

The Ringing of the Bells: Joyful Sounds of Poetry

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Overview

Poetry is a language of the world. It is found in every country across the globe in every language imaginable. Poetry covers every topic in the Universe. But poetry is no longer only found in dusty old libraries but in active and engaged classrooms across this country. Teenagers are more tuned into rhythm and meter found in poetry today than ever before. Poetry has a beginning. It is seen in the intricate lyrics of Emily Dickinson and the everyday commentary of Walt Whitman. It is reflected in the music of Tracy Morris and the melody of 2chanz and JayZ. These lessons will share with teachers a way to get teenagers to connect to poetry and enjoy it in a whole new way—through the rhythm and beat.

Rationale

With so many demands placed on teachers to cover the Classics and prepare students for the next High Stakes Test coming down the pike, we need to be judicious about what we are keeping in our curriculums and what we are brushing over. Often a huge emphasis is placed on F. Scott Fitzgerald and John Steinbeck, grammar and Algebra that we have little time to reenergize our souls. Poetry allows teachers and students to share and reflect on works of written art and listen to poetry and to force ourselves to confront situations or emotions that are unfamiliar to us; things that make us uneasy or anxious about our world.

This lesson will be used with high school freshmen in an urban setting but can easily be adapted for any grade level by choosing poems that focus on learning objectives for your students. An example might be in rhyme scheme; are you teaching internal rhyme, end rhyme, or a slant rhyme type of format in that poem. Student skill level can be as basic or advanced as the accompanying materials. The poems should make students think but not be so obscure as to be a “turn-off.” Children at the pre-school level can also enjoy this lesson using pictures illustrating a read poem with age appropriate music topics, like Mother Goose’s nursery rhymes. With the coming of the Common Core curriculum

across most states, students can enjoy a lesson such as this to create a “learning staircase” which requires students to evaluate and present increasingly complex materials. As students, work through lessons, year after year, teachers will ingrain in students, the ability to compare and contrast materials thus preparing them for careers in the 21st century.¹

This is a unit that can be enjoyed by teachers, students, administrators, and community members. Parents will also enjoy watching poetic presentations as their children make a leap from written word to spoken verse to bridging the two. As a teacher and as a parent, watching students develop skills and relationships they never imaged is a great joy. This joy is then shared student to student. In “The Bells”, onomatopoeia and alliteration are present throughout the poem lending support to it musically. Examples of the onomatopoeia, in which words imitate a sound, occur in usage of tinkling, jingling, chiming, shriek, twanging, clanging and clang. Alliteration can be seen in the third line of each stanza in “The Bells” with the repetition of consonant sounds.²

In “The Bells”, first published in November of 1849 (issued about October 15, 1849) in *Sartain’s Union Magazine*,³ (<http://knowingpoe.thinkport.org/writer/thebells.asp>) month’s after Poe was paid \$15 for the piece and questions still surrounded his mysterious death, Poe describes common objects most people have heard and enjoyed at some point in their lives, bells. Just like a song, this poem is wonderful when listen to rater than read aloud. In “The Bells, Poe creates an awesome mood in the lyrical nature of the poem. It’s the sound that matters, not the words.⁴ Through this poem, Poe shares, sleigh bells and wedding bells, then brass bells and iron bells which signify crisis and death. He covers life’s gamut in this lyrical verse.

Edgar Allan Poe was the son of traveling actors. This, being the life he knew from birth, sparked his wild imagination. His father left the family and his mother died in Richmond, Virginia before the age of three. Edgar was taken in by a wealthy, childless family in Richmond, the Allen’s. They were very pleased with Edgar Allan’s scholastic ability but as he matured, he grew moodier and irresponsible with money. He went to the University of Virginia, but dropped out after amassing a huge gambling debt. His father then refused to take care of Edgar Allen any more. Edgar Allan and his foster family had to part ways. This split left Edgar Allan Poe penniless.

He had several courtships but nothing lasted until he met his thirteen year old cousin caught his eye. He married Virginia Clemm and moved to New York City. The year was 1837; In New York, Poe and his bride lived with her mother whom Poe called endearingly, “Muddy”. In New York, Poe was known to have had much to drink. He wrote with increasing success but conservative critics still mocked his style and ability. The one saving grace was his wife, Virginia. Unfortunately, Virginia fell ill with tuberculosis and died. Poe’s life was shattered. He completely broke down. His one safe haven had vanished. Two years later, Poe was found at a Baltimore tavern completely delirious only to pass away on a rainy, election day. Cause of death was uncertain.⁵

