

Unit of Study: Poetry

Poetry is a literary expression in which language is used in a concentrated blend of sound and imagery to create an emotional response; essentially rhythmic, it is usually lyrical and frequently structured in stanzas. Poetry is one of the first forms of literature children encounter. Pat-a-cake, this little piggy and other rhymes greet the ears of most babies. Soon after this period Mother Goose becomes the norm and rhymes for jumping rope and playing games are heard almost daily.

Poetry, of course, be it for child or adult (and the distinction is not always clear) is very much a matter of perception. Poems speak to the individual, even more than stories do. The rules of poetry selection are the same for the selection of any kind of literacy material that you are going to use with kids. It must speak to you as the living breathing adult you are before you can help it speak to kids. If it's supposed to be funny, it should make you laugh or at least smile. If it's supposed to be sad, it should choke you up a bit. If it's a description of a thing or a feeling, it should help you see it or feel it in a new way.

Types of Poetry:

Rhyme - refers to a *close similarity* of sound as well as an *exact* correspondence; such as Mother Goose Rhymes.

Limericks -highly controlled, lines 1,2 and 5 rhyme; lines 3 and 4 rhyme. While unsuitable for serious verse, they are more light and humorous.

Free Verse - lacks rhyme and has less predictable rhythm

Haiku - Japanese form of poetry, form is 17 syllables in three lines with pattern: first line 5 syllables; second line 7 syllables; third line, 5 syllables. Usually has nature themes.

Light Verse - A loose catch-all term describing poetry written with a relaxed attitude and ordinary tone on trivial, mundane, or frivolous themes. It is intended to amuse and entertain and is frequently distinguished by sophistication, wit, word-play, elegance, and technical competence.

Paradox - A statement which contains seemingly contradictory elements or appears contrary to common sense, yet can be seen as perhaps, or indeed, true when viewed from another angle.

Narrative - The narration of an event or story, stressing details of plot, incident and action, it contains a lot of detail

Criteria for Evaluating and Selecting Poetry for Children

The poetry creates images of sight, touch, smell, and taste to help children in making comparisons to what they understand and know and to help them stretch their verbal and mental images.

The poetry stirs emotions such as delight, sadness, nostalgia, etc.

The words in the poems play with the sounds of language. Similes and metaphors are appropriate for children to understand and appreciate.

Children can understand the poetry or understand it with the help of an adult.

Does the poetry make the child see something in a new way?

What is the purpose of the poetry? Has the poet achieved this purpose without patronizing childhood?

Children Prefer

Contents they can relate to based on their own experiences.

They prefer rhyme and humorous poetry that are not complex.

Children relate easier to more contemporary works than older or more traditional poetry.

As children get older their preferences move from simpler works to more intricate imagery and subtle emotion.

Reasons For Using Poetry

1. Allows children to express their feelings.
2. Allows children to relate to other people and situations.
3. Encourages a creative way to learn about other cultures.
4. Helps expand vocabulary and teaches an appreciation for language.
5. Its fun!

Unit of Study Framework

1. Exposure

read many examples of poetry

invite students to talk about what they hear, feel, see

share copies of favorite poems with students, create

have students find pieces of writing they think are poems, in advertisements, pic

books, signs, posters etc

create a What WE Say is Poetry Bulletin Board

listen for poetic language in picture books we are reading

poetry book marks, treasure hunts for poetic language

poetry centers

study the lives of different poets

2. Exploration

- create a class criteria for “quality” poems
- elements of poetry
- form, format, free verse
- applying criteria in peer conferences, author’s chair
- Use picture books to demonstrate poetic devices
- poetry “exercises”

3. Experimentation

- invite students to write poems
- Richard Margolis “short sayings”
- publishing opportunities - places to share
- teacher poetry conferences / circles

Unit of Study Mini-Lessons: Poetry

Week One:

- read aloud various poems each day and allow students to talk about what they see, feel, hear; have many poetry books available for students to read and enjoy; share copies of favorite poems with students, making copies for them to keep

Week Two / Three:

- discuss the idea of an anthology, explain collecting poems around a central theme
- have students search for things they think are poetry, create a “This is Poetry” bulletin board
- add / share ideas being put on bulletin board by students
- have a “poetry treasures” search in picture books for poetic language – make bookmarks of poetic sayings
- begin discussing poems in small groups
- share circle on poetry

Week Four:

- discuss elements of poetry (one new one each day)
- metaphor / simile
- senses / descriptive language
- alliteration
- structure / format / free verse etc.
- rhyme patterns
- onomatopoeia

Week Five:

- have students attempt to write their own poems
- discuss places to publish poems (Class Poetry Book, newsletter, contests, classroom, home)
- have a Poetry Readers Day
- Celebrations / Publications

Suggested Books

A Circle of Seasons. Livingston, Myra Cohn. Holiday House, Inc., 1988.

