



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2024 Volume III: Poetry as Sound and Object

Poetry Through Hózhó: The Beauty Way of Life

Curriculum Unit 24.03.01, published September 2024

by Elizabeth Isaac

Introduction

At a young age, I have always wanted to express myself in a way where my thoughts or story will inspire others to learn of the *Hózhó* way (the beauty way), or the understanding or message of the daily struggles at home or among others, or the special events that take place in homes such as celebration of life as a Native American, but instilled from two cultural perspectives, the perspective of being a “Diné woman” and “a US citizen” in a westernized civilization. Through the years, I have learned that it is difficult to express yourself, especially if one struggles with self-identity. More so when one’s life is influenced by Western ideas of a modern way of life. So, young students find themselves in a situation where they cannot express themselves. In addition, they struggle to understand others’ feelings as well. I believe that one tool that would forge connections between students, or adults and students, is poetry. Poetry does not require much as a standard way of writing. Poetry can be fun and motivation for young to older students. Here is an example of a poem that I wrote to help me understand the concept of my unit, which is *Hózhó*. In addition, how I utilized my mind and body to make the connection with the outside:

“Through my eyes I see the beauty before me, through my ears I hear the beauty around me, through my heart I feel the *hózhó* within me. Through my nose, I smell beauty among me, Through my hands, I embrace what is around me.”

Expressing oneself, especially to another, sometimes is hard. Those that have done so are more free and have open doors to speaking out for oneself. A long time ago, the Native Americans knew their way of life, and accepted their way of life. They had a sense of belonging and still do. Most Native Americans today still have their language and culture, but for some, language and culture are in danger of going extinct. Although there is competition with a “modern” way of life, changing and living through non-Native ways, people have worked hard to carry on artwork or chants to this day, such as the Navajo culture. The artwork itself has colors that are represented in the cultural perspective representing a way of life. In addition, there are many images and designs that have so much meaning to many Native Americans. Not only do images show expression, but the chants within the songs and prayers tell many stories. This altogether is a great way to express oneself through a more modern communication such as poetry. Students of all ages, especially elementary age children love to share stories and are always excited to show and tell!

Rationale

Poetry is a genre that is often difficult for third-grade students to understand. Each year, students read poems, but are unable to comprehend the message or meaning behind the text. Some students do not like to read poetry. They don't have the passion to read poems. Basically, poetry involves inferencing, and most third-grade students at our school are limited to go beyond the text to think outside the box of what the writer is conveying to his or her audience. Furthermore, state assessment includes passages that are written in poetry forms. Going beyond simply reading poems, students should be exposed to reading poems in a way that is meaningful and useful to them. Reading and writing poetry is a great way to express feelings, share thoughts or a message that is from the heart of the writer, and can be taught or presented in a creative way. "Reading poetry challenged them in terms of attending to the reading process, understanding concepts presented in the poems, and learning to read aloud so that listeners could also make meaning of the poem" (Carver and Gregg, 2007).

Tsaile Public School

I currently teach at Tsaile Public School in Tsaile, Arizona. Tsaile Public School is operated under Chinle Unified School District (CUSD). CUSD has a total of seven other K-8 schools within the perimeter of Chinle, Arizona. The school district has an enrollment of 3,300 students which makes it the largest school district on the Navajo Nation. The district encompasses the communities of Chinle, Many Farms, Tsaile, Luckachukai, Wheatfields, Nazline, Cottonwood, and Tselani. Tsaile is located towards the upper four corners of these states: Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. It is also in the jurisdiction of Apache county. Tsaile is a small town located 25 miles east of Chinle, Arizona. It is based near Chuska Mountain where the ponderosa trees and the pine trees present so much beauty. Tsaile Public School has an enrollment of 450 students, K-8. The demographics of the school is ninety-nine percent Native American, predominately Navajo, or Diné. One percent is Hispanic or of mixed ethnicity, and at times, Caucasian. The student population consists of English language learners and exceptional need students. A majority of the student population are struggling readers. There are at least 2 or 3 classes at each grade level. There are 27 certified teachers and instructional assistants. According to the Arizona Department of Education, the school's current grade is a "B".

