

Poetry

A unit in eight 30-45 minute lessons, grades K-12

Stage 1 – Desired Results

<p>ESTABLISHED GOALS</p> <p>Content Standard: - Identify words and phrases that supply rhythm or sensory images and meaning in a poem, or song and describe how they make a reader feel or what a reader might see in his or her mind. - Create audio recordings of poems</p> <p>Cultural Standards: -gather oral and written historical information from the local community and provide an appropriate interpretation of its cultural meaning and significance; - identify and appreciate who they are and their place in the world.</p>	<i>Transfer</i>	
	<p><i>Students will be able to independently use their learning to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perform a traditional or original poem to express humor, a tradition, or a lesson of cultural significance. 	
	<i>Meaning</i>	
	<p>UNDERSTANDINGS <i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poetry explores universal themes of human existence and can reveal truths. - Oral traditions exist across regions and cultures. - Poetry is a way to preserve the cultural history of a community. 	<p>ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is poetry? - How can original poetry, expressive language from our heritage, or poetry from other places and times bring meaning to our life?
<i>Acquisition</i>		
<p><i>Students will know...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - different types of poetry terms: line, stanza, theme - that words of traditional songs are poetry. -the skills necessary to dramatically share a story orally. 	<p><i>Students will be skilled at...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Selecting or writing original poetry that contains meaningful images. -Reflecting on their heritage language to create or preserve expressive language with cultural meaning. 	

Stage 2 – Evidence and Assessment

Evaluative Criteria	Assessment Evidence
	<p>PERFORMANCE TASK(S): Students will perform a poem orally in front of their peers so that they can help pass on the oral tradition. They should present the poem with the skills of a performer, using clear speech and varying the use of volume, rate, and inflection to express emotion or create images that match the text.</p>
	<p>OTHER EVIDENCE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will make a personal collection of at least eight poems made of any combination of original poetry and/or copied poetry.

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Summary of Key Learning Events and Instruction

Preparation: One-three weeks prior to the launch of the unit.

- Gather LOTS of poetry books from school and classroom libraries—aim for a wide variety of authors/themes
- Read through the poems by Native American and Hawaiian poets that are the models for the eight lessons.
- Make the following poetry bookmarks available through your class website and/or Blackboard:
- Poetry Foundation, look for great poems: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>
- Search for a poem at: <https://poets.org/>
- Curated list of poems for teens by subject (relationships, heritage, identity, etc): <https://poets.org/poetry-teens>
- Poems for Middle and High School:
<https://www.weareteachers.com/24-must-share-poems-for-middle-school-and-high-school/#:~:text=Here%E2%80%99s%20what%20they%20had%20to%20say%20about%20the.poem.%20%20The%20Rat%20Ode%20by%20Elizabeth%20Acevedo>
- Poems for Middle and High School: <https://americanliterature.com/poetry-for-students>
- Poems for elementary: <https://americanliterature.com/poems-for-kids>
- Poems for upper elementary: <https://www.weareteachers.com/4th-grade-poems/>
- Native American poetry: <https://poets.org/native-american-heritage-month>

Unit Framework

This unit is designed to be flexible. Model poems are provided. However, teacher preference for other poems due to content, structure, language, or accessibility of imagery is encouraged. Best of all, as the unit progresses, students will share poems from their daily reading that can either be shared as the Oral Daily Poem, Model Poem, or Copy Poem.

Each lesson follows the same structure.

- Reading of Oral Daily Poems. One of these poems is by a Native American, Native Alaskan, or Hawaiian poet. The second poem may be from the canon of Western poetry in English. This activity can be done by the teacher, students, guests, or recordings.
- Mini-Lesson. A second reading of the Oral Daily Poem highlighting at least one element of structure, language, imagery, or type.
- Writing/Reading time. Students are invited to write a poem modeled or inspired by one of the two Daily Oral Poems, or write a poem from their own ideas. Not every student wants to write. They have two options during this time: 1) copy one or both Daily Oral Poems; 2) read through the collected poetry anthologies/websites and copy one poem (for K-2 students this may be done in a reading group with a teacher, aide, or older student)
- Poetry Reading/Share. Flexible grouping is encouraged. In one session, all students who wrote a poem modeled on an Oral Daily poem might be grouped together, and in another session, those students might be intermixed with those who wrote original poems or read anthologies looking for a Copy poem.

Day 1: Theme - Poetry as an Oral Art

- *Oral Poem:* Hawaiian poet Jamaica Osorio [performing](#) a spoken word poem at the White House in 2009.
 - A three-year-old [reciting](#) Litany by former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins
- *Mini-lesson:* “Do you think he understood the poem? Why do you think he recites a poem he doesn’t understand?” Although we now collect poetry in books, poetry has always been an oral art around the world. Great poems may have an important idea, image, or lesson, and they usually sound pleasing when recited well.
- *Write:* Litany provides a simple structure for writing your own poem. Compare a person to three to four objects: “You are like...”. Write several more lines beginning with “You are not like...” Kumulipo is a poem about wanting to connect to culture and ancestors, but there are things that stand in the way. The poet ends by saying how she will claim them. Watch both videos a second time. Students are always welcome to write a

poem based on their own idea. For students who want to copy either of these poems, here are the links to [Litany](#) and Kumulipo.

