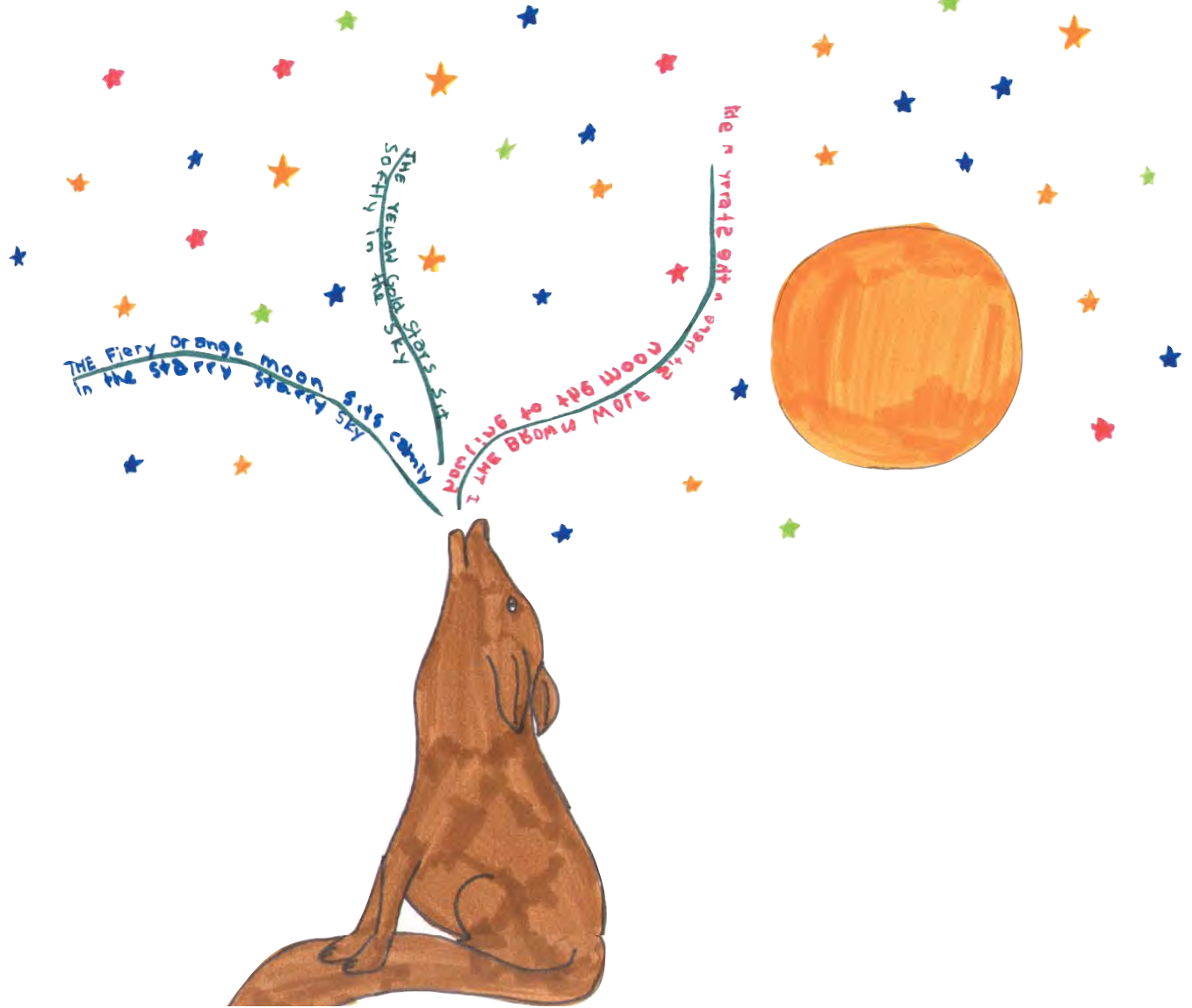


INSPIRATIONAL GUIDE FOR A NEW LANGUAGE

Language of the Awakened Heart

3rd Edition • January 2009



The Fiery Orange moon sits calmly
in the starry starry sky

The yellow stars sit
so shy in the sky

Let's create art & poetry
to bring more life to the world

*"If we can bring poetry back into the lives of our children,
we can transform our world."*

~ Deepak Chopra

“Bringing poetry and the timelessness and intelligence of poetry into the lives of children must be one of the most generous things we can do for those who will make and articulate our future. The Inspirational Guide for a New Language is a marvelous gift to that future.”

—David Whyte, author of *The Heart Aroused: Poetry and Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America*

“An excellent guidebook. Like watering a garden, these poems water the beautiful hearts of our children.”

—Jack Kornfield, author of *A Path with Heart and After the Ecstasy, then the Laundry*

“This is a very inventive and thoughtful book from a gifted poet-teacher and should be enormously valuable to classroom teachers working with kids on poetry.”

—Robert Hass, former U.S. Poet-Laureate

“This book is a gift to the child that lives in all of us. The poetry delights the ear. The illustrations delight the eye. Together they feed the soul.”

—Irene Favreau, Director of Mental Health Association of Marin

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INTRODUCTION

by Terri Glass

I have always loved coming out to Point Reyes. The rural scenery instantly soothes me. Whenever I have written grants to fund certain poetry projects, many times I have included the schools of West Marin. Rural schools typically do not have funding for extracurricular programs. When I met up with Fund For Global Awakening to collaborate on a poetry project, it was only fitting that I chose West Marin School in Point Reyes Station, CA, as the offices of Fund For Global Awakening were located there as well.

My mission as a poet and teacher has been to make poetry accessible to everyone: to bring poetry into settings where poetry did not have the opportunity to be taught or shared. This has included schools, senior centers, hospitals and healing centers. Poetry is an incredible art form to work with as it has the ability to bridge left and right brain, thought with feeling, and the unconscious to the conscious mind where new insights can be made. The act of writing poetry helps one embrace one's whole self. I first encountered this place of "wholeness" at age 13 after I wrote a haiku. By playing with the exact syllabic structure of that poetic form, it allowed me to say something I would not have thought of otherwise. I surprised myself and found it incredibly rewarding. I found the play with words was infinite, and that in itself connected me to something larger.

Universal Children: Voices of Hope is an FFGA inspired program that focuses on children's highest creative expression and spiritual values. After meeting with FFGA, I created a curriculum that would embrace these values and give children the opportunity to express their knowledge and wisdom about topics that ranged from generosity to forgiveness, to envisioning a new future. I had no idea how children, ages 8-13 would respond to such material. I was in a school where there were a lot of ESL children, a wide range of writing skill levels and many children who were quite rambunctious. It was not my easiest case scenario. However, the children responded amazingly well to the poetry and to the subject matter; many enthusiastically went on to take an elective class. I was also quite surprised at how many of the poems revealed the soul of the child: the unique thread of light that connects them to the universal.

"Compassion is a first bloomed rose
shining brighter than all the other flowers.
Yellow, a yellow rose taller than the rest.
This is a special rose,
it doesn't flow in the wind like the others.
It is strong."

—Amanda, 5th grade

It is always a blessing for me to be able to work with children, to be the facilitator for their own unique expression to emerge. Kids are candid, spontaneous, energetic, and a whole lot of fun to work with. I call children "Little parakeets of desire, a magenta winged whirlwind of activity." They add such color to our adult world, a vibrancy that needs expression; a wisdom that needs a home.

OVERVIEW

This poetry guide was created in conjunction with poet-teacher Terri Glass, a member of California Poets in the Schools, and Fund For Global Awakening's *Universal Children: Voices of Hope*, who together collaborated on a special project called *Language of the Awakened Heart*. Poetry lessons with themes of animal wisdom, joy, connection, generosity, beauty, honoring the heart, peace, praise, forgiveness, and envisioning a new future were taught in six classrooms at West Marin School in Point Reyes, California, in the fall of 1999. The grade levels were 3-7; each received ten one-hour sessions of poetry.

Universal Children: Voices of Hope is a program that sponsors and encourages children to express their highest visions and deepest dreams through all creative mediums. This expression lends itself toward fundamental truths and a fresh perspective of the world that adults long to reconnect to. This program was designed to be a two way street—a chance for children to get excited about their own creativity, and a chance for adults to learn what insights children possess.

Universal Children: Voices of Hope supports projects where young people create from their hearts and reach out to the world. More creativity allows for more joyful expression. More joyful expression creates a more elevated language. This develops a self-awareness that contributes to a world based on sharing, cooperation, reverence, and gratitude—a world based on love.

Language of the Awakened Heart was geared to facilitate this new language within the medium of poetry. This guidebook provides a map to discover the hidden potential inside the child by containing lesson plans, visualizations, and introductions to poetic tools. It also supplies example poems and some of the incredible poetry and artwork that was created by the children at West Marin School during the artist's residency.

Fund For Global Awakening would like to see *Inspirational Guide for a New Language: Language of the Awakened Heart* used in schools worldwide. This would include both public and private schools, home schools, after school programs, juvenile halls, learning centers—any place where children (grades 3-12) are gathered to learn about language and where expression of their voice is vital to their well-being.

