



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

Pictures, Poems, and Planets

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Introduction

Something Missing: Fun.

How can I incorporate reading, writing and drawing poetry in my elementary art classroom as a *fun* and not a scary interdisciplinary approach for my fourth grade students? Students can be intimidated by creating art. Students can feel anxious about interpreting and composing poems. "I can't" is a common statement by those who are afraid of doing something wrong or not as good as others. As teachers we have learned and practiced many strategies and activities for de-stigmatizing new material for our students and through this unit, I hope to de-stigmatize poetry for my students. Through strategies in observation, critical thinking, and collaboration students will recognize poetry and art are both accessible. As an elementary art teacher, my main focus is on visual art – what is seen – whether it is a painting, sculpture, or collage. However, in interpreting these pieces we must use words. This is difficult for anyone let alone the high-needs elementary children that I teach. I believe that poetry could be an easier, less-threatening or intimidating avenue for students to use to develop language skills as well as knowledge of art. In the Colonial School District, there is an emphasis to incorporate Common Core State Standards in every content area. Poetry is a fundamental element of the Common Core State Standards and I aim to build engagement in both poetic literacy and visual illustration in my elementary art classroom through humorous poetry.

As a child, I adored the humor of Shel Silverstein and still laugh today when reading "Something Missing." ¹ In this work, Silverstein creates a character who has forgotten to put something on as he dressed for a dance:

I remember I put on my socks, I remember I put on my shoes, I remember I put on my tie
That was painted In beautiful purples and blues. I remember I put on my coat,
To look perfectly grand at the dance, Yet I feel there is something I may have
forgot – What is it? What is it?... ²

The character carefully chose a tie "that painted in beautiful purples and blues" ³ but what is missing in his preparation and is implied by the absence of what would, based on the pattern, rhyme with dance. The accompanying drawing confirms for the reader what is missing in Silverstein's character's attire – his pants! The structure of this poem allows the reader to fill in the missing piece, and if they cannot match the rhyme, the accompanying illustration featured below exposes the answer. The use of humor and the assistance of

illustrations will allow even my most challenged students to find success in reading and interpreting poetry.



4

Featured in the collection *A Light in the Attic*, this poem and picture engage the audience with humor but also demonstrate that the drawing is an integral element in deciphering the riddle questioned in the work, "What is it? What is it?..." Impressionist painter Edgar Degas stated "Art is not what you see, but what you make others see." ⁵ Like works of art, I believe all poems evoke emotions and meanings but not all poems are crafted to explain a riddle. I have chosen poems which have illustrations that unlock their meaning and turn these poems into games the students can play. "Something Missing" inspires me to fill in the gaps in my curriculum to best meet my students' needs. I want to emphasize that learning about art and poetry is fun!

In different ways, all poems offer a riddle for the reader to answer. Silverstein's poems often integrate the drawing to better understand the meaning of the words. In the poem "Something Missing," the drawing alone doesn't explain why the man is standing there with no pants and the poem doesn't reveal the missing apparel. The two parts work together to provide details and meaning. Silverstein's poems that have this interdependent relationship and silly humor will inspire my students to read, write and illustrate similar poems and drawings.

The 2014-15 school year marks my tenth year as an art educator and my fourth year at this school. All

students in Kindergarten through 5th grade participate in Art class for a weekly 45 minute class period. Homeroom classes range from 20 to 30 students. Currently, there is no set curriculum, pacing guide or scope and sequence for the visual art teachers in our district. Although at times difficult, this is one of the best parts of my job—tailoring the art lessons to the interests and needs of my students while merging the current school and district goals and choosing a variety of artists, works and concepts I think the children will find captivating. During art class, students at Eisenberg study various artists, art styles and cultures from around the world. Art lessons correlate with the academic core curriculum in English language arts, science, math and social studies as I frequently collaborate with the grade level partners as well as school and district curriculum coaches. Students create art in many mediums – printmaking, watercolors, tempera paint, aluminum relief, papermaking, plaster gauze, colored pencil, collage, crayons, pastels, markers and pencil. All lessons are aligned with the National and Delaware Visual Art Content Standards and are taught using Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and Learning Focused Strategies (LFS).

I will introduce the students to the funny and quirky poems and drawings by Shel Silverstein. In "The Reading Teacher," Glazer and Lamme describe how poem-pictures are special because "They provide a unique way of looking at a poem, one that combines the art of poetry with the art of illustration. They enhance children's enjoyment of poetry and of art, can stimulate discussion about a poem's meaning and mood, and can encourage children to create and interpret poetry on their own." ⁶ Employing SIOP and LFS, I will break down and combat apprehension to learning about poetry and art. At the time I intend to present this unit, the students will be completing a science unit, "Sky Watchers," exploring the Earth's place in the universe taught by their homeroom teacher. For the culminating activity in art, each student will choose an aspect from their solar system unit to develop a poem and create an illustration to describe their poem. Their poem will use rhyme and figurative language inspired by elements in Silverstein's work.

Rationale

Something Missing: Intrinsic motivation to learn.

Harry O. Eisenberg Elementary of the Colonial School District was awarded by the U.S. Department of Education the title of National Blue Ribbon School for the 2012 school year. In the two subsequent years, we have not met adequate yearly progress goals. With the addition of a new principal and assistant principal beginning this July, our students and teachers face an uphill battle to regain our enthusiasm and aptitude for learning. I hope this unit helps to ignite intrinsic motivation for learning in my fourth grade students by creating a personal experience in art class through drawing, poetry, and science.