Environment

The surrounding environment of Tsaile consists of a lake, a gas station, and a Navajo Nation college. It is a rural area where students are bussed in from a radius of 30 to 50 miles out. The vast area makes it difficult for students to fully commit to school on a daily basis, especially when parents or caregivers have jobs outside the local area. Jobs are scarce on the Navajo Nation. Most parents are employed outside the Navajo Nation. Due to constricted jobs or other obligations such as doctor appointments in other towns or cities, the motivation to be in school is at times difficult. Another barrier to achieving perfect attendance is adverse weather, which affects travel conditions to and from busses, especially during winter days or rainy days. In addition to school life, home life can be hard for many due to home responsibilities or other cultural events. As I recall as a young child, I had the responsibilities of planting, taking care of livestock, and even making jewelry or weaving a rug with my grandmother. I had to set aside the wants of reading a book or playing with friends. Friends were miles and miles away. This can cause feelings of loneliness. Many homes have the meaning of "family" perspective in diverse ways. I can imagine the thoughts of these students. From a more cultural perspective to a more westernized lifestyle or what is considered a civilized way of life. Through home life experiences, there are many types of emotions that could be expressed through poems, art or images. In

addition, there are many activities that take place at home, such as birthday parties, family cookouts, and even cultural activities that bring joy and excitement to home. Having two views of the society can be stressful. The expectation from home and from the educational point of view can take a toll on self-awareness.

Content

Hózhó

Hózhó is a very important word in the Navajo Language. It is a word that defines the beauty way of life. It is considered a powerful word that brings balance and beauty to one. It provides harmony and peace to a person from within the mind and soul and its connection to the surrounding environment. In Navajo songs and chants, the word "*Hózhó*" is used often for the calling of holy people to ensure and instill the balance of life. The balance of harmony, peace, and good health. During the journey of life, the prayers of *Hózhó* are reiterated repeatedly in chants to restore harmony in the mind, body and soul. "*Hózhó*" encompasses an individual's well-being, the connection with the environment, the social interaction with other beings or the environment itself. For this curriculum unit, the focus is on "*Hózhó*" as a guidance to learning about oneself and one's relationship to the environment. The selection of poems is aligned to the model that I have created, which is shown below. In fig.1, the *Hózhó* is the center of the circle. As in the universe, the sun is the center of our solar system in the Milky Way galaxy. Its connection to the planets has its purpose and understanding of its existence. I believe that young children should learn about themselves and their surroundings through this model, especially Native American children. In addition, it is a great example to other ethnicities as well.

