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ABSTRACT

Suggesting that poetry can be inserted into any classroom in any curricular area, this paper discusses reading and writing poetry in middle school classrooms. The paper begins with advice on reading poetry in content classrooms, and then presents a 31-item bibliography of poetry sources "for browsing." The paper then presents tips for writing content poems and a 10-item bibliography on writing poetry. It then presents descriptions, teaching methods, and samples of 10 types of poems: acrostics, biopoems, cinquain poems, concrete poems, diamante poetry, found poetry, letter poems, list poems, recipe poems, and visual response poetry. (RS)

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EXTENDING LITERACY ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES: READING & WRITING POETRY IN MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

Microworkshop 21
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by

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READING POETRY IN CONTENT CLASSROOMS

Poetry adds spice to any content area. It can be inserted into any classroom in any curricular area. Once located, a poem requires little preparation and can speak for itself without the benefit of class discussion or direct instruction.

Why use poetry?

Reading poetry aloud permits the engagement of emotional response. It assists students in developing empathy. Poetry's novel use of words and punctuation also appeals to students' interest. The rhythmic beat and intense images provide a mnemonic device that can promote student retention of content. Poetry encourages abstract thought.

Poetry is quick. The reading of a poem does not have to take a lengthy amount of classroom time. Poetry is concise. It can help a teacher express a concept in only a few lines. Poetry can summon laughter, tell stories, send messages, share feelings, and start students wondering. It also provides a delightful change from expository text.

Using poetry instructionally

Poetry can provide an anticipatory device, be inserted into the text of a lecture, or present a unique closure to a lesson. Poetry should be used frequently in content classrooms. In the beginning, keep it enjoyable. As time passes and students become accustomed to its use, more serious and intense poems can be shared. Promote spontaneous discussion, but don't kill the poem. Leave the meaning of some poems ambiguous. Students can ponder them in their own way and on their own time. The poems selected for sharing in content classrooms should serve the concept under scrutiny by providing students with another avenue for experiencing that content.

Successfully reading poetry

Practice, practice, practice. Poetry is meant to be read aloud, but the teacher will be more successful if s/he practices before reading to a classroom. In fact, practice reading the poem aloud; it will help the teacher to hear the rhythms and understand the meaning. Understanding the meaning of a poem is central to reading it with proper emphasis. Remember to attend to punctuation. Since poetry is frequently punctuated in the middle of lines, attending to punctuation can help the reader to understand the poet's meaning.

Poetry can be read dramatically, but it is not a requirement. Teachers may be more comfortable using a natural voice and an appropriate tone. Once again, the meaning of the poem can signal whether to read fast or slow, with pathos or hilarity.

Poems should be read more than once unless they are excessively long or repetitive. Short poems can easily be lost in the flow of the lesson if the teacher does not repeat them.

Especially puzzling or difficult poems and all visual poems, such as concrete poems, should be presented on paper, CD ROM, or the overhead projector. Research indicates that middle school students do not like to read a poem and hear it recited simultaneously; so allow students to read visually presented poems for themselves.

Locating content poems

Poems are best located through browsing. Encourage students to be on the lookout for poems that have content applications. Use the school or public library's reference librarian. Any teacher can locate content poems on a specific topic by using a poetry index. The Columbia Granger's Index to Poetry is most commonly available in public libraries. It indexes 79,000 poems appearing in anthologies by title, first line, last line, author, and subject and is periodically updated.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF POETRY SOURCES FOR BROWSING

English/Language Arts

Janeczko, P. B. (Ed.) (1994). Poetry from A to Z: A guide for young writers. New York: Bradbury Press.

Nye, N. S. (Ed.) (1992). This same sky: A collection of poems from around the world. New York: Four Winds Press.

Willard, N. (1987). The voyage of the Ludgate Hill. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Yolen, J. (1995). A sip of Aesop. New York: The Blue Sky Press.

Fine Arts (Art, Dance, Music, Theatre Arts)

Blake, W. (1993). The tyger. Illustrated by Neil Waldman. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Morrison, L. (Ed.) (1988). Rhythm road: Poems to move to. New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard.

O'Neill, M. (1961). Hailstones and halibut bones. New York: The Trumpet Club.

Strickland, M. R. (Ed.) (1993). Poems that sing to you. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

Health and Physical Education

Knudson, R. R., & Swenson, M. (Eds.) (1988). American sports poems. New York: Orchard Books.

Morrison, L. (Ed.) (1965). Sprints and distances: Sports in poetry and the poetry in sport. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Morrison, L. (Ed.) (1992). At the crack of the bat. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Taylor, C. (1992). The house that crack built. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Math and Science

Brewton, S., Brewton, J. E., & Blackburn, J. B. (Eds.) (1977). Of quarks, quasars, and other quirks: Quizzical poems for the supersonic age. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Fleischman, P. (1985). I am phoenix: Poems for two voices. New York: Harper & Row.

