

## **Part 1: Introduction**

Poetry has never been my favorite topic in school; I always felt so bitter about hacking the poem apart and learning the layers of deeper meaning. It was different when I wrote poetry though. It is different when you write a poem, feel control over it, and know what you want to say. As a soon-to-be teacher, I want my students to feel that appreciation for poetry that I have, without the bitterness of analyzing it to the point of it no longer having any meaning. Writing poetry made me feel better in ways that writing prose cannot.

As teachers, we want to help students be as well rounded as possible in order to be successful humans. Often, school only focuses on the academics, but children spend more than half their days at school; social and emotional aspects of children cannot be ignored. Incorporating poetry into the curriculum can help foster students' emotional and social health. Regie Routman (2000) talks about how poetry is freeing because there are few rules and students can write about anything (pg. 5). It can help students channel their enormous emotions in a healthy way that allows them to then focus on other academic aspects of school. Poetry can also be helpful in showing students that they can be successful with writing. Students who struggle in writing often find themselves excelling in poetry. I saw this first hand in student teaching, when we did our poetry unit. Every student found themselves writing poems that they were proud of. When their confidence grows with poetry, their abilities in other subjects may increase just from the confidence boost.

When students write poetry, they are using vivid language, figurative language, and making deliberate decisions about word choice. Dorfman and Capelli (2017) talk about introducing poetry by having students look for prose that sounds like poetry (pg. 179). By doing this, students make the connection between powerful sentences that make prose writing strong as well as start to see what poetry looks and sounds like. This will help students in both genres, and they will become better writers across the board. Students who understand that poetry can be used in prose and vice versa will be more likely to utilize strategies that lead to powerful sentences.

As students become better writers in language arts, they can also strengthen their science writing. With math and reading emphasized during the normal classroom day, it can be hard to find time for science or social studies. This can mean that students are not spending very much time writing expository or non-fiction materials (Frye, Bradbury, Gross, 2016, pg. 435-436). This type of writing becomes more important as students get older, but they generally have little experience with it. Using poetry in these subjects can help students get more comfortable writing non-fiction materials, as well as engage students who do not like science or social studies.

Poetry can be a good outlet for figuring out how much a student actually knows about a topic through persona poems. Dorfman and Cappelli (2012) talk about how looking at a different point of view of someone or something else can be a “powerful experience” for students (pg. 92). The ability to look at other perspectives is an important quality in good writers. It also shows what the student knows about that person or thing. By looking through the eyes of the object being described, you are making deeper connections to the topics than if just writing a paper explaining what has been learned. It is a different level of thinking, which shows a greater degree of understanding. It can be easy to regurgitate information about a topic, but unless you

understand it, you cannot write from its perspective. Using poetry in science and social studies will allow students to learn the material more deeply, as well as add another layer of literature into the day.

Poetry can be powerful in the classroom when used correctly. In a world of testing and scores, poetry can help students become stronger readers and writers. Poetry uses literary devices that are found in texts that students read in language arts, and students get more exposure to it, which will help them on the test. Poetry is approachable, which helps when tackling difficult subject matter like science. It is a versatile genre, and once teachers and students stop being afraid of it, it can help open doors in classrooms.

## Part 2: Features of the Unit

Population - Third Grade at Parkway School/Marjorie Williams Academy. Whole group.

Participation Structure - Whole group (teacher modeling), shared writing, partner writing, independent writing

Texts/literary models used

- *Kids' Poems: Teaching Third & Fourth Graders to Love Writing Poetry* by Regie Routman
- *Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle School* by Georgia Heard
- *Mentor Texts* by
- *Firefly July* by Paul B. Janeczko
- *A Kick in the Head* by Paul B. Janeczko
- *Falling Down the Page* collected by Georgia Heard
- *When Green Becomes Tomatoes* by Julie Fogliano

Goals/objectives/skills/strategies -

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.4  
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.4  
With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.5  
With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 3 [here](#).).
- Writers will be able to write haiku, list, concrete, and free verse poems.
- Writers will be able to use literary devices in their poems to enhance their writing.
- Writers will be able to distinguish between ordinary and poetic language.
- Writers will be able to utilize revision strategies.
- Writers will be able to model their writing after a scaffold.
- Writers will be able to collaborate with their peers to write.
- Writers will be able to share their poetry to become more confident in their writing.

