama.

Strategies

My intention is to use this unit during the entire academic year. I must note that unlike many elementary and some other middle schools, at present Betsy Ross' does not have block schedules for academic subjects. Class periods are forty-two minutes long, so the teachers must be skillful with pacing to make the development of the lesson culminate effectively within the single period. With the limitation of time and several aspects of the language arts to be covered, I will not be able to execute poetry lessons for the sustained length of time teachers working with block schedules would have. Nevertheless, in order for students to appreciate and enjoy poems, I will read poems aloud at least twice each week. I plan to use three successive days each month for formal poetry lessons.

Besides the introductory lesson, this unit has four main components. The first part gives the foundation for teaching some important elements of poetry. Building on that, the second part deals with two important language devices, namely, similes and metaphors. The core section is specifically related to reading comprehension in light of the objectives of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). The final section presents poetry workshops highlighting "poems on pictures, places, and people". I am presenting a month by month strategic plan.

September: Social Connections

In order to understand my students' backgrounds, and for students to understand, accept, and relate to each other, I start the academic year with students writing an autobiography. One of the performance tasks for this activity is that students write a poem about themselves in the form of an acrostic, using the letters of their names. This is also known as a "Name Poem". It is practical to include this form of poetry at this time because throughout their early elementary years, students have experimented with the acrostic form. Therefore, at first, I will only be activating their prior knowledge, then establish the criteria for a "Name Poem". Each student will be expected to compose a poem that truly reflects his/her cultural background and character traits. One criterion is that each line should reflect positive qualities or background. Students will be encouraged to use the dictionary or a thesaurus to help them find words beginning with the letters of their name. Students who have first name with fewer than four letters may use their middle name or a combination of both first and middle names. Students whose first name has more than nine letters may use an acceptable shortened form of their name. For example, Christopher may use the name Chris. I will use a think out loud approach to model how I compose my "name" poem. Mine may look somewhat like this:

Z ealous for high achievement

O nly daughter of a Cuban native

I ndustrious, intelligent, I am

L oyal to my two brothers and many friends

A dventurous traveler, born in Jamaica-

At this point no attention will be paid to rhyming, so later students will not feel compelled to include rhyme in every poem. (Rhyming will be addressed later.) I will

solicit the involvement of parents/guardians by encouraging the students to have their caretakers check their poems for verity. These adults, without taking the ownership away from the children, should be able to suggest additions or omissions. These poems will be saved for sharing in small groups, then published with the students' permission.

Discussion within the groups should focus on diversity in order to help students get acquainted with each other, and to accept one another's differences. Some discussion questions may include:

- What kind of person is *John* ?
- Where was *John* born?
- How is *John's* culture different from yours?
- What do you now know about *John* that you did not know before?

Once we have made our social **connections** , we will be ready to make connections across the curriculum.

October: Rhyme and Rhythm

For the next series of poetry lessons, I will concentrate on rhymes and rhythm. These help sustain the pulse and life of poetry. William Packard defines rhyme as "any sense of resonance among vowels or words that seems to echo previous sounds and set up a patterning of aural effects." (*The Poet's Dictionary* , page157.) Rhyme creates a pattern of sounds that enchants the ear and stimulates the mind in such a way that it could function as a memory device. Since my main focus is on integrating content, poetry that contains lines that rhyme may help students retain concepts relating to the themes they are studying. Fifth graders are able to identify rhyming words, although they may not be aware that there are different types and patterns of rhymes. I will therefore familiarize students with some of the various types of rhymes and rhyming patterns (without making them feel as if they are taking an advanced course in poetry). They are already familiar with **end** rhymes and **perfect** rhymes- in which the rhyming words have the exact same sound. What may be new is the term 'perfect rhyme'. I will briefly discuss **masculine** and **feminine** rhymes as we read poems. The accent of masculine rhyme is the last syllable, while that of feminine rhyme is the next-to-last syllable. Students may also benefit from observing ' **eye** rhyme'. This may help students develop their own eyesight for words in English which do not sound alike but look alike with the exception of one letter. For example, the words rough, cough, and bough, with the exception of the first letter sound, look like they should end with the same sound, but that's not the case. Rhyme schemes, or patterns in which rhymes appear, will also be discussed. I will provide students various poems and have students inspect them to identify rhymes and their patterns. Janeczko suggests starting with couplets or short stanzas, then gradually moving to the longer and more sophisticated to reinforce variations. I will reinforce end rhymes and rhyme schemes as I encourage students to use these patterns when they compose their own poems.