Fleischman, P. (1988). Joyful noise: Poems for two voices. New York: Harper & Row.

Florian, D. (1994). Beast feast. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Min, K. I. (1993). Modern informative nursery rhymes: Science, book 1. Honolulu: Rhyme and Reason Publishing Co.

Plotz, H. (Ed.) (1955). Imagination's other place: Poems of science and mathematics. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Ryder, J. (1985). Inside turtle's shell and other poems of the field. New York: Macmillan.

Sandburg, C. (1993). Arithmetic. Illustrated by Ted Rand. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Schertle, A. (1995). Advice for a frog. New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard.

Yolen, J. (1990). Bird watch. New York: Philomel.

Social Studies/Multicultural

Adoff, A. (1982). All the colors of the race. New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard.

Carlson, L. M. (Ed.) (1994). Cool salsa: Bilingual poems on growing up Latino in the United States. New York: Henry Holt and Co.

Feelings, T. (1993). Soul looks back in wonder. New York: Dial Books.

Ho, M. (Ed.) (1996). Maples in the mist: Children's poems from the Tang dynasty. New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard.

Hopkins, L. B. (Ed.) (1995). Hand in hand: An American history through poetry. New York: Simon & Schuster.

General Anthologies

Elledge, S. (Ed.) (1990). Wider than the sky: Poems to grow up with. New York: Harper & Row.

Janeczko, P. B. (Ed.) (1983). Poetspeak: In their work, about their work. New York: Macmillan.

Panzer, N. (Ed.) (1994). Celebrate America in poetry and art. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Whipple, L. (Ed.) (1994). Celebrating America: A collection of poems and images of the American spirit. New York: Philomel.

TIPS FOR WRITING CONTENT POEMS

Poetry is a versatile tool for merging writing and content. Writing poetry in content classes encourages students to read, reflect, conduct research, synthesize, and evaluate information. The following tips are offered to help teachers incorporate poetry writing into their classrooms.

Time Issues

Writing does take time; so be prepared to allow sufficient classroom time for the activity. Content poems, however, do not always need to be polished. Class time to write poems will vary depending on the students' characteristics, the content density, class experience with writing and with the poetic formats, and the teacher's purpose.

To be effective, poetry should be written frequently. Students need lots of opportunities to try old and new forms as they manipulate content. Students also need time to work alone or collaboratively in a supportive writing environment.

Sharing Forms

It is helpful to share forms with students; let them try out the form on a familiar topic and then move to content related topics. Students must realize that accuracy of content is important. Prewriting involving discussion of content vocabulary and concepts following the sharing of forms will be helpful.

Poetic Devices

Poetic devices should not be shared during the introductory phases of poetry writing. They can be slowly introduced to students as tools that help poets with emphasis, clarity, and readability. Remind students that poets choose their words, punctuation, capitalization, and spacing carefully. Once these tools have been introduced, a display poster in the classroom can encourage students to include them in their content poems.

Evaluation and Publication

In content classes, not all writing pieces are polished, but the content material should be accurately presented. All efforts should be honored, perhaps through awarding participation points. As students become more confident, teachers should consider polishing the pieces, so the poems can be shared with a broader audience.

For many students, writing (and writing poetry) has not always been a pleasant experience. However, once students see they can write about content in a new way, teachers may be pleasantly surprised at the results. The merger between writing and content is a truly powerful instructional tool.

WRITING POETRY - A BIBLIOGRAPHY

Carey, M. A. (1989). Poetry starting from scratch: How to teach and write poetry. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Cullinan, B., Scala, M., & Schroder, V. (1995). Three voices: An invitation to poetry across the curriculum. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Dunning, S., & Stafford, W. (1992). Getting the knack: 20 poetry writing exercises. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Graves, D. (1992). Explore poetry. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hopkins, L. B. (1987). Pass the poetry, please! New York: Harper Trophy.

Janeczko, P. B. (Ed.) (1994). Poetry from A to Z: A guide for young writers. New York: Bradbury Press.

Kazemek, F. E., & Rigg, P. (1995). Enriching our lives: Poetry lessons for adult literacy teachers and tutors. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Livingston, M. C. (1991). Poem-making: Ways to begin writing poetry. New York: HarperCollins.

Tiedt, I., Bruemmer, S. S., Lane, S., Stelwagon, P., Watanabe, K. O., & Williams, M. Y. (1983). Teaching writing in K-8 classrooms: The time has come. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Tsujimoto, J. I. (1988). Teaching poetry writing to adolescents. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

ACROSTICS

Acrostic poetry, also known as alphabet poetry (Kazemek & Rigg, 1995), begins with a word or phrase written vertically down the left side of the student's paper. The student then uses each listed letter as the beginning letter in a word, phrase, or sentence that describes or tells something about the original word or phrase. The vertical word or phrase provides the external structure of the acrostic. Beginning acrostic writers enjoy using their name, their friends' names, and the name of their town or school as a starting point for learning the form, but acrostics can be written about any subject.

