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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2005 Volume I: The Uses of Poetry in the Classroom

Thematic Poetry Reading and Writing Workshop

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The intent of this unit is to incorporate a poetry reading and writing workshop into a 6th grade Language Art curriculum. The workshop includes four main components: 1. Poetry reading. 2. Poetry writing. 3. Student portfolio. 4. Oral presentation. Students will write their own poetry using the themes found in other poems. Their work will be stored in a portfolio, and they will have an opportunity to do oral readings during a school assembly in February.

The first goal of the unit is to expose students to poetry written by poets of color that deals with the issues of youth, family and society. The four poems selected to serve this purpose are: "John, Who is Poor" by Gwendolyn Brooks, "Children's Rhymes" by Langston Hughes, "Dark People" by Kattie M. Cumbo, and "You Know, Joe" by Ray Durem. These poems will be used as models to introduce students to the poetry writing workshop. Additionally, illustrations will be used as a tool to assist students with analyzing and synthesizing the poets' message and as a guide to developing ideas for their own poetry.

(Recommended for Language Arts, grade 6.)

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