



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1989 Volume II: Poetry

Reading, Writing, and Reciting

Curriculum Unit 89.02.07
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It's my belief that poetry, once queen of the arts and an important component in man's rise from the caves, has fallen on hard times, at least in Western culture. We pay muscle-bound football players millions of dollars to kick a bit of pigskin around, but not more than a handful of poets can live by their art. In Japan, Emperors write poetry and are proud of it; in Russia poets may be worshipped as Rock stars are in the U.S.; but only one president in my lifetime has called on a poet to be a part of an important ceremony, and none that I can recall has singled out any poets for special recognition in other ways. Even that kiss-of-death job, U.S. Poet Laureate, seems to have decayed into disuse. Poetry, which once was culture-bearer, historian, myth-maker, legendkeeper, and entertainer, all rolled into one, seems to have very little place in this society.

Obviously, no unit, however stellar, and no teacher, however gifted, can ever single-handedly do much to restore this art to its former state of glory—much less me, a humble 4th grade teacher in a typical city school. I struggle with the attempt to raise reading scores to a respectable level; hoping at the same time to provide some of the glimpses into those things that can lift horizons and give direction and meaning to life, among which I include poetry. Still, perhaps I can come up with an experimental unit that will give some New Haven children, for one school year, some sense of what poetry can do to enrich, celebrate, and liberate our daily life.

In the typical classroom, and mine is one, we use the basal reader system, with its constant check-tests and heavy record keeping. There is also a Language basal system with the same burdens. Struggling to bring all your charges up to "level" leaves little time for excursions into realms not provided for in the texts. It is true that recent texts try hard to provide for different forms of enrichment, and there are even small units on poetry in some of them. But I propose, in my 4th grade classroom, to try to recreate in microcosm some of the roles poetry has had in larger society. As real poetry is part of life, I want to make it an integral part of the curriculum. I want it to infiltrate reading, writing, math, social studies; I want it to give expression to my student's emotional and social exchanges.

And I want them to know that poetry is FUN.

This unit, then, is meant for use throughout the school year. It is designed to have a three-strand approach, which will sometimes overlap. Weekly lessons might employ any or all of the three strands. These weekly lessons, built into one subject or another, will pursue three overall aims: the intelligent reading and understanding of poetry; the acquisition of confidence in the ability to write poems; and the memorization and

recitation of some meaningful poetry from our common culture.

OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the year my overall objectives are these:

To expand students' experience and exposure to poetry by restoring it to a place of prominence in school activities and life in these ways:

1. ceremonial: assemblies, plays and projects
2. celebratory occasions: Halloween, Christmas
3. entertainment and shared experience: writing poems or reciting them to provide fun for each other

To increase students' higher thinking skills through analysis of the ideas, techniques, and devices employed by poets.

To widen experience with the many poetic forms and devices by urging students to use them as they write their own poems.

To give students a freer outlet for the expression of feelings and ideas through the poems they write.

To improve reading, expressive, and communicative skills through memorization of worthwhile poetry.

To "freight" student memories with poetry that will increase their chances of sharing in the wider cultural background of Western society.

To give, especially to those children of an introspective turn of mind—and there are always a few—the gift of poetic expression that will provide "touchstones" for personal experience throughout life.

All this may seem a bit grandiose in sum, but I am convinced that poetry isn't merely a form of entertainment, though it is that. When it's in touch with the things that matter, it can help to provide a framework of meaning for our lives, and help us understand better what it means to be human.

STRATEGIES: The three strand attack.

STRAND ONE: Reading poetry

Reading is a complex skill. In my school, most 4th grade children have mastered the basics of decoding and simple comprehension. Their oral reading skills, however, often are somewhat halting or unobservant of the nuances of meaning. They often cannot sort out the meanings of what they read through inference, comparison, or synthesis. They need experience in analyzing what they read, whether reading aloud or silently: who is speaking? What's going on around the speaker? What's the 'message' of the whole during?

Analysis of selected poems, using the "Great Books" discussion approach, can appreciably increase these skills. Homework assignments, with appropriate written prompts, can be added as they acquire facility. With grasp of meaning will come the ability to communicate the ideas of a poem orally and more fluently.