- *Read:* When you are reading poetry from books, read them aloud in a small, quiet voice to yourself to try out how it feels and sounds. When you find one you like, put your name on the top of a sticky note and put it on the page so your name pokes out. Keep reading. Some days you may find several poems you like the sound of. On other days you may find only one poem you like.
- *Share:* Students should each choose one poem to read out loud to a small group. Place students in groups of 3-4, regardless of what they did with their reading/writing time, and provide time for each student to read a poem out loud. Review listening skills and encourage groups to discuss the poem and/or oral reading if time

Day 2: Theme - Poetry as Connection with People

- *Oral Poem:* Watch this video with Inupiaq poet Marie Tozier from Nome.
- *Mini-lesson:* Which early sounds of language did she like? Which do you like? She shares several poems that she wrote and several poems by other authors. Which did you like best? Why?
- *Write:* Marie Tozier's poems like **xxx** are about an important person. Notice she doesn't tell the whole person's life history. She focuses on one activity she shared and provides details of the day, an action, or the behavior of that person. Writer's tip: sometimes writers can't remember the exact article of clothing or the movement a person used on a particular day, but they do remember a favorite piece of clothing and the way that person usually moved. Poets sometimes blend several true details from different memories into one poem.
- *Read:* When reading poetry from books, read them aloud in a small, quiet voice. When you find one you like, put your name on the top of a sticky note and put it on the page so your name pokes out. Keep reading. Some days you may find several poems you like the sound of. On other days you may find only one poem you like.
- *Share:* Before placing students in groups of 3-4 with those who did a similar activity during reading/writing time tell them to practice reading one poem that they will read to the small group. Review listening skills. Review how a poem is read. Share and discuss in small groups.

Day 3: Theme - Poetry as Connection with Place

- *Oral Poem:* Rewatch the video with Inupiaq poet Marie Tozier from Nome.
- *Mini-lesson:* Which places does she write about? Why might she write about these places? Which places mean the same to you? What details could you share to help the reader/listener experience that place?
- *Write:* Marie Tozier's poems like **xxx** are about an important place. Notice she doesn't tell everything that ever happened there. She focuses on one aspect and uses carefully chosen words to create a picture for the listener. Writer's tip: like yesterday, writers don't always remember the exact weather on a particular day they saw a certain animal they are writing about, but they do remember the way the weather usually was in that place in that season. Poets sometimes blend several true details from different memories into one poem.
- *Read:* Ask students to find a poem they marked earlier and copy it neatly into their journal. Keep reading. Some days you may find several poems you like the sound of. On other days you may find only one poem you like.
- *Share:* Before placing students in groups of 3-4 with those who did similar activity during reading/writing time, tell them to practice reading one poem that they will read to the small group. Review listening skills. Share and discuss in small groups.

Day 4: Theme - The Language of Poetry

- *Oral Poem:* Watch this [video](#) of a boy from Scotland reciting in the original Scots a poem by Robbie Burns. Can you understand what he is saying? This is often "translated" into [standard English](#). *Read:* Make Rope by Hawaiian poet Imaikalani Kalahale (Page 204, When the Light of the World... in resource kit). He uses a combination of English, Hawaiian Creole English (Pidgin), and olelo Hawai'i. Ofelia Zepeda is a member of the Tohono O'odham Nation who writes in her heritage language and translates her poems into English as in [Carrying our Words](#) (original text below).
- *Mini-lesson:* Poetry is carefully chosen words that create an image, feeling, or idea. Poetry can be in standard spoken English or not. Compare and contrast the different versions of the poems we just heard—how are they the same? How are they different in different languages?
- *Write:* Think of words or phrases in your heritage language that you like the sound of. It's ok if you don't know many! What about place names in our village, greeting words, or words for food? Try creating an image in your

language of a place. If you need extra words, use English words whose sounds “work” with what you’ve already written.

- *Read:* Ask students to find a poem they marked earlier and copy it neatly in their journal. Keep reading. Some days you may find several poems you like the sound of. On other days you may find only one poem you like.
- *Share:* Before placing students in groups of 3-4 regardless of what they did with their reading/writing time, tell them to practice reading one poem that they will read to the small group. Review listening skills. Share and discuss in small groups.

