**The Promise of Poetry for Struggling Readers**

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Presented by Maria Walther, 1st grade teacher; Aurora, IL

These are the notes she handed out plus a few notes we took and added to her presentation.

**BEST TIP: Create a poetry binder for every student to put each poem you teach to them in for safe keeping. Each student now has a collection book of poems that they can reread over and over again throughout the school year. This is a great idea if you are doing the Great Poetry Race with your students. They can keep all their poems in this. This is also great for those times during Daily 5 when they finish a book early or say they have nothing to read.**

* Why teach poetry to struggling readers?

- Poetry is short

- Poetry plays with language

- Poetry is comprised of well-chosen words

- Poetry incorporates rhythm and rhyme

- Poetry contains rich vocabulary

- Poetry is perfect for fluency practice

- Poetry boost comprehension

- Poetry creates interest in a topic

- Poetry sparks enthusiasm for writing

* Poetry + Powerful Reading Instruction = Success
* Powerful reading instruction is comprised of the following components:
* Frequent read-aloud experiences
* Engaging conversations
* Playful phonemic awareness activities
* Explicit phonics instruction
* Robust vocabulary teaching
* Thoughtful comprehension lessons
* Meaningful fluency development activities
* Multilevel, flexible, small group instruction
* Ample time to read independently
* Effective writing instruction
* Integrated content area studies

A few of Maria’s favorite song picture books:

* Sing (Raposa and Lichtenheld, 2003)
* Take Me Home Country Road (Denver, 2005) **End each day or your year with this one!**
* There Was an Old Monster (Emberley, 2009)

A Sampling of Teaching Ideas for “Look! Look!” by Jack Prelutsky

* Create a poetry binder (mentioned earlier) and enlarge a copy of the poem “Look! Look!” by Jack Prelutsky and chorally read and reread the poem for enjoyment. This poem would be an ideal poem for the opening poem for students’ binders.

Then, try these other activities with the poem:

1. Teacher read-aloud
2. Fill-in-the-blanks
3. Tag-Team Reading
4. Choral Reading
5. Turn up the volume or turn down the volume of your voices as you read
6. Speed it up or slow it down as you read it
7. Clap the beat
8. Reader’s Theater
9. As a Round
10. Sing to a favorite tune like “Twinkle, twinkle little star”

More teaching ideas for “Look! Look!”

* Once you’ve read “Look! Look!” for enjoyment, revisit the poem with students to highlight one or more of the following literacy skills:
* Phonics: /-ook/ word family
* Fluency: using punctuation to make meaning
* Vocabulary: Vivid verbs – marvel, savor
* Writing Connections: Exclamation mark

**Poetry is Short!**

A sampling of Teaching Ideas for “Good Books, Good Times!” by Lee Bennett Hopkins

\***This is a great beginning of the year poem to start with!**

* **Celebrate Books!** Share the poem at the beginning of the year to spark a conversation about students’ favorite books. Return to “Good Books, Good Times!” again at the end of the year to ask students to make a class list of treasured tales.
* **Picture Book Pairings – Books That Feature Reluctant Readers**
* Miss Brooks Loves Books! (and I don’t) (Battner, 2010)
* Miss Malarkey Leaves No Reader Behind (Finchler and O’Malley, 2006)
* Read All About It! (Bush and Bush, 2008)
* **Books to the Ceiling (poem)**

Books to the ceiling, books to the sky

My piles of books are a mile high.

How I love them!

How I love them!

I’ll have a long beard by the time I read them.

By Arnold Lobel

**Poetry Plays With Language**

**\*this gives ELL students a chance to play with Poetry**

* Rhyming Words – Roses are Red Poems (See M-by-M Writing, p.114)
* Adjectives – “What I Told Mrs. Morris When She Asked How I was Feeling Today” (Revenge of the Lunch Ladies by Nesbitt, 2007, p. 24)
* Prefixes – “The Zoo Was in An Uproar” Something Big Has Been Here by Jack Prelutsky, 1990, pp. 62-63.
* Guyku: A Year of Haiku for Boys (Raczka, 2010) **Highly recommended!**
* The Year Comes Round: Haiky through the Seasons (Farrar, 2012)
* Hi, Koo! A Year of Seasons (Muth, 2014) **This book doesn’t use the 5-7-5 pattern that is used in many Haiku poems. American Haiku generally uses the 5-7-5 poem but Japanese haiku does not always follow this pattern.**