Although not every poem rhymes, it is important to point out that every poem has rhythm. Teaching rhyme

leads to a discussion of rhythm. "Rhythm is the underlying

pattern of stresses and accents. It's the pulse of music that allows you to "keep time". Rhythm is musical and helps create pleasure in poetry." (*How to Write a Poem* , page 96) The kinesthetic approach to teaching would be very effective here. Children like to

move. After students listen to a poem, have them tap to the rhythm they hear or feel. More dramatically, they could identify or create a dance for that poem. Provide poems in which the rhythms vary. The poem, *Jimmy Jet and His TV Set* by Shel Silverstein, is a good example of regular rhythm and rhyme pattern. It also includes the end rhyme with which students are familiar. Langston Hughes' April Rain Song presents rhythm that is repetitive. When students compose their own poems, they should also listen for the music in their poems. Meter relates to rhythm, but I think teaching about meter is more appropriate for the upper grades, especially in the high school. However, teachers may modify this unit to focus on aspects of form that are of significance to their students and their particular learning environments.

November-December: Figurative Language

Subsequent lessons will focus on particular figurative language. I will set out to teach simile and metaphor. These are figures of speech used to make comparisons. Students should be able to identify and use these language devices at this grade level. They are also expected to be able to distinguish between a metaphor and a simile. The distinction between the two figures of speech is that a simile uses 'as' or 'like' to compare one thing to another, whereas a metaphor makes the comparison without using as or like. For example: "The cloud is a blanket for the sky" is a metaphor. The cloud is being compared to a blanket. Transforming that statement into a simile, one could say, "The cloud covers the sky **like** a blanket." I will use "Ten Little Likenesses" by X.J. Kennedy, found in Janeczko's *Favorite Poetry Lessons* (pages 85-86), to show examples of both kinds of comparisons. Langston Hughes, in his poem entitled "Dreams," used metaphors to compare life without dreams to a broken-winged bird and also a barren field. A good follow-up lesson would be a dialogical response in which students state their reactions to comparisons quoted from the poems. One child would write his/her interpretation of the quote and another child would react to the first student's response. Students could also think of other things that life without dream is.

The above-mentioned strategies are scaffolds for the remaining parts of the unit. By this time students would have understood the fundamentals of poetry. One important part of the structure to build literacy is reading comprehension. For the next few months (January- April), I will focus on poetry using the CMT objectives. Here, the lessons serve multiple purposes. They will be based on seasonal themes simultaneously integrating the disciplines and meeting the need for responses to open-ended questions. I will use many of the poems to reinforce concepts learned in social studies and science.

January: Free Verse

Introduce **free verse** by integrating science with weather as the theme. Read aloud one of two poems taken from Arnold Adoff's *In for Winter, Out for Spring* . These poems relate a young girl's experience of turbulent spring weather in her rural Midwest setting.

Arnold Adoff has remarked that the physical shape of a poem should contribute to its meaning. Students should use the sensory details in the poems to make a drawing of what they think the illustration should look like. Reveal an illustrated copy for students to compare with theirs. Discuss with students what makes this poem unusual. Here is a short excerpt of both poems.

(1) My Brother Aaron Runs Outside To Tell Us There Is A Severe

Thunder

Storm

Warning

(2) Clouds Are Black

And

Dark Green This Afternoon

Have students draw conclusions about the poet's purpose for the shape of the poems. What clues does the poet give about the speaker's feelings? Another free verse poem that is appropriate for this theme comes from sequential poems written also by Adoff. These are collectively titled "Tornado! Poems".

