Exploring Poetic Voices

Unit Overview

Poetry most poignantly conveys the power of words, of feelings, and of images. Since we are surrounded by poetry in its various forms on a daily basis—for example, popular music, billboards, and advertising jingles, it is important to understand the fundamentals of the genre. At the same time, you should appreciate and enjoy poetry independently, free from teacher interpretation. As Walt Whitman noted in his poem, “Song of Myself,”

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun (there are millions of suns left)
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.

—Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*
### Exploring Poetic Voices

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Learning Focus:
What Does My Voice Represent?

We have all had a song, whether we like it or not, get stuck in our heads. It plays over and over and over. Maybe the tune is catchy or maybe the lyrics are contagious; songs are poetry set to music, and lyrics—words—infectiously express an artist’s voice. In this unit, you will discover voice, a very powerful tool, and you will be exposed to a variety of poetic voices that explore coming-of-age issues. Furthermore, you will analyze how poetry frees an artist to express perspectives on personal experiences, community, and societal issues.

As you examine the work of published poets, you will sharpen your ability to read, interpret, and critique poems. You will explore the function and effect of poetic devices (i.e., poetic structure, figurative language, diction, imagery). In addition, you will gain a sense of how specific poetic language reinforces ideas and themes, and you will gain a sense of what others’ voices can represent.

Careful attention to another’s work will help you to explore your own poetic voice, creating original poems that emulate the style and craft of published poets. Once you understand how authors use poetic devices for specific effect, you will be able to use those same devices to create poems that express your feelings about coming of age. As the first half of the unit ends, you will construct an anthology that showcases a collection of your original poems. This task will give you an opportunity to reflect on and critique the stylistic choices you make as a writer, and, as a result, your voice just may contagiously remain in someone else’s head!

Independent Reading: Several of the poems in this unit focus on issues of growth, self-realization, and expression. For your own reading, you may want to look for a collection of poems or a story written in poetic form that relates to similar issues that are important to you.
Previewing the Unit

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Close Reading, KWL Chart, Marking the Text, Skimming/Scanning, Summarizing/Paraphrasing, Think-Pair-Share

Essential Questions

1. What is poetry?

2. What can a writer learn from studying an author’s craft and style?

Unit Overview and Learning Focus

Predict what you think this unit is about. Use the words or phrases that stood out to you when you read the Unit Overview and the Learning Focus.

Embedded Assessment 1

What knowledge must you have (what do you need to know) to succeed on Embedded Assessment 1? What skills must you have (what must you be able to do)?
## Poets’ Perspectives About Poetry

1. “We don’t read and write poetry because it’s cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for.” *Dead Poets Society*

2. “Poetry is what gets lost in translation.” —Robert Frost

3. “Poetry is just the evidence of life. If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash.” —Leonard Cohen

4. “Out of the quarrel with others we make rhetoric; out of the quarrel with ourselves we make poetry.” —W.B. Yeats

5. “Poetry is a pack sack of invisible keepsakes.” —Carl Sandburg

6. “Poetry is man’s rebellion against being what he is.” —James Branch Cabell

7. “Poetry is the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal which the reader recognizes as his own.” —Salvatore Quasimodo

8. “Poetry is plucking at the heartstrings, and making music with them.” —Dennis Gabor

9. “Mathematics and poetry are . . . the utterance of the same power of imagination, only that in the one case it is addressed to the head, in the other, to the heart.” —Thomas Hill

10. “Poetry is an orphan of silence. The words never quite equal the experiences behind them.” —Charles Simic

### Essential Question: What is poetry?
And it was at that age . . . poetry arrived
in search of me. I don’t know, I don’t know where
it came from, from winter or a river.
I don’t know how or when,
no they were not voices, they were not
words, nor silence,
but from a street I was summoned,
from the branches of night,
abruptly from the others,
among violent fires
or returning alone,
there I was without a face
and it touched me.

I did not know what to say, my mouth
had no way
with names,
my eyes were blind,
and something started in my soul,
fever or forgotten wings,
and I made my own way,
deciphering'
that fire,

1 deciphering: figuring out the meaning of something that’s not clear
and I wrote the first faint line,
25
faint, without substance, pure
nonsense,
pure wisdom
of someone who knows nothing,
and suddenly I saw
the heavens
unfastened and open,
planets,
palpitating² plantations,
shadow perforated,³
riddled
with arrows, fire, and flowers,
the winding night, the universe.

And I, infinitesimal⁴ being,
drunk with the great starry
void,
likeness, image of mystery,
felt myself a pure part
of the abyss,
I wheeled with the stars,
my heart broke loose on the wind.

² palpitating: pulsating or throbbing rapidly
³ perforated: pierced with holes
⁴ infinitesimal: so small as to be almost nothing

My Notes

WORD CONNECTIONS
The word abyss (a bottomless depth) contains the Greek prefix α-, which means “without” or “the absence of.” This common prefix occurs in other English words like amoral, apolitical, and asocial.
While reading the poem aloud, direct your attention to the following stylistic techniques:

**Repetition**
**Verb Choice**
**Anaphora**
**Form**

**Quickwrite:** Revisit the poetry quotations, your classroom discussions, and Neruda’s poem and explore the unit’s essential question, “What is poetry?”

Use your ideas about poetry to complete the frame poem below.

**A Poem About a Poem**

by ______________________

Poetry is ______________________

Poetry is like ______________________

Poetry is about ______________________

Poetry is as important as ______________________

Poetry is as pointless as ______________________

Poetry means ______________________

Poetry is ______________________
Essays

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Susan Wooldridge is a teacher of creative writing. Her work has been published in numerous journals, though she is best known for her collection of essays, *poemcrazy*. As an observer of nature and the world around her, she is inspired in her writing by everyday events and shares her stories in a distinctive writing style.

From *poemcrazy*

by Susan Goldsmith Wooldridge

3

*collecting words and creating a wordpool*

I have a strong gathering instinct. I collect boxes, hats, rusty flattened bottlecaps for collages and creek-worn sticks to color with my hoard of Berol prismacolor pencils. When I was a kid I'd lie in bed imagining I was a squirrel who lived in a hollow tree, foraging for acorns, twigs and whatever it takes to make squirrel furniture.


The great thing about collecting words is they're free; you can borrow them, trade them in or toss them out. I'm trading in (and literally composting) some of my other collections—driftwood, acorns and bits of colored Easter egg shell—for words. Words are lightweight, unbreakable, portable, and they're everywhere. You can even make them up. *Frebrent, bezoncular, zurber.* Someone made up the word *padiddle*.

A word can trigger or inspire a poem, and words in a stack or thin list can make up poems.

Because I always carry my journal with me, I'm likely to jot down words on trains, in the car, at boring meetings (where I appear to be taking notes), on hikes and in bed.

Dylan Thomas loved the words he heard and saw around him in Wales. “When I experience anything,” he once said, “I experience it as a thing and a word at the same time, both equally amazing.” Writing one ballad, he said, was like carrying around an armload of words to a table upstairs and wondering if he’d get there in time.

Words stand for feelings, ideas, mountains, bees. Listen to the sound of words. I line up words I like to hear, Nasturtiums buzz blue grass catnip catalpa catalog.


I call gathering words this way creating a wordpool. This process helps free us to follow the words and write poems. In Paradise, California, my students and I looked up insects in a field guide with names like firebrat, jumping bristletail and slantfaced grasshopper. Then, moving around the room, I asked each person for one word, any word.