Hózhó Model

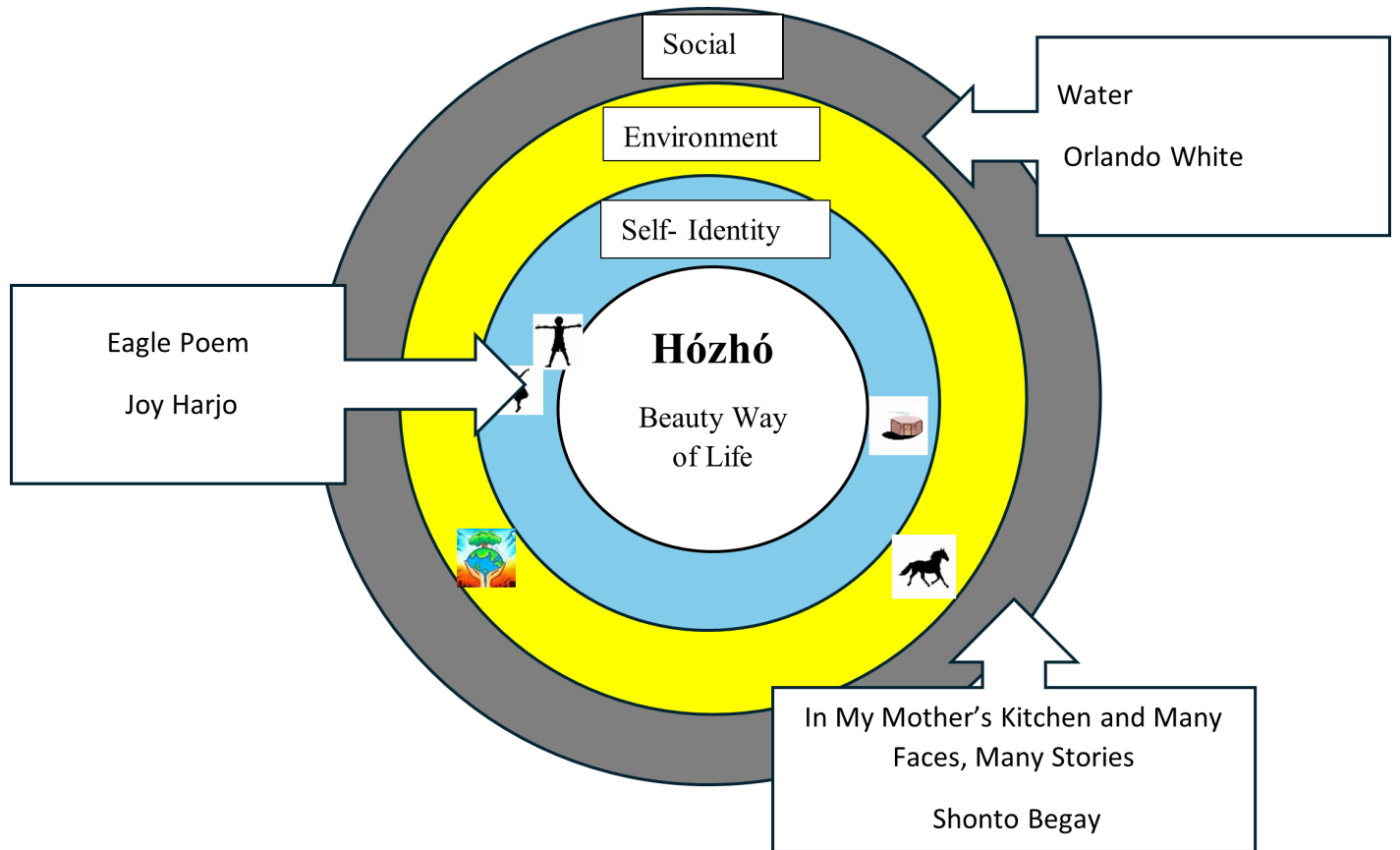


Fig. 1

Self- awareness

Students learn at an early age their place in the world. Their perspective about themselves or the world can be negative or positive. Of course, as teachers, we'd like to see all students see the positive side of themselves and their environment. Unfortunately, some students do not have a positive view of themselves. Especially in today's society. This is due to many obstacles, challenges that students are faced with. For some, they lack motivation and carry bad baggage that prevents them from being positive. I hear some of the students make comments such as, "I am not smart", "No one likes me!" "I don't have to listen to you!" These types of comments are negative. Because of these negative attitudes, or experiences, many struggle in school and are not seeing anything positive in the society. As they get older, some of the students end up dropping out of school and get into trouble.

Navajo Teaching

According to Abraham Maslow's theory, the Hierarchy of Needs includes the level of Need for Esteem, a level based on the needs of an individual: "When the first three classes of needs are satisfied, the needs for esteem can become dominant. These involve needs for both self-esteem and for the esteem a person gets from others. Humans have a need for a stable, firmly based, high level of self-respect, and respect from others. When these needs are satisfied, the person feels self-confident and valuable as a person in the world. When these needs are frustrated, the person feels inferior, weak, helpless and worthless" (Simmons, Donald, Beverly, 1987).¹ This is the reason that teachers should focus on creating positive self-awareness for the students from the beginning of each school year. For this unit, self-awareness is the focal point of obtaining success and increasing motivation. Not much of the Navajo teachings in regards to self-awareness is taught at

home anymore. The Navajo teaching of self-awareness involves self-identity, acceptance, respect, and being resilient.

Another resource that I would like to recommend to read to help you understand the Navajo culture based on the Navajo philosophy of learning, is Stephen Covey's model, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, S. 2020).² The model is aligned with the cultural perspective paradigm of one's outlook on self, the environment and social environment. I find Stephen Covey's model to be the closest to understanding the Navajo philosophy of learning. The elders have always taught the components of the similar habits to their families. There are seven habits Covey believes that start from analyzing self to the connecting to the environment. In addition, the Navajo culture teachings are focused on developing self-esteem on a daily basis, spirituality, physical (the acts and behavior) and the connection with the social environment of an individual. Covey mentions those same qualities which are similar to the Navajo Culture.

