



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2011 Volume II: Love and Politics in the Sonnet

Sounds So Sweet

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Introduction and Objectives

Are you friends with Dr. Seuss and *The Cat in the Hat*? Do you know Peggy Ann McKay who "cannot go to school today"? She is the main character in Shel Silverstein's poem, "Sick." ¹ Have you needed to make a decision in your life and "taken the road less traveled by and made all the difference," as modeled by Robert Frost in his poem "*The Road Not Taken*"?. ² While you sit there and read this now, is your head spinning with other poems that you can quickly recall or recite? What is your favorite? What images or events in your life immediately conjure up a poem that you heard, read, or learned, knowing that that poem puts a smile in your heart? Even poems that address subjects or events that are disturbing still please us for having encountered them and read them to learn something new. Wouldn't it be great to share this same joy with our children? Don't our students deserve to know the great poetry that has been part of our educational history—and even poems that have not? Poetry can have a significant connection to their lives, situations, or the subjects they are studying.

This unit will make poetry connect with everything in my curriculum, but that in itself is not new for me. I currently use poems or songs to introduce different themes and topics that my students study and learn in second grade; but beyond this mediatory function I will also make poetry a curricular topic: I will create a space in my curriculum for my students to learn about the format of poetry, how to read it and how to write it. Only then will I have students write their sonnets in response to something they are learning in a different content area. I believe they can tie the vocabulary of second grade science, social studies, or language arts into their poems to give them purpose and meaning in the context of another discipline they are studying. This will allow the students to realize that poetry is not just about writing, it's also about understanding, and can be used at one and the same time to reinforce what they know and help them learn more.

Poems allow us to remember things. For instance, the rhyme "30 days Hath September, April, June, and November" is quickly recalled anytime I'm trying to figure out how many days there are in a given month. The verses "In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" is needed to help me remember what year Columbus came to America. It is important to foster an enthusiasm in my students for reading and writing in a variety of genres and poetry helps us to understand our lives, our culture, and our history. This curriculum unit will allow my students to reference a variety of poems and types of poetry, including the format of sonnets. This curriculum unit is being developed while I'm participating in the seminar "Love and

"Politics in the Sonnet" offered by Paul H. Fry, Professor of English, at the Yale National Initiative. As a result of what I have learned I will teach my students what a sonnet is and how poems can be categorized as sonnets. Once they know what makes a sonnet, I will give them a chance to explore the rhyme scheme of sonnets, integrating the subjects of reading and math as my students identify and reason about the end patterns in the sonnets they read. Students will have access to a variety of poems that are appropriate to their individual reading levels so that this exercise will be possible for each of them.

Students will listen to, read, and recite poems. This objective serves two purposes. These poems will serve as mentor texts for the poems they are going to write around a topic we are studying in school, integrating the vocabulary they need to learn into their poem as a means of better understanding that topic. This exercise will also help increase the students' fluency, expression, and the rate at which they read and acquire words. I want to find poems that evoke a variety of cultures and time periods and styles, all related to a topic or idea with which my students can make a connection, formulating thoughts about an idea that is new to them.

Students will be responsible for comprehending poems. They will not just learn how to read the words of a poem, but also to interpret its meaning. Students will learn how things may look and sound one way in figurative language but mean something else. They will see why interpretation is important. Learning to read poems fluently will also build their capacity for expressiveness when reciting the poems. Students will use strategies to understand the vocabulary by breaking words apart, looking them up in a dictionary, or asking a friend to help. For some poems they will find out what they can about the author, and perhaps the circumstances of its composition. Students will develop researching skills by doing this.

The skills of reading expressively, understanding new vocabulary, and researching the history of a literary piece are all important to the foundation of language arts and will be accessible to the students throughout their study of all modes of writing, not just poetry. One significant help the students will have access to is the series of books, *Poetry for Young People*, that I have readily available for them to use in my classroom. These books already perform the research I have mentioned for the students, and students can use it as a model for finding out about poems from other sources. The illustrative pictures in *Poetry for Young People* will also help them to interpret the meaning of the poems.

