

Poetry Beyond Words: Creating Poetry with Linguistically and Socio-culturally Diverse Students

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1. Popcorn Poetry—Sensing Verbs and Adverbs

“Popcorn Poetry” highlights similes and employs the senses as a basis for creativity.

Title

Line One: 3 verbs

Line Two: I see...

Line Three: I smell...

Line Four: I taste...

Line Five: I hear...

Line Six: I touch...

Line Seven: Verb (same as in line one) adverb, verb, adverb, verb, adverb

Line Eight: Title.

How?

- Ask students to choose a partner and pair share verbs that have to do with a specific theme or topic. Note some of the suggested verbs.
- Divide the class into 4 lines and demonstrate how to move across the class (to music) while enacting one of the suggested verbs.
- Students move in groups of 4 and enact verbs as per demonstration. Note levels, expression, pace and differences in presentation.
- Request that students turn to the person across from them and brainstorm some adverbs that could be used to describe some of the verbs.
- Repeat the movement lines, but this time with adverbs. Note differences.
- Create a tableaux with students demonstrating an action that reflects the theme. Have them reflect on what they might see, hear, smell, taste or touch around them in the scenario. Tap them on the shoulder and have them speak in role telling what they are experiencing from a sensory perspective. Detail can be encouraged here.
- Invite students to return to their seats and write their themed sensory poems.

Student Example:

Popcorn

Popping. Exploding. Smelling.

I see gold small kernels pop and pop to become big popcorn.

I smell the air! Yum it smells like tasty butter!

It tastes like bubbles popping! It tastes delicious with butter yum!

I hear pop, pop, pop, and pop like bubbles popping loudly.

I touch it. It is hot and warm, too hot to touch!

Popping loudly, exploding highly, and smelling tasty.

Popcorn!

(Jenny, ESL Student, Creative Writing for Children)

2. The Diamond Poem

This simple format emphasizes parallelism. Based on the words chosen, a particular mood may emerge.

Line 1 - a one word noun

Line 2 - 2 adjectives that describe the noun

Line 3 - 3 actions or verbs that the noun 'does'

Line 4 - 4 things (nouns) that the top noun and the bottom noun has

Line 5 - 3 actions or verbs that the bottom noun 'does'

Line 6 - 2 adjectives that describe the bottom noun

Line 7 - a one word noun that is the opposite of the top noun

How?

- Invite students to look at an image (the example below was based on a tattoo)
- Tell the student to search for two opposing themes within the image.
- Write each theme on the top and bottom of the page.
- Work inward to compose the poem.
- Once completed, ask the student to create 4 tableaux (poses)—two representing the top noun and two representing the bottom noun.
- Ask another person to read the poem.
- As it is being read invite the author to create a movement piece by slowly shifting his/her body positions, moving from pose to pose.

Student Example:

Ying
Positive, Good.
Floating, Sitting, Knowing.
Energy, Influence, Balance, Confrontation.
Hiding, Curling, Disguising,
Negative, Evil.
Yang

(Tweek, Homeless Youth—CLAIM Project)

3. Onomatopoeia Poetry

This poetic form incorporates repetition and sound words and employs the process of making soundscapes to elicit a sensory response that translates in images and feelings to the page. Contrast is used to highlight the differences between different states of being, e.g. at peace or at war.

How?

- Read a story aloud to students that may feature onomatopoeia or simply suggest sounds rather than highlight them in text. In this case we used “The Roses in My Carpets” (*Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2005*) Ask students to turn to a partner and share any sound words they might imagine in the story. Write them.
- Introduce the concept that sounds or music can elicit feelings.
- Engage half of the room to create ‘sounds of war’ and the other half to create ‘sounds of peace’ and to scribe some of the sounds.

- Play ‘conductor’ with either the teacher or a student volunteer as the conductor who orchestrates the sound levels, first with the sounds of war group then with the sounds of peace group.
- Invite students to write and discuss feelings that were elicited during soundscapes.
- Using the model below or a variation of it, have students create their own onomatopoeia poem (must include onomatopoeia, contrast and repetition, underlined segments may be used as starters or reinvented by students)

Example:

Today I wake up.

I hear the screech of the jets overhead.

Whoosh!

I pull my covers up around my nose.

I do not know if the jets are friendly and they frighten me.

They have hurt me before.

Tap, tap, tap.

The sound of the nurse coming to check on me.

“**Shhhh. Shhhh,**” she comforts me.

I have seen my village in ruins around me.

And heard my family cry out in this war.

One day, I hope to wake up and hear music,

The music of peace.

It will sound like the wings of a dove fluttering outside on a spring day.

Whish! Whish!

I will see all people singing in harmony.

We will hold hands and dance together.

Tippy tap, tippy tap, tippy tap.

I feel this happy song in my heart

Today I send a wish out to the world,

A wish that all children, everywhere,

May be surrounded by the music of peace.

(soundscape)

(Lori Lee Sherritt)

4. Writing in Role, Collective Poem

The writing in role collective poem highlights poetic ideas such as theme, point of view and tone.

How?

- Choose a pre-text (e.g. a newspaper article, a book, a play, a memory, etc.)
- Discuss the pre-text’s theme together as a group.
- Decide, as a class, whose point of view the class would most like to explore.
- Invite each student to take on that role and to write a paragraph describing what the world is like from that particular perspective.
- When everyone is finished, ask the students to form a circle.
- Ask students to crumple their paper and throw it into the middle of the circle.
- Each student then goes and chooses a new poem (not their own).

- Invite students to read the paragraph and to highlight an important line that resonates with them.
- Next ask all of the students to stand together to create the collective poem.
- Tell them that when it feels right and the words fit with the entire poem to read only their highlighted section.
- Depending on how it is read, a different tone will emerge.

Student Example:

(based on *The Rabbits* (Simply Read Books, 2003) , a picture book about aboriginal appropriation by John Marsden and Shaun Tan)

Response to the Rabbits

I am here now.

Scared and still.

I was scared when I heard the news, “a dragon lurks in the dark.”

And I’m sitting here not asking for much.

Only that you leave us.

You growled and snarled.

My hopes and dreams,

came crashing down like bombs.

I won’t see,

my special place.

We are not replaceable.

And you hide under your creed.

I wish I could push rewind and go back to when I first met you.

You burn and ravage the streets.

You multiply like rabbits.

You bite us again and again.

Reduce me.

I tried talking to you.

And you took my language away.

Now it’s hard to talk to my family without thinking of you.

(the 7th grade group—Kidsafe)

Poetry Books Which Include Different Forms and Strategies

Harley, Avis (2000). *Fly With Poetry*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill Press.

Harley, Avis (2000). *Leap Into Poetry*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill Press.

Janeczko, Paul (2005). *A Kick in the Head*. Ill. Chris Raschka. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Poetry Websites

<http://www.poetry4kids.com>

<http://www.gigglepoetry.com>

<http://www.poetspath.com/exhibits/magnificentrainbow.html>

<http://thewordshop.tripod.com/forms.html>

<http://teenink.com/Poetry>

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/poetry>