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For Better Or Verse – Poetry In The ESL Classroom

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For Better or Verse – Poetry in the ESL Classroom

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My students

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Abstract:

This Independent Personal Project considers the use of poetry with regard to reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. The first part of the paper deals with the author's background in poetry and journey to using it in class. The next part is concerned with the reasons for using poetry in the ESL classroom. Then the paper focuses on general concerns using poetry in class, which segues into a more specific discussion of assessment and correction. The final part of the paper presents twenty activities that can be used in the classroom. The activities offer suggestions for use in all four skill areas and discuss topics such as using poetry in teaching editing and integrating poetry into classes. Rubrics and examples are included throughout the paper. Finally, examples of student poetry and poetry from the author are offered at the end of each activity.

Educational Resource Information Descriptors (ERIC) Descriptors:

Classroom Techniques, Poetry, English as a Second Language, Writing Skills, Reading Skills, Listening Skills, Speaking Skills, Classroom Activities, Grammar Practice

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Introduction

We grow up with poetry. Rhymes surround us, or, in some cases, bombard us. *Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall …, Itsy, bitsy spider …, One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish …, Two all beef patties, special sauce, …* . We hear it in the cradle and, at most funerals, we hear it at the grave.

When I decided that I would write about using poetry in the ESL classroom, I thought that I had stumbled onto something new, something bold, something never-before-done. Until I did a Google search and found more than a million entries. So much for blazing new trails. If I can't explore new territory – at least by standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before me – I can put my mark on the subject.

In this Independent Personal Project, I want to share my vision of using poetry in the classroom. I'll draw on other people's ideas and try to spin them my way. Some are so ubiquitous that it's hard to present them in any way other than the way they were presented in the books or websites I first encountered them. Some are original and, I hope, have my stamp all over them.

My Poetry Background

I began to appreciate poetry when I was in a writing group in Washington, DC in the 1980s. Most of us in the group were there because we wanted to write short stories and novels, but we had a couple poets, too. Until I met them, I had assumed that poets wrote their poems whole cloth after the muse smacked them in the head. Maybe they struggled over a few words while they were writing and they edited at the end of the process to

insure they had everything spelled correctly, but I believed that they wrote their poems – maybe in an afternoon – and that was that.

I was surprised to find that they followed the writing process the same way I did. They did prewriting exercises! They wrote drafts! More than one! They spent as much time – sometimes more – on one poem as I did on a chapter of my novel! These revelations made me appreciate poetry even more than I had. I was even inspired to try my hand at a poem about a heartbreak I'd experienced. Fortunately, I've lost that poem.

A few years ago, I began to think about applying to a Master's of Fine Arts program in writing and thought that I might make myself a more 'marketable' applicant by reading more poetry. A lot of poetry eluded me. I didn't understand it. (To a lesser degree, that's still the case, but I've discovered that I don't have to read the stuff that I don't like – there's plenty of poetry that I do understand so I read that.) I picked up a book called *Poetry for Dummies* and it turned my thinking upside down. I learned to read poetry. I learned to enjoy poetry. I bought more books about poetry and books *of* poetry.

Within a couple of months, I tried my hand at writing poetry again (thanks to Ted Kooser's book *The Poet's Home Repair Manual*) and, while I still wrote some of the 'heartbroke' treacle that I had written fifteen years earlier, I wrote poetry that I was proud of, too. The more I wrote, the more I read and I began to think that poetry might have a place in my ESL classes.

When I first started teaching, I actually had used an exercise I got from a book (that I regret I have forgotten the title of) in which students wrote a list poem by providing a noun for a group of sentences. The pattern was:

You are a(n) (article of clothing).
You are a(n) (room in the house).
You are a(n) (piece of furniture), etc.

I used this activity with limited success, always writing with the students, but in one class, a student wrote using his wife as inspiration and the poem was wonderful. Much better than what I had written. It would have been humbling that this level 4 non-native speaker 'out poeted' me, but it was such a touching poem that it never occurred to me to be jealous. I had him read it in class, bragged on him to students and teachers alike, and told him to take it home to his wife and share it with her.

When I began to think about what I wanted to do for my IPP, I remembered the feeling of excitement and satisfaction I got from that student's poem. I thought about how I enjoyed my forays into poetry. I thought that there had to be a place for poetry in the ESL class. And I realized that writing an IPP about something I loved and had merit for ESL would be better than writing about something that had could be used for ESL, but that I was neutral about. Thus was born *For Better or Verse*.

Why Poetry?

Let me count the ways:

1. Vocabulary Building

An obvious way to use poetry in the classroom is to build student's vocabulary. Because of poetry's conciseness, students can learn how to search for and choose the best word for a situation. In some activities, students will use dictionaries and thesauruses to

define words they read or to find better words to use in their own poems. Exercises can encourage students to use synonyms and antonyms.

2. Reading

Reading poetry is another way for students to appreciate English. As with all reading, students need not understand every word to enjoy a poem. Indeed, some poetry can be read only for the sounds the words make. Students can guess mood from reading poems for gist and then delve deeper into the poem to understand the words and confirm their conjecture. Students can easily find poetry on the World Wide Web and can even read analysis of specific poems on websites like *plagiarist.com* and *poets.org*.

3. Listening

Listening is the way most students first learn to appreciate poetry. Listening to a poem can be a prompt for discussion or writing. Students can be given a copy to read silently, following as the poem is read or they can listen for gist 'without a net'. Through listening, students become familiar with the rhythm and sounds of English.

Many contemporary books of poetry today include compact discs of poets reading their own work and websites such as *poets.org* or *poetryarchive.org* offer historical recordings of poets. Imagine exposing students to Dylan Thomas reading *Do Not Go Gently into that Dark Night* or Langston Hughes reading *I, Too*. Poems can be used for dictation exercises no matter the skill level of the student.

Finally, what is a poem but a song put to music and most students enjoy activities, such as gap fills, with songs.

4. Writing

Another way for students to use poetry is to compose it. Through writing, students use grammar, vocabulary, and a host of other skills they need to improve their English. By writing poetry, students also learn the process of writing, a skill they can use in everything from academic writing, to business writing, to novel writing, to personal writing. The writing process also teaches drafting, revision, and editing and students can be introduced to the idea of peer editing, while they work in pairs or groups, writing collaborative poems.

5. Grammar

As mentioned earlier, students can learn grammar through poetry. They can not only learn things like tense, adjective placement, and clauses, but they can also learn the appropriateness and formality of vocabulary. Students will see – and practice – how language works.

6. Group and pair work

In addition to the earlier listed benefits students get from using group work, students can build a sense of community while writing poems with classmates. One project for the class can be to prepare a chapbook of the poetry they wrote over the semester. Students can have a public reading inviting friends and family to hear the results of the class.

7. Sense of accomplishment

Because poetry is often short, students can quickly finish reading poems – as opposed to essays or novels – giving them a sense of accomplishment. Likewise, they can compose poems that take less time to write than an essay. Teachers can show their pride in their student's work by posting it on the walls in the classroom or, better yet, publishing them in a class book or magazine. Such real life scenarios take student work out of the classroom and put it in the real world. This makes writing more meaningful than just writing to fulfill a homework assignment.

8. Development of personal values

Poetry requires a deeper reading, to think about what is being read. While I don't think teachers should impose their values on students, I think we should give students opportunities to grow and flesh out their own ideas. In the course of this delving into the poem, students can look at issues from a number of angles, can question values, can seek profound meanings. This analysis helps students to develop ideas and values.

9. Learning about other cultures

Poetry can tell much about the culture that it comes from. There is more to culture than television and movies; poetry often says as much about the country that it came from as it does about the author. Kipling's poetry articulates much about the Victorian attitude of British imperialism, Barbra Hamby's *Ode to American English* captures many of the varieties and attitudes of the USA, and Gwendolyn Brooks' *We Real Cool* shows the plight of young people with few options as poignantly – and powerfully – as watching a

movie. Additionally, students can translate poems, or find translations, from their own country to share something about themselves and their culture.

10. Fun

Poetry is fun. The nonsense rhymes of Lewis Carroll or Dr. Seuss put smiles on the faces of listeners of many ages. Ogden Nash's light verse and puns are laugh-out-loud funny and students feel a sense of accomplishment when they begin to understand the subtle humor of these poems.

11. Any age group

Finally, poetry can be used with any age group. Some poetry is written specifically for children, but I wouldn't let that stop me from using it in an adult class. Children can enjoy writing their own poems and are often less inhibited than adults.

Context

I have used most of these activities in my, and other teacher's, freshman English classes. I have also used some in creative writing elective classes. The classes are made up of 20 to 30 male and female, Korean students (with the occasional Malaysian and Chinese student thrown in). The students are usually between 18 and 26 years old and their abilities range from low beginner to near native speaker. Most have been exposed to poetry when they were in high school, but generally not English poetry.

When to Use

These activities can be used to supplement points being made in class. If you wish to make a homework assignment about a grammar point, you can give it more relevance by having students write a poem, instead of random sentences. The poem becomes the assignment, rather than the grammar. Students have to use the grammar, but they focus more on the poem. Stealth grammar. Likewise the activities can be used to revise material. Teachers can incorporate poetry into all four skills in an ESL class.

The activities don't have to relate to what is being taught in class. Teachers can use them independently to 'shake up' the normal class. If the class enjoys the break from the curriculum, using poetry can be a reward for their hard work. Teachers can schedule a 'poetry period' every few classes.

Likewise, the activities can be used if teaching a creative writing or poetry class.

I'd caution teachers from over-using poetry activities, however, unless they are teaching a poetry class. If a class expects a standard four skills class, even when the poetry activity addresses all four skills, some students don't feel they are getting a 'proper' English class. Too much ice cream *and* poetry can be a bad thing.

General Thoughts about the Activities

I've found that my students have generally been exposed to more poetry in their high schools than I was. I usually begin an activity (especially the first poem activity I use in a semester) by asking how many in class like poetry. It's rare to find more than a couple in class who raise their hands. I might ask them what constitutes a poem. Does it need to

rhyme? Are they easy to understand? Are they written in 'real' English? I sometimes ask if they know any famous poets who either write in their own language or poets who write in English. I want to engage them in the idea of using poetry in class. I may ask them to give me reasons to use poetry in an ESL class, and I usually explain that I like to use it because it's another way to let them practice the grammar, or vocabulary, or other skills they learn in class. I try to keep the fact that we are going to use poetry light and fun.

It's important to insure students have been exposed to the grammar, language function, vocabulary, or whatever the point that the poem is before introducing the poem activity. You can't expect students to write poems about their plans for winter break, if you haven't taught them future tense with *going to*.

I generally provide students with examples of the type of poem that they will be writing. This helps them conceptualize the *how* of the form. I may write the poem on the board, but I usually give the students their own copies of the example.

As with all assignments, I tell students how much time they will have for the activity and update them while they are working. I'm flexible about the time. If I see students are finishing quickly, I give less time, but if they seem to be taking longer than I expected (but it's not necessary for me to re-explain the assignment), I give them more time.

I like to have students work in pairs or small groups at first. This gives them more confidence and makes them more comfortable. When they have completed some of the work, I bring them together as a class and put some of what they have done on the board.

It's also important to walk around the room and ensure students understand the assignment and are on the right track. When I am sure the students understand the assignment and they begin to work on individual assignments, or in pairs if it's a collaborative assignment, I write with them. I think this shows that I value the assignment and that even a native speaker can enjoy or get something from the activity.

Before we begin, I tell students that I'd like them to share their work, if not with the whole class, at least with their partners. I point out that they might need to be circumspect about what they write, so they don't embarrass themselves. I want my students to feel safe in class and this helps.

Often students are shy about reading their poems, even when their work is excellent. As I walk around looking at the work, I note poems that I think would be good to share. I ask for students to volunteer to read their work. If I get no takers, I usually read the poem, or poems, that I wrote while they were working and ask again. Then I ask some of the students who I noted earlier to read theirs. If they are especially shy, I offer to read their poems for them, but I think it's better to have them share their work. I don't like to compel students to read their work unless they have had enough time to put it into a final draft for submission to me for a grade. Usually the work that is done in the classroom is the first draft (or the beginning of the first draft). I like to have the students begin writing in class to insure they understand the assignment.

