

LITERATURE AS WRITING MODELS FOR POETRY

I. What's a poem? How do teachers help students write poetry?

What is a poem? By Jane Yolen

Hard work.
Emotion surprised.
Throwing a colored shadow.
A word that doubles back on itself, not once but twice.
The exact crunch of carrots.
Precise joys.
A prayer that sounds like a curse until it is said again.
Crows punctuating a field of snow.
Hard work.

Jane Yolen. *Take Joy: A Book for Writers*. Kalmbach/The Writer Press, 2003. *Wild Wings*. Boyds Mills, 2002

TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Using a literature model, compose a multiple stanza poem that employs the elements of poetry.

II. Start writing from what you already know.

- A. From your head tell a story with a poem....What problems does this task present?
- B. Use "The Dragonfly" to help you get started

The Dragonfly

Once, in a little pond, in the muddy water under the lily pads, there lived a little water beetle in a community of water beetles. They lived a simple and comfortable life in the pond with few disturbances and interruptions. Once in a while, sadness would come to the community when one of their fellow beetles would climb the stem of a lily pad and would never be seen again. They knew when this happened; their friend was dead, gone forever.

Then, one day, one little water beetle felt an irresistible urge to climb up that stem. However, he was determined that he would not leave forever. He would come back and tell his friends what he had found at the top. When he reached the top and climbed out of the water onto the surface of the lily pad, he was so tired, and the sun felt so warm, that he decided he must take a nap. As he slept, his body changed and when he woke up, he had turned into a beautiful blue-tailed dragonfly with broad wings and a slender body designed for flying. So, fly he did! And, as he soared he saw the beauty of a whole new world and a far superior way of life to what he had never known existed.

Then he remembered his beetle friends and how they were thinking by now he was dead. He wanted to go back to tell them, and explain to them that he was now more alive than he had ever been before. His life

had been fulfilled rather than ended. But, his new body would not go down into the water. He could not get back to tell his friends the good news. Then he understood that their time would come, when they, too, would know what he now knew. So, he raised his wings and flew off into his joyous new life!

~Author Unknown~

1. Draw on what you know from literature and divide the story into its three parts (Beginning, Middle, and End)
2. Draw on what you know about IEW writing (Key Words)
3. Draw on what you know about poetry and make some structural decisions.
 - a. Number of stanzas?
 - b. Rhyme scheme?
 - c. Meter or no meter?
 - d. What poetic elements might you require?

EXERCISE: *Now try and write your poem's first stanza (together)*

III. Review the essential elements of poetry. Teach them even if you don't know them.

- A. Types of poem (Narrative, Lyric, Fixed Form Poems)
- B. Figurative Language
 1. Similes (comparison of dissimilar things using like, as, or than)
Example: *Writing poetry is easier than singing a song.*
 2. Metaphors (comparison of dissimilar things without preposition)
Example: *Writing poetry is humming a new song.*
 3. Personification (human attributes are given to non-human thing)
Example: *Poetry plucks at the strings of human emotion.*
 4. Apostrophe (address one absent/dead/non-human as if there and conscious)
Example: *Poetry, you burrow into my deepest soul. Why are you so cruel?*
 5. Hyperbole (over exaggeration in the service of truth)
Example: *Poetry proves the cruelest torture to the unlearned student.*
- C. Poetic Lines

1. Length of the line (determine visual influence of the poem)
2. End-stopped or enjambment (punctuation/no punctuation of lines)
3. Stanza (paragraph of poetry)

D. Words

1. Denotation (dictionary definition of a word)
2. Connotation (more subtle shades of meaning of a word)
3. Diction (specific word choice itself – sophisticated, homespun, thematic)
4. Repetition (repeated words or synonyms to reinforce ideas)
5. Figurative words
 - a. Simile (see above)
 - b. Metaphor (see above)
 - c. Metonymy (one thing is called something else because of the similarities between the two dissimilar things)

Example: The pen is mightier than the sword.

- d. Synecdoche (use a striking part of an object for the whole)

Example: For their feet run to evil (Proverbs 1:16).

EXERCISE: Using what we learned about the poetic elements of figurative language, words, and lines (above), compose the second stanza of “The Dragonfly” poem.

