

Minnesota Writing Project

Demonstration Lesson Template

Title: Small Poems

Grade appropriate: 1-12
hours

Approximate Length of time to complete lesson/unit: 1-2

Learning objectives and significance of lesson:

The learner will observe an object carefully and create a representation of this object.

The learner will use expressive language to write a poem.

The goal of this lesson is for students to look carefully and create a representation of what they see and imagine.

Brief summary/outline:

(Is this lesson an intro? middle? end? All or part of a unit? Does it scaffold a certain learning?)

This lesson could be done on its own, or as part of a larger study of poetry. It combines the development of science skills (observing and recording) with writing practice.

Start with the presentation and discussion of one or more Small Poems written by Valerie Worth. I used "Safety Pin" with my 5th and 6th graders. Worth typically takes an ordinary object and then describes and enlarges it in extraordinary ways. Her language is both simple and evocative.

Next, students are assigned a partner, and they select an object to work with. Both partners will examine and draw their object. They may use a hand lens if they choose. I provided natural objects, primarily seedpods that my students were not familiar with, but any collection of objects could work. The important thing is for students to try and look at whatever objects you use with fresh eyes.

After they have drawn their objects, the students divide a piece of paper into four squares and use words to describe their objects. I like to have student work with partners on this, because more interesting ideas often arise from their conversations than they would come up with on their own.

In the first square, the students write words to describe what their object looks like. They may wish to take the perspective of an ant, or a giant. In the next square the students describe what the object feels like. In the third square, they describe the sounds the object can make. In the final square, students write what the object reminds them of.

The last step of this process is to write a poem. Students could do this with their partners or independently. I give them a choice of imitating the format of Valerie Worth (short lines,

descriptive language followed by more imaginative ideas about object) or writing in a different format. With my 5th and 6th graders, I outlaw rhyming.

One possible extension is to ask students to bring in an object that they care about and repeat this process.

Related Resources:

Worth, Valerie. 1987. *All the small poems*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Worth, Valerie. 2002. *Peacock and other poems*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Worth, Valerie. 2007. *Animal poems*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:

Students with limited English can work with a partner with stronger skills. I find that providing real objects for the students to examine is engaging and helpful to students with many types of learning styles.

For additional information, contact:

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