

Call 811! - A Poetry Emergency

Saskatchewan School Library Association

THE MEDIUM – SPRING 2010

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Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words. — Robert Frost

Rhythm and rhyme, similes and metaphors, alliteration and onomatopoeia – these delightful literacy devices serve as exploration points for enjoying the genre of poetry. From friezes on government buildings to Mother Goose rimes, from liturgy passages to love letters, from songs played on the radio to singing games echoed by children, poetry is clearly interwoven throughout our lives.

Rich poetry learning experiences involve thoughtful discussion and are devoid of intense dissection. Create an environment of spontaneous pleasure in poetry – student self-selections of poetry and acceptance of individual response to poetry, rather than a tedious analysis of the same poem and insistence upon the same interpretation of a poet's work.

Georgia Heard (1999) introduces the poetic craft to students using the metaphor of a toolbox. Heard visualizes two toolboxes – each equally important, but having distinct purposes in the course of sharing a poem. The first toolbox is the *Meaning Toolbox* – it includes visual tools that help the reader imagine, visualize, and ultimately, bring readers closer to the experience of the poem. The second toolbox, the *Auditory Toolbox*, consists of those tools that help the reader experience the poem through sound, music, and rhythm. These tools fasten the poem together musically. In the sharing and writing of poetry, the two toolboxes are inseparable, but for the purposes of studying poetry, they will be considered separately.

Because the culmination of the study of the poetic craft is a Poetry Café, a third toolbox entitled *Presentation Toolbox* was added.

Outline of Lessons

Meaning Toolbox

Lesson Focus

Poems To Share

Imagery	<i>What's In My Journal</i> - William Stafford <i>Nothing But Miracles</i> – Walt Whitman
Observations of Our World	<i>The Red Wheelbarrow</i> - William Carlos Williams <i>Poem</i> - William Carlos Williams <i>Rain in Summer</i> - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Introducing The Social Medium	
Figurative Language – Metaphor	<i>Dreams</i> – Langston Hughes <i>The Road Not Taken</i> - Robert Frost <i>The Negro Speaks of Rivers</i> – Langston Hughes
Figurative Language - Simile	<i>I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud</i> – William Wordsworth

Figurative Language - Personification	<i>Two Sunflowers Move In The Room</i> - William Blake <i>April Rain Song</i> - Langston Hughes <i>Fog</i> - Carl Sandburg
Voice	<i>Richard Cory</i> - Edwin Arlington Robinson <i>How Do I Love Thee?</i> - Elizabeth Barrett Browning
Diction	<i>Dear March, come in!</i> - Emily Dickinson
Organization and Conventions – Style and Format	<i>Sonnet 18</i> - William Shakespeare <i>r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r</i> - e.e. cummings
Organization and Conventions – Line Breaks	<i>Old Age Sticks</i> - e.e. cummings <i>This Is Just To Say</i> - William Carlos Williams
Poet's Craft	<i>Caged Bird</i> - Maya Angelou <i>O Captain, My Captain</i> - Walt Whitman <i>If</i> - Rudyard Kipling
Beginnings and Endings	<i>The Lamb</i> - William Blake <i>The Tyger</i> - William Blake
Punctuation	<i>I'm Nobody! Who are you?</i> - Emily Dickinson <i>anyone lived in a pretty how town</i> - e.e. cummings
Titles	<i>Riddle Poems</i> - Emily Dickinson

Auditory Toolbox

Lesson Focus	Poems To Share
Rhyme	<i>She Walks In Beauty</i> - Lord Byron <i>Brothers and Sisters</i> - Lewis Carroll <i>Jabberwocky</i> - Lewis Carroll
Repetition and Patterns	<i>My People</i> - Langston Hughes <i>Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening</i> - Robert Frost
Cadence and Prosody - Rhythm, Meter, And Intonation	<i>blues journey</i> - Walter Dean Myers <i>The Drum Calls Softly</i> - David Bouchard & Shelley Willier
Figurative Language – Alliteration, Onomatopoeia, Assonance, and Consonance	<i>The Raven</i> - Edgar Allan Poe <i>The Bells</i> - Edgar Allan Poe <i>Eldorado</i> - Edgar Allan Poe <i>Beat! Beat! Drums!</i> - Walt Whitman <i>The Eagle</i> - Lord Alfred Tennyson

Presentation Toolbox

Lesson Focus	Poems To Share
Committed To Memory – Poetry Café	<i>You Reading This, Be Ready</i> - William Stafford

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Format of Lessons

Each lesson is comprised of three components: Setting The Stage; Response Stance; and Benediction (Atwell, 2007).

Setting The Stage

An enjoyable study of poetry emphasizes student exploration of poetry. The focus should not be on teaching forms of poetry. Instead, demonstrate what a variety of poetry forms can do. In this ten minute section, guide students to notice:

- the principles of writing (how poets deliberately craft meaningful, literary writing)
- the genre of poetry (how to observe and name the qualities of effective poems)
- the conventions of writing (how forms give poems voice and make reading predictable and rhythmic)
- the topics of poetry (how to develop ideas for poems that will matter to students and their readers)

How the stage is set depends on the poem. What is crucial is establishing a context for the poem in order to ready students for reading experience.