Day 5: Theme - Other forms of poetry

- *Oral Poem:* So far we have learned about examples of poems as an oral art, a connection with people and place, and a way to use language in new and creative ways to share important imagery. Watch the first poem on this [video](#) for a poem composed and performed in American Sign Language (see cultural notes about the use of sign language among Native people). Sarah Kay is a spoken word poet who uses her hands expressively in this poem entitled [Hands](#). Read this poem by Cherokee poet Gladys Cardiff called [Combing](#).
- *Mini-lesson:* Sarah Kay’s poem “Hands” is a relatively new form of poetry called Spoken Word. This is the style of poetry used at poetry slams, which are live competitions where poets perform original poems and are awarded prizes.
- *Write:* Think of a time you watched someone who you love do an important activity: prepare fish, cook, fix a boat, collect berries. Write a poem about that activity and include at least one line about their hands. What do they look like? How do they move?
- *Read:* Ask students to find a poem they marked earlier and copy it neatly into their journal. Keep reading. Some days you may find several poems you like the sound of. On other days you may find only one poem you like.
- *Share:* Before placing students in groups of 3-4 regardless of what they did with their reading/writing time, tell them to practice reading one poem that they will read with the small group. Review listening skills. Share and discuss in small groups.

Day 6: Theme - The Poet’s Voice

- *Oral Poem:* [Watch](#) Robert Frost recite “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” [Watch](#) the Poet Laureate for the United States Joy Harjo read her poem “Remember”.
- *Mini-lesson:* Discuss, what makes a good reading of a poem. What did Frost do well? What did Harjo do well? How does it add to the meaning of the poem to hear the author read it out loud, not just read it in a book?
- *Write:* Use Harjo’s suggestion and write a poem where each line begins with the word “remember”.
- *Read:* Read another poem by Robert Frost [The Road Not Taken](#) (audio reading is not Frost himself).
- *Share:* Before placing students in groups of 3-4 with those who did similar activity during reading/writing time tell them to practice reading one poem that they will read to the small group.. Review listening skills. Share and discuss in small groups Celebrate students who choose to read their original poem out loud and consider inviting volunteers to read their poem out loud for the whole class.

Day 7: Theme - Poetry As Your Experience

- *Oral Poem:* Read aloud Mary Tall Mountain’s [Good Grease](#). Watch the video of Naomi Shihab Nye reading her poem “[Kindness](#).” (Text version of [Kindness](#))
- *Mini-lesson:* What experience does Tall Mountain share in the poem? What words create the strongest feelings for you? What experience does Nye share? What words create the strongest feelings for you? What do their poems have in common?
- *Write:* Grease is a meaningful detail from Tall Mountain’s childhood in Nulato, Alaska. Write a poem about a local food, using the structure she provides: hunters went out, everyone else waited in anticipation, and finally the hunters returned and cooked the caribou so they could eat it. Half of the poem is about eating. What locally harvested food is just as important to you?
- *Share:* Before placing students in groups of 3-4 regardless of what they did with their reading/writing time, tell them to practice reading one poem that they will read to the small group.. Review listening skills. Share and discuss in small groups

Day 8: Theme - Sharing Poems Out Loud

- *Oral Poem:* Learning Recitation: Sophia Elena Soberon reads "[Bilingual/Bilingue](#)" by Rhina P. Espaillat. Maya Angelou's "[Hey Black Child](#)," recited by 3-yr old Pe'Tehn Raighn Kem.
- *Mini-lesson:* Discuss: What do these presenters do well? How does this help your experience as a listener? (Emphasize clarity, volume, expression, and perhaps eye contact if appropriate/relevant in your setting)
- *Speak:* Today students will choose one of the poems they shared in small groups and practice reading aloud for about 15 minutes. This could be a poem from a mentor author or an original poem inspired by one of the sample poems. Try to focus on the traits you identified in the discussion: volume, clarity, and expression. Students will be reading and not reciting (no need to memorize, though students could memorize and recite if they want a challenge and have the time to work on it!).
- *Share:* Move chairs so students are seated audience style and not at their desks. Review listening skills. Ask students if they want to clap for each student, or at the end for everyone at the same time. An alternative would be to snap three times as a group after each person has shared. Students can politely listen to around 20 poems. Depending on the size of your school, this large group share may be broken into elementary, middle, and high school sections. This could also be organized by theme or type of poem (humor, tradition, lesson of cultural significance, and/or poems inspired by specific model poems). What did you learn about poetry from this unit? I used to think poetry was...but now I think...Poetry helps people because...
- Possible extensions: invite a student volunteer to read or recite an original poem at the next school or community event. Perform a longer poem or song together as a group, with each student taking a turn and the group as a whole reading repeated parts together.

Resources in kit

Books

- When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry
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Suggested Resources

Additional resources:

Use of Sign Language among [Alaskan Tribes](#) (a first-person account) and [Plains Indian Sign Language](#) from Wikipedia.

For High School students: [I Will Not Let An Exam Result Decide My Fate](#) is a spoken word poem about school.

Extensions

Suggestions and space to make notes.

- [Poetry Out Loud](#) is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition for high school students across the country. This program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about literary history and contemporary life. Great video bank of high schoolers reciting poetry. The Juneau Arts and Humanities Council organizes activities for those who want to compete at the [state level](#). The deadline is usually at the end of October.
- Kenai Peninsula Borough School District [Forensics Competition](#). Poetry recitation is just one category of public speaking in which 4th-6th students can complete. This is organized by teacher Doug Hayman DHayman@KPBSD.k12.ak.us Write to Doug in the fall for the schedule.