February: Ballads

Prepare for Presidents' Day celebration by discussing the ballad entitled "Abraham Lincoln: A Man for all the People," by Myra Cohn Livingston. This coincides with the social studies theme on the Civil War. The poet disseminates a great deal of civil and political information about the former President. She relates that he spoke of justice and liberty for all. She also mentions details from his profession as a lawyer to him being shot in his head by Booth. An open-ended question about the author's purpose would be appropriate to meet a CMT objective. Another objective is for students to use information from the text to write down two ideas they would use in a speech. In order to achieve these objectives, the students must be guided through the poem. First, I will read the ballad aloud, then have students read along with me. After the readings the students should realize that the poem is telling a story. Point out that it is heroic and tragic. "Booth shot him in his head." Set the criteria for the open-ended responses. Use graphic organizers to guide students' responses. The stanzas in this ballad are short and rhythmic so students will enjoy reading it, and as a result it becomes memorable. This poem is therefore a good piece to memorize, not so much by rote, but through repeated readings. One year I used this ballad for choral reading with all my classes. Each of my four

classes concentrated on two or three stanzas, thus making it easier to memorize. The students enjoyed reciting and were excited when I recorded their combined choral recitation. The teacher who has a single class could divide the class into four small groups and assign a section of the ballad to each group, then have the students recite in chorus as a whole class activity. Remember to make modifications for students with special needs. They could be given just one stanza to recite along with the students who have additional stanzas.

The Washington poem by Nancy Byrd Turner may also be used during this season. It tells about George Washington's childhood and shows how he did many things that children in his day did. For example, he played by the river.

March: Narrative

This is Women's History Month. The narrative poem by Eve Merriam titled "Elizabeth Blackwell" is found in *Independent Voices*. Eve Merriam is especially interested in women's rights. She tells the story about a young woman named Elizabeth Blackwell who applied to enter medical school in the 1840s, when women were not permitted to study medicine. The following lines from one stanza reveal the discrimination against women during that period.

Now Elizabeth Blackwell, how about you?

Seamstress or teacher, which of the two?

You know there's not much else that a girl can do.

She, however, became the first woman in the United States to be formally trained as a physician. The vocabulary in this poem is somewhat advanced, so the teacher will need to plan to use vocabulary strategies before the students read the poem. Some unfamiliar words may be: indubitably, anatomy, disguise, hoyden, sanctuary, sinister, contaminated, and fumigated. An effective strategy to define these words, as well as to establish background for the poem, is presenting a passage with context clues for these words. I have appended a passage I constructed. This is just a suggestion. Of course, by the time I get ready to execute this lesson I may have a better 'story line' or more precise context clues. Summarizing this narrative would be a worthwhile activity pertinent to the CMT objectives. Cooperative groups of three or four students will produce a Reader's Theater script.

April: Ballads Revisited

Another ballad that could be integrated with social studies is "Paul Revere's Ride," by Longfellow. This makes an effective connection with the study of the American Revolution. Longfellow uses vivid words to paint a mental picture of the events of the night as the British were advancing to attack the Americans. This is an excellent piece to have students visualize, and illustrate. Each student could illustrate a stanza, after which a series of pictures could be combined to make a picture story of the event, or a comic strip. Students should be encouraged to maintain a response journal for these lessons. Teachers could scan samples of these activities and save them for future lesson extensions and the culminating activity.

May: Poetry Writing Workshops

The month of May is reserved for composing poems. These workshops will be conducted three days each week. Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School has a technology center to accommodate an entire class. Each classroom is also equipped with four to six computers so the students have easy access. Teachers who do not have computers for all students to use at once may set up writing centers in their classrooms and have students rotate or sign up for computer time. The workshops will be set up with tools and technology for writing. Students will be provided with several children's books on poetry and other relevant subjects, post-it notes, computers installed with word processing software, pens, pencils, and markers. Students should also have a special section of their notebook for poetry writing workshop. I will encourage students to select books from the library and use the post-it notes as bookmarks for poems they like or would like to share. They may also download or bookmark their favorite poems from the Internet. By this time of the year most skills and strategies in all disciplines would have already been taught. Also, students would have had a great deal of practice using language devices, forms and patterns, and the elements of poetry. Each week's workshops will highlight one of these features: poems on pictures, places, and people relating to the concepts they encounter in other disciplines. This will assist students in developing and improving their comprehension, creative thinking, and usage of literary devices. The activities in the workshop will include independent and collaborative writing, peer conferences, teacher conference and mini-lessons. Students are expected to write at least one poem each week. They will have the freedom to compose any of the three forms: free verse, ballad, or narrative in the form of couplet rhymes.

Poems about Pictures

Day One

Use Shirley McPhillips' interesting insights to teach writing poetry based on pictures. In *A Note Slipped Under the Door*, she uses Cynthia Rylant's poem, "Photograph" as a mentor poem along with Walker Evans' photograph- a piece from a collection about the Great Depression. A section of the poem reads.