Everyone started tossing out words. Tabulate. Magnify. Silence. We could see the weight and value of each one. Someone said the word no. We put yes up there to balance it. Scott said hate and then demolish. We added love and create after talking about the importance of opposites. Then we looked for the opposite of brick, idea, jealousy, tumbleweed and cloud. We piled dozens of words on the board,

  toe joust marvel
  apparatus dome click
  tubed tailstripes
  flabbergast horse thought
  cumulus cumulo nimbus
  nom de plume zodiac zirconium flicker
  slip spin serendipity
  obsession pyromaniac two-tailed thrips
  adobe hypothermia
  frost dragon confetti tapioca
  observe slither slink snuggle snooze

The rhythm, the music in the words, the circle of voices around the room, the associations, the well of minds casting out words like water in a fountain, words next to words in new ways and the look of them spreading across and down the page takes us to the state of mind poems come from.
I encourage people to toss foreign words into the wordpool. Just the sound can move us into another world very swiftly, like *avra*, breeze in Greek, or *petra*, rock. Add *petrified* and the Maidu word for water that sounds like a spring murmuring, *momoli*. Include place names like the ones I collected in Wales, *Abergavenny*, *Linthill* and *Skrinklehaven*.

Listed and tossed out this way, words begin to fall into poems by themselves. We put them together in unexpected ways, like *zodiac flicker*, *tree thought*, *tumbleweed sadness*, *magenta jealousy*, *cloud brick*, *summer ice*, *tapioca slithers*.

When I’m playing with words, I don’t worry about sounding dumb or crazy. And I don’t worry about whether or not I’m writing “a poem.” *Word pool. World pool, wild pool, whipoorwill, swing.* Words taken out of the laborious structures (like this sentence) where we normally place them take on a spinning life of their own.

**PRACTICE**

Write words down. *Flap tip lob. Elope. Scrounge.*


Go ahead and make up a word. *Losoonie. Flapoon. Noplat.*

Be sloppy. Don’t think. You can’t make a mistake, there aren’t any wrong words. *Phantom strut tumble porch. Dragoon.*

Don’t worry too much about meaning for now. Words carry meaning along with them. Put words down and meaning will begin to rush in.

Give each word a color. *Vermilion regret.*

List the senses and give each sense a color. *Peach hearing.*

Toss in words from foreign languages. *Ciao.*

Go for sound: *hum, fizz, fiddle, fandango, zigzag, ziggurat, folderol, armadillo. Tintinabulation.*

Collect field guides. I often bring an insect, rock or butterfly book to workshops and we list words like *window winged moth, globular springtail* or *porphyry*, a purple rock named for the Latin and Greek word for “purple.”

My friend Tom’s Ford pickup repair manual is chock full of great words: *luminosity probe, diesel throttle control tool, acceleration pump link, swivel, internal vent valve, choke hinge pin.* . . .

Look for a Magnetic Poetry Kit of words that stick to the refrigerator. My friend Arielle got a kit and told me, “Things just come out of you.” She wrote about her family’s twenty-one-year-old cat, Jumbo,

- white puppy petal
- you gorgeous milk fluff
- sleep all day lick
- tiny love from time
- and dream
most mad and moonly

Things I love have a way of turning up in my life in unexpected ways. In high school I idolized e. e. cummings because he was irreverent and made me feel free. He played with language and broke all the rules, nourishing my *Catcher in the Rye*, antiestablishment side.

I memorized most of “What of a much of a which of a wind” and several other Cummings poems. My favorite for years was “Somewhere I have never traveled,” with the unexpected line that moved me most, “and no one, not even the rain, has such small hands.”

During my freshman year of college in New York City I met a Columbia student named Simon Roosevelt, who played Lysander in a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I painted vineyleaves for the set as part of a stage crew that played loud rock music all hours of the night. I helped mend and fit costumes, happiest hanging out behind the scenes. Simon and I went to movies and studied together in the Columbia library. One evening I noticed a worn photo of e. e. cummings in Simon's wallet. "He was my grandfather," Simon told me. e. e. cummings—who died while I was in high school—was turning up again in my world. Life can be like a poem that way, with the unexpected appearing in the room, not just on the page.

cummings plays with words, spacing and capital letters, often putting all the punctuation somewhere unexpected. He experiments with opposites. His poems are both goofy and profound, soft and sharp at the same time, tender and fierce. “What of a much of a which of a wind” opens gently, but soon we're shocked as the wind “bloodies with dizzyingleaves the sun / and yanks immortal stars awry.”

cummings's words, often like the trail of an acrobat tumbling down the page, invite us to put our own words down. Filled with open, white space, his poems leave room for us to enter. We feel we can do this too. cummings's writing inspired a passion in me to create my own world, poke around and explore my boundaries, see how many shades of unnamed color and sound I might find there.

I write this in the car as we zoom home from Berkeley approaching—believe it or not—the “Cummings skyway.” Here's Crockett, where the world opens up like a cummings poem into sky, water, sun, ships, and we soar over the Carquinez Strait high in ocean air on a towering erector-set bridge. Back home, my teenage daughter saunters into my room with her hair in a high bun, shoulders low, lips pouting, hips swaying. She's a feminist high-fashion model named Tangerine Valentino. Now she swivels out, ignoring my applause, creating a character sketch for her drama class.
cummings reminds me to allow poems to swagger, soar or tiptoe in unexpectedly. I need to be open and ready for them. Poems aren’t written from ideas, like essays, and they’re not overly controlled. In a poem’s “most mad and moonly” spell, out of time, I can break rules and expectations about who I am as well as about writing.

My journal has a memorial page both for e. e. cummings and for his grandson Simon, killed on his red motorcycle the year after we met. At Simon’s memorial services someone read a cummings poem that helped us with our shock and sadness,

love is more thicker than forget
more thinner than recall
more seldom than a wave is wet
more frequent than to fail

it is most mad and moonly
and less it shall unbe
than all the sea which only
is deeper than the sea

love is less always than to win
less never than alive
less bigger than the least begin
less littler than forgive

it is most sane and sunly
and more it cannot die
than all the sky which only
is higher than the sky.

The unexpected brings us light and darkness, joy and sorrow, life and death. And it brings discovery. Some of our most important discoveries are made when we’re not looking.

PRACTICE

Read some poems by e. e. cummings.
Let a poem write itself as if you were taking dictation from your pen.
Break words up.

Frag
men
t

Let yourself be like a kid. Write your name some way you’ve never written it before. Draw your name. Use colored pens or pencils.
Go somewhere outside and turn over a stone.
List in detail what’s under the stone that you didn’t expect.
Notice three new things in someone’s face. Write down what you’ve seen.
Notice anything that spirals, from the corkscrew to the pasta to the weather patterns on the news.

Write a series of images without stopping. Make some of them absurd.  
*The snow is black today. It’s been raining paint. My dog is singing La Bohème.*

Give colors to ideas and abstractions.  

Be open to unexpected words and adventures. Spend time being in a state of quiet expectation and see what (or who) comes your way.
I could glimpse the Hudson River bordering New Jersey when I lived in the Barnard College dorm. This glimpse filled me with longing for I wasn’t sure what—maybe a houseboat on the river, a village life I loved or the person I knew I could be.

One weekend I went to a van Gogh exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum. As I rounded a curve in the gallery I saw a painting called *The Sower*. A faceless man, solid as the tree leaning toward him, scatters seeds near a river lit by a huge sun, palpable as a grapefruit in a green sky.

Staring at the painting, I almost stopped breathing. The simple figure in sunset seeding the earth expressed all my feelings of longing, hope and promise. I felt van Gogh had painted the inside of me. I was the peasant expectantly seeding the field. I was the glimpse of river like a blue path. I was the low sun about to sink from sight. I was the seed in a dark hand waiting to be tossed home. Though it cost more than I could afford, I bought a print of *The Sower* at the show and hung it on a straw mat in my pale green dorm room. The painting made me feel less alone, though I never lost that longing. Even now on the freeway sometimes I’ll read the signs as, “Gas, Food, Longing.”

I still have that print. Tattered and ripped, it’s tacked to a wall in my garage, so many years later. I can’t throw it out. When I left Barnard and met my future husband, Kent, I was delighted to see a paler version of my *Sower* hanging in his apartment.