The attitudes and priorities of our elementary students are similar to those of many other schools. The children have smart phones, wear the latest fashion trends, play video games, and listen to today's hit music. Unlike many other schools, and also disturbing, is the children's life at home and its impact on their social and academic performance at school. Our children come to Eisenberg from all different types of home life, some with negligent parents, parent(s) imprisoned, teenage pregnancy, gangs in their neighborhoods, and observe alcohol and drug abuse at home and nearby. At times, children come to school hungry because there is no nutritious food at home, tired because they are kept awake at night by parents fighting or partying, or distracted from focusing on other events in their unstable home environment. This setting can make it difficult for our students to see the bigger picture of the world, to set goals for college and career, and to achieve their

greatest potential.

Yet, despite their experience, the educational system demands the same achievement from Eisenberg students as it does everywhere else. Beginning this school year, student performance will be measured through Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium tests aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Teachers are evaluated under the Delaware Performance Appraisal System; thus not only are they tested in their core subjects, students are required to take pre and post tests in art class. The results of the tests in art class are then used to evaluate my job performance. Most often, the students are frustrated by the inordinate amount of testing and are not inspired by their parents and guardians to succeed in academics. The students' home environment and recent standardized test scores propel my job as an art teacher to be even more vital and challenging for the future success of my students.

As a young child, I learned nursery rhymes, songs and poems on the laps of my parents and grandparents; I avidly colored pages, painted seashells and performed songs alongside my brothers and sister. However, many of the children entering Eisenberg have a lack of an early childhood education in the 'ABCs' and frequently have no crayons, paints, or books at home. Even more frequently, students do not have an opportunity in their home lives to view art outside of mainstream media and design such as clothing, video and computer games, and cartoons. While these can be viable sources of inspiration for some, they do not always provide rich, meaningful and authentic sources of reference. I believe a comprehensive visual art education teaches the history of human existence through the study of past artists, craftspeople and their art, their culture, their feelings, and their dreams.

Personally, I find poetry very exciting and inspiring. With the background knowledge I learned at home and in my public school education, I was able to extend my interest in poetry as a lifelong learner. During my undergraduate degree as a visual art major, I was poised to create a wearable sculpture in black and white text. I created a scarf swirled into a head wrap featuring the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The sculpture illustrated the feeling evoked by Barrett Browning's love poems and my interpretation of getting your head spinning or wrapped up in love. Poetry appears in many forms throughout our lives — songs, movies, television, and advertising to name just a few. In one of my favorite motion pictures, *The Princess Bride*, a seemingly dark band of criminals sails off to kidnap a princess but yet as Fezzik and Inigo Montoya banter in rhymes we laugh at their silliness. I want my students to begin to develop a life-long love for all aspects of poetry and see how poetry can communicate ideas and feelings.

John Hollander states, "We no longer memorize poems at school." ⁷ In many classrooms, songs and poems have been pushed aside to focus on learning for a specific test. Even though some poems serve as mnemonic functions to remember facts, many teachers have excluded them as learning devices. Administrations have cut funding for the arts in districts throughout the country and reduced budgets and time for creativity in curriculum. I believe creativity and image making is crucial for children. "The capacity for symbolization vastly expands their intellectual horizons, liberating them from the constraints of time and space and enabling them to acquire information about reality without directly experiencing it." ⁸

I enjoy collaborating with other disciplines in my school to foster deeper understanding in my content area of visual art and other areas- English language arts, math, social studies and science. At the fourth grade level, I noticed I did not have any science related projects. In anticipation of this unit, I reached out to a fourth grade homeroom teacher to learn the specific science kits that were being taught in their grade. In the *Poem Picture Classroom*, the author states, "Science instruction also can be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of poem picture books...The ultimate goal of a science curriculum is to help children become curious and feed their

sense of wonder." ⁹ In our discussion, my colleague shared the excitement students exhibit for their unit on the solar system and how they always ask to learn more about the topic. This was the perfect parameter I was searching for to give a focus to the students in their poetry writing and incorporate science. The students in fourth grade will gain background knowledge of the solar system through "Sky Watchers" in their homeroom science class. After an introduction and 'playing' with poetry and art, students will then use their prior knowledge of the planets' properties from fourth grade science curriculum to create a poem about an imaginary trip to a planet of their choice and draw an illustration of themselves during this extraordinary visit. I hope these activities will be two-fold, the students will gain additional readiness skills in literacy and in their imaginings, escape to a far-away place where anything can happen!

Objectives

Something Missing: Appreciation for the Arts.

In this unit based on Langdon L. Hammer's seminar, "Playing with Poems: Rules, Tools and Games," students will study the poems and drawings of Shel Silverstein to discover how *visual imagery influences understanding of and responses to the world*. The students will use their prior knowledge of the solar system learned in science to demonstrate how *learning can be deepened by connecting visual art to other disciplines* by writing and illustrating their own poems. In "Using Visual Images", the author states, "Teaching methods involving discussion in which students are encouraged to express their ideas and make their reasoning explicit have been shown to have a positive effect on cognitive development and on the learning of new content." ¹⁰

To understand these concepts we will also explore many questions throughout the unit. To introduce poetry we will discuss, "*Where and how do we encounter images in our world? How do artists and writers create meaning through visual and written texts?*" Students will read and write their own poems in pairs and groups and experiment with the role of collaboration in creativity, "*How does collaboration expand the creative process?*" In a review of the solar system vocabulary and concepts, students will explore, "*how learning is deepened through a study of visual art?*"

Demographics

Something Missing: Basic Needs.