....even though he didn't have
nothing good to hold in his hands,
nor even a dog to sit by his chair.

She read several poems by Rylant to the class so the students could get the poet's voice and a sense of the poet's style. Shirley also briefly explained the Great Depression to set a background to the poem. Afterwards the students speculated why the poet chose that picture when they were so many others. She went on to have students bring in photos about themselves and discussed their associations and how they were attached to their photos. My intended purpose is for students to use poetry as a vehicle to convey what they learn across disciplines, so the personal photos are not very appealing to me. However, since students have included personal photos in their autobiographies (according to the specifications), this could be a good way of reflecting on the beginning of the year.

Day Two

I will have various pictures depicting themes from social studies and science. Students would have already

gained background knowledge from their studies of these themes during the previous months. McPhillips identifies four phases in the structure of Rylant's poem that could be used as a guide for writing poems about pictures.

- 1) Backs up a moment- the character's action prior to being snapped.
- 2) Internal thought- the character's thoughts about the photographer.
- 3) Details- at least two things the character lacks that makes him wonder why the photographer has interest in him.
- 4) Speculation- the character thinks that there is certainly something about him that interests the photographer.

This structure seems to work well for pictures that include people. One would have to work out a different structure for pictures that do not include people. I would guide students to think of the time period and the events that occurred during that period. We would speculate about the photographer's interest in the setting and the impact the picture has on our lives.

Day Three

It would be interesting to compare the outcomes of having one group of students compose poems from a given picture, and another group draws pictures from the newly composed poems. Since I interact with at least four groups of students, another group could draw pictures from the original poem. Eventually, all this work could be compared with the original poem and its original work of art. Teachers in self-contained classes may set up learning centers for each of my three proposed activities. Another extension could be a guided tour at an art gallery with specific paintings to study. This would probably be more appropriate for the upper grades, especially if students do not have easy access to prints of the paintings. Grade five students may have difficulty remembering the paintings, although note taking should be done. However, if photographs or slides are available at school, the task would be more feasible and more effective. There are also many websites that offer works of art.

Poems about Places

Many children have connections to a special place. Students sometimes write essays about their favorite hideaways or a special place they like to go on vacation.

Day One

During the first workshop about places, teachers may talk about places they remember or somewhere that brings nostalgic feelings. Read aloud a poem about a place. "Lincoln Park" written by Myra Cohn Livingston (Worlds I Know and Other Poems, page 37) makes an appropriate historic connection. The first stanza reads:

If you go up North Second

and walk to the left

you can see where Lincoln stood

Another of Myra's poem, "My Cousin's Dollhouse", may be used with a more social connection. Have students quickly sketch in their notebooks what they visualize from the

poems. Take a few moments for students to share their sketches, then discuss any line from the poem that seems to be reflected in many sketches. Talk about the objects that represent these places. For example, in "Lincoln Park", the object is the monument. In "My Cousin's Dollhouse" it's a doll. Here are few lines from the first stanza.

In the dollhouse
in the brown room
sits a doll.

Day Two

Students should come to this workshop with a place in mind for which they have some connection. Encourage but do not compel students to think about a museum or other significant buildings in their town or state. During the second workshop, have students generate ideas and images about their places of choice. A few questions students should keep in mind are:

What do I see or hear in this place?

How do I feel when I go there?

What happens here?

How is this place connected to me, or to something I hear or read about?

Students may do research using reference materials, technology, or personal inquiries.

Day Three

Students should put their ideas together, giving factual and specific details in poetic form. Encourage the use of similes and metaphors. Always have students share before each session ends. Extend the composition for homework assignment.

Poems about People

Writing poems about people will stem from biographies. "Biographies help children develop an understanding of historical periods and the people who contributed to them. Poetry enhances that understanding of the people and the times." (Three Voices, pages 92-93.) Students would have studied biographies during Black History and Women's

History months and perhaps at other times and in other disciplines. Some of these biographies will be reserved for this series of workshops.