For years I’ve collected paintings on postcards my friend Deborah sends me. I have a large shoebox full. There’s Ivan Albright’s door, crumbling and bedecked with fading roses like a poem that makes me feel loss and regret.

Albright gave his painting a name that’s a poem fragment in itself, *That Which I Should Have Done I Did Not Do*. There’s a Magritte room that makes me feel expansive with its clouds for walls, giant comb and shaving brush. Once a student saw this painting and, using the word tickets, wrote, “Suddenly my walls disappear.”

In workshops I give each student a postcard to transform into a painting with words. Creating an image with words can express a feeling with color flooding in, as van Gogh’s painting does for me.

Image is the root word of imagination. It’s from Latin *imago*, “picture,” how you see things. Images carry feelings. Saying, “I’m angry,” or “I’m sad,” has little impact. Creating images, I can make you feel how I feel.

When I read the words of a young student named Cari— “I’m a rose in the shape of a heart / with nineteen days of nothing / but the pouncing of shoes on my dead petals”—I experience desperation through her image.
Cari doesn’t even have to name the feeling—nineteen days, a pale green sky, a pouch of seed held against a sower’s heart.

Writing poems using images can create an experience allowing others to feel what we feel. Perhaps more important, poems can put us in touch with our own often buried or unexpected feelings.

Shoua discovered her frustration by using the image of a man shooting pool,

I hear bang, click, shoosh
feeling like the white ball
that does all the work.

Tori used images from a landscape to indicate hopelessness,

the clouds collapsed,
they’re touching the ground
trying to come alive,
but they can’t.

Sometimes word tickets magically fit with the images in the paintings. One of Tori’s words was jingle. It helped her convey her developing feeling of hope,

the glowing water shows shadow
till we all hear
the jingle of dawn.

Images we create in our poem can not only help us discover our feelings, but can help us begin to transform them.

**PRACTICE**

Make a wordpool of feeling words, going for opposites: psychotic stable laughable sober drab vibrant bored blissful frantic calm fragile invincible.

Find a postcard of a painting, a reproduction in a magazine or book, or a poster on a wall. Any painting will do.

Choose a feeling. Look closely at your painting and find a detail that seems to express your feeling, perhaps one color or the gesture of someone’s arm. Perhaps a jug in the corner. Let your words paint the feeling, *I feel as still as a white water jug.*

Say your painting is a landscape. You feel powerless. What does that gray cloud look like that expresses your feeling? You might write that the cloud is dissolving, losing its shape. Or you feel powerful. Now the cloud is gathering electricity to snap out as lightning.

You might feel unimportant, like that tiny leaf on top of the tree, lost in all the others. You might feel like you’re fading like the last bit if pink light on top of the mountain.

Choose a variety of paintings so you can begin to express the full range of your feelings in one or several poems.
Once I heard poet Gary Snyder say, “Poetry has an interesting function. It helps people be where they are.” It’s hard to write a poem about a place, an experience or even a state of mind without fully being there. When I’m fully present describing a place in a poem it helps bring my reader there too.

I need to breathe in the air, hear the sounds, feel the ground under my feet and join a place to fully describe it. If it’s winter, my footprints need to sink in snow or mud beside weblike bird tracks. I need to get wet or muddy, smell, taste and look at things closely. It’s important for me to use all my senses in poems: sight, touch smell, taste, hearing and the sixth sense, intuition or “dreamsense” as my friend Mark Rodriguez calls it.

Yesterday morning, on a walk, my writing partner Elizabeth and I got so caught up talking about our kids we barely noticed we were walking along the creek. To write poems I need to be alone. When I avoid being alone I avoid poetry and the messages it brings me.

Alone I open my senses, listen to my surroundings, take in the smells, the light and the way a sycamore curves over the creek like a pale rainbow. “Everything’s got to do with listening,” the poet W. S. Merwin said of a poem he wrote about the wind. Many of my poems come from what I notice when I’m alone.

Writer Louis Owens says that to most Native Americans, paying this kind of attention is a responsibility. “Our job is to be an awake people . . . utterly conscious, to attend to our world.”

This noon I’m on the upper park rim trail on a pockmarked rock. It rained yesterday and there’s a veil of mud over the lava cap on the ridge. My dog, Emma, explores as I peer over star thistle at retreating clouds. Thin winter grass is poking up and it’s mid-November. Soon I’ll find miner’s lettuce to feed my kids along with the curly dock I gather for my daughter and me. Everyone else thinks it’s too sour.

To experience a place I need to walk in it as often as I can. Abenaki native poet Joseph Bruchac says, “We need to walk to know sacred places, those around us and those within. We need to walk to remember the songs.”

Now I’ve climbed up the hill about fifty feet and I’m sitting against an oak. I’m holding two large acorn caps like small pipe bowls. Here’s one of the acorns, long, greenish brown. I rub off the tiny point and polish the acorn with my fingers. Later at home, two acorns will wobble around on the kitchen table shining like bullets.

Bird song. Sweet air. I feel the crumbly oak bark against my back. A darting bird’s just above me and I hear thrumming wings. The oak helps me
trust and wait and breathe and bend. I feel my body and mind taking in the tree. Soon I’ll see what words come.

For now, I’ll just be here, alone, watching and listening.

PRACTICE

All my poems are suggested by real life and therein have a firm foundation. . . . No one can imitate when you write of the particular, because no others have experienced exactly the same thing. —Goethe

Walk somewhere alone. Listen. Write about what's around you, using all of your senses.

It's important to narrow everything down, make it as specific as you can, down to the tip of a blade of grass, or you’ll leave the reader out. For emotion to arise, writing has to be very specific—describing a particular moment or experience in a particular place.

A useful daily practice is to sit (or walk) with a notebook and focus on what's happening right now, in minute detail. “Inside a moment,” Emily Dickinson wrote, “centuries of June.”

Wherever you are, if it's warm enough, take off your shoes. Breathe deeply. What can you smell?

Look to your right. What’s there? Feel your body and mind taking it in.

Look straight down. Notice a color, texture, shape.

Look straight up. Do you see acoustical tiles or blue sky or antique white plaster? Is there a spider up there in a corner webbing herself over? Leave her there, but describe her exactly on paper.

William Blake thought that art and science exist in the organization of “Minute Particulars.” Blake saw “a World in a Grain of Sand.”

Listen. Do you hear a coffeemaker? Freeway sounds? Tree frogs?

Place your right hand down. What do you feel? A nubby cushion, a chair? Your knee in frayed leggings?

Look closely at something you see all the time. Write as if you’ve never seen this before.

Keep writing. If you focus on your surroundings, the words may just help you be there. But if they want to take you somewhere else, follow them.
When my son, Daniel, was small he would often compare the way one thing looked to another. Passing a peach cannery I said, “See the smoke coming out of that chimney?” Daniel responded, “Just yike a cigarette.” He was always saying, “It yooks yike, it yooks yike.” When his sister, Elisabeth, was born, Dan saw her swaddled with only her head visible and remarked, “She yooks yike a hot dog.”

When we transplanted a small tree from a pot to a hole in the ground, Daniel said, “The world will be its new pants.” As we drove toward the coast one day and saw cows on the hillside, Elisabeth said, “They yook yike popcorn.”

I think we naturally see things metaphorically. We’re always comparing the way one thing looks to another. Comparison is built into our language. I’ve noticed that on a highway a hairpin turn, from above, looks like a hairpin. Cattails in a swampy area along Lonestar Road look like cat’s tails. In my garden foxglove looks like a wee “folk’s glove,” with a pouch for a tiny hand. Georgia O’Keeffe said she painted individual flowers and made them huge so we’d be forced to look closely and notice what flowers really look like. Whether she intended this or not, O’Keeffe’s paintings lend themselves to metaphor. Inside her white flower I see:

- a gown with long white sleeves,
- a curled satin slipper with grey on the toe,
- a Chinese lantern on low,
- a bowl of silver bells, ringing.

