

TERMS FOR THE TOOLS OF POETRY

- In order to do well on standardized examinations students must have an understanding of the tools poets use and must know the terms for those tools, and be able to apply them in reading and discussion.
- Improving their familiarity with poetic terms will also help students establish a common, precise language with which to talk about poetry, and the means for achieving a deeper understanding and appreciation of the poet's art.

Objective:

The order of teaching is crucial. We feel that terms are necessary and useful, but should be taught only after an introductory lesson or lessons that help students establish personal connections with particular poems. After those ties are established, students may want to reflect further upon and delve more deeply into the poems they have selected. As transition into a unit on poetry, we suggest a lesson on poetic terms, which will provide students with a common language for discussing poems.

Activities:

- The teacher will create a list of key poetic terms (see below for suggestions) from which each student will select (or be assigned) a term that they are to teach to the rest of the class.
- Each student should have a visual aid, with the term, its definition, and an example and/or illustration. Their task is to make the term "memorable" to their classmates.
- They will be graded on their presentation.

Lesson by Mary Henry (Veterans Memorial High School, Peabody, MA), Kelly Arevian (Needham High School, Needham, MA), Emma Leslie (Newton South High School, Newton, MA) and Ronna Frick (Wellesley High School, Wellesley, MA).

TERMS FOR THE TOOLS OF POETRY

Teaching Variation:

1. Put students in groups of four and ask them to select one of their four favorite poems (from a previous lesson) to look at more closely. (Variation: each student could do the assignment individually, depending on class size).
2. The teacher will provide a second poem to each group, along with a list of three or four terms that are useful in a focused discussion of poems. (The terms may vary from group to group, with some overlap).
3. The teacher may consider which terms will be most useful to each group, considering their poems for discussion).
4. Each group will develop a presentation defining and illustrating the poetic tools and terms using examples from the two poems to teach the class.
5. Before the presentations, students will look up definitions for the assigned terms, then search for examples in the poems while the teacher acts as coach for the groups.
6. Students will read the poems aloud before each presentation.
7. Groups can be urged to be as creative as possible with the presentations, possibly using pictures, dramatization, music, etc.

Lesson by Tamara Dalton (Needham High School, Needham, MA), Rosemarie DeFelice (Chelsea High School, Chelsea, MA), Virginia Dent (Lansing High School, Lansing, NY) and Frances Moyer (Newton South High School, Newton, MA)

TERMS FOR THE TOOLS OF POETRY

Suggested Poetic Tools for Study:

1. Voice

Speaker

Tone

2. Diction

Denotation

Connotation

Idiom

3. Imagery - appeal to the senses

Visual

Aural

Tactile

Olfactory

Gustatory

4. Figures of Speech

Literal Language

Figurative Language

Metaphor

Simile

Hyperbole

Litotes

Oxymoron

Synecdoche

Metonymy

Personification

Apostrophe

5. Symbolism and Allegory

6. Syntax

7. Rhyme

End

Internal

Exact or Perfect

Slant

8. Alliteration

Assonance

Consonance

Onomatopoeia

9. Rhythm and Meter

Foot

Kinds of feet: Iamb, Trochee, Anapest, Dactyl, Spondee, Pyrrhic foot

Meter determined by number of feet in line: Dimeter, Trimeter, Tetrameter, and

Pentameter

10. Form and Free Verse

Sonnet

Sestina

Villanelle

Lines (varying kinds in free verse)

READING POEMS ALOUD: SOUND AND MEANING

Suggested poems from Americans' Favorite Poems:

