

**Preschool Poetry**  
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Grade Levels: 9-12  
Subject: English

Project Summary: While studying poetry, students will listen to, read, and discuss a series of children's board books. Through their discussions, they will learn to identify and analyze a poem's tone, mood, figurative language, and imagery. Students will formulate ideas about what types of poetic devices appeal most to children of different age groups and discuss why best-selling children's authors use them. Students will then write and color their own children's board book. They will pay particular attention not only to poetic devices, such as figurative language and imagery, but also to age-appropriate word choice, syntax, and sentence structure.

### Introduction:

After hearing aloud two or three children's books like Dr. Seuss' *Hop on Pop*, Sandra Boynton's *Moo, Baa, La, La, La!* or Anna Dewdney's *Llama, Llama, Mad at Mama*, students quickly recognize that these so-called baby books are filled with complex and beautiful poetry. Students who are intimidated by Shakespeare, sonnets, quatrains, and simply poetry in general are usually comforted by learning that even their favorite childhood books contain great poetry. This lesson works because students can relax and have fun with poems that don't look or sound "classic" or scholarly. A review of poetic devices including tone, mood, metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia usually helps the students focus their analysis of the books. Students are then broken up into groups of three to four and each group is given five to six board books to read and study. Students will use their critical-thinking skills to identify the poetic devices and analyze how these devices, as well as the author's word choice and sentence structure affect the mood, tone, and message of the story. Students will use higher-level thinking skills to evaluate whether the author's use of a particular poetic device, word, tone, or sentence structure is age-appropriate for the intended audience and why or why not. After two to three class periods spent analyzing and discussing the teacher-provided board books, students will apply their knowledge of children's books to create their own story. Using proper English punctuation, spelling, and grammar, students will develop a complete children's story, with a plot, characters and an age-appropriate conflict. They will pay close attention to the tone, mood, figurative language, imagery, words, and sentence structure they are using to tell their story. Students then get to bring their stories to life by "publishing" them with colorful drawings on primary school story paper. Students are encouraged to share their stories with each other and even take them home for their family and hopefully, small siblings or cousins to see.

### Student Impact:

Poetry can be very intimidating to students. Students who have only been introduced to poetry through "classical" examples often have a great dislike for the subject as a whole. Completing this series of lessons will help not only all students, but especially "poetically-challenged" students, gain an understanding and maybe even an appreciation for poetry. Students will be able to identify and analyze poetic elements including tone, mood, figurative language, and imagery. They will be able to utilize these elements to write poetry and fiction that is creative and impactful. Students not only gain knowledge of poetic devices and the mechanics of English, but also a better understanding of what elements help authors sell books, and why certain literary elements appeal to certain age groups. They will be given the opportunity to create a final product to showcase their learning, which will be shared with others.

### Assessment:

Students will earn points at several points throughout the multi-day lesson. Teacher-lead class discussions will be used to determine students' readiness to work with the materials in small groups. Student groups will be assessed through oral presentations to the class about their materials, as well as a poetic devices worksheet and graphic organizer. There is also an optional persuasive essay assignment which can be assessed using any literature textbook's persuasive essay scoring rubric. Students' children's books will be assessed based on a teacher-created rubric which emphasizes proper English mechanics,

use of poetic devices, and clarity of the story.

Standards:

Reading 3.7, Literary Response and Analysis

Reading 3.11, Literary Criticism

Writing 1.2, Writing Strategies

Writing 2.1, Writing Applications

WOELC 1.1 and 1.3, Grammar and Mechanics of Writing

Materials/Budget:

