



Putting Poetry on Its Feet

Guide for Curriculum Unit 89.02.06
by Maggie Roberts

As a teacher of theater I am continually searching for writing that will stimulate my students' imagination and which will work well in a one-hour format. I remember my own enjoyment of poetry during my adolescence. Searching back through my memories I have tried to identify what I enjoyed about poetry and to put it into words here.

I have chosen 3 poems for this unit because of their inherent dramatic possibilities. Each poem deals with themes my students have probably encountered in their own lives. The reading I did consisted of poetry by Americans and prose by educators and theater professionals. I was particularly interested in developing activities that explore concepts applicable to both theater and poetry.

I developed my unit for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders who are students in theater, which is the subject that I teach. The lesson plans can stand alone or can be used consecutively.

The first concepts students address in order to work with drama are who, what, and where. Through discussion and improvisation we will explore the poems' themes, the characters' "objective", the central conflict, and the relationships presented in the poems. Structure, meter, and rhyme will be examined and utilized as students write their own poetry. Speaking poetry aloud develops good enunciation and listening skills. Because of the physical requirements of theater my primary purpose is to get students physically involved with the poems. Sensory exercises and games which use the words as music are included for this purpose.

As a result of this seminar, I have rediscovered and deepened my own pleasure in the reading and writing of poetry. I hope you do, too.

(Recommended for English classes, grades 5-12)

Key Words

Poetry Dance Musical Theater Drama American

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