The standards that will be used in this unit in conjunction with the School District of Philadelphia will be 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.6. With the standard of Learning to Read Independently (1.1), students will display this standard by reading selection before activity begins. They will annotate materials for words unfamiliar to them or their classmates to create a vocabulary list and define words during class activity. In standard 1.2, Reading Critically in All Content Areas, students will learn to use context clues to get the meaning of a passage for success. As children interact with the media of music and learn to adapt the beats and rhythm to their original poems, they will become successful in this standard. Understanding works of literature and analyzing the material will be explored in standard 1.3, Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature. In this standard, students will also analyze the effectiveness of a piece of writing and the appropriateness of diction or figurative language in poetry. They will examine how words create tone and mood in a work of poetry. They will read and respond to non-fiction and fiction, including poetry. The last standard that this unit will address is 1.6, Speaking and Listening. This standard covers listening and speaking, working in small and large groups, contributing to discussions and using media for learning purposes.⁶

Poetry is amazingly inexpensive to enjoy for teachers, schools, and students. Once only seen in paper form and hard to find or access, poetry is now abundantly available in the Internet or in spoken form at the University of Pennsylvania at Penn Sound. The world unfolds into a vast region of written work, with the use of Google or any search engine, work read by the poets themselves, songs played by different artists covering original artists. The Poetry seminar has shared a huge resource in the University of Pennsylvania library recordings. Interviews with authors can be shared with the click of the mouse. As we need to differentiate learning, this is an amazing find.

The sounds of poetry can be quite alluring to young people. As children we learned to be quite clever with our singsong nursery rhymes. “The Raven” and “The Bells” are well known by Edgar Allan Poe. In “The Bells” onomatopoeia and alliteration occur throughout the poem helping to support the musicality of the poem. Words like tinkling, jingling, chiming, shrieking, and clanging are just a few words that set up “The Bells” with onomatopoeia. Repetition of consonant sounds that occur in groups such as “bells, bells, bells...tinkle, tinkle, tinkle...” are perfect examples of alliteration occurring in “the Bells”.⁷

Edgar Allan Poe’s first poem produced in print was “The Raven.” It was published in the *Richmond Weekly Examiner* September 25, 1849. The poem tells of a bird lost in a storm that comes and taps on a student’s window for refuge. The student opens the window to find this trained speaking bird there to espouse information of the prior owner’s lover, Lenore. Reviews were that it held the same relation to that of another masterpiece of painting might hold to a mosaic. Reviews mentioned the “the Raven”, a mere narrative, ministered a sense of a beautiful mind. The poem is of great merit from strange, beautiful,

and fantastic imagery to the extraordinary vividness of word painting complicated by Beethoven due to the musical rhythm.⁹

Poetry is all around everyone, every day. Whitman found it in the every day things we all experience. Others saw poetry through a different lens. Poetry is no longer the flowery love sick verbiage of Valentine's Day cards but can be seen right in front of anyone willing to quiet their minds and focus on the beat, the sound of their world. Reading poetry can be tricky. We have always been taught that there is a "right" answer. The beauty of poetry is that is interpretive through its form and can be discussed from beginning to end, with different perspectives being considered all in one realm.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1

Materials needed:

Promethean board

Notebooks

Pens

Magic Markers/colored pencils/colored pens

White board

Speakers

Internet access

Laptop computer

Objective: Students will be able to identify/define sound poetry.

Do Now: What poets are you familiar with? Which poets have you read and enjoyed?

Students will be given five minutes to respond. Time will be kept on the Promethean board. Upon the tone indicating the time limit, students will be asked to put pens down and close notebooks. Teacher again asks, "Poets...what have you read? Which poets have you enjoyed and why?" Teacher chooses a few students to share out loud with the class. Each student is then to share with a partner the information they wrote in their notebooks—3 to 5 minutes given.

Direct Instruction: What is "Sound Poetry"? Have you ever experienced it? Can anyone give an example?

Teacher will begin to use the white board to define onomatopoeia, assonance, and consonance. Students will take note of definitions in notebooks.

Onomatopoeia—is the word being said to represent the meaning of the word. E.g. buzz, zip

Assonance— is the repetition of vowels sounds within a sentence or sentences.

Consonance— is the repetition of consonant sounds within a sentence or sentences.

Internal rhyme—words that sound the same inside the line of poetry as other words listed in consecutive lines in the middle of lines

End rhyme—words that sound the same appearing at the end of poetic lines

The teacher will give simple examples of each sound poetry method listed above.

When understanding of terms is seen for most of class, teacher will introduce Tracie Morris and Sam Cooke's "Chain Gang." What are these songs about? Which song emphasizes the actual motion and emotion of the chain gangs? How do you describe the chain gangs? How are Tracie Morris and Sam Cooke's versions of the same song similar and different?