To get experience in reading aloud, and to give poetry its rightful place in this experience, I will use these approaches:

begin each day with poetry, read aloud by the teacher at first, then by children who have chosen a particular poem.

insert poetry, chosen or written by students, into every possible school occasion, such as assemblies honoring presidents or special achievers (Dr. King's birthday comes to mind). It's true that poems on Dr. King are as yet in short supply (quality ones, that is) but we can use poems kids write themselves which other kids can identify with and enjoy. Some really fine poets have written about Lincoln, and a few about Washington.

use poetry in conjunction with celebratory occasions, such as Halloween, our Christmas revels, May Day. If we can't find good ones, we'll write our own. At least they'll be tailor-made for the occasions.

create occasions to showcase poetry reading skills: exchanges with other classrooms, parent and literary "teas", using both chosen and student written poems.

record and do group and self-critiques of poetry readings. Did the way it was read do justice to the meaning? Was it appropriate to the mood? Did the pauses come in the right place?

use reading of poetry to enlarge concepts and understanding of other subjects, for example:

Math: Create verse form mnemonics to help memorize math facts. *Social Studies :* Find and read

aloud "work songs" from various occupations and cultures (Casey Jones, John Henry. Every culture has work songs; our 4th grade social studies text quotes a beautiful Eskimo caribou calling song for Eskimo hunters). *Science-Ecology:* Poems about animals, especially endangered species, of poems that touch on ecological issues. Stephen Spender's *The Snare* fits into the modern issue of leg-hold traps and Shel Silverstein's *Sara Sylvia Cynthia Stout* (who WOULD not take the garbage out!) are possible examples. *Grammar:* Poems obviously lend themselves to a study of parts of speech, especially adjectives and adverbs (think of the "adjectives" in Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*) . Children can rewrite a current "rap" song into grammatical form, or punctuate, capitalize, and put into lines that yield clearer understanding an e. e. cummings poem, such as *The Balloon Man*. *History :* There are of course many good poems, especially long narrative ones such as *Hiawatha* or *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*, which make wonderful group or choral readings. Many shorter poems, too, are biographical—based on famous figures like Columbus or Lincoln, which can start a fine discussion on historical happenings.

Cutting across the three basic strands of reading, writing, and reciting would be a concern for the claims of ethnicity—it's important to choose poems that grow out of the various students cultures and which contribute to all students' understanding of cultures other than their own. And since you want students to know that poetry can be fun, I'll choose some that are sheer fun, like Shel Silverstein's.

STRAND TWO: Writing Poetry

In early October or even with the first day in school, writing poems for various purposes will begin, along with daily readings of poems as part of our opening each day. Writing will continue weekly to the end of the school year. It will be necessary to set up a well-understood set of criteria for both reading aloud and for approaches to meaning. For reading aloud I usually set these:

1. It must be heard.
2. It should be accurate.
3. It should do justice to the meaning.
4. It should fit the mood of the poem.

As for criteria for approaches to meaning, I think students should be able to answer the questions of (1) who's the speaker, (2) what's the background? and (3) what's the purpose or 'message' of the poem? Fourth graders who can do that are well prepared to advance in the art of understanding poetry.

Writing sessions will begin with simple forms, such as acrostics haiku, couplets, etc., and progress through tankas, senyos, concrete poems, and two-word descriptive poems. Then we'll move through more difficult forms like lanternes, diamentés, cinquains, and rhymed forms. Along the way we'll touch on and make use of poetic devices, and rather tricky for 4th graders, limericks and clerihews.

Finally, I would like to try working from the model of an existing poem, after the manner of Kenneth Koch, for instance, as in his *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* I have read the Koch book mentioned but have been afraid to try it on my classes. That model, which takes off from the poetry of others, seems to encourage a freedom of expression, both in feeling and ideas, which would be new to me and might be fun for my class. If it works, I can add it to my teaching repertory with more confidence.

