



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1985 Volume I: Poetry

Room 20 School of Poetry

Guide for Curriculum Unit 85.01.01
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My unit will be presented as a series of “workshops” offering my sixth grade students a structured and exciting study of poetry. The workshop format will provide structure; our discussions and writings will provide excitement. The format is based on that developed by Neil Baldwin; I will make modifications which address specific student needs and interests. Briefly stated, the format stresses listening, discussion and writing skills; the connectedness of the skills is crucial. The study of particular poems is intertwined with the study of poetry in general.

I have chosen the poetry of Nikki Giovanni and Eve Merriam to form the core of the unit. There are many reasons for my choice: the poets are women; one is black, one is white; one is young, one is old. The most important reason, however, is that children respond enthusiastically to the works of these poets.

Many of the poems in the unit will be the “slightly less than sweet” works of Giovanni and Merriam. In the early part of the unit, paired poems which promote discussion and understanding of basic poetic concepts will be studied. The more “adult” poems will be used to elicit the heartfelt discussions and writings waiting to be brought to fruition by my students. Since the writing of poetry is an important part of the unit, the poems to be studied (and the themes culled from them) must speak directly to my students. Writing begins immediately.

(Recommended for English or humanities classes, grades 6, 7, and 8)

Key Words

Poetry Writing Instruction

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