Teacher enthusiasm about the activity is important. I'm sure that some students would rather not use poetry in their class, but if I can get them excited about the activity, they are more likely to invest more in it. I am enthusiastic about using poetry and try to

make it fun. So far, I've had good results. I define good results as the students attempting the activity. Some of my students have surprised me with the clever and skillful poems that they written. I have posted student's work on the wall, compiled it in a chapbook, and made copies for the entire class. One semester, another teacher and I published an anthology of student and teacher compositions and poetry. I have even made student's name acrostics into bookmarks by typing the acrostic on nice paper and laminating them. At the end of the semester, I write individual haiku for my students, type them, roll them into small tubes, tie them with yarn and let students select one. It's surprising and exciting when students randomly choose a poem that seems to have been written with them specifically in mind. These are all ways I show my enthusiasm for poetry.

Along with enthusiasm, trust is important to get students involved in poetry activities. Students need to know that they can share personal information through their poems, without fear that others will laugh. At the minimum, they need to know which assignments will be shared with the class. I try to build the trust by reading my poetry, by telling them when their work will be for the class to see, and by creating a sense of community in the class.

The redundancies in the activities in this IPP are deliberate so that teachers can pull one activity out and be able to use it whole cloth, rather than having to read the introduction to understand how the activities can be conducted. Likewise, rather than estimating the time for each activity, I leave it to teachers to do so based on their knowledge of their classes. Most activities can be adapted to any level. The activities

have been written with the adult student in mind, but some can be adapted for younger students. Those that I don't think can be, I note in the discussion of the activity.

These have been some general thoughts about using the activities. I'll address more specific issues in the activity descriptions.

Assessment

You've given the perfect lesson, followed it up with the perfect poetry activity, and your students took to the assignment like a seven-year-old takes to chocolate.

Now there's a stack of final drafts of poems on your desk. What do you do? Should you grade your student's poems? Isn't poetry too personal, too subjective, to 'arty' to give a grade to? Should you even judge your student's personal experiences? If you suggest alternate ways of expressing what the student wrote, aren't you imposing your vision on someone else's idea? And what do you really know about poetry anyway? You know what you like, but some poems that make no sense to you, or worse, that you think are just pretentiously stupid, are well respected and beloved by readers and poets everywhere.

These are all questions and comments that I, or teachers I have spoken with, gnaw on when it comes time to assess student poetry. I think they are all legitimate concerns, but, on the other hand, it's rare for teachers to worry about them when assessing academic essays, personal essays, or paragraphs. If we can grade an argumentative essay about the pros and cons of abortion, we should be able to grade a poem about a decision to have or not have an abortion.

There are several ways to grade student poetry assignments.

One way is to give credit for doing the assignment, but not giving a formal grade. That's not to say the teacher doesn't assess the writing, but the student is given credit for competing the assignment. It could also be done as an extra credit assignment. It's an acknowledgement that the student tried and received credit (though not a grade) for participating.

As I noted earlier, this doesn't let the teacher off the hook from assessing the work. The student still needs to be told if there were problems or successes with the poem. For example, if a student is supposed to write a list poem about future plans, but turns in an acrostic instead, the student needs to be advised of the problem and the teacher needs to determine where the breakdown in communication was.

While this is an option in some situations, a more traditional type of assessment is often called for – by the administration in most cases – but often by students, used to getting all work graded. This is especially the case if poetry is the focus of a content based class about creative writing or poetry.

I find assessing poetry has both easy and difficult components. The easiest thing to determine is if students followed the format. If they were supposed to write a sonnet, did it have fourteen lines, did it rhyme following the Shakespearean, Spenserian, or Italian style, did it have three quatrains and a couplet, did it follow the form prescribed by the teacher? If directed to write haiku, did the poems use the correct rhythm scheme? If the poem was to be written in third person singular, did the student use *I* throughout?

Correct spelling is generally simple to assess, but the lines begin to blur when we consider grammar and vocabulary. Is the student omitting punctuation for artistic reasons or indenting or spacing in non-standard ways to establish a certain mood or specific image? Am I underestimating my student's originality? Is the 'creative' use of vocabulary a metaphor or a misunderstanding on the student's part?

Assessment becomes more difficult when I worry about crushing my student's achievement of writing a poem. When I consider my own rudimentary knowledge of poetry, I find commenting on student poems daunting.

I don't have these concerns when I grade essays or paragraphs or other types of genre writing. When I first began assessing student writing, I gave grades both for mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.) and for creativity. (There was even a time when I gave students grades for their early drafts.)

I don't think this is necessarily a bad idea, but it seems to be a compromise made to keep from hurting the student's feelings and to make my job easier. I look at student writing more holistically now. No more breakdowns of mechanics and creativity. Students need clear directions about what is expected in an assignment and they need scaffolding to insure they can do the assignment. This requires several things.

I no longer grade student drafts. I do look at their drafts and, unless there is a significant problem, I might not even comment on them, because, while drafts are vital part of the writing process, I want to assess the final result, not the draft. I do believe that writers need to write drafts and I share the ones I write with students, just as I share my writing. Likewise, I don't just suggest that students write drafts, I insure they do by

reading them and discussing them with the writer in class or conferences. They have to explain their ideas. And not just to me – students need to work with peers (classmates) in the drafting process and so they discuss their drafts with each other.

Students need to be given rubrics so they can practice self-assessment, too. Rubrics need to be discussed and negotiated with students so they understand what is expected. A rubric can indicate that, if students write grammatically or ambiguously or repetitively, it's because they made the choice to do so. (Discussing the work with the student in a student/teacher conference is another way to determine this.)

Here is a sample poetry rubric:

Assessment Rubric

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Word Choice	Writer uses vibrant language that lingers and allows the reader to see what is being written about.	Writer uses language that allows the reader to understand what is being written about.	Writer uses words that communicate clearly, but the writing lacks variety.	Writer uses a limited vocabulary that does not communicate strongly or capture the reader's interest.
Voice	Writer seems to completely understand the speaker's point of view that is being presented.	Writer seems to understand the point of view that is presented, with minor lapses of credibility.	Writer attempts to walk in another person's shoes, with limited success.	The writer has not tried to present another point of view.
Content	Writer fully supports the point of the poem with relevant and cogent details.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but one key issue or portion of the poem is unsupported.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but several key issues or portions of the poem are unsupported.	Supporting details and information are typically unclear or not related to the topic.
Spelling	Writer makes no errors in spelling.	Writer makes 1 or 2 errors in spelling.	Writer makes a few errors spelling.	Writer makes several errors in spelling.
Format	Writer follows the format given.	Writer somewhat follows the format given.	Writer barely follows the format given.	Writer does not follow the format given.

Students need model poems, also, though these need to be used judiciously. When teaching a poem, it's sometimes better to allow students to 'stumble' their way into their poem, but if a specific form is being taught, a model is helpful. If a class is writing diamanté poems, then models are appropriate and writing one as a class on the board is a good way to insure understanding of the form. On the other hand, when doing an activity like the Poem Sketching activity, I worry that students may be influenced by my example and I don't share it until they have written theirs. A goal should be to wean students away from models as the class progresses, especially in a creative writing class.

The most important consideration in assessment is communicating with students. The teacher needs to have a dialog with the students both on paper and in person. The most basic consultation with students is when they are writing in class.

When teachers assign a poem – or any writing assignment – they should write the same assignment that the students are writing. This shows students that the assignment has value and that the teacher takes it seriously. Teachers should share difficulties they have with the writing. This shows students that the writing process can be frustrating even to the teacher who is often a native speaker. When it comes time to share writing with the class, teachers can 'prime the pump' by reading what they have written to give students the confidence to also share.

But at some point (I usually do it early in the in-class writing assignment) the teacher needs to stroll around and observe student's work. Do they understand the assignment? Are they following the form that was assigned? Are they working? This is the first opportunity for the student and teacher to consult.

Students and teachers should meet at least a couple times during the semester to discuss the student's work. This can be done in class or outside of class. It can even be done on-line, but nothing beats sitting knee-to-knee discussing the student's work. These meetings can be about the class or the writing process in general, but it's better to discuss a specific piece of writing.

Another way to have a dialog with the student is to make written comments on the students work. Drafts are a better place for comments than the final poem because the comments can help the student's writing process.

Comments need to be substantive. While it's nice to give encouraging comments like *I like this* or *Keep writing!* they don't help the actual draft. The assessment should help guide the student's work. Reminding the student of the form or reiterating points of the rubric helps students when they stray from the assignment. Rhetorical and open ended questions can also be used when commenting on student work.

I offer suggestions like *Try to find another word for this. I'm confused here. What do you mean?* or *Read this aloud. Does it sound okay to you?* but I do this judiciously because I worry about putting too much of my vision into the poem. Sometimes it's difficult not to automatically substitute what I think is a better word and I have to remind myself this isn't my poem, it's my student's.

I'm not saying not to encourage students (I think it's important to do so), but there has to be more than 'atta boys' for a student to improve.

In oral consultation, I try to put the onus on students to begin. Rather than offering suggestions – no matter how easy that might be – if I ask students what they liked or disliked about their work, they often bring up some of the same issues I wanted to.

Examples of comments/corrections

The following are examples from some of my student's work that illustrate my take on error correction along with the comments I made to the students.

L-O-V-E
To be able to forget
like a chicken.
To be able to search
like a hiena.
To be able to restart
like a clock.
That is love.
(Kim, Hyemin)

My comments:

This makes me smile. Since the first two couplets are animals, can you think of a third one for the restart idea? (I also noted spelling with SP by *hiena*.) The student corrected the spelling and changed the last couplet to *To be able to restart/like a butterfly*. I thought that was a big improvement.

Used To Be
I used to be a sportsman
But now I'm a grinder.
I used to play basketball and soccer after school

But now I study at library. (…)
I used to go to a club of climbing mountain
But now I go to a club of English studying. (…)
(Hwang, Junho)

My comments:

I complemented the student on the ideas in this poem, but I questioned him about what a *grinder* is. I circled the space in front of library to indicate he should put the article the there. I indicated that he should reverse *climbing mountain* and *English studying*. Because of his level and the fact that we had not studied prepositions in our class, I changed the prepositions *of* to *for*.

The Moon
I has seen the light of birth and then the dark of death. (…)
I has seen the extensiveness of the universe (…)
I has seen the earth (…)

My comments:

This is good, but remember, past perfect. *I have,* not *has*. I like this because you used 1st person singular instead of 3rd person singular. (Students had the option of 1st or 3rd person.) I think it makes it a stronger and grander poem. I also noted that I liked the first line.

Sword
I'm a sword.
Steel is my body.
And fire is my blood.

I fight alone on the battlefield.
But I never fall.
Finally I stand alone.

I'm a sword.
I never surrender.
I never lose.

My comments:

I suggested that the student tighten this poem up some. I felt that fighting *on the battlefield* was a bit redundant and that *Finally* was not needed, though I wasn't specific when I made my comments. Here is his revised poem:

Sword
I'm a sword.
Steel is my body.
And fire is my blood.

I fight alone.
I never lose. (Choi, Kwan-yong)

My comments:

Woof! Did you just see (the movie) *Beowulf*? I really like this poem. It's short but there's a lot put in here. Metaphors work so well here – (Students could have chosen similes.) it'd be a different poem if you'd used similes – a weaker one. Good choice.

To My Mom
You are a map that
Helps me find the way when I am in chaos. (…)
You are like a candle that
Makes me exist by your dedication (…)
(Jang, Su-A)

My comments:

I asked why the writer switched from metaphors to a simile and asked if she could think of something that a candle does (to make this couplet parallel to the other couplets). I pointed out that if she wanted to mix metaphors and similes she could – it's her poem – I was just curious. In her revision, she changed the simile to *You are a candle/That brightens me with your warmth*. It's not what I would have said and I worried that she changed just to please me, but I do think it's an improvement.

My Lover

You are sunshine of my life.
You are my lovely baby.
You are my jewel.
You are my angel. (…)
(Kim, Ji min)

My comments:

This is fine and simple. Think about how you can expand it (sunshine … warming me when cold winter winds blow). It's not a bad poem, though; I just think that you can improve it.

Here I wanted the student to be more explicit, but I felt the poem could stand alone without changes and I wanted to encourage him. I offered him a suggestion because I wanted to insure he understood. I'm not sure my suggestion is especially good – it seems a bit cliché.

