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

Don't Fear the Symmetry: The Poetry of William Blake

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This unit is designed for an AP English Literature and Composition class taught in an urban setting, but is easily adaptable for any British Literature course or for a study in poetry of the Romantic Age. The unit is also multi-faceted. It centers on William Blake's poetry found in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. It begins with a study of the major characteristics of the Romantic Age, providing for students a general idea of the social and political cultures during the time period of the poems selected for study. Next, students study poetry vocabulary terms. These specific terms help students identify devices within a piece of poetry and begin to understand how the poet projects his ideas through the use of metaphor, assonance, or paradox, for example. I also provide brief historical backgrounds of the late 18th and early 19th century, as well as a brief biography of William Blake. I want students to embrace Blake and the Romantic Age fully in order to see the genius of the man who painted his ideas. There is much to be discovered about the social and historical value of Blake's poetry, as well as a multitude of ways to connect his poetry and illustrations to contemporary times. His works are an excellent gateway into the study of Romantic, pre-20th century British poetry specifically, but also any poetry analysis generally.

(Developed for AP English Literature and Composition, grade 12; recommended for AP English Literature and Composition, and English 12, grade 12; British Literature, grades 11-12; and Creative Writing, grades 9-12)

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