



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2011 Volume III: The Sound of Words: An Introduction to Poetry

A Study of Poetry in Middle School

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.03.07
by Elizabeth Trojanowski

Using a quote from Suniti Namjoshi, an Indian poet and writer, this unit asks students to write a series of poems reflecting their human animal. Namjoshi's quote, "Poetry is the sound of the human animal," is the inspiration. Middle-school students are unique in their own way and, as teenagers, need to find a positive, safe place to find their inner creature and give it voice. This unit intends to unleash that animal from within students through a poetic unit seeded in language-arts skills but nourished by imagination and sound.

Middle-school students will build an arsenal of crafts in each lesson to answer the question "How can you express your human animal in words, sounds, and emotion?" Each of the poems studied can model or inspire a different craft for each section of the unit. The crafts studied within the unit include onomatopoeia, simile, metaphor, word choice, personification, sound, and metric pattern. Students will write a collection of authentic poetry culminating in the "Animal" poem which responds to the original quote by Namjoshi.

(Recommended for English Language Arts, grades 6-8)

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