E. Sounds

1. Alliteration (repetition of consonant sounds at close intervals)
Example: The continuous crunch of carrots causes chaos.
2. Assonance (repetition of vowel sounds at close intervals)
Example: The ontinuous orunch of oarrots oauses ohaos.
3. Onomatopoeia (use of words that sound like what they mean)
Example: The continuous crunch of carrots causes chaos.
4. Sibilant Sounds (sounds produce a hiss/whistle sound, repeated s or sh)
Example: The continuous s crunch of carrots s causes s chaos

F. Rhyme

1. Full Rhyme (words end with same sounds but begin with different sounds)
Example: his friends were left / really quite bereft
2. Slant Rhyme (words end with approximate vowels and consonants sounds)
Example: *What immortal hand or eye / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*
3. Internal Rhyme (rhyme occurs within the line)
Example: *For after the rain, when never a stain*
4. Blank Verse (poetry that does not rhyme)
Example: “What is a Poem?” By Jane Yolen
5. Stanzas
 - a. Couplets (two lines of verse, usually with same meter and rhyme)
 - b. Triplets (three lines of verse, generally in the same meter and rhyme)
 - c. Quatrains (four lines of verse)
6. Indicate Rhyme within a stanza (use capital letters for new rhyme sounds)
Example: “What is a poem?” (above) (ABCDEFGHA)

EXERCISE: Compose the third stanza of “The Dragonfly Poem” using what you learned about sounds, and Rhyme above.

G. Rhythm/Meter (The Rhythm of Poetry)

1. Stress ($\overset{Z}{\text{ }}$) (indicates accented syllables – mark first)
2. Breve ($\overset{\sim}{\text{ }}$) (indicates unaccented syllables – mark after stresses marked)
3. Meter Types
 - a. Iambic | $\overset{\sim}{\text{ }}$ $\overset{Z}{\text{ }}$ | (The park is filled with night and fog)

b. Trochaic | $\overset{I}{\sim}$ | (Should you ask me whence these stories?)

c. Anapestic | $\sim \sim \overset{I}{\sim}$ | (Hear the drops on the back of the roof)

d. Dactylic | $\overset{I}{\sim} \sim \sim$ | (All through the nighttime a symphony)

4. Poetic Foot (One set of the metrical pattern, consisting of one stressed syllable and one or more unstressed syllables. A line of poetry contains 1 or more feet and is set off by parallel lines (| |).

Number of Feet Per Line

1 Monometer	5 Pentameter
2 Dimeter	6 Hexameter
3 Trimeter	7 Heptameter
4 Tetrameter	8 Octameter

Practice: Mark the meter and the rhyme scheme (called scansion)

1. (6) _____
(Meter / Rhyme Scheme)

January brings the snow,

Makes our feet and fingers glow.

February brings the rain,

Thaws the frozen lake again.

March brings breezes loud and shrill,

Stirs the dancing daffodil.

--Mother Goose

EXERCISE: Revise “The Dragonfly” poem adding meter.

IV. Applying the Lesson to Your Classroom

- A. Secret to Good Poetry – Revise, Revise, Revise
- B. Grading - Always grade against clear expectations that employ poetic elements.
- C. Application at various stages of learning the elements (Develop the Dragonfly as you learn a new concept.)
- D. Variations on literature models: From Poetry to Paragraph and Paragraph to poetry
- E. Types of poetry assignments:
 1. Metaphor poem (Family or School)
 2. Form poems (Haiku, Epigram, Villanelle, Limerick, Sonnet)
 3. Poetry analysis essay (good high school prep. and required at AP level)
 4. Narrative poems using novels or short stories as an idea map
 5. Write paragraph from a poem that connects the author's poem to the student's experience
 6. Create an Epiphany Graph (Whitling 6) and create original poems from the graph.
 7. Descriptive poem from a science study
 8. Historical narrative from history class event
 9. Brainstorm other types of assignments
 - a.
 - b.

V. Recommended Resources for all levels of teaching poetry

- Cook, Judy. *Introduction to Poetry: Forms and Elements Study Guide*. Fall Creek, WI: Progeny Press, 2003. Print. (Excellent resource grades 8-12 for teachers or homeschool parents who know little about poetry. May be purchased at www.christianbooks.com. It does contain Christian Themes.)
- Perrine, Laurence, and Thomas Arp. *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*. 8th ed. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992. Print. (Excellent resource for instructor teaching high school and AP level classes. Resource also included in *Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense* by the same authors and can be purchased cheaply as a used book.)
- Whitling, Matt. *The Grammar of Poetry: Imitation in Writing*. Moscow, ID: Logos School Materials, 2000. Print. (Excellent resource for elementary – high school for teachers and students who have no knowledge of the elements of poetry. You will want to purchase both the student and teacher editions. You can order online at www.logospressonline.com)

GRADING SAMPLES AND STUDENT WRITING SAMPLES

Figurative Language Poem Evaluation

Assignment: Compose a figurative language poem about your 5/6th grade class to include all the class members and at least three of your teachers. Use an overarching metaphor.

