

Poetry in the ESOL Classroom

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Overview

This unit is an introduction to poetry for English Language Learners (ELLs) at the high school level. Readings include a selection of children's poetry as well as samples of contemporary American poetry. The selection of poems will allow access for learners at different levels of English proficiency. Because poetry can be both read and created in small increments, it will allow English learners a chance to be frequently and repeatedly successful as they learn the English language. Additionally, because it often reflects the time and culture in which it was created, poetry can help students gain an insight into American culture. Students will have opportunities to respond to poetry and to write in the style of selected poems and poets. All domains of literacy will be covered in each lesson.

Rationale

Poetry is offered only occasionally throughout the ESOL curriculum during the school year. This unit offers the option of spending a week focusing on poetry in order to give students a chance to spend time mastering the basic components while reading, listening to, and writing different styles of poetry.

English language learners need to develop vocabulary for both instructional and academic use; they will do so, while also developing their descriptive vocabulary. Increasing students' vocabulary leads to improved reading and writing skills. Students will advance their listening and speaking skills as well as they listen to poetry and spend time reading aloud to each other. Additionally, poetry naturally lends itself to focus on pronunciation and stress, a necessary but often overlooked component to learning a language. Students will gain at least a passing acquaintance with American culture, as names, places and movements are reflected in the poetry of various eras.

Poetry can be read and re-read, a key factor in improving reading skills. The more often students reread texts, the more they have a chance to practice and improve their literacy

skills. Because poetry is reader-friendly, the students are more likely to want to reread it. Students will choral read and echo read in pairs or small groups after whole group instruction. Literacy instruction devoted to specific skills will be repeated in both whole group and small group situations, differentiated according to student needs.

This unit has been created for an ESOL classroom. However, I believe that the lessons and ideas can be beneficial for educators in traditional classrooms as well. Poetry isn't as daunting to readers because it is shorter than most prose, and each word is specifically chosen by the writer to send a message; this makes it more accessible to those just learning English. Because it is filled with colorful language, the vocabulary is made more memorable to students.

English language learners, like all students, learn best by doing. The four domains, reading, writing, listening and speaking will be covered in every lesson to provide exposure to and practice with the English language in order to promote English language proficiency.

I have provided guided lessons that introduce poetry on a variety of subjects. My hope is that this will both show students the essence of poetry, and will allow students to be more creative in their own endeavors.

Lessons are planned so that students will gain a familiarity with the components of poetry as well as some of the forms of poetry. They will complete this unit having read, listed to and written poems. They will have had a passing glimpse with some highlights of the chronology of a few events in America

By sharing basic information about American society of the time that each poem was written, ELLs will gain some familiarity with names and events known to most students educated in America. This can only help ELLs as they continue to learn about America. The fact that our country is made up of many different cultures should be evident as we read through and share selections from various writers and time periods. Students will see that all people and cultures have something to contribute as they share poetry from their native culture.

Objectives

This unit is designed for a high school ESOL class, grades 9-12, with English language proficiency ranging from levels 1 through 4 (entering, beginning, developing and expanding). I will introduce contemporary American poetry and poetry expressly written for children. Students will be given an opportunity to share poetry from their native cultures. They will participate in reading poetry aloud and illustrating what they hear and read. Students will increase their descriptive vocabulary as they read poetry with the hope that this will reflect in their writing.

My goal is that students will increase reading and speaking fluency, as well as quality and quantity of writing in English through the use of modern and children's poetry. Students

will be able to identify and define components and features of poetry; they will create poems in the style of various poets and will use poetry to express themselves.

Another objective I plan to cover for developing and expanding English speakers is this: How does poetry reflect or express the time and culture in which it was written. This focus will allow students to develop literacy skills while learning about American society, the ways in which it has changed, and how those changes are reflected in literature.

Strategies

Students - high school ESOL, English language proficiency levels 1 through 4 - will be exposed to poetry in a variety of forms. We will use poetry books as well as audio and video recordings of poetry being performed. Students will have opportunities to read aloud to each other.

We will preview vocabulary and view images and film clips of unknown vocabulary words and concepts before reading. Students will create illustrated, descriptive vocabulary displays to be posted throughout the room.

Students will look at poems about nature, personal experiences and will share poetry from their native cultures. Samples of poetry in various languages and forms and student work will be displayed or available for rereading.

We will view the text of poetry as we listen to it being read and compare and contrast styles of poems. Students will identify the similarities between poetry and other forms of literature. They will illustrate what they hear as poetry is read, and share their drawings with others.