Day One

Students should brainstorm names of people they encounter in their studies, such as scientists, mathematicians, civil rights leaders, astronauts, or explorers. Read a one-page biography to students. Then on chart paper, write separate lines for each significant detail about that person's life. Each student could supply one fact. Review the nature of the details- the important events, the contributions to life, the determination, discouragement, and the feelings or sense of personal change they evoke. Students may want to jot these details down in their poetry notebooks. Remind students of the Ballad of Abraham Lincoln and the Washington poem. Read one of these again and analyze it, looking for the details mentioned above. Return to the chart paper and collaboratively work with students to rearrange the lines into poetic form on an overhead transparency. Do a mini-lesson on line breaks. Experiment with line breaks by placing them at different parts in the text, each time having the students read aloud, pausing for meaning, suspense, or to slow down.

Day Two

Student pairs browse through historical fiction, informational books, and biographies in books and on the Internet to choose a person as their subject. They look for important events in their subjects' lives and note them in their poetry notebook.

Day Three

Pairs of students work together to write a poem about their subject. This is a good time to write **free verse** poems. They should not worry about rhyming, as this may distort the truth about their subject.

The last week in May will be devoted entirely to revision of students' compositions, although there would have been continuous conferencing among students and between teacher and students, prior to this week. Revision can be very demanding, but is necessary in order to produce pieces that deserve to be published. In her book, *For the Good of the Earth and Sun*, Georgia Heard lists suggestions to help students distance themselves from their poems and take a critical stance. To ensure that their poems are carefully revised the students should:

- Delete unnecessary words, phrases, or sections.
- Replace a string of words with one word, when possible.
- Break the lines in different places to see what works best.
- Rearrange lines or stanzas.
- Use the active voice rather than the passive, where possible.
- Experiment with several titles until they find one that has the most effective connection to the poem.
- Be sure to have an ending that gives a feeling of completion. Examine the poem to see if an effective ending is misplaced.
- Check the mechanics of the English, especially spelling.
- Type a clean copy.

Assessment & Evaluation

At the close of the workshop, students will complete a self-evaluation. Students and teachers could work together to create rubrics for the finished products. A single rubric could be designed to show a column for the students' self-evaluation and one for the teacher's evaluation based on the criteria established by the teacher.

June: Poetry Celebration

Since my school emphasizes the arts and academics, I will collaborate with the music, theater, and visual arts departments so the expertise of those teachers will enrich my teaching, thus making students' learning more effective. For instance, the students, under the guidance of the music teacher, may put music to the "Washington" poem. Students will sense the collaboration and integration, and will make connections that will reinforce learning. Products of this unit include poetry picture books, reader's theater scripts, taped recitations of choral reading, and anthologies of poems.

The end of the year is filled with excitement. A short assembly will allow the students to have fun showing off their learning. Performances will include live choral recitation of the "Lincoln" poem, the "Washington" poem being sung, the Readers' Theater script dramatized, and individual readings or recitations of students' compositions. The anthologies, illustrations, and picture books will be displayed in strategic areas of the building for the school community to view.

Sample Lesson Plans

I have made a conscious effort to include three detailed lesson plans that reflect three different parts of the unit. These lessons are progressive, but have gaps within the sequence from one to another. In other words, one or many other lessons may come between each of these samples.

Lesson One

Topic: Figurative Language

Objective:

Students will demonstrate a critical stance by analyzing the poet's use of metaphors and similes.

Prior Knowledge:

Students are able to distinguish between metaphors and similes.

Materials:

Overhead projector, transparency with X. J. Kennedy's "Ten Little Likenesses", copies of "Dreams" by Langston Hughes, and highlighter.

Procedure:

1. Project the poem, "Ten Little Likenesses". Share reading aloud, alternating stanzas with students. Briefly review the difference between a simile and a metaphor. Volunteers highlight examples of metaphors and similes on the projected overhead transparency.
2. Discuss the second stanza, in which Kennedy uses a simile to make the comparison that the six black appleseeds are sleek as the beetles' backs. What sensory details does the poet use?
3. Continue the discussion using examples of metaphors. For example, the last stanza states, "the river flows down to its delta and sets sail on the sea." Ask students to tell what things are being compared. Explain that the poet uses this metaphor to give us a mental image of the river. Students tell what they visualize, hear, or feel.

Follow-up Activity:

Students read Langston Hughes' "Dreams" with a partner. Each student begins a dialogical response (a two-column chart showing two students' reactions to the same quote) by quoting the two comparisons in the poem, then reacting to each quote.

Assessment:

Informally assess, checking students' understanding through interpretation of the quotes. Pay special attention to the English language learners.