This curriculum unit is being designed for second graders, but could be modified to be used by other elementary grades. I am a second grade teacher in a self-contained classroom in a large suburban public school in the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools district. My school fosters strong parental involvement and participates in the Basic School philosophy that prioritizes "The School as Community, Commitment to Character, Climate for Learning, and Curriculum with Coherence" (Boyer 1995) ³. These priorities promote themed units with integrated connections across the subjects of math, science, social studies, and language arts. They also encourage developing and using relevant and rigorous curriculum for students. As we implement the national Common Core standards, prior knowledge of students together with observations and assessments inform instruction in the classroom. Student assessments include district mandated quarterly tests in the subjects of reading, writing, and math, self-reflection, portfolios, grade level pre- and post-unit assessment, formative and summative assessment, and classroom observations. In the classroom and at the school, students have access to numerous technologies including computers with internet and instructional software, calculators, overhead and data projectors, TV, VCR/DVD player, CD player, and cassette players. We have a mobile (students frequently come and leave) student population that averages over 900 students and there is an approximately one to twenty-three teacher to student ratio on my grade level. The student population of my school includes 59.6% African American, 16.5% Caucasian, 11.3% Hispanic, 4.9% Asian, and 6.9% multiracial. 60% of our students meet the state's poverty level. 63% of our 2010-2011 students passed

the state's end-of-grade test. One of my roles as an elementary school teacher is to find and make connections across the curriculum content areas. I will be engaging in this process throughout the curriculum unit by using poems with content related to the various themes and topics I teach across the content areas of reading, writing, science, social studies, and math. Within the framework of the language arts curriculum, students will be reading, writing, speaking, and listening when they engage with the poetry we are learning in the classroom.

It is most important for students to learn and study poetry as part of a rigorous curriculum. Poetry is motivating. It comes in so many forms and structures, and students can learn and remember a lot about different cultures and time periods from reading poems and learning about the context in which they were written. In the British newspaper, *The Telegraph*, columnist Boris Johnson argues that children should learn and recite poetry. As he says,

When you learn a good poem, you make a good friend. You have a voice that will pop up in your head, whenever you want it, and say something beautiful and consoling and true. A poem can keep you going when you are driving on a lonely motorway, or when you are trapped on some freezing ledge in the Alps, or when you are engaged in any kind of arduous and repetitive physical activity, and need to keep concentration. When some disaster overwhelms you, or when you are feeling unusually cheerful – or when you are experiencing any human feeling whatever – it is amazing how often some line or phrase will swim to the surface and help to articulate your emotions, to intensify them or to console. ⁴

This is a sentiment that I echo. When I'm searching for the right words to say to express my emotions during different situations, I am frequently able to reference a poem that I've learned or heard at one point in my life. Poems align with all types of emotions or circumstances; they are not limited to just one or two specific situations.

Amsco, an Educational Publishing Company, sets forth five reasons for why teachers should be teaching poetry. 1. Poems are short. 2. Poetry helps students learn about word choice and build their vocabulary. 3. Poetry is a good outlet for students. 4. Poetry helps students learn to make connections to what they're reading. 5. Poetry is catchy. It sticks in your head because of the meter, rhymes, imagery, and figurative language. ⁵ These five reasons are echoed on several websites where teachers and literary professionals alike declare why it is important for children to learn poetry.

When children are introduced to something early, it can capture their attention and become more attractive to them. The capacity young children have to learn, understand, and appreciate things develops when they are introduced to things at a young age and stays with them for the rest of their lives. Giving second graders an opportunity to become experts at poetry creates in them a life-long skill and love for reading, understanding, and reciting poems. When poetry is introduced and used alongside other literary modes, students will begin to identify the important contributions it makes to their fluency as readers.

Background Information

Merriam Webster offers multiple definitions of poetry. They include "metrical writing, writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm, and something likened to poetry especially in beauty of expression." ⁶ Sonnets are defined by Merriam-Webster as "a fixed verse form of Italian origin consisting of 14 lines that are typically 5-foot iambics rhyming according to a prescribed scheme." ⁷ I share this because as a teacher of second grade students, I know that sonnets are a type of poetry; however, I had to look further to see what made them special enough to have the unique name of sonnet. There are three types of sonnets. The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet typically relies on the rhyme scheme of ABBAABBA CDECDE. The Shakespearean or English sonnet typically relies on the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. Spenser, who influenced Shakespeare, employed the Spenserian sonnet, which relies on the rhyme scheme ABAB BCBC CDCD EE. There are also poems defined as sonnets that do not use the rhyme patterns described above. Other vocabulary related to sonnets includes iambic pentameter, which describes the number and type of feet in a line, and volta, which is the turn of thought in the sonnet. Jennifer Ann Wagner, in the introduction to her book, *A Moment's Monument*, describes sonnets as a "poetic form that had enjoyed its original heyday several hundred years earlier." ⁸