Wilfred Funk writes in *Word Origins and Their Romantic Stories* that originally all words were poems, since our language is based, like poems, in metaphor. The names of flowers makes this easier to see. This flower looks like a shooting star. Maybe the next time I see one I’ll make the shift from simile to full metaphor and think, This flower is a shooting star, or a bird’s-eye, a paintbrush, butter and eggs.

In some words we can still see the poem/metaphor, especially flowers and trees like lady slipper, redbud, spinster blue-eyed Mary. My married name, Wooldridge, must have come from the image of lambs on a ridge.

Metaphor is a bridge bringing things together. The world is a stage. Life is a dream. The navel is a belly button. When she lived in Athens years ago, a friend Sally tells me, some of the delivery bikes had the word METAPHOR printed on their sides—probably a company name. In Greek metaphor literally means to bear or carry over.

Sometimes part of writing a poem is as simple as looking carefully and bringing things together through simile and metaphor. This bit of moon looks
like a canoe. The moon is a cradle, a wolf’s tooth, a fingernail, snow on a curved leaf or milk in the bottom of a tipped glass.

PRACTICE

Take an object and think about what it looks like. Describe exactly what you see.

Look around you. Does your lampshade look like a ballerina’s illuminated pink pleated skirt? Not exactly, but it’s a start. Let yourself go for the farfetched and the ridiculous when you make comparisons.

If you can find a flower, look inside. What does it look like?

Find a painting, abstract or realistic. Choose a detail and stare at it. Focusing on that detail, write,

I see
It looks like
it looks like
I see
It looks like (repeat)

For more practice, list what you see around you and write down what it looks like.

The pine tree looks like a torpedo
That folded piece of paper looks like a flattened sail
The curled telephone cord looks like an earthworm
That man’s curly hair looks like. . .
The moth’s wing . . .

Keep going.

After Reading

What insights about writing does Susan Wooldridge suggest?
# Personal Poetry Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Device</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example from the Text and Explanation of Function and Use</th>
<th>Original Example for My Writer's Toolbox</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refrain</td>
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<td>Tone</td>
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<td>Imagery</td>
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<td>Hyperbole</td>
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<td>Extended Metaphor</td>
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<td>Alliteration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consonance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Select a term from the preceding chart that is of particular interest to you, and create a graphic representation that captures the essence of the term.

**WORD CONNECTIONS**

*Hyperbole* contains the Greek prefix *hyper-*, which means “excessive,” or “more than normal.” This prefix appears in such words as *hyperactive, hypersensitive, hypertension,* and *hypertext.*
A Catalogue of Coming-of-Age Experiences

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Freewriting, Marking the Text, Notetaking, Questioning the Text, Think-Pair-Share, Close Reading

Poetry

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Born in 1943 in Knoxville, Tennessee, Nikki Giovanni is a popular poet and professor of English. Over the years, she has won numerous writing awards. One of her recurring themes, presented through a variety of styles and topics, is love. Once known as “the priestess of Black poetry,” she has more recently been called a “national treasure” and named an Oprah Winfrey “Living Legend.”

NIKKI ROsa

by Nikki Giovanni

childhood remembrances are always a drag
if you’re Black
you always remember things like living in Woodlawn
with no inside toilet
and if you become famous or something
they never talk about how happy you were to have
your mother
all to yourself and
how good the water felt when you got your bath
from one of those
big tubs that folk in Chicago barbecue in
and somehow when you talk about home
it never gets across how much you
understood their feelings

Literary Terms
An autobiography is written by a person who is telling his or her life’s story. What elements in this poem make it autobiographical?
as the whole family attended meetings about Hollydale
and even though you remember
your biographers never understand
your father’s pain as he sells his stock
and another dream goes
and though you’re poor it isn’t poverty that
concerns you
and though they fight a lot
it isn’t your father’s drinking that makes any difference
but only that everybody is together and you
and your sister have happy birthdays and very good
Christmases
and I really hope no white person ever has cause
to write about me
because they never understand
Black love is Black wealth and they’ll
probably talk about my hard childhood
and never understand that
all the while I was quite happy.
**About the Author**

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000) grew up and lived her life in Chicago. While still in her teens, she published poems in an African American newspaper in Chicago. It wasn’t long before her poetry became recognized nationally, and she won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1950, the first African American to win a Pulitzer. Poetry was the focus of Brooks’s life, and she continued to be a prolific writer as well as a teacher and advocate of poetry. She taught creative writing at a number of colleges and universities. Her publications and awards were numerous, including an appointment as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in 1985.

**We Real Cool**

**Prose:** *The Pool Players. Seven at the Golden Shovel.* We real cool. We Left school. We Lurk late. We Strike straight. We Sing sin. We Thin gin. We Jazz June. We Die soon.

As you read “We Real Cool,” pay attention to its poetic structure.

**We Real Cool**

*by Gwendolyn Brooks*

_The Pool Players._  
_Seven at the Golden Shovel._

We real cool. We  
Left school. We  
Lurk late. We  
Strike straight. We  
Sing sin. We  
Thin gin. We  
Jazz June. We  
Die soon.
Author's purpose: What message about life is Brooks sending to young people with this poem?

How do the structure (free verse, line breaks, stanzas) and musical devices (consonance, assonance, and alliteration) create an effect?

**Literary Terms**

**Rhythm** in poetry is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

**Rhyme scheme** refers to the consistent pattern of rhyme throughout a poem.

A **stanza** is a group of lines, usually similar in length and pattern, that form a unit within a poem.
Exploring Diction and Imagery

**Before Reading**

**Freewrite:** Choose a hobby, topic, or interest about which you are passionate, and explain why.

---

**After Reading**

Use the Title/Author/Genre (TAG) sentence stem to write an analytical statement examining the author’s use of diction or imagery. (For example, Hirsch’s poem, “Fast Break” uses the imagery/diction of... to convey...).

---

**ACADEMIC VOCABULARY**

- **Diction** refers to a writer’s choice of words.
- **Imagery** refers to descriptive or figurative language that appeals to the senses and is used to create word pictures.

**LITERARY TERMS**

- **Voice** is a writer’s distinctive use of language.
Poetry

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Edward Hirsch (b. 1950) is a professor of English and a published author of many poems, essays, and books. His collection of verse, Wild Gratitude, was awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1986. Hirsh has also earned a Guggenheim Fellowship and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. One of Hirsch’s most popular books has been his surprise best-seller, How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry.

FAST BREAK

In Memory of Dennis Turner, 1946–1984

by Edward Hirsch

A hook shot kisses the rim and
hangs there, helplessly, but doesn’t drop,

and for once our gangly starting center
boxes out his man and times his jump

perfectly, gathering the orange leather
from the air like a cherished possession

and spinning around to throw a strike
to the outlet who is already shoveling

an underhand pass toward the other guard
scissoring past a flat-footed defender

who looks stunned and nailed to the floor
in the wrong direction, trying to catch sight

of a high, gliding dribble and a man
letting the play develop in front of him
in slow motion, almost exactly
like a coach's drawing on the blackboard,

both forwards racing down the court
the way that forwards should, fanning out

and filling the lanes in tandem, moving
together as brothers passing the ball

between them without a dribble, without
a single bounce hitting the hardwood

until the guard finally lunges out
and commits to the wrong man

while the power-forward explodes past them
in a fury, taking the ball into the air

by himself now and laying it gently
against the glass for a lay-up,

but losing his balance in the process,
inexplicably falling, hitting the floor

with a wild, headlong motion
for the game he loved like a country

and swiveling back to see an orange blur
floating perfectly though the net.
## Extended Metaphor and Symbol

**Summary of Identity:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I know...</th>
<th>What I think...</th>
<th>I’m confused about...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Writing Prompt:** After reading the poem “Identity,” write an original poem using metaphors, symbols, or repetition to reinforce an idea or concept. You may want to begin with this line: I am like a .... Use figurative language to create an imaginative image of yourself.
by Julio Noboa Polanco

Let them be as flowers
always watered, fed, guarded, admired,
but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

I’d rather be a tall, ugly weed,
clinging on cliffs, like an eagle
wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks.

