

Strategies for Analyzing Poetry

Poetry provides opportunities for students to develop an appreciation for poetry and its various techniques. Students will develop the skills necessary to properly understand poems. Reading poetry can certainly be helpful in introducing new vocabulary words and literary elements. This leads to an increase in reading comprehension and fluency that can be put into practice. Students will be able to critically analyze text and explain the intended meaning and effect in their responses.

In this section you may access strategies and resources to enhance your teaching of poetry.

1. Poetry Dictionaries
2. Poetry Scrapbooks
3. Poetry and Song
4. Walk Around a Poem
5. Responding to a Poem
6. Partner Poems
7. Thematic poetry
8. Poetry suggestions/links for resources
9. Poetry graphic organizers

When should students start analyzing poetry?

Poetry can be taken apart as soon as poetry is taught. The earliest question, "what do you think this poem is about?" can be asked in kindergarten. By the end of grade 6 (SLO 2.2.3) for example, students should be responding to poems on an emotional level and understanding the figurative language that is a part of poetry. They should be identifying figurative language discussing how it enhances understanding people, places and action. By the end of grade 12, in a similar outcome, students should be analyzing how language and stylistic choices in oral, print, and other media texts communicate intended meaning and create effect.

The following strategies and resources can be used to enhance your teaching of poetry.

1. Poetry Dictionaries

Students create their own dictionaries in Grade 8 or 9 and use them through to Grade 12. Students can use “The Frayer Model” as a poetic vocabulary development tool. The model helps to develop a better understanding of complex concepts, by having students identify what something is but what something is not. An example of this model is located in the appendix.

Poetry – the area of writing that lends itself to the expression of feelings and ideas using style and rhythm. Beautiful, imaginative, reflective; poetry taps into inner emotion and musical pulse. It allows students to access and share feelings and emotions as no other genre does.

2. Poetry Scrapbooks

Poetry scrapbooks are both visual and textual representations of student selected poetry.

Students select poems that they like or can relate to. Teachers and students can generate a rubric which outlines the criteria. Students will share and explain why they chose the poems and how the poems relate to them.

Poetry is rhythm, sound, and beat. Children don't have to understand it to appreciate it, and they become curious about making their own. Poetry is kinesthetic literature at its finest!
Poetry moves us.

3. Poetry and Song

Songs are an engaging example of poetry. Teachers can play different parts of a song from a variety of genres. The students respond to the parts by writing the mood that each part evokes in them. Students can identify poetic devices found in the lyrics. Students can use a favourite song and search for a visual that reflects the idea or message of a particular song.

Poetry slams are meant for audiences and even reluctant writers are happy to try their voices.

4. “Walk around a Poem” strategy

The teacher will photocopy a poem in the middle of a page to allow students to record all their responses in the margins. Suggest that students highlight phrases in the poem that they consider important. (For more information about this strategy see the Grade 12 ELA Foundation for Implementation document, section 4 -116)

Poems defy rules. This means that poetry is accessible to English language learners. Even with limited vocabulary, students can find ways to express their voices.

5. Responding to a Poem

There are a wide variety of strategies available for teachers to model responding to a poem. One effective strategy is the Responding to a Poem sheet (adapted from the Prentice Hall Multisource Activity sheet) located in the Appendix. Another resource is the Poem Analysis sheet also located in the Appendix.

Poetry provides students with the opportunity to learn figurative language and specific literary techniques as no other form does. Poetry allows kids to share their lives through metaphor and simile, through language that breaks the rules of grammar and conventions.

6. Partner Poems

Partner Poems is a strategy where two or more voices read aloud a poem to one another. There are many benefits in using this strategy to:

- Build self-confidence as students build fluency and comprehension
- Develop public speaking skills and confidence – easier to speak with a peer than alone – security blanket

- Reinforce comprehension and fluency since you give students time to practice before reading to class
- Motivate students since this is fun and not intimidating
- Promote group/partner work

Students find their voices in poems.

7. Thematic poetry

There are many poems accessible to teachers based on themes. Theme is defined as a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work that may be stated directly or indirectly. Some common themes used in the classroom are nature, growing up, friendship, conflict etc.