In the Navajo culture and teaching, the day begins with "you" in mind. The colors presented in the model I will be using is followed from the inward of self to the outward of one's daily life in her or his lifetime. One begins with self and then outward to the environment around one and to connect with the outside environment. This is practice on a daily basis from dawn to night. Why I chose to use the *Hózhó* model as a guide is basically to follow the order of learning of oneself for younger generation and the connection beyond self-awareness. To further explain the model in fig.1, the color represents the daily cycle. The white color represents the morning light. The time to pray, and set goals in good thoughts and harmony, *hózhó*. The blue, representing the day, is the time to work in your environment. A time to apply yourself to your purpose in life and work towards goals. The yellow, representing the evening, is associated with social life. Social is the time to interact with your family, and with others. In addition, a time to reflect about what was accomplished to refining the next day's goals. The black, representing the closing of the day, is a time to re-energize oneself by resting along with the animals. All these are important colors that represent the importance of the colors that reflect upon the Navajo culture. When teaching students, I believe that teaching with cultural knowledge of belief and values brought down by the ancestors is important. It is a part of self-identity and acceptance to become a strong independent citizen. Chinle Unified School District supports the importance of the students' connection with their culture and heritage. The schools' vision and mission encompasses what is known as the Navajo philosophy of learning.

Cultural Art and ceremony

Most Navajo chants describe self-awareness, guidance and understanding of life. Chants connect us with the holy beings and mother earth. Learning of these chants would provide students with a sense of belonging and build self-esteem. In light of the students' cultural and proud ethnic acceptance, the unit will focus from the cultural perspective, mixed with the art and the sound of Native American art, chants and stories. The curriculum unit that will be developed focuses on free expression of oneself. In order to learn about one's existence, and to feel good about oneself and the connection with nature or the world, a poem that I've selected is written by the first Native American US Poet Laureate, Joy Harjo. Joy has written many poems that are relevant to Native American culture. The poem, "Eagle Poem," depicts how one should make connection with oneself and the environment (nature and animals). Harjo is a member of the Muscogee Nation. She has written many wonderful poems about home, family and nature. "Eagle Poem" was written as she was flying over Salt River and was reminded of an eagle. All the beauty she saw she has written in her poem. This poem reminds us to take in the beauty all around us.

In addition to building self-esteem, I would like to use a creed or chant that our school does on a daily basis.

Each morning, the students recite the chant. It is known as the Navajo Creed. The creed is written in the Navajo Language. All the students recite it, but they do not understand what they are saying. A majority of the students speak English, while at least twenty percent speak both Navajo and English. The creed is taught by the Navajo Language teacher during the students' enrichment time. The Navajo language teacher allows the students to learn it from the beginning of the school year. Then during the school year, students recite it every morning during our morning announcements. The problem that I see is that they cannot interpret what the words are and students do not understand what they are saying. I believe this is my chance to teach the chant. The Navajo creed is aligned to the *Hózhó* daily thoughts of goods and motivation. This creed will work toward building a positive mindset, mentally and emotionally. The creed describes the beauty within and the surrounding for protection and blessings. The creed is very powerful when it is read, but the students are unable to appreciate the thought of the words. In addition to understanding the chant, activities that are aligned with self-identity will be ideal. For example, a silhouette of the students and character trait words will be filled by the students to connect with themselves.

Poetry as Expression and Art

Poetry is a form of expression. Poets write to express their feelings and thoughts in an artistic way. History shows that art was developing in poetry. Poetry was not just simple sentences, but the formality of each word or sentence usage and structure. Especially manipulating written words and letters, or even orally read, can be thought of as art. Feisal Mohamed, Professor of English at Yale University, suggests how poetry has been developing into this modern art. He states that poetry has formed in different forms of expression through time. Poetry has transformed, or is transforming, into amazing, interesting and fun art through different types and techniques that writers develop. Different types of poetry, such as erasure, blackout, or the use of videos and letters, were some of the ways writers displayed and expressed their feelings (Mohamad, F. 2024).³ The genre of poetry varies. For this unit, a variety of poems will be shared with students of third grade. The unit is geared toward third grade, but can be utilized at any grade level, especially for Native American students. The unit focuses on the idea of building a positive, responsible, respectable citizen to become independent and be proactive in the society.

Poems are written in interesting ways. The writings then become very artistic and develop a style. This makes it fun and unique. Poets or writers want to hook an audience as they express their thoughts. One type of poetry is written using shapes. Shapes are used to symbolize a message (Mohamed, F. 2024).⁴ In addition, shapes are interesting and fun for students. This allows students to be creative and still make that connection with their environment or to family. There will many activities involving third-grade students reading poems that have shapes. An example of shape poems, a Navajo poet, Orlando White, uses letters to shape his poems. He is the author of *Letters* (2015). I love the poems he has written, which mostly describe sounds or objects and symbols to connect with the readers. The activities would be based on the voice or sound that is heard through poetry. In addition, some of his poems are created using both the English and Navajo languages. I can see students having fun with these types of poems. Several poems will be selected to show an example of shapes and, in addition, to understand the author's point of view. One is called *water*. This poem involves one word, but yet, it has two words. The word water means basically water, but with an added "o", centers the word "to" which also means water in Navajo.