His rewrite:

My Lover
You are sunshine of my life.
You always give me Vitamin D.
You are my tiny fairy.
You always stay with me when I'm sleeping.
You are my lovely baby.
I always want to hug you tightly.
You are my jewel.
You are splendid and I want to wear you in my body forever. (…)
(Kim, Ji min)

Again, it's not to my taste, but he clearly understood where I was coming from and worked with it. I was pleased that he took the revision seriously.

You are a shining star to me
You shed light on me when I become dark and depressed.
You are a shelter to me
Sometimes the world is harsh like hell, but I feel comfortable and protected when I am with you.
(…) You are a teacher of my life
Every time I talk with you, I learn precious lessons and bear them in my mind.
(Lee, In-je)

My comments:

This is nice, In-je. Can you make the second lines in the couplets (2, 4, 6. 8, and 10) more succinct?

You are a shining star to me
Shedding light on me when I'm depressed.
You are a shelter to me
Protecting me from a harsh world.
(…) You are the mentor of my life
Guiding me to the right road when I'm lost.
(Lee, In-je)

I like this better and was impressed that In-je changed *teacher* to *mentor* without my suggesting it. He did more than just make my suggested changes, he edited his work.

Discussion of the Activities

Most activities are presented first with an explanation about the activity and what it attempts to accomplish. If an activity is more suited to a certain level, I have noted that, but most can be used, with modifications, for all levels. I have also given the background on some of the poetic forms. I have included some of my poetry as examples and student examples are in boxes at the end of each activity.

Activity 1 – ACROSTICS

WHAT & WHY

A good beginning of the semester activity is writing acrostic poems. Acrostics can be used to teach brainstorming, build vocabulary, practice using a dictionary, and introduce students to each other.

An acrostic spells out a word vertically with the words in column, defining or telling about the word:

Dependable,
Often
Growls

Students can write about themselves using their names:

Such a
Helpful teacher –
Always
Dependable.

Seldom absent –
Comes to class early, too.
He
Rarely
Orders his students about, but
Expects them to
Do their best.
English is hard and he
Respects students who try.

Acrostics can also be used to practice the alphabet. Giving students a specific genre or theme for the ABC acrostic is helpful because it helps students focus better. Some possibilities include *At the zoo, In a toy store, At the mall*, or anyplace where there are a variety of things to observe.

Alligator
Buffalo
Cougar
Deer
Elephant, and so on.

PROCEDURE

1. To begin the activity, show the students examples of an acrostic and explain what they are. Ask the students what the topic is, to insure they understand that they need to read the first letter of each line to determine the word. It helps to capitalize or embolden the first letter.

2. Explain that the class will write a short acrostic poem. Write a short word or phrase vertically on the chalkboard.

   As an example:

   ESL
   E
   S
   L

3. Put students in pairs or small groups and tell them to try to think of as many words as they can that relate to the topic. Using the letters on the board, encourage them to use a dictionary. While students brainstorm, walk around and offer insights and encouragement. An alternative is to work as a whole class and compile words for one letter.

4. When students have compiled a list of words, go through each letter and have them suggest possibilities.

English		**E**veryone
Students	or	**S**tudies
Learning		**L**anguage

5. Invite students to suggest another word and repeat the above steps. Words they might consider are names, cities, the name of their school, or an animal. In the next example, I'll use the name of the university that I work at – Hanyang. A possibility is:

Hoping
Achieving
Now
Yearning
Answers
New
Goals

6. Read the words aloud and ask if students can suggest changes or additions to make it sound more like a poem. Students may suggest changes. If they don't, and you feel there could be changes made, offer your own to model that the poems can be changed. This should reinforce to students that editing and revision are part of the writing process.

Hoping and
Achieving – we are
Now
Yearning for
Answers and setting
New
Goals

7. Students should now be able to write acrostics on their own. They can either do another in class, or do one for homework. At the beginning of a semester, have

students do an acrostic using their names and personality characteristics or interests. When they finish the assignment, the poems can be posted on the classroom walls, or the teacher can collect and laminate them on colored paper for use as bookmarks and return to the students as a small gift.

EXAMPLES

Brilliant
Unique person.

Knowledgeable and
Excellent, not an
Unkind man, but a
Nice man.
(Oh, Bu Keun)

Ben is my nickname that my
Aunt gave me when I was only
Eight years old. I like to read

Journals of famous people.
Usually I become
Nervous when I don't have any
Effort.

Most of all, I hate to go
Up to high places.
(Bae, Jun-mu)

Mole
In her

Room.
It is
Myself.
(Han, Mi-rim)

Spring is an
Attractive and
Elegant lady,

But
Occasionally a
Mere child.
(Jung, Sae Bom)

Activity 2 - DICTATION

WHAT & WHY

Another way to integrate poetry into the ESL classroom is to use it in dictation exercises. Reasons to use dictation include: it's challenging, it gives students practice in understanding and writing English, it's a whole class activity despite the size of the class, and it makes both the teacher and student aware of student's phonological, grammatical, and spelling errors. Dictation integrates more than one skill, listening, writing, reading, and even speaking, if you allow students to ask questions or work in pairs. Dictation can be a 'real world' skill, too, because students need to learn to take notes for school and for jobs.

Selecting the poem for dictation depends on the class. Lower level classes should be given shorter poems, with vocabulary and grammar that they are familiar with. Students can be dictated more closed poetic forms, in which the rhyme scheme, meter, and other elements of the poem are based on specific rules – sonnets, villanelles, and haiku. Less rigid prose poetry is also appropriate. As the student's level increases, so can the difficulty and length of the poem. While occasional new vocabulary can be introduced in a poem, it's generally better to pre-teach new vocabulary to help students with the dictation.

Have students use a pencil when conducting a dictation, because there may be changes and corrections.

PROCEDURE

1. To begin, the teacher may want to do an activity to arouse interest or activate the student's schema. If necessary, pre-teach any vocabulary, keeping in mind that the less that's needed to be taught, the better. Words that may be needed to be pre-taught include proper nouns, foreign words, and abbreviations.

2. Tell the students that they should only listen, during the first reading. This is to familiarize them with the poem. The teacher should read the poem at a normal speed and should not read punctuation and line breaks.

3. The students will transcribe the poem during the second dictation. Teachers should now read the poem at a slower speed, stopping at appropriate points, generally at the end of the line. Teachers should now note punctuation and line breaks when dictating. The poem may be dictated, with increasing speed, as many times as the teacher feels is appropriate depending on the class, remembering that the dictation should be somewhat challenging. The final reading should be at the normal speed. The teacher may repeat specific words or phrases, if students request the reiteration.

4. Students can then be given a copy of the poem and self-correct. Because correction is one way to become aware of errors, teachers should insure that students do, indeed, correct their dictations. Another way to insure the correction is to have students trade with partners and correct each other's dictations.

Alkire, in Dictation as a Learning Device (http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Alkire-Dictation.html), recommends using dictation at the beginning of class, citing that it focuses students on English immediately, calms them, and ensures punctuality.

Dictations can be kept in a student's portfolio or journal. As previously noted, at the end of the dictation, students can be given a correct copy to check that they have correctly transcribed the poem. Likewise the teacher can write the poem, or have students write it, on the board. The dictation can be used as homework if students are directed to take them home, look up unknown vocabulary, and rewrite them to insure correct spelling and grammar. Teachers should periodically check the student's portfolios, or dictations to monitor student's progress.

Some good dictation poems for lower level students include *The Hammer* or *Fog* by Carl Sandberg. *Love Worn* by Lita Hooper or *Pullman Porter* by Robert Service are two of my favorites for more advanced students. Choose poems you like and that you think are appropriate for your students. Your enthusiasm is often contagious.

Activity 3 – 'I AM' POEMS

WHAT & WHY

In 'I am' poems, students practice writing sentences, use subordinate and relative clauses and use metaphors. It's also a good way to show students how to brainstorm using clusters and it reminds that paragraphs need to have only one subject. While it's a poem in which students write about themselves, it's probably not a good idea to use this too early in the semester. It can be a very personal poem and some students may need some time to feel comfortable sharing this information.

Students will need to brainstorm to gather information for this poem. It's best not to show an example of this type of poem before the brainstorming because it might influence the type of information students write down and it's better to allow students to interpret as they understand it to get a truer vision of themselves.

PROCEDURE

1. Give students a student interest cluster (see example on page 33), or write one on the board, and have them write words or phrases describing themselves in the bubbles.

2. Have students look over the information in the cluster to see if there a central theme that connects the special things about themselves, their hopes, dreams, concerns, questions, wants, and things they say, hear and touch.

3. Next, show the pattern of the poem and explain that they are going to write a poem using the information they just gathered in the cluster. Each line in the poem will be one sentence.

4. Have students write the first draft of their poems.

5. When the first draft is completed, students should read through to insure that the poem has a central theme. Encourage them to revise so the separate sentences all relate to a theme. Point out that this is similar to a paragraph where all sentences relate to the topic – but not in paragraph form.

6. Show examples of similar poems and note how the poets expanded on the basic sentences by adding phrases and clauses to add details and make the poems flow better. Also point out that the poems have one theme.

7. Depending on the time you have for this activity, students may finish their poems in class (possibly using classmates as peer editors) or they may complete the poems as homework.

Feel free to change the starter verbs in the pattern depending of the class ability. Likewise, it can be changed to a one stanza poem. This kind of poem doesn't necessarily have to be personal; students may use it to describe a famous historical person, a place, an animal, or, even, an event. The verb tense can be changed to past tense when writing about something that has already occurred. Finally, if written about someone or something historical, students can present their poem as a guessing game for their classmates.

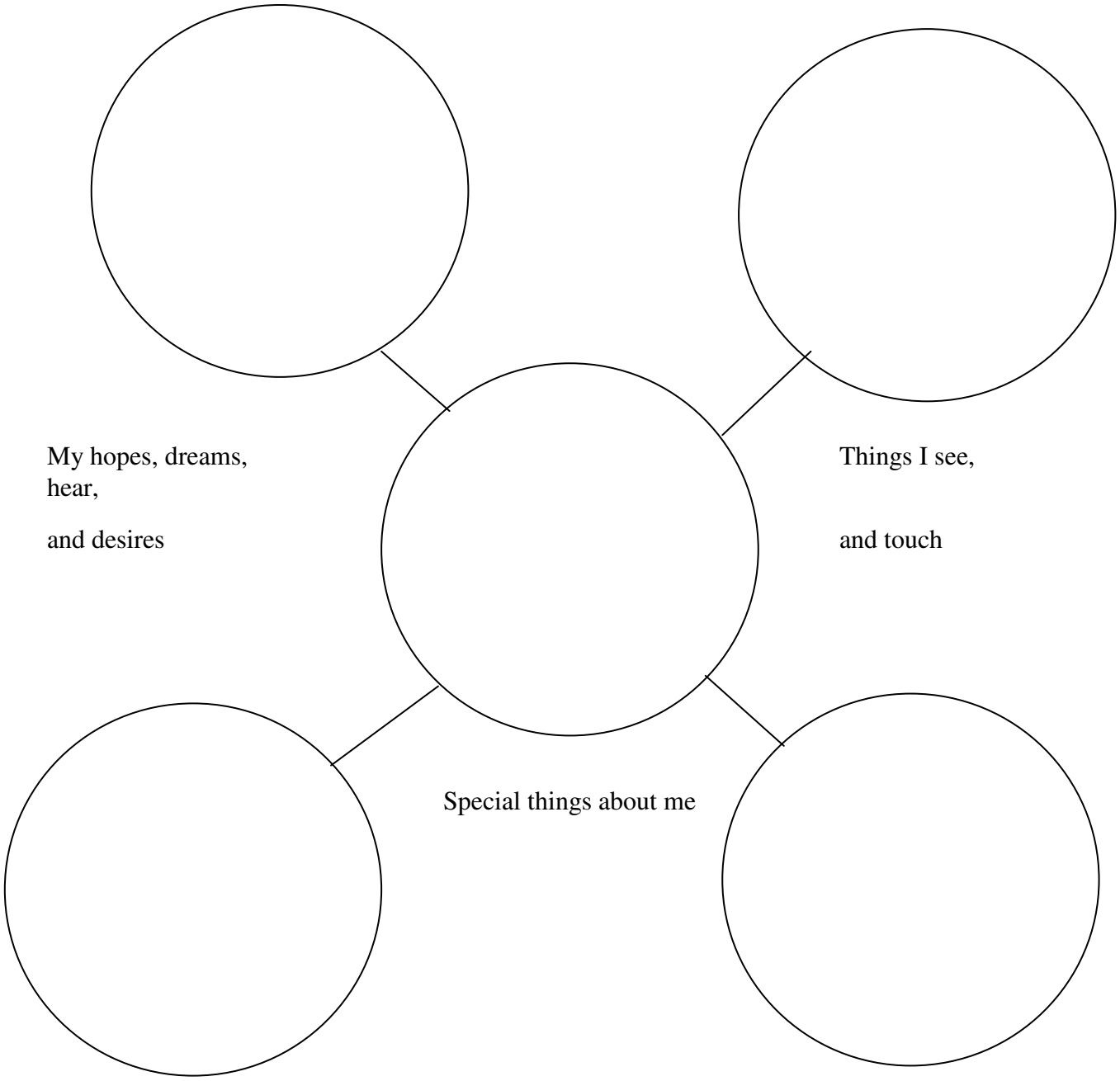
The Quest

I am a traveler who is searching.
I wonder what I'm seeking.
I hear lonely train whistles in the night.
I see canoes on gently flowing rivers.
I want to jump on those trains and paddle those canoes.
I am a traveler who is searching.