Response Stance

In this stage, students assume the roles of readers and critics. Choice, conversation, and collaboration are pivotal during this twenty-five minute stage. Students read the poems and leave tracks of their thinking (questions, inferences, understandings, connections, and mental images) as notes on the poems.

In the initial phase, students collectively discuss the read poem in *Setting The Stage*. Specific prompts are provided to help students discuss their discoveries, struggles, feelings, and connections.

Later, students choose to respond to at least one poem from a provided collection. Groups are formed according to the chosen poems. Within the groups, students reflect on the poem using prompts that deepen their understanding and prepare them for writing in the next stage of the lesson. As a blog comment, students publish their coalesced understandings.

Benediction

This stage is not a writing assignment, but an invitation to reflect upon the focus of the lesson and to determine if they would like to add this style or idea to their own poetry portfolio. During this twenty-five minute component, students choose a task determined by their own needs. They may draft, revise, or reflect on their own writing, or engage in peer conferences, or join a group for extra help on the focus of this lesson. The *Call 811!: A Poetry Emergency* blog (<http://call811.blogspot.com/>) has Benediction prompts for each lesson.

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Setting the Stage

Display

Place several examples of poetry, classic, modern, and student written poems, in the school library.

Convert the library into a coffee house setting to host poetry jams and slams. Students can recite poems and discuss one another's work, staged with scenery. Advertise the "open mike" poetry readings and guest poets. This setting can also be used for a poetry-reading club.

Entice readers' imaginations with quotes about poetry from famous poets. ReadWriteThink's *Observations about Poetry* (http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson848/observations.pdf) lists observations about poetry by various poets and authors.

Arrange space for a writer's studio to foster the creation of poetry. Supply writing material, magnetic poetry, and electronic equipment to create podcasts. Provide materials to help inspire writers of poetry:

- Poetry books (jump-rope rhymes, tongue twisters, etc.)
- Magnetic poetry kit
- Poet study information
- Highlighter tape
- Magazine pictures (To inspire writing)
- Rhyming dictionary and thesaurus
- Blank note cards and envelopes (for copying special poems to give as gifts)
- Charts about poetry craft (alliteration, simile, personification, etc)
- Poetry work station task cards
- Poetry collection booklet (personal anthology)

Resources

Create a poetry resource display with posters of notable poets in tandem with their books. The collection should include a mix of anthologies, picture books, and audio books of lullabies, nursery verse, riddles and wordplay, playground verse, nonsense and standard poetry collections. Include recipients of poetry awards: The NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children, the Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award, the Lee Bennett Award for Children's Poetry, and the Claudia Lewis Award. Audio poetry adaptations often accompany print resources and poetry-related Web sites, such as [The Academy of American Poets](#), [Poetry Magazine.com](#), [Poets and Writers, Inc.](#), [LibriVox.org](#), and the [Favourite Poem Project](#).

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Poetry Work Stations

As new poems are presented and the modelling of reading, writing, copying, and responding to poems is introduced, students can focus on their poetic craft. Post a “Things to Do” list of activities:

Things to Do:

Find a favourite poem

Read your favourite poem aloud during Writers’ Workshop.

Think about how a poem makes you feel

Read the poems. Of what does the poem remind you? Complete a poetry bookmark detailing your thoughts.

Copy a favourite poem

Write your favourite poem into your Poetry Anthology. Be sure to copy line-by-line, pacing line breaks exactly where the poet did.

Create a page of words or images

Collect words and images you like from poems you have read. Write the words and draw the images on a page in your Poetry Anthology.

Make a poem with magnetic poetry

Create a poem using the words from the Magnetic Poetry kit.

Memorize a favourite poem

Memorize a poem. You can bring or make props. Perform your poem at the Poetry Café.

Write a poem

Create your own poem. Perform your poem at the Poetry Café.

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Technology and Poetry

The students will be using technology to enhance the learning and analysis of poetry. Many of these technologies require students to publish to the Internet. These include the use of blogs, podcasts, and digital photography.

Blogs

A Weblog, or blog, is a special type of Web page that is easily created and updated using a Web browser. Each new entry has its own date stamp. Each entry has a comments section where visitors may leave comments. For example, students respond to prompts and discuss poetry within a class blog.

Having a real audience is one of the key components to this program. In addition to receiving comments from their classmates, the class will receive comments from other classes who are invited to visit the web pages. Parents are also invited to visit the blogs and respond to the writing. All comments are monitored and must be accepted by the participating teachers before they are visible on the blog. The URL of the poetry blog is <http://call811.blogspot.com/>.

Podcasts

A podcast is a digital audio recording published on the Internet and available for downloading. Selected student presentations will be published to a Virtual Classroom (a protected site) or the blog via podcasts.

Digital Photography

A digital photograph is a still picture that can be stored electronically and published to the Internet. Poetry projects, including magnetic poetry, *Free Verse Photo Project*, and *Poetry On The Range*, will be photographed and shared through digital slideshows. The poetry projects will be submitted to The Academy of American Poetry (<http://www.poets.org/>).