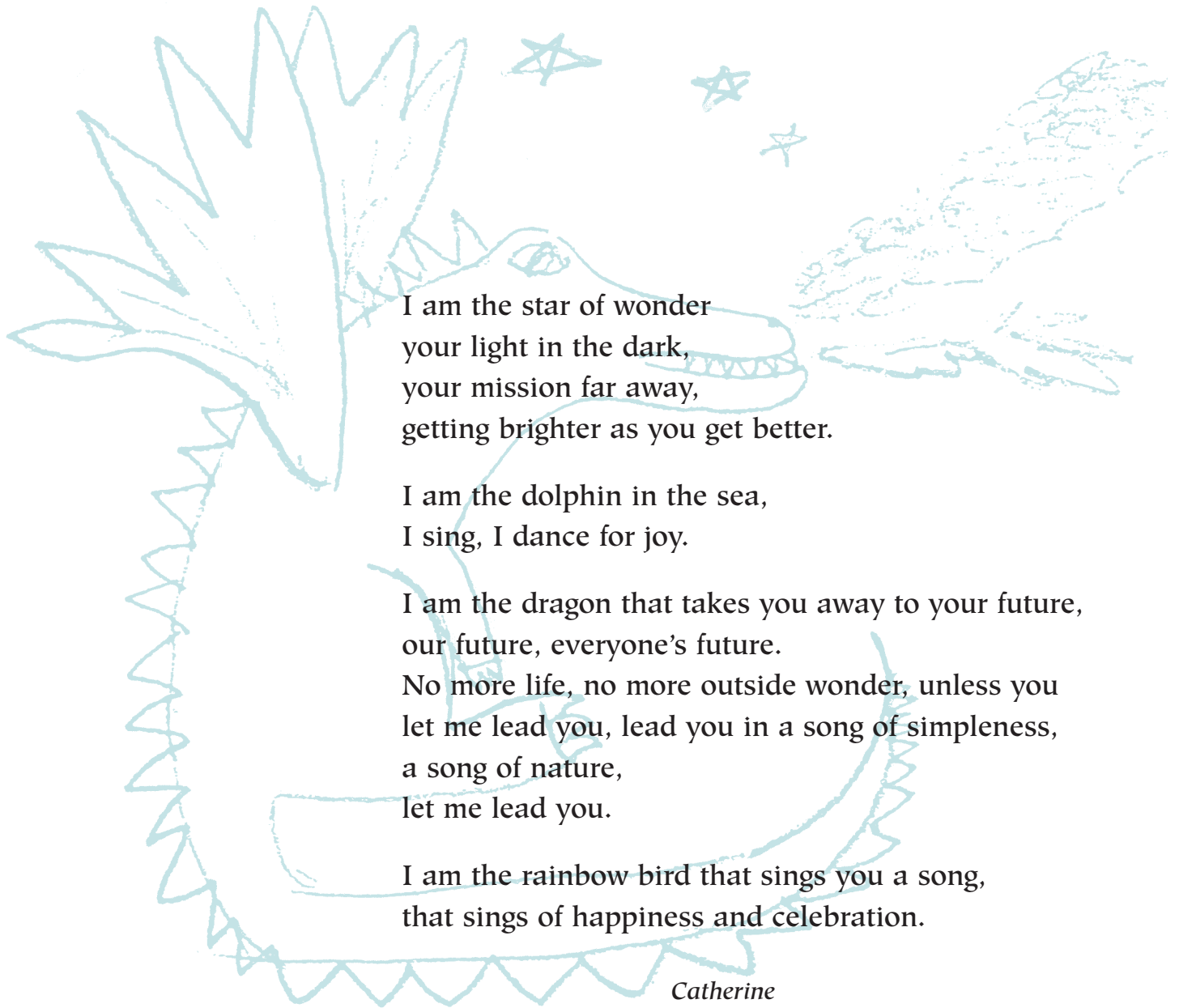
We hope you find this guide to be an inspirational tool you can use in your own work with children. It is our desire that it gives more children the opportunity to express their higher selves while broadening their ability to use language effectively and creatively.

THE ORIGINAL GUIDE QUESTIONS

At the start of the pilot program of Language of the Awakened Heart, five guide questions were developed to help elicit the deeper expression of the hearts and minds of young people without setting narrow constraints. These are the five questions:

- Imagine a future you would like to be in. What you give voice to, will be. Imagine anything and everything is possible. Remember to consider the purpose and meaning of your thoughts before you speak them. What is created? What does it feel like?
- Imagine looking in to the eyes of your favorite animal. You can experience anything that animal has known and experienced. Imagine it can help you communicate with other animals and plants. What wisdom does this animal give to you? What do you say to the other animals and plants?
- Imagine you are the recognized leader of your country. You have two opportunities to address the entire population of children and adults. You have three minutes. What do you say?
- Imagine you are a new star and you have planets revolving all around you which you have created. Do they have life on them? If so, what is it like? What does that life want to be?
- Imagine you could compose music and /or lyrics for a song that will be shared with many millions of people. What do the words say if there are words to the music? How will it sound?

Wonder



I am the star of wonder
your light in the dark,
your mission far away,
getting brighter as you get better.

I am the dolphin in the sea,
I sing, I dance for joy.

I am the dragon that takes you away to your future,
our future, everyone's future.
No more life, no more outside wonder, unless you
let me lead you, lead you in a song of simpleness,
a song of nature,
let me lead you.

I am the rainbow bird that sings you a song,
that sings of happiness and celebration.

*Catherine
6th grade*

PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

There is a sacredness in everyday language that has been diminished in our culture. What this sacredness represents is a feeling of connectedness to self and something larger than the self — the whole of nature. Within the act of writing poetry lies an amazing gift — it is the gift of metaphor and the gift of the image. These two incredibly important tools stretch our normal perceptions and allow us to see similarities rather than differences, unifying our experience of the world.

Children have an innate ability to feel this sense of connection. You see it in their overflowing energy at play, their love for animals, and their awe of the simplest rock or a star filled sky. The following ten-lesson guidebook gives a framework for children to express their highest truth with poetry, a language that embraces the sacredness of life — a language of the awakened heart.

The following is a poem that speaks about our need to connect in this larger way:

The Whole

A human being is part
of the Whole—
Called by us:
“The Universe”—
A part limited in time
space.

He experiences himself,
his thoughts and feelings,
As something separated

From the Rest—
A Kind of optical “delusion”

Of Consciousness.

This delusion is a prison

For us, restricting humans to
Personal desires and affection
for a few Persons nearest to us.

Our task
Must be to free ourselves
of the prison

By widening the circle of
compassion to embrace
All living creatures

And the whole of Nature
in all its beauty.

~ *Albert Einstein*

GUIDELINES FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

Anyone can learn to write and appreciate poetry. Poetry is not just for academic professors and madcap artists—popular poetry written today reflects many styles and voices from all walks of life. A common misconception about poetry is that it has to rhyme. However, poetry has the liberty to rhyme or be free verse where the writer is not constricted to a particular end sound. Another freeing aspect of poetry is that it does not have to make logical sense. Some poems are mysterious like dreams that you may not understand. But like a dream, the poem can take hold of you in a very powerful way. Poetry is valuable for anyone to learn, for it teaches us to express our voices from an authentic place. This guidebook of poetry lessons gives students an opportunity for authentic expression through exploring the importance of human values while learning exciting language and communication tools.

Poetry does not have to be a difficult subject to teach. Poetry is merely concentrated language, often within a particular form or line breath. Within that condensed language is an incredible play with words, with their sounds, rhythms, and the images they evoke. Have you ever played with poetry magnets or words in a letter or essay and were pleasantly surprised at new word combinations? Look at poetry as an experiment with words that represent thought and feeling that has no right or wrong outcome. Poetry is an invitation to this unknown, a calling to your inner self to revel in expression. Each voice has something unique to say, so let go of any predisposed rules of what you think the poem should look or sound like.

If you are a teacher unfamiliar with poetry, a good starting point is to read some contemporary poets to get a feel for the poetry written today. The anthology *The Language of Life*, edited by Bill Moyers, has a good variety of poets from different backgrounds. Another suggestion is to read one of the annual anthologies published by California Poets in the Schools that displays some of the best writing from California school-age children (see contact info p. 68). Both of these anthologies represent a multicultural mix of voices and a variety of writing styles. Another book, *How to Read A Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry* by Edward Hirsch, is geared to develop an understanding of the meaning and mechanics of a poem.

A wonderful way to prepare each lesson is to do each lesson plan first before you teach it, to see how the creative process works for you. You may discover the hidden poet in you elicits a newfound energy that carries over to the students. Children are instantly nourished by enthusiasm and passion and are more apt to try new things themselves when they feel the teacher's excitement. By reading aloud example poems and explaining the poetic tools presented in these lesson plans, the most unwilling students can write a respectable poem. Children love to create new things, whether with words, music, clay or a paintbrush. Poetry is fun for kids, because it plays with the basic rhythms of speech and helps them construct their reality in a new way. Poetry is a spontaneous expression of thought

and feeling woven together into a beautiful tapestry of sounds and images. It puts meaning back into our everyday speech. It can be total reverie and magic—and you are the magician pulling the surprise red scarf out from the child's sleeve. So release any preconceived notions of poetry and let the playful child in you join with the playful child in your students. Have fun exploring feelings and ideas with words.

PROTOCOL FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING

Your school or learning center may have the opportunity to bring in a guest poet into your site to teach these lessons. If this is the case, it is most beneficial when the classroom teacher stays with the guest poet for the entire session, imposes disciplinary action if needed, and shows enthusiasm for student participation. This generates a higher level of writing from the students.

If teaching the lessons yourself, the following outline shows how to conduct a session of poetry within 60 minutes. Each lesson varies according to whether you use visualizations, charting, or brainstorming. If you have less time for your session of poetry, you can shorten discussions and/or sharing time, although these are both of great value. Never minimize writing time; it takes at least 15-25 minutes for a child to create a poem, sometimes longer.

- 1) Introduction to subject & discussion - 15 minutes
 - Definition of poetic tools
 - Reading of example poems
- 2) Exercises - 10 minutes
 - Visualization
 - Charting
 - Brainstorming
- 3) Writing time - 15-25 minutes
- 4) Sharing time - 10 minutes

Sometimes it is good to begin a poetry session by gathering the students in a circle or semicircle. This can be done with their desks or by having the children sit on the floor. Begin the first 15 minutes of a one-hour session by introducing the lesson theme in an engaging way. You can ask the children what a particular subject means to them, i.e., generosity. Then read example poems to engage their imagination about that theme. Next, introduce the poetry tool the children can use in describing their subject matter and define that tool clearly by writing the definition on the board. Show examples of how this tool works in the example poems you read.

After introducing the theme and the poetic tool, present some type of exercise. This can include brainstorming, creating charts, or visualizations. When using visualization, have the students close their eyes while you ask them a series of questions, which they can use to make various associations about a particular subject. During visualization, the lights can be lowered or candles lit to allow the children to go inward more easily. In the forgiveness lesson, you can also show a video clip from

Fund For Global Awakening's Campaign on Forgiveness (see contact info p. 69) For certain lessons, these various activities will lead to a discussion.

Following the exercises and/or discussion, allot 20-25 minutes for writing. During writing time, it can be helpful to change the atmosphere in the classroom by having students return to their desks if they have been sitting on the floor, and/or playing soft music in the background. If students have a difficult time starting a poem, you may need to revisit some of the ideas generated on the board or from the discussion. Remind the students that they do not have to worry about grammar or spelling when writing their first draft of a poem. This frees up their creative process. This is a time when you can also give feedback to students whose poems you know can be taken further in some way. If a student finished his/her poem early on in the session, ask them to make a drawing from one of the images in their poem at the bottom of their page or on the back of their paper.

Use the last ten minutes of a session for sharing. This requires children willing to read their poem aloud and a good listening audience. Don't be surprised at the number of kids willing to share. It may be the first time for many children to feel successful at something of a non-linear nature. But never force a child to read out loud if they don't want to (poetry often lends itself to intimate feelings that need time to be integrated). During sharing, emphasize to your students the importance of attentive listening when their classmates read, which may bring a greater feeling of empathy and tolerance to the classroom.

In my experience, I have found that children like structure, especially if they have never written poetry before. Therefore the charting, brainstorming, and listing categories on the board help children feel they can create a poem. I also want to add that children who do deviate from the format presented, often create the more interesting poems. These children are "original thinkers" and will take one aspect of the lesson and fly in their own direction. It is good to honor all aspects of creative expression and to emphasize that there is no right or wrong way to write a poem. However, there are techniques that make a poem click, and the tools introduced in lessons one, two, three, and seven provide the framework to make a poem visually interesting and sound good to the ear.

