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Dr. Mary Warner

English 112B

26 November 2013

Unit of Study: On The Importance of Teaching Poetry

“Next week class we begin our study of Poetry!” I do not know about you, but when I heard those words in school, I immediately began to fret. What poems is the teacher going to teach? Am I going to have to memorize one? Will I be able to understand what the poet is trying to say? Will the poems even be in modern day English? Will I have to write my own poem? And most terrifying of all: will I have to read my created poem out loud to the whole class? An art form that is so beautiful, creative and therapeutic should evoke feelings of excitement and even adventure, not anxiety and boredom. The questions remain then, why is it so important to learn about poetry, why is it boring and what can we do as educators to enliven this worthy form of art.

Prose is our most common form of written communication and while no one would argue its effectiveness; it is like trying to find the beauty in a plain white sheet of paper. The white paper becomes much more pleasing when color is added and that even more alluring when some sort of decoration is made. The word prose is derived from the Latin word *prosa*, which is actually translated to mean, straightforward. There is nothing wrong with straightforward. In fact, there are times when it is much preferred, like by your physician when she is apprising you of your medical condition. If, however, you want to add beauty and emotion to your words, thoughts and ideas, it is good to know

poetry. Since we know that teens are generally emotional beings, this can be a great point of connection.

When I think about the things that I have learned well, they have been areas that I have interest in, excel in, or, at the very least, have found a compelling reason for needing to learn it. Adolescents are notoriously self-centered; few subjects are of interest to them if it is not taught provocatively, they are struggling in it, or if the teen cannot imagine how it will benefit them in the foreseeable future. Unless a youngster has been exposed to poetry by an enthusiastic adult, who has great influence over him; he probably will not suddenly, acquire an appreciation for poetry that was written several centuries before he was a thought in his parents minds, by a person who scarcely spoke modern day English, upon entering high school. That is not to say, however, that an educator cannot find success in garnering interest in the genre. Connection then, is the key is to helping high school students attain an appreciation of, and hopefully a love for poetry. The first connection is to make the student realize that, some form of poetry surrounds her; if she likes any lyrical music at all, she probably likes poetry. If he can appreciate a clever line in a rap song, he may learn to appreciate a clever line in a sonnet, which can lead him to want to create a clever line of his own.

Californian rapper, Kendrick Lamar told high school students, “My teachers were great positive influences in my life. My middle school English teacher was probably the reason I became a rapper. He used to encourage me to write poetry and would challenge me, which helped me improve my vocabulary and made me enjoy writing.”

<http://www.vibe.com/article/kendrick-lamar-plays-principal-rhode-island-high-school>

To that end, I endeavor to spark or nurture a love of literature through the genre of Poetry

by conducting a survey of various works. The emphasis of the unit will be on garnering an appreciation, if not a love of poetry that will last a lifetime.

### Centerpiece Poems

A note: I have chosen several centerpiece poems spanning eras and genres to engage as many different interests of the students as possible.

- “I Used to Love H.E.R.” by Common (rap)
- Sonnets 130 and 138 by William Shakespeare
- “Watching Me” by Jill Scott (song)
- “One is the Magic Number” by Jill Scott (song)
- “My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun” by Emily Dickinson
- “Tell All the Truth” by Emily Dickinson
- “I Hate Poetry” by Julia Vinograd
- “Astrophil and Stella Sonnets 1&2” by Philip Sidney
- “The Red Wheelbarrow” by William Carlos Williams

As we read the centerpiece poems in class, a worksheet for poem analysis will be given as an accompaniment to the reading. Students will work in small groups.

### Launching the Unit

- The “**Bell Work**” question, an activity that takes place during the first ten minutes of class when the students answer a question(s) written on the whiteboard will be:  
*Express by writing or illustrating all that you know, think or feel about Poetry.*
- I will ask for a couple of volunteers to share their responses to the Bell Work question. I ask people who did not volunteer, to call out one word they wrote down that describes poetry. We will have a brief discussion of the responses.

- I will play a rap song that is a representation of a double entendre. Just before the end of the song when the rapper reveals what he is really rapping about; I will stop the music and ask students what they think he is rapping about. After that discussion I will continue the song and the real meaning will be revealed.
- A couple of other songs may be played as an example of poetry. The lyrics of all of the songs played will be handed out.
- Lecture: How to analyze a poem for a deeper understanding
- Homework will be to find works from any era and genre, that they would choose for a “centerpiece” and complete the poem analysis worksheet on that piece. Each day the “Bell Work” activity will be to reflect on the centerpiece work(s) discussed the previous day.
- Poetry Pass activity – Teacher and students will bring in works of poetry of their choice. Students may choose their pieces from any book; online pieces will be accepted too.
- Clips of high school students participating in a Poetry Slam will be viewed
- Each period as students walk in the classroom there will be a poem in song playing. I will also play appropriate songs that are suggested by students during that time.

### *Continuing the Unit*

- Daily Bell Work question is a reflection of what they learned the previous day.
- A centerpiece work will be taught daily.
- Complete Poem Analysis Worksheet on all Poems studied.

- Students will find a favorite poem and complete poem analysis worksheet as homework
- Those poems, along with additional poems provided by the teacher, will be used for a poetry pass activity.
- Students will have a chance to write their own poem using the “I Am” Method.