Poetry is written, but illustrations are also important. Drawings, paintings, even scenery is described as it becomes alive. Illustrations are used to express one's thought. What is the connection with a reader made by an image. Many perspectives can be shown in the same image. Or the other way around, where the imagery is developed based on thought. Another well-known illustrator, Shonto Begay, is a local artist that connects

his art to his Navajo home life. He illustrates for authors in several books. His paintings show positive, and sometimes negative, sides of Navajo culture. Some of the images or paintings he portrays hit home for many. He is the author of *The Mud Pony* (1988), and *Navajo: Visions and Voices Across the Mesa* (1995). Not only is he an illustrator, he has written a few poems that resonate the cultural perspective of home life, especially for older Navajos who grew up in a less modern society. One poem called “In My Mother’s Kitchen” is a great poem. Shonto describes her cooking and making a frybread. Frybread is similar to something like a funnel cake. The poem depicts the memory of a mother’s daily responsibilities in caring, and the memory that the writer has of her in a most detailed way showing the love he has for his mother. This poem connects to the home life and sends a powerful message of feeling love for a mother. There are other poems written by Shonto Begay that resonate for many Native Americans as they are growing up. The images he illustrates just adds the perfect perception that is real. Another great poem that will be used for this unit is called, “Many Faces, Many Stories.” These two poems written by Shonto Begay, “In my Mother’s Kitchen”⁵ and “Many Faces, Many Stories,”⁶ exemplify the Diné cultural perspective on family ties. Not only will the students find them enjoyable to read, they will be able to actually relate to them. Finding materials that provide cultural perspective is great, but finding the material that the author is familiar with is a plus, especially when it incorporates teacher and student content knowledge. Of his writing and art, Begay says, “I work to bring my own art, my own traditions, my own people, to places where they don’t know about us. I believe in sharing that story and in finding ways to let kids express themselves the same way.”⁷ The first excerpt above is culturally relevant to the Diné children. In homes of the Diné, one will often find a mother figure, even if it is a grandmother, an aunt, or a sister, in the special role of caring for the young. The setting and the illustrating of the poem (Begay is an artist) provides visual aid.

Excerpt from “In my Mother’s Kitchen”

Childhood dreams and warmth

Tight in my throat, tears in my eyes

The radio softly tuned to a local AM station

News of ceremonies and chapter meetings

And funerals

Flows into the peaceful kitchen

Lines upon her face, features carved of hard times

Lines around her eyes, creases of happy times

Bittersweet tears and ringing silvery laughter

I ache in my heart

Excerpt from “Many Faces, Many Stories”

Sounds of traditional song and dance contests

Contrast with blaring bass rap songs

Children cry as mothers and fathers

comfort them

Laughter and shouting from the carnival

Sounds of a far off rodeo announcer

Navajo Language mixes with teen language

Cups of coffee and sodas

Other Important Information about Poems

Teachers should bear in mind other important components of learning about poetry. For the third-grade students, one of the standards that is aligned to learning about poetry is knowing the parts of poetry. The parts of poetry are important. For third-grade students, they are basically knowing the stanza, lines, mood or tone, theme, rhythm and patterns. The standard should be taught along with learning the parts of a prose or drama. This is an opportunity to learn about poetry. In addition, poetry can be extended into other subjects to reinforce vocabulary and to make learning fun. Just as music is poetry, the songs that people listen to have a better effect on retaining information. Students recall listening to nursery rhymes since kindergarten. For many, they are able to recall and recite those poems as they would familiar songs. Taking the poems into other subjects allows more retention of information.

Another way to express and understand the point of view of the reader and the author is to read erasure types of poems. Students can take poems and practice and understand erasure poems to add histories of early writers, students should learn about book making, book binding and paper making. This is also an important part that will motivate students to become writers. Students love to collect different types of writing objects, such as colors, or dark ink, or just simple pencil and use that to write on interesting or pretty paper. The collection of students writing on different papers and binding it for them is a joy and everlasting for many as a keepsake. Especially with parents, they like to recall special moments of their child's events as he or she grows into an adult.