These are only guidelines and you may have other methods that may work. Play around with one of the lesson plans and see how it best fits your ways of teaching this curriculum. You may find teaching poetry a co-creative experience where your role as a teacher is expanded and you are learning valuable information about your students that helps you work with them in other subjects. I know for myself that listening to children's poetry has kept my imagination fresh and helped me be a more empathetic human being, thus giving meaning to my role as an artist in the community. I hope you find *Inspirational Guide for a New Language: Language of the Awakened Heart* nourishing for yourself as well for your students.

Terri Glass

Poet in Residence

LESSON PLAN ONE

ANIMAL WISDOM: PERSONIFYING AN ANIMAL USING THE FIVE SENSES

*What is this joy?
That no animal falters, but
knows what it must do?*

~ Denise Levertov, *Come into Animal Presence*

Most children love being around animals. Animals act without pretense. Not only do animals possess this “presence,” many of them surpass humans in their sense of smell or hearing. There is much to be learned from the animal kingdom and it is fun to imagine what their message might be to us. The following poem was inspired by an observation of a fox and the desire to be that animal, because it moved with such grace and intent.

The Fox Path

I want to follow the fox path
and enter a different world;
become swift, light footed
wear an outrageous fur coat
aim like an arrow
toward my earthen home
dream fox dreams
in my hidden den
slip into the womb
of hibernation,
melodic and serene
and always in tune
to the perfect hues of spring.

I want to follow the fox path—
the unknown beckoning;
the ancient world of smell,
the true field of touch—
paw to ground, nose to wind
fur radiating out
north, south, east and west.
I want to follow the fox path
and forget my humanness.
I want to follow the fox path
every morning I awake.

~ Terri Glass

IMAGINE QUESTION

Imagine looking into the eyes of your favorite animal. You can experience anything that animal has known and experienced. Imagine it can help you communicate with other plants and animals. What wisdom does that animal give you? What does it say to other plants and animals?

LESSON PLAN

This *Animal Wisdom* lesson begins by reading the example poem, then moves to visualization and explanation of the poetic tools.



EXAMPLE POEM

Read aloud the poem *Magic Words* by the Eskimo Nalungiaq. It depicts a time when animals could become human beings and human beings could become animals. Invite the children into a discussion of what this might have felt like if they had lived in such a time. This poem is a great example of the power of language and of the imagination.

Magic Words

In the very earliest time,
when both people and animals lived on earth,
a person could become an animal if he wanted to
and an animal could become a human being.
Sometimes they were people
and sometimes animals
and there was no difference.
All spoke the same language.
That was a time when words were like magic.
The human mind had mysterious powers.
A word spoken by chance
might have strange consequences.
It would suddenly come alive
and what people wanted to happen could happen—
all you had to do was say it.
Nobody can explain this:
That's the way it was.

~ after Nalungiaq

VISUALIZATION

Ask the children to choose an animal they would like to become—anything from a butterfly to a tiger. Have them choose an animal whose power they would like to possess, such as the power to fly or swim or metamorphosize. After they choose their animal, invite them into a visualization. Have them close their eyes and imagine being that animal.. they are in the body of that animal. Then ask the following questions:

- What do you look like?
- What do your immediate surroundings look like?
- What do you see in your world, are you close to the ground, in the air or in the water?
- What do you smell in your world, trees, other animals, the food you might eat?
- What do you taste?
- What do you feel against your skin as you move in your world?
- What kind of sounds do you hear?
- What message do you have for the human world (or what qualities/wisdom do you possess that you could share with humans?)

POETIC TOOLS

The nobel prize winning writer Octavio Paz said, “A poet is a scientist of the five senses.” What he meant by this statement is that a poet pays very close attention to all the sights, sounds, feelings, smells, and tastes of his/her external world. Using the five senses in poetry enlivens the language tremendously and allows the reader/listener to enter into the poem instantly. It is a simple tool, yet very effective in producing engaging poems. Reading a poem filled with sensory detail, then breaking it down into the five categories of the senses on the blackboard, assists the students in seeing how the five senses can be used in a poem.

The other tool being used in this lesson is personification. It is a helpful tool for children to gain a larger perspective of their world and to gain empathy for others, including non-human life. Explain that personification is the representation of the embodiment of something other than yourself. Refer back to *The Fox Path* poem, where the author imagines being a fox aiming toward its earthen home. Imagine going into the body of that animal, and having an amazing fur coat and the ability to hibernate. It is very liberating to experience a world different from your own.

WRITING EXERCISE

List the above visualization questions on the board and ask the children to write a poem from the point of view of being the animal they choose to be. Allow 15-20 minutes for the children to compose their poems.

SHARING

Sharing time is very valuable, so devote the last ten minutes of the class period to those children who want to read their animal poem aloud. Poetry should provide a safe harbor through which a child can express what is going on in their emotional life. Some children are eager to read aloud, while others may be a little more shy; ask these children if you can read their poem for them. Hearing their poem read aloud may encourage them to read their own poem later. Originally, poetry was an oral art form akin to storytelling, which completes the form when expressed aloud. More magic can happen in the classroom when the poem actually falls on the drum of the ear. The expression becomes a multisensory experience as the sounds and rhythms permeate the whole body.

STORY

Certain lessons inspire particular children. The poem *The Bear* by Vincent is a prime example. It was the only completed poem from this student during the entire residency, yet is very strong and clear. This indicates that this theme was a triggering point for him. It wasn't until the following year that he began writing good poems during each lesson. Perhaps *The Bear* was his initiation into feeling capable of expressing himself through poetry. Different lessons impact children in entirely different ways. You will probably find at least one lesson that is a triggering point for even the most reluctant writer.

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S ANIMAL POEMS



The Bear

I am a Black Bear.
I see the river rapidly rushing
through the valley.
I feel the tall grass
rubbing against my paws.
I hear the nighthawk crying.
I smell dinner awaiting.
I want to tell you that my soul
is in your hands.

~ Vincent
4th grade

Sea Cucumber

I move very slowly but very smoothly.
I see the bottom of the ocean, rocks and soft ocean plants.
I feel little lumps on my back and the smooth ocean waves.
I hear the songs of a whale and the music of the dolphins.
I smell the sea plants growing near me,
I want to tell humans to slow down and move smoothly.
That is my message to you.

~ Alex
5th grade



The Horse

I am a brown Arabian horse running through a field.
I see the tall grass, wildflowers and trees that surround me.
I feel the smooth wind blowing against my soft skin.
I feel the joy and I hear the laughter of kids riding me.
I smell the fresh smell of flowers blowing in the wind.
I want to tell you that when you turn into a horse,
your soul will rise and stay that way forever.

~ Hana
4th grade



The Parrot

I am a parrot.
I move my wings outstretched.
I see the jungle and the animals.
I feel the air through my wings.
I hear the birds singing.
I smell nature.
I love to be a parrot.
I say to humans,
“Why do you kill the animals of the jungle?”

~ Angelica
5th grade

LESSON PLAN TWO

JUBILANT JOY: EXPLORING JOY USING METAPHOR AND SIMILE

*Keep knocking, and the joy inside
will eventually open a window
and look to see who's there.*

~ Rumi

LESSON PLAN

What is the difference between joy and happiness? One student replied, “Happiness comes and goes, but joy is always there.” Joy is a deeply internal experience and although some of us feel we lose that connection, there are ways to remind us that it is always within us. Most children contain a vast reservoir of joy. This lesson provides a framework to articulate their associations of what it is that evokes joy for them.

Begin this lesson with definition of metaphor and simile, follow with an exercise and the reading of the example poem. The lesson ends with a brainstorming chart on the board.

POETIC TOOLS

Metaphor is a language tool, you could look at it as the “glue of the universe,” for it helps us see the interconnectedness between two things that appear different on the surface. Metaphor is a direct statement that compares two unlike objects suggesting a likeness, i.e., *My love is a red, red rose*. Ask the children what that comparison tells us about a love. How are the qualities of someone you love like a rose? Is your love beautiful, soft or fragrant? A good metaphor can imply more than one thing. Next define simile as making the same comparison as metaphor, but using “like” or “as” in the comparison (i.e., *My love is like a red, red rose*).

EXERCISE

Ask the children to look into the eyes of the student sitting closest to them and compose a simile or metaphor describing the color or shape of their eyes. Then ask some of the students what they came up with. This is a fun exercise and gets the students engaged in the active use of these tools.

EXAMPLE POEM

Read the example poem “Ode to Joy” by Pablo Neruda. This is a beautiful poem for it lists several things that make Neruda joyful and also explains a time when joy had left him. He does this all through metaphor and simile. Ask the children to find some metaphors and similes in Neruda’s poem. Reading the whole poem is optional, a suggestion is to read the first page only. That is where most of the metaphors and similes reside.

Ode to My Joy

Joy,
green leaf
resting on the window sill
tiny brightness
newly born
musical elephant,
dazzling
coin
occasional
fragile gust of wind
but
more often
everlasting bread,
hope realized,
and duty properly done:
I scorned you joy—
I was given bad advice.
The moon
lured me along its paths
Ancient poets
lent me their glasses
and I drew a dark halo
around everything I saw,
a black crown on every flower,
a melancholy kiss
on each pair of beloved lips
But there’s still time.
Let me make it up to you.

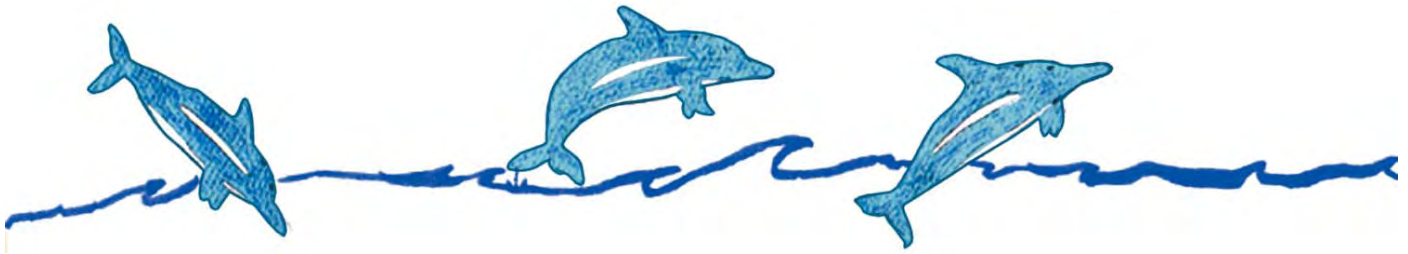
I thought
the bush caught up in the storm
had only to singe my heart,
the rain had only to drench my clothes
in that crimson land of mourning,
that if I closed
my eyes to the rose
and caressed the open wound,
suffering my share of everyone’s pain-
that only then I was aiding my fellow man.
In this I erred.
I had lost my way,
so today I call on you, joy.

You are
as necessary
as earth.
You warm
our hearths
like fire.

You are perfect
like bread.

You are musical,
like the water of a river.

You make gifts of honey
circulating like a bee.



Joy,
I was a moody youth:
I found your mop of hair
shocking.

But when its abundance
showered down on my chest
I discovered it wasn't true.