### **Extending the Unit**

- Each student will have an opportunity to share their favorite poem, from either centerpieces that I have chosen, or one of their own using the poem analysis worksheet.
- In the classroom library books of poetry will be available for use.
- Additionally, Young Adult Literature novels written in poetry form will be available to check out for reading pleasure. They may receive extra credit for writing an essay using the structure of the poem analysis form and include whether the poem would have evoked the same emotion if written in the form of a regular novel.

### **Wrapping Up**

- Readers Theater with the book “Love That Dog” by Sharon Creech
- YouTube Video of a high school Poetry Slam
- We will have an in class mock poetry slam where students will perform poetry either through spoken word, rap, or song. If student has chosen rap or song, it must be an original work (the “I Am” method will not count). Extra credit will be given for original work.

### Works Cited

Common Sense “I Used to Love H.E.R.” music video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C99iG4HoO1c>

Shakespeare, William “Sonnet 130” and “Sonnet 138” Damrosch, David, Susan J.

Wolfson, and Peter J. Manning. The Longman anthology of British literature. 4th ed. Vol. 1B. Boston: Longman, 2010.

Scott, Jill “Watching Me” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5OegUCe704>

Scott, Jill “One is the Magic Number” <http://www.metrolyrics.com/one-is-the-magic-number-lyrics-jill-scott.html>

Dickinson, Emily “My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun” Baym, Nina, Wayne Franklin, Philip F. Gura, and Arnold Krupat. The Norton anthology of American literature. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007.

Dickinson, Emily “Tell All the Truth” Baym, Nina, Wayne Franklin, Philip F. Gura, and Arnold Krupat. The Norton anthology of American literature. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007.

Vinograd, Julia “I Hate Poetry” Linthwaite, Illona. Ain't I a woman!: Classic poetry by women from around the world. Lincolnwood, IL: Contemporary Books, 2000.

Sidney, Philip “Sonnet 1” and “Sonnet 2”

<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/Sidney1thru27.htm>



# Poetry

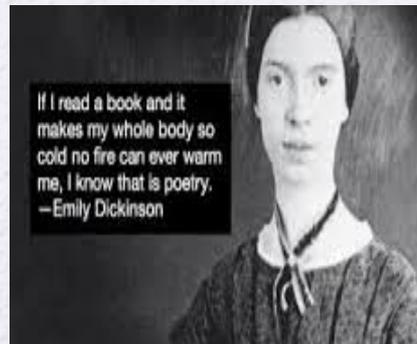
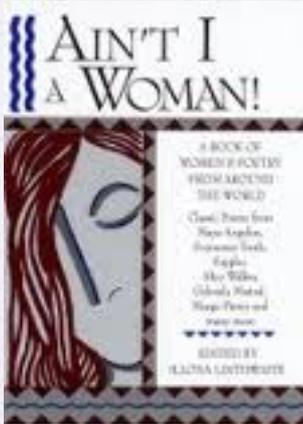
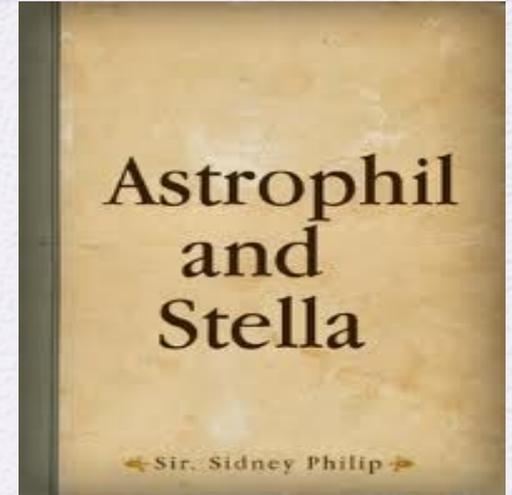
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# Center Piece Works



# Launching the Unit

Bell Work Question: *Express by writing or illustrating all that you know, think or feel about Poetry.*

Interactive Discussion

Watch Video: “I Used to Love H.E.R.

Discussion of Video

Lecture on How to Analysis a Poem

Complete Handout(s)

# Continuing the Unit

- Daily Bell Work question is a reflection of what they learned the previous day.
- A center piece work will be taught daily.
- Complete Poem Analysis Worksheet on all Poems studied.
- Students will and bring in favorite poems
- Those poems, along with additional poems provided by the teacher, will be used for a poetry pass activity

# *Extending the Unit*

- Students will find poems of different genres
- Extra credit will be given for an essay
- “Teach” their chosen poem to the class
- Classroom Library will have novels and books of poetry
- Students will be encouraged to share poetic songs to be played in class

# Unit Wrap Up

- Readers Theater – Love That Dog” by Sharon Creech
- View YouTube video of a high school Poetry Slam
- Have a Mock Poetry Slam in class where students will perform poetry as spoken word, rap, or song. Extra credit will be given for original pieces.

# Links

- Mt. Pleasant Poetry Slam: Lyrical Lust - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjCIAwitTIQ>
- I Used to Love H.E.R. by Common - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C99iG4HoO1c>
- One is the Magic Number by Jill Scott - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mymiKkgC2vc>
- Watching Me by Jill Scott - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5OegUCe704>

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- Scott, Jill “One is the Magic Number” <http://www.metrolyrics.com/one-is-the-magic-number-lyrics-jill-scott.html>
- Dickinson, Emily “My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun” Baym, Nina, Wayne Franklin, Philip F. Gura, and Arnold Krupat. The Norton anthology of American literature. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007.
- Dickinson, Emily “Tell All the Truth” Baym, Nina, Wayne Franklin, Philip F. Gura, and Arnold Krupat. The Norton anthology of American literature. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007.
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