Finally, this unit stresses motivating students becoming authors of their own writing. Students can write from their own perspective. Students collaborating and sharing their understanding of poems will ease the pressure of "Am I understanding the poem as it should be understood?" In addition, students need to learn of how to make inferences from a story or poem. During this unit, the students should be given opportunities to share their thoughts and hear others' thoughts. This promotes students to dig into the poems, the meaning of each word, and pull and eliminate *words to help them comprehend the poems*. *So the unit is intended to be taught over 15 to 20 days*. The lesson should begin as early as the students return to school so they get the idea of the model. The models can be used throughout the school year as you pull other readings into the model so as a teacher, you are consistently building their self-esteem, their connection with the world and their understanding or viewpoints of any readings.

Objectives

The objectives for this unit will cover three areas. The first objective is for the students to understand the parts of poetry. Students need to be familiar in name and labeling parts of poetry. In addition, students will have to comprehend the poetry. Through readings, analyzing and collaborating, students will better understand the purpose of poetry.

The second objective is for students to understand the purpose for using poetry when writing. Students should become familiar with the ways of writing, that writing can be fun and free. When writing poems, there are many ways to write. An example is the books of poems, *Olio*, by Tyehimba Jess. His collection of poems involves students to be expressive and be engaged.

Lastly, the third objective is for the students to be engaged and enjoy reading poems. Not only can students read, but create poems to express themselves. Through their collections of reading and writing, they also gain the motivation in many areas through self-esteem, respect, and making the connection with their environment on this earth.

Strategies

The type of strategies teachers utilize are important. Some of the strategies described in this unit can be modified based on the level of the students. Strategies provide the most effective way to help students understand what it is that you want them to learn. Students getting involved in their learning encourages and motivates them to become more independent learners. Students at Tsaille Public school have different learning styles just as any other students. Students at Tsaille range from students that are tactile learners, a few auditory learners, and of course visual learners. It is always best to teach a visual learner. This allows the students to see the outcome and understand the expectation of a lesson. Teachers using different and effective strategies in lessons is the key, such as use of technology, grouping, thinking and planning with graphic organizers, modeling and guided practice. It all depends on the level of the students.

The majority of the students are Native American, as mentioned in the demographics, and for the most part their Native language is their first language. Some of the students struggle with academic vocabulary as they learn about topics and skills. They are especially limited in vocabulary when it comes reading literature and text features. For many, parents are not home to work with their child, so they do not get the vocabulary development in normal daily conversation. Therefore, students will be deeply exposed to lessons encouraging vocabulary development. This is done through providing activities that will increase their ability to describe and create poems. Graphic organizers are another way students will be able to obtain new vocabulary that will sustain them for future reference. Such graphic organizers use the four corners method that I like to use. This strategy is based on Robert Marzano and Debra J Pickering's reference book, *Building Academic Vocabulary Teacher's Manual*. The outline of poetry, the parts and the types of genre will be of assistance to help third-grade students obtain key vocabulary words. This is considered visual aids in addition to the types of poetry selected. To further motivate students, use of technology in the classroom will be incorporated as students type out poems or draw an image. Today's students are tech savvy and creative. In addition, we have

students that are always asking to use a computer to complete work. Furthermore, there are some poets, such as Joy Harjo and Orlando White, who have their poems published on the website Poetry Foundation that is selected for this unit; students can listen to the poems that are written.

One of the most fundamental ways to involve students to interact and create or read poems together is a strategy that allows them to work together. This strategy is known as grouping or collaborative team work. In addition, it allows students who are struggling to find support. The students are able to enjoy reading and working together. Students are able to play a part or be the character or the author. For this unit, there will be discussion among students, so the arrangement of desk will be in groups of four, or set up in pairs. Some of the poems or activities will allow students to read poems that are written as sonnets, but read from a different perspective. Such as the poem written in *Olio*, "Mark Twain vs. Blind Tom." This is just an example to show that students should be able to read poetry from one perspective and the point of view of another. This increases the participation from students as they love to share how they perceive the voice or message of an author. In addition, students begin to hear the voice, the tone and the mood of a poem.

For the most part, the lesson will begin with the teacher modeling strategies followed by the gradual release method. The method involves teacher modeling, guided practice we do together, another guided practice together as you do together, and finally, you do independently. This ensures that the expectation to the outcome is learned through steps and understanding of skills is obtained. The teacher models many skills and steps to show students what they are expected to learn, such as highlighting, asking and answering questions, showing work through collaboration and or on paper will teach students to walk the talk. I believe that through the use of these strategies the students will be able to gain the skills that are being taught.

