



Poetry

Language Arts Kit for 5th-8th Grades

Welcome to Poetry. At the end of this club each student will have six pages of poetry designed to share things that the student is interested in. Each poem will be a one day project.

Each lesson will focus on a different type of poetry that you will use to create the content (information) on your six poetry pages:

Acrostic

Cinquian

Couplets

Free Verse

Clerihew

Haiku

Lesson 1

The theme for the first type of poetry is Who Am I? Ask students to think about the words and phrases, thoughts and feelings that describe them. They should write these words in the worksheet entitled Who Am I? under the appropriate heading. Let them know that this is to stimulate their thinking and provide rich, personal material that can be included in their poem.

After students have had 9-10 minutes to complete this Personal Inventory, ask them to reread their list and add anything that they believe they overlooked on the first go round. After they have reread the list (adding as necessary) ask them to underline the most important information, and then to consider additional details that they might want to add to the important information they identified. Ask students to look for connections between the boxes. Repetition within boxes could indicate something that is a passion for them.

Acrostic Poetry

Tell students that they are going to write an Acrostic Poem. Explain that this is an ancient poetic form. The word “acrostic” comes from the Greek *akrostikhis* which translates into the word end line. Acrostic poems can be written in two different formats but to begin with you need to write the topic, in the case of this poem the student’s name, vertically. The poem can be a “list” of different items or character traits of the key word. For example:

Tarzan

Tan
Agile
Resourceful
Zooms
Athletic
Nimble

Emma

Eager to dance
Makes time to practice
Marvelous artist
Adores her ballet slippers

The other form an acrostic poem can take is a statement or a question that works its way through the poem. For example:

Cat

Can't
Avoid
Trouble

Trash

Takes a
Really
Astounding

Stomach to
Handles this mess.

Tell students that Acrostic Poems are relatively easy to write.

Ask them to review their work sheet and to create a first draft of their Acrostic Poem about themselves.

After writing a first version of the poem, ask students to write a second version. Let them know this version might include things that they didn't include in the other one. When they have finished the second poem, ask students to reread both and select the one that think most represents them.

Lesson 2

The theme for this second type of poetry is Friends. Students should think about their BFF, someone they really enjoy hanging out with. The poetry form for this page will be the Cinquain.

Cinquain Poetry:

A poet named Adelaide Crapsey invented the Cinquain in 1911, three years before she died from tuberculosis at age 36. This form of poetry derives its name from *quinque*, the Latin word for “five”, the Cinquain is a poem of five lines. Like the haiku and the tanka, the Cinquain follows a pattern based on syllable count. There are 22 syllables in a Cinquain, distributed among the five lines in a specific pattern: 2, 4, 6, 8, 2.

A good Cinquain flows smoothly. Each line will flow from the line before, with little distinction between the lines. In a Cinquain, the poet tries to create one complete thought, whether it’s a powerful image or a feeling. Usually the Cinquain is a sentence or two, rather than a list of disjointed phrases. The poem should flow, building toward a conclusion. It must not simply stop because the poet has used up the allotted number of syllables. The spirit of the Cinquain is more important than sticking to a syllable count at the expense of the images and feeling in the poem.

To begin, read through the four Cinquain poems that are included as examples in this lesson/

Pink sky

turns to purple
as the sun slides behind
the mountains and day slowly turns
to night.

Snowflakes

dance in the square
of light from a window
as a man sits, quiet and still,
and waits.

Stillness

of night deepens:
stars are scattered across
black velvet sky in glorious
array.

Oh, cat

are you grinning
curled in the window seat
as sun warms you this December
morning?

If you have the opportunity to go on line, look at a wide variety of Cinquains to get the idea.

After looking at other Cinquains more closely, you are ready to begin your own “thinking” process. Because your Cinquain is going to be about your friend, when you begin the Cinquain web, put your friend’s name in the center.

Imagine your friend and record your impressions in each of the spoke bubbles. Use as many sensory words as you can (words that will help the reader see, hear, and/or “feel” the presence of your friend. Once you have completed the web, try your first draft of the Cinquain poem. Once you have a written draft, use the “Looking At Your Draft” Checklist to help you modify your poem to fit the Cinquain model.

Lesson 3

The theme for this third type of poetry is Family. The poetry form is the Couplet. The Couplet is one of the easiest poems to write as it is a simple, two-line poem which rhymes. Most couplets are funny, but they do not have to be.

Couplets

Some samples of couplets include:

My grandma thinks I am her star
Except when I raid the cookie jar!