Lesson Two

Topic: Building Vocabulary for "Elizabeth Blackwell" poem.

Objectives:

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Students will...

- use context clues and structural analyses to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words in a passage.
- build background to the poem.
- listen to understand and appreciate the poem.

Materials:

Overhead projector, transparencies with a passage and the poem, chart paper, and marker

Prior Knowledge:

Students know how to use different types of context clues.

Procedure:

1. Project the transparency with the passage, and say the key words while highlighting them. (See the passage in Appendix 1.)
2. Read the passage aloud, then have students read it aloud.
3. Guide students to look for clues in the passage or part of a word to determine its meaning. Write the words and their meanings on chart paper. Encourage students to copy the words and meanings in their vocabulary notebook.
4. Display the transparency with the poem, and read aloud while students follow silently. Inform the class that they will analyze the poem at a later time.

Follow-up Activity:

Students write a brief summary of the poem.

Extension:

Small groups of 3-4 students write a Readers' Theater script.

Lesson Three

Topic: Poems on Pictures

Objectives:

Students will...

- make connections between photographic images and the story told in poetic form.
- identify point of view.

Materials:

A picture, a related poem, and students' personal photos.

Procedure:

1. Present a picture related to a theme or era. Talk about the images in the picture. Discuss the events of that period.
2. Read aloud a poem pertaining to the picture. Students listen as they look at the picture. Talk about the voice-point of view, tone and style- the poet uses.
3. Students reflect on photos in their autobiographies (compiled at the start of the year). They make notes of memories, attachments, or connections they have to their personal photos.

Homework:

Students use the first person point of view to compose a poem about their photos. (Save poems for poetry writers' workshops.)

Follow-up Activity:

Next day, students will share their photos and poems in small groups.

Assessment:

Assess students informally. Check for usage of the first person point of view.

Appendix 1

Presenting Vocabulary for "Elizabeth Blackwell" Poem

Until the 1800s women did not have the same rights as men. Women could not vote. They could not sue in court. Also, they were not allowed to enter professions such as law and medicine. Clearly, or indubitably, men were in control. Only men could get a degree from the study of the human body - also known as anatomy. When one woman decided to enter medical school, her friends suggested she disguise herself by dressing like a man. This sinister action, or evil plan, would be troublesome to the men in the medical profession. Since she wants to act like a man, she would be called a hoyden.

This woman would soon need a sanctuary. This place of protection would help her escape harsh treatment from both men and women. Other women would try to avoid her as if she will contaminate them. If they get contaminated they would need to be fumigated to cleanse them from her harmful germs.

Resources

Teachers' Bibliography

Cullinan, Bernice, et al. *Three Voices: An Invitation to Poetry Across the Curriculum*. Stenhouse, ME, 1995. In this book three teachers give practical approaches to the teaching of poetry. They show how students respond to their teaching methods and provide samples of the students' work. Each section contains a description of a strategy, a vignette, and a list of extensions giving more ways the strategies may be adapted.

Flynn, Nick and McPhillips, Shirley. *A Note Slipped Under the Door...* Stenhouse, ME, 2000. This gives an up-close look on how to provide inquiry around selected poems. The book includes mini-lessons from initiation to culmination. Samples of students' work at various stages of writing are included. The conversations that occur within the classroom make the lessons insightful.

Heard, Georgia. *For the Good of the Earth and Sun: Teaching Poetry*. Heinemann, New Hampshire, 1989 Georgia Heard offers a method of teaching poetry at all levels. Elementary teachers are given a glimpse into another teacher's world- her mistakes and her successes. The dialogue between teacher and students is insightful and invaluable.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett. *Pass the Poetry, Please!* Citation Press, New York, 1972 This poet-teacher and anthologist offers several proven strategies for using poetry in every discipline in the elementary school.

Janeczko, Paul B. *Favorite Poetry Lessons: Scholastic*, 1998 Writing from his personal experience and interaction with students, Janeczko compiles lessons that are thorough, but easy to use or adapt. In each section, he includes a full-page reproducible poem with suggestions for its use as a model poem.

Koch, Kenneth. *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children*. Random House, New York, 1973. This book gives an introductory essay describing Koch's teaching method with subsequent chapters explaining his approach in teaching children to read and enjoy poems. He gives insights into his students' work by including a large collection of the poems they produced from his instruction and interaction with them. He also includes an anthology of great poems to teach children and

suggests methods to teach each of these poems.