## Part 3: Develop Instructional Plans

### Overview of Lessons

Over the course of the five days, students will be adding to their knowledge of poetry. The first day will consist of talking about and modeling poetry in an effort to get students in a poetry mindset. This is a day to allow students to get their feet wet with poetry, and just let them experiment with writing. The sharing at the end of the day will be very important to give students confidence that they are in fact writing poetry. The second day introduces the idea that poems use different vocabulary than everyday vocabulary. We will do this by talking about some ordinary words about snow, and trying to change them into poetic words about snow. On the third day, scaffolds will be introduced to help students start thinking about line breaks, as well as how borrowing from poems can help us become stronger writers. Scaffolds can also be used if a student is having trouble writing a poem. The fourth day introduces different types of poems, haiku, concrete, and list, in order to expose students to the forms and give them ideas for furthering their own poems. The final day will focus on revision. Students will think about ways to add more poetic language to a poem, as well as think about how they can experiment with line breaks to make the poem even better.

### Day 1- Introduction

#### Poems Used:

“Divorce”

Pg. 57 *Kids’ Poems*

- Poems can be serious
- They do not have to rhyme

“Baseball Stress”

Pg. 83 *Kids’ Poems*

- Everyday life is a good thing to write about
- Kids can write good poetry
- Line breaks

“April Rain Song”

Pg. 83 *Awakening the Heart*

- Descriptive language
- Imagery
- Talks about one thing in different ways

“Little Orange Cat”

Pg. 14 *Firefly July*

- Simile
- Short

“December 11”

*When Green Becomes Tomatoes*

- The colors
- The personification
- Describing something without naming it

**Hook:** Tell students that we are going to be celebrating poetry this week by reading as well as creating our own poems.

Engage students by having a shared discussion (chart paper/document cam) answering questions:

What do we like about poetry?

What do we not like about poetry?

What do we know about poetry?

The teacher will record student answers during discussion, so we can look back on this discussion later in the unit.

Poetry	
Likes	Dislikes
fun	They can be short
family writes poetry	Sometimes boring
funny poems	can be said
fun to read	too long
freedom in poetry	
fun to write	
like that they are short	
What do we know?	
Rhyming words	long & short
It doesn't go across the page	shows emotions
It can be about anything	factual
learn from them	books of poetry
Different types of poetry	
- observation	

**Purpose:** The purpose of this lesson is to get students thinking about what poetry is, as well as to build excitement about reading and writing poetry.

**Hook:** Teacher will introduce variety of poems (listed above) about self and seasons. Class will read and discuss poems as a whole group.

What do you notice about these poems?

**Brainstorm:** Have students Brainstorm in their poetry booklets a list of “Things I love”. These will serve as poetry writing territories.

**Modeling:** Have 2 or 3 students share what they are planning to write about it. Model thinking through how the student might begin writing about their topic.

**Independent writing:** Students will be given time to try any form of poetry they’d like, possibly based off their “Things I love” brainstorm.

**Sharing:** At the end of the lesson, invite students to share what they have written and celebrate our first day of poetry writing.

**Reflection:**

The students seemed to have a lot of fun with poetry today. Everyone was able to write a poem, and only one student really struggled to find a topic. When reading poetry, the students were getting really restless. I decided not to read the last poem, and let them start writing. Tomorrow, I will ask more questions and try and get students more involved with each poem. While the students were writing, I saw students not using any sort of line breaks, despite having a conversation about how poetry uses line breaks and aren’t always sentences. Tomorrow, I will make sure to show the students all of the poems I read on the document camera, in order to help them continue thinking about line breaks. Once the students were done writing, almost the whole class wanted to share their poems. Some students shared more than once. They really enjoyed listening to all of the poems. I was pleasantly surprised that I managed to give the class twenty minutes of writing, and enough time for sharing without going over time.

## **Day 2 - Drafting**

**Poems Used:**

“March 20”

*When Green Becomes Tomatoes*

- Metaphor
- Imagery

“Snow Fence”

*Firefly July*

- Personification

“April Waking”

*Forest Has a Song*

- Pattern/ scaffold

- Observation

“Thanksgiving”

Pg. 43 *Kid's Poems*

- Pattern
- Descriptive words

**Hook:** Tell the class that you’re going to share a few poems and you want them to think about what they notice. Read “March 20”, “Snow Fence”, “April Waking” and “Thanksgiving”. Create a list of what they notice. Students should come up with that the poems are about seasons, and that they use literary devices such as alliteration and simile.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this lesson is to learn how to draft poems using the strategy of rewriting ordinary words as poetic words, then using the poetic words to form a poem.

**Brainstorm:** On the whiteboard (or SmartBoard), create a T chart labeling the two sides “ordinary” vs “poetic”. Using the topic of winter, have students come up with ordinary words that have to do with winter. These may include snow, cold, ice, etc. Then, have students come up with poetic words that they could use alternatively. These may include blustery, frigid, shiver, etc.