To have broken through the surface of stone,
to live, to feel exposed to the madness
of the vast, eternal sky.
To be swayed by the breezes of an ancient sea,
carrying my soul, my seed,
beyond the mountains of time or into the abyss of the bizarre.

I’d rather be unseen, and if
then shunned by everyone,
than to be a pleasant-smelling flower,
growing in clusters in the fertile valley,
where they’re praised, handled, and plucked
by greedy human hands.

I’d rather smell of musty, green stench
than of sweet, fragrant lilac.
If I could stand alone, strong and free,
I’d rather be a tall, ugly weed.
I was born in the congo
I walked to the fertile crescent and built
the sphinx
I designed a pyramid so tough that a star
that only glows every one hundred years falls
into the center giving divine perfect light
I am bad

I sat on the throne
drinking nectar with allah
I got hot and sent an ice age to europe
to cool my thirst
My oldest daughter is nefertiti
the tears from my birth pains
created the nile
I am a beautiful woman

I gazed on the forest and burned
out the sahara desert
With a packet of goat’s meat
and a change of clothes
I crossed it in two hours
I am a gazelle so swift
so swift you can’t catch me

For a birthday present when he was three
I gave my son hannibal an elephant
He gave me rome for mother’s day
My strength flows ever on
My son noah built new/ark and
I stood proudly at the helm
   as we sailed on a soft summer day
I turned myself into myself and was
   jesus
   men intone my loving name
   All praises All praises
I am the one who would save

I sowed diamonds in my back yard
My bowels delivered uranium
   The filings from my fingernails are
   semi-precious jewels
   On a trip north
I caught a cold and blew
My nose giving oil to the arab world
I am so hip even my errors are correct
I sailed west to reach east and had to round off
   the earth as I went
   The hair from my head thinned and gold was laid
   across three continents

I am so perfect, so divine so ethereal\(^1\) so surreal
I cannot be comprehended except by my permission

I mean . . . I . . . can fly
   like a bird in the sky . . .

\(^1\) ethereal: not of the earth; heavenly
Hanging Fire

by Audre Lorde

I am fourteen
and my skin has betrayed me
the boy I cannot live without
still sucks his thumb
in secret
how come my knees are
always so ashy
what if I die
before the morning comes
and momma’s in the bedroom
with the door closed.

I have to learn how to dance
in time for the next party
my room is too small for me
suppose I die before graduation
they will sing sad melodies
but finally
tell the truth about me
There is nothing I want to do
and too much
that has to be done
and momma’s in the bedroom
with the door closed.

Nobody even stops to think
about my side of it
I should have been on Math Team
my marks were better than his
why do I have to be
the one
wearing braces
I have nothing to wear tomorrow
will I live long enough
to grow up
and momma’s in the bedroom
with the door closed.
### Activity 3.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I know...</th>
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</table>

1. Audre Lorde’s poem, “Hanging Fire” is about...

2. List questions you would like to ask Audre Lorde:

3. **Writing Prompt:** Explain a theme of Audre Lorde’s poem, “Hanging Fire.”

---

**Grammar & Usage**

The purpose of punctuation is to help a reader understand the writer’s phrasing and emphasis on specific words. Audre Lorde’s poem has almost no punctuation. How does the lack of punctuation affect your reading and understanding of this poem?
My Notes

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pablo Neruda (1904–1973) was born in Chile. He began writing at an early age and published his first literary work as a teenager. Neruda spent much of his life living in different countries, and his writing reflects the political and social matters of his time.

WORD CONNECTIONS

The origin of *ode* is the Greek word *oide*, for a song.

A related spelling, -ody, is found in *melody, parody, rhapsody*.

ODE TO MY SOCKS

*by* Pablo Neruda
*translated by* Robert Bly

Mara Mori brought me
a pair of socks
which she knitted herself
with her sheepherder’s hands,
two socks as soft as rabbits.
I slipped my feet into them
as if they were two cases
knitted with threads of twilight and goatskin,
Violent socks,
my feet were two fish made of wool,
two long sharks
sea blue, shot through
by one golden thread,
two immense blackbirds,
two cannons,
my feet were honored in this way
by these heavenly socks.
They were so handsome for the first time
my feet seemed to me unacceptable
like two decrepit firemen,
firemen unworthy of that woven fire,
of those glowing socks.

Nevertheless, I resisted the sharp temptation
to save them somewhere as schoolboys
keep fireflies,
as learned men collect
sacred texts,
I resisted the mad impulse to put them
in a golden cage and each day give them
birdseed and pieces of pink melon.
Like explorers in the jungle
who hand over the very rare green deer
to the spit and eat it with remorse,
I stretched out my feet and pulled on
the magnificent socks and then my shoes.

The moral of my ode is this:
beauty is twice beauty
and what is good is doubly good
when it is a matter of two socks
made of wool in winter.
Odes to Someone Special

Abuelito

by Sandra Cisneros

Abuelito¹ who throws coins like rain and asks who loves him who is dough and feathers who is a watch and glass of water whose hair is made of fur is too sad to come downstairs today who tells me in Spanish you are my diamond who tells me in English you are my sky whose little eyes are string can’t come out to play sleeps in his little room all night and day who used to laugh like the letter k is sick is a doorknob tied to a sour stick is tired shut the door doesn’t live here anymore is hiding underneath the bed who talks to me inside my head is blankets and spoons and big brown shoes who snores up and down up and down and down again is the rain on the roof that falls like coins asking who loves him who loves him who?

¹ Abuelito: Spanish term for “grandfather”
Sonnet 18
by William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer’s lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature’s changing course untrimmed.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander’st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st,
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

1. What is the purpose of each quatrain?
2. How does the couplet bring closure to ideas presented in the poem?
3. How does the poem address the thematic concept of coming of age?

1 thee, thou: you
2 untrimmed: stripped of beauty
3 fair thou ow’st: beauty you possess

Literary Terms
A quatrain is a four-line stanza in a poem.
A couplet is two consecutive lines of verse with end rhyme. A couplet usually expresses a complete unit of thought.
Iambic pentameter describes a rhythmic pattern: five feet (or units) of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.
Creating a Poetry Anthology

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Marking the Draft, Sharing and Responding, Self-Editing/Peer Editing

Assignment

Your assignment is to create a thematic poetry anthology with an introduction to the collection, seven or eight original poems with complementary visuals, and a reflection explaining the style and content of the work.

Steps

Planning and Drafting the Collection

1. Revisit the poems you generated throughout this unit. Select ones you think will work well for this assignment. If necessary, draft additional poems using the various structures (sonnet, free verse, catalogue, ode).

2. Revise your poems for purposeful use of figurative language and literary devices to capture your theme.

3. Share your poems with your peers and solicit feedback for revision on:
   - Refining line breaks, stanza, refrains.
   - Adding, deleting, or reordering lines.
   - Adding in or refining figurative language and poetic devices.

4. Annotate each poem by marking the text and creating marginal notes identifying the literary devices and explaining their effect.

5. Think about the imagery and symbolism in your poems. Find pictures or make sketches to represent the thematic concepts.

6. Reread, revise, and edit your poems to prepare final drafts for publication. Be sure each poem contains an appropriate title.

Planning and Drafting the Introduction and Reflection

7. Write a brief autobiography to introduce your poetry anthology. Focus on what the reader needs to know about you to better understand your poems.

8. Write a reflection to explain your favorite selections, and discuss the style and form used to capture the ideas in your poems. What was your intended effect on the reader? How did you design your poems to accomplish this? Discuss your creative process and what inspires you as a poet.

Refining the Anthology for Publication

9. Consult the Scoring Guide, and review your poetry anthology in its entirety to revise and edit each section, preparing for publication.