Poetry has its roots in oral tradition. Early poems were passed from one person to the next, one generation to the next. It is the earliest form of literary expression, and paved the way for newspapers. Historically, many poems were short stories, bits of information that could be relayed from one group to another. "Poetry is about conciseness, echoes and resonances. A poem can suggest things by putting two words near to each other or giving a thought-provoking image." ⁹ Aristotle describes the genres of poetry as epic, comic, and tragic and more recently poetry has been described as epic, lyric and dramatic. ¹⁰ During the 20th century, poetry has often moved from more traditional forms to free verse. Earlier forms of poetry represent religious movements, cultural information, the history of politics and wars, and the organization of societies. It predates literacy, and was originally used to aid memorization and oral transmission. ¹¹

In *Teaching Great Poetry to Children*, Kenneth Koch shares strategies he used to teach children in grades 3-6 how to appreciate and write poetry. He "taught reading poetry and writing poetry as one subject. Students would read the adult poem in class, discuss it, and then they would write. Afterward, they or he would read aloud the poems they had written." In his book, Kenneth Koch offers leading ideas of what to write that go along with the poems he required students to read. He shared with his students a variety of poems on a variety of topics and then gave them the opportunity to respond in various ways. "I didn't want a poetry idea which commanded a child to closely imitate an adult poem. I wanted my students to find and to re-create in themselves the main feelings of the adult poems." Kenneth Koch encourages teachers to use great poems in instruction with children. "To save the whole poems for later means that some important things will be lost, permanently. When a child has had few experiences, he may begin to anticipate finding more of them in poetry and want to read more of it, rather than being cut off from it, as so many schoolchildren now are." ¹²

Students need to learn and understand the vocabulary associated with poetry. There are a variety of types of poetry forms that students can read and write, and it would be beneficial to teach students not only how to comprehend the poems, but also what name and meaning is associated with the type. I will list some very short forms here. Couplets usually rhyme and express a complete thought. Tercets add a third line with the

same end rhyme to a couplet. Quatrains are found in a variety of poems and are made up of four lines that usually rhyme with an *abab* or *abba* rhyme scheme. Haikus are Japanese-influenced poems that contain three unrhymed lines and usually have 17 syllables arranged in lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. They usually describe a scene in nature or a seasonal reference. A Limerick is a five-line poem that is made up of three lines (1, 2, and 5) with three accented syllables and two shorter lines (3 and 4) with two accented syllables. Riddle poems describe a person, place, thing, or idea, and see if the reader can figure out the reference. They usually have a rhyme scheme of *abcb* or *aabb*.

The teacher may also wish to enumerate poetic forms that are normally longer or more complex. Pindaric odes are poems of celebration and follow no regular rhyme scheme and often but not always no stanza pattern. Acrostic poems are descriptive poems. The first letter of each line must form a word or phrase, usually the subject of the poem. Concrete or Emblem Poems are also known as shape poems because the words in the poem are arranged on the page to show the shape of the subject of the poem. (They could also be abstract poems that do not represent what they're about.) Epitaph is sometimes a short poem, usually rhymed, with a play on words that draws on the tradition of verses that adorned tombstones in days of old. A persona poem is a poem written from the point of view of the speaker of the poem, who is not the author. A poem of address is one in which a speaker addresses a person or object designated within the poem though not necessarily named. Ballads tell a story and are written in quatrains with a rhyme scheme of *abcb* or couplets or six-line stanzas. A list poem uses details and precise language to show the reader what the poet has noticed about a thing or situation. ¹³

There are many more types of forms, but these are the ones that I will introduce my students to throughout the year for the purpose of this unit. By teaching students the names of the types of poems they are studying and sharing with them a definition and example of the type, I will be providing them with a foundation on which to grow in their future years of studying poetry. If children learn something at a young age in a way that makes sense to them, it will be easier for them to understand it in a more difficult context. For example, if students learn about what sonnets are and see what they've learned applied to several sonnets that are developmentally appropriate to their level of understanding and vocabulary, then when they study William Shakespeare later on in their educational careers, the format of a sonnet will be familiar to them and they can focus on the content of the poem. It is also important to teach students a variety of types of poems, because as they begin to fall in love with each format of poetry, they can use it as an option for different responses they contribute to the class. As a teacher who values engaging all students in my classroom, I think I should provide students with choices of how to respond and to share their learning and understanding. By learning and understanding poetry, students can apply it to projects they are expected to complete in school. Instead of creating a poster or PowerPoint or story about something they are studying, they can write an original poem about their topic. This is an excellent way to assess how well they know and understand poetry, and also how much they enjoy it.