Teacher will then review the historical facts about "chain gangs" and again ask the students for their input for factual depiction in each song. How has your opinion changed? Is one version better than the other and why?

Independent Instruction: With a partner, create a poem in which you enact the words in lyrical verse. The motion of your poem will drive or take the reader to your guided place of poetry.

Exit Ticket: What current topics in city, national or world news would make good impact on people with this method of delivery? How would this method of sharing be best and for which group?

Homework: Bring in a newspaper or magazine for us to cut up for tomorrow's "do now."

Lesson 2:

Materials needed:

Promethean board

Notebooks

Pens

Magic Markers/colored pencils/colored pens

White board

Speakers

Internet access

Laptop computer

Large index cards—10 per student

Large metal rings for index cards

Objective: Students will be able to identify/define sound poetry.

Do Now: Take out the newspaper or magazine you brought in. (Have some extra available, “just in case”) Find an article that interests you and do an article review. What is the title? Who wrote it? What is the main idea? What is your opinion of this topic/why did you choose this particular article?

Cut that article out of the source. Cut the words out and rearrange them in another way to create a different story/poem with them. Is there assonance or consonance in your poem? Are you employing internal rhyme or end rhyme?

Direct Instruction: Review poetry terms aloud. Prepare for Promethean Board presentation, [The Language of Poetry Slide Show](#).⁸ Students will complete “Literary Devices” sheet as they watch slide presentation. Sheet must include the definition of each literary term and an example of each.

Explain that each student will now create literary term vocabulary cards using the Frayer model. In the center of the large index card, each student will put the literary term. In the upper left corner of the card will be the definition of the literary term. For the upper right corner, the student will write characteristics of the term. In the lower left corner of the card, examples of the literary term will be placed. In the upper right corner, students will place what the term is NOT or non-examples of the literary term.⁷
(<http://www.longwood.edu>)

Independent Instruction: Students will complete the “Literary Devices” sheet and complete a large index card for each term on the sheet. The cards will then be attached for the student with the large metal ring.

Exit Ticket: Students will complete a “Literary Cartoon”. He/She will think of the literary devices that were covered in the class and illustrate a cartoon to display a specific term in the box on the sheet given.

Homework: Look up Edgar Allen Poe’s, “The Raven” on the Internet. Print out the poem and underline and circle—annotate the text to express your understanding of Poe and sound poetry terms. This serves as reinforcement of Poe’s style as a poet and to reinforce annotation with the text thus encouraging close reading by students.

Lesson 3:

Materials needed:
Promethean board
Notebooks

Pens
Markers/colored pencils/colored pens
White board
Speakers
Internet access
Laptop computer
Magazines/newspapers
Dictionaries
Scissors
Clear tape/glue sticks
Construction paper
Large news print sheets

Objective: Students will be able to identify/define sound poetry.

Do Now: Describe the sound bells make. When are the bells higher in pitch? When are the bells deeper in tone? When do you think of bells? Are bells significant any place in society? If so, where and when?

In a pair, share your answers with another student. Did you both see the bell sounds in the same way? Combine your lists and prepare to share with the class your interpretations.

Direct Instruction: Introduce Edgar Allen Poe and “The Bells. Hand out a copy of the printed version of “The Bells” to each student. Give each child two magic markers or colored pencils. Put the poem up on the Promethean board, ready with pen to highlight the rhyming schemes found in the poem. Call on a student to come to board and circle or underline the lines/words that rhyme. Play the poem.

The specific student in the front of the class will indicate his/her findings as the poem is read. Each student will then annotate his/her own sheet. When the end of the poem is read and reading completed, students will compare his/her work with the board. In a pair, students will take 5 minutes to discuss findings with a partner.

Teacher will review end rhyme, internal rhyme and onomatopoeia after the specific time, teacher will thank the front highlighter of the poem for their efforts and open a discussion about similarities and differences that were found in the rhyming scheme. Using large news print sheets of paper, teacher will note similarities in one column and differences in the other.

What is a raven? Describe a raven using sensory terms. Are they friendly birds? Teacher will review “The Raven” focus on the repetition and rhyming sounds. Poe uses in “The Raven”. What type of rhyming scheme do students see? Project poem onto board. Teacher then break students into groups to identify as many as each group can in five

minutes. A spokesperson for the group will go to board in-group assigned color indicates findings of the group.

Indirect instruction: As Poe has used musical mechanics in his poem, “The Bells”, each student will create a 10-15 line poem using end rhyme, internal rhyme and onomatopoeia. Students will have 12-15 minutes to complete. Students will imitate Poe in the rhyming aspect of their writing. Can students also incorporate symbols as Poe did in “The Bells”? How many onomatopoeia words can students bring to their piece?