Today, joy,
I ran into you on the street,
far from any book.
Come with me:

I want to go with you
house to house,
I want to go from town to town,
flag to flag.
You aren't just for me.
We will go to islands
and seas.
We will go to mines,
and forests.
Not only will I be greeted
by solitary woodsmen,
poor washerwomen, or gruff and stately
stonecutters,

all of them bearing your bouquets:
there will also be crowds
and gatherings,
lumberjacks and longshoremen,
and brave boys
fighting their fight.

Around the world with you
and with my song!
With the star's
winking flight
and the sea spray's
delight!

I will deliver them all
because to all
I owe my joy.

Let no one question why I should want
to give the world's wonders
to all mankind:
I learned the hard way
it's my earthly duty
to spread joy—
and I do this through my song.

~ Pablo Neruda

Translated by Ken Krabbenhoft

CREATE A CHART

Brainstorm with the children about what brings them joy. List categories on the blackboard such as favorite activities, toys, favorite foods, places, pets, people, etc., and list some of their ideas portraying what joy is for them.

WRITING EXERCISE

Then ask the children to compose a poem describing joy using metaphors and similes. Each phrase can begin with “joy is.” Allow 15-20 minutes of writing time.

SHARING

Allow ten minutes for the children to read out loud their poems on joy. Applaud each child after they read. Pick out one strong aspect of their poem and say what was good about it. Kids often love this exercise and there is often high energy in the classroom when they read these poems.

STORY

There is always a child in the classroom who will write something utterly surprising or sophisticated for their age group. The first poem on joy in the Samples of Children’s Poems was written by a 2nd-grader named Sierra. Sierra was very quiet and didn’t like to read her poetry out loud. But she continued to surprise me with the way she would construct her poems which were far advanced for her class. At this age, many children struggle with spelling and cannot comprehend abstract topics or ideas. Yet, there are always a few who do. Therefore, it is good to aim high with the materials presented to see how ingenious the children really are.

Allen Ginsberg said to young writers, “You are a genius all the time!” This statement instills a sense of self-esteem, giving poets permission to fully let their ideas and feelings out on the page. The word genius comes from the word genie, which means “the spirit that inhabits us.” All children possess this spirit and genius happens at any age.

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S POEMS ON JOY

My Joy

Joy is a rose petal
that falls into a rain puddle.
The wind is also joy.
I like the way it blows through my hair.
Joy is a fresh brownie from the oven.
Joy is a butterfly
that lands on a flower.
Joy is a kitten or a puppy.
Joy is whatever makes you happy.

~ Sierra
2nd grade



Joy is when I play with my cat.
He purrs on my lap and crawls on my head.
Joy is painting a sunset,
splashing colors on a blank piece of paper.

~ Jenny
3rd grade

Joy is like
a seed of life.
Joy is like
a summer as long as eternity.
Joy is a
Christmas with peace.
Joy is my
bird who went to heaven.

~ Patrick
6th grade

Joy is my family who cares for me.
Joy is having people love me
the way I am.
Joy is swimming in the creek
on a hot hot day.
Joy is having friends
that care and share.

~ Heather
4th grade



Joy is a fire with hot chocolate in my hands,
and snuggling up to my mom,
her body warming mine
on a cold winter night,
the cotton soft snow falling outside.
Joy is giving presents and seeing the happiness they bring,
then receiving and feeling the same
on Christmas morning.

Joy is
swimming on a hot summer day,
I feel as free as the wind.

Joy is
the beautiful colors of autumn,
the orange like gold,
the red like ruby,
as they fall from the trees and crunch like chips under my feet.

Joy is friends and family joined together,
and me being one of the many.

~ Catherine
6th grade

LESSON PLAN THREE

THE GREAT MYSTERY ME: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONNECTION USING IMAGERY

“Poetry wants to come out of your wilderness, your deepest Africa. Immerse yourself in your body and find constellations of images that are uniquely yours.”

~ Stanley Kunitz

Poetry is an act of self-discovery. When you begin a poem you may have no idea how it will end. One trick is to follow an image or feeling which triggers another series of associations. The late William Stafford called this writing process “following the golden thread.” This golden thread connects images from the unconscious to the conscious mind. It is a very mysterious process and yet very revealing. The following lesson explores the great mystery of oneself by using imagery in depth.

LESSON PLAN

Begin this lesson with a description of the poetic tool, followed by the reading of two example poems. Then open it up to a discussion and end with a creation of categories for the writing of the poem.

POETIC TOOL

Define imagery as painting pictures with words using lots of descriptive detail. To illustrate what imagery is, pick an object in the classroom that is colorful or has an interesting shape and ask the class to describe it with as much detail as possible. Imagery often contains descriptions of colors, shapes and locations of a particular object. Imagery in poetry creates a picture in the imagination of the reader/listener.

EXAMPLE POEMS

Following are two wonderful example poems that explore the mystery of oneself from entirely different eras and cultures. The first is a Celtic poem called *The Mystery* written by the Druid poet Amergin and is a version from the *Song of Amergin*. The second is by contemporary Native American poet Scott Momaday, called *The Delight Song of Tscai-Talee*. Both of these poems use imagery to describe the different relationships in the universe that the poet feels a part of.

The Mystery is part of the oral tradition of poetry that preserves the historical past. The poem begins with 18 statements, followed by 6 questions. It may have been the poem Amergin chanted as he set foot on Ireland after migrating from Spain between 2,000-2,600 years ago.

I am the wind which breathes upon the ocean.
I am the murmur of the billowing waves of the sea.
I am the breakers of threatening doom,
I am the stag of seven tines
I am the ox of seven combats,
I am the deftness of the griffin
and the hawk upon the cliffs,
I am the dewdrop, a tear the sun lets fall,
I am among the fairest of flowers,
I am ruthless wild boar of valor,
I am the knowledge of salmon in hidden pools,
I am a vast lake flooding a plain,
I am the strength of art, a word of science.
I am a hill where poets walk.
I am the lure from beyond the world's end.
I am the point of the lance that hungers for battle.
I am the one who created in the head the fire.
I am wisdom: who but I cools the head aflame with smoke?
I am an infant: who but I knows the secret
of the unhewn dolmen*?
Who throws light into the gathering of stones
on the mountains?
Who announces the foretold ages of the moon?
Who reaches the place where sleeps the sun?
(If not I?)

~ *The Song of Amergin*
Version by Maureen Hurley

*dolmen- a prehistoric rock structure consisting of two upright stones
with a capstone resembling an altar.

The following is a contemporary Native American poem.
Notice the similarities between the two poems.

The Delight Song of Tscai-Talee

I am the feather in the bright sky
I am the blue horse that runs in the plain
I am the fish that rolls, shining in the water
I am the shadow that follows a child
I am the evening light, the luster of meadows
I am an eagle playing with the wind
I am a cluster of bright beads
I am the furthest star
I am the cold of the dawn
I am the roaring of the rain
I am the glitter on the crust of the snow
I am the long track of the moon in a lake
I am the flame of four colors
I am a deer standing away in the dusk
I am the field of sumac and the pomme blanche
I am an angle of geese in the winter sky
I am the hunger of a young wolf
I am the whole dream of these things

You see, I am alive, I am alive
I stand in good relations to the earth
I stand in good relations to the gods
I stand in good relations to all that is beautiful
You see, I am alive, I am alive

~ Scott Momaday

DISCUSSION

After you read these poems, ask the children what their favorite image was, what image spoke to them. Emphasize that each line of these poems creates its own image and the more detailed the image, the better the poem becomes (i.e., the author is not just the snow, but the glitter on the crust on the snow).

CREATE CATEGORIES

Next, list categories on the blackboard of things they could become while writing their own “I am” poem. Some examples of categories are:

- a new planet or star
- something that lives in the water
- something mythical or mystical (i.e. dragon, fairy, angel, centaur)
- a type of light (i.e. moonlight, sunlight, starlight, firelight)
- a bird
- a kind of song/sound in nature
- a leader of a country and/or something in the future that will help humankind

WRITING EXERCISE

Have the children begin each image with “I am”. Ask them to become at least six different things. The last line should produce a climax, or summarize the poem in some way. This poem brings forth a connectedness to something larger than themselves and produces amazing poems.

STORY

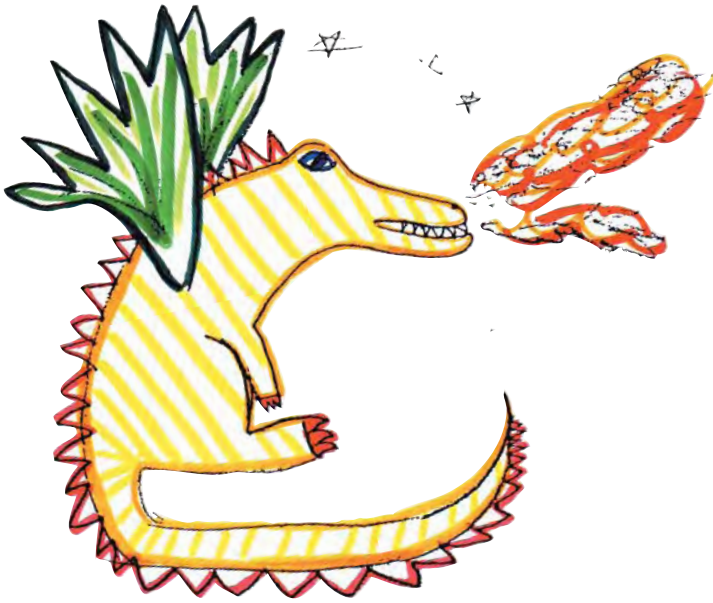
The I AM lesson is a sure success with even “problematic” students. In one school where *Language of the Awakened Heart* was being taught, there was a student named “John” who historically had behavior problems in class. When introduced to poetry, he quickly complained he couldn’t write and didn’t have any ideas. He rebelled against the notion of poetry and became so disruptive that he was expelled from class. A week later, John sought out the poetry teacher and begged her to reinstate him. After agreeing not to disturb other students and with a little encouragement of his abilities from the poetry teacher, John began writing a poem from the I AM lesson. Staying into recess time to finish his poem, diligently writing with depth, vision, and inspiring imagery, this is the result of his efforts:

I am an explorer on the icy surface of Jupiter’s moon.
I am a star giving birth to a solar system of planets.
I am a creature in a desolate world.
I am a single asteroid in the great yellow rings of Saturn.
I am a supernova filled with rage.
I am all these things and I am a silent star.