In addition to the vocabulary and definitions of types of poems that students will be learning, they also need to learn and understand different types of figurative language. This supports the National Common Core learning standards for second graders because they need to be able to describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem or song as well as demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

¹⁴ Students will learn various types of figurative language, including similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole, alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, repetition, and rhyme. A simile is a comparison of two unlike things using the words like and as. Metaphors are comparisons of two unlike things that do not use the words like and as. Personification is giving inanimate objects human qualities. Hyperboles

are wild exaggerations. Alliteration is the repetition of beginning sounds. Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds anywhere in a word. Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds somewhere within words. Onomatopoeia is words that sound like what they refer to. Anaphora is the repeating of words or phrases. Rhyme occurs when endings of words sound alike. Students will learn the vocabulary words associated with figurative language as well as their definitions and examples of them. They will learn these by reading examples of them in the context of stories or poems, then create a definition for them, and record the definition as well as an example in order to illustrate their understanding. Students will also be responsible for identifying the types of figurative language when they discover them within the poems and the stories they read.

Strategies

By practicing the reading of poems, students will increase their reading fluency. Research shows that "developing students' reading fluency sets up a vitalizing cycle. Improved fluency results in increased confidence and self-esteem as a reader. Increased confidence leads to more independent reading, which leads to an increase in background knowledge, comprehension, and fluency."¹⁵ There are multiple ways to increase a student's fluency. One of them is to have students "recite poetry."¹⁶ Another strategy to increase fluency is choral reading. When students read chorally they recite the same text at the same time, developing expressiveness.¹⁷ "The National Reading Panel (2000) and multiple researchers strongly recommend repeated readings as the best way to improve fluency."¹⁸ Students should repeatedly read poems to master their short rhythmic patterns, and they can time their successive readings to document improvement in fluency. Rasinski offers the suggestion of hosting a "Poetry Coffeehouse where students read aloud to the class a self-selected poem that they have practiced all week." He reports that over time Poetry Coffeehouses help students evolve as poets. They start out the year with simple, fun pieces, move to more serious pieces by midyear, and often become so interested in poetry that they begin to write and perform their own pieces by the end of the year."¹⁹

Students will discuss their poems with peers who are reading the same poem, or they can illustrate them in order to demonstrate that they comprehend the message of the poem. It is important for students not just to know the words of the poems they are reading, but also the meaning behind the words. Poetry offers rich language and vocabulary and students can strengthen their reading comprehension by being able to discuss their poem with a teacher or peer and offer their ideas about what it means. Students will work together or independently to brainstorm the meaning behind the poems they are reading and demonstrate their understanding by using a visual representation or other chosen form of presentation. When students are able to discuss and listen to the ideas of others, they are better able to understand. It is especially important for them to hear the voices of their peers so that they can know how other children their age made a connection to the poem and decide whether it is similar to or different from their own and why. They can use the ideas of others to better understand what they think they already know. Teachers and students need to create norms for discussing poetry so everyone has an opportunity to speak and that everyone's ideas are to be valued. The Common Core Standards specifically addresses for second grade students the rules for discussion, including: follow agreed upon rules for discussions, build on others' talk in conversation by linking comments to the remarks of others, and ask for clarification & further explanation as needed about topics and texts under discussion.²⁰ These standards can best be modeled and met through the study of poetry. Students can

demonstrate an understanding and mastery of them each time they discuss a poem (as well as during other discussion opportunities that are presented across the curriculum throughout the year).

Poems can be used to influence vocabulary. Poems written for adults by poets of other eras like Shakespeare and Milton are filled with expressions not common in a second grade classroom, or in any 21st century classroom for that matter. The poems and the exposure to new vocabulary within the context of the poems will build up the grade school students' vocabulary. Shakespeare's Sonnet Twelve includes words like "behold," "prime," "sable," and "o'er," just to name a few. I'll read the poem to the students once, fluently and with expression, so they can listen to the poem, but on the second read I'll pause at the new vocabulary words so the students will have the opportunity to discuss them and learn their meanings. Koch wrote, "Students learned new words and new conceptions in order to play a new game, or to enable them to understand science fiction in comics or on TV, so why not for poetry, which is liked just as much?"²¹ I would like to establish a classroom climate that allows them several avenues for understanding new words. Students could share whether or not they have heard the word before and where they remember hearing it. They can talk about what situation they were in when they heard the word, or what book they read it in and what they remember about it. Students can have help to understand the new word by using a resource to look it up. They can use a dictionary or the internet for this purpose and re-read the poem with the new definition applied to the context to show that they understand what it means. While they're discussing the new words and their meaning in the context of the poem or line of the poem, students can also be illustrating the meaning of that particular line or the poem itself. When students are able to discuss and illustrate, they show that they understand what they have read and heard. This strategy is applicable to all types of modes the students will be reading in second grade, but it is important for teachers to model for students what to do when they come to a word they do not know and how to use the words around that word or the resources around them to help them figure out what that word means.