I pretend that I have no worries.
I feel it's good to hide your feelings.
I touch few people.
I worry I'm too distant.
I cry when I think about opportunities I squandered.
I am a traveler who is searching.

I understand we should live every moment.
I say it's important to understand myself.
I dream that someday I will.
I try to become better every day.
I hope I do.
I am a traveler who is searching. *(Shad Schroeder)*

Example of a cluster



Pattern for ‘I am’ poems

First stanza

I am (two special things about you/characteristics)

I wonder (something you are curious about)

I hear (a real or imagined sound)

I see (a real or imagined sight)

I want (something that you really want)

I am (The first line of the poem repeated)

Second stanza

I pretend (something that you pretend to do)

I feel (something that you feel)

I touch (something that you touch)

I worry (something that really concerns you)

I cry (something that make you sad)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

Third stanza

I understand (something you believe to be true)

I say (something you believe in)

I dream (something that you want)

I try (something that you make an effort in)

I hope (something that you desire)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

EXAMPLES

A Wonderer

I am a wonderer in my life.
I wonder what I want to be.
I hear nothing about my future.
I see only just in front of me.
I want to be a great person.
I am a wonderer in my life.

I pretend that I have a determined dream.
I feel it's not true.
I touch many things to find my way.
I worry if that is right.
I cry when I cannot be convinced of my choice.
I am a wonderer in my life.
(Byun, Hung-moo)

I am a dreamer.
I wonder about my future.
I hear a hopeful sound.
I see bright sunlight.
I want to have a happy life.
I am a dreamer.

I pretend that I am always happy.
I feel gloomy sometimes.
I touch fresh air.
I worry what I can do.
I cry when I can't control myself.
I am a dreamer.

I understand If I do my best, I can do everything.
I say I can do it.
I dream of a happyful life.
I try to understand that I have to study something.
I hope I do.
I am a dreamer.
(Jeong, Da Sol)

I am a lazy and sleepy boy.
I wonder why I wake up.
I hear noise that is Mom's shouting.
I see a clock.
I want to sleep more.
I am a lazy and sleepy boy.

I pretend to wake up.
I feel boring and tired.
I touch the clock.
I worry that Mom is angry.
I cry when I feel sleepy.
I am a lazy and sleepy boy.

I understand I must wake up.
I say I'm already awake.
I dream that this situation is a dream.
I try to open my eyes.
I hope today is Sunday.
I am a lazy and sleepy boy.
(Lim, Che Yeong)

Activity 4 - CLERIHEWS

WHAT & WHY

First written by Edmund Clerihew Bentley around 1905, the clerihew is a four-line poem, or quatrain, with a rhyming scheme in which the first two lines rhyme and the second two lines rhyme (AABB). Usually biographical, the first line traditionally is, or ends in, a person's name; the meter is not of great concern and is often ignored altogether. Clerihews are, or aspire to be, humorous, and are not usually mean-spirited or obscene.

Clerihews can be used to help students listen for rhymes and understand that rhyming words don't always have the same spellings, e.g. beau/show/dough/woe. Students can write clerihews about themselves, classmates, people in the news, or historical people.

Nicknames may be used. Other considerations are that some cultures only use one name, or place the family name first as opposed to last. None of this should stop you from using clerihews – they're written for fun and don't need to be taken as seriously as other form poems.

PROCEDURE

The best way to teach clerihews is to give several examples. (Two good websites to gather examples are http://www.poetryteachers.com/poetclass/lessons/clerihew.html and http://www.smart.net/~tak/clerihew.html . Advanced classes may be able to explain how to write the poem by reading several. Putting students in pairs and having them work

together to inductively understand how the poem is written is a good way to teach the format; however, a deductive approach, giving examples and then explaining how to write the clerihew, is an alternative, too. If you choose this way, remember – first line, begin with a name; second line, a fact (true or untrue) about the person that rhymes with the name; finally, the third and fourth lines need to rhyme. Have students identify who or what the poem is about and then what the rhyming word in line two is. Then, have them find the rhyming words in the third and fourth lines.

Two of my clerihews:

Dilafruz Abdukayunova
A Tajikistani who will really show ya.
Her sharp mind and spirit are hard to tame.
This pretty young woman with the alphabet name.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt
Understood how others felt.
He told us we had nothing to fear
And gave us back legal beer.

and two by Bentley, himself:

Sir Humphry Davy
Detested gravy
He lived in the odium
Of having discovered sodium.

Daniel Defoe
Lived a long time ago.
He had nothing to do, so
He wrote Robinson Crusoe.

Activity 5 – USED TO BE POEMS

WHAT & WHY

Students will compare the past with the present using memory poems. Specifically, they will use *used to* to write about past memories.

PROCEDURES

1. Begin by teaching or revising *used to* – something that was or happened in the past, but isn't happening or doesn't happen now. I generally use a personal example by showing a picture of myself when I was 29 years old. (At this writing, I'm 53 years old.) After students have had a chance to digest the differences, I solicit some from the class and write them on the board. The picture provides a lot of fodder for comparison – I used to be thin, but now I'm fat, I used to be a military police officer, but now I'm a teacher, I used to be young and handsome, but now I'm old and ugly. This often elicits laughter and cries that I'm still handsome. That's all right, this is supposed to be light and fun, but I drop the handsome/ugly comparison to avoid confusion and just note that I'm no longer young. This reinforces that not all information gathered in a brainstorm is used.

2. Next I have students brainstorm for a few minutes about things they used to do, be, or have. An alternative is to have them think about a specific friend or acquaintance.

3. While students brainstorm, write on the board *I used to … but now I, You used to … but now you …, We used to … but now we, He/She used to … but now he/she*

… . Also write the verbs *be, do* and *have*. Encourage students to provide and use other verbs as well.

4. Now give students ten minutes to write several pairs of sentences. When they finish, have them share with a partner or small group.

5. Encourage students to follow the form, but allow them the chance to spread their wings and deviate for 'art's sake'. Dropping the *but* and writing twice as many sentences or using semicolons or adding a coda at the end is acceptable.

Insure that the students are using *used to* properly (that the condition no longer exists). Another possible error to look for is not putting on the proper ending for the third person singular pronouns. Other possible errors are leaving out the *to* (*I used eat*) and using the wrong verb form (*I used to eating*). Finally, be sure they understand that, while *used to* sounds like *use to*, used is spelled with a *d* at the end of the word.

A Work in Progress

I used to be a military police officer
But now I'm a teacher.

I used to catch bad guys committing crimes
But now I try to capture student's imaginations.

I used to walk a beat on an army post
But now I stand in a classroom.

I used to take tests
But now I give them.

I used to be a student
But now I'm a teacher.

And I still try to learn something new every day. *(Shad Schroeder)*

EXAMPLES

I used to be thin
But now I am stuffed.

I used to be charming
But now I'm unattractive.

I used to enjoy being with my boyfriend
But now I'm very lonely.

I used to live with my parents
But now I'm alone.
(Kim, Na-youn)

Because of You

I used to be very short.
But now I stand tall.

I used to cry
But now I never cry.

I used to be alone
But now I'm not alone.

I used to be weak
But now I'm strong.

I used to be passive
But now I'm active.

Because Now I'm with you!
(Lee, Hock Jin)

Activity 6 – CINQUAIN POEMS

WHAT & WHY

The cinquain consists of five lines and is shaped like a diamond. Students will practice working with nouns, synonyms, gerunds, and adjectives. Cinquains can also be used to revise these parts of speech. Because of the strict form, students will have to search for the perfect word which can encourage thesaurus and dictionary work. Punctuation and capitalization is also required, as is correct spelling. As with other activities, this gives students an outlet for their creativity.

The poet who is credited with inventing the cinquain form is Adelaide Crapsey. In her version of the form, lines 1 and 5 consist of two syllables, line 2 consists of four, line 3 consists of six, and line 4 has eight syllables. Clearly influenced by the haiku, following Miss Crapsey's formula might prove too difficult for many classes, but could be an appropriate challenge to an advanced class.

PROCEDURE

1. Tell students that we will create a poem that describes something or someone without sentences. Have students name different parts of speech and what they do and write them on the board.

2. Students can be put in pairs or groups of three and given an example, or two, of a cinquain and asked to identify the parts of speech in each line. Insure students note the relationship with the first and the last lines.

Line 1: Noun

Line 2: Two adjectives (description words)

Line 3: Three gerunds

Line 4: Four word phrase

Line 5: Synonym or closely related word for line 1 noun

3. Write a template of the form on the board.

4. Ask students to provide different topics, choose one, and have students suggest synonyms for the nouns. Decide which topic to use and write the noun and synonym on the board, at lines 1 and 5.

5. In their groups, have students offer adjectives for the nouns and write them on the board. Choose two and write them in line 2 with the proper punctuation.

6. Next have students think of appropriate gerunds, write them on the board and choose three to put in line 3. Again, point out that the words are separated by commas.

7. Now ask students to think of a four word phrase that describes the topic. Elicit some and write them on the board. From the list, choose one to write in line 4.

8. Choose a student to read the poem to the class. Have the groups discuss the poem and decide if they want to change something in it. Encourage them to make changes to make the poem more meaningful or easier to read. (This reinforces that writing is a process and that editing is an important part of the process.) If changes are made, have another student read the revised poem.

9. In class, have students individually write their own cinquains, have a partner read it and offer suggestions. Finally, have the students write the revised versions as homework. Suggest they use center justification to make the poem more diamond shaped. Encourage students to include a picture with their poem.

An alternative to writing the fourth line as a four word phrase is to write a short sentence describing the topic.

EXAMPLES

English
Problem, trying
Reading, writing, speaking
Learning isn't always easy
Language
(Shad Schroeder)

Korea
Dynamic, passionate
Exciting, changing, Fighting!
A country on the move
Home
(Shad Schroeder)

Love
Passionate, obsessive
Caring, waiting, chafing
Must pay the price.
Pain
(Suzy Bautista's class)

Exam
Difficult, challenging
Worrying, nervous making, time flying
Emptiness in my head.
Frustration
(Jungsun Ahn)

Traveling
Exciting, interesting
Looking, listening, feeling
Everything new to me.
Wonderland
(Seonmi Jang)

Test
Difficult, complicated
Thinking, memorizing, studying
Become my own knowledge
Pleasure
(Hyunsung Bae)

Future
Fearful, painful
Challenging, trying, enduring
Patience pays the reward.
Road
(Lee, Youn-ji)

Starbucks
Sweet, hot
Roasting, brewing, drinking
Guess who's always there.
Shad
(Eunji Byun)

Activity 7 - DIAMANTE (dee ah MAHN tay) POEMS

WHAT & WHY

The diamanté poem is similar to the cinquain in that it has a fixed form and students practice working with nouns, synonyms, gerunds, and adjectives. They can also be used to revise these parts of speech and students have to search for the exact word which can encourage thesaurus and dictionary work. Punctuation and capitalization are also required, as is correct spelling. The diamanté, as opposed to the cinquain, is made up of seven lines and the final line, rather than reiterating the noun in the first line, is the opposite of the first line, so students will also practice using antonyms. The final line can also be what the first line changes into by the end of the poem, i.e. smile to laugh, but this is more difficult and it's probably better to focus on opposites.

