

Genre Mini Unit: Free Verse Poetry

by Tracy Sutton

1st grade-to be taught during the last quarter of the year

Unit of Study: Poetry

Grade Level: 1st grade

Resources:

Poetry, compiled by Colleen Lancaster, Glenn Sacos, and Ilene Dunyon. Jordan School District, 1979.

First Grade Language Arts Core Curriculum, Utah State Office of Education/Utah State University

The Art of Teaching Writing, Lucy McCormick Calkins, Irwin Publishing.

Materials:

Overheads of poems or poems on paper to use under a document camera.

Lined paper with space at the top for pictures.

White blank paper for final copies

Pencils, pens, crayons, construction paper

Dry erase board with markers

A variety of free verse poetry on a variety of topics

Student writing journals

A list of writing buddies posted on the wall, to be changed each day, putting higher level writers with lower level writers.

Standards and Objectives Overview:

Standard VII Recognize and use features of narrative and informational text.

Objective 3:

b. Identify different genres: nursery rhymes, fairy tales, poems, realistic fiction, fantasy, fables.

Standard VIII Writing – students write daily to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Objective 1: Prepare to write by gathering and organizing information and ideas (pre-writing)

- a. Generate ideas for writing by reading, discussing literature and informational text, drawing, looking at books, being read to, and reflecting on personal experiences.
- b. Select topics from generated ideas.
- c. Identify audience for writing.

Objective 2: Compose a written draft

- a. Draft ideas on paper in an organized manner (e.g., beginning, middle, end) utilizing words and sentences.
- b. Select appropriate words to convey meaning.

Objective 3: Revise by elaborating and clarifying a written draft.

- a. Revise draft to add details.
- b. Revise draft using descriptive words.
- c. Write in complete sentences.

Objective 4: Edit written draft for conventions.

- a. Edit writing for capitals in names, first word of a sentence, and the pronoun “I” and correct ending punctuation (i.e., periods, question marks, exclamation marks).
- b. Edit for grade level-appropriate words (e.g., would, down, made, write).
- c. Edit for standard grammar (i.e., complete sentences)
- d. Edit for appropriate formatting features (i.e., spacing, margins, titles).

Objective 5 Use fluent and legible handwriting to communicate.

- a. Print all upper – and lower – case letters of the alphabet and numerals 0-9 using proper form, proportions and spacing.
- b. Write with increasing fluency in forming manuscript letters and numerals.
- c. Produce legible documents with manuscript handwriting.

Objective 6 Write in different forms and genres

- b. Produce traditional and imaginative stories narrative and formula poetry as a shared writing activity.
- d. Share writing with others using illustrations to add meaning to published works.
- e. Publish group and individual products.

Expected Outcome: Students will be able to write and share poetry based on self selected topics.

Day 1

Time: about 40 minutes

Objective: Students will listen to and talk about several different types of free verse poetry and then write some topics for their own poetry in their journals. They will then choose one of their topics and attempt to write a poem. Then they will share these with a writing buddy.

Mini lesson (10-15 minutes): share several different types of free verse poetry with students and discuss word choice and comparisons with students.

Teacher: (Students are at the carpet) Today we are going to listen to some poems that are different than the poetry we have listened to in the past. Do you remember how we know that something is poetry?

Students: Poetry has rhythm, it doesn't follow regular sentence structure, and it rhymes.

Teacher: You are correct! The poetry we are going to write is called "free verse". This means that it doesn't rhyme, but it has the other components of poetry and is easier to write. We will begin with some really great poems. Read these with me.

Fire

Flickering flames of gold and red
Creeping forward like a cautious thief
Devouring greedily the old, dry twigs;
Wisps of light gray smoke
Floating higher and higher
In the damp air of the dawn.

-Jill Craik, Age 11

The Garden Hose

In the gray evening
I see a long green serpent
With its tail in the dahlias.

It lies in loops across the grass
And drinks softly at the faucet.

I can hear it swallow.

-Beatrice Janosco

Teacher: What do you notice about the words that are used in these poems?

Students: They are descriptive words.