"Naming of Parts" by Henry Reed
"My Papa's Waltz" or "The Waking" by Theodore Roethke
"One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop
"Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas
"The Waking" by Theodore Roethke
"Merry Go Round" by Langston Hughes
"Sonnet 29" by William Shakespeare
"Acquainted with the Night" by Robert Frost
"We Wear the Mask" by Paul Laurence Dunbar
"Mid-Term Break" by Seamus Heaney
"The Snow Man" by Wallace Stevens
"Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden
"Mansion" by A.R. Ammons
"The Bean Eaters" by Gwendolyn Brooks
"The Rain" by Robert Creeley
"The Bee" by James Dickey
"The Pebble" by Zbigniew Herbert
"Strawberries" by W.S. Merwin
"The Night Dances" or "Polly's Tree" by Sylvia Plath
"Pot Roast" by Mark Strand
"My Fly" by C.K. Williams
"The Moon Sails Out" by Federico Garcia Lorca (a poem with wonderfully textured lines, even in translation)

Objectives:

For a midpoint lesson in a unit on poetry, the students, through their reading aloud and listening to various poems, will consider the elements involved in reading poetry aloud.

Activities:

- As a musical score gives direction to the player of an instrument, a poem's arrangement on the page gives direction to the reader of a poem.
- Line-breaks and punctuation in poems offer cues about the way a poem should be read aloud — commas are short breaths, periods longer beats.
- Some poets pause lightly at line-breaks, others do not.
- Reading aloud is also driven by cadences in the language — monosyllabic words slow things down, long words extend lines. (You may or may not decide to demonstrate this notion of a poem's "score" by reading a few lines or a poem to the students — first in a clunky way and then following the more natural rhythms or the sentences and phrases struck across the lines).

READING POEMS ALOUD: SOUND AND MEANING

- It may be a good idea to begin or end the lesson by listening to a few recordings of poets reading poems (there is lots of good audio available on the Academy of American Poets website — www.poets.org — and several audio anthologies).
- During this lesson, students will listen to a few poems read two to four times, each time by a separate student in class.
- It's a good idea to present at least one poem that uses end-line rhymes, and at least one that doesn't. The lesson may provide the opportunity to discuss different poetic forms as well. The teacher may choose to offer a formal poem, such as Elizabeth Bishop's villanelle "One Art," alongside a free verse poem written in short lines, such as "Pot Roast" by Mark Strand; or two fourteen-line poems — a Shakespearean sonnet, paired with Robert Hayden's unrhymed sonnet "Those Winter Sundays.").
- Students will begin to observe that when a poem is read aloud, choices the reader makes (in tone of voice, emphasis, breaths and pauses) can affect the listener's understanding of the poem.
- The readers will leave the classroom so that they are not influenced by one another's readings.
- Each reader will be given a copy of the chosen poem to practice in the hall. You should let them know that they're guinea pigs and should be open to hearing the class comment on their reading in a collegial way.
- The remaining students will receive four copies of the chosen poem.
- The teacher will show them the process of notation, using a poem other than the one(s) chosen for the readers.
- The teacher will read the poem and model the notation process on an Elmo.
- One reader will be called into the classroom to read the poem only once.
- Students will note as much as they can on their copy of the poem.
- After reading the poem students will record what general feeling they associate with the reading.
- The class will then include the reader in a discussion of how the poem was delivered and how the reading promoted or detracted from students' hearing and understanding the poem.
- No student should feel as if he or she has somehow failed to read the poem well; if he or she does, offer a chance to read it again after the class discussion. After hearing different readings of different poems, students will write reflections on what the poems mean to them (for homework or in class).

Based on a lesson by Holly Bugoni (Hyde School, Woodstock, CT), Michalene Hague (Veterans Memorial High School, Peabody, MA), Margaret LaRaia (Needham High School, Needham, MA) and Jenny LaVigne (Chelsea High School, Chelsea, MA)

Initiating Activity for a Poetry Unit

Source of Poems:

Resources provided by the teacher and/or school library — volumes of poems, poetry anthologies, Internet, etc.

POETRY ARCHIVE

<http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/forms.do>

POETRY 180

<http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>

Objectives:

This lesson seeks first to help students find an immediate connection to a poem, and we feel that to underscore the democratic spirit of this unit, it is important that, as far as possible, the teacher should participate alongside the students.