10. Create a cover with a unique title and thematic visual.

11. Organize your anthology and bind it in this order: cover page, table of contents, introduction, annotated original poems with visuals, and reflection.

TECHNOLOGY TIP You may want to use a software program to create your anthology. Many word processing programs have attractive templates for creating booklets, or you can design your own.
### SCORING GUIDE

| Scoring Criteria       | Exemplary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Proficient                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Emerging                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Original Poems**     | The collection of poems displays skillful use of format and structure to capture key ideas within the poetic form (i.e., line breaks, stanzas, refrain, title, etc.)                                                                                   | The collection of poems contains a clear format or structure appropriate to the poetic form (i.e., line breaks, stanzas, refrain, etc.)                                                                                       | The poems presented do not contain a clear format or structure. If devices are present, the poems in this collection contain a limited understanding of these literary devices and how they are used to add meaning to the text. The poems do not show a connection to the thematic concepts addressed within the unit. |
|                        | The poetry contains knowledgeable use of word choice, figurative language, and literary devices to reinforce the thematic concept and have an impact on the reader.                                                                                                                                           | The poetry contains appropriate word choice, figurative language, and literary devices that reinforce the thematic concept of the collection. Each poem contains an appropriate connection to the thematic concept of the unit.                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                        | Each poem contains an insightful connection to the thematic concept of the unit appealing to the universal level.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| **Annotated Poems**    | The poet marks the poems, identifies literary devices used, and provides insightful analysis of the function and purpose of the device and its impact on the reader.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | The poet is able to identify, appropriately label some of the literary devices used, and analyze the literary devices’ function and purpose in marginal notes.                                                                                                                                | The poet is unable to identify the literary devices used and/or does not provide appropriate analysis of the function and purpose of the devices.                                                                                       |
| **Introduction**       | The engaging introduction highlights significant and influential moments of the poet’s life that thoroughly provide the reader an insight about the poet’s collection of work.                                                                                                                                   | The introduction is clear and contains relevant information about the poet’s life that helps the reader better understand the collection of work.                                                                                                             | The introduction is unfocused and vaguely discusses the life and work of the poet. The reader is unable to draw connections between the life events shared and the collection of poems.                                                                                           |
### SCORING GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong></td>
<td>The reflection insightfully explains and provides examples of the poet's purpose, creative process, challenges encountered, and use of symbolic visuals. It clarifies learning within the unit on poetic form, style, and content.</td>
<td>The reflection insightfully explains and provides examples of the poet's purpose, creative process, challenges encountered, and use of symbolic visuals. It reveals learning in some or all aspects of poetic form, style, and content.</td>
<td>The reflection is unclear and/or incomplete. It does not adequately explain the process, product, or learning of poetic form, style, and content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Organization and Presentation** | The poetry anthology is a polished collection of work that contains:  
  • a creative cover page with an insightful title  
  • an accurate table of contents  
  • a well written introduction  
  • insightful annotated original poems with symbolic visuals to support the ideas in the poem  
  • a thoughtful reflection. | The poetry anthology is an organized collection of work that contains:  
  • a cover page and title  
  • a table of contents  
  • a clear introduction  
  • annotated original poems with complementary visuals  
  • a clear reflection. | The poetry anthology is not well organized or may contain some or all of the following:  
  • a missing or vague cover page, no title  
  • a missing or inaccurate table of contents  
  • a missing or limited introduction  
  • a limited number of poems that are not annotated or are missing complementary visuals  
  • a missing or limited reflection. |

### Comments:

...
Learning Focus:

A Signature Style

What is a signature style in writing? Is a signature style one that reveals a clear understanding of self? Is a signature style one that is emulated by others? During the second half of this unit, you will choose a published author whose signature style speaks to you. In your analysis of this writer’s work, you will distinguish between a thematic concept, a subject of a text, and a theme—the author’s underlying message about life inferred by the reader. Independently, you will know when, why, and how to use strategies to interpret and critique a poet’s work. To deepen your understanding of the poet’s work, you will conduct research to learn about the poet’s life.

You will demonstrate your analysis at the end of the unit by creating a literary analysis essay. You will use the writing process to explain your poet’s thematic ideas and style. As you develop your essay, you will create complex thesis and topic sentences, and you will seamlessly embed quotations. In addition to writing your analysis, you will present a poem of your choice to your peers. This presentation will allow you to show what you have learned about your author, about theme, and about the significance of the poet’s style. This in turn will help you to understand the power of style in your own writing as you continue to encounter and create new texts.
More Work with Connotation

In Response to Executive Order 9066:
All Americans of Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers

by Dwight Okita

Dear Sirs:
Of course I’ll come. I’ve packed my galoshes and three packets of tomato seeds. Denise calls them love apples. My father says where we’re going they won’t grow.

I am a fourteen-year-old girl with bad spelling and a messy room. If it helps any, I will tell you I have always felt funny using chopsticks and my favorite food is hot dogs.

My best friend is a white girl named Denise—we look at boys together. She sat in front of me all through grade school because of our names: O’Connor, Ozawa. I know the back of Denise’s head very well.

I tell her she’s going bald. She tells me I copy on tests.

We’re best friends.

I saw Denise today in Geography class. She was sitting on the other side of the room. “You’re trying to start a war,” she said, “giving secrets away to the Enemy. Why can’t you keep your big mouth shut?”

I didn’t know what to say.
I gave her a packet of tomato seeds and asked her to plant them for me, told her when the first tomato ripened she’d miss me.

Writing Prompt: Follow your teacher’s instructions to construct a paragraph analyzing the function of connotation in “In Response to executive Order 9066.”

1 Enemy: the Japanese, who were at war against the United States in World War II.
“Smells Like Teen Spirit” is a song originally written by and recorded by Nirvana. Later, Tori Amos recorded it with her own signature style. Listen to both artists’ versions of the song, and use the graphic organizer below to note words or phrases that may describe the tone that the artist conveys in the song.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nirvana’s Version: “Smells Like Teen Spirit”</th>
<th>Tori Amos’s Version: “Smells Like Teen Spirit”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comments About Tone:</td>
<td>Comments About Tone:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What are the differences between these two versions of one song?

2. What tone (attitude) does each artist create? Incorporate phrases and images from the song to support your opinion.

3. Where do you see or hear a shift? Explain.

**Writing Prompt:** Follow your teacher’s directions to write a style analysis paragraph identifying the tone and explain how it shifts between the two songs.
Poetry Analysis of “Young”

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Marking the Text, Skimming, Think-Pair-Share, TP-CASTT

My Notes

Poetry

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Anne Sexton (1928–1974) discovered her poetic voice as an adult when she joined writing groups and met other poets who encouraged her work. She published several successful collections of poetry and was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1967. Much of her work explores personal issues or issues specific to women.

YOUNG

by Anne Sexton

A thousand doors ago
when I was a lonely kid
in a big house with four garages and it was summer
as long as I could remember,
I lay on the lawn at night,
clover wrinkling under me,
the wise stars bedding over me,
my mother’s window a funnel
of yellow heat running out,
my father’s window, half shut,
an eye where sleepers pass,
and the boards of the house
were smooth and white as wax
and probably a million leaves
sailed on their strange stalks
as the crickets ticked together
and I, in my brand new body,
which was not a woman’s yet,
told the stars my questions
and thought God could really see
the heat and the painted light,
elbows, knees, dreams, goodnight.
TP-CASTT Analysis
Title of Poem:
Author:

Title: Make a prediction. What do you think the title means before you read the poem?

Paraphrase: Restate the main ideas of the poem in your own words.

Connotation: What words or phrases suggest something beyond their literal meanings? What do you think the poet is saying in this poem? Go beyond the literal meanings (denotation) or the plot of the poem.

Attitude: Describe the speaker’s attitude. Use specific adjectives to describe your ideas.

Shifts: Describe where the poem appears to shift, either in subject, speaker, or tone.

Title: Re-examine the title. What do you think it means now in the context of the poem?