Students will *re-read* texts; this is a key factor in improving reading skills. As students reread, text becomes more familiar allowing students to practice and improve their literacy skills. Because poetry is reader-friendly, the students are more likely to want to reread it. Students will choral read and echo read in pairs or small groups after whole group instruction. Literacy instruction devoted to specific skills will be repeated in both whole group and small group situations, differentiated according to student needs.

Students will be placed in small groups to read and listen to each other and to review literacy concepts with each other. Educator Nadine Sporer conducted a study that showed that students who received small group instruction in literary skills did better than those students who only received the skills whole class (Sporer, 2009).

Through the reading of poetry, the students will compare attitudes toward subjects in America to attitudes from their home countries.

To meet writing requirements, students will write a poem on a topic of their choice in the style of, or in response to, a work that we read in class. They will refer to previously read examples, and will use graphic organizers

Classroom Activities

Each lesson will have students reading, writing, speaking and listening. These lessons are designed to meet English Language Proficiency Standards for communication necessary for academic success in school across content areas. (See Appendix 1.) In addition to language for instructional purposes and for the Language Arts, students will briefly and occasionally focus on academic concepts and vocabulary useful in the content area of Social Studies when students learn names and dates relevant to US history and culture. Relevant names include both the subjects of poetry (e.g. the first few presidents on day 1) and authors (e.g. Langston Hughes on days 5 and 6). These will be placed on a US History timeline in the classroom.

Students will read modern poetry from William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, Cid Corman and others; they will also read poetry written specifically for children. Students will respond to poetry; will create poetry in the styles of certain poems; will compare two or more poems on a theme of American culture; will create a word bank about a person in American history; and will use models and graphic organizers to create a poem in any style.

Day One

Objectives: Define poetry as a specific genre; define components of poetry. Listen to and read poetry. Define poetry unit expectations: reading, responding to, writing and sharing poetry. Students will create an illustration for Longfellow's *Rain in Summer*.

Robert Louis Stevenson's quote "*The world is so full of a number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.*"

Today's vocabulary: poem, stanza, rhythm, rhyme, imagery, alliteration.

Procedure: Introduce poetry as one more literary genre; define components, provide examples; post the word with other genre vocabulary in classroom. Create frayer model for stanza (see Appendix 2). Whole class, students help create frayer models for imagery, rhythm, rhyme and alliteration. Introduce "*Rain in Summer*". Students copy and illustrate what they hear; students share with partner/small group. Post illustrations. Introduce necessary vocabulary for 2nd poem, a summer haiku "Clouds and Poppies," from Serio's, *Poetry for Young People – The Seasons*. Read aloud; students echo read 2nd time. Review prepositions of place, by having students write them where they belong on a nature picture on the smart board (above, below/under, next to, on top of, near). Have students provide vocabulary for the exhibited nature picture see (using bilingual/ word-to-word dictionaries as necessary); list words in columns according to part of speech. Ask students how words are grouped.

Define poetry unit expectations: reading, responding to, writing and sharing poetry, including poetry from native countries if possible.

Review rhythm and rhyme. Model writing a poem using the picture and student-provided descriptions.

Provide nature pictures for students to label with nouns and adjectives; add prepositions of place. Provide sentence frames. Students write using their labeled picture.

Closure: Students share poems. Look at homework page; choose one vocabulary word, match word -> definition ->example.

Homework: Match vocabulary & definition & example; preposition words page.

Day Two

Objective: Students will review poetry vocabulary; will review student-created illustrated vocabulary; will reread class poem created with student-provided descriptive vocabulary; will listen to poems about the four seasons; will match poems to pictures; will identify and use descriptive vocabulary by creating two-line poems about new nature pictures.

Today's vocabulary: Review previous vocabulary; additional vocabulary as necessary for comprehension of individual seasonal poetry.

Procedure: Review poetry vocabulary; review student-created illustrated vocabulary; show new nature pictures and have students write down three descriptive words to go along with each picture.

Listen to/read along as selected poetry from Serio's *Poetry for Young People – The Seasons* is read. Have students match descriptors from class lists to new poetry.

Students echo read poems. In pairs or small groups, students choose a picture and create two-line poems using appropriate descriptive vocabulary.

Closure: Echo read new vocabulary. Students share work.

Homework: students read aloud descriptive vocabulary; read aloud their own and selected nature poems read in class;

Notes: Revisit this lesson as the seasons change.