Teaching Ideas:

1. Play 6-10 poems for the students to listen to. You should select these according to the needs and tastes of your class.
2. Ask students to write a response to a single segment that spoke to them strongly.
3. Ask them to discuss what appealed to them, what they noticed, etc.
4. Ask about what they feel makes a good reading of a poem.
5. Ask the students "What poetry is in your head?" — anything at all.
6. Ask, "Is there a poem you know well enough to recite?" Encourage students to recite any poems they know.
7. Assign the homework:

Find a poem that you like, and be ready to read it to the class, and talk about why you like it.

Initiating Activity for a Poetry Unit

Teachers whose students may need more guidance and encouragement might want to pause at this point to accompany their students to the library for a period of searching for poems. Otherwise, teachers could send their students to their bookshelves at home, the library, the Internet, or classroom books.

Students should:

1. Write out the poem legibly. It is not sufficient to bring in a sheet printed from the Internet, or a book with a bookmark in it.
2. Look up any unfamiliar words in the poem and prepare definitions.
3. Practice reading the poem aloud at least three times. It may be helpful to remind them that punctuation marks serve as a sort of score, with commas as breaths and periods as full beats, and that it's not necessary to pause unnaturally at each line-ending, especially those that are enjambed (where the syntax of one line runs into the next without punctuation). Remind them, too, to check pronunciation of unfamiliar words.
4. Think carefully about, but do not write out, what they will say about the personal significance of this poem.
5. The in-class reading. Students will share the poems they've discovered with the class, and speak about what in the poem draws them to it. All the students could share poems during a single class, or the activity could be spread over a few classes, with a handful of students sharing a poem each day to start or end the class. Teachers, don't forget to bring one of your favorite poems to share.

Activity Choices:

We see this activity leading naturally into a unit that is student-driven to a considerable degree, which could culminate in students working in groups to produce their own favorite poem videos, either within the school, or in the wider community.

Lesson by Kelly Aravian (Needham High School, Needham, MA), Ronna Frick (Wellesley High School, Wellesley, MA), Mary Henry (Veterans Memorial High School, Peabody, MA), and Emma Leslie (Newton South High School, Newton, MA)

What is Poetry?

Poems (suggestions from Americans' Favorite Poems):

"Mansion" by A.R. Ammons
"The Bean Eaters" by Gwendolyn Brooks
"Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll
"The Rain" by Robert Creeley
"The Bee" by James Dickey
"The Pebble" by Zbigniew Herbert
"Strawberries" by W.S. Merwin
"The Night Dances" or "Polly's Tree" by Sylvia Plath
"My Papa's Waltz" by Theodore Roethke
"The Snow Man" by Wallace Stevens
"Pot Roast" by Mark Strand
"My Fly" by C.K. Williams

Objectives:

1. In an introductory lesson to a unit on poetry, students will consider, both as a class and individually, what they like or dislike in poetry.
2. The poems listed above offer some challenges to a narrow definition of poetry — most of them are unrhymed free verse poems with varying line lengths.
3. The teacher will read at least one of these poems to the class as an opening for student discussion on how the poem differs from, or corresponds to, the students' expectations of poetry.
4. After the reading, give students copies of the poem, so they can see the shape it takes on the page. Students will also identify what elements of the poem they like or dislike. After a preliminary discussion, students will go to the library with the assignment of finding a poem that appeals to them. In addition to setting aside various poetry anthologies, there will be a folder of poems the teacher has selected for students to consider if they choose.
5. Once students have picked their poems, they must write out the poems by hand twice, as a way of familiarizing themselves with the language.
6. As a homework assignment they will each write a reflection on why they like their chosen poem — what in particular makes it a good poem, what in it speaks directly to them.
7. In a subsequent class, each student will read his or her poem aloud and will offer some thoughts on it. It's a good idea to ask students to have only the text of the poem in front of them for their class presentation. That way, their reflection will be natural — they'll be talking to each other about poetry rather than assuming a book-report style monotone. Of course, they will turn in what they've written, but they need not simply read it out to the class.
8. Over the next week, a few students (3-6) will read and explain their chosen poems each day.

