

Title: Poetry Brainstorming Boxes (Place I Love or Hate)

Approximate Grade Level: This can be adapted for any grade level, I use it with 4th and 5th graders.

Objectives to be covered:

- For students to appreciate and grow to love this form of writing, reading and speaking.
- Celebrate each child's unique view of the world
- Recognize that poetry is all around us, even when it is unwritten
- Find the poems inside themselves and release them.
- Play with language and images to convey meaning
- Use descriptive language that will transfer to the other forms of writing such as narrative.

Standards to be covered:

- Write in a variety of modes to express meaning, including- (poetic)
- Use composing processes including: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, & publishing

Approximate length of time to complete lesson: This takes from 1-2 sessions (about 45 minutes each time, sometimes longer depending on the draft)

****Note:** This lesson falls after I have had the students do a poetry dig early on in the unit, finding a personal anthology of poetry that relates to them in some way, and after they have played with the language and sound of poetry for at least a month. Composing poetry, I believe, should only come after immersion in it and after making personal connections and constructing knowledge about how poetry looks and works.

Brief Directions For Basic Lesson Format:

1. Choose several poems from class anthology of poetry that deal with places or objects in places. Read the title of a poem and ask the students what they think it's about. (A place or object in a place).
2. Read several poems about places and ask them what they notice that they like about each poem. Lead them to the understanding that poets notice the world around them as all writers do and they try to show us how they feel or what they think about a particular piece through sensory information or using language in a particular way.
3. Have them think about places that they remember well or that mean something special to them for some reason. It might be something or someplace they've seen outside that is amazing, beautiful, strange, interesting, dreadful, or just remains in their mind for some reason. Perhaps it is a place they once traveled to and never forgot. Perhaps it's a place they go where they feel they have time alone.
4. Give a few examples of your own places and why they're special to you. It should be a place that causes them to have a strong emotion and that they can see clearly in their minds. Give them a few minutes to brainstorm. Share with a partner. Have them circle a

place they'd like to experience more of through writing about it. Something they feel attached to in some way or that they feel is unique.

5. Divide your paper up into six boxes. Don't tell students ahead of time what each spot will be. You could also have them do this in their journals or use a basic template with six boxes.
6. Have students close their eyes so they can picture it. See it as if it were a photograph. Notice all the details and what is special or unique about it. Now have them open their eyes and describe it as accurately as possible.
7. Now, have them write their description in the first box (room).
8. Once done, in the 2nd box (room), look at the same place/image but only focus on the quality of light. You can also describe colors here. (five minutes)
9. Third room (box) focus only on the sounds (voices, movement of any kind, what kind of silence)
10. Fourth room write questions that they have.
11. Fifth room write what they're feeling about this image/place.
12. Sixth room read through your poem for a word, phrase, sentence that feels important in some way and repeat it three times.
13. Now, take what you have, rearrange the pieces (rooms) any way you like, get rid of words or add words and create a poem. No real rules here. Just create some sort of poem. If students have mentor poets they want to look at for inspiration you could encourage them to look at their anthologies.
14. Share the poem with a partner. Look for places to cut unnecessary words. Take some time to revise or edit.
15. Have them each choose a favorite line or the whole poem and share it aloud.
16. Publish the poems in some way on a bulletin board or have a poetry jam to share the poetry with other students or parents.

**This brainstorming technique could also be used to look at certain literary devices, for stories, to review information from a unit of study. There really are limitless options.

Other ideas for boxes (rooms):

-3 similes or metaphors to describe image

-smell

-touch

-taste

-a favorite line or quote from another poem to weave in

-If your image could speak, what would it say, sound, what voice (dialogue)

Example of boxes (rooms)

Description	Light	Sound
<p>I see blowing grasses, flowers waving side to side and the sun dipping low to join with the horizon. There are pink and purple streaks across the sky like a laser show only softer. I hear the chorus of crickets and the whistle of the grasses. I'm wearing jeans so I don't get any ticks. I am curious about what the next day will bring. Who I will be? What I'll be doing. Faraway a dog barks and cars whiz by on the freeway but I focus only on the natural in the midst of a very human world.</p>	<p>Shadows draw near as light traces the tips of the green bower and blazes one last moment on the tips of the grasses waving. My face feels the warm sunshine but my feet are lost in shadow and draw cool. The sun's last dance, flirting with night before she must ease away for another day to come</p>	<p>Cars whiz and whoosh by hurrying home while the laughter is shut behind closed doors. If I listen carefully I can hear the beat of my own heart in rhythm with the swaying fronds below me and the rising chorus of crickets. The sun eases away is splendid silence twirling purple and pink ribbons across the sky.</p>
<p>Questions Who else stops to take notice after the bustle of day? Who braves mosquitoes to be out here.</p>	<p>Feelings A bit sad to see the day go but happy that it ends so splendidly I am a bit contemplative and wondering what the world holds for me and who else is doing the same thing I'm doing somewhere else?</p>	<p>Fading light, rising night Fading light, rising night Fading light, rising night</p>

Some of my favorite poetry books:

- Poetry By Heart: A Child's Book of Poems to Remember Compiled by: Liz Attenborough
- The Earth is Painted Green Edited by: Barbara Brenner
- The Dragons Are Singing Tonight By Jack Prelutsky
- Poems From Homeroom: A Writers Place to Start By Kathi Appelt
- Pterodactyls and Pizza Selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins
- I Am Phoenix: Poems For Two Voices By Paul Fleischman
- Joyful Noise: Poems For Two Voices By Paul Fleischman
- Heartsongs by Mattie J. T. Stepanek
- Relatively Speaking: Poems About Family By Ralph Fletcher
- Poetry For Young People: Carl Sandburg Edited by Frances Schoonmaker Bolin **many different editions including Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allen Poe, etc...
- Treasury of Children's Poetry Edited by Alison Sage
- Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back: A Native American Year of Moons By Joseph Bruchac and Jonathan London
- Beast Feast by Douglas Florian (has several other animal books too)
- Never Take a Pig to Lunch and Other Poems About The Fun of Eating Selected by Nadine Bernard Westcott
- Science Verse By Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith
- The Random House Book of Poetry For Children Selected by Jack Prelutsky
- America The Beautiful By Katherine Lee Bates
- This Same Sky: A Collection of Poems From Around The World Selected by Naomi Shihab Nye
- It's Raining Pigs and Noodles By Jack Prelutsky
- Where The Sidewalk Ends By Shel Silverstein
- Poetry Speaks To Children Edited by Elise Paschen
- **Above all, anything my students have written from the heart**

Some Resources for Teaching Poetry:

- For The Good of The Earth and Sun Georgia Heard (1989)
- Awakening the Heart Georgia Heard (1999) –great for middle school too, maybe high school?
- A Celebration of Bees: Helping Children to Write Poetry Barbara Juster Esbensen (1995)
- The Reading/Writing Teacher's Companion EXPLORE POETRY Donald Graves (1992)

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