

Creating the Environment

Introduce students to the delights of poetry by immersing them in a world of imaginative literature. In order to create an environment where children can encounter poetry all around them through literature collections, classroom displays and authentic learning experiences, you may wish to try one of these activities.

The Poetry Corner

Establish a setting in the classroom where students can read, respond to and write poems. Have the children create a “Poetry Corner” complete with a rocking chair, pillows, sofa or rug, and a collection of poetry books related to a chosen theme, such as the Environment. Invite students to spend time there, reading items in the collection. Provide art materials and journals that learners can use to express their personal responses to poetry. Include a variety of paper products (e.g., decorative stationary), writing supplies (e.g., colored pens, calligraphy markers etc.) and a computer that students can use to compose their own poems. Encourage the students to bring in objects that may inspire poetry writing and display them at the Poetry Corner. Enrich the learning environment with visual displays of poetry too.

“Poet Tree” Bulletin Board

One way to create an atmosphere in the classroom where poetry can come to life is to design a bulletin board display featuring a tree where students can attach poems about the Environment, or another theme, to the branches. This collection can feature the works of famous poets, selections from children’s anthologies or poems produced by the students themselves. Encourage students to contribute phrases and poems at any time. Setting up a “poet tree” as a permanent feature in the classroom can illustrate the pleasure of words and the language of poetry throughout the year.

Sources of Poetry

- Poetry books
- Poetry anthologies
- Songbooks
- Sheet music
- Hymnbooks
- Song lyrics
- Greeting cards
- Advertisements
- Slogans
- Nursery rhymes
- Traditional ballads
- Poetic verse
- Schoolyard rhymes
- Chants
- Lyrical prose

Discovering Poetry

Poetry provides an open door for sharing stories, expressing emotions, creating images, using powerful language and entertaining readers young and old alike. Invite children to discover the world of poetry by surrounding them with poems and having them interact with poems in a natural and personal way. Here are some activities to get started.

Creating a Poetry Display

Poetry exists all around us. As shown in the box on this page, poetry can take many different forms.

Invite students to share examples of poetry from their daily lives by recounting nursery and schoolyard rhymes, reading greeting cards,

examining song lyrics and reciting poems dealing with a common topic or theme. Arrange a trip to the school or local library where students can gather their own poetry collections. Ask learners to locate poetry books and anthologies on a range of topics related to a chosen theme, such as the Environment. Encourage students to bring in poems and poetry books from home to feature in the classroom collection. Assemble these literary works in a poetry display. Invite students to sign out books from this collection, read them independently and enjoy them with others.

The Poetry Graffiti Wall

Poetry carries many different meanings for those who read it. Invite children to share their impressions of poetry with the class by distributing file cards or paper strips to the students and asking them to write down what comes to mind when they think about poetry or a poem. Encourage learners to use both literal and figurative language to explain the meaning of poetry (e.g., words arranged in a rhyming pattern; an imaginative way of seeing the world etc.). Students can create symbols and illustrations to accompany the words and phrases they produce.

After brainstorming characteristics of the genre in this way, have students prepare a graffiti wall by posting their definitions of poetry on a bulletin board, wall chart, wipe board or other visual display. Invite learners to share their contributions with others. As a class, arrange the items on the graffiti wall into a poem or poems that explain the meaning of poetry.

Types Of Poetry

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| • Acrostics | • Diamantes |
| • Cinquains | • Haiku |
| • Couplets | • Tanka |
| • Limericks | • Five W |
| • Lyrics | • Narrative |
| • Concrete | • Traditional |
| • Pattern | • Modern |
| • Free Verse | • Empathy |
| • Rhyming | • Puzzle |
| • Humorous | • Imitative |
| • Image | • Autobiographical |
| • Found | • Triolets |
| • Triads | • Contrast |
| • Syllable | |
| • Quatrains | |

Introducing Types of Poetry

Poetry is one of the most expressive and creative forms of writing. By drawing on their imagination and experiences, poets are able to develop ideas, communicate messages and convey emotions using different poetic styles. As students encounter poems in collections, anthologies and other sources, they will also realize that poetry can take many identifiable forms. As a class, produce a list of poetic forms similar to the one shown here. Ask students to locate examples and describe the patterns and functions of different types of poetry. Many of these forms will be examined later in the chapter.