Poets come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. When choosing poems, it is important that students have the benefit of reading poetry written by various authors. Poetry can be used to build a cultural appreciation and awareness in the classroom, as well as give students a global perspective. When teaching students how to understand a poem, it is important to give them the context in which the poem was written. It would be beneficial to use a map and show where the author is from or where the author lived when writing the poem (if known). Biographical information about a poem's author can also help the students understand the poem. This requires work on the part of the teacher or an exercise in which students can work independently or in pairs to research information about a poet and share out with the class when one of that poet's poems is being studied. Students will not only read the poem, but will also learn about the poet's author. This could contribute to their understanding of the content of the poem.

Students will learn point-of-view through poetry. Students will read poems and discuss who the author of the poem is, and they will also learn how to identify the speaker and the intended audience. After reading the poem and learning something about the author as well as contextual information about the poem, students can reread the poem to see if they can identify who is speaking in the poem. This will be done first using poems where the speaker is easily identifiable, but with increasing difficulty throughout the year or once students feel that they have mastered identifying who the speaker and intended audience of the poem are. This is important for students to learn because it contributes not only to a greater understanding of the poem but to an understanding of point of view, a Common Core Standard for second graders. Additionally, if they are able to learn the dynamic relationship among the author, the speaker(s), and audience member of the poems they are reading, they will be more successful in writing poetry that takes varying points of view. This skill can help develop the ability to be understanding citizens who can appreciate others. If they can identify

different points of view in the literature that they read, then they can begin to understand differing perspectives among the people they encounter and engage with in their everyday lives.

Students will write into poems. This means students will mark a part of a poem (they can mark a word, line, or stanza), annotate that part and respond to it. This is a way for all students to access all poems because they choose what part to mark and annotate in a way that is meaningful to them. First students will listen to me fluently read the poem and look at their copy while I read. Then they will highlight, underline, and annotate in the side margins. It is important that they get to choose their part, not for the teacher to assign the part. In their response they can make a connection to it or a reflection about it, or address it in whatever way they feel. This is a quick write, and students will only be given a short amount of time to respond. I will then reread the poem slowly and students will read what they've written when I come to the part of the poem that they chose (it's ok if more than one student shares about the same part, just establish in advance the rules for taking turns talking). This enables students to hear each others' ideas and learn more about the meaning of the poem from their peers. When this strategy is coupled with poems of real substance, it is inspiring to listen to the students combine their voice with that of the author of the poem.

Students will access poems to help them remember things. Poems will be used in my classroom, and students will be expected to memorize them, in order to know and understand a new topic or idea. For example, when we study matter in science, students will learn "The States of Matter Poem," which starts "Air is a gas/ We can't see it, that's true/ But often we feel it/ In things that we do./ It keeps up a kite/ Air fills up a bubble/ Without it to breathe/ We would be in BIG trouble!"²² I am going to use this poem and others throughout the year as introductions to units of study across the curriculum in the subjects of science, social studies, reading, writing, and math. When students are able to connect their learning and understanding across disciplines, it makes it easier for them to understand both the poem and the content.

Any poem that I share with students I will make sure they have a copy of. This is very important in order to include all learning styles, and it will give students the opportunity to associate the visual representation of the word with what they only hear when the words and poems are being read aloud to them. Kinesthetic learners can also put their fingers under the lines in the poems they are listening to and track the words with their eyes, ears, and fingers. Making copies of poems available to students further engages them in understanding the poem. Students can also write on their copies and take notes off to the side to help them remember or think of things that they associate with each particular poem.

Classroom Activities

1) After I have introduced the vocabulary associated with the word "sonnet" and given students examples of sonnets to look at and identify the different parts of, I will give them examples to sort through. Students will behave like detectives when investigating the poems, identifying what characteristics they have that make them sonnets. I will find poems (both sonnets and non-sonnets) that are appropriate to the reading level of my students so that they can read the poems and use the definition of a sonnet to determine whether each one is a sonnet or not, and I will make them defend their decisions before the class or a group of their peers. One of the main characteristics of a sonnet is that it has fourteen lines. Integrating math into poetry, students will be able to count the number of lines in a poem. They will quickly be able to determine whether a poem has fourteen lines. In deciding whether their poem is or isn't a sonnet, they need to be able to justify their decision

beyond how many lines the poem has. For purposes of this "discovery" I will mostly give them poems that have fourteen lines, with a few poems that have more or less so that students can have a few "givens."