Steps in writing acrostics:

1. Explain the acrostic form to the students and have them practice the form using their name or a simple phrase.

2. Ask students to brainstorm a list of words or phrases tied to an academic concept. Ask them to select one for their acrostic. The other words generated can be used as a word bank to help fill in the lines of the acrostic. If a student selects a short word, such as cell, have them repeat the word vertically two or three times to create a longer poem, giving more information about the concept with each successive use of the word. Students might start with a one word per line acrostic, then move to a longer line acrostic, and finally write a sentence acrostic.

3. Variations to the acrostic form should be encouraged. Acrostics should invite students to explore the content. Sometimes students have excellent reasons for deciding to run their acrostic horizontally across the page or for spelling the word or phrase out vertically down the right side of the paper or in the middle of the poem. In the example written by Wendy Bethany, the undulations in the name "Huckleberry Finn" are meant to imitate the motion of the Mississippi River.

Dunning & Stafford. (1992). Getting the knack: 20 poetry writing exercises. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Kazemek & Rigg. (1995). Enriching our lives: Poetry lessons for adult literacy teachers and tutors. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Tiedt, Bruemmer, Lane, Stelwagon, Watanabe, & Williams. (1983). Teaching writing in K-8 classrooms: The time has come. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

C<u>l</u>ay, Paint or medium unlimited
<u>R</u>elates oneself to the world forever
<u>E</u>asily flowing or painstakingly purposeful
<u>A</u>rt is a statement
<u>T</u>o make - an innate drive to create
<u>E</u>xpression, deliverance of one's imagination

Kris Leslie Curtis

ART CLASS
by
Linda Massie

A rt class is hard work.
R eading dull textbooks all of the time and
T rying to learn the six "Elements of Design":

C olor, Value, and Texture, to name only a few, and
L ine, 1-point-perspective, and orthagonals too?
A nd Space, Shape and form, "Oh, soooooo divine!"
S o many art terms, so little time. My very
S pecial memories of ART CLASS.

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Huck finds happiness in an

Unconventional lifestyle.

Church and chains.

King and Duke

Live a life of lies.

Escaping fulfills the dreams of a

Boy and a slave.

Exciting times on the mighty Mississippi.

Raft becomes a refuge.

Romance and adventure is a

Yearning for Tom Sawyer.

Feelings of death

In any house Huck enters.

Nobody is as low as a

Nigger.

By: Wendy Bethany

BIOPOEMS

A biopoem can be adapted to many subject areas; however, they are particularly suited to social studies and science topics. Writing biopoems encourages students to read informational texts, use their research skills, and to describe a concept or individual in detail.

The formula for a biopoem looks like this:

Line 1: First name
Line 2: Four traits that describe
Line 3: Relative of
Line 4: Lover of (List three things or people)
Line 5: who feels (three items)
Line 6: Who needs (three items)
Line 7: Who fears (three items)
Line 8: Who gives (three items)
Line 9: Who would like to see (three items)
Line 10: Resident of
Line 11: Last name.

Steps to writing a biopoem:

1. Share the formula for biopoems and several examples. Model the process of writing a biopoem by encouraging students to write a biopoem about themselves. This opportunity will allow them to practice the format.

2. Once they are comfortable with the format, the class generates a list of content related terms. Students each choose a subject, read informational text(s) to gain ideas for their poems, and then begin drafting. Encourage students to share their drafts as they progress. It may be necessary for students to slightly alter the format to fit their topic.

Richardson & Morgan. (1997). Reading to learn in the content areas (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Anne
Youthful, outgoing, brave
Relative of Otto Frank
Lover of words, memories, life
Who feels fear, loneliness, hunger
Who needs freedom, friends, chances
Who fears footsteps, railway cars, concentration camps
Who gives perspective, courage, acceptance
Who would like to see peace, tolerance, tomorrow
Resident of Amsterdam
Frank

Cheryl Dunlap

Acinonyx jubatus (Cheetah)

Acinonyx
Spotted, swift, silent, solitary
Relative of all cats large and small
Lover of grasslands, big sky, the chase
Who feels svelte, powerful and fast
Who needs wide open spaces, clean water, quiet to raise cubs
Who fears drought, fire, man
Would like to see a small deer, sleepy antelope, inattentive gazelle
Resident of Africa's savannas
Jubatus

LeaAnne McRitchie

I am a middle school student
hyper, careless and sociable
Friends of everyone or anyone who cares
Lover of friends, family, telephone and parties
Who feels confused, energized, overwhelmed and _____
Who needs to be noticed, left alone and independent
Who fears not fitting in, 8th graders and _____
Who gives almost nothing but takes all
Who would like to be someone famous, rich or _____

I am a middle school student

Lacey Edley

Eulogizing LaVaughn

Lavaughn
fourteen-year-old college bound grow-up
daughter.