1. Approximately 25 to 30 children's board books, enough for each group of students to read and analyze a minimum of five books: average book price = \$8.99 plus tax x 30 books = approximately \$290.70
2. Approximately twelve packs of Melissa & Doug Primary School Story Paper—with an average of nine pages per student, per story at \$4.79 a pack plus tax and shipping: \$4.79 x 12 packs + S&H = approx. \$68.13
3. Six to eight packs of Crayola markers: \$3.59 per box plus tax x 8 boxes = \$30.96
4. Xeroxing costs for one class set of a handout on poetic devices: 30 double-sided handouts x .14¢ per (double-sided) copy = \$4.20
5. Xeroxing costs for 60 poetry vocabulary fill-in-the-blank worksheets: 60 x .7¢ per single-sided copy = \$4.20
6. Xeroxing costs for 60 figurative language practice worksheets: 60 x .7¢ per single-sided copy = \$4.20
7. Xeroxing costs for 60 elements of poetry quizzes: 60 x .7¢ per single-sided copy = \$4.20
8. Xeroxing costs for 60 peer editing worksheets: 60 x .7¢ per single-sided copy = \$4.20
9. Xeroxing costs for 30 (two per page) storybook guidelines handouts: 30 x .7¢ per single-sided copy = \$2.10
10. Xeroxing costs for 30 (two per page) poem storybook rubrics: 30 x .7¢ per single-sided copy = \$2.10

**Approximate total = \$414.99**

### Lesson Plans:

All handouts, worksheets, and rubrics, as well as the graphic organizer, quiz, and Powerpoint mentioned are attached but can also be downloaded and printed from <http://www.smjuhsd.k12.ca.us/~kdavis/sbceo/sbceo.html>.

#### **Lesson 1:**

Students will need to learn/review several poetic and literary terms in order for the board book lessons to run smoothly.

1. Students should be given the poetry vocabulary fill-in-the-blank worksheet.
2. Show the poetry terms Powerpoint and have them fill in the definitions as they appear in the presentation. You can also give them the elements of poetry handout as a reference to use throughout the poetry unit.
3. Give the students the figurative language practice worksheet and have them work either in pairs, groups or individually to identify examples of similes, metaphors, personification, imagery, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. The teacher can have students write their favorite examples of each poetic device from the worksheet on the board for discussion. It helps if you circulate first to make sure that the students you pick to write examples on the board have correct answers on their papers. Students should discuss their findings as a class, using the favorites written on the board as a springboard for the discussion.
4. For homework, students can be asked to study the poetry vocabulary and/or make vocabulary flash cards to study depending on their level of understanding of these terms after today.

#### **Lesson 2:**

A quiz on the poetry terms from the day before might be useful, depending on your students' level of understanding of the terms and their motivation to learn them. If necessary, review any poetic devices/terms that still seem sketchy to the students.

1. Choose two to three children's board books to read out loud to the class. Don't tell them why or what you will be reading to them. As you read, show the pictures if you are able. The following books work well but are by no means the only ones to use to start this lesson:

- The Going to Bed Book* by Sandra Boynton
- Moo, Baa, La, La, La!* By Sandra Boynton
- Rainforest Discoveries* by Julie Aigner Clark (for Baby Einstein)
- Sheep on a Ship* by Nancy Shaw
- anything from the Big Vehicle series by Parragon Publishing
- Hop on Pop* by Dr. Seuss
- How Do I Love You?* by Marion Dane Bauer

2. Read the books in a fun way, paying attention to your inflections, tone, and pacing.

Don't stop after each one and discuss it. Just flow from one book to the next and let the students feel the joy and peacefulness that comes when an adult reads to them.

3. After the third (or last) book you read aloud, ask for the students' impressions. What did they hear? What did they like about the books? What emotions did they feel while you were reading? What memories were conjured up? Let them discuss their feelings and impressions, but lead them toward the idea that these books are examples of poetry. Almost always at least one student will "get it" and exclaim that these books are poetry. Let them chew on this idea for a few minutes and discuss whether poetry includes silly rhymes and animal noises like this or only classical Shakespearean-type verses full of "thees" and "thous." Finish this part of the discussion with the idea that even silly children's books are considered poetry. Poets use all kinds of language to bring their story or their image alive, even made-up words like Dr. Seuss' wockets, grinches, and loraxes.