**Poetry Is Comprised of Well-Chosen Words**

A Sampling of Teaching Ideas for “Cinderella’s Double Life” by Marilyn Singer

(she also wrote Mirror, Mirror and Follow, Follow; two other excellent books)

* **Reader’s Theater** – Divide the class or guided reading group into half. Make a copy of one side of the poem for each group member. Provide time for students to practice and polish their performance. If they enjoy this poem, students can perform others from the book Mirror, Mirror (Singer, 2010).
* **A Poetry Challenge** – Challenge students to write a poem by following Marilyn Singer’s lead and using the same words forward and backwards.

(In Singer’s sequel to the book Mirror, Mirror she creates another collection of “reverse” poems about fairy tales. Teaching ideas: Poetry; Different Perspectives

**Poetry Incorporates Rhythm and Rhyme**

* **“My Sister is a Sissy” by Jack Prelutsky**
* **Meaning Vocabulary – Synonyms**

In this poem, Prelutsky uses the synonyms “afraid”, “terrified”, and “scared” to describe the way the sister feels. Build on these words by creating a word web of all the different ways writers can say “scared.” Post the web in your room for future reference. (M-by-M Writing, p. 59)

* **Picture Book Pairing**

Scaredy Squirrel (Watt, 2008)

**Poetry Contains Rich Vocabulary**

* Three Read Aloud Words

**Poetry is Perfect for Fluency Practice**

* **A Little Book of Sloth (Cooke, L., 2013)** Join Lucy Cooke, founder of the Sloth Appreciation Society, and visit Slothville, a sanctuary in Costa Rica for Orphaned and injured sloths, to learn more about the sloth’s mellow ways.
* **Teaching Ideas:** Create a multi-genre text set using: “Slow Sloth’s Slowsong” (p. 65) of Jack Prelutsky’s book **Something Big Has Been Here (1990)** and **Let’s Look at Sloths (Piehl, 2011); Fluency Fun Lesson (M-by-M Reading, p. 71)** For a text about rocks see **M-by-M Writing, p. 152).**

**Also, she recommended “Sparky” (Anderson) and “Hip Hop Don’t Stop” by Jef Czekaj** which has a good message about friendship, is a rap book, and has great art.

**Poetry Boosts Comprehension**

Can You Infer What This Poem Is About?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hungry monster,you grumble, wheeze,never seem full.You stop everywhereto grazeand go off againin search of morefor your keepersto shove betweenyour greedy jaws.Do you digestwhen you rest? | **CLUES** | **MY SCHEMA** |

“Garbage Truck” by Marci Ridlon; Source: Hopkins, L. B. (1987). Click, Rumble, Roar: Poems About Machines (A. H. Audette, Illus.) New York: Harper Collins

**Other Poems for Inferring (**\*Inferring is the bedrock of understanding!)

**\*\*These poems appear on reproducible pages in Teaching Struggling Readers With Poetry (Walther and Fuhler, 2010).**

* “Cat Kisses” by Bobbi Katz\*\* Source: Yolen, J. and Peters, A. F. (2007). Here’s a little poem: A very first book of poetry. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick. (p. 32)
* “Crayons: A Rainbow Peom” by Jane Yolen\*\* Source: Paschen, E. (Ed.). (2005). Poetry speaks to children Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc. (p. 23)
* “Groundhog” by Maria Fleming\*\* Source: Hopkins, L. B. (2005). Days to celebrate: A full year of poetry, people, holidays, history, fascinating facts, and more. (S. Alcorn, Illus.) New York: Greenwillow (p.19)

**Poetry Creates Interest in a Topic**

Content Are Knowledge – Poetry paired with informational texts; pair fiction with non-fiction

* Lewis, J. P. (2013) Face bug. Honesdale, PA: Wordsong.