Teacher: The authors of these poems let you know what they are writing about in their titles. Everything that they write is about the title. They write about fire and a regular hose. You can write about anything! You can write about your shoes, your pencil, your dog, anything! You think about the sounds that thing makes, how it looks, compare it to something else. In "The Garden Hose" the author compares the hose to a serpent and in "Fire" the author compares it to a thief. Think about smells, textures and colors.

Shared writing: (5 minutes)

Teacher: I have chosen to write my poem about writing, since that's what we do during this time of day.

Teacher writes the poem on the board as the students read it.

Writing

Chairs creak, papers rustle, pencils scratch,
Like busy bees building a nest
Thoughts are swirling, and shared with others.
Ideas blossoming on the page
To be shared with others.

Teacher: What is my topic? What do I compare the sound of writing to?

Writing time: (10 minutes) Teacher walks around and monitors the partners progress and speaks to individual students about their topics.

Teacher: Now I would like you to take a minute with your buddy and share ideas about things you could write about.

Teacher: Now I would like you to go back to your seats and take out your journals. You have 4 minutes to make a list of all the topics that you could write about.

Teacher: Now, choose one of your topics and write a poem. This is only practice, so just do your best. You have 5 minutes.

Sharing/Revising time: (5 minutes) Teacher monitors the progress made with the partners. Write down what is working and what students need to improve on. Make suggestions to students as needed.

Teacher: Now I would like you to get with your writing buddy again and read what you have written. Talk about what you like about each other's writing and how to make it better. Are there better words that you could choose? Write them next to your poem in your journal. Could you have broken up your lines so that your poem is more fluent and conveys more meaning? Draw arrows in your journal.

Assessment/Group sharing: (5 minutes) Bring notes to discussion.

Teacher: How is this process working for you? What do you like about it? What are you having difficulties with? How can we make this better for you so you can become a better writer? Who would like to share today? (Choose two or three)

Day 2

Time: about 40 minutes

Objective: Students will again listen to and talk about several different types of free verse poetry and then add to their topic list in their journals. They will then choose one

of their topics and attempt to write another poem. Then they will share these with a writing buddy.

Mini Lesson: (10 minutes) again share several different types of free verse poetry with students and discuss word choice and comparisons with students. Also talk about why the author broke the lines up and put breaks into the poems.

Teacher: Do you remember the type of poetry we are writing? (free – verse) What does this type of poetry have? (rhythm, great word choice, erratic sentence structure). Pay close attention to where the authors begin and end their poems and the types of words they use. Ask yourself if they used a comparison.

Runners

A heart beats with determination
a runner in the body
racing to the finish
but keeping a steady beat
it pulses blood through the body
thin and fast
hurrying to fill the expectations
the body wants of it.

-Leandra Sutton, age 16

Basketball

bright lights
white shoes
orange flashes passes to each player
sweat drops off gleaming bodies
muscles tightening, loosening
with every quick labored step
willpower controls all participants
in this extreme basketball game.

Leandra Sutton

Teacher: What do you notice about the words that are used in these poems? (descriptive words). The author of these poems loves sports. She thinks about her senses: how it feels, what she sees, what she hears, how her body feels. Why did she break her poem up into the parts that she did? Why didn't she use periods? Did she use any comparison? What does it remind you of when she says "it pulses blood through the body", in "Runners"? What about in "Basketball" when she says, "orange flashes passes to each player"?

Interactive writing: (10 minutes)

Teacher: Let's make a list of topics about sports that we could write about. (Make a list at the side of the board. Ask students to vote on one, or you choose one). Okay, we will use our topic as our title.

Students generate ideas to write about with the teacher selecting the ones that fit the best. The teacher can use her own ideas or improve upon some of the student's ideas to write the poem on the board, or on a paper under the document camera.

Teacher: Did we use any comparisons? Can we add any? Do we need to revise and use better word choices? Did we break up our poem into the lines that sound the best and are fluent?

Writing Time: (10 minutes) Teacher walks around and monitors different groups than yesterday. Make notes about student's progress and speak to them about their topic choices.

Teacher: Now I would like you to take a minute with your buddy and see if you can choose some different topics than you did yesterday.