Obviously students should be encouraged to use poetry to express their feelings in writing sessions, and all far-out ideas should be welcomed. All poems except very personal ones (they usually tell you if they don't want to read it aloud) should be shared with the class, with ground rules firmly established: some poems ARE personal, and no poems will be read aloud which are pejorative for persons in the class, or for ethnic or religious groups.

Nothing encourages writing like an attentive audience, though, and I will work to develop this through monthly publication of a "literary magazine" which will be circulated among other classes at school and sent home to parents. This, of course, will be profusely illustrated and made as attractive and diverse as we can make it. Besides this, any poems written by students for a special occasion at school will be added to the program, and special bulletin board displays of interesting work will be arranged throughout the year.

We are fortunate to have in our school-parent population a published poet and writer for the *New Yorker* magazine, Alice Mattison. She has expressed willingness to come in and read her poetry and discuss how she gets her ideas and shapes them. We would take advantage of this resource early in the year.

All work will be done in spiral notebooks kept just for this area of activity. This allows students to look back on work from previous months and assess progress or perhaps make changes, since a poem is never finished until the poet says so. The notebooks also avoid that fourth grade disease, the I-don't-have-my-poem-teacher-because-the-cat-ate-it syndrome. It also assures a steady supply of material for the literary magazine and the school newspaper. The spiral poetry notebooks can be taken home at the end of the year to be kept as a record of all the forms and new ideas tried during the year.

In addition, as an art/writing project, we will develop, perhaps from the New Year on, an anthology of favorite poems for the class to pass on to next year's group. It will include favorites from among their own writings. Children who wish to do so could make personal anthologies as well. Covers and illustrations can be an additional source of fun and creativity.

An alternative to the personal anthology will include a "publishing" venture, creating a book that includes all the year's writing in printed form, since next year the school system hopes to place a computer with a working printer in each classroom. We can then branch into bookbinding, making covers with stitched bindings and handsome overleaves.

STRAND THREE: Reciting Poetry

In recent years—at least during the 17 years I have taught—memorization, or "rote learning", has been in disrepute. No one wants to revive the bad old days when almost all learning was done by rote. But I am sure many a teacher struggling to teach division to fourth graders wishes SOMEONE had forced a little rote learning on certain students who have absolutely no permanent recall of the multiplication tables. And I feel there are real values to the memorization of poetry, especially at this age, or, if I were Queen, even younger than fourth.

For example, I can still recite poems that my father, when I was 7 or 8, gave me a nickel apiece for memorizing (cheap enough, but it was the Great Depression), and they recur at odd but usually appropriate times of my life, proving their value in the culture. He learned them by heart in a tiny Kansas schoolhouse where the "basal" was *McGuffey's Eclectic Reader*.

There are many good reasons for having children memorize. First, in the effort to remember the lines of a poem and to make sense of them, they study it more closely and do a better job with the stopping place. Fourth graders have a regrettable tendency to call a marked halt at the end of every line, to the detriment of the meaning. If at the beginning of the school year we discuss standards to guide recitation—loud enough to hear, accurate as to content; and most of all, do justice to what the poem is trying to say, it's bound to improve their understanding of how to read a poem in general.

Second, the memory at age 9 and 10 is very receptive and retentive, and good poetry learned then sets an unconscious model for future exposures. It can also become part of a value system, as well as raising the level of taste if poems are chosen with care. If "there is no frigate like a book", there is little more precious freight that can be carried in the memory than the work of poets like Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, e. e. cummings, Langston Hughes, and William Blake, to mention a few of my favorites. Children get a real sense of accomplishment from knowing a beautiful poem, and this activity improves reading recognition skills, oral delivery, and fluency, and sharpens memory. I have done this regularly for years, and the children seem to

like doing it. Often a student returns to visit and proves they still can recite “Stopping by Woods” or “Ill tell you how the sun rose”, after the lapse of several years. Therefore it should be a worthwhile part of my Poetry Year.

In addition, there is a place for group memorization of choral readings when there is a special occasion where longer narrative poems or historical poems are suitable. I will use them particularly where some children are very shy of reciting alone, perhaps at assemblies, but can do well as part of a choral version or when they are part of a group that recites serially. Usually I find that many of the children in groups end up knowing the entire poem without trying, because of the practice necessary to perfect it.