4. Depending on your time and your students' level of understanding of the poetic devices, read aloud again one of the books you just read. This time tell the students to pay attention for one or more of the poetic devices and make a note of what or where it is. Discuss what they heard. How many examples of alliteration or onomatopoeia or similes did they hear? What comparisons were made? If the author compares this one thing to this other thing (insert the simile or metaphor objects into that question), what does that mean about that object? Have them discuss their thoughts.

5. Have the students get into groups and give each group a few books to look at. Depending on time, you may want to just give them an opportunity to look through the books and have fun with them. They could just be responsible for identifying one particular poetic device per book and being able to show it to you or the class and explain it before they leave.

6. For homework the students can be encouraged to find children's board books at the library or in their own homes to examine. Tell them to read a few and look for poetic devices. If their parents approve, they can bring in any children's books from home to use to deepen the class discussion. Of course, not all students will have access to these books, but they can be encouraged to look anyway. Any students who complete the task will be able to add more strongly to the next day's discussion.

### **Lesson 3:**

1. Have students get back into groups and create a 4-6 part graphic organizer like the one attached titled poetic devices. You can determine what the focus of the lesson is, whether it's just similes, metaphors, and personification, or all those plus alliteration, or more.

2. Give the groups a stack of children's books to look through, and tell them to find and write down examples of each of the poetic devices listed on their charts. Give them most of the whole period if you have time and enough books, because you can rotate the books from group to group if necessary. Again, at the end of class you can have representatives from each group go to the board and write their favorite examples of similes, or

metaphors, or assonance, or whatever poetic devices you choose on the board. Discuss them if you have time. Find out whether the other groups found those when they had the book in their group.

3. For homework the students could be encouraged to find a younger sibling, cousin, neighbor, etc and read to him/her. Have the students talk to the younger child and ask them (if they are old enough to speak) why they like each particular book. What makes the story fun?

#### **Lesson 4:**

1. As a whole class, look through two to three children's book again. Discuss which ones they like best and ask them to tell the class why. Examine what poetic devices the students are most drawn to and why. Ask them if they found any books at home or at the library that were fun and contained poetic devices. Discuss why authors might use particular poetic devices. Encourage any students with younger siblings or cousins to share their findings from the homework. Discuss the authors' word choices and sentence structures and how these affect the mood, tone, and message of the stories. They should evaluate whether the authors' use of a particular poetic device, word, tone, or sentence structure is age-appropriate for the intended audience and why or why not. All this can be done as a whole class with two or three books held by you at the front, or students can be split into smaller groups with a few books to discuss these ideas and then share back with the whole class.

2. Students can also write their responses in paragraph or essay form. The topics for today's lesson work well for a persuasive essay: Persuade the CEO of a publishing company to publish more children's books that contain the particular poetic devices or sentence structure/syntax you've been discussing in class.

3. Students should then be given the assignment of using the sample children's books as inspiration for writing a rough draft of their own children's book. Go over the poem storybook guidelines with them and then let them create their story in rough draft form on regular lined paper.

4. Their homework should be to finish their story rough draft.

#### **Lesson 5:**

1. Students should peer-edit each other's stories using the peer editing rubric. They can spend the rest of class revising their rough draft. Try to collect it and edit it once yourself before they go on to write their final draft on the primary school paper.

#### **Lessons 6-however long they need to finish:**

1. When students are ready to create the final draft of their children's book, give them the primary school story paper and instruct them to write their story on the dashed lines and draw pictures to accompany each page of the story. They should be encouraged to do their best, neatest work, even if they can't draw. If you want, allow them to use school-

appropriate magazine cutouts or internet clip art for pictures.

**Final lesson:**

1. Have the students present their stories by each one reading his or her story to the class. Shy students can give you theirs to read anonymously, but they should all be encouraged to be proud of their stories and read them themselves.