Free Verse Photo Project



The Academy of American Poets invites students to capture ephemeral bits of verse on film as part of this year's celebration. Recast your favourite lines of poetry in the most unusual places—T. S. Eliot's work could appear in sugar spilled across a table, and William Carlos Williams famous words could be revealed in the mud covering a wheelbarrow.

Poem on The Range



Take your poetic license and hit the road in 2010. Poem on the Range, an ongoing and collaborative multimedia-mapping project, invites students to share their views of poetry with the world.

Contribute to the map by uploading and geotagging your videos or photos of poetic landmarks, cities, dwellings, streets, roadside ephemera, and other places immortalized by iconic poems. Go the extra mile (km) by capturing your poetic pilgrimage on video as you read the poem on location.

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Poetry Portfolio

Students contribute to a poetry portfolio throughout the unit in which encompasses the following items:

Anchor charts

Affix co-constructed lists of poetic forms, styles, and guidelines for writing and reading poetry.

Drafts and created poems

Append your poetic writing, whether it is seed ideas, drafts, or completed pieces.

Harvest of words

Record your collection of words and phrases that resonated with you.

Favourite poems

Supplement your portfolio with poems that have awakened your heart and mind.

Poetry stations

Include completed work from the Poetry Stations.

Responses to poetry

Record your responses to read poems – how did reading a poem let knowledge pass through your heart: sharpen your outer and inner visions, and help to awaken the poetry in yourself?

Illustrations of poetry

Record what has stayed in your mind – the images, sounds, and feelings that you see clearly from a read poem.

Poetry projects - free verse photo

Include a photo of your ephemeral, non-permanent expression of a poem.

Poetry project - Poetry on the range

Upload and geotag videos or photos of poetic landmarks, cities, dwellings, streets, roadside ephemera, and other places immortalized by poems. Capture the pilgrimage on video by reading the poem on location.

Poetry project - Photo read-a-thon

Include a log of your reading and the written responses describing the elements of the read poems. Submit outstanding exemplars to be considered for posting on the Poets.org site.

Poetry Café presentation

Append the poem you will be presenting at the Poetry Café.

Assessment tools

Append rubrics, checklists, anecdotal records, and any data celebrating your poetic journey.

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Committed To Memory

Recruit students to plan class anthologies of student-selected poetry. Students carefully plan the sequence of poems for the anthology, practice reading aloud, and prepare for signing autographs. To help prepare students for the oral presentation, refer to the following two documents and benchmarks from Nancie Atwell (2006):

- *Preparing To Present A Poem* (page 264)
- *Setting The Stage For A Poem: Some Options for Student Presenters* (page 365).
- Agree upon simple benchmarks, such as:
 - Each student performance will be two to three minutes in length.
 - Performances will make effective use of dynamics and pacing.
 - Students will clearly articulate their words.
 - Students will make appropriate use of gestures to convey the message or feeling of their poems.
 - Each student will partially (at least one minute) or completely memorize their poem.
 - No props, costumes, or musical instruments of any kind will be allowed; this will be poetry in its purest form. Only the poet's personal presence, in action and voice, are permitted.

(Atwell, 2006)

Invite family members to the event. Send home an invitation to parents along with a slip for them to RSVP.

Invite students to help ready the school library for the Poetry Café. Transform the environment into a vintage 1980s coffeehouse by rearranging desks into cozy card tables or TV trays covered with black plastic tablecloths. Place LCD powered candles on each of the tables.

Locate a microphone for the “open mic” presentations. Hang low lighting on the stage with a single spotlight falling on a stool and music stand. String white lights on the walls of the “coffeehouse” and bring in small round tables with chairs.

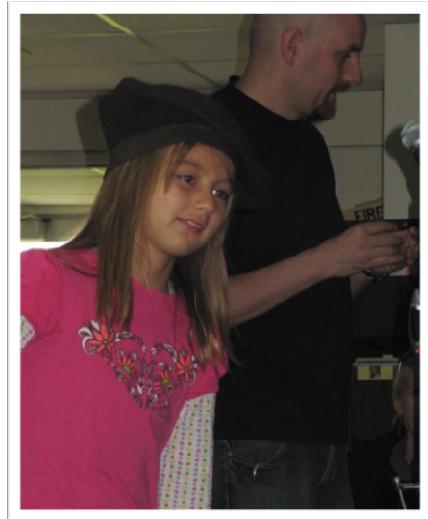
The replicate the beatnik culture of the 1950s and early 1960s that is often associated with poetry readings at coffee shops. Encourage students to wear jeans and black t-shirts. Sunglasses and berets are optional if students have access to such accessories.

Unveil the poetry. One at a time, call the students' names and announce the title of their poem. Students take their place on the stage and read their poem aloud from their portfolio. Instead of clapping at the end of each poem, guests are asked to snap their fingers in honour of the true beatnik culture.

After the readings are complete, celebrate by serving food and refreshment. During this time, guests can browse a display of poetry from students who have agreed to exhibit their writing.

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