- Add the **line number** where you used each of the required items below.

Missing/Good/Excellent	M	G	E
REQUIRED			
Overarching Metaphor			
Simile			
Personification			
Hyperbole			
Apostrophe			
Metaphor			

IMPROVEMENTS			
Rich verbs develop met.			
Rich nouns develop met.			
NTVSWWTW			
Stanza Separations			
Tell story / Make point			
Introduction			
Conclusion			
Surprise and Delights			
EXTRAS			
Other figures of thought/speech			
Rhyme			
Meter			
Sounds – Alliteration			
- Assonance			
- Onomatopoeia			
- Sibilant Sounds			

The Classroom War

By Sean (March 2010, 6th Grade)

On the barren wastes of Trinitas I saw my teachers,
Mr. Marth, Mrs. Kratt, and Mrs. Richards,
as generals facing off during a temporary parley,
trying to scare the enemy into surrender.
Some of their talk is heard, but all know that talk cannot solve this
problem

WRITING A LONG NARRATIVE POEM - ASSIGNMENT SHEET

- Step 1** Decide what you want your poem to be about. Pinocchio
- Step 2** Determine your poem format - a rhyming poem, blank verse or sonnet? rhyming
- Step 3** Choose a rhyme pattern for rhyming poetry. _____
- Step 4** Think about how many lines you plan to write and if it should be divided into stanzas. 2 per chapter (36) of Pinocchio = 72 lines
- Step 5** Determine your meter: trochaic octameter
- Step 6** Write your first line and count out the beats. Your lines should have eight beats or meters per line | ' □ |. (Here it helps to imitate the meter of a famous poem of that type. We will use the The Spider and the Fly by Mary Howitt.)

The Spider and the Fly
by Mary Howitt (1829)

Will you walk into my parlor?" said the Spider to the Fly,
'Tis the prettiest little parlor that ever you did spy;
The way into my parlor is up a winding stair,
And I've a many curious things to show when you are there."
Oh no, no," said the little Fly, "to ask me is in vain,
For who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come down again."

Step 6 Make sure that your syllables have two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed one. Example: DUM Tee, DUM Tee.

Step 7 Proofread your poem using slash marks above each word to indicate stressed and unstressed beats. Count up your beats and write at the end of each line. If you're over or under you'll have to go back and rework.

NOTE: Pinocchio is pronounced PEE-no-KEE-o

Title _____

Chapter #1

Chapter #2

Student Example – Group Poetry Project (Kate, Stefan, Sam, Jeremy, and Angel)
PINNOCHIO (May 2009, Grades 5-7)

PINOCCHIO

Listen to my story 'bout a common piece of wood.
Supposed to be a table leg but happ'ly never could.

Maestro Cherry gave the wood to Geppetto as a gift
Hurt poor old Geppetto as the log he tried to lift.

Geppetto made the puppet parts, Pinocchio gave a wail.
He ran away on his new feet, Geppetto went to jail.

Cricket warned Pinocchio, "Your dad you must obey."
After hearing this good warning, wise cricket he did slay.

Bad Pinocchio missed his father, his hunger he bewailed.
He found a little chicken egg, but out the window sailed.

Seeking food from neighbor, got water on his head
Sleeping soundly all the night, woke with feet burnt dead.

Calm Geppetto found Pinocchio lying on the floor.
Gave him three pears so the puppet could have more.

Pinocchio's kind father gladly made him nice new feet.
Kind Geppetto sold his only coat so the puppet could be teached.

Pinocchio met his family when he went out to play.
Crowds were yelling, pressing, running in his precious way.

Supposed to go to school, Pinocchio would drift.
To get into the theater Pinocchio sold his gift.

Fire Eater sneezes; Pinocchio had saved
His old brother Harlequin from the fire grave.

At the Inn of Red Lobster, gets to pay the bill.
Fox and Cat leave to see the firstborn who was ill.

Talking Cricket's advice Pinocchio does not listen to
Finds himself chased by assassins not one but two.

Darted swiftly through the woods to run away from them.
Knocked upon the door but no answer came to him.

Fairy sends for doctors, to see if he's alive
When the doctors come in, Pinocchio's revived.

Fairy with azure hair came to Pinocchio's aid.
Gave him medicine to drink but NO, NO, NO he said.

Pinocchio plants his gold in field to reap to get some more.
He returns to find himself even more than poor.

Pinocchio hearing laughing calls, asks, "Why you jeer?"
"I'm laughing at those simpletons who trust everything they hear!"

Walking briskly lonely poor Pinocchio did see:
A serpent lying on the road, died of laughter (he burst an artery.)