**Model:** Using the poetic words that the students came up with, model writing a stanza about winter.

**Shared Writing:** As a class, write the second stanza together. Make sure to pull from the poetic words.

Ordinary	Poetic
Snowing      Cold ice      B Snow ball      soft fights      melting watery      frosty freezing      snowman windy	icicles look like popsicles Snowy snow globe winter wonderland ice is like glass ice is everywhere Snowy snowing dazzling frost dangling icicles Wind takes your breath away
The world looks like a Snowy snow globe during the first snow fall of the year.	The icicles look like popsicles ready to eat!



**Independent Writing:** Allow students to either continue the poem we've worked on together, or allow them to write a completely new one using poetic words.

**Sharing:** Once everyone has had time to write, tell them to choose their favorite line. Go around the room and have everyone share the line they picked.

### **Reflection:**

The students are really embracing poetry. Many of them were full of poetic language, and they had fun sharing what they could come up with. I helped some students how to turn their ordinary words into poetic words, and I think by the end of the lesson, they understood. After a second day of students looking at how poems are structured, more students used purposeful line breaks in their own poems. They also were more excited to show what they had written. Students were sharing with classmates around them, and wanting their teachers to come and read them. The same student from yesterday struggled to write a poem, until finally, he started talking to me about his chicks. He described them as fluffy puff balls, and then started to write. He did not finish today, but hopefully he will be more successful tomorrow. In just two days, I am seeing students growing as writers, and I cannot wait until the end of the week to see where they are.

## **Day 3 - Drafting**

### **Poems Used:**

"February"

By Charlotte Otten (*Mentor Texts*)

- Picks a month/ time period to focus on
- One color throughout
- One thing is described in more detail

"Invitation"

Pg. 4 *Forest Has A Song*

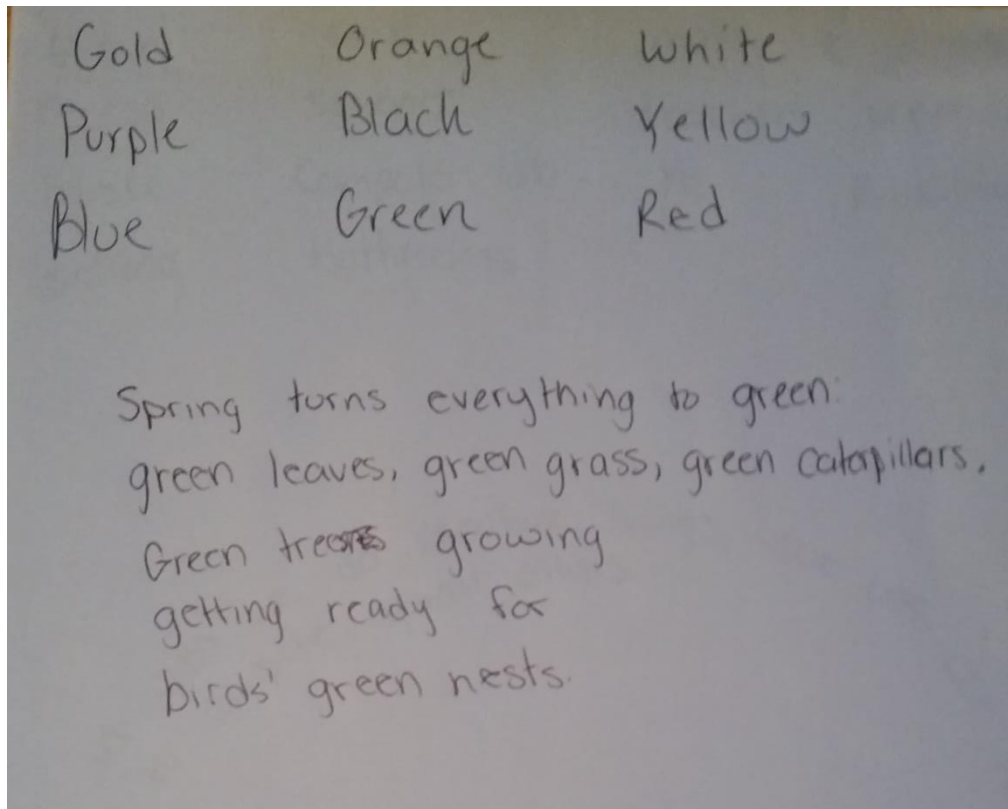
- Uses senses
- Simple, short lines

**Hook:** Share "February" by Charlotte Otten and "Invitation" by Amy Ludwig VanDerwater. These two poems have different scaffolds that students can use.

**Purpose:** Writers, yesterday, we looked at ways to turn ordinary language into poetic language, and today we are going to look at how scaffolds can help us write poems when we feel stuck. Anything can become a scaffold, but today we will look at three.