Sally has a bandaged nose
She didn't see his fist was closed.

I've had a dog, I've had a cat,
But I have never had a rat.

Dripping-dripping goes the rain
Slipping down my window pane.

Here are some first lines of a variety of couplets. In partners decide how you might end the Couplet. Be prepared to share with the group.

As I was walking to school on day....

I saw a shooting star flash by....

A caterpillar brown and fuzzy....

The circus parade comes to many towns....

I couldn't do my homework tonight....

Sing me a song, of pirate's gold....

Ask students to share their couplets.

For one more warm-up in writing couplets before writing ones that will appropriately link to your family, here are several pairs of rhyming words for you and your partner to write a couplet with.

tomatoes—potatoes

raccoon—spoon

strain—brain

lizard—gizzards

whale—scale

fudge—smudge

hesitant—president

tickle—pickle

Brainstorm some descriptive words for each of your family members, whether those descriptors are about how they look, what they say, how they are, how they interact with you, or their hopes and dreams.

Write a first, and perhaps a second draft of a couplet for each of the people in your family. Select the one that is most meaningful to you.

Lesson 4

The theme for this poem is Your Dreams, where you want to be and what you want to be doing 5, 10, 15 years from now. When thinking about Your Dreams think about what you want, not the obstacles that stand in the way. By the same token, maybe deciding you will be an Olympic Figure Skater if you don't know how to skate isn't very likely. So take your dreams seriously, but don't limit yourself. You're looking for balance.

Free Verse

The poetry form that will go with this page is Free Verse. Free Verse poems have no rhyme schemes or necessary patterns or syllables. They are an original form of your own design. They can be about any topic. You just say what you think. Lines can be long or short, written with complete sentences, or just in phrases. For example:

Lemon pie!
Yellow and rich
Topped with meringue so light.
I feel as if I had swallowed
A sunbeam with a spoonful of clouds.

My first car
Was an old used one,
I worked on it
Day in an out
Until I turn the key and heard
The engine roar!
I've painted it,
And bought new wheels,
Watch out world!
Here I come down
Life's speedway!

As a practice, think about the Twilight Movies.

1. Brainstorm your thoughts about Vampire Movies, how do you feel about them, when you are watching them, when you anticipate going....
2. List everything that comes to mind.
3. After you have made your list, see if any of the ideas come together and combine them.
4. Decide which of your ideas you MOST want to communicate.
5. Write your Free Verse poem.
6. Share with a friend and get feedback.

Now, think about your future and what you could be.

1. Brainstorm your ideas, thoughts, wants, hopes, dreams.

2. Visualize yourself in the future (5, 10, 15 years from now). What is happening? What does this future look like? Feel like?
3. List everything that comes to mind.
4. After you have made your list, see if any of the ideas come together and combine them.
5. Decide which of your ideas you MOST want to communicate.
6. Write your Free Verse poem.
7. Share with a friend and get feedback.

Lesson 5

The theme for this poetry page will be a person or persons that you admire. Think about your role models, someone who leads their life in a way that you admire and has influenced you, whether through personal acquaintance or relationship, or because you know about them, read their books, listen to their music, watch their movies, admire their work....

Clerihew Poetry

The type of poetry that we will use for this page is the Clerihew. The Clerihew was invented during the Victorian era by an English schoolboy name Edmund Clerihew Bentley. The boy went on to become a well-regarded writer and creator of the classic locked-room mystery.

Clerihew is a four-line poem about a celebrity (at least a celebrity for you). It is made up of two rhymed couplets, giving it a rhyme scheme of **aabb**. It gently pokes fun at the subject, but is never hurtful. Sometimes a clerihew includes some reflection of the person's fame. Read this sample:

Harry Potter
Was a magical plotter.
At Hogwarts he became a master
After many a goof and disaster!

If you are familiar with Harry Potter you know how often he makes mistakes and things almost backfire on him and then he manages to pull through.

One of the most challenging things about the Clerihew is that the celebrity's name at the end of the first line, which means you need to rhyme it. Remind them that it is easier to rhyme with one or two syllables. Writers will need to be clever when rhyming the names. Here are two interesting examples:

A funny fellow is Bill **Cosby**
His rubber face is what **draws me**.
His eyes roll up, his mouth turned
down.
He's my favorite TV clown.¹

Our first president, George
Washington,
From war or battle he would not **run**,
When some folks cried, "George, be
our king!"
Old George yelled back, "I'll be no such
thing!"²

If you can't think of a rhyme for the person's name, you will need to select another person to highlight.