So I will include memorization throughout the year, with a monthly memorization task. If there is no special occasion to learn poems for, we’ll create one: a contest, parent-school performance day, or because the poem fits a social studies or math or science unit.

The three strands of this unit will be intertwined in a not always predictable manner, because it depends on the vicissitudes of school and classroom life. But I feel sure that well accomplish enough through the school year to make the Poetry Year more than worthwhile, and I expect to learn a lot.

Implementation

Strand one, the intelligent reading and interpretation of poetry on a regular basis, I have dealt with earlier. I will incorporate a daily poem into opening exercises. Sometimes I will choose the poem and sometimes a student will be appointed to choose and read it. School assemblies and special occasions will also allow such readings, using appropriate poems. Sometimes we will take time out to question the reader on meaning or poetic devices employed by the poem. Sometimes we will seek discussion on whether read-aloud criteria have been met: was it loud enough? Did it do justice to the meaning? Was it read in an appropriate mood?

Other occasions for analysis will arise with poems from the readers. Other occasions for reading aloud with care will arise when preparing our “Revels” Christmas celebration, when everyone recites poetry along with dancing and singing, and again for the “Author’s Tea” listed in the calendar for June, when an adult audience—in addition to other 4th graders—will be invited.

Strand Three, regular memorization of poetry, has been incorporated into my calendar on a monthly basis. The poems chosen for memorization in this unit have some connection either with what is going on in the writing process, or a unit from some other subject than reading. I will submit copies of these mostly well-known poems to be kept on file with this unit in case anyone has difficulty finding them. These monthly assignments will be homework, with grades given to show serious intent. (They don’t take it seriously unless you do that, even in the 4th grade.)

The same basic criteria as for reading aloud will be sought, except that accuracy as to content and emphasis on dramatic delivery will be more important. Really shy children may be offered the chance to say it with two or three others, but they are usually willing to try it alone.

Strand Two, the writing of poetry on a regular, weekly basis, also appears on the school-year based calendar below. I have not included detailed lesson plans, because the approach is basically similar. We will have notebooks used just for poetry, which will allow us to see what progress we have made. In some cases, “brainstorming” is employed, to get a list of rhyming words, for instance, or a list of alliterative or onomatopoeic ones. Sometimes, as with a “sense” poem, it may be necessary to review the five senses and

list some samples of how they may be used. Sometimes—usually, in fact—it is helpful to discuss variations on ideas, as in a poem about war and its effects. If a particular form is asked for—a ballad, diamenté, a haiku—it helps to give the formula, and have the group as a whole write one like it. I usually ban colorless words like “nice”, and unless writing Clerihews or limericks or epitaphs, prohibit the use of names of people in our classroom. (This prevents verbal skirmishes that soon prevent more real attention to the task at hand.) I also make it clear that we are sharing to be helpful, and that ad hominem comments are out; we stick to constructive comments. Most students soon understand the ground rules and with a little boost, will try any form, once clearly delineated.

CALENDAR FOR A POETRY YEAR

September 7 (Opening day)

Children will write a “name” poem, acrostic in form, in which each letter of their names begins a phrase which they feel tells something about them. We share as part of get-acquainted activity.

September 11: Continuing the get-to-know-you theme, students will write a “Telephone number” poem, in which each digit of their phone numbers begins a phrase telling something about their families, and the number of syllables in the phrase is determined by the digit—a 9, for example, calls for a 9 syllable phrase. (Most 4th graders can tell how many syllables a word has, but you can show those who don’t how to clap it.)

September 18: We write a “personal poem”. Each student chooses a subject he cares about: skateboarding, Bat-Man, etc. He/she then lists all feelings and technical words connected with the subject and arranges them in poetic form. (A group-written poem on, say, school lunches, will get them off the ground.)

MEMORIZATION, September assignment: Since the first science unit of the year deals with insects, a good poem is “Design”, by Robert Frost (“I found a dimpled spider, fat and white”).

Gives you a chance to point out that a spider is not a true insect, and is a charming poem.

