

13 Ways of Using Poetry in the EFL Classroom



Narva College
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Together at TESOL*

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& English Language Expo

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How to Eat a Poem by Eve Merriam

Don't be polite.

Bite in.

Pick it up with your fingers and lick the juice that

may run down your chin.

It is ready and ripe now, whenever you are.

You do not need a knife or fork or spoon
or plate or napkin or tablecloth.

For there is no core

or stem

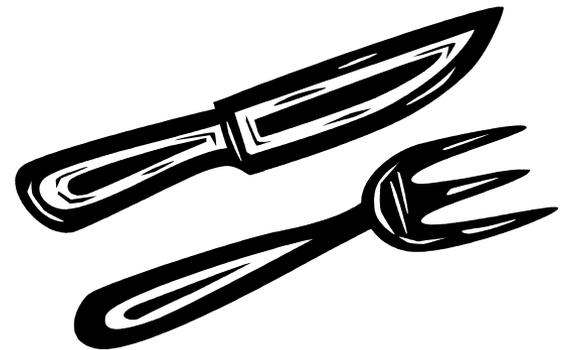
or rind

or pit

or seed

or skin

to throw away.



Today I would like to...

Discuss the **benefits** of reading and writing poetry in the EFL classroom.

Share some great poetry

Describe and demonstrate **activities** for reading/writing poetry with students at various levels.

WHY POETRY?

- Poetry Helps with Language Acquisition
 - Pronunciation (phonemic awareness, syllabification, rhyme, stress and intonation)
 - Vocabulary
 - Pattern and repetition
- Poetry is Fun/ny!
- Poetry is great for content-based EFL (CBT/CLIL)
 - Teaching 'target cultures'
 - History, Science, etc.
- Length – Poems are generally short!
- Poetry helps students find their own VOICE
 - Break the rules!
- Poetry teaches us about ourselves

Introduction to Poetry

by Billy Collins, US Poet Laureate 2001-2003

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide
or press an ear against its hive
I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,
or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.
I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.
But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with a rope
and torture a confession out of it.
They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

maggie and milly and molly and may

by e.e. cummings

maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach (to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and

milly befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles: and

may came home with a smooth round stone
as small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in the sea

Using e.e.cummings's maggie and millie and molly and may

Students can....

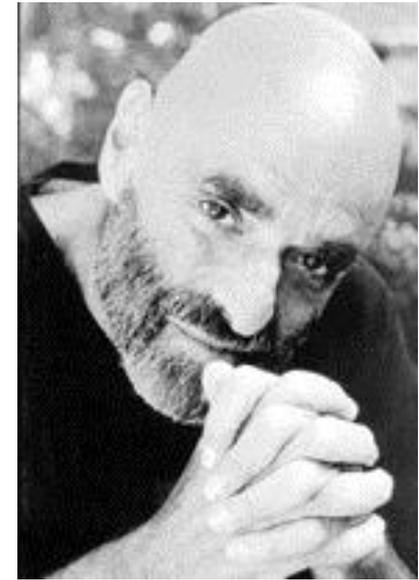
- put the poem in order
- compare their poem to the original
- identify essential elements of poetry:
rhyme, rhythm, topic, rule-breaking...



Zebra Question

by Shel Silverstein

I asked the zebra,
Are you black with white stripes?
Or white with black stripes?
And the zebra asked me,
Are you good with bad habits?
Or are you bad with good habits?
Are you noisy with quiet times?
Or are you quiet with noisy times?
Are you happy with some sad days?
Or are you sad with some happy days?
Are you neat with some sloppy ways?
Or are you sloppy with some neat ways?
And on and on and on and on
And on and on he went.
I'll never ask a zebra
About stripes
Again.

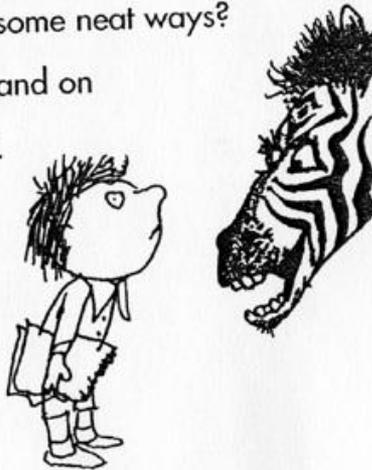


Shel Silverstein (1930-1999)

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Students can....

- find antonyms (opposites)
- answer the questions themselves
- think of questions for other animals

Louder Than a Clap of Thunder

by Jack Prelutsky

Louder than a clap of thunder,
louder than an eagle screams,
louder than a dragon blunders,
or a dozen football teams,
louder than a four alarmer,
or a rushing waterfall,
louder than a knight in armor
jumping from a ten-foot wall.
Louder than an earthquake rumbles,
louder than a tidal wave,
louder than an ogre grumbles
as he stumbles through his cave,
louder than stampeding cattle,
louder than a cannon roars,
louder than a giant's rattle,
that's how loud my father SNORES!



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SNORES!

Students can....

- learn vocabulary through sound
- illustrate the poem
- write their own poems

Softer than....

Faster than....

Smellier than....

Sillier than....

Keep it Simple (at first)



This Is Just To Say
by William Carlos Williams

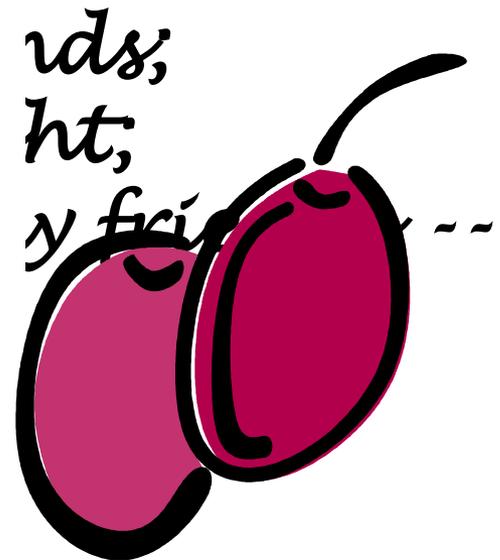
Fc
Ci
First Fig Students can...