Lover of Jolly, Jilly, and Jeremy
who
feels capable, worthy, and resourceful;
needs opportunity, determination, and steam;
fears pregnancy, poverty, and patience;
gives nurturing, loyalty, and time.

Who would like to see security and safety--a modest American dream.

A resident of some inner-city.

LaVaughn.

(Note: LaVaughn is a character in Make Lemonade by Virginia Euwer Wolff.)

Ann Huestis

CINQUAIN POEMS

Cinquains are five-line poems that can be written on almost any subject. In content classrooms, the use of cinquains encourages thought and concentration (Richardson & Morgan, 1995). Prerequisite skills for writing a cinquain include: knowing parts of speech, identifying a pattern, and identifying syllables. The first line in a cinquain is a noun, the second line is two adjectives, the third is three action words, the fourth line contains a four word phrase, and the last line is a synonym for the noun used at the beginning of the poem. A thesaurus is a helpful tool for students as they create cinquains.

Steps for creating cinquains:

1. Display the formula for cinquains. Read several cinquains aloud to students. Point out how the syllables increase, the use of different forms of speech, and how the first and last words are connected. The teacher may incorporate a brief review on nouns, action words, adjectives and a definition of a synonym if needed.

2. Initially provide some non-content related concepts to let students become familiar with the form. After they have the format in mind, let the class generate a list of possible content related topics. Encourage students to read either their textbook or tradebooks for information to include in their cinquains. Remind students cinquains do not need to rhyme.

3. Students can also write progressive cinquains. Each student composes his/her own cinquains. Students then share their original cinquains in a small group. The group composes a cinquain that builds on the ideas presented in the individual poems. This progression allows students to have several opportunities to work with content concepts.

Cullinan, Scala, & Schroder. (1995). Three voices: An invitation to poetry across the curriculum. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Richardson & Morgan. (1997). Reading to learn in the content areas (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Tiedt, Bruemmer, Lane, Stelwagon, Watanabe, & Williams. (1983). Teaching writing in K-8 classrooms: The time has come. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Electricity
Silent, Colorless
Giving, Surging, Sustaining
Lights the unknown darkness
Power!

Shanna Webb

Cinquain
Not wordy
Combines five lines
Easy, fun to compose,
Poem

Carol Ann Bellomy

Lines
Straight, Long
Racing, Stretching, Going
No intersections, no transversals, no touching,
forever moving. . .
Parallel

J. Y. McWhorter

Sound
Soft, Loud
Echoing, Traveling, Vibrating
Through my mind
Music!

Suzanne Mireiter

Thoughts
imaginative, ingenious
forming, exploding, confounding
Make the impossible real
Ideas

Rozann Rob

Communication
talkative, engaged
speaking, listening, understanding
conveys a powerful message
Interaction

Michelle Newton

CONCRETE POEMS

Concrete, or shape poems, bring together visual effects and content. The shape suggests the subject of the poem (Cullinan, Scala, & Schroder, 1995). Students can use words to form a shape or use a shape to frame their words.

Steps for constructing concrete poems:

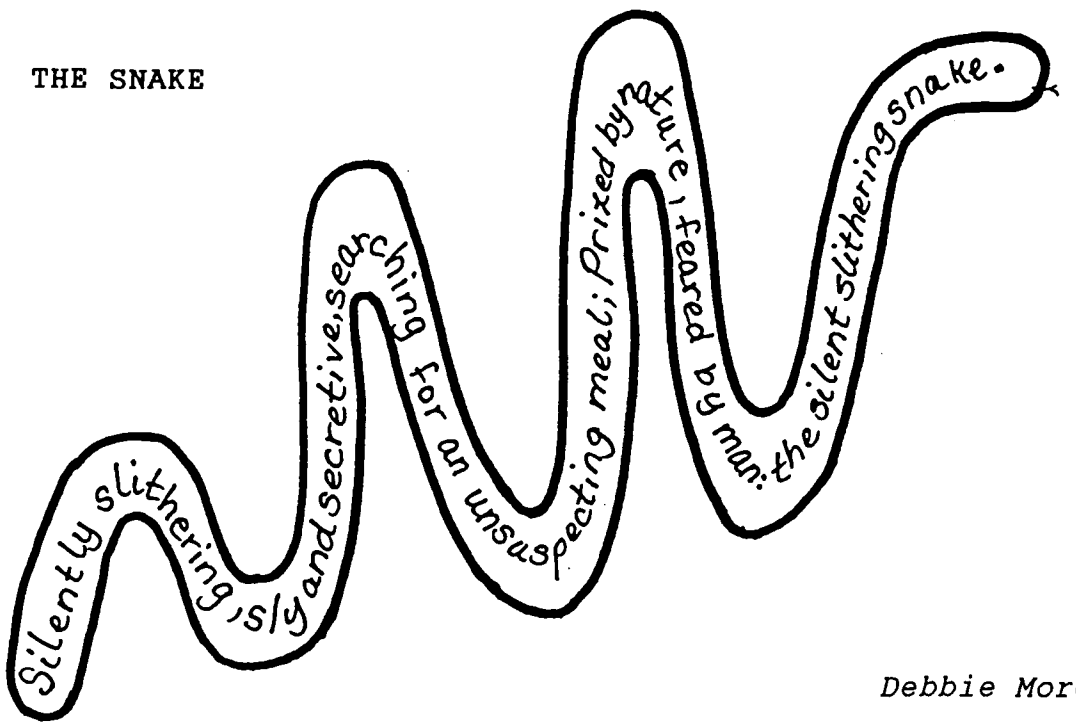
1. Due to the visual nature of these poems, it is best to begin by sharing several examples with students. These first examples need to be on simple concepts familiar to students.