Pinocchio is told to guard chickens through the night.
But when participating in a trick did not cooperate.

Pinocchio discovered the weasel thieves.
In return for his faithfulness he can leave.

Pigeon and Pinocchio fly over some seas.
Pinocchio must eat gross chick peas.

Geppetto taught Pinocchio, "Begging was for the poor."
Shamefully, he disobeys, rejects work more and more.

Fairy with Azure hair admitted she was she.
Pinocchio agrees to go to school to make her happy.

In the morning bright and early Pinocchio goes to school.
Naughty boys make Pinocchio a gigantic fool.

Pinocchio goes to see a shark, maybe sleeping like a whale.
But when a friend gets injured Pinocchio goes to jail.

Pinocchio ran away that wasn't his wish
Runs into the danger of being fried like a fish.

Pinocchio escapes and finds
The Fairy's house but still he whines.

Finally Pinocchio's told that he'll become a boy
But instead he runs off with friend to Land of Toys.

Donkey gives Pinocchio some very good advice.
Driver bit the donkey's ear and was not very nice.

After five months of no school, no work and only play,
Pinocchio and friends quite suddenly begin to bray.

Pinocchio sold to circus man,
Hardly gets to see dry land.

Pinocchio is a marionette, but eaten by a shark.
Sees inside his belly, a candle in the dark.

Pinocchio finds Geppetto in the fishy landscape.
Becomes like a father, plans a daring escape.

The two of them escape to find Pinocchio's a boy,
Get a nice big fortune and love their precious joy.

Student Example – Individual Poetry Project

(We had finished the poetry unit just prior to starting *The Hobbit*, so as we read, each student individually composed a rhyming quatrain that captured each night's reading assignment. Some nights included more than one chapter, but only one quatrain was required.)

The Hobbit
Amazing, Astonishing, Adventure

By Kate (June 2010, 6th Grade)

Gandalf knocked on Bilbo's door.
Bilbo cried, "I can't have more!"
Dwarves came marching in his house and talked of many things,
Played their harps and sang their songs and talked of long, lost kings.

Bilbo journeyed with the dwarves,
(Supposed to be a thief.)
Bilbo found some mean old Trolls and almost was their food.
Dwarves thought Bilbo's burgling was not very good!

In the middle of the night,
Bilbo had a dream (a fright!)
That some goblins open walls and capture also steal...
Bilbo wakes to find that dreams are very real!

Bilbo finds a shiny ring and puts it in his coat.
Wanders down to Gollum's lake and finds him in a boat.
Riddles Gollum wants to play but later cannot guess.
Bilbo follows Gollum out by using his "Precious."

Freed from goblins, not for long, they're caught in trees by wargs.
Dwarves are stuck in trees to hide, but goblins won't use swords.
Goblins try to burn the trees but eagles come in time.
Save the dwarves and fly away (they're safe for one short time).

Dropped at Carrock (Beorn lives there)
Introduced in six scared pairs.
Gandalf did this so Beorn would not be very mad.
Not used to company, Beorn is still too glad.

Dwarves meet spiders in the woods.
Bilbo frees them (think he's good).
Dwarves are hungry, try to find some food but meet elves' feast.
Wood elf king locks dwarves all up (he thinks that they are beasts).

Bilbo puts his "Precious" on before the elves catch him.
Then he wanders `bout the dungeon grounds to try to find all them.
Guards go drunk and Bilbo lets the dwarves come run away.
All the dwarves and Bilbo get in barrels, float all day!

Dwarves go marching to the mountain, try to find the gold.
Bilbo, Fili, Kili search to find the long, lost door.
Searchers found it; they can't open it so they wait and think.
Moon-letters show the secret door; it opens with a clink.

Bilbo tries to take a cup from Smaug and does succeed.
Goes back later; Smaug does smell him; Bilbo is not freed!
Riddles, Bilbo, Smaug do play to try to stump each other.
Bilbo almost does not escape and almost is a smother.

Bilbo leads the dwarves to Smaug.
(Smaug had gone away that day.)
Smaug destroys the Lake-men's city, smashing buildings in.
Thrush warns Bard: he shoots an arrow, piercing Smaug's chest so thin.

Dwarves are greedy, selfish brats.
Bilbo tries to tell them, "Stop!"
Later Bilbo tries to help (to bargain with the king).
Arkenstone, the tool he uses as a bargain-thing.

Battle rises, brave men fall,
Many elves, and large and small.
Eagles come to save the day.
Thorin dies, and Bilbo stays.

Bilbo starts to venture home,
Leaves the gold to meet his dome.
Finds his hole for sale, alack!
All of this he must unpack!