September 25: The fall review of math facts is underway, so we discuss couplets (perhaps with Rap rhythm?) and write couplets to use as mnemonics to help recall facts. It makes a good homework assignment, and the group can assemble their favorites into, say, a poem for remembering the 7 tables.

October 2: Columbus Day is coming up, so we write a “rap” celebrating the exploits of the doughty explorer, or for those who can master the quatrain (after suitable explanation) we can write a “Ballad” for him. These can be shared with the other 4th grade at Columbus assembly. Illustrations can be painted for a bulletin board based on the same.

October 10: Follow up on quatrains: write a ballad about a “tall Tale” personality (based on reader stories)—which can be as modern as Bat-Man or from history, like John Henry, the Steel Driving Man.

October 16: Now that they know what quatrains and couplets are, they could create a sonnet. We will need a discussion of elementary metrics to establish how long lines should be. Successful “sonneteers” get their sonnet posted in the hall and printed in the school newspaper.

MEMORIZATION, October assignment: This is usually the height of the leafcolor season, so we will memorize *God’s World*, by Edna St. Vincent Millay—“O World, I cannot hold thee close

enough”—a passionate celebration of autumn glory.

October 23: Haikus and tankas will represent a change of pace. The haiku, a 3-line poem following a 5-7-5 pattern of syllables, is usually about nature. It’s an easy form for most 4th graders. It will be followed by writing tankas, also a Japanese poetry form with five lines, unrhymed, with a 5-7-5-7-7 syllable pattern, which is a little more challenging.

October 30: Halloween is nearly here. We’ll read *Jabberwocky*, by Lewis Carroll, and discuss its lovely made-up adjectives and verbs. We’ll follow this by reading Humpty-Dumpty’s translation of the poem and then make up a monster of our own, using also made-up adjectives and verbs.

EXTRA MEMORIZATION TASK (top group): Memorize *Jabberwocky*. Contest for most dramatic presentation.

November 6: Week before Veterans’ Day is celebrated. We will write lantern poems, which take the shape of a Japanese lantern. Verses are strung together in a line, but each stanza has five lines with a syllable pattern of 1, 2, 3, 4, 1. They can be on any subject but we might emphasize peace between nations in the world as our basic concern.

MEMORIZATION, November assignment: We will memorize *A. E. F.*, by Carl Sandburg. This poem, which begins “There will be a rusty gun on the wall, sweetheart,” deals with the theme of the gradual turning of men away from the arts of war.

November 13: We write a definition poem: one that begins with a question: What is...? For example, we may use What is a friend?...a friend is someone who gives you half his last stick of bubblegum...etc.

November 20: Write a “sense poem” on a Thanksgiving theme . . . We’ll recall the sights, sounds, smells, etc. connected with that holiday and string them into poems.

November 27: We’ll write cinquains, single and double. A cinquain is a five line poem employing specific numbers of words in each line. In our version, the first line has two words and names the subject. The second line has four words and describes the subject. The third line has six words and gives actions the subject might be connected with. Line four describes your feelings about it, and line five has two words that give another name for the subject. A double cinquain doubles the number of words in each line but follows the same formula.

December 4: This week we’ll create “concrete” poems; poems that create a picture connected with their meanings on the paper. Haikus make good foundations for concrete poems, and children enjoy drawing a picture with the words.

December 11: We will write diamentes, a diamond shaped form with this formula: Line 1: a noun that names the topic. Line 2: two words that describe the topic. Line 3: three action words for the topic (-ing verbs). Line 4: a four word phrase describing your feelings connected with the topic. Line 5: three words that are action words. Line 6: two adjectives again. Line 7: another name for the subject. If time we will try “opposition” diamentes in which two nouns with opposite qualities are chosen, like laughter and tears, and halfway through the poem—in line 4—the antonym starts being described.

MEMORIZATION, December assignment: We’ll learn *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, by Robert Frost. This poem has been set to a lovely melody for children’s voices, and we will ask our music teacher if she might not teach it to us. It will also be used as one of the poems in our Christmas Revels later in the month.