2. The class then generates lists of content related words and concepts. It might also be helpful to talk about some possible structures. This form of poetry tends to be popular with students; so after the initial list is formed, you can let them begin generating their poems.

3. Encourage students to think about the best form to reflect their topic.

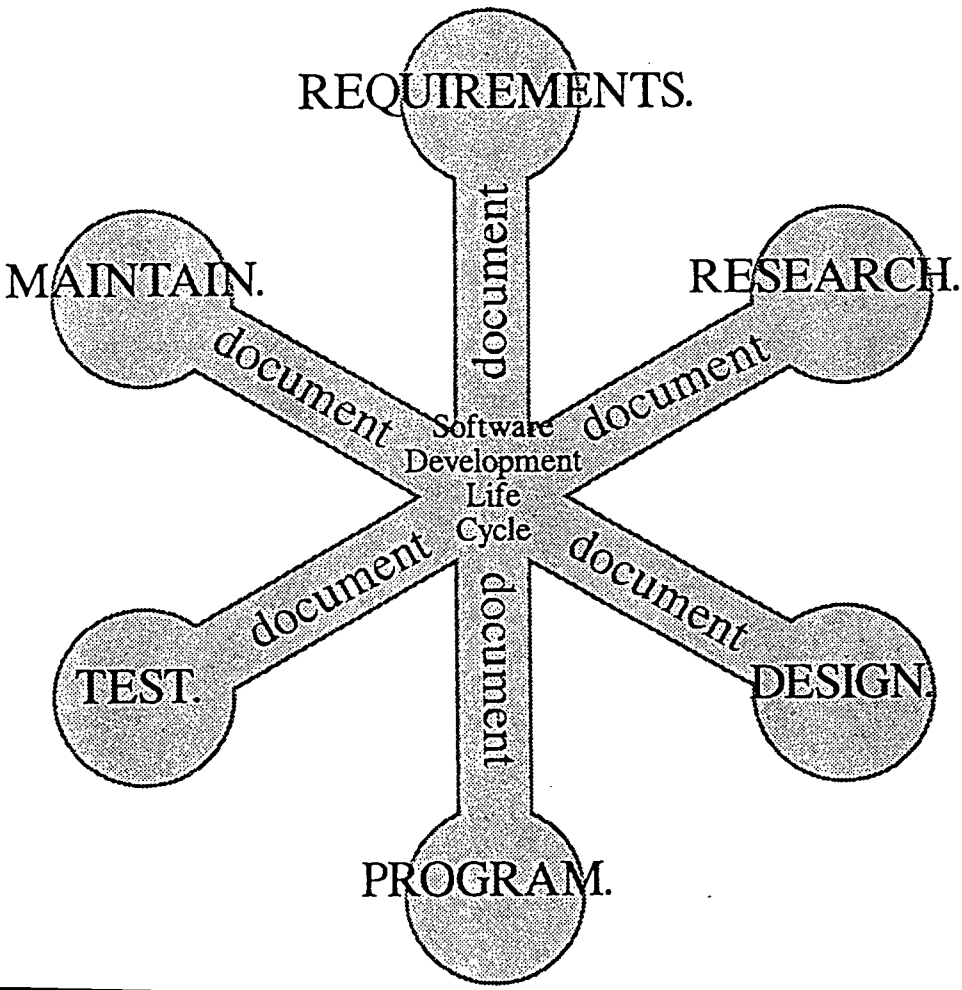
Cullinan, Scala, & Schroder (1995). Three voices: An invitation to poetry across the curriculum. York, ME: Stenhouse.

THE SNAKE



Debbie Morowsk

WHAT A LIFE?



Kathryn Jankiewicz

Rectangles,
rectangles,
rectangles,
two long
sides, two
short sides
make sides of
four, the shape
of a door.

Tri-
angle,
triangle,
triangle,
sides of three.
A slice of pizza
for you and me.