Eisenberg students come to school for not only an education, but also for safety and nutrition. Less than five miles south of Wilmington, Delaware, the school is situated in the town of New Castle, while considered suburban, lies on the edge of a very dangerous city. According to an analysis of the FBI's uniformed crime report, Wilmington was the third most violent of 450 cities of comparable size in 2012. It's the eighth most violent city of nearly 750 cities with a population of over 50,000. ¹¹ The Colonial School District serves approximately 10,000 students and has 8 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, one high school and two special needs schools. My school, Harry O. Eisenberg Elementary, embraces approximately 550 students. Over 80% of the students are characterized as living in a low income household, approximately 70% of the students

are minorities, 20% are English Language Learners and over 10% are designated as requiring Special Education services. My building has a certified special education teacher assigned to each grade level. Our guidance counselor, school psychologist and family crisis therapist meet with students individually and in groups to discuss life changes. Through state and local donations, students can receive free backpacks and winter coats. The family crisis therapist also maintains a food pantry housed in our school building and with the support of the Food Bank of Delaware provides a local location to serve our students' families. Based on the large number of those who qualify, our entire school population receives free breakfast, lunch and a fruit or vegetable snack every day. I am proud to work in a district that strives to go beyond educating to meet the basic needs of our students.

Background

Something Missing: Art and Poetry.

The integration of art with another discipline provides a deeper understanding of both disciplines and provides the child with multiple opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding. It is also fundamental in visual art for students to reflect in writing their work and the work of others. As noted in the National Core Arts Standards Anchor Standard 8, students are to "Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work." The visual art teachers in my district are also expected to support the Common Core Standards which are intertwined as the students read, write and speak about artwork. Poetry offers a unique pathway to these standards from art.

There is a long history of the interconnection of poem and picture. The pairing of poems and pictures dates back prior to recorded time. In sixth century B.C., Simonides of Ceos is quoted to have said, "Painting is mute poetry, poetry a speaking picture." ¹² Egyptian hieroglyphics and Japanese literature undoubtedly were early forms of poem and picture combinations but our lack of knowledge of their translations and loss of some of these works contribute to the fact that it is not clearly defined when artists began combining these two art forms. ¹³

Born in 1812, Edward Lear is known for being one of the first poets to incorporate the drawing in an interdependent way with his poetry. "All of Lear's poems were originally published with his illustrations...and the limericks in particular cannot be separated from the drawings." ¹⁴ The poems and drawings are self-described as "nonsense." Lear used invented words and even imaginary botany. Dr. Seuss continued use of nonsense words and characters in his poems and books. Describing the well-known children's author, Theodor Geisel, Philip Nel states, "the quantity and variety of new creatures demonstrates that, in terms of inventiveness, Dr. Seuss is heir to Edward Lear." ¹⁵

More recently and perhaps better known to our generation is the poet and artist Shel Silverstein. Born at the beginning of the Great Depression to immigrant parents, a young Silverstein took refuge in quiet activities like reading and drawing as a way to keep his busy mind active while keeping occupied and out of his father's way. Silverstein's father was burdened with the pressure of operating his fledgling bakery in uncertain financial times and wasn't fond of the joyful noise that children brought to his house. Another early influence was Silverstein's love of the country and western stations on the radio. Silverstein's incessant drawing aggravated his father, as he felt more time should be focused on school in preparation to take over the family business. Consumed by drawing, Silverstein continued to college but did not excel as a student, even as an art

major. Despite his lack of success in school, Silverstein was eventually capable of the financial and artistic freedom sought by many. Although Silverstein is chiefly credited as a children's author, he also scripted and directed plays, composed lyrics and performed songs, drew adult humor cartoons and authored travelogues. Undeniably, Silverstein's restricted childhood prepared him to express himself in the life of an artist, traveling freely and unrestrained and exploring many mediums.

Silverstein played with poems using literary devices with the great expertise and inventiveness. At the outset of the Yale National Institute, our seminar leader proposed, "How do we know a piece of writing is a poem?" A flurry of responses followed — listing all the elements of figurative language, rhyming, spacing, syllable patterns, etc. In the elementary school environment, figurative language offers an advanced way of describing the content in their writing. Figurative language is also a fun way of using imagery in writing. For teachers who do not typically teach writing, there are many internet sites to further explain definitions and examples of figurative language. In the vein of making learning fun, the site Educational Raps features 'Rhythm Rhyme Results - Figurative Language' a kid-friendly rap explaining personification, alliteration, assonance, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and onomatopoeia. An early elementary student might simply write, "The car is red." Students who have developed as writers might use a simile by using "like" or "as" to say, "The car is red like roses." Another way to compare two items but without using "like" or "as" is through metaphor. Silverstein writes a metaphor in "Play Ball" to describe the extreme velocity of the pitcher "Who can throw with blinding speed." ¹⁶

Silverstein employed onomatopoeia in many poems, mimicking the noise one hears. "Eight Balloons" pop and whoosh and float away when they broke loose. ¹⁷ "Picture Puzzle Piece" ¹⁸ demonstrates alliteration beginning with the title, as the first letter or sound of every word is the same. The book, *Lafcadio: The Lion Who Shot Back*, ¹⁹ is an example of personification, as the main character, a lion, speaks, shoots a gun, becomes famous working in a circus while he stays in a hotel suite, wears a suit and signs autographs. Hyperbole is used to exaggerate the meaning as Silverstein writes in "Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out" the trash had gotten so large that "The garbage reached across the state, From New York to the Golden Gate!" ²⁰

Silverstein followed no one rule when writing his poems. Typically, refrain or repetition in a poem activates the reader's imagination by emphasizing an emotion or a message. The echo of "Here comes summer, here comes summer" ²¹ in the poem "Here Comes," evokes the excitement of all the pleasures summer has to offer until "Whoosh - shiver - there it goes." ²² Rhyming can have the same effect as stimulating a sensation but also provides a rhythm to the poem sometimes creating a song pattern. As you read aloud "Actions," the reader follows the beat, "If we stop and talk awhile, That's a conversation. If we understand each other, That's communication." ²³ Refrain and rhyming offer ways to play with reading and writing poetry.

Runny Babbit ²⁴ is not a typo but a book written in spoonerisms. Named after the Reverend William Archibald Spooner who lived in the late 19th century and into the 20th century, spoonerisms swap the first letter of the word with the word that follows. Reverend Spooner was known to get flustered when he spoke saying, "You have hissed my mystery lecture." ²⁵ Students will enjoy listening to and creating their own spoonerisms.

