

Lesson Plan from The Sumner Arts and Learning Collaborative:
Making Connections to Meaning through Poetry

Collaborating Partners:

Sumner Elementary School, Boston Public Schools

Lesley University

National Arts & Learning Collaborative

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Development of the Poetry Lesson Plan

Fifth Grade Sheltered English Immersion

Unit: Testing as a Genre

Lesson title: Making Connections to Meaning through Poetry

1. Length of Assignment: Two days during “Testing as a Genre” study weaving into an exploration of poetic style and language.
2. Materials: Poetry MCAS test prep session.
3. Prior Knowledge: songs, rhymes, poems from their cultural backgrounds, some elements of poetry. Student poetry from the beginning of the year.
4. Weave joy into the exploration of comprehension required for standardized tests.
5. Objectives attached
6. Vocabulary: verse, stanza, rhythm, rhyme, sonnet, haiku, narrative, line poem, turning a line, images, poetic license.
7. Teacher preparation: Standards, research and select poems from MCAS test preparation materials
8. Motivation: Students have written poetry at the beginning of the year. Students will reread their poems to open the inquiry between what they already know and the comprehension challenges of standardized tests. In order for students to respond to their peer’s poetry, they have to use the skill of inference.

9. Activity: What is poetry – Students create a word splash with their notions of what poetry is. After reading some examples of a range of poetic styles, students will add to their word splash.
10. Assignment: Students will work in pairs to solve the MCAS test section on a poem. Once they have completed their standardized test (MEPA, MCAS Reading Trial) they can create Haiku with the haiku maze.
11. Rationale: Writing and reading poetry demands acute reading comprehension. Students are challenged to read and understand the meaning of standardized test questions. They also need to feel confident that what they know will help them do well on the standardized tests. Students have written and read poetry at the beginning of the year. Poetry forms part of the MCAS test preparation in the form of poetic analysis through multiple choice test questions.
12. Evaluation: Test scores, joy of writing poetry as an after-test activity, follow-up poetry unit after testing.
13. Reflection: This reflection is premature because we are about to begin our post-test unit next week. I am reading a novel in poetic form aloud to the children. Their engagement is a testimony to the access created by poetic use of words for students who are learning English. It is as if the freedom from conventions holds meaning. One of the students has selected three poems from Julia Alvarez Homecoming. These are largely identity poems. In the next few weeks before the MCAS Science, Social Studies and Math tests, we will delight in reading and writing poetry. We have just completed our Testing as a Genre study for the MEPA and MCAS reading. Now we are using poetry again to rest from the routing of examining multiple choice and open response questions while continuing to focus on test preparation. This time we are counting on the inferential comprehension that is required for delighting in “getting” the meaning of poetry. At the same time we will engage children with digging deep into their wealth of knowledge to write meaningful poems. We will invite families to celebrate their children’s literary accomplishments after the TESTS.

Resource:

Mckim, E and J. Steinberg (1983) *Beyond Words, Writing Poems With Children*—A guide for parents and teachers.

STUDENT POEMS

Las Esclavas

A wide beige hallway
Open to the court yard garden
Cool tile floor
Girls sitting paying “yaquis”
2 pon, 3 pon, 4 pon, 12

On the right side
“el comedor”
white table cloths
frijoles, chuletas, casco de guayabas
trying not to swallow

Dash across the hall
Politely
With a napkin full of food
Flush it quick
Only I am the gatekeeper of my mouth

Haiku

Poem
Writing a poem
All I need is a hammock
I exhale in thought

Stone

Feeling the stone on the palm of my hand
Cool resting on my lifeline
Palm outside the stone
A palm in the breeze

The northern breeze
The palm is out of landscape

Still the stone
Better wait to hear what it says
Still. Be still before the cool stone
Before the northern coolness
Makes me be the stone

Stone split in two
You know the line that joins you
That graceful line we walk to blend
The two
One dark black side
One speckled grey side
Outside there was once a turquoise blue sea
That tumbled the edges smooth
I don't see the sea anymore
Only this cool stone
Shaped in two
Resting cool on the warm lifeline of my palm