PROCEDURE

This is the format of the diamanté.

Line 1: Noun

Line 2: Two adjectives related to the noun in line 1.

Line 3: Three gerunds related to the noun in line 1.

Line 4: Two nouns related to the noun in line 1 and two nouns related to the noun in line 7.

Line 5: Three gerunds related to the noun in line 7.

Line 6: Two adjectives related to the noun in line 7.

Line 7: Noun (the opposite, or what the word evolves into, of the noun in line 1).

1. Begin by asking a student to draw a diamond shape on the board. If the drawing is large enough, write an example diamante poem in it, explaining that this kind of poem is called a diamanté.

2. Give examples to groups of two or three and have them identify the parts of speech in each line. Ask what the relationship with the first and the last nouns are. Have students define all the parts of speech, using dictionaries if necessary. Make sure they notice where the change in line 4 occurs.

3. Explain that the easiest way to write this poem is to decide on the first and last lines. Have students think of pairs of opposites and write them on the board.

4. Students decide which pair to use for the whole class poem and the teacher writes the words on the board.

5. Now have students generate adjectives that relate to each noun. Write the adjectives in two separate columns on the board. Encourage students to use thesauruses and dictionaries if they have difficulty coming up with words. Then have the students choose which adjectives to use and write them in the appropriate place under or above (lines 2 and 6) the nouns. Note that you punctuate the lines with commas.

6. Repeat the process with the gerunds (lines 3 and 5).

7. Repeat the procedure for the nouns for line 4. If students have difficulty finding enough single nouns for this line, the format can be changed so that

students may use noun phrases instead. The changing point (after the first two nouns) can be separated by a comma as with the other words, or by a hyphen.

8. Have a student read the poem out loud and let students make any changes they feel will make the poem better.

9. Finally, have students work in pairs or groups of three to write their own diamanté poems. They can choose from the list that has been generated on the board or make their own pairs.

Possible subjects for student poems include describing friends or family that have opposite personalities, abstract ideas (love versus hate), protagonists, change (child to an adult), or to describe a person (first name in line 1, last name in line 7).

Two helpful websites for students writing diamanté poems, especially if they are doing it for homework, are: http://www.writingfix.com/leftbrain/diamante.htm#student – a great site for students to use to generate pairs and http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/diamante/ – provides a computerized template for writing diamanté poems.

EXAMPLES

Smile
Mirthful, cheerful
Sparkling, captivating, grinning
Snicker, giggle – chuckle, chortle
Beaming, whooping, guffawing
Jubilant, exultant
Laugh

'F'
Bad, low
Partying, failing, crying
Flop, loser, winner, hero
Studying, succeeding, passing
Great, top
'A'
(Shad Schroeder)

Patriot
Bold-hearted, loyal
Sacrificing, devoting, guarding
Nationalism, determination, rebellion, espionage
Betraying, deceiving, leaving
Disloyal, dishonest
Traitor

(Eun-Gyu Shin)

New
Fresh, clean
Delivering, starting, living
Baby, rookie – wrinkles, grandfather
Slowing, respecting, aging
Vintage, dirty
Old

(Ahn, Sung-baek)

Angel
Divine, holy
Flying, shining, harp-playing
Heaven, light, curse, hatred
Falling, fighting, alluring
Dark, distrust
Demon

(Hyujin Song)

War
Cruel, merciless
Shooting, exploding, refugeeing
Death, soldier, dove, Nobel Prize
Living, helping laughing
Harmonic, hopeful
Peace

(Jiwan Lee)

Married
Settled, joyful
Loving, exciting, satisfying
Honeymoon, baby, freedom, pessimist
Searching, crying, envying
Sad, alone
Single

(Kang, Jeong Heon)

Smart
Diligent, respectable
Trying, winning, flying
Book, pen, TV, computer
Sleeping, failing, escaping
Lazy, dull
Stupid

(Monica)

Spring
Warm, shiny
Melting, creating, blooming
Flower, green – snow, white
Snowing, freezing, icing
Cold, gloomy
Winter

(Kim, Hong-cheol)

Activity 8 – APOLOGY POEMS

WHAT & WHY

In this exercise, students will listen to and write a dictation of the William Carlos Williams poem *This Is Just To Say*. They will also discuss the poem and, finally, write poems of apology, using the same format.

This Is Just To Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

PROCEDURE

1. Dictate *This Is Just To Say* indicating the end of lines and the line breaks. Because no line is more than three words, the entire line should be able to be read completely. (Alternately, instead of a dictation, the teacher could only read the poem aloud to the class while they follow reading a written copy of the poem.)

2. Ensure that the students have correctly written the poem either by walking around and checking or by giving them a copy of the poem. After students have correctly written the poem, begin a discussion about what the students think about the poem, i.e. what's the purpose, who was it written to, do they like the poem, who wrote it, is it really a poem

and why? Help students with vocabulary questions they may have – icebox, may be unknown.

3. Next tell them the story of the poem. Williams, a doctor and poet, got up one morning before his wife, Flossie, and saw a bowl of plums in the refrigerator (icebox). Even though he knew Flossie wanted them for breakfast, he succumbed to temptation and ate all the sweet and cold plums. Afterward he felt guilty and wrote her a note of apology. Recognizing that the note could be a poem, he wrote it in short lines to make it sound conversational.

4. Point out that the three *s* sounds in the last three lines give the poem a mouthwatering effect and changes the idea of the apology – that, maybe, Williams was more impressed with how good the plums were than he was sorry that he ate them. When I read the poem aloud, I really emphasize the sweet, succulence of the plums and how much I enjoyed them.

5. Have students think about a time, or imagine a time, when they did something they regret – even though they might have had a good time doing it. Then, following Williams' general format, write an apology poem. Ask them to try to balance their being sorry with the fact that they still enjoyed what they did. They need not begin their poem with the same line/title, but may want to start it with *Sorry, Mom* or *I Wish I Could.*

6. Finish by having students read their apology poems.

7. A nice way to end this lesson is with a reading of Erica-Lynn Gambino's poem for Williams.

This Is Just To Say (for William Carlos Williams)

I have just
asked you to
get out of my
apartment

even though
you never
thought
I would

Forgive me
you were
driving
me insane

EXAMPLES

This is Just To Say

I have had a date
with your lover boy
He had waited
for me

You feel
a sense of betrayal

Forgive me.
He is very handsome
So gentle
And so tough
(Lee, Hee Jin)

I have just
asked you to
love me

Even though
we've known each other
four years

I'm sure
we would be like
fresh and new.
(Yu Jin Jeong)

(Not exactly an apology, but I thought it was nice.)

I have just asked you
to break up our relationship

I have
even though
you didn't
prepare the ending of our love

forgive me
I can't meet you anymore.

You are so selfish.
I got hurt from you.
(Hong Se Ra)

This is Just To Say

Someone passed wind
While we were
Talking before.

Most of us
Suspected you
As offender.
I did, either.

I tell
The truth, now.
Actually,
It was me.

Forgive me
I know
How you were embarrassed.

But I felt
Fresh then.
Sorry,
My love.
(Byoung-Kwon Yoon)

Activity 9 – POEM SKETCHING

WHAT & WHY

This activity is based on Sanford Lyne's Poem Sketching from the book *Writing Poetry from the Inside Out*. This activity improves student's vocabulary, gives practice writing sentences, and gives a sense of accomplishment, and also allows students the opportunity to express themselves more freely than when writing more formulaic poems. Using this activity, students call on their own memories and personal ideas for their poems.

PROCEDURE

1. Give students a word list, four words to a box. There doesn't need to be a theme or connection to the words. However, it can be interesting to have three words with a connection and the fourth unconnected to see where the poem goes. Students may have to look up some words in a dictionary. Have them read the words and choose a box that they feel connected to or that speaks to them.
2. Students now make sentences or sentence fragments with the words. They may change the form of the word (*happy to happiness, childhood to children* or *child*) or the tense to suit their sentences. Not all sentences need to include one of the words in them and students may substitute words that are a better fit for their poems (change *river* to *stream* or *soldier* to *sailor*).
3. The word combinations are just a prompt or way to get sentences on paper, but often the sketch elicits near complete poems. While the student examples

that I include at the end of the activity were all done in class with minimal revision, this activity can be used to reinforce the need for editing and revision either in class or as homework.

4. Students may want to combine more than one group of four words into a poem and may omit words they don't feel add to their poem. Another way for students to acquire words is to have them randomly choose them from books they are reading.
5. Some students need examples to give them an idea of what or how they should write. If need be, give them examples, but for this activity, I prefer to show them examples after they have produced their poems, so as not to influence their work.

Example of four word lists:

world exit whimper bang	watch seeker taste weary	cure disease winter given	knowledge powerful book help
love hate life raspberry	understand attempt secret watchful	weep underworld woods clever	daylight damp temple rush
picnic swamp trade wince	violin country villa tent	upstairs ghost heart string	powder matches love play
Christmas lights hymns childhood	altar kiss our flickering	castles brave sand faithful	faith rancid bubble ice

EXAMPLES

Empty Space

The light throws crazy shadows on
The walls, the floor, the ceiling and into
Places you used to sit and listen to your ballads.
Though you're no longer here
With me,
No longer share your love
Songs with me,
No longer hold me
In the night,
Your presence permeates my being.
My memories of you are patterns in the sand
That can't be washed away with time. *(Shad Schroeder)*

(The words that I used were *light*, *patterns*, *ballads*, and *though*. I chose them randomly by closing my eyes and pointing at a page in a book.)

Waves
sound so good.
As if
there's a child
singing in the sea
lost at the shore.
Look at the sky,
all seems
so quiet
and peaceful.
But the world
isn't in peace.
Wars everywhere
results ends.
kids yearning everywhere,
many people lost
their homes,
their beloved, and
their lives.
Why can't the wars stop?
Why are the wars nonstop?
Is there anyone?
Just someone,
please,
Save them,
Save the poor ones
who suffer in wars. (KC Pang) (Words used – waves, child, yearning, shore)

On a muddy street
A woman dreams about becoming a child again.
The gray snow dreams of being white.
But we cannot rewind the time.
(Seungwoo Lee)
(Words used – muddy, dreams, snow, rewind)

Childhood Tears

A long railroad has an end.
A hot and humid summer has an end.
Even the nervous time waiting for a test

But why do I weep
And ask that he light doesn't end?
I wish and pray to be good.
(Kang Hee Lee)
(Words used – railroad, summer, waiting, light)

Activity 10 – LIST POEMS

WHAT & WHY

List poems (catalog verse) have a history going back to *The Iliad* and *The Bible* to Walt Whitman. They are especially good for beginners giving them the opportunity to show their creativity and reinforcing grammar by repeating patterns – even practicing the alphabet, but shouldn't be dismissed as something only for beginners. List poems encourage brainstorming, collaboration and revision, skills that all students need.

PROCEDURE

To begin writing a list poem put the subject of the poem/list on the blackboard and have students work in pairs or small groups to build the list. Some classes enjoy working as a whole class, shouting out ideas, and this can also work well. The subject can be whatever you deem interesting or provides plenty of fodder for ideas. As with all brainstorming, all ideas should be encouraged and written down. Editing can be done when there are plenty of possibilities for the list.

Examples of list subjects include things to do in a specific season, beautiful things, ugly things and things to do in a specific location. If you want to revise a specific grammar point or tense, you can do this with a list poem, e.g. *I'm going to … this weekend* for future plans or *I remember …* for past tense.

List poems can be used to teach process writing for recipes … and not just for food; do a list for a person. Remember *What Are Little Boys/Girls Made Of? Snakes and snails and puppy dog tails/Sugar and spice and everything nice. That's what little boys/girls are made of.* You can have your class improve on or add to the list. You can also use real people as the subject.

Examples abound and can help students understand the form. Walt Whitman's *I Hear America Singing*, Anne Waldman's *Fast Speaking Woman* and Neil Diamond's song *Done Too Soon* are all list poems that can be used for the student's reference.

The teacher can take the list prepared by the students and type it into a poem and have students revise it in class or students can be assigned the typing responsibilities. It is often best to do one class poem before assigning individual or small group collaborative poems to insure students understand the task. Providing examples is another way to make sure they understand the form.