Post illustrated academic vocabulary, such as seasons, photosynthesis, autumnal equinox; labeled posters of the parts of plants, the lunar cycle, and other words and concepts as they arise in discussion.

Day Three

Objective: Students will review poetry vocabulary; will read and respond to William Carlos Williams' "This is Just to Say".

Today's vocabulary: free verse; apology, regret, okay; additional vocabulary as necessary for comprehension.

Procedure: Introduce new vocabulary. Post word, part of speech, meaning; group related words together; add additional words in word family. Read /listen to poem. Students read/echo read poem. Ask: who did what? How does he feel? Are you sure? How does he describe the plums? Number the stanzas; note the different purposes for each stanza. Create a class list of things we did to siblings or friends that we're not really sorry for. Use one example to model an apology in three stanzas, in the style of Williams. Students create apology poems individually or with a partner.

Alternate product for level 1 ELLs: Answer the poet using sentence frames and a word bank. (See Appendix 2.)

Closure: review new vocabulary. Students share work.

Homework: students read aloud Williams' work and their own; review vocabulary; create sentences for advise, advice, apologize, apology

Day Four

Objective: Students will review poetry components and vocabulary; will define form/concrete poetry; will read examples, including Lewis Carroll's snake-shaped poem and NASA's concrete poem of a plane taking off; will create a concrete poem individually or with a partner on a given theme (thoughts about my school; differences between my first culture and my new one; being a teenager in America, etc.)

Today's vocabulary: form poetry; words as needed for individual poems, e.g. fury, cur; take-off, etc.

Procedure: Review academic vocabulary; define form poetry; show Lewis Carroll's snake shaped poem, have students write down what they see (using bilingual/ word-to-word dictionaries as necessary). With student help, write down snake-related words (list on chart according to part of speech); then write sentences with the words. Have students write the sentences in the form of a snake. Next students choose an animal or classroom object; generate words about that object; write sentences; then create a concrete poem.

Closure: review vocabulary; share student-creations.

Homework: read aloud one of the form poems read in class; complete individual form poem if necessary; identify the part of speech of given words.

Day Five

Objective: Students will review poetry vocabulary; will read Langston Hughes' poem "Mother to Son"; will identify contraction *ain't* as slang and will identify other options to use in writing; will complete a graphic organizer in order to create a written response to the poem. (See Appendix 2.)

Alternate activity: Students will tell what the speaker in the poem is saying.

Today's vocabulary: advice, response; words as needed for individual poems, e.g. stairs, crystal, ain't, splinter, tack

Procedure: Show images for crystal stairway and dilapidated stairs. Read /play audio of "Mother to Son". List responses to: Who is the speaker? Who is she talking to? What is she saying? Does/did someone talk to you like this? Why do they talk to you like this? Provide graphic organizer. Model completing G.O. then using it to respond to (1) write about the person in the G.O. (2) write a letter to the person.

Students complete information in individual graphic organizers. Class listens to, the reads/echo reads poem. Using teacher model, review and label the parts of a letter.

Closure: review vocabulary; students share person, relationship & one piece of advice from graphic organizer.

Homework: read over graphic organizer; add more information, more description

Day Six

Objective: Students will review poetry vocabulary; will use the previous day's graphic organizer to write a letter to or about someone who influenced them; will correctly use present and past tense verbs.

Procedure: Review vocabulary; review parts of a letter. Reread and review Langston Hughes' poem "Mother to Son". Underline all verbs. List verbs by tense (present or past). Add the missing tense to the class chart. Highlight irregular past tenses. Reread teacher-created responses to poem. Post writing procedure and expectations. Students create responses. Teacher assists with editing. Students rewrite.

Alternate activity: Students will tell review what the speaker in the poem is saying and offer a response.

Closure: Students share work.

Homework: Read poetry response aloud; illustrate or create border for writing.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Teacher Bibliography

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1973.

I use this for the form poem that is Alice's reply to the mouse.

Chatton, Barbara. *Using Poetry Across the Curriculum: Learning to Love Language*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Incorporated, 2010.

The book is organized by subject areas, facilitating the search for an appropriate poem.

Hopkins, Lee Bennet. *Pass the Poetry, Please!* New York: Harper Trophy, 1972.

Wood, Jaime R. *Living voices: multicultural poetry in the middle school classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2006.

Student Bibliography

Froman, Robert. *SEEING THINGS: A Book of Poems*. United States (no longer operating): T.Y. Crowell, 1974.