A checklist for a Clerihew follows:

A Clerihew is always four line long, written in two couplets.

It is about a celebrity

It pokes gentle fun at the person, much like a political cartoon.

The subject's name must be at the end of the first line (and the second line must rhyme with it.)

Here are four Clerihew poems.

Harry Potter

Was a magical plotter.

At Hogwarts he became a master

After many a goof and disaster!

Mark Twain

Wrote books in a humorous vein

His characters can make us grin,

Especially that rascal Huck Finn.

¹ www.gigglepoetry.com

² Ibid.

Edgar Alan Poe

Penned stories that we all know

And every one that he wrote

Seems to end of a gruesome note.

Beatrix Potter,

While doodling with her pen on a fuzzy blotter,

May well have developed the habit

Of drawing Peter Rabbit.

Using these four poems, complete the Looking at the Clerihew worksheet.

Now you're ready to work on your own Clerihew.

Make a list of favorite celebrity, someone that you think is terrific.

Reviewing your list, select one or two that you think might be the best subject for your Clerihew—if you select a group that can count as one person—i.e. Jonas Brothers

Take each person, brainstorm a list the things that come to mind when you think of this person—music, dance, guitar, actor.

Write several words or phrases that will rhyme with the person's name (you will need to use their last name unless they are known by only one name—like Prince--fence, Cher--bear, Brother Jonas—Oughta phone us etc.)

Is there something that you can gently poke fun at that is linked to this person? Write it down.

Once you have collected this information, try writing your Clerihew. When finished, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are there two couplets in this poem?
- Do the first two lines rhyme? Do the second two lines rhyme?
- Does your Clerihew have a lighthearted tone or does it sound mean? (Change any words that you need to change to keep the tone positive)
- Read to a friend and ask for feedback.

Create one or two Clerihews for either the same person or more than one.

Lesson 6

Imagine the perfect day, the perfect time of year, the perfect place to be. What is the weather like, what are you doing, what are you wearing, what season are you in, what can you hear, see, smell, taste, feel? Think about a time when you were able to “experience” this perfect day. Imagine yourself experiencing this day right now.

Haiku Poetry

The type of poetry that we will be focus on today is Haiku.

Haiku is considered “word-painting in 17 syllables”. Nearly a thousand years ago in Japan, young poets frequently gathered at parties to write long collaborative poems called *renga*. After the poet with the best reputation wrote the first short section of the *renga*, his colleagues took turns writing other short parts. In the 15th century, the short sections were released from the long poem and eventually developed into haiku. Haiku became popular in the United States during the 20th century.

A haiku is a kind of verbal snapshot. Generally, a haiku will

- contain 17 syllables in lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables
- include some sort of season word or phrase, either directly (winter wind) or indirectly (thunder crashed) and some sensory image (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste)
- focus on nature; and
- be written in the present tense about the present moment.

Here are some Haiku poems for you to read:

all night long
light shines in the eye
of the carousel ponies

Penny Harter

All summer long
the sixteen-story crane
bows and bows

J. Patrick Lewis

November evening---
the wind from a passing truck
ripples a roadside puddle.

Cro van den Heuvel

from the tar papered
tenement roof, pigeons
hot-foot into flights

Anita Wintz

Stickball players shout
as moonlight floods their field
from curb to curb

The sudden storm's dead...
petals from the dogwood tree
on the still pond

The young artist takes
pains to paint a masterpiece:
a smiling pumpkin

The moaning snowplow
shatters the frigid stillness
of a crystal night

After reading these Haiku poems, carefully look at each one of them and determine if the create a vivid picture, meet the criteria regarding syllables, and focus on nature.

So now it's time to frame your Haiku Poem. Think again about the perfect day. Vividly imagine this as if you are experiencing it at this very moment. What's going on? What can you see? What can you hear? What can you touch? What can you smell? What can you taste in the air?

Complete the following:

Sight: _____

Sound: _____

Touch: _____

Smell: _____

Taste: _____

Look at these observations and use these notes to describe—in a single sentence—a scene you see in your mind’s eye. Remember to write in the present tense and be about the present moment. Write the sentence first and then you can work on it to create a Haiku form. Check for sensory images—you want to include as many images as you can.

If there are words in your sentence that detract from the clear image, then cross them out. When you finish your Haiku poem, you want to include the most vivid words that paint a clear picture.

Next, write your own sentence as a Haiku, in three lines. Count the syllables in each line. The pattern needs to be 5 – 7 – 5 . In the example above, a final version might be:

Tighten your own sentence to meet the pattern.



For more information, contact

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