Welcome to the Face Bug Museum with close-up photographs and poems about 14 different bugs. Ends with “And Now a Word from our Bugs” that tells readers, in first person point-of-view, where each bug lives, how it grows, what it eats, and what eats it.

Teaching Ideas: Science – Insects; Poetry; Informational text (For other science related poetry titles see Poetry p. 107).

* Singer, M. (2011). Caterpillars. Waynesville, NC; Earlylight.

In this poetic nonfiction book, Singer begins with a poem, then continues to use each line of the poem on a separate page to describe the lives and life cycles of caterpillar. In addition, she uses photographs, labels, and captions to enhance the information found in the running text.

Teaching ideas” Science – Insects; Poetry: Informational Text (For other caterpillar poems see Poetry p. 94)

**Poetry** **Sparks Enthusiasm for Writing**

**Teach Students to Write Free Verse and List Poems**  - Sources: Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing Instruction (Walther and Phillips, 2009) Month-by-Month Reading Instruction for the Differentiated Classroom (Walthers and Phillips, 2012)

**\*Bober, N.S. (2013) Papa is a poet: A story about Robert Frost (R. Gibbon, Illus.) New Yor; Holt. (Biography)**

While waitig in Grand Central Terminal in New York City, Lesley Frost, the eldest Frost child, reminisces about her family’s like on Derry Farm. With snippets of Frost’s poems sprinkled throughout the text, readers get a sense of who Robert Frost was and where he got the ideas for many of his poems.

**Teaching Ideas:** Writing genres – poetry; Biography – told from the point of view of his daughter

**Immerse Your Students in Poetry: Notice Poetic Devices**

* **Alliteration**
* **Mentor Texts:**
* A My Name is Alice (Bayer, 1984)
* “Batty” found in Laugh-eteria (Florian, 1999)
* Four Famished Foxes and Fosdyke (Edwards, 1995)
* **Onomatopeoia**
* **Mentor Texts:**
* Poems Go Clang (Gliori, 1997) \*Out of print
* Clang! Clang! Beep! Beep! Listen to the City (Burleigh, 2009) Picture written with rhyming couplets
* “Clatter” found in Teaching Struggling Readers With Poetry, p. 73
* **Rhythm – Repetition of Words, Phrases, or Lines**
* **Mentor Texts:**
* I Love Our Earth (Martinand Sampson, 2006)
* **Have students write free verse poems – fold a sheet of paper in half (make a vertical fold) and put lines on left side of paper and leave right side blank for pictures**
* **Shapes – Concrete Poems**
* **Mentor Texts:**
* Come to My Party and Other Shape Poems (Roemer, 2004)
* **Rhyme**
* **Mentor Texts:**
* Billy and Milly: Short and Silly (Feldman, 2009)
* **Sensory Images**
* **Mentor Text:**
* The Black Book of Colors (Cottin 2006/2008) Teacher Resource: Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing Instruction pp. 139-140)

**Comparison**

* **Creative Conventions**
* **“Caprolite”** found in Can You DigIt” and Other Poems (Weinstock, 2010)
* **Once I Ate a Pie** (MacLachlan and MacLachlan Charest, 2006)

Teacher resource: Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing Instruction pp. 140-141.

**A Few Other Poetry Resources/Professional Books**

Kids’ Poems (Routman, 2000) (1st grade, 2nd grade, 3/4th grade)

Literature is Back! **(**Fuhler and Walther, 2007)

Month-by-Month Reading Instruction for the Differentiated Classroom (Walther and Phillips, 2012)

Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing Instruction (Walther and Phillips**,** 2009)

Pizza, Pigs, and Poetry: How to Write a Poem (Prelutsky, 2008)

Read a Rhyme, Write a Rhyme (Prelutsky, 2005)

Teaching Struggling Readers with Poetry (Walther and Phillips, 2010)

Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children to Write Poetry (Koch, 2000)

**Final Idea Maria shared:**

Brainstorm a science or social studies topic and make a list of all the words student can come up with to write about the topic. Put the individual words on cardstock or index cards. Then, let them use a pocket chart to play with the words and create their own “poems”. Then, have them write these poems down on paper. This would be a great writing center or station idea or choice during Daily 5 time.