Exit ticket: Each student will turn to their partner in the pair and recite, out loud his/her poem. At the end of the reading the partner will underline rhyming schemes found and place circles around the onomatopoeia words.

Homework: Students will complete the mirror writing poem exercise and illustrate his/her poem in a shadow box. What is the action-taking place? What will be the outcome at the end of your poem? How will the reader feel? Use objects and color to demonstrate your thoughts in this box. The poem, typed, and shadow box will be due in three days.

Annotated Bibliography

Teacher Resources

www.brighthubeducation.com/english-homework-help/49958-the-raven-by-edgar-allan-poe-summary/

This site provides a summary of the poem, “The Raven” broken down by stanza with understanding of each line within it.

Common Core State Standards Initiative. <http://www.corestandards.org>. National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices and Counsel of Chief State School Officers: 2010.

This site will provide the teacher with the expected outcomes of the Core teaching methods. It is a very basic site offering the teacher merely facts on common core standards.

www.cummingstudyguide.net/guides4/Bells.html

This is a very interesting for many aspects of literature. This site breaks literature into ways of approaching the same required readings. Ideas and methods will keep teachers fresh on routine literature and keep students interested.

Poe, Edgar Allan. “The Raven”. *Richmond Weekly Examiner*. Sept. 25, 1849, col. 4-5

<http://www.eapoe.org/works/poems/ravent.htm>

The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore shares a review for “The Raven” written in 1849 of the first publishing of the poem. Interesting in the words used to describe the poets works.

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-raven-is-published>

This History Channel website shared January 29, 1845 as the date Poe's poem, "The Raven" was published in the *New York Evening Mirror* newspaper for the first time.

Elements of Literature, third course. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. New York, NY. 2005.

This is the current textbook in the ninth grade curriculum in the city of Philadelphia. It offers all genres of literature with writing workshops, biographies, and debate possibilities. Students are familiar with this book also making the work out of it not so foreign. This book also offers many theories on how Poe died; making it an extension of several other exercises such as a debate or argumentative essay.

<http://Knowingpoe.thinkspot.org/writer/thebells.asp>

Sartain's Union Magazine (Oct. 15, 1849) this was interesting in how material was explained. Teachers will find it informative but not overkill on the facts to share with students.

http://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/poe/poe_ind.html

This site provides a complete list in alphabetical order of all Poe's poetic works.

<http://www.shmoop.com/bells-poe/sound-check.html>, "The Bells". University, Inc. April 16, 2013.

This is a place to find one of many readings of the Poe classic, "The Bells". This site also offers ideas on teaching other Poe stories and poetry.

www.slideshare.net/Brialdoolan. "The Language of Poetry". Slideshare, Inc., San Francisco, CA. (2013)

"The Language of Poetry" is a power point presentation that illustrates literary definitions needed by students for the use of creating poetry. An excellent visual aid.

Student Resources

Elements of Literature, third course. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. New York, NY. 2005.

Urdang, Laurence. *The American Century Dictionary*. New York, NY, Oxford University Press. 1996.

End Notes

- 1 www.commoncorestandards.org
- 2 www.cummingsguides.net/guides4/Bells.html
- 3 <http://knowingpoe.thinkport.org/writer/thebells.asp>
- 4 <http://www.shmoop.com/bells-poe/sound-check.html>
- 5 Holt Elements of Literature, Third Edition
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 www.cummingstudyguide.net/guides4/Bells.html
- 8 www.slideshare.net/Briandoolan
- 9 <http://www.eapoe.org/works/poems/ravent.html>

Content Standards

1.1 Learning To Read Independently

Analyze the structure of informal materials explaining how authors used these to achieve their purpose

Identify, describe, evaluate, and synthesize the essential ideas in text.

Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying words and correctly using new words

Understand the meaning of and apply key vocabulary across various subject areas

Demonstrate, after reading, an understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text

1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas

Read and understand essential content of informational text and documents in all academic areas

Use and understand a variety of media and evaluate the quality of material produced

Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre

1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature

Read and understand works of literature

Analyze the relationships, uses and effectiveness of literary elements used by one or more authors in similar genres

Analyze the effectiveness, in terms of literary quality, the author's use of literary devices.

Analyze and evaluate in poetry the appropriateness of diction and figurative language

Analyze how a writer's use of words creates tone and mood, and how choice of words advances the theme or purpose of the work

Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama

1.6 Speaking and Listening

Listen to others

Listen to selections of literature (fiction and/or non-fiction)

Contribute to discussions

Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations

Use media for learning purposes