December 18: We will take advantage of the colorful sights and excitement of the Christmas season to write “color” poems. We’ll discuss how color is tied into feelings, as in “I feel blue”. Even unrelated objects seem to be associated with color in our minds, and there are “hot” and “cool” colors, bringing in another of the senses. Then we begin: green is..., listing all the sights,

sounds, tastes, feelings that we associate with green. And then we'll each pick a color to write a poem about.

January 2: We're coming up to Martin Luther King's birthday, so we will write poems in praise of him and his work. The acrostic form that we used opening day is probably the easiest, but those who wish may use any form they feel comfortable with. I may read them "Let us now praise famous men" from the Bible and see if it inspires any parodies. The best will be displayed on the common hall bulletin board and read at our MLK assembly.

MEMORIZATION, January assignment: We will memorize in groups for a choral reading the long poem "Martin Luther King, Jr." by Gerda Lubritz, to be found in Instructor Magazine, which is a distillation of his life, and while it's not great poetry, it makes a good dramatic reading for our assembly (and will do till some real poets start writing about him).

January 8: We'll write "two-word poems", descriptive poems which use only two words to a line, as in "Big sister/Bossy, kind/sends me/ many times/ out of/my mind! There is no limit to the number of lines and they need not rhyme.

January 16: We will write "classified" poems, using teams. The teams will examine ads in magazines and newspapers for interesting descriptive phrases that could apply to one topic. Keeping in mind the demands of sense, they arrange these into a poem. Words may be substituted.

January 22: We'll try a tricky poem made up of phrases that begin with each letter of the alphabet in turn. Some compromise will probably have to be *made* with letters like X and Z, but it will be fun to see how far one can get in the alphabet before running out of steam on that particular subject.

January 29: We can't predict the weather that far off, but kids are usually itchy for some snow by this point in the winter. We will try to write a snow poem of some description. Any form so far learned can be used (they can leaf back in their notebooks to find a form that suits them).

February 5: Lincoln's birthday is coming soon. Washington's follows not long after. I will have been including stories about Lincoln and Washington in my (usually daily) reading aloud, which should assist them with material for some light biographical poems. This light verse form is based upon a person's name, which takes up the first line of the quatrain. It uses the rhyming pattern aa, bb, and should tell something about the named person. Since it's not easy for some kids to rhyme, they may be introduced to a thesaurus or a rhyming dictionary at this point, and it would be wise to have them compile a list of words that rhyme for resources. The best will go into the winter newspaper.

MEMORIZATION, February assignment: We will memorize for Lincoln's birthday the four verse poem, " *Nancy Hanks* ", by Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benét.

February 13: Since tomorrow is Valentine's Day, we will make up quatrains to fit valentines which we will be making in an art project. I'll read them some of the fun-making verses that old-fashioned valentines had, as well as some "sweet" ones, and they can choose which to do.

February 26: We'll soon make our annual pilgrimage to Worthington Hooker's grave in Grove Street. It might be fun to generate new words to our school song, which have grown a little trite over the years. It's based on an old western ballad in form, and will be easy to supply new words.

March 5: We'll write "lanterne" poems, which take the shape of a string of Japanese lanterns. It has five lines and a limited syllable count: one in the first, two in the second, three in the third, four in the fourth, and returning to one in the fifth. Verses are linked by subject as in a chain of lanterns.

MEMORIZATION, March assignment: We will memorize *The Wind* , by Robert Louis Stevenson.

March 12: We succumb to the advertising age by writing a commercial jingle. We'll review the ones students remember. We'll review the purpose of the jingle. Then we'll write some, with the subject either a real commodity or a ridiculous, made-up one. Since most jingles are quatrains it shouldn't be hard for them now.

March 19: With my top group, we'll read some of the Lear limericks—and Ogden Nash has some good ones. We'll analyze the rhyme pattern and the three-long-two-short line length. They might need to generate a list of good rhyming words. They need to be reminded that it's not funny if it doesn't make sense. Best ones for the spring newspaper.

March 26: The children will have had information on similes and metaphors in the course of their reading. We'll make a list of some of each kind. We'll write a group poem—probably rhyming—that contains at least one of each kind of comparison. I will read them some well known poems for them to pick out the kind of comparison they include.