Concrete or shape poetry is noted to be officially named in 1955 during a meeting between Brazilian poet Decio Pignatari and Swiss and Bolivian-born poet Eugen Gomringer. ²⁶ This type of poem instead of typically having a left justified margin, it is in a correlated shape. Silverstein's "Here I Go Down Circle Road," ²⁷ poem is written in an outline of a circle. "Here I go down circle road strong and hopeful hearted through the dust and

wind up just exactly where I started" ²⁸ At the top of the circle is a drawing of a little man facing right. The shape of the poem reinforces the meaning by ending the sentence where the sentence began creating an everlasting loop to "wind up just exactly where I started."

Poetry and art work together because they are so similar. Hollander states, "The building blocks of poetry itself are elements of fiction-fable, 'image', metaphor – all the material of the non-literal." ²⁹ The non-literal aspects of the poem stimulate the reader in the same way art does. In art, the arrangement of the elements of art; color, shape, line, texture, value, form, and space- create the story the viewer puts together without words. In Silverstein's poems, these two 'non-literal' forms combine together. The answer to Silverstein's question posed in "The Runners" ³⁰ is unanswered without the image and the humor of the image is lost without the poem.

Why does our track team run so fast
And jump with zest and zeal?
We owe it all to our great coach
And our wonderful practice field. ³¹

THE RUNNERS

Why does our track team run so fast
And jump with zest and zeal?
We owe it all to our great coach
And our wonderful practice field.



In my elementary art classroom, the relationship between the poem and picture seems innate. Poet Myra Cohn Livingston states, "we ought to be encouraging children to make their own pictures instead of presenting them with an illustration for every set of words." ³² I believe the students will love the wondrous world of poetry and art through the work of Shel Silverstein and will be motivated to create their own.

Teaching Strategies

Something Missing: The "Four Cs".

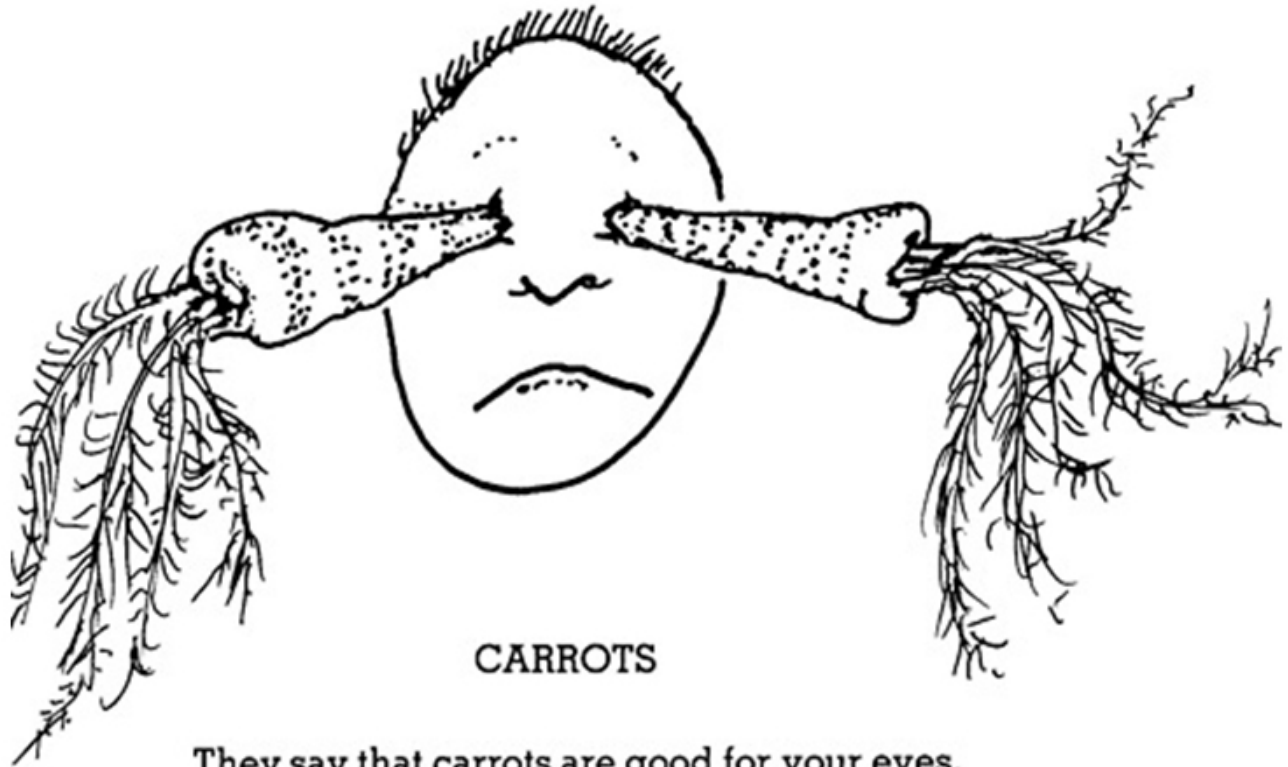
We are all familiar with the term the "Three Rs" to represent reading, writing and arithmetic. Recent findings for preparing students in the 21st Century empowers educators to broaden the "Three Rs" to add the "Four Cs", collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and communication. ³³ The "Four Cs" will be incorporated in this unit and fortunately occur naturally in art class.