I will model for students how to identify the rhyme scheme of a poem. Integrating the use of math manipulatives, students will create a pattern aligning to the end rhyme of the poem to show the rhyme scheme. We have snap cubes (sometimes also known as pop cubes or unifix cubes). These are cubes that come in a variety of colors and are used to group and count in math. Students can look at the words at the end of each line of a poem and lay out the corresponding colored cube so that words that rhyme will have the same color. Then students will translate this into the vocabulary that is used when studying poetry by identifying the rhyme scheme as *abab* or *abba*, etc. One of the poems students will have to identify and demonstrate to be a sonnet is Shakespeare's Sonnet Number 12. After reading the sonnet in a group (sounding out words they do not know), they will begin to discuss what characteristics make it a sonnet. They will count to see how many lines it has to verify that it has fourteen. They will look at the rhyme scheme, first using color cubes then translating the cubes into letters. For example, students would line up cubes like: red-white-red-white blue-green-blue-green yellow-purple-yellow-purple black-black. Then they will write *abab cdcd efef gg*. As students examine the end rhyme of the poem, they are identifying a pattern, which makes a connection to math.

Students will repeat this step with other poems they encounter during this activity. For the purpose of identifying whether or not a poem can be defined as a sonnet, it is not yet necessary for the students to be able to fluently read or understand the poem. It would be helpful for them to hear the poem being read so that they can be sure of the correct pronunciation of words, particularly the last word in each line. This can be done by the teacher, or there are resources online that can supply auditory recordings of poems. YouTube has numerous authors who recite their poems.²³ Other poems that can be used for this activity can include: "The Restoration" by Robert Lowell, most of the sonnets by William Shakespeare (I recommend quickly reviewing them for the appropriateness of the content for your age-level of students), "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden, "How Soon Hath Time" by John Milton, "When I Consider How My Light Is Spent" by John Milton, "Learning to Write a Sonnet" by Denise Rogers, "After Turkey Day" by Denise Rogers, "My Version of William Shakespeare's Sonnet Number Twelve" by April Halprin Wayland, "For the Anniversary of My Death" by W.S. Merwin, "The Oven Bird" by Robert Frost, "A Sport Sonnet," by Rachel S., and any of the sonnets from "Children's Sonnets by Scott Ennis" available online²⁴. Some of these poems will lead to a further discussion of rhyme scheme. These are just some examples of poems that can be used for this activity. I would have students work in pairs or groups of three to read the poem, count the lines, and identify the rhyme scheme. Students will choose one of the poems they've justified, either positively or negatively, as a sonnet and share with the class their reasoning. While they do this I will project their poem on the board so the other students will have a visual to reference while they are listening to the justification.

2) Students will learn how to read adult poems and interpret their meaning. This activity can be replicated with any poem that is read, but I'm going to illustrate the various steps that can be done to help students understand the meaning of poems by using Shakespeare's Number Twelve. It is important for students to have a copy of the poem in their possession so they can connect the words visually and auditorily. I can either read the poem or play the YouTube recording. After a first read I will have students turn and talk to a neighbor about what they think the poem means. Students can be very successful at doing this because they can choose whether or not to discuss the whole poem or only a part of the poem that they understand. This removes the excuse, "I don't get it," that one often hears from students of any age. Within each poem there is at least one thing students can interpret and understand. This virtual certainty may need to be conveyed to them reassuringly at the beginning of the year. Students can pick out words or phrases that they know or are

familiar with, and then as a class we can piece together things that as a group they still do not know or understand. Using Shakespeare's Sonnet Number Twelve towards the beginning of the year, I would explicitly teach students to look for words they know and create an image in their mind to accompany those words.

Using a think aloud strategy with Sonnet Number Twelve, I would say, "In the first line I can picture a big clock that is making noise. It reminds me of a clock that is chiming so I can count the chimes to know what time it is. I'm not sure how a day can be brave or what hideous means, but when I hear the words 'day sunk in night' I'm picturing the sun sinking in the sky and the world becoming dark." My students can talk about times and experiences when they showed bravery and they can illustrate "hideous" in order to help make a connection to the lines of the poem. If I continue to model for students my own think aloud strategies, and pause to give them an opportunity to try and share, they will begin to feel confident and successful at reading not only poems but other forms of text that have difficult words and ideas.