April 2: We will be looking for examples of alliteration. We will doubtless discover that most good tongue-twisters are alliterative. We'll try to write some tongue-twisters of our own.

April 9: We'll be studying onomatopoeic words. We'll have a contest for the longest list of such words. We'll write couplets that employ onomatopoeia.

MEMORIZATION, April assignment: We'll learn *The Bells*, as a choral speaking piece. (Getting ready for author's tea?) Emphasis will be on the onomatopoeic devices Poe uses to convey the sound of the different bells.

April 23: The device of personification, turning "things" into "persons" by attributing to them human characteristics will be our focus. We'll write triplets in which objects do human things.

April 30: We'll focus on hyperbole—exaggeration for effect. We'll read some of Mark Twain's stories which depend on exaggeration—*Jumping Frog*, *The Bluejay*, etc. We'll write a series of "big lies" about ourselves, in couplet form.

May 7: We'll now turn to formless poetry, with greater emphasis on feelings. The first time I'll use the lesson in Kenneth Koch's *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* After reading William Blake's *The Tyger*, I will ask them to "talk to an animal" and ask it questions.

MEMORIZATION, May assignment: *Loveliest of Trees*, by A.E. Houseman.

May 14: Reminding the children of the nature of hyperbole, we'll use the "I wish" format devised by Kenneth Koch in *Wishes, Lies and Dreams*. In this kind of poem there are rules: each line must begin with "I wish" and has to include a color, a comic-strip character, and a place. We may think of other combinations of rules but will be trying for the wildest wishes possible.

May 21: By this time we will have chosen favorites for each child's anthology and will be creating "books" out of them, with attractive covers and inside facing leaves and now will each create a rhyming invitation to the Author's Tea at which we will share poems of all kinds, especially those we have written ourselves. I hope to locate a computer printer for the type, and each child will provide illustrations for their choices.

June 4: The Author's Tea will be this week. Our writing project will be epitaphs: I will read from a book of humorous ones, and we will create one for ourselves and one for some public figure.

Emphasis will be on humor but the poetic form can vary.

MEMORIZATION, June assignment: *A Narrow Fellow in the Grass*, by Emily Dickinson. The narrow fellow is a snake, of course.

June 11: A dual assignment will recognize the coming of promotion ceremonies when our 4th graders leave our school, since that's as far as we go: autograph rhymes (we will make a memory book to write the rhyming autographs in) and a poem in any form that celebrates or recalls life at our school. The best of these will be read at "graduation" ceremonies.

MEMORIZATION: Some of our memorization assignments may be recited for parents at our promotion ceremonies.

Student and Teacher Bibliography

The following books are those that I think would be most helpful to *teachers* in the practice of teaching or learning about the craft of poetry:

Anderson, Douglas. *My Sister Looks Like a Pear*. New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1974. The author has extensive experience as an itinerant teacher of poetry in the public schools and has a lot of practical suggestions for it.

Cheyney, Arnold B. *The Writing Corner*. Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1979. An extremely helpful book that deals extensively with poetic forms and methods of motivation. Also explains poetic devices and approaches to teaching them, lists of rhyming words, and methods of bookbinding.

Frank, Marjorie. *If You're Trying to Teach Kids to Write. You've Gotta Have This Book!* Nashville, Tennessee: Incentive Publications, 1979. Lively, very useful compendium of ideas and lesson plans—they're even timed and tagged as to age level—on teaching poetry (as well as other forms of writing).

Koch, Kenneth. *Rose. Where Did You Get That Red?* New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1974. A real poet, using the works of real poets as models, evokes astounding poetic response in the classroom. Mr. Koch provides an education in poetry for teachers as he teaches how to teach it.

Koch, Kenneth. *Sleeping on the Wing*. New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1981. This book was written for high school students and beyond. It is an anthology with explications, but wonderful suggestions for writing as well. Teachers can learn a lot about forms and terms from it.

Koch, Kenneth. *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams*. New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1970. Mr. Koch's first book, about teaching poetry in a New York City public school, again provides a wide range of poetry he used with the children and explanations of his approach and their responses.

