



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Teaching Poetry in New Formats to Intermediate-Grade Students

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A major problem facing teachers of writing is how to motivate their students to write poetry. Most teachers have heard one of their students complain, “I can’t write poetry” or “I don’t know what to write.” Either students have never had a positive experience with poetry and as a result they dislike it, or they have never been exposed to poetry. We, as teachers, can either ignore this area of creative writing, or we can try to overcome this negative attitude toward poetry. From its inception, I have tried to make this a unit that will serve a purpose: providing the classroom teacher with many specific ideas and resources for teaching poetry to intermediate grade students. This unit deals with the skills needed by the students in order to write poetry, skills needed by the teacher of creative writing and specific examples of poetry in new formats.

Although the unit often suggests activities that might be useful in teaching a particular skill, the teacher can choose those materials and strategies that he or she wants to use, without being locked into prescribed lesson plans. Most of the activities and approaches included in this unit were developed for and used successfully with my own classes. I feel confident, therefore, that many other teachers will find them practical and useful. If we don’t teach writing, whether it be poetry, prose, or composition, who will in our schools? It is our responsibility to offer students the opportunity to write as much as possible, for it is a lifetime skill essential for them to learn.

(Recommended for 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade English and ESOL.)

Key Words

Writing Poetry Instruction

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