

Writing and Wordplay Hooray!

Writing poetry using alliteration and rhyme
with Elementary School Students

Overview and Goals

- “Writing and Wordplay Hooray!” is a lesson plan intended for Elementary School students to develop skills in valuing the aesthetics of a writer or poet through recognition of these writerly techniques and to begin practicing artistic expression through a structured writing exercise at the end. The approximate time for this lesson is about an hour and can easily be woven into a curriculum about poets, writers, and how to not only talk about them, but also how to become one yourself.
- The premise of this lesson plan is that a guided reading of a poem specifically for sound and then discussion of the poem’s meaning can aid in the understanding of how sound creates meaning for a writer. Students will be guided towards what rhyme and alliteration sound and look like and be encouraged to create their own words that rhyme and alliterate with those of a writer. By engaging with the poem both as reader and writer, a student not only begins to understand poetic mechanics but begins developing agency as a writer themselves.

Materials and Methods

- Materials
 - Students will need copies of the poems, something to write with, and paper to write on. In addition they will need to be in table groups.
- Introduction
 - What is a poem?
 - A poem is writing that expresses an intense moment. Rap is poetry. Music is poetry. Even prose can be poetry.
 - Define alliteration and rhyme, provide loud/obvious examples of both and have the students do a call-and-response of term and definition.
- The Poems
 - Both poems can be found at the poetry foundation
 - “Dream Variations” by Langston Hughes
 - <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/dream-variations>
 - “maggie and milly and molly and may” by e.e. cummings
 - <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/maggie-and-milly-and-molly-and-may>
 - Each poem should be read aloud 3 times.
 - 1st time: provide students with one pair of alliteration

- “While I read, mark other pairs”
 - 2nd time: provide students with one pair of rhyme
 - “While I read, mark other pairs”
 - 3rd time: just listen to the poem for a story
 - “Can anyone tell me what this poem is about?”
- The Writing!
 - Have students create a word bank of rhyming and alliteration pairs on the board from pairs within the poems.
 - Then ask for words that rhyme and alliterate with those pairs that have action like “run,” “pow,” and “crackle.”
 - Once the word bank is made here is a list of potential games and writing activities:
 - Have the students write a paragraph length short-short story using as many word pairs from the word bank as possible.
 - Have one student in the group write the first sentence only using half of a pair from the word bank, and the following student must write a sentence that uses the second half of the pair as well as at least one half of a new pair, repeat.
 - Have students write a sequence of short-short stories together using a single character.
 - Pick one pair of rhyme or alliteration and see how many other words you can match that alliterate and/or rhyme with each other and try and make sentences that both make sense and use those extended pairs.
 - The point of these writing exercises is to have fun! Make sure students are laughing at the silly sounds and stories they can make. Emphasize how musical the poems are when walking around the room.

Conclusion

Strong poetry is engaging not only for the reader but for the writer as well. This lesson serves as a way for students to begin writing from a space of pleasure and play that will not only lend itself to reading and writing more but develop reading and writing comprehension through active participation in linguistic play.