

Genre Focus Lesson

I. Objectives

- To read to enjoy a poem
- To visualize the images in a poem
- To identify and understand the elements of poetry: speaker, lines and stanzas, rhythm, rhyme, sound devices, imagery, and figures of speech
- To identify and understand narrative and lyric poetry
- To respond and connect to a poem
- To write a haiku

II. Motivating Options

Visualizing Point out to students that the language in most poems creates a vivid mental image. Encourage them to read each poem silently. After reading, they should close their eyes and try to picture the images the poem describes. Ask them to pay close attention to the vivid verbs, adjectives, and phrases the poet uses to create these images.

III. Teaching Strategies

Though poems may be long enough to tell a story or very short, just capturing a brief image, they all include the same basic elements.

A. Analyzing

1. *Elements of Poetry*

- a. **Speaker** Explain that the speaker of a poem is the voice that talks to the reader. The speaker can be poet or a character the poet creates.

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Ask students to consider a poem they have read and imagine how it might differ with a different speaker. What if the speaker was a child, or a mother, an objective passer-by, or an animal? How would the poem change?

- b. Lines and Stanzas** Remind students that lines of poetry are not necessarily sentences. When they read a poem, they should pause where punctuation indicates. Each stanza in a poem is separated from other stanzas by spaces, and each develops a single main idea.

Ask a volunteer to read a poem aloud, pausing at the end of each line. Then have another volunteer read the poem, pausing where punctuation indicates. Discuss with students how the two readings differ.

- c. Rhythm** Explain that the rhythm of a poem often reflects its subject. A poem about running, for example, might have a fast, uneven rhythm, while a poem about the sea might have a rhythm that is regular and calm.

Have students read aloud a poem, noting whether the rhythm is fast or slow, gentle or ragged. Discuss with them how the rhythm reflects the poem's topic.

- d. Rhyme** Point out that not all poems use rhyme. However, when a poem does rhyme, the rhyme scheme contributes to its overall sound. To determine the rhyme scene, students must give a new letter of the alphabet to each new end rhyme in a poem. Rhyming lines have the same letter.

Encourage students to work in groups to find two poems with the same rhyme scheme. Ask them to compare the poems, noting whether they have similarities other than their rhyme scheme.

- e. Sound Devices** Tell students that alliteration, assonance, and consonance are all forms of repetition. (See *Literary Terms Handbook* for definitions.) Onomatopoeia is the use of a word

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or phrase that suggests a sound. Sound devices can add to or reflect a poem's meaning and increase its emotional impact on the reader.

Encourage students to write a sentence describing an animal. Their sentence should use at least two sound devices.

- f. **Imagery** Explain that poets use imagery to create mental pictures with words. The words in an image may appeal to any of the senses – sight, smell, sound, touch, or taste. Invite students to use sensory language to describe an image that reflects a season of the year. Ask them to use vivid words that appeal to all five senses.
- g. **Figures of Speech** Remind students that a figure of speech is a comparison that creates a new way of looking at something. A simile uses *like* or *as* to compare two things. A metaphor implies a comparison between two things. Invite students to create metaphors to describe familiar objects without identifying the objects. They can write their metaphors on slips of paper. Collect the slips and have each student choose one. Students can try to figure out what is described in the metaphor they have chosen.

2. *Types of Poetry*

- a. **Narrative Poetry** Stress that narrative poems can include the same elements as fiction: setting, plot, character, point of view, and theme. Narrative poems often have a strong rhythm, are written in regular stanzas, and use repetition to create a musical effect.
- b. **Lyric Poetry** In a lyric poem, the poet uses vivid language to suggest rather than state thoughts and feelings. Most lyric poems are short and musical.

Short forms of poetry include the haiku, the cinquain, and the limerick. Some haiku and cinquains are lyric in nature, using

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sensory description to create vivid images. Many limericks tell a story as narrative poems do. However, these forms of poetry are shorter than most other poems.

3. **Vocabulary** Because each word in a poem is important, stress that students must know the meanings of all the words they read. Have them jot down and look up unfamiliar words. If a word has more than a single meaning, they should write all its meanings. Then they can work with a partner to determine which definition is appropriate in the context of the poem.
4. **Author's Craft** Stress to students that a poet chooses each word of a poem with care. Because poems are usually short, each word has importance and must convey the poet's meaning exactly. A reader shares the poet's experience through the use of imagery, which recreates a scene or event in the reader's mind. Urge students to consider why the poet chose to write the poem. How did he or she want the poem to affect the reader?

B. Responding

1. **Literature Groups** After reading the poem, have students work in groups to discuss their reactions to and opinions of it. Encourage them to support their statements with words and images from the poem. (For more suggestions on using Literature Groups, see *Literature Groups Sourcebook: Strategies and Activities*.)
2. **Writing a Haiku** Remind students that haiku have no rhythm and no figures of speech. They often include images of nature. They have three lines, with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third line. Invite students to write a haiku of their own that describes something in nature. Urge them to use sensory language to create a vivid mental image.

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