Theme: What do you think is the underlying message about life expressed in this poem?

Reflection: How does the TP-CASTT strategy assist you to make meaning of a complex poem?

WORD CONNEXIONS
In analyzing analogies, look at the parts of speech in the word pairs. Parts of speech are consistent within an analogy; for example, if an adjective is used in one pair, the second pair also will use an adjective. Look at this analogy:

carpenter : hammer ::
musician : piano. Complete the following analogy.

youth: child :: adult : 

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POETRY CAFÉ

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: TP-CASTT, Oral Interpretation

**TP-CASTT Analysis**

**Title of Poem:**

**Author:**

**Title:** Make a prediction. What do you think the title means before you read the poem?

**Paraphrase:** Restate the main ideas of the poem in your own words.

**Connotation:** What words or phrases suggest something beyond their literal meanings? What do you think the poet is saying in this poem? Go beyond the literal meaning or the plot of the poem.

**Attitude:** Describe the speaker’s attitude toward the subject. Use specific adjectives to describe your ideas.

**Shifts:** Describe where the poem appears to shift, either in subject, speaker, or tone.

**Title:** Re-examine the title. What do you think it means now in the context of the poem?

**Theme:** What do you think is the underlying message about life the author is expressing in this poem?
Combing

by Gladys Cardiff

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Gladys Cardiff (b. 1942) is an American poet and writer of Irish, Welsh, and Cherokee descent. Her poetry tends to reflect her heritage. She has published two books of poems, To Frighten a Storm and A Bare Unpainted Table. She is an associate professor of poetry, American literature, and Native American literature at Oakland University.

Bending, I bow my head
And lay my hand upon
Her hair, combing, and think
How women do this for
Each other. My daughter’s hair
Curls against the comb.
Wet and fragrant— orange
Parings. Her face, downcast,
Is quiet for one so young.

I take her place. Beneath
My mother’s hands I feel
The braids drawn up tight
As a piano wire and singing,
Vinegar-rinsed. Sitting
before the oven I hear
The orange coils tick
The early hour before school.

She combed her grandmother
Mathilda’s hair using
A comb made out of bone.
Mathilda rocked her oak-wood
Chair, her face downcast,
intent on tearing rags
In strips to braid a cotton
Rug from bits of orange
And brown. A simple act,

Preparing hair. Something
Women do for each other,
Plaiting the generations.
I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud That floats on high o'er vales and hills, When all at once I saw a crowd, A host, of golden daffodils; Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. Continuous as the stars that shine And twinkle on the milky way, They stretched in never-ending line Along the margin of a bay: Ten thousand saw I at a glance, Tossing their heads in sprightly dance. The waves beside them danced; but they Outdid the sparkling waves in glee: A poet could not but be gay, In such a jocund company: I gazed—and gazed—but little thought What wealth the show to me had brought: For oft, when on my couch I lie In vacant or in pensive mood, They flash upon that inward eye Which is the bliss of solitude; And then my heart with pleasure fills, And dances with the daffodils.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Langston Hughes (1902–1967) was born in the Midwest but came to New York to attend Columbia University. He became a prominent figure in the period of American literature known as the Harlem Renaissance. Much of his work—poetry, prose, and plays—evoked life in the Harlem section of New York. In fact, he was known as the “poet laureate of Harlem.” In his work, he focused on the struggles and feelings of ordinary individuals.

Poetry

by Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?
Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) lived her entire life in her father’s house in Amherst, Massachusetts. She was somewhat reclusive, yet her imagination was extremely active. Using her own peculiar style of punctuation and capitalization, she wrote more than 1,700 short poems, of which only a few were published (anonymously) in her lifetime. The others were found after her death. She is regarded as one of America’s greatest poets.

“Hope” is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—

And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—
And sore must be the storm—
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm—

I’ve heard it in the chillest land—
And on the strangest Sea—
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb— of Me.
Scars

by Daniel Halpern

They are the short stories of the flesh,
can evoke the entire event
in a moment—the action, the scent
and sound—place you there a second time.

It’s as if the flesh decides to hold
onto what threatens its well-being,
They become part of the map marking
the pain we’ve had to endure.

If only the heart were so ruthless,
willing to document what it lived
by branding even those sensitive
tissues so information might flow back.

It’s easy to recall what doesn’t heal,
more difficult to call back what leaves
no mark, what depends on memory
to bring forward what’s been gone so long,

The heart’s too gentle. It won’t hold
before us what we may still need to see.
My Notes

Poetry

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Essex Hemphill (1957–1995) was a poet, essayist, and editor. He began writing when he was fourteen, and, over time, he published three volumes of poetry. His poetry also appeared in a variety of magazines and in several films and documentaries. Some of his poems, like “American Hero,” reflect on self-acceptance and social acceptance or denial.

AMERICAN HERO

by Essex Hemphill

I have nothing to lose tonight.
All my men surround me, panting,
as I spin the ball above our heads
on my middle finger.

5 It’s a shimmering club light
and I’m dancing, slick in my sweat.
Squinting, I aim at the hole
fifty feet away. I let the tension go.
Shoot for the net. Choke it.

10 I never hear the ball
slap the backboard. I slam it
through the net. The crowd goes wild
for our win. I scored
thirty-two points this game

15 and they love me for it.
Everyone hollering
is a friend tonight.
But there are towns,
certain neighborhoods

20 where I’d be hard pressed
to hear them cheer
if I move on the block.
Getting Kidnapped by a Poet

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Graphic Organizer, Quickwrite

Poetry

“Poetry, to me, is the association of disassociated ideas. I like clear simple images, clear simple metaphors, making clear simple statements about not-so-clear, not-so-simple human beings.” – Nikki Giovanni

The BEEP BEEP Poem

by Nikki Giovanni

i should write a poem
but there’s almost nothing
that hasn’t been said,
and said and said
beautifully, ugly, blandly
excitingly
    stay in school
    make love not war
    death to all tyrants
    where have all the flowers gone
and don’t they understand at kent state¹
the troopers will shoot . . . again

i could write a poem
because i love walking
    in the rain
and the solace² of my naked
body in a tub of warm water
cleanliness may not be next
to godliness but it sure feels
good

i wrote a poem
for my father but it was so constant³
i burned it up
he hates change
and i’m baffled by sameness

i composed a ditty
about encore american and worldwide news

¹ kent state: on May 4, 1970, National Guard troops fired at student protestors at Kent State University in Ohio, killing four students and wounding nine others.
² solace: comfort in times of disappointment
³ constant: unchanging, faithful, dependable
but the editorial board said no one would understand it
30 as if people have to be tricked into sensitivity
though of course they do
i love to drive my car
hours on end
along back country roads
i love to stop for cider and apples and acorn squash
three for a dollar
i love my CB when the truckers talk
and the hum of the diesel in my ear
i love the aloneness of the road
when I ascend\textsuperscript{4} the descending curves
the power within my toe delights me
and i fling my spirit down the highway
i love the way i feel
45 when i pass the moon and i holler to the stars
i’m coming through
Beep Beep

**kidnap poem**

ever been kidnapped
by a poet
if i were a poet
i’d kidnap you
5 put you in my phrases and meter
you to jones beach
or maybe coney island
or maybe just to my house
lyric you in lilacs
dash you in the rain
blend into the beach
to complement my see
play the lyre for you
ode you with my love song
10 anything to win you
wrap you in the red Black green
show you off to mama
yeah if i were a poet i’d kidnap you

\textsuperscript{4} ascend: move upward; rise to a higher level
### Style Chart

Poet or Lyricist:  
Nikki Giovanni

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author's Style</th>
<th>Example from the Poems/Song Lyrics</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

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Syntax Surgery

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Graphic Organizer, Marking the Text, Word Map

Poet or Lyricist: ____________________________

<table>
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</tbody>
</table>

Criteria for thesis statement:
- Include title, author, genre
- Identify the stylistic technique and its effect

Example:
In “The Beep Beep Poem,” Giovanni’s artful use of diction causes the reader to ponder considerably before gaining clarity.