EXAMPLES

Student's Excuses

Teacher, I forgot my homework at home.
Teacher, yesterday was festival.
Teacher, it's my one hundred day anniversary with my girlfriend.
Teacher, it's my one hundred day anniversary with my boyfriend.
Teacher, my grandmother died.
Teacher, I drank too much last night. Urp!
Teacher, my dog ate it.
Teacher, I had to study for another class.
Teacher, my other grandmother died.
Teacher, uh, um, aah <giggle>.
Teacher, I had military duty.
Teacher, too much other homework … from ***mean*** *teachers.*
Teacher, I left it on the bus.
Teacher, I was sick.
Teacher, I am sick.
Teacher, I lost my book.
Teacher, someone stole my book.
Teacher, I had to help my mother.
Teacher, it's my birthday.
Teacher, my ***other*** *grandmother died.*
Teacher, you meant ***today****?*

Often preceded or followed by Teacher, you look so ***handsome*** *today.*
(Shad Schroeder)

I Remember

I remember my childhood. At six years of age, I fell down four floors. It was like flying in the sky. But I was still alive.

I remember my trip to Australia. I tried to ride a sand board. It was very interesting, but sand invaded my shoes and it irritated me.

I remember going faint in school. It was strange. When I came to my senses I felt good.

I remember my trip to Germany. There was a woman who tried to free-hug. I looked at her. She was beautiful, so I went to the woman and we hugged. I was happy.

I still remember that day when snow fell from the sky when I was a soldier and I had to get rid of that bullshit snow. It was terrible. The captain said, "All soldiers take a brown stick to remove that fucking snow." It was a hard day because it fell all day 'till midnight.

I remember traveling around Europe. I traveled by myself and always had to stay alone or eat silently or wait for a plane all day long. It was really lonely traveling.

I remember my trip to New York. I tried to talk to foreigners, but many people ignored me. Finally I lost my way in the middle of New York. I don't want to remember that, but it was interesting.

I remember my first date with my ex-boyfriend. The sun was shining and it was warm. A cool wind was blowing to us. We walked hand-in-hand at the park. We were happy.

I remember my piano in my home. I've played it for six years since I was a kid. I practice with it and got a medal in the testing concert. These days I don't have enough time to play but, if I had the chance, I would play my piano all the whole day.

I remember my trip to Bong Pyong. There were beautiful flowers.

I remember my trip to An Myeon Island two weeks ago. When we went there it was right after the Lobster Festival so we ate many lobsters very cheap. We also enjoyed the scenery of the beautiful beach.

I remember my trip to Japan when I was a middle school student because it was Science Space Camp. I experienced a moon-walk and wore a spacesuit. On the final day, I rode a rollercoaster with my friends.

I remember hiking Do Bang Mountain. So hot and so exhausted.

I remember the day I first came to Seoul. After we moved, my parents returned to my hometown leaving me alone. A lot of time has gone. I adapted to Seoul life but I always miss my parents and hometown.

(Natural Science PEC1 Class, Hanyang University)

Activity 11 – COMPLETE LESSON FOR METAPHORS AND SIMILES

WHAT & WHY

Rather than an activity that can be used to supplement a lesson, this activity is a complete lesson. Teachers can certainly take aspects of this activity and blend it into another class, but I present this as an example of how poetry can be used for a whole class period, teaching all four skills. This class will present metaphors and similes, but other topics could be similarly taught.

This lesson uses all four skills – students listen to the song, they discuss the song and work together to find metaphors/similes and discuss their own work, they read several poems, and they write (using the writing process) their own poem.

PROCEDURES

1. Begin by defining metaphors and similes. This can be done by giving examples of each and having students determine the difference between the two or by explaining the difference.
2. Next, have the students write a few examples themselves and share to insure they understand.
3. Now I introduce the song that we use for the listening activity. The song I use for metaphor/similes is *Tangled Up Puppet* by Harry Chapin. I treat this part of the lesson as a regular listening activity. I show a picture of Harry Chapin and ask if students know who he is. Generally they don't and I have them speculate who he

is and what he did. I'm trying to arouse interest in this stage of the lesson. We talk a bit about Chapin, the kind of music he performed, his charity work, and his death. Then I play the song.

4. After they've listened to the song once, I give them a handout with the song. I usually do some kind of gap fill exercise, maybe in this case blanking out parts of the metaphor/similes in the song, or verbs, or make it a real cloze and randomly choose every sixth or tenth word. Another option is to change words in the handout and students will listen to find the differences. I invite students to work with partners and try to fill in the missing words. At this point, students naturally have difficulty because they have only heard the song once.
5. Now we listen to the song and students fill in the blanks. We listen several times depending on the students' ability. Between listenings, I encourage them to consult with partners. While students talk with partners, I walk around and monitor how the work is going.
6. When students have completed the listening activity, we go over the song verse by verse to reveal the answers. When the listening review is completed, I give students a clean, correct copy of the song.
7. Next, students work with partners and look through the song to find the metaphors/similes and we go over the results as a class. I point out that, while this is a song, it can also be read as a poem.
8. Now I give students a handout with examples of metaphor/simile poems. Ted Kooser's poem *The Student* is a good example. They read and discuss them, how they feel about them, what the metaphors/similes are.

9. Next, students choose an item or person to brainstorm metaphors/similes about. As a class, we discuss possible subjects to give them ideas.
10. Finally, students begin to write a metaphor/simile poem in class. I walk around and monitor to insure they are on the right track and then I start my poem. Students bring in their first draft for the next class, show it to a partner and peer review/edit, then write the 'hand-in-for-grade' copy in the next class.

EXAMPLES

Writing Poetry

Sometimes it's a poke in the eye.
Mosquitos buzzing your ear.
Other times it's an asphalt road
on an August day
that I'm walking barefoot on.
Or maybe a sliver of food,
stuck between your molars,
that your tongue just … can't ... coax … out.

But it can be a first kiss.
Ice cream and birthday cakes.
Floating on your back in a pond
in the summer.
It can be childhood friends
sitting around a campfire
listening to crickets chirruping.

And that's why I keep doing it.
(Shad Schroeder)

Family

Family is a bed
which I can rest in after a tough day.

Family is a shield
which protects me from any affliction.

Family is a movie
that makes me cry from happiness and sadness.

Family is jewelry
that is the most precious thing in the world.
(Lee, Dahyun)

She is the moon;
She can light my sight.

She is a doctor;
She can cure my inner illness.

She is the sea;
She can absorb all things.

I believe in her.
(Lee, Gi Cheol)

Activity 12 – ANCIENT MONUMENTS SPEAK

WHAT & WHY

This activity allows students to practice using the present perfect to describe memories. Students can use either first, second, or third person when writing these poems. I like to allow them to make that choice to make the poem even more their own.

PROCEDURE

1. Begin by showing students pictures of famous monuments, landscapes, buildings, bridges, or statues. Post them around the room and let students walk around, discuss them with each other, and insure they know about the pictures. Have the students choose one picture to work with as a class.
2. Tell students that they are going to imagine what the place they chose has seen, has heard and has known. Post the picture on the board and write three columns next to it with the headings *You have seen … , You have heard … , You have known …* at the top of each column. (Other verbs maybe used.)
3. Ask students to provide 'memories' for the picture. If the class needs some help, feel free to prime the pump by writing one or two of yours.
4. When you have enough 'memories' for a six or nine stanza poem, have students choose which memories to use. It's best to have too many and edit or not use some to reinforce to your students that when they brainstorm, not every idea will be used.

5. When the ‘memories’ have been chosen, have the class choose which lines go where. Some possibilities are all *seen* memories in one verse, all *heard* in another, and all *known* in a third or one each in a verse.
6. When the class poem is finished, read it or have a student read it. Discuss if there needs to be changes and make them if there is a good reason to.
7. Next, give several examples of this type of poem to the students and read them. This is another opportunity to show different layouts for the poems. For more advanced classes, have them notice these kinds of differences.
8. Now have students choose a location, either from the pictures that you had previously shown or one of their own choice, and have them write poems similar to the class poem and the examples.
9. When they have completed the poems, have several read theirs, but not to read the title. When they finish the class will try to guess where they were writing about.

Some things to consider:

Insure that students use the present perfect structure correctly – *have seen/heard/known* and a *noun*.

Students may add more information by adding either a verb or phrase or the -ing form to the sentence, i.e. … *have seen men weep* or *have seen men weeping with fear.*

EXAMPLES

The Great Wall

You have turned away the Mongol Empire.

You have seen wars and bombs.
You have seen the world's largest population grow larger still.
You have seen plague and hunger devastate the population.

You have known the anarchy of bandits.
You have known the rule of emperors.
You have known the fist of dictators.

You have heard the first explosions from gunpowder.
You have heard foreign powers plot to divide you like a pie.
You have heard great educators teach wisdom.

And still you stand.
(Shad Schroeder)

Mount Everest

I have seen the dawn of time.
I have heard the howl of Yeti.
I have known the footsteps of man.

I have known the struggle of climbers.
I have heard their gasps for breath.
I have seen the trash they left.

I have heard the weeping of widows.
I have seen the courage of rescuers.
I have known the glory of summiteers!
(Kevin Doyle's Class)

The Moon

You have known many people's wishes.
You have seen many people who are happy and sad at night.
You have seen the earth a very long time.
You have seen Armstrong's footprint.
You have heard the rabbit making ddok in the Korean legend.

And you always shine.
(Kim, Jin-guk)

The Han River

I have watched the whole of Korean history.
I have wept because of the Korean War.
I have longed for Korea's reunion.
I have been touched by the Red Devils.
You have heard the story of the miracle named after me.
You sometimes hurt me to gain economical success.
But you always loved me and lived by me.

We have loved each other until now and will love each other forever.
(Go, San & Moon, Chung Seob)

Han River

You have been the place of many wars in Korean history.
You have seen death and sadness.
You have seen the Kings of the Joesun.
You have the warmth and kindness of Korea.
You have seen the Miracle of the Han.
You have heard the bombs of North Korea.
You have seen millions of people fight for democracy.
You have known your water contaminated.
You have heard the screaming of your friends – fish.
You have known you have been with Korea and are important to the Korean people still.
(Park, Won Ki)

The Sun

You have awakened many people
and given them fresh mornings.
You have pushed away the darkness for people
and given them light.
You have given energy to creatures
and created life.
You have warmed Earth
and warmed my heart. *(Shin, Dong-heon)*

Activity 13 – LUNES (AND OTHER SYLLABLE COUNTING POEMS)

WHAT & WHY

Students will learn about rhythm and counting syllables through these kinds of poems. By writing syllable poems, students may have to find synonyms to conform to the form. This type of poem will also help students who tend to write too much or not enough by giving them strict parameters to follow. Teaching students to focus on writing these forms will help them focus when writing other papers. Because of the multi-national flavor of syllabic poems, they can provide wider cultural experience for students. Finally, while this specific activity deals with the *lune*, it invites comparison with other syllable poems and teachers can show respect for other cultures when discussing the different forms.

The *lune* (pronounced loon, like the bird) is a poetic form, written in syllables, invented by Robert Kelly as a response to the Japanese form *haiku*. The *lune* is written with five syllables in the first line, three in the second, and five in the third (5 – 3 – 5 syllables). Kelly believed that this made the form closer to the spirit of the *haiku*. Jack Collom changed the form, by accident, when he misremembered the form when teaching it to some schoolchildren as three words in the first line, five in the second, and three in the third (3 – 5 – 3 words). He believed that this variation was easier for younger children because words are easier to count than syllables. Both forms must have a complete thought told in the three lines and they may have any subject. Metaphors and similes may be used (something frowned upon in *haiku*).

PROCEDURE

1. Begin by writing a *lune* on the board and ask the students to count the syllables (or words, if writing the Collom form). Have them define the form. (Alternately, this can instead be done as a dictation.) Ask if they are familiar with any other syllable type poems. Many students know the *haiku* and you may want to briefly talk about it.

2. Give students a handout with several examples and review how to count syllables. It may help to have students clap or tap their desks with each syllable as they read the poems. Teachers may also want to give students this handout with the following examples and information about the history of the *lune*.