This collection offers a different version of the concrete poem: poems are written inside shapes/forms. I would make this available to students although I personally prefer when the words create the shape.

Giovanni, Nikki, Ed. *Hip Hop Speaks to Children: A Celebration of Poetry With a Beat*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2008.

Hopkins, Lee Bennet, Ed. *My America: A Poetry Atlas of the United States*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

This compilation is grouped by geographical regions and includes maps and information on each state.

Rogasky, Barbara, Ed. *Winter Poems*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1994.

A variety of poems that is especially useful for students experiencing this season for the first time.

Salas, Laura Purdie. *And Then There Were Eight: Poems About Space*. Mankato, MN: Capston Press, 2008.

This collection both offers poems about the earth, moon and planets and provides information about the planets. Additionally, the book concludes with a glossary of poetic terms.

Salas, Laura Purdie. *Flashy, Clashy, and Oh-So Splashy: Poems about Color*. Mankato, MN: Capston Press, 2008.

This collection provides poems for each color and provides glossaries of poetry and colors.

Salas, Laura Purdie. *Shrinking Days, Frosty Nights: Poems about Fall*. Mankato, MN: Capston Press, 2008.

Although the illustrations are geared toward young children, this collection offers a variety of styles of poetry, from acrostics to shape poetry.

Serio, John N, Editor. *Poetry for Young People – The Seasons*. New York: Sterling, 2005.

Spörer, N., Brunstein, J. C., & Kieschke, U. (2009). *Improving Students' Reading Comprehension Skills: Effects Of Strategy Instruction And Reciprocal Teaching*. *Learning and Instruction*, 19(3), 272-286.

Witherspoon, Jim, Ph.D. *English Comes Alive! Dynamic Brain Building Ways to Teach ESL and EFL*. New York: Synpase Books, 2012.

Helpful activities and ideas for ESL teachers.

Web Sources

<http://magicglade.com/game4.htm>

This page offers examples of concrete poems as well as explanations. The site is geared to kids and offers weekly writing assignments, suggestions. Anyone can post stories or poetry to it.

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

This is a good site for resources, and especially helpful if you are looking for a particular poet.

<http://poetryoutloud.org/>

Poetry Out Loud is the website for the organization that offers a yearly poetry contest for young adults. Contests being in individual classrooms all over the US and lead to competition at the national level. Students can listen to others their own age reading aloud poetry. Teachers can find classroom resources as well.

<http://quest.arc.nasa.gov/aero/wright/teachers/wfomanual/langarts/poem.gif>

This is the website for the delightful concrete poem of a plane taking off, offered by NASA, NASA Quest.

Appendices

Appendix 1: ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STANDARDS

English Language Proficiency Standard 1: English language learners communicate in English for SOCIAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL purposes within the school setting.

English Language Proficiency Standard 2: English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of LANGUAGE ARTS.

English Language Proficiency Standard 5: English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of SOCIAL STUDIES.

Appendix 2: Homework and Graphic Organizer

Day One Vocabulary - Frayer Model

Word (part of speech)	Definition
Stanza (noun)	A group of lines in poetry
Synonym / Similar to...	Example
This is similar to a paragraph in other texts.	(Here, copy a stanza from posted poem or post this next to the poem and circle or draw { } around one stanza, pointing out the space Between stanzas. Suggested: Longfellow's <i>Rain in Summer</i> [Serio])

Day One Homework

Vocabulary -> Definition -> Example Matching

word		definition		example
rhyme		making pictures in my mind		{ George Washington, Adams and } { Jefferson three } { First rulers of Uncle Sam's land } { of the free: } Then Madison, Monroe and Adams again All clever and upright and good honest men
stanza		A group of lines in poetry		meet, seat, wheat
imagery		one genre of literature		The world is so full of such wonderful things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings. Robert Louis Stevenson
poem		same ending sound		velvet grass

Days Three Word Bank and Sentence Frames

Word Bank

Mr. Williams; ate, plums; angry; okay, not okay; do not eat them; ask before you eat them; buy your own

Sentence Frame

Date:

Dear _____,

I know you _____ the _____.

It is _____

Next time, _____.

Sincerely,

Days Five and Six Graphic Organizer

Think of an older person in your life who has sacrificed for you or for others. Then complete the graphic organizer.

Name and relationship to me	
Way he/she helped me or others	
Way he/she helps me or others	
Advice he/she gave to me	