During a walking tour of the Yale University campus, our guide, a rising junior, cited many times how the university was founded and progressed on the principle of collaboration. Not coincidentally, collaboration is also a fundamental piece in the Yale National Initiative (YNI) program. Acknowledging the success of both Yale and YNI, I aim to base many of the activities of this unit on the strategies of collaboration. Of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) techniques, I intend to facilitate 'Think, Pair, Share' and a walking 'Carousel'. SIOP is a teaching method that involves several techniques to break down learning incorporating collaboration and focuses on supporting English as second language learners. To prepare the students for life, the students need to know how to work in collaborative groups that will continue to develop throughout their careers and in their families. Modeling ideal collaborative behavior for working in groups at the elementary level will help build these skills for their future.

Critical thinking will be applied through the practices of Learning Focused Strategies (LFS). LFS provides teachers and students with an end-in-mind philosophy to learning. Teachers prepare lessons by first identifying what they want students to learn. Students learn vocabulary before the lesson is presented. Students are presented with Unit and Lesson Essential Questions prior to the activities in class and reviewed daily. These questions will provide students with the knowledge of the goals and outcomes for their learning.

Students will analyze, interpret and reflect on the work of Lear and Silverstein as well as their own. Writing their own poem and drawing an illustration to further interpret the meaning will deliver the students an opportunity to be creative in this unit. The solar system unit provides a thematic focus but also will allow each child to choose what and how these parts will be combined. Communication will be incorporated in this unit, through the student sharing their imaginary journey in words and pictures.

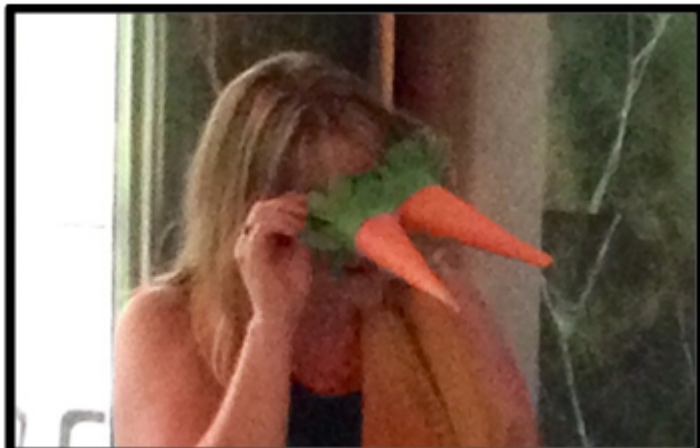
Classroom Activities



They say that carrots are good for your eyes,
They swear that they improve your sight,
But I'm seein' worse than I did last night—
You think maybe I ain't usin' 'em right?

34

Make learning fun! To hook the students into the unit, start class by reading aloud Shel Silverstein's "Carrots" while wearing glasses or an eye mask with carrots attached. This is how I attached the carrots on my sunglasses when I recited the poem:



No doubt the students will laugh at the poem if they aren't already laughing at you. Ask the students, what is the proper way to 'use' carrots? This is a great way to incorporate humor and begin questioning between the relationship between the poem and the visual illustration. As a whole group or in pairs, you could also discuss if they have ever misunderstood what someone told them?

The classroom activities are presented in three stages to have students engage through critical thinking, expand their ideas in collaboration, and explore their creativity and share through communication. While all teachers may not be able to dedicate the same amount of classroom time for this project, I think it is useful to select what will work best in your classroom. As with reading levels, students arrive in our classrooms with varying degrees of skill in drawing. Likewise, these activities are differentiated and intended to have every student be successful.

Engaging Through Critical Thinking

Finding the meaning in an artwork or a poem can be daunting but we approach both, using a similar skill set, observation. Dominic Lopes says "no picture is seen with an innocent eye, because we come to pictures primed with beliefs, expectations, and attitudes about systems of representation." ³⁶ Through critical thinking, students can discover that they hold the keys to unlocking the meaning of a poem or work of art.

In *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, the character Apollo states, "You might as well ask an artist to explain his art, or ask a poet to explain his poem. It defeats the purpose. The meaning is only clear thorough the search." ³⁷ Viewers of any age can search through poetry and art to decipher their own meaning. When you think about it, we use art and poetry in our everyday lives. Ask students, what is art? and what is a poem? Once they recognize that art can found in video games, clothing, advertising, packaging, picture books, etc. they begin to see art is accessible. Similarly, poems can be found in songs, nursery rhymes, mnemonic devices, children's books, etc. Many students by fourth grade have written poems in an acrostic form, using the letters in a word to begin each line of the poem. To analyze an artwork and poem, there three basic questions — "What do you see/read?" "What do you think it means?" "What do you see that makes you think that?" I would recommend first working together as a whole group to model interpretation. Organize and group your thoughts on a t-chart. Graphic organizers are useful to help student organize their thoughts and derive conclusions. The left column will display what you actually see or read and the right column will display your interpretation of what you see. Ask the students to spend a quiet minute to look at the picture or read the poem. Ask the students what do they see or read and add the students' answers to the left column of the t-chart.

Next begin the "Think, Pair, Share" strategy by asking the students to think about what is going on in the picture or poem. After about thirty seconds, have students discuss with the person next to them or their table group what they thought. Circulate through the room to monitor conversations and assist to facilitate as necessary. Have the students continue the discussions for a few minutes. Finally, ask a pair or group to share one of their findings, and ask them what do they see/read that makes you think that and add the responses to right side of the t-chart, as seen below. If more than one student/group finds the same conclusions make a tally or mark the duplicates. Ask the students to reflect on their overall conclusions: "Did we reach the same conclusions and meanings?" "Is it possible to have more than one correct answer based on a different viewpoint?"

What do you see? What do you read?	What do you think it means?
<p>I see snow outside the window. The person is having problems with their eyesight.</p>	<p>I think the season is winter. They were not supposed to put the carrots actually in their eyes.</p>

Students may find it easier to have a written prompt to refer to while they identify and interpret the works. I like to add clip art images next to the list or question to help students with reading challenges in deciphering the words. For example, next to the question, "What do you see?" would show a big pair of eyes or a pair of binoculars.