Handout examples

The Lune – America's haiku

A lune is a short, simple poem of three lines:

A line with five syllables
A line with three syllables (Robert Kelly)
A line with five syllables

Or

A line with three words
A line with five words (Jack Collom style)
A line with three words

The lune is a haiku variation invented and named by poet Robert Kelly. The lune, so called because of how the right edge is bowed like a crescent moon, is a thirteen **syllable** form arranged in three lines of 5 / 3/ 5 respectively. Unlike the haiku, the lune need not be about nature or the seasons. Jack Collom misremembered the form as 5 /3 /5 **words** when teaching the form to some kids, found it easier for them to work with and that's why we have two forms.

Possible first lines:

Here I am	On Christmas morning
In the sky	When I cry (or sneeze, shout, laugh, etc.)
In the sea	In the dark.
In this room	

(1) indicates a syllabic lune

On-line shopping's fun,
but it can be expensive. *(2)*
I prefer malls.

When I see
you walking down the street, *(2)*
my heart sings.

When snow falls,
lovers talk on the phone, *(2)*
planning to meet.

Mother cooks breakfast –
meyoek guk on my birthday. *(2)*
It is delicious.

I am here
writing poetry in English class. *(2)*
It's very easy!

Snowflakes are falling,
kissing my cheeks and nose, *(2)*
making me happy.

Think of me
when the stars twinkle brightly. *(2)*
I'll be there.
(Shad Schroeder)

(2) indicates a word lune

Where are my car keys?
The table! *(1)*
Thank you for your help.

It's not easy, but
teaching poems *(1)*
Is something I love.

Leftover pepperoni pizza
is delicious in the morning. *(2)*
Breakfast of champions!

Fighting a war is
dangerous. *(1)*
When you leave, take care.

Late in the evening
missing you *(1)*
I wish you were here.

When the snowflakes fall
I'm happy. *(1)*
They caress my cheeks.

When the stars twinkle,
think of me. *(1)*
I'll think of you, too.

3. Have students brainstorm some possible topics for *lunes* and then write a class *lune*. Put the poem on the board and discuss it.

4. Students can now either work in pairs and write a collaborative *lune*, or have them write individual ones.

5. Students may write *lunes* as homework and read them in class. One option is to have them write their poems without naming the object and present it as a riddle. They may illustrate the poems as well.

Ex. *I can fly,*
But I don't have feathers.
I suck blood. *(a mosquito)*

Snow White ate me and
Took a nap.
Evil, Wicked Witch! *(an apple)*

As I noted earlier, the *lune* is not the only syllable-based poem form. Many students are familiar with the *haiku*. The *haiku* is a Japanese form that is traditionally written in a 5-7-5 syllables or beats and, when translated into English, written in three lines. *Haiku* traditionally were about nature and the change of seasons. Translations of Japanese *haiku* into English rarely conform to the 5-7-5 beat and many *haiku* written in English today do not follow the form, instead representing the simplicity and the idea of the *haiku*. Many poems purported to be *haiku* are actually *senryu*, which are similar in form, but not about nature. Other short or syllabic forms include: *kural*, a Tamil form consisting of two lines (four words in the first and three in the second), Japanese *tanka* (seven lines consisting of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables each), Korean *sijo* (three lines of 14 to 16 syllables – in English translation the verse form is divided into six shorter lines), and cinquain and diamanté poems, which are dealt with in more detail in this paper.

EXAMPLES

Oh my God.
I didn't eat breakfast today.
I'm very hungry.
(Park, Inyong)

Winter wind blows by
Sudden kiss
A gentle farewell
(Yoon-Sik Kim)

Sunny day today.
Unfortunately we have this class.
Let us play!
(Ho-Jeong Jeong)

I'll be happy
When the exams are over.
I'll be excited.
(Im, Eun Yong)

Here I am.
Cute, pretty, sexy, and smart.
I'm Kyung Jin.
(Yu, Kyung Jin)

Activity 14 – I BELIEVE POEMS/CREDOS

WHAT & WHY

I Believe, or credo, poems allow students to write about ideas important to them. They may also help students who haven't given much thought about the way they want to live their lives an opportunity to think about and define what might be important to them.

PROCEDURE

1. Begin this activity by asking if students know what a credo is. Either allow them to check their dictionaries, if they want, and explain to the class or the teacher can explain that a credo is a system of beliefs. They can help students define what's important to them.

2. Give students a handout with several different credos on it. I use a quote from the movie *Bull Durham*, a list from *Crooked Hearts*, by Robert Boswell, and my own belief poem. I include a template that students can use as they brainstorm. You might want to explain that *Bull Durham* is a movie about baseball. These examples follow. (The language is graphic in the *Bull Durham* quote and I generally edit it.) Robert Heinlein's *This I Believe* is another famous belief statement that can be readily found on the web, as can many non-famous poets' credos.

3. Have students read the handout and discuss and ask questions about it.

4. Next students brainstorm beliefs. I suggest they follow the template, but not to feel constrained by it, leaving out items, adding items, or changing the order of the poem as they please.

5. Students may do the assignment in class and peer review/edit, or do it as a homework assignment.

Handout examples

Well, I believe in the soul … the small of a woman's back, the hanging curve ball, high fiber, good scotch, that the novels of Susan Sontag are self-indulgent, overrated crap. I believe Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. I believe there ought to be a constitutional amendment outlawing Astroturf and the designated hitter. I believe in the sweet spot, soft-core pornography, opening your presents Christmas morning rather than Christmas Eve and I believe in long, slow, deep, soft, wet kisses that last three days. (Ron Shelton, *Bull Durham*)

1. Never make a complicated thing simple, or a simple thing complicated.
2. Wear white at night.
3. Take care of Tom (The writer's brother.)
4. Eat from the four food groups.
5. Be consistent.
6. Never do anything for the sole intent of hurting someone.
7. Floss.
8. Always put the family first.
9. Clean even where it doesn't show.
10. Pursue the truth.
11. Wear socks that match your shirt.
12. Take care of Cassie. (The writer's sister.)
13. Look up words you don't know.
14. Never put out electrical flames with water.
15. Get to the bottom of things.
16. If a person changes his or her hair, tell him or her it looks good.
17. Remember.
18. Forgive. (Robert Boswell, Crooked Hearts)

What I Believe

I believe that quiet is better than noise. I believe the curve of a woman's neck and the dimples in the small of her back are the sexiest parts of her body. I believe in manners. I believe in people (but they usually disappoint you). I believe that it's hard to give second chances, but that you should. I believe that reading is important, but that you can learn more by living. I believe men shouldn't color their hair. I believe in honesty, but not enough to hurt someone. I believe that guns don't kill, people do. I believe that a warm fall day is better than a warm spring one. I believe in taking and assigning responsibility. I believe that one earring in a man's ear is cool, but more than one is just silly. I believe we should squeeze the juice out of every day we're alive. I believe that vegetables are good for you, but I still don't like and won't eat Brussels sprouts or broccoli. I believe that things change. I believe I'll have another.
(Shad Schroeder)

Template:

1. Brainstorm six things you seriously believe in.
2. Brainstorm three silly or outrageous beliefs.
3. Make a list of five rules for yourself both personal rules and as a student.
4. Write three things you would never do.
5. Finally, write three things that you don't believe.

Now write them in a belief statement, either in paragraph form or as a list. Play around with the list. It's not necessary to keep the items together or in the template order. Feel free to move sentences around. Leave out some of the items or add items not asked for.

This is your poem and your beliefs. Enjoy!

Another follow up for this assignment might be to either read or listen to essays from National Public Radio's *This I Believe* program. There are teacher's resources as well, and students are encouraged to submit essays to the program. (http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4538138)

EXAMPLES

I believe in the pure soul and the smile of a child, the four strings of a bass and the great influence of music. I believe in the great power of love, that having good friends is one of the most important and happy things that one could do. But I believe that money can buy everything is (a) crap. I believe that passion and hard work are important, but finishing and achieving the goal is also important. I believe going for a walk alone is sometimes a nice and relaxing thing to do. I believe honesty, forgiveness, consideration and warm smiles are what one should have for meeting others. I believe that if I change, the world will change for me. I believe I should change and maybe I will change for someone. *(Ho-jeong Jeong)*	*I believe in the word halcyon and that a smile is always the best hello. I believe that the taste of freshly dripped Jamaican blue mountain will keep me awake through the day. I believe in the Beatles and that 2Pac is actually not dead. I believe in luck along with effort and that nothing can be given as an excuse. I believe in the clashing sounds of beer glass, bitter taste of vodka, love for soju, friendship, love and respect. I believe that the only true smile is that of a child and that there are no forever friends, nor foes. I believe in the light blue colour of sky and I believe that a strong will is tougher than steel and that you should always think before you speak.* *(Yoon Sik Kim)*

Activity 15 – DAY OF THE WEEK POEMS

WHAT & WHY

Day-of-the-week poems give students practice writing sentences and skills such as punctuation and capitalization. The poems also improve student's vocabulary by encouraging them to choose interesting verbs, as opposed to the more common *'be'* verb and to practice past tense. Students also practice brainstorming and unity and must practice sequencing to insure that the poem is logical, all skills needed for writing.

PROCEDURE

The pattern for the poem is:

On Monday I (verb) ….
On Tuesday I (verb) ….
On Wednesday I (verb) ….
On Thursday I (verb) ….
On Friday I (verb) ….
On Saturday I (verb) ….
On Sunday I (verb) ….

1. Revise a number of verbs in the past tense. Use both regular and irregular verbs. Write them on a section of the board.

2. Divide the board into seven sections, ask the students to recite the days of the week, and write them at the top of each section. Under the days write On (day of the week) I ….

3. Announce a topic that you and the class will discuss and later write a class poem about. Possible topics include: the perfect week, a week of school, a week of winter vacation, a week of summer vacation, a week on the farm, a week at a famous vacation spot, a week at grandmother's, a week in the army, a week during a holiday (Christmas, Easter, Tet/Chinese New Year/Sollal, the Haj), or the week leading up to an event (meeting the love of your life, preparing for a concert or play, looking for an apartment/house, studying for a test). Invite students to chime in with suggestions.

4. Brainstorm with the class things that you do during the week and write them on the board. Don't allow students to use the same verb more than once. Having them work in pairs or small groups before whole class work might provide more suggestions.

5. Choose the different activities done during the week and write them under the days. Insure that there is a logical sequence to the days. For instance, you wouldn't go on your honeymoon before you asked your spouse to marry you. Make sure students understand this.

6. Finally, take the information the class chose and rewrite it in linear (poem) form. Read it aloud and ask if there could be improvements to it. Possibilities include changing the sequence and adding adjectives and adverbs to the poem. Encourage revision.

7. Follow up with a homework assignment in which students write individual day-of-the-week poems.

This type of poem isn't limited to past tense; other tenses may be used as well. Future with *going to* or *will* both can be effectively used. Likewise, the beginning (On Monday I …) can be changed to months, years, seasons, and clock times. Tenses can also be mixed to show a progression.

In Holmes and Moultin's *Writing Simple Poems*, the verb pattern used is to teach sensory verbs (*saw, touched, heard, tasted, and smelled*) or variations of them (*felt* instead of *touched*, *watched* instead of *saw*) and there is no set pattern, except that the same verb can't be repeated. This especially lends itself to five line poems. If you choose to do seven day poems, either a different sensory verb or non-sensory verbs may be used.

EXAMPLES

Chusok Trip

On Monday I drove to Pusan for Chusok.
On Tuesday I cleaned my grandfather's grave.
On Wednesday I partied with my high school friends.
On Thursday I played yutnori and ate ttok guk with my family.
On Friday I kissed my mother good-bye.
On Saturday I slept in my car, stuck in traffic on the trip to Seoul.
On Sunday I dragged in to my apartment at three in the morning. *(Shad Schroeder)*

A Week on the Farm

On Monday I met a friendly cow.
On Tuesday I fought the not-so-friendly cow.
On Wednesday I fed the hungry cow.
On Thursday I smelled the cow's fresh manure.
On Friday I sold the cow's delicious milk.
On Saturday I butchered the poor cow.
On Sunday I ate hamburgers.

(Shad Schroeder's Material Science class)

A Week in Winter's Vacation

On Monday I played soccer with my friends.
On Tuesday, I went to the gym to do speed climbing.
On Wednesday I played video games with my friends.
On Thursday I played basketball with my friends.
On Friday I went out to eat with my family.
On Saturday I met my brother.

