



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1991 Volume IV: Recent American Poetry: Expanding the Canon

---

## **The Use of Puppetry to Increase Self-worth Through the Windows of Poetry**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 91.04.08  
by Geraldine Martin

In my paper I have explored ways in which ventriloquism and puppetry can be integrated into a unit for teaching young children about poetry. As a key component to my unit, I have emphasized the active participation of children in using puppetry to read and discuss poetry, as well as, writing it. Focused activities will be implemented in the classroom throughout the school year, using puppetry and poetry as vehicles for the creation of opportunities to increase the use of reading and language arts. In addition supplementary activities will be suggested for an eight-to-ten week after-school program.

I am a self-taught ventriloquist and presently teach first grade in an inner-city school setting where many of the students lack the primary skills for reading readiness and writing. Along with a need for improved vocabulary, many children exhibit low self-esteem and have difficulty conveying their thoughts and feelings. Puppets provide a beautiful tool which children perceive as non-threatening and can relate to on a peer basis. Puppets can break down barriers and help to achieve communication and self-identity goals in a relatively short span of time. As an example of how poetry and puppetry will be integrated, each student will have the opportunity to make his/her own puppet along with discovering a unique voice and developing a specific character. The art of helping the puppet become alive will be explored and experienced.

“Wednesday Delight” (a classroom puppet) will introduce a new poem each Wednesday to the children in class. She will aid the children in their class discussion of the poem. Poems will be chosen from a wide range of American poets with diversified multi-ethnic backgrounds. The children will become acquainted with a variety of subjects found in poetry. This will be accomplished by bringing an activity to the children relative to their own experience. For example, along with Nikki Giovanni’s poem “James Shell’s Snowball Stand,” the children will have the opportunity to feel the ice balls, followed by putting their own toppings on snowcones and eating them.

After being introduced to a poem, the children will then be asked to write and illustrate a poem about a similar experience. The children will have the opportunity to read their poem with their puppet. The children’s poems will be compiled into a class book and placed in the classroom library.

(Recommended for Reading/Language Arts, grade 1)

### **Key Words**

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>