Students will analyze different types of poems based on a selected theme. They will use a mind map to organize the differences and similarities of the poem. They can determine the type and form of poetry used in the selected theme. There is a list of common themes located in the appendix and presented as a word splash.

Poetry is meant to be spoken and shared.

8. Poetry suggestions/links for resources

Text sources:

- *Poetry in Focus* by Bob Cameron, Margaret Hogan, and Patrick Lashmar
- *Poetry Alive (Perspectives)/ (Transitions)* by Don Salianni
- *Joyful Noise – Poems for Two Voices, I am Phoenix (to be used for Partner Poems)*
- *Partner Poems for Building Fluency: 25 Original Poems with Research-Based Lessons* By Bobbi Katz (Jan. 1, 2007)
- *Inside Poetry* by Glenn Kirkland and Richard Davies
- *Adolescent Literacy – Turning Promise into Practice* by Kyleene Beers – Robert Probst - Linda Rief (Dialogue with a Poem p 350 – 364, Icebreaker – p 48-49, Dealing with Trauma – p 40-41)

Online sources:

- Partner Poems for Building Fluency: Grades 4-6: 40 Engaging Poems for Two-Voices With Motivating Activities - http://www.amazon.ca/Partner-Poems-Building-Fluency-Comprehension/dp/0545108764/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1431109811&sr=8-2&keywords=partner+poems
- Poetry Picnic - <http://readingyear.blogspot.ca/2011/04/poetry-picnic.html>

9. Poetry graphic organizers

There are numerous poetry graphic organizers available for teachers to use in the classroom to support students to better understand poetry and poetic devices. Two suggested graphic organizers are:

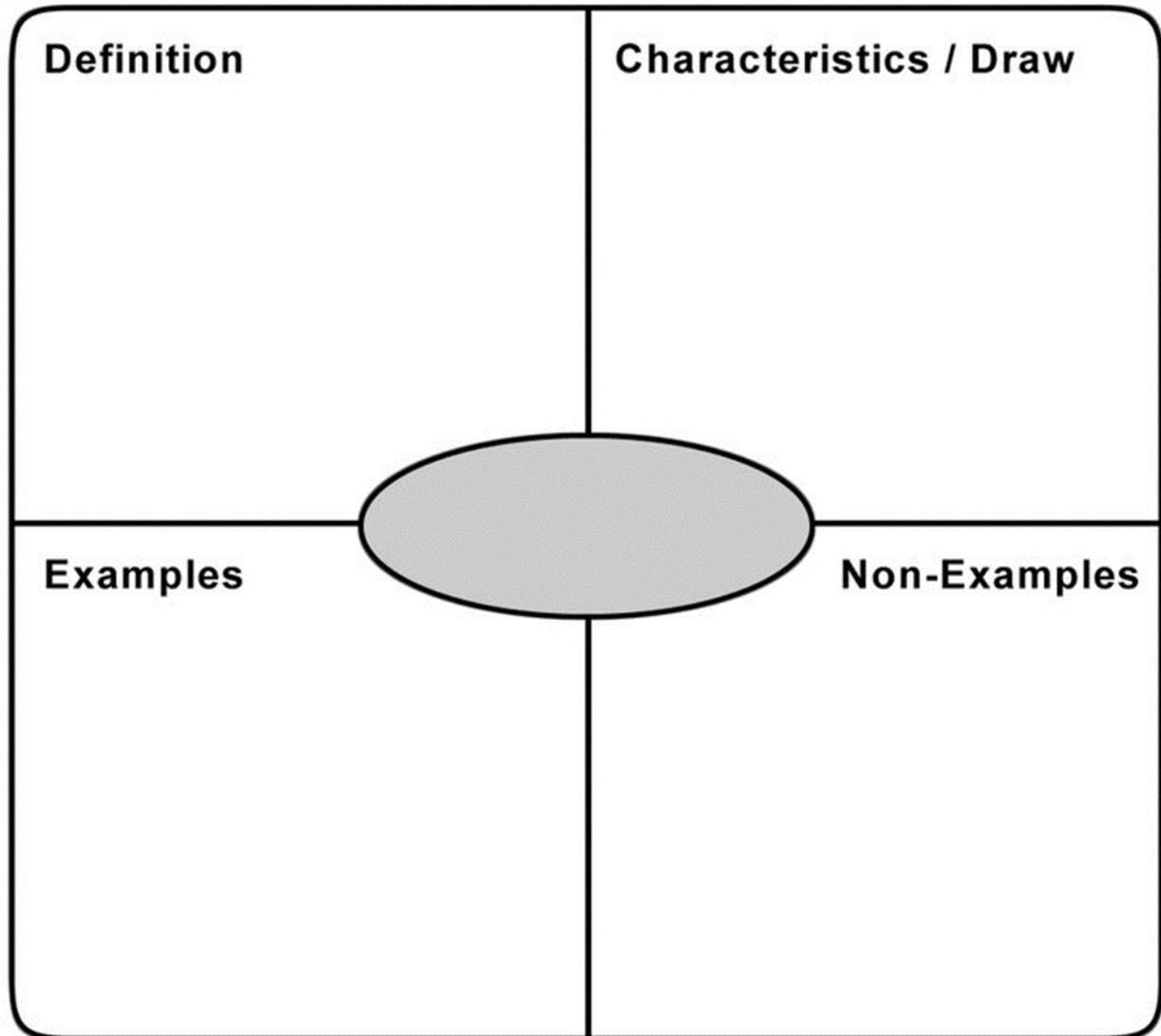
- Pyramid Organizer

Students will record information on the graphic organizer to provide students with the structure that facilitates analysis. (For more information see Grade 9 ELA Foundation document section 1-188, Grade 10 ELA Foundation document section 2-234, Grade 11 ELA Foundation document, and section 4- 254-255).

- S.O.A.P.S.Tone Organizer

The S.O.A.P.S.Tone Organizer teaches students a strategy to use when analyzing literary texts, including poetry. It uses common literary elements to critically examine texts and better organize their responses to text. There are numerous other online resources for teachers to successfully implement in any classroom. An example of this organizer is located in the appendix.

Fray Model



Responding to a Poem

How you respond to a poem on an emotional and intellectual level is based on your past; on all your experiences, thoughts, and beliefs. The meaning of a poem comes from who you are as much as from the written text.

The following questions will help you probe deeper into a poem.

1. What feelings arise in you as you read this poem?
2. What memories or past experiences come to you?
3. Imagery is so powerful; what images are most striking? Which of your senses are awakened?
4. Are you wondering about something? What parts puzzle you? What questions can you ask?
5. Titles offer clues to meaning, what does your title tell you?
6. Can you tell who or what the speaker is in the poem? How can you tell? Why do you think the poet chose this voice?
7. Why do you think the writer decided to use poetry rather than prose?
8. How many examples of figurative language can you find in your poem? Can you find similes, metaphors, personification, apostrophe, etc?
9. Can you find sound devices such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance, etc.? Can you figure out the rhyme scheme? Can you find other literary devices?
10. What's the opinion of the poet about people or life? Do you agree or disagree with the viewpoint? Explain.
11. Did you like the poem? Hate it? What did you like most? Least?
12. Is there a piece of music you would use to accompany the reading of this poem? What would you choose? Why?

Go ahead, take apart a poem.

Poem Analysis sheet

Name of Poem: _____

Written by: _____

Date written: _____

Additional information found on Poet: _____

Words/line that "caught" your eye: _____

Theme of poem: _____

Poetic Devices found in poem:

Metaphor – _____

Simile – _____

Imagery – _____

Other (please identify) _____

How it connects to you/your life: _____

SOAPSTone Graphic Organizer

Title of Piece: Author:		
Subject	The general topic, content, and ideas contained in the text. What is this piece about?	
Occasion	The time and place of the piece; the current situation or context which gave rise to the writing or speech.	
Audience	The group of readers to whom this piece is directed. The audience may be one person, a small group, or a large group. What qualities, beliefs, or values do the audience members have in common?	
Purpose	The reason behind the text. What does the speaker, writer, or filmmaker want the audience to do, feel, say or choose? In literature, we call this the theme of the piece.	
Speaker	The voice that tells the story, or in nonfiction, the author. What do we know about the writer's life and views that shape this text?	
Tone	What choice of words and use of rhetorical devices let you know the speaker's tone? Is the tone light-hearted or deadly serious? Mischievous or ironic?	