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S

I AM

POEMS

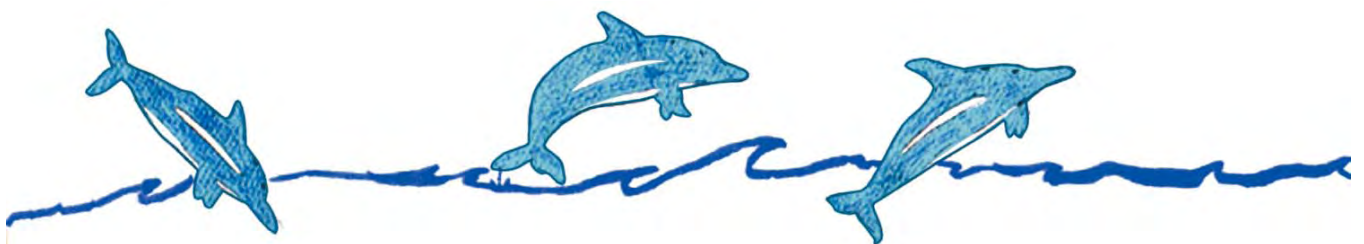


I am the bright gold star
shooting through the dark night sky.
I am the giant sea turtle swaying
through the salty blue green sea.
I am the purple fire breathing dragon
watching the Pegasus go by.
I am red and orange fire burning
in the purple and red sunset.
I am the golden eagle swaying
in the wind.
I am the song of the beautiful humpback
whale singing the song of sadness.
I am the new species of animal
running through the trees.

~ Alex
5th grade

I am a star that shines at night.
I am a dolphin who swims and jumps.
I am the fairy that shines in the castle.
I am the hummingbird that hums and flies fast.
I am the river that sings
a song as beautiful as a butterfly.

~ Kari
2nd grade



I am Pluto blue as the sky.
I am the dolphin that jumps up and down.
I am the sun shining in the clear water.
I am the eagle that flies as fast as the wind.
I am the song that sounds like a flute.
I am the tree as green as the grass,
I am the leader from the birds high in the sky.
I am an angel white as paper.

~ Yasmin
7th grade



I am the tiniest star that sits in the night sky.
I am the lionhearted fish, I love my elegant colors.
I am a lovely fairy my wings are rainbow.
I am the baby blue sky behind the sunset.
I am a bluejay, high at the top of a tree.
I am the song that is most appealing.
I am the animals that live in the future that are so cool.
I am the leader that rules everything.
I am the dream that all people dream.

~ Jillian
6th grade

LESSON PLAN FOUR

THE GIFT OF GENEROSITY: THE GIVEAWAY POEM USING SIMILES AND IMAGERY

*“The fragrance always remains in the hand
that gives the rose.”*

~ Gandhi

Generosity is a trait we all seem to admire when we observe it in others. Yet our culture seems to be based on “getting” (accumulating material wealth) in our consumer society. What if we were to turn this around and base our culture on what we can give away?

This lesson begins by a discussion of the topic, followed by reading the two example poems and then a brainstorming session on the board with a chart.

DISCUSSION

Ask the children what generosity means to them. Do they believe it's better to give than to receive? Do they ever remember giving away something that brought them great joy?

EXAMPLE POEMS

Read out loud the poem by a 5th grader, called *This is a Giveaway Party*, and the poem by the ancient poet Hafiz which talks about being in a grand and generous mood.

This is a Giveaway Party

This is a giveaway party,
I give you the lucky penny I found,
It's very lucky.
I give you this recipe of love,
And this feather,
It fell from an eagle,
It will bring you joy.
I give you this cot to lay on,
To look at the stars from.
I give you this picture
Of Martin Luther King Jr.,
He will tell you about his life, his self:
Put your ear to it.
I give you this chess piece that
I won a game of chess with.
I give you a rock I found
On the best day of summer camp.
I give you this bottle of water,
made it myself from an icicle
Of the long winter.
I give you this fish
I caught from the sea.
I give most of the stuff
That people gave to me at
Their own giveaway parties.
I will receive back more,
And a whole lot of respect, too.

~ Quiana , 5th grade

Come to my house late at night—
Do not be shy.
Hafiz will be barefoot and dancing.

I will be
In such a grand and generous mood!

Come to my door at any hour,
Even if your eyes
Are frightened by my light.
My heart and arms are open
And need no rest—
They will always welcome you.

Come in, my dear,
From the harsh world
That has rained elements of stone
Upon your tender face.

Every soul
Should receive a toast from us
For bravery!

Bring all the bottles of wine you own
To this divine table—the earth
We share.

If your cellar is empty,
This whole Universe
Could drink forever
from mine!

Let's dine tonight with exquisite music,
I might even hire the angels
To play - just for you.

Look!
Hidden beneath your feet
Is a Luminous Stage
Where we are meant to rehearse
Our Eternal Dance!

Come to the window, dear world—
Why ever be shy?

Look inside my playful Verse,
For Hafiz is Barefoot and Dancing
And in such a Grand and Generous—
In such a Fantastic Mood.

~ *Hafiz (Persian Poet, 1302-1389)*
Version by Daniel Ladinsky
excerpt from Someone Who Can Kiss God

CREATE A CHART

List three categories in columns on the board with the following headings: *objects* (such as a blanket or a piece of jewelry), *things found in nature*, and an *abstract* category for things such as love, friendship, or their own talent which they can share. Generosity is sometimes a difficult concept for children. A way to approach this is to have the children imagine giving away something knowing that it can always be replaced. This provides a greater opening for them when they are often attached to their material possessions. When a material possession has a meaning, like a chess piece from a winning game, then the gift bears more meaning to the receiver as well. It is also good to emphasize that a gift of the self is the greatest gift of all (as in helping someone move, lending an ear to a friend, bringing flowers to a sick relative, etc.). Brainstorm with them and list a few ideas on the board for each category.

WRITING EXERCISE

When composing their own giveaway poem, the students can use “This is a giveaway party” or “I’m in such a grand and generous mood” as the beginning phrase to lead into the poem. Have them use a couple of ideas from each category to give the poem some variation in describing what they are giving away. Remind the children to be specific in detail by using similes or imagery for each object/thing described.

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN’S GENEROSITY POEMS



This is for You

I will give you my treasures I kept
for a long time.
I will give you a petal
that falls from a rose.
I will give you the first golden leaf
that falls in autumn.
I will give you the sunken diamond
that shines more than the sun.
I will give you my last treasure,
the seashell that echoes like the ocean.

~ Sierra
2nd grade

I Will Give You

You have given me so much.
What will I give you?

I will give you my heart, my soul.
It will make you soar like an eagle high in the sky.

I will give you a song and i will sing it for you.
If you are sick, it will make you healthy,
if lost you will hear it and be found.

I will give you my books,
some old and torn, some shining with their
newness.
Treat them with care and they will pull you

into their adventures, their stories.

I will give you my pillow to sleep on,
the moons and stars on it will make you have
dreams of wonder.

I will give you a bouquet of flowers,
found by the river,
the blues and purples of the lupines,
the red of the paintbrush,
the orange and yellow of the poppies
all blend together and
make a rainbow, it glows like you do
when I give you these gifts.

~ Catherine
6th grade

Give it Away

I'm in such a grand and generous mood,
I want to give you a stuffed animal
as a token for a good night sleep.

I want to give you a two dollar bill
to bring you luck.

I want to give you a wild flower
to scent your house with a nice fragrance.

I want to give you a song in my clarinet.

I want to give you a smile that will
bring you joy.

~ Hana
4th grade

I give you my white rose
to light up your room.

I give you the sun
to shine up your morning.

I give you the moon
to protect you at night.

~ Lupita
5th grade

I'll give you the sun as bright
as a flashlight.

I'll give you the moon as shiny as silver.

I'll give you the trees standing tall and strong.

I'll give you the flowers with petals like jewels.

I'll give you the sky as blue as the ocean.

I'll give you the clouds as fluffy as cotton candy.

I'll give you the wind blowing strong and powerful.

I'll give you the stars twinkling like diamonds.

I'll give you my friendship,
but you must promise to value it.

~ Jenna
5th grade



LESSON PLAN FIVE

BOUNTIFUL BEAUTY: DISCOVERING BEAUTY THROUGH HAIKU

*“The source of suffering is the loss of attention
to the connection to beauty and to one another.”*

~ Jack Kornfield

Beauty requires a certain attention that demands one to be in present time. To fully appreciate the delicate design of a snowflake or the bright color of a tropical fish, one can't be thinking about the past or future. *Haiku* is a form of poetry that traditionally speaks of the beauty of nature and requires this attention.

LESSON PLAN

This lesson begins by explaining the form of haiku, then describing the elements, followed by a chart of object, time and place.

FORM

The haiku is a very compact form of verse originating from Japan. Haiku contains 3 lines with a 5-7-5 syllabic count. Haiku strives to say a lot in 17 syllables. Read the example poem below and have the children count out the syllables by clapping. Emphasize that it doesn't matter how many words there are, but the number of syllables in each word.

5-A soft summer breeze
7-wisks away a tiny seed
5-new planted flower.

ELEMENTS OF HAIKU

Haiku is not only 3 lines with a 5-7-5 count, but contains several other elements that work together making a haiku a high art form:

- Most haiku are an acute observation of nature.
- Haiku uses simple language—it presents objects more than describes them. Haiku usually does not contain a lot of adjectives.
- Haiku often contains an object, time and place. The object is what is creating the action in the poem; the time can either be the time of day or season, and the place is where the action is happening.
- Haiku embodies a sense of stillness or harmony by the blend of object, time and place.
- Often haiku presents a new discovery or insight that appears in the third line.

Haiku is like meditation—coming to a very still place inside as one observes nature. By observing nature closely, one can make a new discovery that can be about nature itself or about the inner world of oneself.

Cherry tree blooming
against my bedroom window
keeps me up all night.

~ Terri Glass

If it had no voice
the heron might disappear
in this morning's snow.

~ Chiyo

In each of these haiku, there is an element of surprise that doesn't occur until the third line. Sometimes this is achieved by presenting the object at the end; however, it is the way the object, time or place are blended that gives the poem an overall feeling like something momentous just happened.

Endless orange field
magic lens zooms in slowly
a single poppy.

~ Cheryl Wilkins

It did not matter
when stinging on my cheek was
the grace of snowflake.

~ Terri Glass

INTERPRETING HAIKU

In poetry, every reader is a master of interpretation. There is no right way to interpret poetry. Poems can be multi-layered with meanings. Each poem will speak to a reader according to the reader's own experience and perception. When the above haiku, "Cherry tree blooming" was presented to a class, many interpretations were offered:

- "Maybe the moon was shining so bright on the blossoms that the light kept her up all night."
- "Maybe the noise of the branches was annoying and she could not sleep."
- "Maybe the sight was so beautiful, she wanted to stay up and look at it."
- "Maybe the smell of the tree was so inviting, she wanted to stay up all night."

All those answers were insightful and clear. It is fun to ask children what they think a haiku means. Because there are often several different angles from which haiku can be approached, they generate unusual and clever ideas.

CREATE CATEGORIES

Make three columns on the board with the headings: *object*, *time*, and *place*. Ask the children what they have seen in nature that was surprising or interesting and list it under the category of *object*. Then ask them when they saw this happening—evening, summer, dusk, etc., and list this under the category of *time*. Next, ask the children where it was happening—a forest, a field, a backyard, etc., and list that under the category *place*. This gives them a framework to begin their poem.

