Unit 5--Poetry Writing

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts**
Time Period: **Marking Period 3**
Length: **4 to 5 weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

April is Poetry Month, and students have a dual opportunity in this unit: to read and develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for poetry, and also to compose poetry from a more informed understanding of traditions, conventions, counter-conventions, and tropes. Students will draft both handwritten pieces as well as pieces using appropriate technology.

Students will read and attempt various forms, organizational structures, and literary devices. They will compose, however, with an emphasis on concept and the role of figurative language in transmitting that concept.

Also, the activities from this unit will enable students to produce a poem for the school's literary magazine, *Reflections*.

Standards

LA.W.8.5	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
LA.W.8.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self correction, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
LA.SL.8.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
LA.SL.8.1.B	Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
LA.SL.8.1.D	Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.
LA.L.8.2.C	Spell correctly.
LA.L.8.5.A	Interpret figures of speech (e.g., verbal irony, puns) in context.
LA.L.8.5.B	Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.
LA.L.8.5.C	Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute).

Essential Questions

1. Evaluating my previous experiences in writing poetry, what goals should I set for myself in terms of concept, literary devices, and creativity?

2. How do I develop a concept in my poetry that applies to the world at large and the experiences of my audience?

3. What elements contribute to a meaningful poem, and how do they do so?

4. What forms of poetry (sonnet, villanelle, common meter, etc.) may suite my style and creative direction?

4. What should inspire me and influence me as I write?

5. How and why should I make use of my skills, resources, peers, and teacher as my work takes shape?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- Adding connotations and implications can often have a more meaningful effect on poetry than mere explicit statement.
- As much as poets write for the purpose of self-expression, they must also frame their expression by considering their audience.
- Cliches do not belong in poetry unless a poet deliberately adds fresh meaning to them.
- Conferences are two-way discussions whose frank interchange of ideas facilitates good writing.
- Figurative language is an essential component of most poetry.
- Rhyme and rhythm are common—but not necessary—elements in poetry.
- Traditional and contemporary exemplars provide rich examples for inspiration.
- Various forms of poetry (sonnet, villanelle, common meter, blank verse) are useful frameworks for poetry who are ready to use them.
- Writing is a process that unfolds over time, beginning with ideas, taking refinement over several drafts, and improving with inspiration from outside texts as well as with consultations with peers and teachers.

Application of Skills: Students will be able to...

- Draw inspiration from the poetry of others and manipulate elements they find there to suit their own compositions.
- Apply constructive criticism received from their peers and from the teacher with regard to form, theme, and literary devices.
- Assist and receive assistance from peers in developing ideas, writing, revising, and editing.
- Attempt traditional forms of poetry (sonnet, villanelle, common meter, blank verse) as they feel ready.
- Avoid cliches when writing poetry, detect and eliminate them when assessing their own work, and point them out in the work of others.
- Complete at least the final phase of their work using digital and cloud capabilities and produce final

products in digital form.

- Emphasize description, figurative language, and other elements over rhyme and rhythm as they compose poetry.
- Employ elements and tropes that readers will recognize and relate to.
- Experiment with figurative language and incorporate it into their poetry.
- Use connotations and implications to convey nonliteral meaning.
- Use vocabulary appropriate to the content, tone, and theme of their poems.
- Write every day toward the development and culmination of their poems.

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

The following teaching points address the objectives of this unit, as well as the standards in the Common Core:

- Famous poems (see mentor texts below)
- Emphasizing concept over form, rhyme and rhythm
- Priorities for peer conferences
- Genres: narrative, lyric, and descriptive
- Metaphors
- Symbolism
- Personification
- Rhyme, slant rhyme, and sight rhyme
- Rhythm
- Forms: sonnet
- Forms: villanelle
- Forms: Haiku
- Forms: blank verse
- Forms: free verse

Typical Daily Activities

- Mini-lesson (teaching point, modeling, active engagement, sharing)
- Daily writing
- Conferences (between peers and with the teacher) and sharing

Critical Phases of Student Activity

- Developing topics
- Research

- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing

The Reading and Writing Project's *Units of Study in Argument, Information and Narrative Writing, Grades 6-8* (Calkins et al., 2014) serves as an additional resource for teachers. The "Poetry" section of this resource divides lessons into three sections. or "bends."

Teaching Points

Bend 1, Narrative and Lyric Poetry

- Finding poems in old writing projects
- Finding inspiration in the details of life
- Looking to the world for inspiration
- Asking unanswerable questions
- Offering feedback to writing partners

Bend 2, Revising So That Every Syllable Counts

- Sounds and meanings of words
- Relating the physical appearance of a poem to its meaning
- Revising for craft
- Using craft in fresh, interesting ways
- Special attention to endings

Bend 3, Chapbooks and Slams, Publishing Poetry with Flair

- Selecting poems that go together
- Creating introductions to poetry collections
- Celebration

Assessments

Assessment in this unit takes three forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. Assessment rubrics are available in Lucy Calkins's *Writer's Project* resource kits, but teachers may also develop their own rubrics in order to include more specific elements of knowledge and skills listed in this unit summary.

Additionally, student self-assessment and peer assessment should take place whenever possible--again, in all three forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. Removing the traditional emphasis on teacher assessment enables students to take more initiative and become self-directed.

Also, whenever possible, teacher assessment should take place in the context of a conference, or at least be followed up by a conference. This reinforces expectations, advice, assistance, and ultimately, growth.