Lipson, Greta Barclay, and Romatowski, Jane A. *Calliope*. Peoria, IL, Good Apple, Inc., 1981. This book, battered from use in my classroom, is "A handbook of 47 poetic forms and figures of speech." It is filled with lesson plans and ideas for activities.

Scholes, Robert. *Elements of Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969. For any teacher who feels insecure about terms, forms, and approaches to meaning, this is a delightful and practical as well as insightful book. It teaches teachers to teach.

There are many anthologies, but the following are useful collections which give a wide variety of poets and their works which to draw on for reading aloud or for use as models when the class is writing. This group is for the *teacher's use* and delectation.

Corbett, Brother Thomas, and Boldt, Rev. William J. *Modern American Poetry*. New York: Macmillan, 1965. This is a study guide with some unusual and tasteful choices in American poetry.

Corbin, Richard. *Poetry I*. New York: Macmillan, 1962. This is another high school study guide that has poems especially good for reading aloud. Besides touching on the background of the selections, it deals with purpose, images, shape, sound and language of poetry.

Greenfield, Stanley B., and Weatherhead, A. Kingsley. *The Poem: An Anthology*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968. A good basic collection.

Sanders, Gerald Dewitt; Nelson, John Herbert; Rosenthal, M.L. *Chief Modern Poets of England and America*, 4th Ed. New York: Macmillan, 1969. This is a useful two volume collection of British and American poets.

Aldington, Richard, editor. *The Viking Book of Poetry of the English Speaking World* . New York: Viking Press, 1944. A very thorough collection with helpful indexes. There are later editions but all are good.

Untermeyer, Louis. *The Pocket Book of Robert Frost's Poems* . New York: Pocket Books, 1946. This collection has most of the Frost poems usable with younger school children.

Williams, Oscar. *Immortal Poems of the English Language*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1964. A useful paperback collection.

Williams, Oscar, and Honig, Edwin. *The Mentor Book of Major American Poets*. Also useful paperback specializing in three centuries of American poets.

This is a group of collections of poems especially of interest to *children*. These need to be available to students since part of this unit calls for class members choosing and reading aloud favorite poems, and children's collections, though they may contain some poems of dubious value, are attractively presented, selected for readability by students in grammar school, and are readily available through book clubs prevalent in our classrooms.

Carroll, Lewis. *Jabberwocky and More Nonsense* . New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964. Jabberwocky and several of Louis Carroll's funniest poems, nicely illustrated.

Clymer, Eleanor. *Arrow Book of Funny Poems*. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1961. Some excellent poets have written for children, and quite a few can be found here.

Cole, William. *Poem Stew*. New York: Harper & Row, 1981. Tasteful choices from good writers, well displayed with charming pictures.

Dunning, Stephen; Lueders, Edward, and Smith, Hugh. *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle . . . and Other Modern Verse* . Another tasteful collection with some of the best poets.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett and Arenstein, Misha. *Faces and Places: Poems for You*. New York: Scholastic Book Services. Also a good collection, illustrated.

McGovern, Ann. *Arrow Book of Poetry*. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1965. A good collection with a somewhat wider choice of form. Good on Haiku.

Merriam, Eve. *Jamboree, Rhymes for All Times* . Eve Merriam is very popular with 4th and 5th graders; she's funny and deals with the real stuff of kid's lives, especially in school. Poems tend to fit in with various subjects that arise in the classroom.

Merrill, Jean, and Solbert, Ronni, editors. *A Few Flies and I Haiku by Issa* . (Translated by R.H. Blyth) A delicate book of Haiku translated from the Japanese with an excellent exposition of the nature of the Haiku. Tiny, dainty illustrations.

Smith, William Jay. *Laughing Time*. Good, funny read-aloud poems that children enjoy and could make good starters for their own.

Stevenson, Robert L. *A Child's Garden of Verses*. New York: Avenel Books, undated. This book, a little dated and apt to be purchased by maiden aunts out of touch with juvenilia, still has some poems kids just like to hear, and for those it's useful.

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