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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2014 Volume II: Playing with Poems: Rules, Tools, and Games

The ABCs of Elementary Reading and Writing Poetry with Animals

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I've often heard that school curriculum follows the rule that students learn to read up until third grade and then they read to learn. Makes sense. But what happens when many of your students enter fourth grade reading two years behind grade level? How do you build the comprehension and analytical skills they will need when they are unable to read the grade-level material? This unit will provide information to lead elementary students through reading and discussing a wide variety of animal poetry that will range from Shel Silverstein to Alfred, Lord Tennyson. This range of material will challenge on and above grade level students while not being so lengthy that struggling students will find it inaccessible. Students will be looking at and analyzing the use of similes, metaphors, alliteration and idioms. I am hopeful that students will take as much joy and pleasure from hearing great poems and through creating their own poetry, as they do when given watercolors and paper with the license to just paint, create, and enjoy.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 4; recommended for ELA, grades 3-5)

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