Packard, William. *The Poet's Dictionary: A handbook of Prosody and Poetic Devices* . Harper & Row, New York, 1989. This is a dictionary of poetic terms, examples, and explanation of how the terms are used.

Roethke, Theodore. *On Poetry & Craft*. Copper Canyon Press, WA, 2001. The Foreword by Carolyn Kizer gives insights into the methods that the author used in his own teaching. The book offers advice to young writers, and provides insights that will help teachers become passionate about teaching poetry composition as an integral part of writing.

Ryan, Margaret. *How To Write A Poem*. A Franklin Watts Library Edition, Danbury, CT, 1996. A step-by-step approach to composing poems. It is an easy to read book that gives clear instruction on working with rhythm and aural texture. The poetic elements and their uses are concisely discussed.

Students' Bibliography

Adoff, Arnold. *In for Winter, Out for Spring*. Harcourt Brace Jovanich, New York, 1991. Arnold presents a journal of free verses written from the perspective of a child. The poems show the child's interaction with her family, as the seasons change throughout the year. Jerry Pinkney has given bright and vivid illustrations.

Adoff, Arnold. *Tornado! Poems*. Delacorte Press, New York, 1977. This is a book of free verse poems describing a tornado and its aftermath. The black and white pictures show the gloom of the disaster.

Clinton, Catherine. *I, Too, Sing America*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA, 1998. The book begins with Langston Hughes' poem bearing its title. This collection of poetry presents brief biographies of the poets and notes about the poems. The pictorial interpretation of the poems are unusual and may be thought provoking.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett. *My America*. Simon & Schuster, NY, 2000. Fifty poems grouped by geographical regions give an insight of the character of America. Maps of the regions and facts about the states complement the textured artwork. The poems are a collection of works of renowned poets.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett. *Lives: Poems About Famous Americans*. Harper Collins, 1999. Sixteen famous Americans with distinctive personalities are presented in this collection of poetic portraits. The book also features a short biographical sketch of each of these men and women.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett. *Spectacular Science* . Simon & Schuster, NY, 1999. This is a collection of science related poems selected by Hopkins. The works of several poets, including pieces by the author, are compiled and attractively illustrated.

Janeczko, Paul B. *The Place My Words Are Longing For*. Bradbury Press, NY, 1990. An anthology of poems written by several poets, this is a collection of poems about friends, neighbors, parents, love, and various objects. It also presents a short discussion about the poems written in the poets' own voices.

Kennedy, X.J. and Dorothy M. *Knock at a Star: A Child's Introduction to Poetry* . Little, Brown & Co. 1999. A great collection of poems for children categorized under headings that teachers could refer students to. It gives an explanation of pertinent literary devices as well as suggestions for teachers.

Livingston, Myra Cohn. *O Frabjous Day!* Atheneum, NY, 1977. This book is a collection of poetry for holidays and special occasions edited by Livingston. It includes poems from various countries and time periods- from Biblical times through the twentieth century.

Livingston, Myra Cohn. *Worlds I Know and Other Poems*. Atheneum, NY, 1985. These poems are a special collection of objects and imagery in a child's world. They appeal to and reflect the special moments of childhood.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *Paul Revere's Ride*. Dutton Children's Books, NY, 1990 This is a well-illustrated picture book presenting history in poetic form. It recreates the events in 1775 when Paul Revere rode at midnight to warn the people of the Boston countryside that the British were coming.

Merriam, Eve. *Independent Voices*. Atheneum, New York, 1968. Merriam presents a collection of verses in honor of distinguished Americans in history. The narrative poems relate the challenges they faced and their accomplishments.

Whipple, Laura. *Celebrating America*. Philomel Books, NY, 1994. This collection of poems and images of the American spirit integrates art work with a variety of the poetic styles of several poets. It presents the characteristics of the land and people as well as other aspects of the American life.

Other Resources

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (HBJ). NY. Grade 5 Literature Cassettes:

- "Tornado Alert!"
- "Tornado! Poems"
- "Elizabeth Blackwell"

Photos and pictures from the Internet and art galleries.

<http://gallery.yahoo.com/>

<http://www.fs.fed.us/npnht/gallery>

<http://www.zazzle.com/collections/products/gallery>

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