Prior to implementing this unit in your art classroom, I suggest asking the grade level teachers, a reading specialist or a reading coach what the student learning objectives specifically focused on at your school. Other ways of seeking meaning can be investigated by discussing, who is the speaker? Is the author or artist the character represented? What is the author's or artist's purpose of the work — to persuade, inform or entertain?

Helen Plotz writes, "for science and art – or poetry, if you will – are alike, dedicated to exploring and questioning." ³⁸ Students with more experience in art might dissect an artwork by identifying how the artist used the elements of art. The Elements of Art are the 'tools' that artists use to create a work of art — line, shape, color, texture, space, value, space. Students in some schools might recognize the use of figurative language in poetry such as alliteration, rhyme, personification, simile, and metaphor. Create a list of figurative language examples to use as a resource for creating a poem later in the unit.

Expand Ideas Through Collaboration

Collaboration will allow students to become more confident in their analysis and creation of poems and art works. Depending on the amount of class time, there are many ways to have students work together. As a warm-up activity or exit strategy, the students can play Exquisite Corpse. In the early 1900's, a group of artists called Surrealists played a game they named Exquisite Corpse. To begin the game, a sentence or phrase format is chosen, as in adjective-noun-verb. The each participant writes their phrase on a paper, folds the paper to hide their phrase and passes it to the next participant who continues the pattern until everyone has written one phrase of adjective-noun-verb. The first student might write, "adventurous astronaut air-walks" and the next student may write, "silly girls hopscotch." To differentiate among different learning levels, pair or group students and model the first phrase line of the poem.

Haikus are also approachable for elementary students. Ask students to write a haiku, a poem consisting of three lines of five syllables, then seven syllables, then five syllables. After the haikus are written, ask students to work in pairs to illustrate each other's poems. Another cooperative activity, the teacher may choose to assign each student or group a line of a poem from Shel Silverstein's *"Eight Balloons"* ³⁹ or *"A Closet Full of Shoes"* ⁴⁰ to illustrate. After the illustrations are complete, each student or group can present their illustration and read aloud their assigned section of the poem.

Explore Your Creativity and Share Through Communication

In art, the importance of the process of creating is equivalent to the outcome of the final product. Each student should be evaluated with a rubric and with reference to the best of their own ability. In my opinion, all

students' work should not look identical. When choosing the poems to introduce to your class, find ones that you enjoy reading. Just like our students, we are all different. As teachers, our enthusiasm is transparent even to the naivety of children. They will see your smile and find your enchantment with the poem contagious. Through a read of Silverstein's collection of poems, *A Light in the Attic*, I earmarked three dozen poems that would enhance this unit.

Introduce the students to your favorites from the collections of the funny and quirky poems and drawings by Shel Silverstein. I recommend finding a YouTube recording of Silverstein reading one of his poems. His voice is unique and who better to read than the author himself! Read aloud or ask for volunteers to read aloud, poems that have interdependent illustrations or where the illustrations further the imagination of the reader but do not show the class the drawing. Ask the students to infer the meaning of the poem. After several responses are shared, show the students the interconnected illustration. Discuss if their predictions are accurate and how the image changes the meaning. Repeat the same exercise with "Sun Hat,"⁴¹ "Turkey?,"⁴² "Stupid Pencil Maker,"⁴³ "Cookwitch Sandwich,"⁴⁴ "The Runners,"⁴⁵ and "Snake Problem."⁴⁶

After seeing several examples of Silverstein's drawings, ask the students to describe his art work. Referencing the elements of art, fourth grade students should be able to discuss color, line, shape, space and texture. Students should recognize that there is no color in the work, just black outline on white paper. Students should note how Silverstein typically shows space by drawing a horizon line to give the characters a place to stand or run, as seen in "The Runners."⁴⁷ Ask the students to describe how they can build a picture using shapes and then look for general shapes in Silverstein's drawings, like the rounded triangles to create the carrots. Point out how Silverstein showed texture by changing the way he draws the lines, as illustrated in the dots and dashes to describe the undulations on the carrots.

Activate the students' prior knowledge from science by reading "Moon-Catchin' Net"⁴⁸ and "Somebody Has To."⁴⁹ If time permits you could also introduce poems that do not have an illustration attached, for example, "Go Fly A Saucer"⁵⁰ by David McCord. Ask the students to list the places they could visit in a spaceship based on what they learned in their science unit. The list could include sun, Mercury, Venus, Moon, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, galaxy, comet, star, etc. Write each on a separate piece of paper and spread around the room. Group the students in pairs and have them 'carousel' around the classroom. With each group starting at a different location, have the students list characteristics of that place in the solar system. After one to two minutes, indicate for the students to rotate counter-clockwise and add more characteristics to each place. The rotation indicator could add an element of amusement by having a tone sound like 'blast off' or play a song, "Weird Science" by Oingo Boingo. As they rotate, if they had the same idea as someone before them, instead of having 'rings' written several times to describe Saturn, each group should place a checkmark next to the word. Continue the carousel rotation as time permits or until all the possible traits are listed.

Using the student generated solar system traits list, each student will choose an aspect of the 'Sky Watchers' unit to develop a poem. While they are brainstorming ideas for their poem, encourage them to doodle and draw on their paper. Circulate the room to provide feedback and suggestions for students on developing their poems and illustrations. Next, direct the students to refer to the list of poetic references you created to incorporate in their poem. Allow them to choose the poem format the "speaks" to them. It could be a haiku, free verse or rhyming poem of at least three lines. Give the students a paper to fold in half twice and make four different thumbnail sketches of their drawings. Each sketch should be a different picture relating to the poem they wrote. Refer to the elements of art as the students draw and encourage the student to extend, add details and rework to improve their drawings. Once the poem and illustration are finalized, have the student

transfer them onto a piece of drawing paper in pencil. To create a finished appearance, they should trace over their pencil lines with a thin tip black marker. Allowing each student to have a choice of the type of poem and solar system location provides an opportunity for students to gain a personal connection with the work. Their personal connection is then deepened by making creative decisions about how they would experience their out-of-this-world exploration.