WRITING EXERCISE

Ask the children to write a haiku about a scene in nature that is beautiful. This could be a favorite vacation spot or a local place that is special to them or an animal that caught them by surprise. Remind them to count out the syllables and try to use an object, time and place. This stretches their mind in a new way, using both left and right brains. Usually a child can write at least two haiku in 15-20 minutes of writing time.

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S HAIKU



A peaceful evening
Summer sun rises and sets
All creatures watch it.
~ Jenna, 5th grade

In the blue meadow
The sight took my breath away
All the butterflies.
~ Jeanette, 4th grade

A foggy morning
In the transparent mist
A parrot flying.
~ Hana, 4th grade

The wolf is swimming
Slow movements fill the water
Ripples all around.
~ Paulita, 4th grade



Butterfly awaits
As it calls for another
With a fountain of color.
~ Nicolas, 5th grade

LESSON PLAN SIX

HONORING THE HEART: EXPLORING EMOTION USING IMAGERY

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.”

~ Helen Keller

There is a beauty in honoring feelings, which, when written poetically, can create a positive construct on even the most negative feelings. The act of writing appears to be a neutralizer, a transformer—it allows one to step outside of the emotion while describing it. Sometimes when these feelings are buried, the gift of the image can unearth them in very interesting ways.

LESSON PLAN

This lesson begins by the reading of two example poems, then follows with a discussion of the poems and a creation of categories to provide a framework to write from.

EXAMPLE POEMS

Read the example poems that describe what is inside one’s heart. One is from 19th century poet Christina Rossetti, the other from a 3rd grader named Emily. Each one describes different feelings using metaphors and similes.



A Birthday

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick set
fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon* sea;
My heart is gladder than all these,
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me dais* of silk and down;
Hang it with vair* and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleur-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

~ Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

My Heart

My heart
is a winter moon
as white as a pearl
looking down at me
from high above.
My heart is a calm
silver poppy that
dances in the
moonlight.
Inside my heart
there is a
violet, smooth
sadness waiting
to crawl out into a
bluish purple ocean.
Love is
a wild silence
from far away.

~ Emily
3rd grade

It's fun for kids to look up the meanings of unusual words or words of old English. Ask one of the children to look up the following words as you read the poem.

**halcyon*—*calm, peaceful, tranquil*

**dais*—*a raised platform for honored guests*

**vair*—*Medieval fur trimming for robes or shields*

DISCUSSION

Ask the children what each poet is feeling according to their use of descriptive language. Have the children find the metaphors and similes in each poem.

CHART

Ask the children to select one feeling in their heart that they could describe. List different feelings on the board such as love, excitement, sadness, anger, loneliness, joy, etc. that they can choose from. Then list some categories on the board to give a framework for children to make new associations for their feelings. Example categories are:

- a celestial body
- a bird
- a body of water
- a tree or fruit
- a color

WRITING EXERCISE

Have the children compose a poem about what is in their heart using metaphors and similes, applying the sample categories. Begin the poem with “My heart is” or “Inside my heart there is.”

STORY

This particular lesson can reveal what is really going on emotionally inside a child. Kevin’s poem, “Inside my heart there is a sadness,” was a surprising poem to read. Kevin was a boy always joking in class who would often write silly or funny poems. However, in his heart there was all this sadness draped in the metaphor of animals. Perhaps Kevin deeply feels empathetic with the plight of so many of the endangered animals and/or he feels sadness in himself he doesn’t readily express. This lesson may involve risk-taking for students who don’t readily express their emotions.

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN’S HEART POEMS

Inside my heart there is a sadness
when I see a sea lion stuck in a net.
Inside my heart is sadness
when I see a kid cutting down
a perfectly good apple tree.
Inside my heart is a sadness
when I see a bird get shot
out of the sky.
Inside my heart is sadness
when a monkey gets taken
away from his Mom.

~ Kevin
5th grade

My heart is a rainbow of colors.
Inside my heart is a trapped bird
waiting to be set free.
My heart is the moon
shining in the night sky.
My heart is a dolphin
free in the ocean.
My heart is a pine tree
With snow on its branches.

~ Jenna
5th grade



My heart is like a happy dolphin
swimming through the water.
My heart is like a shining star up in the sky.
My heart is like a red red apple in the sun.
My heart is as red as the reddest coral
in the sea.
My heart is a swimming sea turtle
going to his friends.

~ Megan
5th grade

Inside My Heart

Inside my heart
there's a unicorn that is
as free as the wind.
Inside my heart,
there's a tree that does not care
whether it's windy, rainy, snowy or cloudy.
Inside my heart, there's a time for winter
when it's windy and rainy.
Inside my heart, there's my favorite color—
the color of the sky and ocean.
Inside my heart, there's a rose
that is as red as my heart.

~ Erika
6th grade



In my heart, there is a waterfall.
When I'm sad, it runs as a trickle.
When I'm mad, it flows violently
with power and force.
When I'm happy, it flows gracefully
never missing a beat.
Joy is a waterfall.

~ Matt
6th grade

My heart is like two lovebirds in spring.
My heart is like a juicy orange mango.
My heart is like a hot summer's day when I splash
and play in a refreshing cool creek.
My heart is like a beautiful red rose
Just about to open for the first time.
Love is the sound of the ocean waves.

~ Annika
6th grade

LESSON PLAN SEVEN

THE SOUNDS OF PEACE: WRITING ABOUT PEACE USING ONOMATOPOEIA AND ALLITERATION

*“Listen, listen,
This wonderful sound
Brings me back to
My true self.”*

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

In our hectic adult world, most of us yearn to experience a sense of peace. The feeling of peace shakes all the burdens from our shoulders and gives us a center of calm amongst our daily challenges. This lesson provides an opportunity to elicit a memory of a place that brings a feeling of peacefulness.

LESSON PLAN

Begin this lesson with an explanation of the poetic tools, followed by an exercise. Then read the example poems and end with a visualization.

POETIC TOOLS

Explain that *alliteration* is the repetition of consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words or syllables. Alliteration makes sounds roll off the tongue, and it is very pleasing to the ear. An extreme example of alliteration is a tongue twister. Ask the kids to repeat a tongue twister such as “*Peter Piper picked...*” Explain that poetry is a bit subtler than a tongue twister, with usually only 2-3 repetitions of consonant sounds that are close together in a phrase or sentence.

Onomatopoeia is naming a sound or action by vocal imitation. It is a sensory tool that makes words come alive. To give examples of onomatopoeic words, ask the children to name some bird sounds and list them on the board (i.e. hoot, squawk, caw, coo, quack, etc.). Then ask them to name some water sounds (i.e. crash, drip, trickle, roar, etc.).

SOUNDS OF SILENCE EXERCISE

Have the children be totally quiet for 3 minutes. Ask them to listen for all sounds other than human speech and list them on a sheet of paper. Then open it up to a discussion of what they heard. Did they hear a fluorescent light humming, a bird tweeting, their heart beating or their own breath? This exercise opens up an awareness of all sounds, especially after quieting the mind, and brings them to a place of stillness. As a fun guessing game, read the Thich Nhat Hanh quote and see if the students can guess what sound he is referring to (the breath).

EXAMPLE POEMS

Read aloud the two example poems that use sound tools of alliteration and onomatopoeia depicting a sense of peace. *Splinter* by Carl Sandberg speaks of the voice of the last cricket in autumn. *Against the Rock* by Kevin Stokes speaks of the sound of waves at a lake.

Splinter

The voice of the last cricket
across the first frost
is one kind of good-bye.
It is so thin
a splinter of singing.

~ Carl Sandberg
(1878-1967)

Against the Rock

Sitting in the banks of Wallace Lake
A feeling of coolness and peace arises.
The waves beat and splash against the rock.
In the distance, a roar begins to build!
The pines come alive with movement,
Crashing and thrashing by the force
Of the wind beating their tops.
As it approaches, all stop to listen,
Waiting for the crash to reach them.
But silence—the wind hits the lake,
Where no trees carry the sound,
But water waves and beats
Against the rock.

~ Kevin Stokes
11th grade

VISUALIZATION

Ask the children to choose a place that represents peacefulness for them (almost all children describe a place in nature, although a few describe their bedroom).

- When no human is talking, when no machine or technological sounds are heard, what might you hear?
- What does this place look like?
- How do you feel being there?

WRITING EXERCISE

Have the children compose a poem using at least four onomatopoeia words describing this place. If they can also add some alliteration, it will make the poem even more interesting to the ear.

A child's sense of peace can differ drastically from an adult's. Some children think being at a theme park is peaceful. The feelings of excitement and peacefulness are at times interchangeable. It is important not to make any child wrong for how they depict peace.

This exercise is a good opportunity for the teacher and student to relax. It is also a tool your students can always refer back to when they are feeling stressed or having a hectic day. They now have an image of a peaceful place that they can take with them wherever they go.

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S PEACE POEMS

Sounds of Peace

The water is so peaceful at the prettiest lake.
I hear the crunch of the fall leaves as I walk around.
I hear the song of the blue jay out in a meadow.
I hear the water trickling down the roots of a tree.
I hear the swoosh of the grass as I walk past.
It makes me feel so happy I could be alone forever.

~ Jillian
6th grade



Sounds of Peace

At the creek by my house,
I hear the water splashing against my legs.
The water rushes through its path.
A small wave makes a quiet crash.
The water rumbles while I bend down
to feel the cold water.
I hear the minnows swishing while they swim.
when I go to the creek, I feel peaceful.

~ Sierra
2nd grade

LESSON PLAN EIGHT

THE POWER OF PRAISE: PRAISING AN OBJECT THROUGH THE ODE

*“Every object, every being is a garden of delight.
Be a connoisseur.” ~ Rumi*

*“Any object deeply regarded is
a gateway to the Gods.”
~ James Joyce*

To praise what is good is a very empowering experience. It shifts the focus from the negative to the positive. An *ode* is a form of poetry that allows one to praise someone or something in a very exalted manner. It can take an ordinary object or subject and make it appear extraordinary by the colorful language it uses. It is the language used that cleanses the doors of one’s perception.

LESSON PLAN

This lesson begins with an explanation of the poetic form, the reading of example poems, and ends with a writing exercise.

POETIC FORM

An ode is a kind of poem or song that praises something or someone, and is written with a lot of feeling and enthusiasm. An ode describes an object’s uniqueness and often compares it to something royal, heavenly or abundant; i.e., the round, magnificent, star-filled watermelon. An ode may use an exclamatory phrase somewhere in the poem (i.e., Oh, stars, you fill my eyes with such exquisite light!).

There have been many odes written throughout history. Ask the children if they can name a famous ode (i.e., “Ode to Joy” by Beethoven, “Ode to a Nightingale” by John Keats).



EXAMPLE POEM

Pablo Neruda was a master of the ode. His *Ode to the Watermelon* is a good example of taking an object and, through metaphor and imagery, exalting it to the highest level.