**Brainstorm:** Students will look at "February," and think about colors. Choosing one color the students will brainstorm things that could remind them of that color, like in "February."

**Model:** Using Otten's poem, create a poem using another color.



**Shared/ Guided Writing:** Depending on how students seem to be doing with poetry, decide what they need: shared or guided writing. Work on a shared writing or have students work in partners on a poem.

**Independent Writing:** Allow students time to work on poetry. Give them access to the poems to use as scaffolds if need be. Remind students that they do not need to use a scaffold, or they can even make up their own.

### Sharing

### Reflections:

Today was not as great as the first two days. The students were resistant to using scaffolds, even if it helped focus their writing; some of the poems were the best work they have done so far. I wonder if the students would have enjoyed it more if I had introduced scaffolds the first day, instead of the third. I also wonder if, even though I gave them options of different scaffolds, they felt limited by the scaffolds. If this was my classroom, and I had more than five

days, I probably would have spent more than one day on scaffolds, and would have given them more examples of poems to use.

The students are continuing to write some great poetry. Almost all of the students are thinking about line breaks, and they are using rich language. I continue to make the mistake of telling students that I like their poem, therefore telling them they need my approval before moving on. I have been trying to catch myself, and instead talk about the things they did that make them a good poet. It so easy to just tell a student, “I love it”, or “you did a great job with that poem” especially when you have multiple students wants to read me their poems. I am working on it, and I know that it will give students confidence to feel good about their poems without my approval.

## **Day 4 - Drafting**

### **Poems Used**

“Spew Machine”

*Technically, It’s Not My Fault*

- Shape
- Words match the actions

“Spring Rain”

*A Kick in the Head*

- Three lines
- About weather
- Personification

“Helping Hands”

“Creativity”

*Falling Down the Page*

- List poems
- Each list focuses on something specific

### **Hook:**

Discuss chart that was created on the first day, asking students what they could add or change their mind about. Read “Helping Hands,” “Creativity,” and “Spew Machine,” and ask students to talk about what they notice about these poems.

### **Purpose:**

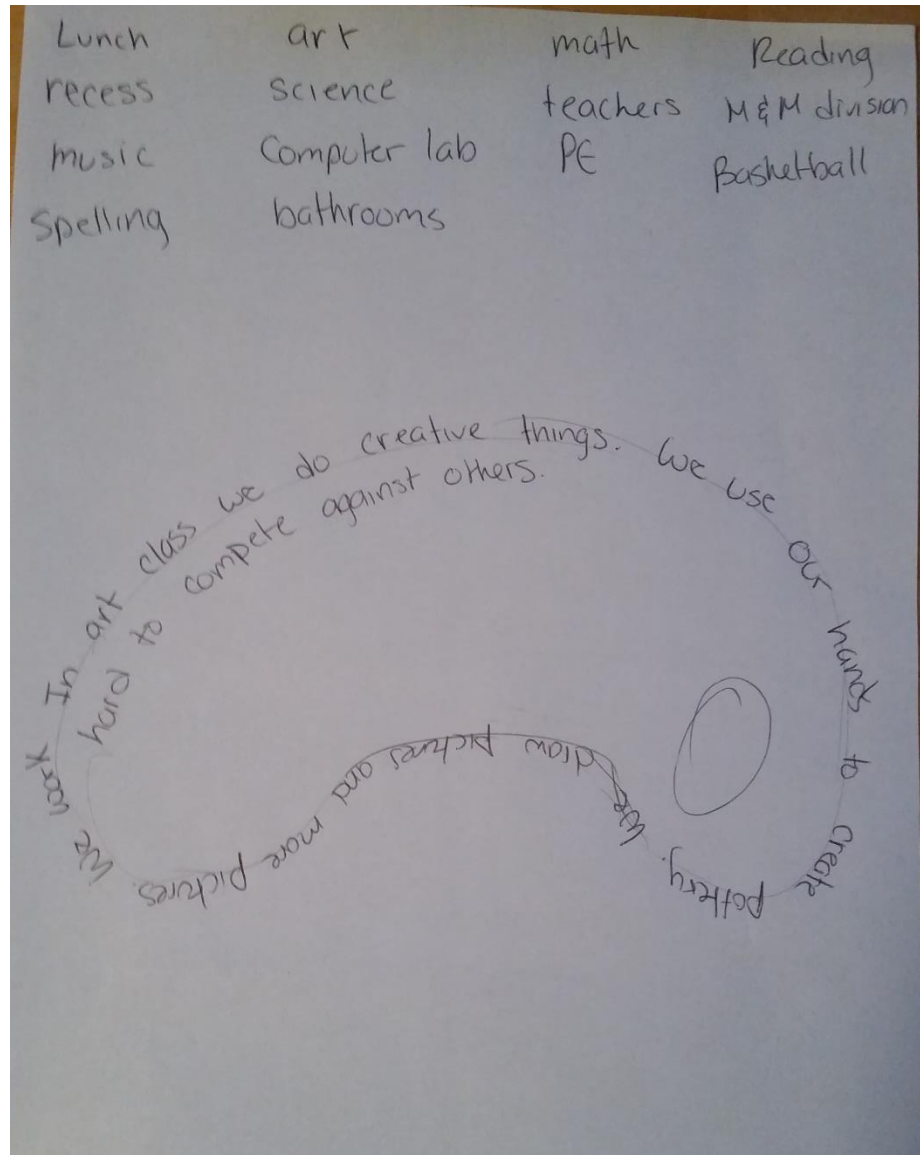
To introduce the format of Haiku, Concrete, and List poems, in order to give students more outlets for their poetry.

