

- Personification is figurative language device in which human qualities are given to an animal, object or idea. Share poems that feature vivid uses of personification. Consider Emily Dickinson's "I like to see it lap the miles," in which a railway train is given human qualities (available at www.bartleby.com/113/1043.html). Encourage students to get creative and write their own poems that feature personification.
- Sound elements are dynamic features of poetry. Examine poems featured in this program in their entirety with these features in mind. Consider focusing on Robert Service's "The Cremation of Sam McGee," Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere." Listen to these poems read aloud and determine how rhythm and rhyme contribute to the overall effect of the poem. Have students identify elements such as meter and rhyme scheme. Students might also enjoy hearing Johnny Cash's performance of "The Cremation of Sam McGee" (visit www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5391456).
- Nature is a popular theme in poetry, and haiku is a popular form of poetry that celebrates this theme. This form of Japanese poetry consists of three lines and traditionally follows a 5-7-5 syllable pattern. Introduce students to works by Matsuo Basho and Yosa Buson. Since these poems were originally written in Japanese, keep in mind that their translated versions may not follow the 5-7-5 syllable pattern. Encourage students to write their own haiku. This activity can be linked to a cultural study of Japan. Additional lesson ideas are available at edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=305.

Suggested Resources

Periodically, Internet and print resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com.

- www.poets.org/
This comprehensive web site from the Academy of American Poets features a large index of poems, poet biographies and audio of poetry readings and lectures.
- www.favoritepoem.org/poems/index.html
The Favorite Poem Project is dedicated to celebrating and documenting favorite poems and the role they play in Americans' lives. Texts of these poems are available as are video clips of people reading and discussing these poems.
- www.loc.gov/poetry/180/
Poetry 180 is an effort by the Library of Congress to introduce to students to a new poem each day during the 180 days of the school year.
- Wood, Jamie R. *Living Voices: Multicultural Poetry in the Middle School Classroom*. National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL: 2006.

Selected Poems Featured in Analyzing & Appreciating Poetry

- Angelou, Maya. "Life Doesn't Frighten Me," in *And Still I Rise*. (New York: Random House, 1978), 45-46.
- Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. "How Do I Love Thee Let me Count the Ways?" in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th ed., ed. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter and Jon Stallworthy (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 947.
- Frost, Robert. "The Road Not Taken," in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th ed., ed. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter and Jon Stallworthy (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 1232.
- Merriam, Eve. "How to Eat a Poem," in *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle*, ed. Stephen Dunning (New York: HarperCollins, 1967), 15.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Raven," in *Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. G.R. Thompson (New York: Harper Perennial, 1970), 73-77.
- Service, Robert. "The Cremation of Sam McGee," in *The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses* (New York: Barse & Hopkins, 1907), 50-54.
- Shakespeare, William. "Sonnet 130," in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th ed., ed. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter and Jon Stallworthy (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 267.
- Thayer, Ernest Lawrence. *Casey at the Bat*. Illus. Christopher Bing. Brooklyn, New York: Handprint Books, 2000.
- Whitman, Walt. "O Captain! My Captain!" in *Leaves of Grass*. (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1891-1892), 262-263.
- Williams, William Carlos. "This is Just to Say," in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th ed., ed. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter and Jon Stallworthy (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 1274.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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TITLES IN THIS SERIES

- ANALYZING & APPRECIATING POETRY
- ANALYZING FICTION
- ANALYZING NONFICTION
- ELEMENTS OF FICTION
- GENRES OF FICTION

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ANALYZING AND APPRECIATING POETRY

Grades 5-9

At the middle school level, students have already been introduced to some basic elements and characteristics of literature. They have been called upon to organize and communicate their understanding of what they read as well as express their own opinions. *Literature for Students* reinforces these skills and challenges students to approach them with a more critical eye. This series journeys through fiction, nonfiction and poetry and explores important elements and characteristics of each. By examining interesting excerpts by a diverse group of authors and sharing one-on-one moments with the hosts as they reflect on their own interests and experiences with literature, students will be challenged to analyze how language is used, how ideas are organized and the many ways in which people connect with and appreciate these different forms of literature.



Program Summary

Poetry involves expression. It can stir the imagination and provide plenty of food for thought. Knowing some of the features and devices of poetry is helpful in analyzing and appreciating a poem.

The way a poem sounds is big part of what a poem is all about. That is why many enjoy reading poetry aloud. Rhyme, rhythm and meter are sound devices of poetry. Rhyme includes end rhyme, internal rhyme and near rhymes. When you look at the pattern of end rhyme in a poem, you can determine its rhyme scheme. Rhythm brings a musical quality to language and can be a powerful component of a poem. Rhythm can be influenced by rhyme, repetition and meter. Meter is the repeated pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. These sound devices sometimes work together to create structure in a poem.