Ode to the Watermelon

The tree of intense
summer,
hard,
is all blue sky,
yellow sun,
fatigue in drops,
a sword
above the highways,
a scorched shoe
in the cities:
the brightness and the world
weigh us down,
hit us
in the eyes
with clouds of dust,
with sudden golden blows,
they torture
our feet
with tiny thorns,
with hot stones,
and the mouth
suffers
more than all the toes:
the throat
becomes thirsty,
the teeth,
the lips, the tongue:
we want to drink
waterfalls,
the dark blue night,
the South Pole,
and then
the coolest of all
the planets crosses

the sky,
the round, magnificent,
star-filled watermelon.

It's a fruit from the thirst-tree.
It's the green whale of the summer.

The dry universe
all at once
given dark stars
by this firmament of coolness
lets the swelling
fruit
come down:
its hemispheres open
showing a flag
green, white, red,
that dissolves into
wild rivers, sugar,
delight!

Jewel box of water,
queen
of the fruitshops,
warehouse
of profundity, moon
on earth!
You are pure,
rubies fall apart
in your abundance,
and we
want
to bite into you.

to bury our
face
In you, and
our hair, and
the soul!
When we're thirsty
we glimpse you
like
a mine or a mountain.
of fantastic food,
but among our longings and
our teeth
you change
simply
into cool light
that slips in turn into
spring water
that touched us once
singing.
And that is why
you don't weigh us down
in the siesta hour
that's like an oven,
you don't weigh us down,
you just
go by
and your heart, some cold
ember
turned itself into a single
drop of water.

~ Pablo Neruda
translated by Robert Bly

DISCUSSION

Ask the children to find all the metaphors, similes or images that make the watermelon appear special or unique (jewel box of water, green whale of summer, etc.).

MAKE A LIST

Brainstorm with the children words of praise that they could use in their ode, and write them on the board. Words such as fantastic, spectacular, excellent, splendid, marvelous, magnificent, beautiful, etc. It is amazing how many praise words exist in the English language.

WRITING EXERCISE

Have the students select something they truly love and can get excited writing about. This can be a favorite person, place, activity, food or pet. Then ask them to describe their object or person using the five senses, metaphor, and imagery to make that thing appear extraordinary. Give them the leeway to exaggerate if need be, to exalt their topic of choice and to use an exclamatory phrase somewhere in the poem.

STORY

The poem *Ode to My Mom*, in the *Samples of Children's Odes* on the following two pages, is a very touching poem and a total surprise to the mother to whom the ode was written. The mother had no idea how her daughter felt until she found the poem after several requests from the teacher to locate it for publication. It literally brought tears to her eyes when she read it. This experience led to an open dialogue between mother and daughter, who did not live together. The young author of this ode attended the school poetry reading at the end of the year with her mother. She was too shy to read the poem herself, so the poetry teacher read the poem to the roomful of parents, teachers and young poets. Many eyes were moved to tears including the mother's once again. This is a powerful example of the healing power of praise when it is given a place for expression.

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S ODES



Ode to Mother Earth

In outer space, you look like a beautiful blue ball
spinning so gracefully.
On your orbit around the sun,
you look as if you are spinning through
a circular river of sunlight.
Your rocky surface is your skin.
Your trees in the forest are your fingers
reaching for the moon
that you may never catch.
Your tears are the rainfall that gives life
to all plants and animals.
Your oceans feed the clouds
that provide the tears of life.
And your mountains are where I long to be
because that is where I see your beauty best.

~ Devin
5th grade

Ode to Mother Earth

You are as blue as the grass is green.
You spin like a top while children are playing.
In space, you look like a whirlpool spinning
at the speed of light.
Your waters are as plentiful as the stars
in the sky.
The mountains are as snowy as vanilla ice cream
melting in your mouth.
You provide life force for all.
You are so wonderful mother earth.

~ Hana
4th grade

An Ode to My Mom

My mom, the one who nourished me when I was young.
The one who held me when I cried and who wiped my tears.
The one who tucked me in when I was tired
and read me to sleep when the nights were long.
The one who cut her long golden-brown locks of hair
so I would not hide in them when I was shy.
She who gave me my life when I was lifeless
and the one who loves me most of all.

~ Theana
7th grade

Ode to Sleep

Happiness you give,
you give my eyes a new life,
you give my limbs a massage,
when I am with you I think of all things
no one has known,
that are even new to me.
You let me think up my life, my future,
you help me so much.
I owe you so much for your ideas,
your time.
Yes, you renew my life with the energy you give,
you are my other world,
my best world, my favorite world.

~ Catherine
6th grade



LESSON PLAN NINE

FOSTERING FORGIVENESS: WRITING ABOUT FORGIVENESS USING SENSORY DETAIL

*“In the greater oneness of our
higher self, ultimately there is
nothing to forgive.”*

~ Alex Kochkin

We are just beginning to realize how important forgiveness is in our lives. There are now scientific studies that prove that there are health benefits for those people who know how to forgive. There is even now an International Forgiveness Day, but do children embrace a concept of forgiveness and what can we learn from this?

LESSON PLAN

This lesson begins with a discussion, a showing of a short video with three 30-second segments on the theme of forgiveness, and ends with a visualization. The video is from the Decade of the Heart media campaign titled *Messages: Awakening the Heart of Humanity*. It can be previewed online at <http://www.decadeoftheheart.org/campaign.htm>. A VHS tape can be obtained from Global Awakening Press whose contact information is provided at the end of this booklet.

DISCUSSION

Begin this lesson by asking the children what forgiveness means to them. You can explain that one definition of forgiveness is letting go of all anger or hate toward someone and learning to love again. Explain that the feeling of holding onto grudges drains away one's power, the power to feel good inside. What keeps us from forgiving? Why do we choose to hold onto grudges when it doesn't feel good?

Forgiveness is a topic that you may find some children don't accept readily. As children approach puberty, sometimes you find a cynicism that permeates their thinking. It may only take two or three students to upset or sway the whole classroom into believing forgiveness is something they don't want any part of. It is important to stress that carrying a grudge against someone is like swallowing a slow bottle of poison. It takes away your ability to enjoy other things in life and can affect your phy-

sical health. It can also take away personal power that could be redirected into becoming great at something (i.e., a famous athlete or recording artist). Great people do not have time to carry grudges, they only have time to let their own star shine.

LESSON TOOLS: STORY AND VIDEO

Read the following story as a tool to engage the kids in thinking about how or what they might want to forgive: In 1999, a 12-year-old girl from Sacramento, Kimi Anderson, was shot in a drive-by shooting which left her paralyzed from the waist down. She was a victim of a random act of road rage. During her hospitalization, she awoke from surgery knowing she had to forgive her assailant. She wrote a letter to the man suspected in the shooting, "Dear Mr. Odell, I am not sure what your name is, but that doesn't matter. All that matters is I forgive you and the wrongness that you have put on me, and I am sure if you ask God for forgiveness, he will." A month later she refused to dwell on what happened to her. "I don't want to bother with it," she whispered from her hospital bed. "It's a waste of time. It's better to be happy than sad."

Show the three 30-second video clip from FFGA's *Campaign on Forgiveness*. If you do not have easy access to the video clips, see the contact page for a free copy. After viewing the clips, ask the children the following questions:

- What takes joy as its prisoner? (anger)
- If forgiveness was instant, how might that make them feel?
(full of compassion and understanding)
- What was the simile used in describing what forgiveness felt like?
(felt part of me rise up and fly like something the universe hadn't yet invented)

EXAMPLE POEMS

Read aloud the two example poems on forgiveness.

Forgiving Love

Decide to Forgive

Be the first to forgive

To smile and take the first step

For by forgiving

You become the master of fate

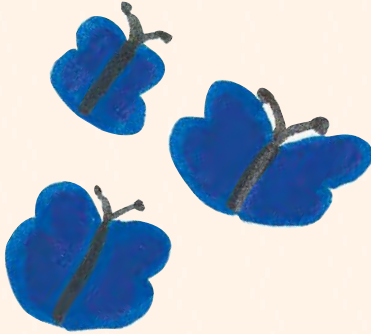
The doer of miracles

To forgive is the highest

Most beautiful form of love

In return you will receive

Untold peace and happiness.



~ Robert Muller

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a strong woman, tender and earthy and direct. Since her children left home, she has embarked on an extended walking tour, visiting ruins and old monuments, bathing in rivers and hot springs, traveling through the small towns and large pulsing cities, tracing the current of sorrow under the stories she hears. Sometimes the city authorities and officials don't want her within their gates. If people want her there enough, she always manages to find a way inside.

Forgiveness brings gifts wherever she goes. Simple ones, a three-stranded twig with leaves turning yellow, a belt she wove on an inkle loom, a little song that grows inside you and changes everything. She bought me a silver ring from the South with a pale stone, pink with a hint of brown. When I had asthma, she taught me how to breathe.

~ Ruth Gendler
from *The Book of Qualities*

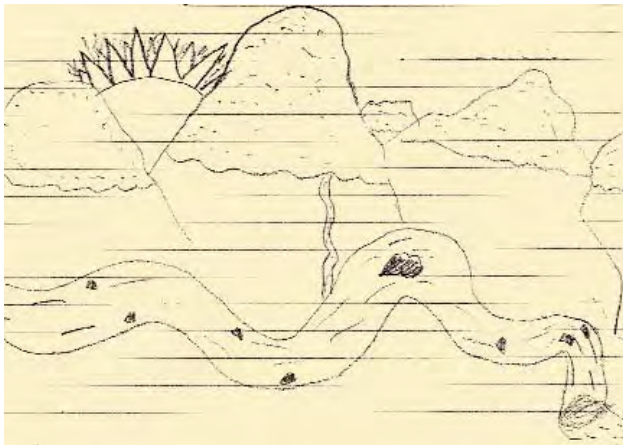
VISUALIZATION

- Ask the children to close their eyes and ask the following questions:
- What color is forgiveness?
- If forgiveness were a shape, what would it be?
- What does it feel like when you forgive someone—what can you compare that to?
- Where is forgiveness located in your body? (i.e., heart, lungs, etc.)
- If forgiveness were a place in the external world, where would that be?

WRITING EXERCISE

Ask the children to write a poem about what forgiveness is for them. Repeat the first three questions from the visualization on the board. Then ask them to include three other things describing their take on forgiveness. Allow 15-20 minutes of writing time.

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S FORGIVENESS POEMS



Forgiveness is a ring,
a ring around the earth.
Forgiveness is a yellowish light like a laser.
When I forgive, I feel good.
Forgiveness is a river,
a river with a waterfall.
Forgiveness is a mountain
a mountain no one has climbed.
Forgiveness is a smile like a rainbow.
Forgiveness is a ring.

~Matt
6th grade

Forgiveness is a stream of water
carving out a gray rock over thousands of years.
That rock will be the sandy bottom of the stream.
That sandy bottom makes home for the algae and other plants.
These plants provide food and homes for many animals.
The water in the stream provides water
for the plants to grow and for animals to drink.
This all comes from the forgiveness of rock and stream.