I will continue to model how to understand the poem by wondering what information there is about the poet William Shakespeare. I will model for students looking in books. There is biographical information about him in *Poetry for Young Children: William Shakespeare*, a book that features his poems, and I will also model for students how to research him doing an internet search, so that they know how to use a variety of resources to gather information. It is important for students to search for biographical information that they can read and understand (and that does not contain content inappropriate to their young minds). This step can be repeated to learn information about most poets. William Shakespeare was one of the "best playwrights of all time." He was born in 1564 and he went to school. He married when he was eighteen and had three children. After the plague caused theaters to shut down, he began to write lyric poetry, and is well known for his sonnets—which are now widely known as Shakespearean or English sonnets. After the plague passed, the theater reopened in 1594 and Shakespeare resumed his career writing plays. ²⁵ Together the class will note information about him on the board and create a visual representation of our ideas, and then we will read the poem again and students will have the opportunity to make any connections they can find between the poem and information they have gathered about his life or other plays or poems that he wrote. One of the things knowing this information will contribute to is that students will come to understand why the poem contains the language that it does because it was written in that particular time period. We will also pull down the world map to see where Shakespeare lived and worked. Additionally, children can be led to discover the idea that Shakespeare wrote a lot of plays and poems, and wanted his work to withstand the test of time. This is particularly relevant to Sonnet Number Twelve which suggests that memory can be perpetuated by having children but implicitly develops the theme of many later sonnets in the cycle, which is that poetry itself can perpetuate memory. This poem would be particularly relevant to study during our Life Cycles unit in science, as students are learning about their own life cycle and how one reproduces and also dies, which is touched upon in the poem as well.

3) It is important to give students the opportunity to write a various kinds of poem. Another genre I'm going to introduce them to is the Poem of Address, where the author is speaking to another person or an object. William Carlos Williams's poem, "This Is Just to Say" is an example of this type of poem. The speaker apologizes for eating plums that his wife had perhaps left in the refrigerator for another occasion and describes the sensation he had while doing it. One of the first things students will notice about this poem is that it lacks rhyme scheme. This poem is in free verse, and will lend itself to students seeing poetry as formally flexible, not just something that has rhyme. Students should be familiar with the words and vocabulary used in the poem, and in preparation for this lesson, I may purchase plums to cut up for the students so that they can taste what the speaker describes in the poem. The author, William Carlos Williams, was born in 1883 and died in 1963. He was from Rutherford, NJ and was a pediatrician, poet, and Pulitzer Prize

winner. "He is noted for making the ordinary appear extraordinary through clear and discrete imagery." ²⁶

Students will learn to read poems and respond to them in different ways. I will read this poem aloud, modeling for the students how it is read. We will discuss any ideas or questions they may have about the poem and then we will perform an echo read, where I read a line and they repeat it back to me, and then a choral read, where we all read the same words at the same time. Students can continue to practice reading it on their own. The Williams poem is great because it is short and easy to memorize. They will be able to creatively respond to it. As a class we will discuss who the speaker of the poem is, and whom the speaker is writing to. Then students can choose whether to continue the poem, write a response to the poem, or write their own "This Is Just to Say" poem revealing something that they've done and need to confess to. For students who are struggling to get started with their writing, we can brainstorm responses or things they can write together as a class. This gives students a way to get their creative minds going so they can be successful getting started.

We will look at the stanza form in "This Is Just to Say." The lines are short and grouped together into four line stanzas. Students will be able to use this format to write their own poems. I want my students to be able to make choices in writing their poems, but I also want them to be able to write in a variety of forms inspired by poems they read. Students will work in close proximity with their peers so they can ask questions and bounce ideas off each other as needed. They can also share what they've written so far and get immediate feedback. Again, sharing ideas is something that needs to be taught in advance to second grade students, and reviewed before children try their hand at writing poems. Expectations should be established for how to share ideas and respond to what others write.

Teaching poetry to young people has many valuable purposes. Poems can be used to introduce new vocabulary and forms as well as help beginning readers read more fluently and learn how to associate word patterns while integrating mathematical patterns. Poetry encourages students to get in touch with their emotions. Poems can be used to facilitate comprehension. But, the most important benefit students can receive from this unit is to enjoy reading, especially reading poetry. Reading and reciting poems should be fun for my students. They should enjoy it so much, and it should build such a strong foundation in language arts, that benefit for their entire educational careers, and develop interpretive strategies that are valuable in living their lives.

Resources - Reading List for Students

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(accessed July 16, 2011). This website is an auditory recording of William Shakespeare's Sonnet Number 12.

Koch, Kenneth. *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children*. New York: Vintage Books, 1974. This book includes poems and suggestions for how to use them in the classroom.

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This webpage offers Merriam Webster's definition of poetry.