What is Poetry?

9. Part of the class period will be devoted to the presentations. The readings will be used as a discussion starter, and students will develop a list of words, phrases and ideas that come in handy when discussing poetry (See list at end).

Other Activities:

- Students will find and compile five poems that mean something to them for a personal anthology they will turn in at the end of the unit. The anthology will include a written reflection to introduce each poem. By the end of the unit, each student will have chosen one poem to memorize for class presentation.
- Students will work in groups to create a presentation (music, video, pantomime, collage, etc.) for each (or one) poem that demonstrates the significance of that poem to its chooser, or to the group.
- Literature and Art: students will illuminate the poem's personal significance through a creative presentation.

Lesson by Holly Bugoni (Hyde School, Woodstock, CT), Michalene Hague (Veterans Memorial High School, Peabody, MA), Margaret LaRaia (Needham High School, Needham, MA) and Jenny LaVigne (Chelsea High School, Chelsea, MA)

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Based on a lesson by Holly Bugoni (Hyde School, Woodstock, CT), Michalene Hague (Veterans Memorial High School, Peabody, MA), Margaret LaRaia (Needham High School, Needham, MA) and Jenny LaVigne (Chelsea High School, Chelsea, MA)

LINE IT UP

Suggested Poems:

"The Farmer" by William Carlos Williams
"This is Just to Say" by William Carlos Williams
"One for the Rose" by Galway Kinnell
"A Lover" by Amy Clampitt
"Song" by H. D.
"The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams
"a(l)" by E. E. Cummings
"in-Just Spring" by E. E. Cummings

Objective:

This assignment is designed to draw students' attention to the different ways poets use lines, line-breaks, stanza breaks and white space in free verse poems.

Activities:

1. The teachers will present the text several poems typed each as a single paragraph, with no line-breaks or stanza breaks.
2. You may want to review some useful terms with your students — enjambment, end-stopped lines, and caesura.
3. Put the students into groups, and give each group a poem-paragraph.
4. Each groups will arrange the text into lines and stanzas, aiming to create textured lines with rich sounds, listening to the cadences of the phrases and sentences and looking for possible exciting ambiguities created by considered line-breaks (aiming to create at least one line that speaks to both the line that precedes it and the line that follows it).
5. Encourage students to experiment — not merely breaking the text into syntactical units. They may arrange the same text a couple of different ways — trying longer and shorter lines, various stanzas.
6. Together, the group will write a reflection about the process, explaining some of the choices and pointing out the lines that really seem to shine.
7. Groups will briefly present and discuss the arrangements with each other, then compare them to the original poems and continue discussion.
8. The teacher can extend the discussion to include grammar and mechanics (punctuation, sentence structure). Inevitably, looking closely at a poem's texture will also bring up questions of tone.

Based on a lesson by Frances Ashe, Kate Oneschuk (Holliston High School, Holliston, MA), Monica Hiller (Watertown High School, Watertown, MA) and Allyson Sklover (Boston Latin Academy, Dorchester, MA)

POETRY AND LOSS: TWO LESSONS

LESSON 1

Source of Poems:

POETRY ARCHIVE

<http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/forms.do>

POETRY 180

<http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>

Objectives:

Many students run into difficulty with poetry because they believe that a single poem has one purpose, one true meaning, and/or speaks only to one person. The lesson aims to help students consider poems in a deeper, richer way.

Activities:

(The teacher may choose to begin this lesson by reading to the class Elizabeth Bishop's wonderful villanelle "One Art," which begins with the line: "The art of losing isn't hard to master.")