### **Brainstorm:**

With students’ help, make a list of topics that have to do with school, in order to write a concrete poem.

**Model:**

Select a topic from the list, and model how to create a concrete poem about that topic. Show students that a concrete poem can first be written, and then put into the shape that you want, or do the shape while writing.

**Shared/Guided Writing:**

Together, select another topic about school to create a list poem. Partners can potentially come up with a line to add to the poem. Then, have students work on a haiku with a partner using a topic about school of their choosing. Take a couple minutes to have partners share with another pair.

**Independent Writing:** Have students try out any of the three forms on their own. If time, they may try out more than one.

**Reflection:** Tell students that tomorrow will be a revision day, and that they should start thinking about what poem they might want in the anthology.

### **Teacher Reflection:**

Today was definitely a Monday. The students were very chatty and had trouble staying on task throughout the entire lesson. I had to stop and redirect them multiple times, resulting in less time spent on actual poetry. We ended up with only five minutes of sharing, and quite a few students were not able to share; I am hoping that they will remember that consequence of their behavior, and do better tomorrow. I know that we were trying to introduce students to different types of poetry, but in hindsight, I think we should have chosen one to show students. They loved concrete poetry, but cared less for list poems, even when given the opportunity to choose their partners. Many of them did not write a list poem, but they continued experimenting and becoming more conscientious of line breaks as a result of taking about how list poems have short lines. I did better about complimenting specific aspects of students' writing today, so progress on that front. One student also came up and shared by herself for the first time, and I felt a small victory, since she fights me about writing to some degree.

I am hopeful for tomorrow, but know that I need to be very purposeful to make sure that all students complete a poem for the anthology. I hope that the students are more focused, and that I can give them enough time to revise and edit their poems. I think that I will have students copy their poems onto sheets of notebook paper to lessen the chance of them just erasing work. It will also keep them more focused, I think, because they will not have access to their notebooks. I am excited to see what their finished products look like.

## **Day 5 - Revising**

### **Poems Used**

“April Rain Song”

*Awakening the Heart*

“Water Lily”

*Firefly July*

- Poetic language
- Short
- Line breaks

**Hook:** Read the poem, “April Rain Song” without any line breaks or poetic language (replace poetic words with ordinary words beforehand). After talking about how it sounds, re-read poem, adding in breath of line breaks and the original poetic language.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this lesson is to show students how to revise their poems. They will accomplish this by learning how to add line breaks where needed, and by replacing ordinary words with more poetic language.

**Brainstorm:** Now, show students version of “Water Lily” with no line breaks and with ordinary language. Brainstorm a list of places where line breaks could be added to this poem. Then, brainstorm different descriptive, poetic words that could replace the ordinary language in this piece.

**Model:** Model revising “Water Lily” by using student suggestions of line breaks and new language.

**Shared/Guided Writing:** Ask a volunteer to share one of their poems from their anthology that they would be willing to revise. After poem is shared, discuss ways we could either change line breaks or language in the poem. Rewrite the poem on a new page in their booklets. Explain that once we revise poems to our best ability, they are ready to be published.

**Independent Writing:** Have students practice revising some of their poems independently. Get ready to share and celebrate students’ published poems.

### **Reflection:**

The students were more behaved today, and we were able to get through what we needed to do. I wish revising could have spanned over two days though. I was trying to use all of my time wisely, so I did not spend a lot of time modeling and talking about revising, because I knew these students would take a long time to revise and write their final drafts. I think that if I had to do this sequence again, I would allow students writing time on day 4, with nothing new taught about writing poetry, and then ending the time with modeling and talking about revising. I think allowing the students to think about, and sit with information would have helped them be more prepared for revising their poems the next day.