"Rectangles" and
"Triangles"
by
Brenda Ross

DIAMANTE POETRY

A diamante is a seven line, diamond-shaped poem that explores the contrasts that exist between certain content area topics. The form, developed by Iris Tiedt (1983), begins and ends with a noun and through the intervening lines explores the differences between the two concepts. This type of poetry does not focus on rhythm or rhyme; as with a cinquain, students do need familiarity with the parts of speech. A diamante follows this pattern:

Line 1-One noun
Line 2-Two adjectives
Line 3-Three participles
(Verbs ending in -ing or -ed)
Line 4-Four nouns related to subjects
(Shift to contrasting concept)
Line 5-Three participles
Line 6-Two adjectives
Line 7-One noun

Steps in generating a diamante:

1. Draw a diamond-shaped figure on the overhead projector; insert the diamante pattern into the diamond. Discuss the pattern with the students. Share examples to increase comprehension. Review information about the parts of speech used in a diamante, if necessary.

2. As a class, generate pairs of contrasting concepts related to your subject area. The following examples only scratch the surface of the indicated content areas:

Language Arts: reading-writing, subject-predicate, noun-verb, comedy-tragedy
Science: acid-base, plant-animal, existence-extinction
Math: addition-subtraction, fraction-whole
Social Studies: supply-demand, North-South, industrial-agrarian, mountain-plain

3. Create a class diamante using a pair of contrasting concepts. Diamantes are easier to write if the contrasting pair is generated first. On the class example, fill in the first and last lines when beginning the poem. Then complete the rest of the poem.

4. Once students are familiar with the format, they can generate individual diamantes on contrasting concepts set by the teacher or themselves.

5. To vary instruction, place students into groups of six. Each student generates a pair of contrasting concepts and fills in the first and last lines of a diamante. The students then pass their papers to the next student who fills in line two. The process continues with each student contributing the next line until the paper returns to the student who originated the diamante.

Tiedt, Bruemmer, Lane, Stelwagon, Watanabe, & Williams. (1983). Teaching writing in K-8 classrooms: The time has come. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Fraction to Whole

Fraction
Separate, equal
Divided, sectioned, shared
Mathematics, measurement, food, friendship
Undiminished, completed, fused
Intact, unbroken
Whole

LeaAnne McRitchie

Pencil
Lead, Wood
Drawing, Sketching, Shading
Paper, Pads, Scribble, Notes
Writing, Composing, Editing
Ink, Plastic
Pen

Tonya McClung

Square
flat, four
laid, played, measured
lines, edges, faces, box
measured, throwing, rolling
solid, six
Cube

Suzanne Thetford

FOUND POETRY

Poetry exists in the world around us in advertisements, newspaper articles, books, and conversations. Found poetry gives students the opportunity to develop an awareness of the interesting uses of language in their everyday environments. The student does not create a text when writing a found poem but rather rearranges and improves text found in other sources. Writing found poetry in content classrooms can help students be more attentive to and appreciative of the print and language found in simple and complex text materials. Students can see for themselves how the arrangement of the poem emphasizes certain words or concepts.

Steps in creating found poems:

1. Select an interesting passage of 50 to 100 words from a newspaper, book, encyclopedia, magazine, or content area textbook.

2. Copy the passage onto a sheet of paper, double spacing the text to make it easier to examine and edit.

3. Examine the passage. Delete dull, uninteresting, or unnecessary words. Dunning and Stafford (1992) suggest cutting the original passage in half. Students may also delete punctuation and change capitalization. Adding words to the passage should be avoided, if at all possible. However, the student may add up to *two words* to ease transitions or help the poem to make sense. Other small changes to the text may include changing possessives, plurals, and tenses.

4. Arrange the material left into poetic lines. Emphasize meaning by arranging the words in various and unique ways. Reading out loud as students arrange the text will help them to hear differences in meaning and emphasis. The student may want to space the text out or runthemalltogether. Key words can be highlighted by placing them on a line by themselves, by writing them in a larger size, or by using boldface or a different type of print. Try more than one format. Students should feel free to play with the text until it conveys the meaning for which they are searching.

5. Title the poem Found Poem. Under the title write "words from" and the article title, publication, date, and page number. At the end of the poem, the student should write "--arranged by" and his/her name.

Dunning & Stafford. (1992). Getting the knack: 20 poetry writing exercises. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Kazemek & Rigg. (1995). Enriching our lives: Poetry lessons for adult literacy teachers and tutors. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Tsujimoto. (1988). Teaching poetry writing to adolescents. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Found Poem

(words from
"A Prophetic Delver"
Time, Feb. 3, 1997, p. 75)

"I died you know"
James Dickey was saying.
Nine months ago
"I flatlined! -
I heard the doctor say,
'My God, we lost him!'
. . . But ain't nothin' to dyin'
really.
You just -
get tired
You kind of drift away.

arranged by
Jennifer Leschber

Found Poetry

(Words from "Staying on the Trail of
JonBenet's Killer," Newsweek, January
20, 1997, page 46)

She was
gagged and strangled,
her wrists tied loosely with nylon cord
and
her nightgown-clad body
covered by a
colorful
blanket
belonging to the

family.

arranged by Jana Wright

Found Poem

(words from "The Man with Strange Tastes" Newsweek, Dec. 30, 1996, 9)

It's hard to think
of anything funnier,
than a man - with the president's ear
nibbling on a prostitute's toes!

arranged by Chasity Hrnicko

LETTER POEMS

Letter poems are based on the familiar letter format. Thus, they begin with a salutation and end with phrases such as yours truly or sincerely. This particular format may be approached in two ways: students may write to a particular person or concept or students may construct the letter as if it was written by someone or something. In the first, the students address the individual or idea; in the second, they role play being the character or concept. No matter which approach is used, this format involves several steps.