The last strategy that will be incorporated is the use of writing. This writing will also be used as assessment of the unit. An anthology of poems will be collected and bound as a resource. This is added to small projects such as making paper and binding books. Furthermore, in learning through *Hózhó*, students should have the motivation of learning to express themselves in writing, enjoy reading and be able to understand the author's point of view. All these strategies will be aimed at igniting writers. The students will be involved in creating their own poems as a means of learning how poems are created and written. The purpose of why writers choose to write in this format. As an extended activity, I hope to have students write poems and or bind a collection of poems in a big book as a class or individuals. To add to the motivation, for this unit, I will be inviting our local poet, Orlando White, into our classroom and have him actually read to the students. This will surely allow students to see that anybody can write poetry.

Activities

Week 1: Building self-identity to learning about the environment.

This unit is to be implemented in a span of 15 days. It can be modified to reduce or add more days to encourage student comprehension for each section or days. The unit will begin by introducing poetry reading to the students. After introduction, students will be exposed to several poems. Along with the poetry reading, activities for the students will involve different strategies learned from the Yale National Initiative Sessions and through best practice researched strategies to enjoy reading poetry. Furthermore, the aim is for students to become poets themselves.

Week 1: Day 1: As a part of introduction and review, the teacher will create an anchor chart showing the characteristics of prose. Students should be familiar with a piece of prose or story from previous lessons, so it will be review for them. Teacher will move to the next part after reading a simple poem, such as nursery rhymes of choice. This is with the understanding that all students hear nursery rhymes at some point in their lives, such as in kindergarten or from their home environment. The teacher will then show the characteristics of a poem. Teacher can label parts of poetry. For our grade level, students should be familiar with the following parts of a poem, in addition to the purpose: stanzas, lines, verse, pattern, tone, mood, rhythm, rhyme, beat. This anchor chart will help students learn the characteristic of a poem. The anchor chart is considered a visual aid which supports learning for English Language Learners, and or Exceptional Students. After showing and identifying the parts, students will then compare and contrast the parts of poetry with those of prose. Teacher focuses on the writing differences between prose and poetry. Teacher can use the different graphic organizer that best helps students understand similarities and differences. For Tsaille Public School, we use graphic organizer sets called, Double Bubble Map, by a company name, Thinking Maps. It works just the same as a Venn Diagram but has more maps for different purposes.

Day 2 and Day 3: Through the *Hózhó* model, the focus is to learn of oneself and the environment of one's life. The idea of learning to accept yourself and to be happy with oneself is the goal of this unit. Students should feel happy and content with themselves. In addition, they should have the respect for their neighbors as well as the environment itself. For this reason, students should be exposed to learning from within to outside. In the *Hózhó* way, the ideal thing to do every morning is to observe oneself and to begin by addressing the needs, such as a positive attitude. From saying a prayer to getting ready for the day with goals in mind. If there are animals to feed, that would come next, or plants that need to be watered which is considered sacred and provides life. So for this activity, Teacher will introduce a poem written by Joy Harjo, *Eagle Poem*. The idea for this poem is to have the students think about themselves and their surroundings. In addition to this poems, the students' activity will involve them in analyzing the poem, and to describe themselves using positive adjective words in a silhouette body of themselves, and to discuss and share the meaning behind the poem. For this poem, students will basically learn how the language is used and the structure of the poem to express feelings or the point of view of the writer. For each day, the teacher will review and discuss in groups or partners about connecting with self and the environment. Furthermore, identify the feeling and discuss the traits of that character. In addition, students can illustrate using pictures to express their thoughts about the poem. The students each day can use descriptive words to share feelings using the five senses. Later in the unit, students will use some of the words collected to write a poetry of self or the environment.

Day 4 and Day 5: In addition to learning about the environment, such as the plants, animals, learning about one's family, and to basically enjoy reading poetry. According to the *Hózhó* model, connecting with the living things around you is important. One's surrounding is a connection with earth, and the connection with family is *K'é*. *K'é* is a Navajo word meaning "relationship" or "kinship". In connecting with a mother's love and the environment, Shonto Begay's poem, *In My Mother's Kitchen* and *Many Faces and Many Stories* will be read with the students. Graphic organizers will be used for this activity to demonstrate the understanding of the texts. In addition, images and illustrations are a way for a reader to understand the poem. Most of Shonto Begay's illustrations are beautifully done. With the help of the illustrations, students analyze the illustration to grasp what the poem is conveying. In Shonto Begay's first poem, he shares the emotion and the love he has for his mother when he was growing up. The students will be able to make the connection about their own mother. The illustrations are very well detailed and relevant to the student's own environment, which makes it easy to make the connection. The students at Tsaille Public School can connect with the feelings of the author. Students can highlight words or do an erasure to depict what the poem is basically about. The students will also be involved in making illustration about their mother, or the environment around them. The illustration

can be created collected and combine to made into a quilt.