I had students feel very resistant to the idea of revising their poems, despite talking about how published poets, me, everyone revises their work. I was able to help students revise their line breaks, but content wise, most students refused to change anything about their poem. Because of time, I decided that I preferred having one of their poems on paper and pretty, than arguing about revising. At the end of the five days though, students are excited about poetry, and I feel that this was a positive experience that they will remember as they continue doing poetry in school. For a five day unit, I think that is the most important part. I saw growth in a few students who become more confident writers in such a short time. It makes me hopeful and excited for when I will have time to teach poetry at a more leisurely pace in my own classroom.

#### **Part 4: Analytical Memo (Conclusion)**

From the moment I walked into the classroom, the students were excited about poetry. Overall, students knew less about poetry than I thought they would, but they did not think that all poems had to rhyme. While I was reading them poetry, the class would not stop moving because of how excited they were to be able to write in their poetry notebooks. Almost every day, I did not read all of the poems because they were so ready to write. They stayed engaged with the poems and had a lot to say, but were always ready to be let go.

In the beginning students did not pay much attention to line breaks, but after showing them multiple poems on the document camera, and talking to students about line breaks, more than half of the class began putting in line breaks in their own poetry. Considering the whirlwind of poetry we did, it is great that so many students thought about line breaks.

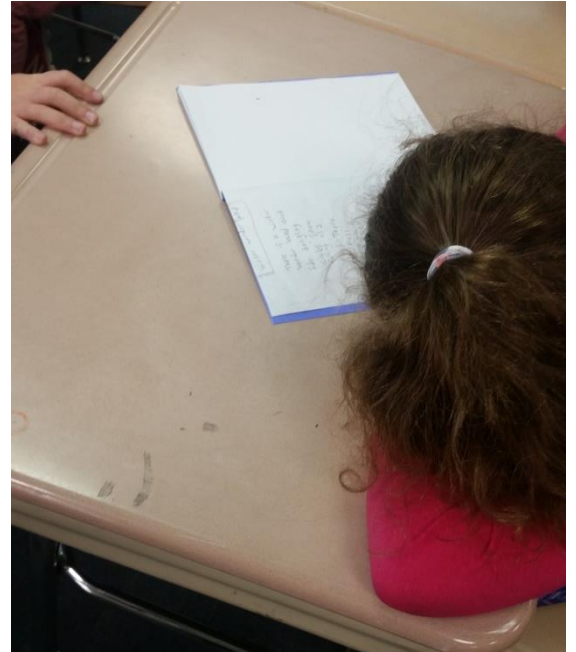
It was interesting to see how quickly some students wrote poems while others spent time meticulously crafting their poems. Different personality styles create such different poems. Some



students only wrote about one topic the entire week, while other students created poems on a variety of topics. There were also themes across the classroom which shows the influence peers made on each other. Many of the boys in one section of the classroom wrote about cars, while pairs of girls would choose a topic to write about together. The students enjoyed collaborating with each other, and really embraced borrowing good words or phrases from each other. No poem was every exactly the same, but there would be

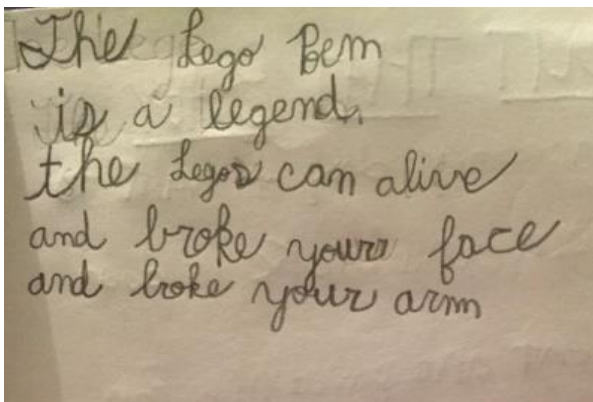
some words or phrases that were the same across poems. These words and phrases were relatively poetic.

Students did their best to write with poetic language. I think to some that meant using words of emphasis, for example, “a ton,” “really,” and utilizing repetition. During discussion about poetic language, students had many examples for snow, but I think that it was hard for them to take that experience and apply it to other topics. Snow is also an easy thing to make poetic because it is often talked about in books and songs and other poems. A potential lesson to help with poetic language would be for students to get in small groups and write poetic language about a different topic.



Then, students would share this language and it could be displayed in the classroom to get students thinking about other topics that use poetic language.