Steps to writing letter poems:

1. Students generate a list of persons or concepts connected to the content area.

2. Each student chooses one and drafts a letter that is no more than one page long. The important thing for students to remember is that their letters need to be specific and interesting. The format could look like this:

Dear _____:

In the letter, students need to tell who they are and why they are writing. For example, are they seeking advice, do they have a specific point or action that they would like to discuss, or do they have a question for the character or concept. Degree of formality and emotion is up to students. Students then close their letters with traditional endings.

3. Students now turn their draft letters into poems. At this stage, teachers need to encourage students to condense, think about line breaks, and flow. This is best accomplished by students first thinking about "squeezing" down their letters through deleting unnecessary words and phrases, substituting one or two words for several, and perhaps cutting out entire chunks. Students then need to look at their order to see if any parts need to be shifted around or still need to be deleted. During the final stage, students read poems aloud to help them find interesting places to end lines. For once, students do not need to be concerned with traditional line punctuation, capitalization, or sentence structure rules. Teachers may encourage the students to use rhyme, but the format does not demand it.

Dunning & Stafford. (1992). Getting the knack: 20 poetry writing exercises. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Dear Mr. Caterpillar,

I think you are so cute and fuzzy!
It is so neat that you grow and change into a butterfly during your life cycle.
Which do you like to be best?
A caterpillar inching your way along or a butterfly fluttering by?
Sometimes I wish I could build a cocoon and come out something new.
My life cycle is different though.
I grow very slow.
Please come visit me in the spring!
When you metamorphosize and learn to sing.

Your admirer walking by . . .

Sara Philips

Dear Leonardo,
If I were alive during your time, I would ask you for help with my painting block. My life is full of sadness and pain. All I see is blue each time I look at the blank canvas. It seems to ignore the stroke of my brush each time I pass across the deserted cloth. Yet, I hear strange voices coming from the remains of my right ear. They say, "Ask the Master." So here I sit on my lonely floor with a paint brush in one hand and this pen in the other, asking the Master for help. I wonder if the voices know you are dead?

Vincent

(Letter poem written by Tonya McClung)

LIST POEMS

List poems begin with a list of words or facts about content area concepts. Students then rearrange words and phrases from the initial list to describe and illustrate their ideas. Individual students, small groups, or the entire class can use the words and facts to create their list poems.

Steps for creating list poems:

1. Share examples of list poems with students. Point out to students the descriptive language that strengthens the ideas being discussed.

2. Encourage students to generate a list of ideas, words, and concepts related to a content course subject. With the initial list in hand, students need to think of descriptive words to help clarify their information. Students can also edit and rearrange as they work through their poem. It is not necessary for the poem to rhyme, but students will need to think about how their list flows. Students need to add an ending that gives a twist or adds meaning.

Dunning & Stafford. (1992). Getting the knack: 20 poetry writing exercises. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Tiedt, Bruemmer, Lane, Stelwagon, Watanabe, & Williams. (1983). Teaching writing in K-8 classrooms: The time has come. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Scissors in Sewing

Pattern tissue,
fabric,
pins,
snip.
snip,
snip,
scissors keeping pace.
elastic,
ribbon,
lace,
snip,
snip,
snip,
scissors keeping pace.
smooth
scissors
slowly
slicing
snip
snip
snip
scissors keeping pace.
Liza Leggett

First Draft

Rod
Tape
Theodolite
Stretch the tape
but not too tight
Twenty pounds tension
will be right

Sine
Cosine
Tangent
Aposite
adjacent
hypotenus

Map the ground
Draw contours
Locate trees
Find elevation

Will McCollum

Finished Product

The Measurements that Make a Home

Rod
Tape
Theodolite
Stretch the tape,
but not too tight.
Stake the corners,
with angles right.

Tape
Saw
Hammer and Nails
Pour concrete
and haul in wood.
Measure the lengths
and cut it good.

Chairs
Beds
Toys and crayons
Measure kids,
and mark the wall.
The home now has
a story hall.

Theodolite - a surveying instrument used to measure vertical and horizontal angles.

Will McCollum

Learning Spanish

¡Hola!
Learning Spanish
Fun, exciting
Hard
¿Qué pasa, chica?
¿Cómo estás, muchacho?
Travel, adventure
Communication
Learning Spanish
¡Adios!