Week 2: Fun with Poetry

Day 1 and Day 4: The second week will have the students enjoying poetry. In addition, students write about their environment, how people and the environment are connected together. Teacher will read and show some poems from Orlando White's *Letters* and Tyhimba Jess's *Olio* that are in the form of shapes. White used the word and letters *water*, but at the same time, uses the Navajo word for water, *to* in the center of it. For Orlando White's poem, he likes to use shape and the Navajo words to mean the same thing. This encourages students to learn the language as well. In Jess's book of poetry, teacher will read, "Millie and Christine Mckoy." For this activity, teacher will model reading the poem as students listen. Teacher will explain the structure of the poetry and how it is read. The two voices poetry is a fun way students can write together and them merge their thoughts together. They can use the silhouette and add their thoughts about certain issues or something relating to their environment. This activity can be extended to the five days where students make different shapes and two voice poems to collaborate. Furthermore, students will learn about how they connect with the environment from the *Hózhó* model. Students' viewpoints are shared with each other! These are exciting activities for the students to be engaged in. Students can go further and make a play out of some of the poems. Some of the Navajo thoughts and songs are shared during this activity.

Day 5: The students will connect everything they have learned from week 1 and week 2. For this day, students at Tsaile Public School say a class pledge. The pledge is written in Navajo. The pledge is recited on a daily basis. A majority of the students do not know what they are actually saying. Tsaile Public School students mostly speak the English language. About 20 percent of the students can understand, but not all words. Most words they understand are words such as school, the names of the mountains (four scared mountains) and the word *hózhó*. Reading this chant and analyzing the meaning of the chant, such as acting it out, or even doing sign language or some gesture will allow the students to comprehend what they are saying. In addition, the students will hear short chants, songs that teach them about life from the time of their birth to old age; they will learn to understand their path and their purpose in life. Some of the chant songs are very spiritual, and they have a very positive meaning.

Week 3: Day 1- Day 5

The last week of the unit, students will be exposed to paper making. Students will learn to make paper to write on. In addition, they will learn to bind the papers to make a book. Students can independently collect their own writing, or as a class bind a collection of poems. Lastly, students will get to write some poems and become authors. I am sure many will not hesitate to write!

Appendices

Implementing Arizona State Standards

Reading Standard

Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections. (3.RL.5)

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail. (3.SL.3)
10. Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details. (3.SL.5)

Writing Standard

Create and revise an appropriate piece of writing, given a specific audience, purpose, and task (3.W.10).

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.

Bibliography

Andonovska-Trajkovska, Daniela. "POETRY WRITING IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM AND BECOMING AWARE OF SELFNESS."

Bastone, Gina. "Spotlight on Diné/Navajo Poets and Poets from Southwestern Tribes and Nations." (2018).

Begay, Shonto. *The Mudd Pony*

Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. Simon & Schuster, 2020.

Ediger, Marlow. "Reading Poetry in the Language Arts." (2000).

Jess, Tyehimba. *Olio*. Seattle: Wave Books, 2016.

Marzano, Robert J., and Debra J. Pickering. "Building academic vocabulary." *VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Deve* (2005).

Sekeres, Diane Carver, and Madeleine Gregg. "Poetry in third grade: Getting started." *The Reading Teacher* 60, no. 5 (2007): 466-475.

Simons, Janet A., Donald B. Irwin, and Beverly A. Drinnien. "Maslow's hierarchy of needs." *Retrieved October 9, no. 2009* (1987): 222.

White, Orlando. LETERRS. (2015).

Notes

¹ Simons, Janet A., Donald B. Irwin, and Beverly A. Drinnien. "Maslow's hierarchy of needs." *Retrieved October 9, no. 2009* (1987): 222.

² Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. Simon & Schuster, 2020.

³ Mohamed, Feisal, Yale National Initiative Intensive Session, Summer 2024

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Shonto Begay Poetry Foundation

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2024 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use