Diagnostic Assessments

Review of poetry in the student's portfolio from the previous school year

Formative Assessments (Informal)

Daily observation of students' participation and products during the active participation segment of each mini-lesson.

Students' questions, comments, suggestions to teacher

Comments, corrections, and records from peer conferences between students

Formative Assessments (Formal)

Teacher-student conferences

Summative Assessment

Summative writing will take the form of both handwritten pieces and pieces generated using appropriate technology.

Published poems

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

The Writing Workshop framework--indeed, the endeavor of writing poetry--enables students to generate ideas based on their own interests and experiences. The inherently self-directed nature of developing initial concepts requires continual reinforcement, however, at all phases of instruction during the unit.

This particular unit on poetry writing also enables students--based on interest and ability--to choose in consultation with their teachers from a diverse field of genres, forms, and traditions. Struggling students may choose more basic forms such free verse, concentrating on one or two literary devices, perhaps metaphor and symbolism. Most students will want to experiment with additional devices such as personification and hyperbole, and they may add some structural organization in the form of rhyme and meter. Highly advanced students will manipulate and reassert traditional forms and conventions; they will synthesize concepts and merge them with their methods of construction. They will explore literary tropes and elements on a highly abstract level and with highly nuanced applications.

The active participation component of mini-lessons enables a teacher to move around and observe students at work on concepts and strategies that were presented in a whole-class format. The teacher can intervene at his or her discretion.

Likewise, a sharing component of many lessons will allow for a sampling of work from multiple students. A greater flow of ideas and products brings about a more thorough appeal to the individual dispositions and learning styles of students listening. Also, this unit will culminate in a publishing/celebrating day on which students put their individual skills and products on display.

Supplementing this, multiple exemplar texts in varying styles will broaden the appeal and accessibility of the knowledge and skills students are developing.

Due to those varying dispositions and learning styles, teachers promote various strategies during all phases of the writing process. Students will have opportunities to work alone, in pairs, and in groups. They will choose either to compose in a traditional pen-on-paper mode or to compose, revise, edit, and publish digitally.

Conferences also provide a critical opportunity for students to receive individual attention and instruction. Small-group conferences with a teacher will allow for a diverse mix of ideas and advice that students can apply to their work whether it was specifically given to them or not, and the discussion is often easier to follow and takes place in closer proximity to individual students than whole-class instruction. Of course, at several stages in the writing process, the teacher will hold conferences with individual students for formative and summative purposes.

In compliance with 504 plans and IEP's, teachers will review applicable documents, consult appropriate personnel connected with special-needs students' cases, work closely with inclusion teachers and classroom aides, and communicate with parents in an effort to see to the specific needs of all students.

In some cases, most often in GATE classes, teachers may elect to have students compile their poems into a true publication. This will require many individual students to work in specialized capacities such as copy editors, section editors, editors-in-chief, and layout and design specialists. Over several instructional units,

additional students will serve as archivists.

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

Consistent with the concept of differentiated instruction, students will choose topics for their poetry that will range across the curriculum. While some teachers will provide instruction that includes specific concepts from various content areas, all should direct students to specific text and on-line resources pertinent to various content areas. Also, teachers will consult grade-level content area teachers on concepts covered in their classes, allowing subjects, lessons, and experiences to reinforce each other.

Suggested Mentor Texts and Other Resources

Mentor Texts:

"Birches" by Robert Frost (blank verse, symbolism, metaphor)

"The Charge of the Light Brigade" by Alfred Lord Tennyson (imagery, allusion, symbolism)

"Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas (villanelle, connotation/implication, metaphor, imagery)

"I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died" by Emily Dickinson (common meter, onomatopoeia, synesthesia, metaphor, symbolism)

"next to of course god america i" by e.e. cummings (sonnet, recuperating cliches, allusion)

"Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day" by William Shakespeare (sonnet, metaphor, symbolism)

"Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou (common meter, metaphor, imagery)

"Trees" by Joyce Kilmer (metaphor, personification)

"Winter Poem" by Nikki Giovanni (free verse, personification, imagery, symbolism)

Resources:

Grade 6 Poetry Packet and Grade 6 GATE Poetry Packet

University of Freiburg, Germany, English poetry website (http://www2.anglistik.uni-freiburg.de/intranet/englishbasics/PoetryTypes01.htm)

Poetry Magazine (poetry.org)

Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing:

- *"Poetry." Units of Study in Argument, Information and Narrative Writing, Grade 8.* Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop, Intermediate Grades*. Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *Writing Pathways, Grades K-8, Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions*. Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *If...Then... Curriculum*, Grade 8 (Assessment-Based Instruction). Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *Resources for Teaching Writing* (DVD). Lucy Calkins, TCRWP

The Writer's Almanac (writersalmanac.org)

21st Century Skills

CRP.K-12.CRP2.1	Career-ready individuals readily access and use the knowledge and skills acquired through experience and education to be more productive. They make connections between abstract concepts with real-world applications, and they make correct insights about when it is appropriate to apply the use of an academic skill in a workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP4.1	Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas, and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal, and/or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice, and organization, and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.
CRP.K-12.CRP11.1	Career-ready individuals find and maximize the productive value of existing and new technology to accomplish workplace tasks and solve workplace problems. They are flexible and adaptive in acquiring new technology. They are proficient with ubiquitous technology applications. They understand the inherent risks-personal and organizational-of technology applications, and they take actions to prevent or mitigate these risks.