Teacher: Go back to your seats and take out your writing journals and write down some new topics that you didn't write yesterday.

Teacher: Now choose any one of your topics and write a poem in your journal. You have 5 minutes.

Sharing/Revising Time: (5 minutes) Teacher monitors different students today than yesterday making notes of what is working well and what students need additional help/discussion about.

Teacher: I would like you to get with your writing buddy and take turns reading your poems to each other. Talk about what you like in the poems and what questions you might have. Suggest better word choices or line breaks. Make the corrections that you choose in your journals.

Assessment/Group sharing: (5 minutes) Bring notes to discussion.

Teacher: Is this process working for you? What do you like? What could be done better? Who would like to share their poem today? (Choose two or three that didn't read yesterday)

Day 3

Time: about 40 minutes

Objective: Students will listen to and talk about several different types of free verse poetry and write some topics for their own poetry in their journals. They will then choose one of their topics and write a poem in their writing journals. Then they will share these with a writing buddy.

Mini lesson (10 minutes)

Teacher: (Students are at the carpet) What type of writing are we doing? (free verse poetry) How is it different from the other types of poetry we have heard? (it doesn't rhyme) What are some of the things that are the same? (it has rhythm, and it doesn't have regular sentence structure) What kinds of topics can we choose? (anything) I have some more cool poems to share with you. Think about the word choice, and see if she uses any comparisons. Also pay attention to where she puts her line breaks.

Tiger

One world, many predators
fittest of evolution
but mother nature has chosen her favorite
her dangerous pet
the Bengal Tiger
fierce, strong, remarkable
and a trap
to those who are stunned by his beauty
and glare
of liquid gold pools
pouring into the soul
and rendering you powerless
as you are stunned, he circles you
to find the best way
to kill you.
The large muscles cord and tighten
as he crouches.
Then he asks, "What is your last request?"
I ponder what I should say, for every moment counts
"I wish for my friends to find me," I answer.
What a stupid request.
Then I hear it
loud calls for my name
and gunshots.
This is not what he's expecting
"Till another time," he calls
as I see his snakelike tail
whip into the darkness.

Leandra, age 16

Teacher: What kinds of words or phrases did you like the most? Did you notice that the tiger poem turns into a story? The Cat poem is very simple, but well written. What makes this a great poem? (the feelings it portrays).

Interactive writing: (10 minutes)

Teacher: Let's make a list of topics about animals that we could write about. (Make a list at the side of the board. Ask students to vote on one, or you choose one). Okay, we will use our topic as our title.

Students generate ideas to write about with the teacher selecting the ones that fit the best. The teacher can use her own ideas or improve upon some of the student's ideas to write the poem on the board, or on a paper under the document camera. Encourage good word choice.

My Cat

My cat is black and white.
I pretend that he is my son.
I love him.
His feet smell like popcorn.

-Georgia
from The Art of Teaching
Writing p. 385

Teacher: Did we use any comparisons? Can we add any? Do we need to revise and use better word choices? Did we break up our poem into the lines that sound the best and are fluent?

Writing Time: (10 minutes) Teacher walks around and monitors different groups than yesterday. Make notes about student's progress and speak to them about their topic choices.

Teacher: Now I would like you to take a minute with your buddy and see if you can think about some different topics than you did yesterday.

Teacher: Go back to your seats and take out your writing journals and write down some new topics that you didn't write yesterday.

Teacher: Now choose any one of your topics and write a poem in your journal. You have 5 minutes.

Sharing/Revising Time: (5 minutes) Teacher monitors different students today than on the other days, making notes of what is working well and what students need additional help/discussion about.

Teacher: I would like you to get with your writing buddy and take turns reading your poems to each other. Talk about what you like in the poems and what questions you might have. Suggest better word choices or line breaks. Make the corrections that you choose in your journals.

Assessment/Group sharing: (5 minutes) Bring notes to discussion.

Teacher: Is this process working for you? What do you like? What could be done better? Who would like to share their poem today? (Choose two or three that didn't read yesterday).

Day 4

Time: about 40 minutes

Objective: Students will take one of the topics or poems they have written about and take it to final draft. They will write their poem in final draft form and add an illustration.