Part One: Free write

1. Write about a significant experience in which you lost something or someone, or you were lost. The "something" can be anything: money, a pet, a shoe — but aim to record a loss you felt deeply; the "someone" can be a friend or family member and can refer to separation or changes in a relationship, or to a death.
2. What is the overall feeling you have about this experience?
3. What, if anything, helped you through this time?
4. What happened later? Did your life change?

Part Two: Read the Following Poems to Class

"Facing It" by Yusef Komunyakaa

"We Real Cool" by Gwendolyn Brooks

"Sonnet 29" by William Shakespeare

"The Holy Longing" by Johann Wolfgang

Questions for discussion:

POETRY AND LOSS: TWO LESSONS

1. What types of loss did each person address? (E.g., loss of innocence, loss of loved ones, loss of identity).
2. How were these losses similar? How different?
3. How has poetry helped this person through his or her loss?
4. What are the connections between the person and the poem?

Part Three: Student Reflection

1. Take another look at your free write. Could poetry have helped you through your loss? Why? How?
2. Through additional searching and reading, choose a poem that speaks to your loss. Become comfortable with the poem; write it out in your own handwriting, read it aloud and be prepared to read it aloud for the class.
3. Why did you choose this poem? What is the connection between it and you? Write about your choice.
4. Create a poem, using your free write as a base, but concentrating on making forceful and memorable lines and honing out the best images.
5. Refine your poem still further. How does this new poem express your experience in a way different from your free write?

Lesson by Lauren Manganiello, Wilmington High School, Wilmington, MA

LESSON 2

Poems:

"Out, Out — " by Robert Frost

"The Holy Longing" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (tr. Robert Bly)

"We Real Cool" by Gwendolyn Brooks

"Facing It" by Yusef Komunyakaa

Objectives:

Poetry can capture a life and say something about a person that an obituary cannot. Remembering the dead (funeral/memorial service) is a "daily life" use of poetry.

Activities:

1. Read the following poems:

"Out, Out — " by Robert Frost

"The Holy Longing" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (tr. Robert Bly)

"We Real Cool" by Gwendolyn Brooks

"Facing It"

POETRY AND LOSS: TWO LESSONS

2. Students can choose the poem they wish to work with for their breakout groups.
Group discussion: issues brought up in chosen poem.

3. General discussion: How do the poems serve as memorials? Discuss the difference between memorializing someone and grieving for someone. For whom do we create these memorials and associations? Consider elegy, eulogy and obituary. What information is contained in each form? What's the purpose of each form?

4. Write an obituary for a character in "Out, Out —" "We Real Cool" or "Facing It"

5. Write an elegiac poem based on an actual obituary.

Lesson by Frances Ashe, Kate Oneschuk (Holliston High School, Holliston, MA), Monica Hiller (Watertown High School, Watertown, MA) and Allyson Sklover (Boston Latin Academy, Dorchester, MA)

LISTENING FOR TONE

Source of Poems:

"Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll

Any poem in a foreign language unknown to students.

Objective:

The lesson, which focuses on vocal renderings of poems, will:

- * Encourage students to discerning meaning through tone of voice, inflection and context.

- * Emphasize that part of being a good reader of poetry is following intuition.

Activities:

1. Have students listen to a poem in another language.
2. Discussion - how can we tell what words might mean even if we have no idea what they are saying? Introduce thinking about tone, sound, and inflection.
3. Have one student read "Jabberwocky" aloud. Repeat exercise, having students (in groups) define the nonsense words in context based upon their sounds and placement within sentences and insert "synonyms."
4. Have students share their "new" Jabberwocky poems, where the nonsense words are replaced with words in English. How do the groups' poems differ? Do they all have the same tone?
5. Discussion - tone and choice in students' lives: Do students speak differently when they are in different social situations? How can we read people by the tone of their voice? Why is this important?
6. Incorporate into vocabulary lessons stressing defining meanings of words from context.