When looking at individual student’s work, there are four who stand out to me for various reasons. One student, who is probably not the lowest in the class, but was definitely my most reluctant writer. He managed to evade my eyes by always looking like he was writing a poem, but actually only wrote three poems in four days, and he was in class every time I was there. This

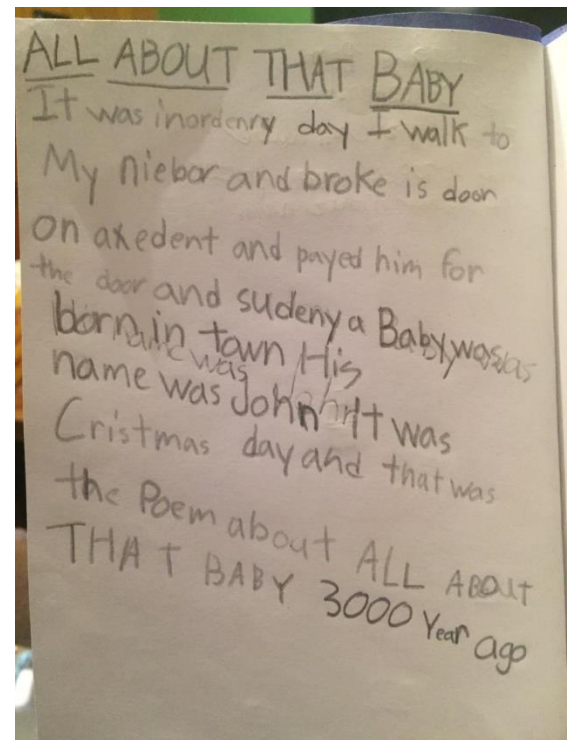


student wrote poems that do not make much sense, and he was resistant whenever I tried to help him. He did want to share, but that did not motivate him to write more than the bare minimum. His final poem reflects this, while it has line breaks, the picture and

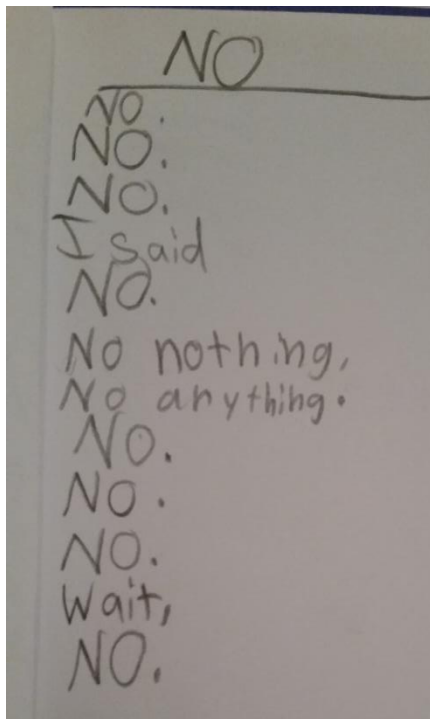


poem do not match, and again the poem is hard to understand.

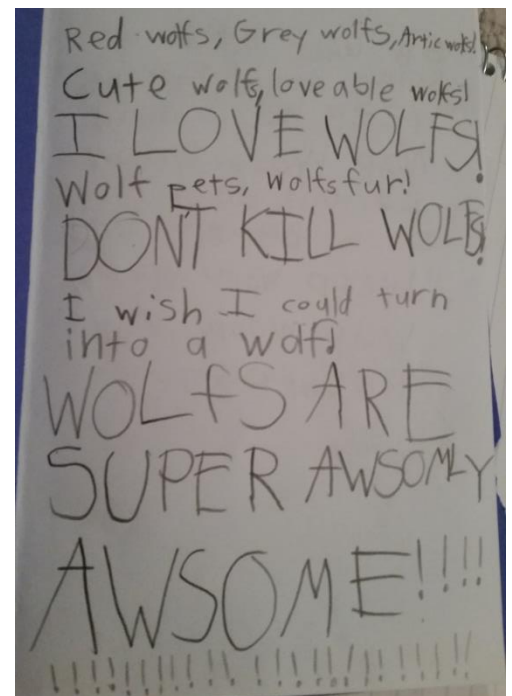
This seems strange, because when talking about poems, he would be engaged and contribute. I wonder if there is disconnect between his understanding and his ability to communicate it on the page.