Finally, the students will communicate their ideas through the words of the poem and through the picture of the planetary adventure with the school community. Their final work can be shown collaboratively and displayed on a bulletin board, combined into a book for each student to keep, scanned into a digital slideshow, or record each student reading their poem while displaying their drawing in a digital story.

Resources

Teacher Resources

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, Julia Markus, and William S. Peterson. *Sonnets from the Portuguese: illuminated by the Brownings' love letters*. Hopewell, N.J.: Ecco Press ;, 1998.

This book includes the beloved poem, "How do I love thee, let me count the ways..." and letters written between Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning.

DeLoache, Judy S., Sophia L. Pierroutsakos, and David H. Uttal. "The Origins Of Pictorial Competence." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 12, no. 4 (2003):114-118 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20182855> (accessed July 13, 2014).

This article describes how we perceive images focusing on how children interact with pictures.

"Figurative Language." Song with Free Worksheets and Activities. <http://www.educationalrap.com/song/figurative-language/> (accessed August 4, 2014).

Education Rap publishes rap and hip hop songs to teach many different content areas. In this song, elements of figurative language are defined in a very accessible method even elementary students can learn.

Glazer, Joan I., and Linda Leonard Lamme. "Poem picture books and their uses in the classroom." *The Reading Teacher* 44, no. 2 (1990): 102-109. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20200563> (accessed July 13, 2014).

In this article, the author discusses the importance of poem picture books to stimulate children's interest in learning and deepen their understanding of the world around them.

Hollander, John. *Rhyme's reason: a guide to English verse*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

This book is excellent for explaining the basic conventions of poetry forms.

Klonsky, Milton. *Speaking pictures: a gallery of pictorial poetry from the sixteenth century to the present*. New York: Harmony Books, 1975.

This book is a collection of poems where pictures play a role in supporting the words.

Lear, Edward, and Constance Braham Strachey Strachie. *The complete nonsense book*. Tenth Edition ed. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1912.

This book is Lear's collection of limericks with illustrations, fictional botany and other poems and drawings.

Lear, Edward, and Peter Swaab. *Over the land and over the sea: selected nonsense and travel writings*. Manchester: Carcanet, 2005.

This book contains Lear's nonsense poetry and writings from his travels. The introduction provides more biographical information through letters and accounts by those who knew him.

Moore, Dorothy K.. "Getting Personal with Poetry." *Teaching Pre K-8* 33, no. 7 (2003): 50.

This article describes a teacher's narrative of the failures and successes of teaching poetry and strategies to help engage students.

Mostow, Joshua S.. "Painted Poems, Forgotten Words. Poem-Pictures and Classical Japanese Literature." *Monumenta Nipponica* 47, no. 3 (1992): 323-346. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2385102> (accessed July 13, 2014).

This article presents research on the history of the beginning of the use of pictures with poems in Japanese literature.

Nathan, Jesse. "Origin of the Species." Poetry Foundation. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/artcle/181785> (accessed July 11, 2014).

This article briefly chronicles Shel Silverstein's works for adults and children.

Nel, Philip. *Dr. Seuss: American icon*. New York: Continuum, 2004.

This book is a biography of Theodor Seuss Geisel, also known as Dr. Seuss.

Pinsky, Robert. *The sounds of poetry: a brief guide*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.

This book describes the ways we hear poetry through the works by well-known poets.

Plotz, Helen. *Imagination's other place: poems of science and mathematics*. New York: Crowell, 1955.

This book is a collection of poetry about science and math from a variety of poets.

Rogak, Lisa. *A boy named Shel: the life & times of Shel Silverstein*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007.

A comprehensive biography written mostly through interviews with his friends and acquaintances. The book chronologically presents Silverstein's works and how and why he created them.

"Welcome to Shel Silverstein | Shel Silverstein." Welcome to Shel Silverstein | Shel Silverstein. <http://www.shelsilverstein.com/> (accessed July 11, 2014).

This website provides teacher resources and worksheets. The most recent additions connect to the Common Curriculum Unit 14.02.09

Core State Standards.

Wood, Karen D., Katie Stover, and Brian Kissel. "Using digital voice threads to promote 21st century learning." *Middle School Journal* 44, no. 4 (2013): 58-64.

This article discusses how using a software application, VoiceThread, is used in enhancing student learning and describes a lesson integrating poetry.

Zabel, Morton Dauwen. "Poems and Pictures." *Poetry* 34, no. 4 (1929): 217-222.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20577131> (accessed July 13, 2014).

This article explains the (then) current relationship of images with art.

Student Resources

In addition to the cited works, you might find interesting to read the poems by the following authors to expand your classroom library and to engage your students further in poetry and illustration: Jack Prelutsky, Bob Raczka, Douglas Florian, Eric Carle, Leo Lionni, Richard Scarry, John Hollander, Bruce Lansky, May Swenson, Ezra Jack Keats, Robert McCloskey, Lewis Carroll, Robert Lewis Stevenson.

Silverstein, Shel. *Lafcadio: the lion who shot back*. United States: Harper Collins, 1963.

This book is Silverstein's first children novel, written in first person. The story tells a tale of a lion who becomes rich and famous then returns to the wild and is faced with the dilemma of being a part of two worlds.

Silverstein, Shel. *The giving tree*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

This is a must read for teachers and students, touching story of the relationship between humans and the environment.

