



Southern Nevada
Regional Professional
Development Program

Volume 5, Issue 7

April 2009

The LeafLIT

A Literacy Publication

N a t i o n a l

P o e t r y M o n t h

By Holly Lee

Yea! April is here, and that means it is poetry month! And as long as people have stories, there will be rhythm, rap, hip hop and poetry.

"In our fast-paced, instant everything world, we need poetry. Poetry helps children and adults to ponder, to observe, to ask questions, to discover sights, sounds, and feelings that might otherwise remain untapped. It brings balance and beauty to our increasingly complex world. Poetry can awaken our senses or bring the element of surprise into our lives. It makes us laugh, teaches us powerful lessons, and renews our souls." writes D.L. Harrison and K. Hodlerith in *Using the Power of Poetry to Teach Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and More*.

Poetry is the kind of writing we enjoy. It is concise and to the point. It is free of formal constraints, and an ideal way to express feelings. After reading many poems, memorizing some, listening to the lyrics of song and trying to understand the message or the ironies, students are eager to try their own hand at writing poetry.

Regie Routman writes, "Poetry writing is the surest, easiest way to turn kids on to writing. They appreciate that fewer words convey the message, and that conventions – while important – loom less prominently."

Couldn't we, as teachers, invest more energy in a form that allowed for maximum choice – not just choice of topic (which they already had in their journals) but choice of form, layout, spacing, pattern, and even conventions?

The message we, as teachers, want to send is "Yes You Can! You can do it!" Initially, it will require a leap of faith. We will need to trust the poems themselves and our own judgment to know how and what to teach. The unstructured form of free-verse poetry, based on the irregular rhythmic cadence or the recurrence, with variations, of phrases, images, and syntactical patterns rather than the conventional use of meter makes writing easier for kids than more traditional forms. Rhyme may or may not be present in free verse, but when it is, it is used with great freedom, accompanying possibilities for using phrases and words instead of full sentences.



Bill Hanlon, Director

RPDP Literacy Team:

Shan Cannon

Northwest Region
799-4558 x5337

Adine Sibley

Southeast Region
799-0880

Hattie Leday

Northeast Region
799-1719 x5322

Holly Lee

Southwest Region
799-2658 x5322

Elizabeth Mattson

Nye County
775-727-7767

Jacalyn Peterson

Nye County
775-727-7743 x278

NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

Teach children to aim first for meaning, and for finding a way to describe what matters with words that will make the reader see the world in a brand new way. Keep in mind poetry writing offers many other important benefits, too. It:

- ▶ Offers an easy and meaningful alternative to traditional writing forms
- ▶ Extends students' understanding of poetry beyond rhyme to free verse
- ▶ Incorporates all five senses into the writing
- ▶ Encourages kids to play around with language and form (organization)
- ▶ Requires fewer words to create a meaningful message which, in turn, helps kids stay focused while writing (Ideas)
- ▶ Extends and supports learning to read
- ▶ Challenges students to be specific and innovative language (voice)
- ▶ Focuses students' thoughts toward selection of vocabulary (word choice)
- ▶ Frees kids up to write and affirms their writing abilities

Finally, one of the greatest advantages of poetry writing is that students' voices – their personality and uniqueness – come through in their writing.

Poetry allows writers to let their hearts and minds soar. It also allows them to practice all that they've learned thus far in the year. That is, our young poets will find significance in the ordinary details of their lives, employ strategies of revision, and learn from mentor authors in order to write many, many poems. In this way, poetry will not be an esoteric unit done only once a year, but a culmination of a year's learning and an opportunity to use language in extraordinary ways. Try it and much success will follow. All your students will shine as writers. And the poems your own students create will be your most powerful models of all.

Reading and Writing, Writing and Reading

•••••
• Is what we do
• All the time.
• SO- today for this "LeafLIT"
• We will look at Reading and Writing
• Through RHYME.
• Poetry, yes, poetry
• Is what we will study today.
• Rhyming and Chanting,
• Meter and Beat –
• We are on our way
• SO=
• Let's begin-
• Let's start now
• To think about
• The what, the why, the who and
• The HOW
• Of teaching POETRY
• Here
• And
• NOW!!!
•••••

NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

POEM
IN YOUR
POCKET

Poem in Your Pocket

Celebrate the second national Poem In Your Pocket Day on Thursday, April 30, 2009!

Inaugurated by the Academy of American Poets in April 1996, National Poetry Month brings together publishers, booksellers, literary organizations, libraries, schools, and poets around the country to celebrate poetry and its vital place in American culture. Thousands of businesses and non-profit organizations participate through readings, festivals, book displays, workshops, and other events.

The idea is simple: select a poem you love during National Poetry Month then carry it with you to share with students, colleagues, family, and friends on April 30, 2009. Poems from pockets can be unfolded throughout the day, maybe even with events in classrooms, libraries, schools, hallways, or playgrounds.

So, create your own Poem In Your Pocket Day event using ideas below because in this age of mechanical and digital reproduction, it's easy to carry a poem, and share a poem.



- Start a "poems for pockets" give-a-way in your school
- Urge local business partnerships to offer discounts for those carrying poems
- Post pocket-sized verses in public places: cafeterias, hallways, bathrooms, great rooms
- Handwrite some lines on the back of your homework or meeting agendas
- Start a school team to pass out poems in your school community
- Distribute bookmarks with your favorite immortal lines
- Add a poem to your email footer
- Post a poem on your blog
- Project a poem on a wall, inside or out
- Text a poem to colleagues and friends

FREE VERSE PROJECT

Inspired by the 2009 National Poetry Month Poster design, the Academy of American Poets invites you to capture and share your own brief bits of verse.