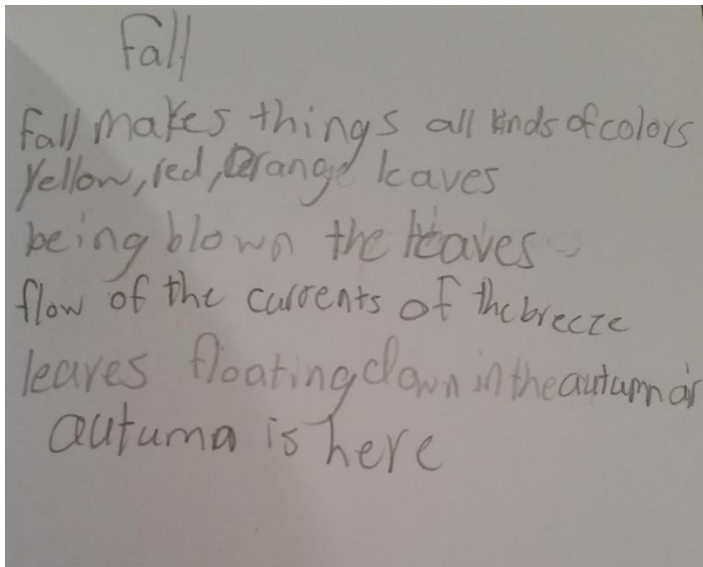


The second student is good at coming up with catchy poems that he reads with such rhythm and expression. He was a natural born storyteller. His language is descriptive, but not necessarily extremely poetic. This student uses repetition in one form or another in every poem he writes. I think the repetition and how he reads his poems, leaves his audience feeling satisfied, but his poems could include more imagery and poetic language. He does a great job choosing words



that flow and have a natural beat to them, which is why his poems sound so great. He is also very proud of his poems, to the point of being resistant to change. Any attempt at helping him revise was shot down. I would predict that with time and more lessons on poetry, he would continue to make growth in language and start to add more poetic language.

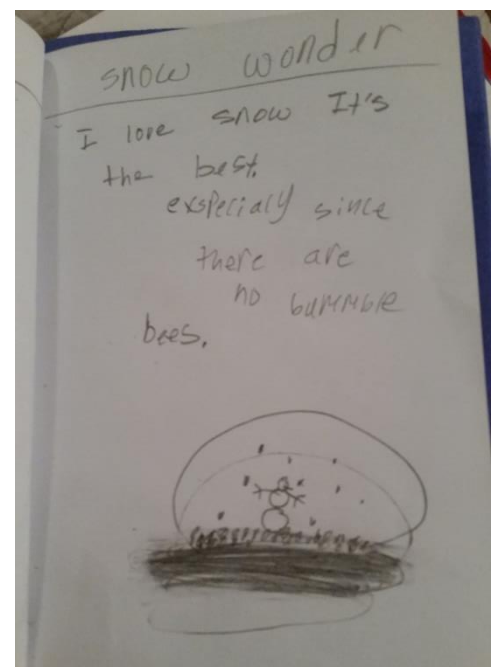




The third student is a perfectionist. He does his best to turn in great work, and after talking to his teacher, it seems to be because of the pressure put on him from his parents. This manifested in really slow poetry writing. Over the course of the first two days, he had one completed and one started. By the end though, he had seven poems. I

believe that as he started getting more comfortable, and realizing that he could do this, he started writing more poems. Many of the poems include rhyming, and they are rhymes that make sense, so I know that he spends a lot of time thinking about what his poem is going to look like. From the beginning, he understood line breaks, and used them in every one of his poems.

The last student was the most creative with her poems. She was immediately aware of line breaks and used that to her advantage. She moved words around and played with spaces. While the words she used were typical of a third grader first learning how to write poetry, she did think outside the box when putting them down on the page. She was one of few students who allowed me to help her revise for poetic language. While her word choice does not make complete sense in context, it shows that she was thinking about, and noticing that adding more specific language will help strengthen the poem. With more practice, I believe that she will eventually get the hang of adding poetic language with the right context.



In five short days, I learned more about teaching and was reminded of things. While I think that it is important to hold high expectations for your students, I think it is also important to remember that sometimes they are not ready for it yet. I overestimated how much poetry knowledge these students had, and thought that they would be fine with three types of poetry on one day. This was not true. Two was okay, students did both concrete and list poems, but they did not write very many haikus. I wanted to pack as much into the week as possible, but looking back, I think students would have done better if the focus had only been poetic language and line breaks. With these as the focus, I think students would have really been able to pick both of these aspects of poetry up.

Students have a lot of ideas about poetry, but without guidance, it is going to be hard for them to channel those ideas into polished poems. Based on the reactions of this class, revisions will need to be emphasized with later students. I wish that I had had time to give them at least three different forms of revision in order to truly show them that revision is good. It is the signs of a good writer. In the future, I might even show a video about a writer talking about revising. I am happy by the growth in many of the students, and I exposed them to multiple aspects of poetry that will help them as they continue through school. At the very least, I gave them a positive experience with poetry based on all the poems in their notebooks and all the sharing that happened throughout the week.

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