Linda Aughinbaugh

RECIPE POEMS

Recipe poems tell how. They have much in common with writing good directions and can help students develop skills in selecting correct words to convey meaning and in sequencing information. Subjects for recipe poems can be directions for constructing, creating, or cooking or the rules for participating or playing a game. Recipe poems have a familiar structure which can ease student anxieties.

Steps in writing recipe poems:

1. Explain to students that they will be writing poems to explain a process. It may be helpful to share cooking recipes or directions for a game to stimulate students' thinking before sharing examples of content related poems. Students' initial attempts can be on familiar topics such as making a sandwich, playing a game, or riding a bike. After this preliminary work, students can generate a list of possible content topics. For example, science related topics include how to prepare a slide, how to conduct an experiment, or how cells divide. Math related topics can include how to determine area or multiply fractions.

2. Students select a topic from the class generated list. They then begin to think about the materials/ingredients needed and the steps involved in the process. They are now ready to start constructing their poems. The topic is written as a title that tells exactly what the recipe/directions/rules are for. Then students write their recipe-like list of five or more steps. Students may find it easier if they begin their poems with "First, . . " (Janeczko, 1994, 45). Remind them to use connecting or sequencing words like second, third, next, then, and finally. Poems will read better if they combine actions with the materials/ingredients. Once the first draft is finished, encourage students to edit their poem by crossing out all unnecessary words. Emphasize that students should include only the best words.

3. At the end of their poem, students can either describe the final product or tell how to serve.

Dunning & Stafford. (1992). Getting the knack: 20 poetry writing exercises. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Janeczko. (1994). Poetry from A to Z: A guide for young writers. New York: Bradbury Press.

How to Begin

First, examine your present life,
Second, make a list of good and bad--
make it your own, not what others think.
Third, prioritize what can and cannot be changed.
Fourth, choose things that can be changed
and begin to change them in your thought process.
Fifth, accept those things that cannot be changed.
Sixth, move on with you life ---
Remember you can make more changes as you go and grow.

Liza Leggett

How To Use A Computer

Approach with care, they are fragile machines.

Turn on with a switch,

As the screen begins to glow,

you know you have done well so far.

Take the mouse by the hand,

and click on program you want to use.

Begin to type when the page appears,

<u>Save often so nothing disappears!!</u>

When you are done typing your words,

Use spell check to check your spelling.

Computers can be your friend if you let them,

or your worst enemy if you allow them.

Remember a computer is only as good as the person using it,

and the best computer ever devised is your brain so use it.

Lou Anton

VISUAL RESPONSE POETRY

Visual response poetry involves examining a picture, diagram, or sculpture and recording information about what is seen, known, or experienced by the viewer. Tsujimoto (1988) uses reproductions of art works and displays them on walls and in chalkboard trays. Students select one reproduction and write about it. However, visual response poems can also be written about photographs, diagrams, and flow charts of content concepts. Pictures of an exploding volcano, photos of current events topics, schematic drawings of replicating DNA strands, and reproductions of M. C. Escher's tessellations are all fruitful areas for student investigation through a visual response poem.

Steps in writing a visual response poem:

1. Select a variety of visual images around the topic of discussion or use the overhead projector to display one image for the students to use as their visual prompt for writing.

2. Have the students freewrite about the image. In freewriting, the writer's aim is to write continually for a specified amount of time without regard for form or mechanics. At this stage, setting down ideas, impressions, and reactions is the focus of attention.

3. The student then uses the freewrite as a basis for beginning their visual response poem. They can choose to use words, phrases, or whole sentences or they may decide to examine the picture more closely. Encourage students to comment on the details of the selected image. "What more can you 'see,' what more can you say?" (Tsujimoto, 1988, p. 63).

4. If the student is responding to an art work, the work's title and the creator's name should be included in the poem's title. If the student is responding to photographs, drawings, or flow charts, then the topic should be included in poem's title.

Tsujimoto. (1988). Teaching poetry writing to adolescents. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

What Am I?

All different sizes and varieties,
Each one similar in design.
Thorns on each petal keep out intruders,
  yet protect the heart at the center.
Made of stem, leaves, heart and choke,
Did you guess it? The artichoke.

Liza Leggett

Tornado

Run for safety it's coming, it's coming
Like a mighty, strong lion, I hear it's roar
As black as night as loud as thunder
With its wind twisting, swirling, destroying
everything in its path.
Run for safety it's coming, it's coming
I can hear the alarm sound
Danger ahead, danger is soon to come

Lacey Edley

The Margins and the Cracks

Exterior signs of maturity
dangling earrings
dark mascara
sharp nails
and cigarette smoke
mask youthful confusion.

She mimics
(and models)
the directives of a dysfunctional
family structure
embedded within a destructive
social culture.

And, feigning apathy,
her eyes challenge me
to make a difference
while her posture promises
my efforts will fail.

Ann Huestis

Texas at Sunset

Rozann Rob

Red tongues of campfire
Leaping up to reach
the matching sun-setting sky
A moment of exciting brilliance
Heralding the peacefulness of night.

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