

BROWN BAG POETRY

A poetry lesson plan created by author Kim Norman
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(Sometimes I call this activity “Poetry Collages.”)

Grade Level(s): 3 through 12

Subject(s):

- Language Arts/Literature • Art

Purpose:

This lesson is designed to give students an appreciation of poetic language, imagery, metaphor & simile, as well as the storytelling aspects of poetry. Additionally, as students create their own poems, they’ll begin to understand that the more open-minded and imaginative they are when selecting phrases, the stronger their poems will be.

Objectives:

Students will:

- 1 Create their own poems by arranging individual lines of poetry into new poems
- 2 Study the work of other poets
- 3 Study poetic devices like simile, metaphor and imagery
- 4 Work cooperatively

Materials:

- glue, glue sticks or tape
- scrap paper, construction paper or some other background surface
- many varied poems by different poets
They may be photocopied from poetry books, typed or copied & printed from the internet.. They could even be hand-copied by the students, then photocopied. To save paper, you may wish to arrange 4 to 6 poems on a single page before making additional copies
- scissors
- small bags

Pre-activity: If you wish, you may want to have the students read the photocopied poems first, noting the author of each poem as well. This isn’t necessary, though, and could even be an inhibiting activity, since some students may, later--consciously or not--find themselves arranging the phrases in a similar manner to the original poem. Alternatively, you could have the students read the original poems AFTER they have created their own poems. They’ll have fun spotting phrases they used in their own poems.



Activities:

- 1 Each group (4 to 6 students) will be given a small stack of photocopied poems and instructed to cut each line of the poems into individual strips of paper. If they wish, students may cut longer lines into several shorter phrases. Of course, the teacher may prefer to do the cutting in advance, so students will not see the original poems, but having 20 hands doing the cutting saves time and labor.
- 2 Poem clippings are then placed in brown paper bags and traded with other groups of students. If other groups received different poems, this starts each group with a truly clean slate, having no idea how the phrases worked together in the original poems.

Alternatively, all clippings can be gathered in one larger bag, shaken up, (the bag could even be passed around for a *really* good shaking) then opened and divided up into smaller bags.

- 3 Now comes the real fun: students comb through the clippings, creating new poems by arranging the phrases on construction paper, tacking them down with glue sticks. Glue sticks work well since they allow the young poets to move them around without tearing the phrases.

It is important that students understand that there are no “rules” to creating the poems. If they ask, for instance, “Is it okay to cut the lines into individual words?” or “May I arrange the words in one long strip?” the general answer should be, “If you wish. This is YOUR poem.”

Students may work in groups creating one or more poem(s) per group or work individually, sharing the pile of clippings as each student creates his/her own poem.

- 4 Students will be eager to share their completed poems, so plan for some sharing time, as well. Or have a “poetry art show” by displaying the poems on the walls of the room or hallway. If the poetic strips were glued onto colored paper, they are visually pleasing as well.

Alternative activities:

Phrases may be arranged to create artistic shapes such as spirals, triangles, trees. This would lead to a discussion of concrete (shape) poetry.

Students could choose their own favorite poems to be used, written by the students themselves or by popular poets.

Students could write their own phrases to be added to the bag. The teacher may wish to assign specific types of phrases for the students to write, such as metaphors. This would be a good activity to try if the lesson is ever repeated. Keep those clippings. It’s a popular activity, and they probably *will* ask to do it again!

Brown Bag Poetry Examples:

Here are a few sample student poems:

###

With my spear I shall
be lost forever
left alone, amongst the grasses
a star that you can't see.

children come and wait
They dance above us
to a lifeless ocean;
Death is like a rock.

--Skylar, grade 7

###

The floor is a brown cat
Among gray buildings
Cold and all alone

wandering in the mystic rhythm
We can walk on the stripes
I hear jungle drums
The fire darkens
as holy and enchanted
as the first star

--James, grade 9

###



It was raining
in that brain of yours
From cloud to tumbling cloud,

My mind's not right
Nothing beside remains
And you may see me cry--

I'm a window
There was never any paint on
A magic web with colours gray
There is no one else for miles

--Danielle, grade 10

###

We have come this far
Come with me to
the basket
with lizards

A whisker first and then a claw,
But it's not elves exactly
All leather and in red, black or purple
Suddenly I realize
they shrieked up out of sight

--Morgan, grade 5

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