Lesson by Cari Barbour, Arcadia High School, Arcadia, CA

We've listened ... now what?

One of the great things about poetry is that it comes in bite-sized pieces that can easily find a place in the busy school day. A poem need not necessarily have a whole lesson built around it; listening is an end in itself and an enjoyable way of starting or ending a lesson or of signaling a change of activity.

These activities are designed to get inside the poem and look at some of its many different aspects: vocabulary, sound effects, imagery, narrative, form, tone and so on. They also provide opportunities for students to practice their critical skills and use critical vocabulary.

If you'd like to extend these 'poetry moments' with short activities that will make your students think about what they have heard, here are a few ideas to get you started. Remember, classroom activities around poetry need not always involve students doing their own writing - there are plenty of other ways of responding to a poem.

It's a good idea to listen more than once if time allows. There are complex interactions of sound and sense in a poem, and your students will notice and appreciate these more with each listen.

Memory game

- Have pen and paper ready but keep it to one side while you listen to the poem.
- Choose a short poem and listen without reading the text on screen.
- Without speaking to anyone, begin immediately to write down what you think you have heard.
- Your challenge is to reproduce the poem as accurately as possible.
- This activity encourages attentive listening and recall.
- Comparing notes can reveal interesting differences in the way individuals respond to what they hear and what they feel is most important.

Definitions

- Choose a poem with some unusual or challenging vocabulary.
- Listen, and then work in pairs to make thoughtful guesses at the meaning of words you don't know.
- Draw on all available clues in the context and the sound of the word. This activity should be kept light-hearted - it's not a test!
- Afterwards, look up the words in the dictionary and compare the two definitions.

Poetry explorers

We've listened ... now what?

- Listen to the poem as a whole-class activity, and then set off individually or in pairs to make your own discoveries using the Search facility.
- Use the first poem as a springboard to find another you like by the same poet.
- Alternatively, follow the poet's own recommendation. Archive poets have been asked to tell us their favorite poems by others - you'll find these on many poets' main pages.
- After ten minutes' exploration, share some of your new discoveries.

Themes

Another way of finding poems in the Archive is to Search by Theme. Look at the list of themes - which do you think apply to the poem you've just heard? Click and see if the search engine agrees with you. Can you identify other themes in the poem that don't appear in our list?

Role-play

Pair up and take on roles: one of you is the poet, the other a journalist interviewing the poet for a magazine. The journalist has three minutes to think up some questions to ask, while the poet uses this time to look closely at the poem and make some notes that might help him/her to respond. Keep the interview itself short - five minutes is enough. Try to come up with original, free-ranging questions that nevertheless concentrate on the poem and the poet's preoccupations and methods as a writer, rather than favorite colors and brand of toothpaste!

Threes

Listen to the recording twice, then make notes responding to the following prompts:

- * Three things you like about the poem
- * Three things you don't like or don't fully understand.
- * Three questions you would ask if the poet were here.

It's important to pick out specifics (individual words or phrases, images, even punctuation!) rather than giving vague responses such as "I like the atmosphere" or "I don't like the style". This activity encourages you to look critically at the way a poem is made.

Radio

You are a broadcaster, given the job of introducing this poem to the listening public. Listen twice, following the text on screen. Now write a brief introductory paragraph, preparing the listener and saying what's good about the poem. The challenge is to do this effectively without giving too much away; simply re-telling narrative will not make for a good introduction. Zero in on other powerful features of the poem (its quirky half-rhyme, its brilliant use of metaphor...). If time allows, extend this activity by choosing a piece of music to illustrate the poem.

We've listened ... now what?

Television

You are a TV producer and your job is to present this poem through the essentially visual medium of television. What images would you use to accompany the poem? They could be still photographs, film, fine art, and cartoon... rough out a storyboard showing how images and sound would work together.

<http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/teachersAfterListening.do>