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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2009 Volume IV: The Sound of Words: An Introduction to Poetry

The Sound Within: An Exploration of Prosodic Elements in Poetry

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This stand-alone introductory poetry course was designed for seventh and eighth grade students in the Humanities Department of the Pittsburgh Public Schools gifted education program.

The focus of this unit is the exploration of *auditory imagery*. The unit was developed to help students make a connection between what words mean, how the words sound, and how the two support one another within poetry. Can you still hear the upbeat rhythmic pattern of childhood nursery rhymes playing in your memory? In this unit, students will study prosody in order to uncover how patterns of words create such an effect.

The poems chosen for use in this unit contain specific prosodic elements and will be used in a sequence that allows the students to move from familiar sounds — such as those created in nursery rhymes — to the often inconspicuous pattern of sounds in free verse. Each poem was also chosen for the over-arching theme of perseverance that each supports — either because the poet has overcome adversity, the poem's content implies such, or because of the consistent pattern of sound that ripples through the poem.

(Developed for Middle-Level Humanities, grades 7-8; recommended for Middle-Level Humanities, grades 7-8)

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