~Nicholas
5th grade

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a soft emerald green
like the palace of Oz.
It is a delightful and yet peaceful wavering object.
When I forgive, I feel a sense of joy inside me,
the way a mother feels during the first word of her child.
Forgiveness is a blooming, gentle rose,
a door opening to a new world of friendship.
It is a creamy white dove,
spreading its wings to fly away to a promised land.

*~Petra
6th grade*

Forgiveness is
as blue as the pen
I'm writing with.
Forgiveness is the
most beautiful star
shining in the dark sky.
Forgiveness is all over the world.
U can hear "I forgive U" in Asia,
France and everywhere in the world.
Forgiveness is
always in my heart.
When I forgive,
I feel like
I burst into a flame
of strong friendship.
Forgiveness is
the sound of claps
of joy when U
forgive someone.

*~Nora
5th grade*



Ode to Future Time

Time, you beckon. Before
you were
perfect space,
open prairie.
Today
you are
a thread, a drop,
a slender light
scurrying like hare toward thickets
of concave night.

But
now
you're telling me, time, what
you didn't tell me before.

Go ahead, get going,
give your heart a rest.
Go ahead and sing your song.

I'm still the same, aren't I? The one
who knows the river
by the way its water flows?

All I know is this: in that very place
my heart has been knocking
at a single
door,
knocking since yesterday, from afar,
since long ago,
since my birth—

that place where the dark echo
of the singing
sea
answers, and I sing,
an echo
I only
know
by its blind hissing,
by lightening
striking the waves,
by waves' thick froth in the night.

And so, time,
you've sized me up in vain.
In vain have you hurried
to step ahead
of this wanderer.

I spent the entire night
by a single door.
I was alone, and singing.

And now
while your light thins
like a speeding animal
fading into shadow,
only now do you tell me
plainly
what you didn't show me
but I've always known.

~ Pablo Neruda
Translated by Ken Krabbenhoft

QUESTIONS

Ask the children the following questions so they can envision what the future may hold. List their answers on the board so they can refer back to them as they write.

- How would you like to see yourself in the future?
- How might you better the world?
- What new discoveries or inventions might be made?
- How would you envision the health of planet Earth?
- What would you like to see for all of humanity?
- Imagine anything and everything is possible. What is created? What does it feel like?

WRITING EXERCISE

They can begin their poem “I wish for the new millennium to bring” or “I wish that in the future there is” or “In the future, I envision...” Have them list their wishes using descriptive language, referring back to all poetic tools used: sensory detail, metaphors and similes, imagery, and onomatopoeia and alliteration.

CLASS PROJECT

This exercise is a good starting point for children to choose one thing from their poem that they could incorporate into a project for themselves or their class to give them the feeling that they can create their future.

In an example of the children’s wish poems, Hana states, “I wish homeless people could have the chance that we have for a good life.” Her wish could develop into a volunteer project at the local homeless shelter where the homeless are fed, clothed, and counseled.

In Yasmin’s poem, she states she will bring peace to the world by growing flowers. Her project could lead to planting a community garden in an inner-city lot that helps beautify the area and bring people together for a common purpose.

These projects could be as simple as one child’s desire for inner peace and his/her commitment to a daily meditation practice. Making their ideas real will give the children a greater sense of self-esteem and also make the future a better place for us all.

“We have reached a state of affairs that it is the duty of every intelligent citizen to pay attention to the most obvious. That is what poetry is. That’s why I believe it’s the last campaign. Poetry is ultimately—ultimately—the most political act there is.”

~ Bill Moyers

SAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S WISH POEMS

The New Millennium

In the new millennium, I wish that the world
could be as peaceful as the angels in heaven.
I wish that the air could be as clean
as the pebbles sparkling in the Oregon river.
I wish that homeless people could have the chance
that we have with a good life.
I wish that people could like each other
for who they are.

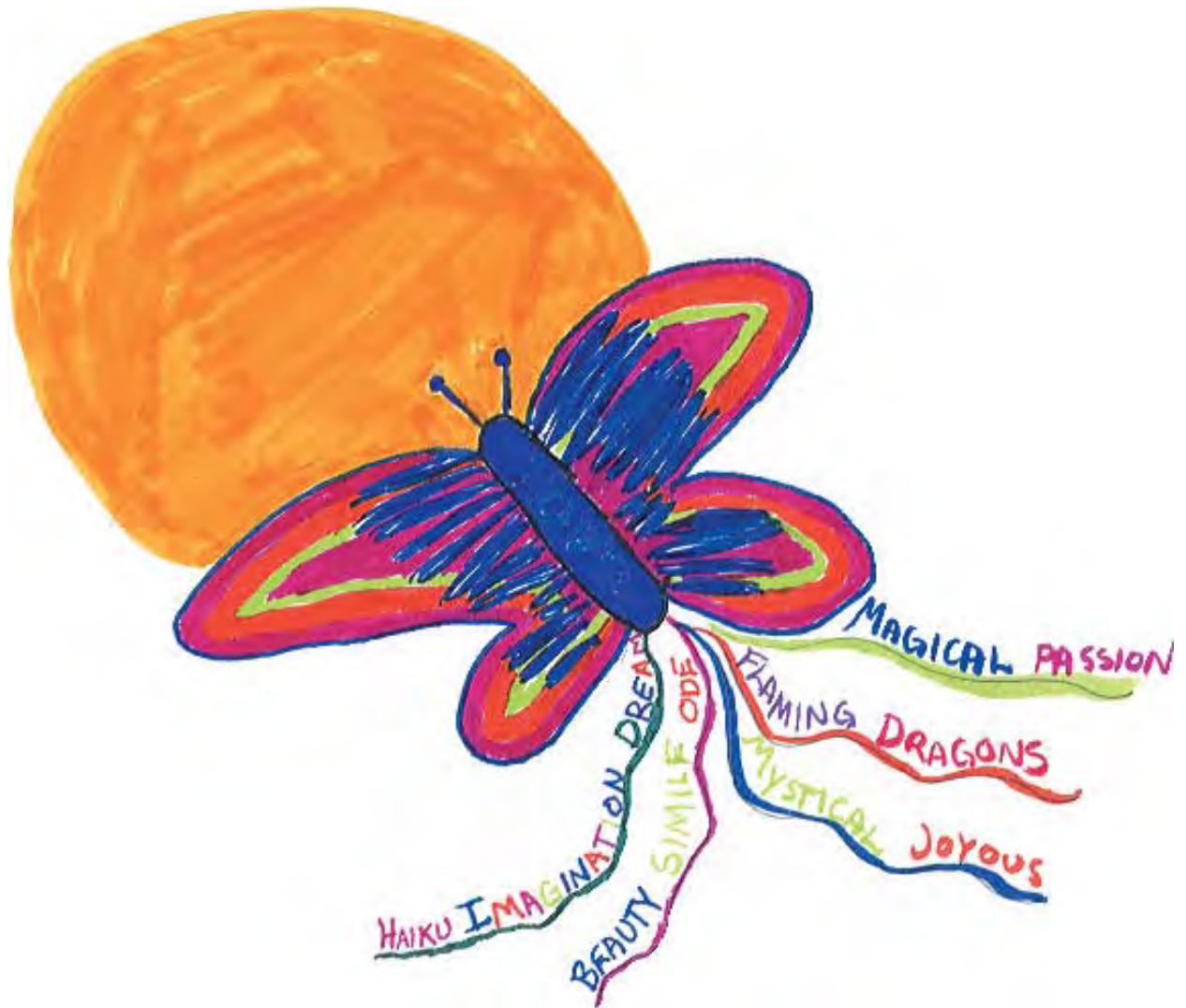
~ Hana
4th grade



In the New Millennium

I see the birds falling from up above.
I hear kids crying everywhere.
I feel the wind going through my face.
I discover water yellow like the sun.
I heal the millennium,
by bringing some peace to the new world,
by growing flowers, and then the birds
will be singing to the world.

~ Yasmin
7th grade



*“After the final no
there comes a yes
and on that yes
the future of the world depends.”*

~ Wallace Stevens

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Terri Glass is a poet deeply committed to the ability of language to transform oneself and one's culture. A professional poet, teacher and writer since 1987, her mission has been to make poetry accessible to as many people as possible. She is a community-based artist who coordinates the California Poets in the Schools program for Marin County, working in over 20 public and private schools teaching children K-12 the art of writing poetry. She has been a facilitator for *River of Words*, a project founded by former U.S. Poet-Laureate Robert Hass, where she taught teachers nationwide how to incorporate environmental awareness into poetic writing. She has been awarded grants to facilitate poetry workshops in alternative settings throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, from Senior Access Centers to the Kentfield Rehabilitation Hospital and the Center for Attitudinal Healing. Currently she conducts a spiritual poetry writing class for adults called *Journey to the Center of Your Soul*.

Terri was born in 1954 in Washington state and began writing in her early teens. Her early poetry is filled with lush nature imagery of the Pacific Northwest and she still writes about a sense of place today. Her early influences were William Stafford, former Poet Laureate of Oregon, and the national best-selling author Robert Bly, who both acted as mentors and encouraged her to forge deeper into her writing. She published her first poem at age 26 and a chapbook, *Mermaid's Secret*, at age 30. She moved to California shortly thereafter and began teaching poetry at various institutions such as The Academy of Sciences in San Francisco and Sonoma State University. Terri published her first book of poems at age 37, *Unveiling the Mystical Light*, a blend of inner and outer worlds of nature and spirit. She has been published in a variety of journals, anthologies and magazines, including *Science of Mind*, *Calendar* magazine of San Francisco, *Beside the Sleeping Maiden—Poets of Marin*, and *To Honor a Teacher*. She has read her poetry in Bay Area bookstores (Cody's, Borders, Clean Well Lighted Place for Books) and in many settings along the West Coast, from colleges to conferences, art galleries, and open spaces.

Terri has collaborated with a variety of artists and experimented with a music and poetry project in 1996 at San Pedro School in San Rafael, CA with jazz musician Marcia Miget. Here she began to see how the combination of these two art forms added a heightened dimension to one another. She later met musician John Walsh and was inspired to collaborate on a music and poetry CD entitled *The Body of the Living Future*, poems that weave the sensual, emotional, and spiritual realms of the human experience into an alchemical process of transformation. Peter Russell, author of *The Global Brain*, calls *The Body of the Living Future* "exciting, rich and sensual." Terri Glass believes her poetry embodies a deep conviction of the power of words to evoke a feeling of wholeness, a connection to what is greater and what is possible—the body of the living future.

Terri Glass can be reached by e-mail: terri@thefoxpath.net

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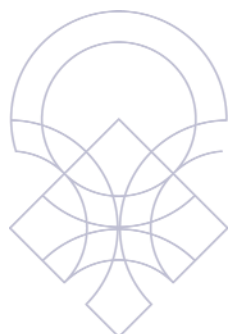
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Awakening requires remembering who and what we are beyond ordinary considerations of self and experiencing extraordinary dimensions of being. The vastness of this destiny is such that it can only be known as it creates itself.

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