Generate a working thesis on your poet or lyricist. Mark the text to identify where you have met the criteria of a strong thesis.

If needed, use the space below to revise your thesis statement to incorporate missing criteria or strengthen your thesis.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY
Syntax refers to the arrangement of words and the order of grammatical elements in a sentence; the way in which words are put together to make meaningful elements, such as phrases and clauses.

GRAMMAR USAGE
A verb form must agree in number (singular or plural) with its subject. Notice that in the sample thesis statement the singular verb causes agrees with the singular subject use:

In “The Beep Beep Poem,” Giovanni’s artful use of diction causes the reader to ponder considerably before gaining clarity.
Model outline of analysis of Giovanni’s style:

Thesis: In “The Beep Beep Poem,” Giovanni’s artful use of diction causes the reader to ponder considerably before gaining clarity.

- Topic Sentence 1: Giovanni’s connotations are elusive because they comprise various shades of suggestion making a simple object a complex idea.
  Possible examples for support:

- Topic Sentence 2: Giovanni weaves formal and informal diction together seamlessly to assert an informed, yet humble opinion.
  Possible examples for support:

As you work on your rhetorical plan, consider—and use—the grammatical knowledge and skills you have studied and practiced throughout this unit.

Your Outline:

I. Thesis

II. Topic Sentence 1:
  Possible examples:

III. Topic Sentence 2:
  Possible examples:
Analyzing and Presenting a Poet

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Drafting, TP-CASTT, Marking the Text, Self-Editing, Oral Interpretation, Sharing and Responding

Assignment

Your assignment is to analyze a collection of work from a poet, and write a style-analysis essay. You will then select one of the poems you analyzed and present an oral interpretation of the poem to the class.

Steps

Planning

1. Review the list of poets provided by your teacher and briefly research potential poets for this assignment. Select a poet that is of interest to you.
2. Read through a collection of the poet’s work and choose three to five poems to analyze for this task. Mark and annotate the texts using TP-CASTT or another strategy.

Drafting

3. Review the analyzed poems and look for recurring patterns within the text. Generate a working thesis that identifies the author’s stylistic technique and its effect.
4. Create an outline to organize and structure ideas for the essay.
5. Generate a first draft to develop the ideas from the outline.

Revising

6. Review and evaluate your draft by color-coding the text to identify elements of organization listed in the Scoring Guide. Revise your draft and add any missing elements into it to ensure that ideas flow coherently.
7. Share your draft with your peers and get feedback to revise for the following:
   • Analysis of style.
   • Clarity of ideas.
   Review the suggestions from your peers and consult the Scoring Guide to revise accordingly.

Editing for Publication

8. Reread and edit your draft for seamless integration of quotations and for correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. If you are handwriting your essay, write legibly.
9. Create an appropriate title, and prepare a final draft for publication.

TECHNOLOGY TIP If you are using word processing software to create your essay, use its spell-check features to help you create a publishable final product.
Planning and Rehearsing for Presentation

10. Select the poem that most intrigues you and prepare an oral interpretation of the poem. Mark and annotate this poem for purposeful use of movement, gestures, inflection, props, sound effects, etc.

11. Rehearse your oral interpretation in a mirror, and practice within a group of your peers. Ask for suggestions to refine your oral interpretation.

12. Use the format below to organize your performance:
   - Brief introduction of the poet and his or her style.
   - Oral interpretation of the poem.
   - Brief rationale for your oral interpretation.

13. Check that your presentation has a logical progression of ideas and a clearly stated point of view.

14. Consult the Scoring Guide criteria, and use peer feedback to refine your presentation.
## SCORING GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
<td>The essay demonstrates an insightful analysis of the poet/lyricist's style. It makes relevant connections within the text at a sophisticated level.</td>
<td>The presentation and essay demonstrate an accurate analysis of the poet/lyricist's style.</td>
<td>The presentation and essay demonstrate a sustained misinterpretation of the text and/or a lack of appropriate analysis, relying primarily on summary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>The essay's structure contains:</td>
<td>The essay's structure contains:</td>
<td>The essay's structure may or may not contain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a well-written introduction with an engaging lead, TAG, and a sophisticated thesis</td>
<td>• an introduction with a clear lead, TAG, and thesis</td>
<td>• a limited introduction with an unfocused lead, inaccurate TAG, and/or an unclear thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• coherent and concise body paragraphs with complex topic sentences, strong textual support, and insightful commentary</td>
<td>• coherent body paragraphs with topic sentences, adequate textual support, and relevant commentary</td>
<td>• incoherent body paragraphs with topic sentences that do not support the thesis, inadequate textual support, and irrelevant commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• effective transitions that show relationship between ideas</td>
<td>• transitions that show a relationship between ideas</td>
<td>• inappropriate transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a reflective conclusion that extends the key ideas of the essay</td>
<td>• a logical conclusion that extends the key ideas of the essay</td>
<td>• a limited conclusion that is repetitive and/or does not extend the ideas presented in the essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Language</strong></td>
<td>The writing contains a clear, consistent academic voice and seamless integration of quotations woven in with commentary.</td>
<td>The writing contains an academic voice and integration of quotations with commentary.</td>
<td>Writing may contain inconsistent/inappropriate voice, ineffective sentence structure (run-ons, fragments), and/or freestanding quotations not connected with commentary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence of Writing Process</strong></td>
<td>The writing demonstrates thoughtful planning, significant revision, and careful editing in preparing a publishable draft.</td>
<td>The writing demonstrates planning, revision, and editing in preparing a publishable draft.</td>
<td>The writing lacks evidence of planning, revision, and/or editing. The draft is not ready for publication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# SCORING GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td>The oral interpretation of the poem is convincingly performed with skillful use of movement, gestures, inflection, props, and/or sound effects. The brief introduction and rationale enlighten the audience, communicating a deep understanding of the poem. Focused rehearsal is evident.</td>
<td>The oral interpretation of the poem is performed with purposeful use of movement, gestures, inflection, props, and/or sound effects. The brief introduction and rationale inform the audience, communicating a clear understanding of the poem. Adequate rehearsal is evident.</td>
<td>The oral interpretation lacks movement, gestures, inflection, props, and/or sound effects, or the performance elements may be distracting. The brief introduction and rationale do little to communicate a clear understanding of the poem or may be missing. There is little or no evidence of rehearsal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Criteria</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**
Reflection

An important aspect of growing as a learner is to reflect on where you have been, what you have accomplished, what helped you to learn, and how you will apply your new knowledge in the future. Use the following questions to guide your thinking and to identify evidence of your learning. Use separate notebook paper.

**Thinking about Concepts**
1. Using specific examples from this unit, respond to the Essential Questions:
   - What is poetry?
   - What can a writer learn from studying an author’s craft and style?
2. Consider the new academic vocabulary from this unit (*Diction, Imagery, Poetic Structure, Figurative Language, Syntax*) as well as academic vocabulary from previous units and select 3-4 terms of which your understanding has grown. For each term, answer the following questions:
   - What was your understanding of the word before you completed this unit?
   - How has your understanding of the term evolved throughout the unit?
   - How will you apply your understanding in the future?

**Thinking about Connections**
3. Review the activities and products (artifacts) you created. Choose those that most reflect your growth or increase in understanding.
4. For each artifact that you choose, record, respond to, and reflect on your thinking and understanding, using the following questions as a guide:
   a. What skill/knowledge does this artifact reflect, and how did you learn this skill/knowledge?
   b. How did your understanding of the power of language expand through your engagement with this artifact?
   c. How will you apply this skill or knowledge in the future?
5. Create this reflection as Portfolio pages—one for each artifact you choose. Use the model in the box for your headings and commentary on questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking About Thinking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concept:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of Artifact:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commentary on Questions:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>