Mini lesson (10 minutes)

Teacher: I have chosen some new poems to share with you today. As I read them, think about ways to make a poem better by changing the order of the poem, choosing better words, or adding onto the poem.

The Circus

This is a circus.
The man is training the lion.
He said to the lion,
“You roar.”
He did.

-Kendra
from *The Art of Teaching*
Writing p. 264

Books

Loving books
is what's for you.
The sun
hits your back
and hits your book
and you take a trip
into your
memory.

-Miles
from *The Art of Teaching*
Writing p. 250

Snowy Benches

Do parks get lonely
in winter, perhaps,
when benches have only
snow on their laps?

-Aileen Fisher

Teacher: Are there words in any of these poems that could be better? Could we change the order of the words to make it better? Could we change the lines to make it sound better?

Interactive writing (10 minutes): Revise a class selected poem that we have heard over the last three days during the selected writing or the interactive writing. Add to the poem, change words, or correct the order of the poem.

Teacher: Today we get to choose one of the poems we have written and revise and edit it. We will look at choosing better words, at the order of the lines and perhaps add some lines to our poem.

Writing time/Conferencing time: (20 minutes) Students may choose one or two of their favorite poems they have written in their journals, or they may choose to write a new poem from their topic list in their journal.

Teacher: Please choose one or two of the poems you wrote in your journal, or make a new poem using your topic list. We will take this poem to publication. We will have a chance to share these poems in the author's chair, and put them into our classroom's writing anthology that is in our classroom library. You will work alone to choose your poems and then get with your buddy. Revise your poem in your writing journal before you make the final copy for our book. Look for: misspelled words, great word choices,

and sentence and word order. Go ahead and get paper from the writing center to begin your final copy. I will be calling you and your buddy to the table during this time for conferences.

Teacher calls buddy groups, three at a time (six children) to share poems and talk about things they like about the poems. They will also ask questions about vague ideas and language. Students will make suggestions for things that could be better in the writing such as word choice or sentence order. Teacher makes notes of students' strengths and weaknesses and things that could be re-taught or re-emphasized.

Assessment/group sharing: (10 minutes) Students discuss what happened well during writing time and how they felt about the revising that they did for their final copies. Ask them how they chose their poems and what kinds of things they did to make them better. Emphasize that comments made during conferences by other students are suggestions and are not mandatory. If a student uses a word with purpose because it conveys exactly what they mean, then this word shouldn't be changed unless a new word sounds better to them. Also, remind students to not get upset when someone doesn't take their suggestion. This was modeled during the interactive writing portion of today's lesson when the teacher chose what to change based on student's suggestions.

Day 5

Time: about 45 minutes

Objective: Students will use fluent and legible handwriting to publish their poems using the author's chair and putting their pieces into a classroom poetry anthology to place in the classroom library.

Mini lesson/Interactive writing: (15 minutes)

Teacher: We will take our revised poem from yesterday and publish it. To do this I must recopy it onto a new paper using my best handwriting.

As the teacher recopies the poem, have the students read it. This will help keep them engaged.

Teacher: Now I need to add an illustration to our poem. We can do a simple pencil drawing, a full page colored illustration, a paper tear, or use some other type of media. We need to choose a media that will add to the meaning and feeling of our poem.

Students choose the media that goes best with the poem and the teacher illustrates it with students' input.

Independent writing: (15 minutes)

Teacher: Pull out your folders from yesterday and let's finish up our final copies so we will have plenty of time for sharing. You know where the paper is and the materials for illustrating your copies. Remember to use your most beautiful handwriting.

Author's Chair: (10-15 minutes)

Teacher: How do we sit as we listen to the person in the author's chair? (eyes on the student, bodies sitting criss-cross, papers quiet) Where do the papers go when you finish reading your piece? (in the basket) Please remember to choose something about the piece that you really enjoyed. The person in the author's chair can choose three people to make comments at the end. Be sure to show your illustration.

Assessment:

A writing rubric that includes each of the core objectives will be used to assess their poems.

Handwriting	_____	5 points
Spelling	_____	5 points
Word choice	_____	5 points
Illustration	_____	5 points