Edna St find the poem manageable in length

- access the poem's simple vocabulary

My can realize how great ideas can be
It expressed in simple ways with powerful
effect *and which*
But ah, **you were probably**
It **saving**
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold



Explore Complexities of Culture and Identity

I H I, too by Lang *from I, too; Sing América by Julia Alvarez*

I, too

I h I am *"I know it's been said before
Th but not in this voice*

Th *of the plátano*
Th **Students can....**

Th *and the mango,*
Th *canard y bono,*
Th *not in this voice*
on *of inglés*

Th • compare the three poems (before
Th knowing anything about the authors)
sta • learn about the three authors, their times
Th and ethnic backgrounds
no *con español....*

Th • search for other poems on the same
Th topic, but from different perspectives
Th *So, ¿tú también?*
gir *¡Uno-dos-tres!*
Ea *One-two-three!*
Th *Ay sí,*
Th *(y bilingually):*
frie *Yo también soy América*

Th *¡Uno-dos-tres!*

Th *One-two-three!*

Th *Ay sí,*

Th *(y bilingually):*

Th *Yo también soy América*

I, too *I, too, am América"*

Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

Linking Poetry and Song

“Yippee! I'm a poet, and I know it
Hope I don't blow it”

Bob Dylan

I Shall Be Free No. 10



Everyone Can Write Poetry!

I Can't Write a Poem

Forget it.

You must be kidding.

I'm still half asleep.

My eyes keep closing.

My brain isn't working.

I don't have a pencil.

I don't have any paper.

My desk is wobbly.

I don't know what to write about.

And besides, I don't even know how to write a poem.

I've got a headache. I need to see the nurse.

Time's up? Uh oh!

All I have is this dumb list of excuses.

You like it? Really? No kidding.

Thanks a lot. Would you like to see another one?

-Bruce Lansky

Poetry Getting to Know You

J
E
N
N
I
E

Joyful,

Energetic,

Needs to learn to say

No

I am an

English teacher

Acrostic Poetry

Writing Poetry

Beginning with the Self: BioPoems

Line 1: First name

Line 2: (three words to describe you)

Line 3: Who loves...(three ideas or people)

Line 4: Who feels...

Line 5: Who needs...

Line 6: Who gives...

Line 7: Who fears...

Line 8: Who would like to see...

Line 9: Resident of...

Line 10: Last name

Writing Poetry

Beginning with the Self: BioPoems

Jen

Bright, traveling teacher

Lover of books, people and things new

Who feels at home in the North

Who always needs new challenges and more sleep

Who fears boredom and bad choices

Who would like to see the stars

Resident of many places

MacArthur

Writing Poetry

- A terrific resource: Kenneth Koch's "Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children to Write Poetry"
- Koch's advice:
 - Avoid requiring rhyme
 - Build upon a heritage of collaborative poetry writing
 - Create an environment for experimentation
 - "permit children to discover something they already have"

I used to be _____, but now...

I used to be a pest, but now I'm nice.

I used to live in New Jersey, but now I live in New York.

I used to have an apple dress, but now it doesn't fit me.

I used to be smart, but now I'm smarter.

I used to be pretty, but now I'm prettier.

I used to be little, but now I'm bigger.

I used to be a book, but now I'm a ladybug.

A LIE Poem

I was bought from a store.

- Written in pairs, every other line.
- Each line must be untrue.

I am three hundred years old.

I was a bear before I was born.

I am a boy of bananas.

I go to a school of apples.

I am snow.

I am snow in Spain.

I am rain in Spain.

I am the sun in Spain.

I am a cloud in Spain.

I am in Spain.

I am Spain.

Exquisite Corpse

"Adjective, Noun, Verb, Adjective, Noun"

- o traces its roots to the Parisian Surrealist Movement.
- o is played by several people, each of whom writes a word on a sheet of paper, folds the paper to conceal it, and passes it on to the next player for his or her contribution.
- o articles and verb tenses may be added later or adjusted after the poem has been written.
- o The only hard and fast rule is that each participant is unaware of what the others have written, thus producing a surprising--sometimes absurd--yet often beautiful poem.
- o The name comes from a line of poetry created using the technique: "The exquisite corpse will drink the young wine."

Why 13? “13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” by Wallace Stevens

I
Among twenty snowy
mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II
I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three
blackbirds.

III
The blackbird whirled in the
autumn winds.
It was a small part of the
pantomime.

IV
A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a
blackbird
Are one.

V
I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI
Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII
O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden
birds?
Do you not see how the
blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII
I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable
rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX
When the blackbird flew out of
sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X
At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI
He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII
The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII
It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

Poetry Online

- o Poems
- o Information about poets
- o Lesson plans
- o Publication possibilities
- o Ideas for celebrating poetry
- o Daily poetry digests



Illustration by Peter Arkle New York Times

NATIONAL
POETRY
MONTH ❁ APRIL

www.poets.org

Goals:

Highlight the **legacy** of American poets past and present

Introduce more people to the **pleasures** of reading poetry

Bring poetry to the public in **innovative** ways

Make poetry a more important part of the school **curriculum**

Increase the attention paid to poetry by the **media**

Encourage increased **publication** sales of poetry books

Increase **philanthropic** support for poets and poetry

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