Silverstein, Shel. *Where the sidewalk ends: the poems & drawings of Shel Silverstein..* New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

The first of three collections of poems and drawings intended for a young audience.

Silverstein, Shel. *A light in the attic*. New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1981.

The second of three collections of poems and drawings intended for a young audience. I cited from many of these poems in this unit.

Silverstein, Shel. *Falling up: poems and drawings*. New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins, 1996.

The third collection of poems and drawings intended for a young audience. The solar system related poems I cited are in this book.

Silverstein, Shel. *Runny Babbit: a billy sook*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Silverstein's story based full of spoonerisms.

Seuss, Dr.. *Marvin K. Mooney, will you please go now!*. New York: Random House, 1972.

This book uses figurative language and rhyme to tell the story of an unwelcome character.

Appendix A

Implementing District Standards

The Colonial School District adheres to the Delaware Recommended Curriculum Standards which were adopted from the National Art Education Association Standards published in 2006. In Standard 2, "Using knowledge of structures and functions," students will select and apply the knowledge of the elements of art to convey their imaginings about a fantasy planetary trip in their drawing. Students will reach Standard 3, "Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas" in their drawing by picking what will work best to accompany their poem. Standard 6, "Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines," are evident as the students will use their prior knowledge of poems in English Language Arts and of the solar system in science to demonstrate how skills transfer between the visual arts and other disciplines.

Common Core Standards - Reading, Speaking and Listening, Writing, Language

My unit is focused on the visual art standards but there are many natural links with the Common Core Anchor Standards fulfilled by the Reading-Written Connection. I have included some that I feel highlight the most important aspects of this unit.

R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of the text.

Reading R.6 is demonstrated through the students discussion of the viewpoint of the reader makes a difference in interpreting the poems especially with the drawings.

R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Reading R.7 is demonstrated through the use of images as a resource for interpretation.

SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Speaking and Listening SL.1 is demonstrated as students work in pairs and small groups to analyze and create poetry and drawings.

W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Writing W.3 is demonstrated as students create their own poem and image based on their prior knowledge from social students to imagine a trip to outer space.

L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Language L.5 is demonstrated as students incorporate rhymes and figurative language in their poetry.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

The new National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts were released on June 4, 2014 and are proposed to be adopted by the Delaware Department of Education and subsequently, by the Colonial School District. Preparing for the anticipated adoption, there are several standards that directly relate to the goals of this unit. The process of developing ideas through brainstorming and drawing thumbnails to a final work is represented in Creating Anchor Standard 1, 'Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work' and Presenting Anchor Standard 5 'Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.' Responding, Anchor Standard 8 to 'Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work' will be met as students examine the work of Shel Silverstein. Students will address Connecting Anchor Standard 10 as they activate their prior knowledge from science to visit another planet when they "Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art."

Notes

1. Shel Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 26.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. "The Kennedy Center Arts Edge Artist Quotes," accessed July 13, 2014, <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/quotes/quotes/degas-edgar-1>.

6. Joan I. Glazer and Linda Leonard Lamme, "Poem picture books and their uses in the classroom." *The Reading Teacher* 44, no. 2 (1990): 108, accessed July 13, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20200563>

7. John Hollander, *Rhyme's reason: a guide to English verse*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 2.

8. Judy S. DeLoache, Sophia L. Pierroutsakos, and David H. Uttal, "The Origins Of Pictorial Competence." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 12, no. 4 (2003):114, accessed July 13, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20182855>.

9. Glazer and Lamme, *The Reading Teacher*, 107.

10. Wood, Karen D., Katie Stover, and Brian Kissel, "Using digital voice threads to promote 21st century learning." *Middle School Journal* 44, no. 4 (2013): 58.

11. "No Escaping Wilmington Violence," accessed July 13, 2014, <http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/speak-easy-delaware/63274-no-escaping-wilmington-violence-in-2013>.

12. Milton Klonsky, *Speaking pictures: a gallery of pictorial poetry from the sixteenth century to the present* (New York: Harmony Books, 1975), 1.
13. Ibid.
14. Edward Lear and Peter Swaab, *Over the land and over the sea: selected nonsense and travel writings* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2005), xiii.
15. Philip Nel, *Dr. Seuss: American icon* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 23.
16. Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*, 131.
17. Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*, 58.
18. Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*, 21.
19. Shel Silverstein, *Lafcadio: the lion who shot back* (United States: Harper Collins, 1963).
20. Shel Silverstein, *Where the sidewalk ends: the poems & drawings of Shel Silverstein* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974) 287.
21. Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*, 32.
22. Ibid.
23. Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*, 59.
24. Shel Silverstein, *Runny Babbit: a billy sook* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).
25. Lisa Rogak, *A boy named Shel: the life & times of Shel Silverstein* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007), 170.
26. Klonsky, *Speaking Pictures*, 23.
27. Shel Silverstein, *Every thing on it: poems and drawings* (New York: Harper, 2011).
28. Silverstein, *Every Thing On It*.
29. Hollander, *Rhyme's reason*, 1.
30. Shel Silverstein, *Falling up: poems and drawings* (New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins, 1996), 110.
31. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 110.
32. Glazer and Lamme, *The Reading Teacher*, 104.
33. "Partnership for 21st Century Skills," accessed July 13, 2014, <http://www.p21.org/index.php>.
34. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 105.
35. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 105.

36. DeLoache, Pierroutsakos, and Uttal, *Origins of pictorial competence*, 118.
37. Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* (New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2005), 162.
38. Helen Plotz, *Imagination's other place: poems of science and mathematics* (New York: Crowell, 1955), xi.
39. Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*, 58.
40. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 118.
41. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 10.
42. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 34.
43. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 60.
44. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 125.
45. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 110-1.
46. Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*, 44.
47. Silverstein, *Falling Up*, 110-1.
48. Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*, 8.
49. Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*, 28.
50. Plotz, *Imagination's other place*, 27.

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