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1994 Volume II: Poetry in the Classroom: Incentive and Dramatization

Sharing Poetry with Children

Guide for Curriculum Unit 94.02.02
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Poetry is an aspect of literature that is often neglected in the elementary classroom, especially after the third grade. This can be attributed to teachers' lack of confidence in dealing with the subject, and the sparsity of poetry included in most current reading texts. The curriculum unit: "Sharing Poetry with Children," suggests ways of getting students interested in poetry which avoids heavy emphasis on memorization and over-analysis. Most research suggests that a simple three-to-five week unit on poetry during the year is not the way to truly cultivate a love of poetry in students. To build confidence and interest in poetry, its study must be an ongoing activity in the elementary classroom. The unit offers suggestions on how poetry can be integrated into the content areas. It is further suggested that the poetry studied should include all kinds—from nonsense to the more traditional. The unit discusses the view expressed by author Kenneth Koch that what is termed adult poetry can be made accessible to elementary-age children. The connection between reading and writing poetry as another way to get children to communicate their ideas is also discussed. My research suggests that discussions and writing assignments should arise from the students' emotional reaction to the poems. Any analysis of poetic devices should be done only to the extent that it serves to further illuminate and expand the students' understanding of a poem. The unit also includes a bibliography of children's poetry, and references for teachers.

(Recommended for Reading, grades 3-6)

Key Words

Poetry Reading Writing Instruction Spanish General

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