Write lines from a favorite poem on a sandy beach, assemble twigs on a hillside, or chalk the sidewalk. Take a photo before it disappears and post it in the "Free Verse" group page on Flickr, on the "Academy's Fan Page" on Facebook, or email your photo to freeverse@poets.org. Include the source of your lines in the photo caption.



NATIONAL

POETRY

MONTH

POETRY READ-A-THON

FROM THE ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS & THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

POETRY READ-A-THON

The Academy of American Poets launched the first National Poetry Read-a-Thon in April 2006. Since then classrooms in every state and at every grade level in the country have been invited to continue the project—in any month of the year. The goal is to celebrate the reading of poems and writing about poems as well as to facilitate the development of student writing and comprehension skills.

Students choose poems to read and then write prose “responses” to the poems they read. A response will be 75-100 words and students can respond to one or two of the following elements of the poem:

-► images of the poem
-► sounds of the poem
-► subject(s) of the poem
-► emotional effect(s) of the poem
-► the poem’s meaning(s)
-► questions about the poem
-► questions the student would like to ask, if he/she could speak to the poet

The students keep a log of their reading. The log will include each poem’s title, author, and the date the student read the poem and presented his or her response to the teacher. The teacher will maintain a master log of all the poems read by the class.

Teachers submit examples of their students’ responses, and they will be considered for posting in the “For Educators” section of the Academy of American Poets’ award-winning website, Poets.org.

For a selection of poems to teach, see the Academy’s anthology, “How to Eat a Poem” or view these other suggestions.

Sara Holbrook wrote, “A poet uses words as a means to an end, but that end is not simply the poem. The end is the impact the poem has on the writer and his audience, her audience. That audience may be a single friend, a classroom, a nation, or just the poet. We write poetry to make our individual ideas heard, and these ideas must not be limited to language arts class, another silly idea. When we succeed, when we create a poem that serves as a bridge towards understanding, that is COMMUNICATION—an indispensable standard of learning.”



NATIONAL

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POETRY BOOK REVIEW by Jean Frantz

The book titled, Poetry: Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages by Lucy Calkins and Stephanie Parsons says it all. Look at this poem written by a five year old from the Bronx:

*I am the kind of writer who writes
In peace and quiet.
I am the kind of writer who really feels
The rain and the wind.
That feeling makes me want to sway from
One way to another.
It's all in the heart.*

'Do you wonder how young minds can come up with such poetic words? The authors estimate that it is because poetry is the genre of childhood.

In this book, Calkins explains that she believes poetry can do many things for young minds. It can teach children to deliberately craft language, to see what kind of special effects they can create. It can encourage children to see the world with different eyes, to study it closely. They can also learn to see with their hearts. And they can have fun just playing with words, to be gymnasts with language.

From the beginning Calkins and Parsons call their students poets. Instead of saying "boys and girls" or "you guys", they use the term "poets", which is a clue into their approach with children, that they respect them as people and expect them to produce real poetry.

This book is a series of lessons, planned out from the "getting ready" stage to the sharing and assessment stages. Each lesson is scripted, so that we teachers can hear the language of the experts as they guide students through an introduction of a mini-lesson, through the active engagement stage, through a conference and then a revision. We can learn from this book how to talk with children in a way that guides rather than coerces and celebrates rather than criticizes. At the side of each page is a running commentary for us, the teachers, which suggests, clarifies, and gives examples and illustrations which help us navigate through each lesson.

For the secret of poetry is heart. Poets write from the heart, teaching all of us to look at the world differently. They help us to celebrate small beauties. They inspire us to be outraged over injustices great and small. And so, focus on the work that poets do in the world, the way that poets love the world through words. Focus on the way poets sustain us during hard times, and the way poets express outrage and grief and joy.

Student Poem
by Jaxson Turk,
2nd grade

Past, Present, Future

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Your life</i> | <i>The wind's blowing me away</i> |
| <i>Is a cloud</i> | <i>Into pieces</i> |
| <i>Fading away,</i> | <i>You're a shadow</i> |
| <i>On and on,</i> | <i>Of yourself</i> |
| <i>Every day...</i> | <i>In the past</i> |
| | <i>And future</i> |

NATIONAL

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CHARTS FOR CLASSROOM USE

Chart #1: Practical Ideas to Create a Poetic Environment

- Post poems around your room
- Chant poems about the weather, about subjects
- Bring them to meeting area with a poem
- Go on a treasure hunt around the room for poems and read with a partner
- Interactive poetry wall
- Have students begin post-it-ing poems
- Exchange and share poems

Chart #2: Build a Definition of Poetry

(This chart will grow as you and your students study poetry)

- The specific is made universal
- Poetry is about feelings
- Imagery (specific images)
- Rhythm, beat
- Repetition
- "Just right" words
- First and last line can repeat
- Plays with language
- Rhyme and unrhymed
- Poets can surprise us at the end
- Looks different
- Shape and form

Chart #3: Strategies Poets Use

(This chart will grow as you and your students study poetry)

- Find a big topic that gives big, strong feelings
- Find a small object or moment or detail that holds the big feeling
- Look with poets' eyes and see this ordinary thing in a fresh, new way
- Write about it, experimenting with line breaks
- Reread the poem
- Change the words till the music is right
- Reach for honest, precise words

Websites

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

<http://www.poetry4kids.com/>

<http://www.gigglepoetry.com/>

<http://tinyurl.com/ct8dgo>

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

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/poetry/index.htm>

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/poetry/>

<http://www.poets.org/page.php/prmID/41>

<http://www.magpo.com/kidspoetry/>