A Classic Treasury of Nursery Songs and Rhymes. Moroney, Tracey. Barnes And Noble Books, 2001.

A Light In the Attic. Silverstein, Shel. Harper Collins Children's Books, 1981.

Book of Pigericks: Pig Limericks. Lobel, Arnold. Harper Collins Children's Books, 1983.

Book of Poems. DePaola, Tomie. Putman Publishing Group, 1988.

Brats. Kennedy, X.J.. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1986.

Chicken Socks and Other Contagious Poems. Bagert, Brod. Wordsong, 1993.

The Children's Book of America. Bennett, William J. (Editor). Simon & Schuster Trade, 1998.

The Dragons Are Singing Tonight. Prelutsky, Jack. Greenwillow Books, 1993.

Dragons Dragons. Carle, Eric. Putnam Publishing, 1991.

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems. Hughes, Langston. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1932.

Earth Songs. Livingston, Myra Cohn. Holiday House, Inc., 1986.

Falling Up. Silverstein, Shel. Harper Collins Children's Books, 1996.

The Frogs Wore Red Suspenders. Prelutsky, Jack. Greenwillow Books, 2002.

The Gooch Machine. Bagert, Brod. Boydmills Press, 1997.

The Hopeful Trout and other Limericks. Ciardi, John. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1991.

I Never Did That Before. Moore, Lilian. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1995.

I Never Told and Other Poem. Livingston, Myra Cohn. Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992.

If You Ever Meet a Whale. Livingston, Myra Cohn (Selected Poems). Holiday House, Inc., 1992.

If You're Not Here, Please Raise Your Hand: Poems About School. Dakos, Kalli. Simon & Schuster Trade, 1995.

Is Your Mama a Lama? Guarino, Deborah. Scholastic, Inc., 1997.

My Kingdom for a Horse: An Anthology of Poems About Horses. Schwartz, Betty Ann (Editor). Henry Holt Books for young Readers, 2001.

The New Adventures of Mother Goose. Lansky, Bruce. Simon & Schuster Trade, 1993.

New Kid On the Block. Prelutsky, Jack. Greenwillow Books, 2002

The Nonsense Poems of Edward Lear. Lear, Edward. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1991.

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat. Lear, Edward. North-South Books Inc., 1995.

Owls and Pussy-Cats Nonsense Verse. Lear, Edward & Carroll, Lewis. Peter Bedrick Books, 1993.

Poems of A. Nonny Mouse. Prelutsky, Jack (Selected Poems). Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1989.

Poetry By Heart A Child's Book of Poems. Attenborough, Liz (Compiled Poems). The Chicken House, 2001.

Poetry for a Lifetime: All-time Favorite Poems to Delight and Inspire All Ages.
Etheredge, Samuel Norfleet. Harlequin Books, 1999.

Poetry Place Anthology: More than 600 Poems for All Occasions!
Scholastic Book, Inc.. Scholastic, Inc., 1994.

20th Century Children's Poetry Treasury. Prelutsky, Jack (Selected Poems). Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1999.

Talkaty Talker. Manley, Molly. Boyds Mills Press, Inc., 1994.

Talking to the Sun: An Illustrated Anthology of Poems for Young People.
Koch, Kenneth & Farrell, Kate. Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1985.

There Was a Place and Ohter Poems. Livingston, Myra Cohn. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1988.

There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly. Taback, Simms. Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1997.

There Was an Old Man. Lear, Edward. William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1994.

Uncle Switch Loony Limericks. Kennedy, X.J.. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1997.

Where the Sidewalks Ends. Silverstein, Shel. Harper Collins Children's Books, 1973.

Wish You Were Here and I Wasn't. McNaughton, Colin. Candlewick Press, 1999.

Suggested Authors

Adoff, Arnold
Asch, Frank
Carle, Eric
Ciardi, John
DePaola, Tomie
Dr. Suess
Fleischman, Paul
Hopkins, Lee Benett

Hughes, Langston
Kennedy, X.J.
Lansky, Bruce
Lear, Edward
Little, Jean
Livingston, Myra Cohn
Moore, Lilian
Prelutsky, Jack
Shields, Carol Diggory
Silverstein, Shel
Taback, Simms
Updike, John

Related Sites about Poetry

<http://geocities.com/EnchantedForest/5165/lessonplans.html>

http://www.galegroup.com/school/resrcs/poets_cn/index.htm

<http://www.ahapoetry.com/>

www.poeticbyway.com

www.carolhurst.com

<http://falcon.jmu.edu>