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Appendix I - Implementing Common Core State Standards

- 2.RL.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text
- 2.RL.4 Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem or song
- 2.RL.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range
- 2.RI.6 Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe
- 2.RF.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words
- 2.RF.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension
- 2.W.5 With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing
- 2.W.6 With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including collaboration with peers
- 2.SL.1a Follow agreed upon rules for discussions
- 2.SL.1b Build on others talk in conversation by linking comments to the remarks of others
- 2.SL.1c Ask for clarification & further explanation as needed about topics and texts under discussion
- 2.SL.3 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of an topic or issue
- 2.SL.5 Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings
- 2.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking
- 2.L.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening
- 2.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies
- 2.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings
- 2.L.6 Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe

Appendix II - Suggested poems that align with curriculum themes and standards

Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Social Studies
<p><i>Introduction to Reading</i></p> <p>Dear Reader – Billy Collins</p> <p>I Go Back to the House for a Book – Billy Collins</p> <p>Things – Eloise Greenfield</p> <p>Hip Hop Rules the World – Jacqueline Woodson</p>	<p><i>Introduction to Writing - Capitalization, punctuation, dictionary skills, conventions</i></p> <p>I Ask You – Billy Collins</p> <p>Epitaph for a Book Editor – J. Patrick Lewis</p>	<p><i>Place Value, Tell Time, Money Odd & Even Numbers, Problem Solving</i></p> <p>The Learner – Brod Bagert</p> <p>Sonnet Number Twelve – William Shakespeare</p> <p>Old Man of Kilkenny – Edward Lear</p>	<p><i>Being a scientist</i></p>	<p><i>Responsible Citizenship</i></p> <p>The Mule – Ogden Nash</p>
<p><i>Kindness</i></p> <p><i>Rhythm & meaning, Vocabulary strategies, word relationships, prefixes & suffixes, spelling</i></p> <p>Introduction to Poetry – Billy Collins</p> <p>Shout! – Brod Bagert</p> <p>September – John Updike</p>	<p><i>Conventions: collective nouns, irregular plural nouns, reflexive pronouns, irregular verbs past tense, adj & adv, simple & compound sentences, contractions & possession</i></p> <p>Thesaurus – Billy Collins</p>	<p><i>Shapes & Geometry</i></p>	<p><i>Forces & Motion – Sound</i></p> <p>Music for Fun and Profit by Gary Soto</p>	<p><i>Culture</i></p> <p>Immigrants – Robert Frost</p> <p>People Equal – James Berry</p> <p>Love Poem For My People – Pedro Pietri</p> <p>Ego Tripping – Nickki Giovanni</p>

<p><i>Courage</i></p> <p>The First Airplane – Bobbi Katz</p> <p>Dream Variations – by Langston Hughes</p> <p>Parts of a Story & Comparing Stories</p>	<p><i>Narrative Writing</i></p>	<p><i>Data & Mental Math</i></p>	<p><i>Matter, Properties & Change</i></p>	<p><i>Civics & Governance</i></p> <p>Harlem Hopscotch – Maya Angelou</p>
<p><i>Around the Town</i></p> <p><i>Answering ?s about stories/text, ID & summarize main idea of stories/text</i></p>		<p><i>Equal groups, skip counting, odd & even #s</i></p>	<p><i>Earth Systems, Structures & Processes – Weather</i></p> <p>Neither Snow – Billy Collins</p> <p>Taking Turns – Brod Bagert</p> <p>To the Thawing Wind – Robert Frost</p> <p>Spring Rain - Buson</p>	<p><i>Economics & Financial Literacy</i></p>
<p><i>America's People</i></p> <p><i>Point of view, comparing stories & important points, connections to events, ideas,</i></p>	<p><i>Persuasive Writing</i></p>	<p><i>Place Value with 100s, 10s & 1s</i></p>		<p><i>History</i></p> <p>Star Spangled Banner – Francis Scott Key</p>

<i>concepts, or steps, Reason author's choice</i> My Shadow – Brod Bagert Along Came Ruth – Ford Frick The Rosa Parks – Nikki Giovanni				
<i>Let's Explore text features, clarifying images, compare important points, ask & answer right there questions, ask & answer questions about the speaker to clarify meaning</i>	Expository Writing	Fractions Best Friend by Judith Nicholls	Structures & Functions of Living Organisms – Animal Life Cycles Sonnet Number 12 – William Shakespeare	Geography & Environmental Literacy Edward Springs, Missouri? – J.Patrick Lewis Old Man on a Hill – Edward Lear The Negro Speaks of Rivers- Langston Hughs
Look Again Review Books - Eloise Greenfield	For Word – Benjamin Zephaniah	Measurement - Length	Evolution & Genetics The Rose That Grew from Concrete – Tupac Shakur	

Endnotes

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