All forms of writing feature figurative language to enhance the experience of the reader, and poetry is no exception. Simile and metaphor are both figurative language devices that make comparisons. Symbolism is used to infuse poetry with layers of meaning. The beauty of symbolism is that those layers may mean different things to different people. The repetition of words and sounds is another example of how figurative language is used in poetry. Poets might also use language and symbols in surprising and unconventional ways. They can manipulate the look, spelling, sound, punctuation and arrangement of each word in order to express feelings, build images or instill meanings.

Poetry can take many forms. Poems that rely upon rhyme, rhythm and meter include humorous limericks and romantic sonnets. Blank verse is similar to sonnets, except it is written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Free verse is a form of poetry that is not bound by rhyme, rhythm or meter. This form of poetry often captures the natural rhythm of everyday spoken language. Narrative poetry tells stories, including epics, which recount adventures panoramic in scope, and ballads. Lyric poetry zeroes in on emotions or feelings. Whatever its type, poetry expresses the ebb and flow of life in a very personal voice that reaches across form and time.

What do poets write about? Just about everything — from major events to simple everyday occurrences to momentary flashes of feeling. A few themes, however, have captivated poets for thousands of years: love and loss, family and friendship, growing up and growing old. These themes reflect the timeless, universal concerns of life. By understanding a poem's theme and by examining elements like word choice, readers can make connections to a poem that can help to build a better understanding and enjoyment of it.

Vocabulary

rhyme — The repetition of similar sounds at the end of a word. With end rhyme, the rhyme is at the end of a line of poetry. With internal rhyme, the rhyme is within the line of a poem. Near rhymes involve sounds that are similar but are not exactly the same.

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stanza — A group of lines that are linked together, often by a thought. This is similar to a paragraph in prose.

rhyme scheme — The pattern of end rhyme in a poem. Rhyme scheme is illustrated with letters of the alphabet. A separate letter is used for each end rhyme.

rhythm — A sound element of poetry, it is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

meter — A repeated pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

couplet — A pair of rhyming lines in a poem.

quatrain — A four-line poem or stanza, usually united by meter and rhyme.

figurative language — The deliberate use and arrangement of words to create a special effect. They include words, phrases, symbols and ideas that evoke mental images and sensory impressions.

simile — A comparison of two things that have a quality in common. The comparison is indicated by the use of words such as "like" or "as."

metaphor — A comparison of two things that have a quality in common. Unlike simile, a metaphor does not use the terms "like" or "as." It states that one thing is something else.

extended metaphor — A metaphor that is developed over several lines of writing or over the course of an entire poem.

symbolism — The use of a person, place or object to stand for something other than itself. Symbolism is used to create multiple layers of meaning in a poem.

alliteration — The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words.

consonance — The repetition of a consonant sound in several words of a line or stanza. The repeated consonant sound can be preceded by different vowel sounds.

assonance — The repetition of a vowel sound in several words of a line or stanza.

limerick — A five-line poem that is often humorous. It has a regular meter and an abba rhyme scheme.

sonnet — A 14-line rhyming poem written in iambic pentameter.

iambic pentameter — A meter in which each unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable. Each line consists of five unstressed/stressed syllable pairs for a total of ten syllables.

blank verse — Unrhymed iambic pentameter.

free verse — Poetry that does not follow a regular pattern of rhythm or rhyme. Free verse often captures the natural rhythm of everyday spoken language.

narrative poetry — Poetry that tells stories.

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epic — A long narrative poem that tells of the adventures of a hero of historic or legendary importance. Themes of epic poems include good vs. evil and life and death.

ballad — A narrative poem that usually tells a story with tragic overtones and a dramatic conclusion. Ballads are meant to be sung or recited.

lyric poetry — Poetry that focuses on the emotions or thoughts of a single speaker.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- What is poetry? Have students write and share their own definitions of this form of literature. Then, consider this quote from Langston Hughes: "Poetry is the human soul entire, squeezed like a lemon or lime, drop by drop, into atomic words." What do you think is meant by this statement? Do you agree with it? Explain.
- Share Eve Merriam's "How to Eat a Poem" with students. Ask students how they approach a poem. Do they read it aloud or do they read it quietly? Do they read it from start to finish or do they stop to think about each line? Do they read it one time or do they read it many times? Encourage students to share their favorite poems and describe what they liked about them.

Follow-up Discussion & Activities

- While it is interesting to examine poems and all of their elements, it is sometimes fun to simply listen to poems in their entirety. This often enables listeners to take in the message or feeling and establish personal connections to the poem. Consider turning your classroom into a poetry café. Each student can select a poem they like and read it for the class. To prepare students for their own readings, visit www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/studentsHome.do to listen to audio recordings of renowned poets reading some of their own works.
- Poets sometimes use language in surprising and unconventional ways. They may manipulate the look, spelling, sound, pronunciation and arrangement of each word. E.E. Cummings was famous for experimenting with punctuation, spelling and syntax. Share Cummings' "old age sticks" (available at www.fandelem.com/eecummings.html#oldage). Authors also may write concrete poems — poems in which the placement of words on the page relates to the meaning of the poem. A list of concrete poems is available at www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson211/concretepoemlist.html. Invite students to play with language and the placement of words. They can rewrite a classic poem or write their own poems with these features.

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