(Kim, Kyoung Jin)

On Monday I met calculus.
On Tuesday I was defeated by calculus.
On Wednesday, I beat a retreat.
On Thursday I was exhausted.
On Friday I met physics and chemistry.
On Saturday, as soon as I saw them, I ran away.
On Sunday I was deprived of a weekend.

(Hong Do Sun)

My Worst Week

On Monday I was having a nap when my relatives came to visit.
On Tuesday, I was late for my morning class.
On Wednesday it rained but I didn't have an umbrella.
On Thursday I had a fever.
On Friday I had to stay up late to finish my homework.
On Saturday my kitchen flooded.
On Sunday I fought with my best friend.

(Lee, Myung Ji)

Activity 16 - CHANTS

WHAT & WHY

Carolyn Graham is an ESL teacher and musician who began publishing books about using chants in the classroom in 1978. Her first book was called *Jazz Chants* and, since then, she has written numerous other books using chants ranging from *Grammarchants* (basic aspects of grammar) to *Jazz Chant Fairy Tales* (children's fairy tales) to *Jazz Chants: Small Talk* (language functions). Jazz chants can be used for practicing stress and rhythm in pronunciation. (One consideration to remember is that the stress and rhythm used in jazz chants is predominately North American.) They are fun and can be used to motivate students when a class is running on low energy.

Student's listening skills are also improved through jazz chants. Chants are repetitive and use real language forms, so students are memorizing in a fun way. They can be used in pairs, but especially lend themselves to large classes. Chanting satisfies several of Gardner's multiple intelligences, specifically musical, kinesthetic, and verbal linguistic. Chants can be combined with music and the rhythm helps students remember the chants and can be combined with body movements to reiterate the words. While chants are similar to drills, they are different in that they are using real and meaningful language. Chants are most often used with beginning and intermediate students, but even high level students can benefit when the chants contain collocations and idioms.

PROCEDURE

1. To use chants, the teacher should first explain to students what the function of the chant is. Is it used for greetings? Can it be used to ask about someone's health? Is it stressing a verb tense? This is also the time to pre-teach any vocabulary.

2. Next, the teacher should read the chant, or play a CD of the chant.

3. At this point, the teacher may give students a copy of the chant, but, if it's short, it's better not to. Students should repeat the chant after the teacher, at the same time keeping the rhythm by clapping their hands, snapping their fingers, tapping their pencils, or using some other way to keep the beat. (If students have been given a copy of the chant, they may be distracted from the task by trying to read it.) An alternative to a handout is to write the chant on the board.

4. After they have practiced the chant, have the students listen again to the complete chant on CD or performed by the teacher.

5. Finally, students should practice the chant as a group, or, if the chant lends itself to it, such as questions and answers, in pairs.

6. After doing several chants, when students begin to get a feel for chanting, challenge students to write their own chants and perform them in class. They can work individually or with classmates.

The Graham books are an excellent resource for chants (and CDs are included with purchase, if the teacher is rhythmically challenged), but there is no reason for teachers not to write their own. One that I often use, when I have a 9:00 class, is:

Good morning.
Good morning and how are you?
Good morning.
Good morning, I'm fine, thank you.

I introduce Total Physical Response aspects with this by having the class stand and wave when they say *good morning*, give thumbs up when they say *I'm fine*, and do a short bow when they say *thank you*.

Another example of one of my chants for relaxed pronunciation of *what did you* (whadija):

What did you do yesterday?
I went to the store. (wenta the)
What did you do yesterday?
I went to a movie.
What did you do yesterday?
I slept all day.

This can be changed by making it more conversational, instead of repetitive:

What did you do yesterday?
I went to the store.
What did you buy?
I bought a book. (boughta)
What did it cost?
An arm and a leg. ('Narm ana leg.)

This can be made a game with the teacher asking individual students questions and the students making up different answers or with students asking each other.

Poems from the 1920's Harlem renaissance poets, like Langston Hughes (*The Weary Blues*) and Sterling Brown (*Southern Road*) to the lyrics of modern rappers can be used to show how poetry is reflected in chants.

Activity 17 – FOUND POEMS

WHAT & WHY

To write found poetry, students need to rearrange words, phrases and sentences that are taken from different sources and reorganize them in poetic forms. There are several reasons to have students compose found poems. When writing them, students will have to read original texts, a way to encourage reading magazines and newspapers. Found poems encourage creativity on the part of students. They have to decide what to edit out, and what form it takes by deciding where line breaks and punctuation go.

Words can be deleted from the original text and the meaning of the poem is generally different from the article it is taken from. Some found poems can be 'written' by changing the line breaks, instead of deleting words. Newspaper and magazine articles are good sources for found poems, as are passages from books.

In the following examples, I used both techniques. All of the text in *Hard Won Success* (including the title) was edited from the magazine article. *Habeas Grabbus* is a term taught to me by a grizzled sergeant when I was a young military policeman, but the poem was taken word for word from a Reuter's news story, with my rearrangement of the line breaks.

EXAMPLES

Hard Won Success

"It's about f---ing time,"
declares the husband.
"I get hung,
with people staring
at me."
"It excites me,"
he giggles.
"I like jumping around
over
and over."

(*Shad Schroeder, adapted from Spotlight James Marsden, an article from Entertainment Weekly, 11 January 2008*)

Habeas Grabbus

Voters in two Vermont towns
on Tuesday
approved a measure that would instruct police to arrest
President George W. Bush and
Vice President Dick Cheney
for "crimes against our Constitution,"
local media reported.
The nonbinding,
symbolic measure,
passed in Brattleboro and Marlboro
in a state known
for taking liberal positions on national issues,
instructs town police to
"extradite them to other authorities
that may reasonably contend to prosecute them."

Vermont,
home to maple syrup and
picture-postcard views,
is known for

its liberal politics.

(*Shad Schroeder, adapted from Wed Mar 5 2008, 3.55PM, Reuter's news article from Yahoo News*)

Activity 18 – ADJECTIVE/NOUN POEMS

WHAT & WHY

This activity gives students practice using adjectives and building vocabulary. Students will also be able to practice dictionary skills and using thesauruses. Students will see that learning vocabulary in lexical sets often makes learning new vocabulary easier than rote memorization. Students can also be introduced to the idea that adjectives do have a certain order that they should be used in and that two or more should be separated by a comma. Finally, students will practice writing sentences with the adjective phrases they have coined.

These sentences often become epigrams or aphorisms and examples can be pointed out to students, exposing them to English maxims, proverbs, and sayings.

PROCEDURE

1. Insure that students understand what nouns and adjectives are. Nouns are people, places, and things. Some nouns are countable and can be made plural (apple, car) and some are uncountable and cannot be pluralized (water, sky). Adjectives describe nouns, are usually found in front of or near them. Adjectives often end in *–y, -ful,* and *–less*.

2. Write *the sad sister, the cruel step-mother, the lonely valley* and *the sweet river* on the board and ask if the students see a pattern. If they don't, erase a couple of adjectives and ask what is left – *the* _____ *sister, the* _____ *river.*

If they still don't know, tell them and write two columns on the board labeled Noun and Adjective. Ask them to provide some adjectives that could be used and write them in the adjective column. Then do the same thing with *the cruel _____ and the _____ valley*.

3. Next, have the students combine the nouns and adjectives with the respective phrases. Have them give several examples for each phrase. Ask them if the phrases sound good together, if they sound strange, which words were easy to combine and which were difficult, is the meaning clear or unclear, or is the meaning changed?

4. Give each group fifteen to twenty index cards and explain that they will have to write as many adjectives or nouns that they can think of on the cards. Then assign each group a different task. Group one should write as many adjectives as they can think of (or find in a dictionary or thesaurus) which describe people (happy, sad, friendly); group two should write as many adjectives as they can describing shape and size (large, tall, short); group three should write as many colors as they can (red, white, blue); group four should write as many nouns that describe family (mother, father, sister); group five should write as many nouns about the weather (rain, snow, storm); group six should write nouns about places (city, beach, school). A piece of paper or a large index card with the instructions and examples may help to keep the students on track.

5. Students should write one word from their assigned word on each index card. Encourage students to self edit in their groups and the teacher should walk around insuring the correct words are being written.

6. After a sufficient amount of time during which students were able to write a minimum of nine or ten words, collect the cards separating them into packs – one of nouns and one of adjectives.

7. Shuffle each pack and then divide the two packs among the groups. Have the groups put the words in two columns and then make as many noun phrases as they can. One student should write the phrases the group coins. After ten minutes, the groups read their phrases.

8. Now the idea of proverbs, epigrams, and aphorisms can be introduced. An aphorism expresses a general truth, usually in a succinct sentence. Examples of famous aphorisms include:

   Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

   That which does not destroy us makes us stronger. – Friedrich Nietzsche

   If you see the teeth of the lion, do not think that the lion is smiling at you. – Al – Mutannabi

   Believe nothing you hear, and only half of what you see. – Mark Twain

   An epigram is a short poem with a clever twist at the end or a pithy saying or statement. Examples of epigrams include:

   Little strokes
   Fell great oaks. – Benjamin Franklin

Here lies my wife: here let her lie!
Now she's at rest – and so am I. – John Dryden

I am His Highness' dog at Kew:
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you? – Alexander Pope

Proverbs are often considered aphorisms.

9. For a homework assignment, have students write their own epigrams/aphorisms to answer with when roll is called for the next class. An alternative to this would be to have students look up proverbs and present them in class. They can also be posted on the class walls. A more challenging variation is to have students write a poem using several of the phrases that they created.

EXAMPLES

The lonely mountain waits for the kind hiker.
The cruel, green sea drowns the swimmer.
The lonely, silver moon weeps for her love.
The smiling dentist drills into the yellow tooth. *(All examples by Shad Schroeder)*

I am nature.
I sometimes give presents such as sweet sunbeams.
But sometimes I get angry and throw black snow on the scared university.
When I want to find a partner, I'll paint the sea orange.
(Matt Lee)

What hides underneath the black snow?
The longing for sweet rain.
The pink sunshine behind the horizon.
Healthy clouds, so plump and fluffy.
The hilarious sky that sent giggling thunder.
(Sung Woon Kim)

This activity can be used with any adjective/noun phrases that you have studied in class. Examples include: sensory adjectives (taste – sweet, spicy; touch – rough, sandy; sound – soft, loud); temperature (hot, cold); food (hamburgers, rice); occupations (teacher, poet).

Activity 19 – GIVING ADVICE POEMS

WHAT & WHY

In this activity, students practice using modals that are used for advice and also revise adjectives.

PROCEDURE

1. Teachers should begin this activity by asking the class to help them with a problem like wanting to lose weight. This elicits suggestions like *exercise more, don't eat pizza, and go for a walk*. If students don't use the correct suggestion form, I repeat the advice, for example, *I should exercise more, I should not eat pizza*.

2. When they pick up on the form, the teacher then draws two boxes on the board and labels them *A* and *B*. In *A*, the teacher should write *If you want to be* _____ *you should* _____. Under *you should,* write in a column, *you must, you need to, you have to, you ought to, you'd better,* and *it would be a good idea to*. Then, the teacher may wish to discuss the intensity of the different modals, from strongest to mildest. It should look like this:

A	B
If you want to be _____ you should you must you need to you have to you ought to you'd better it would be a good idea to	

3. Now have students work in pairs or small groups to compile a list of two or three suggestions and, when they have the list, come to the board and write them in the *B* box. Tell students that they can't repeat the suggestions to encourage them to work faster so they can be the first to write on the board, and to try to be more creative.

4. When students have written their suggestions in box *B*, have a class discussion to decide which suggestions to use in the poem. Tell students not to use the same verb more than once or twice.

5. Finally, have students work in pairs or triads and write their own suggestion poem. Post them on the walls.

An alternative to this form is to have students write complete sentences instead of the *If* phrase followed by all of the suggestions. Rather than using the same modal, if students write complete sentences, they may use different modals. Lower level students can write shorter poems; higher level students can write more than one verse with different or related adjectives and modals.

EXAMPLES

If you want to be wise
you should try to understand others,
you should turn off the television,
you should avoid loud people,
you should study history,
you should climb a mountain,
you should pick up a book,
you should listen more than speak.
(Shad Schroeder)

If you want to be happy
you should always smile
you should think affirmatively
you should eat well
you should sleep well
you should be healthy
you should study English with Shad.

If you want to be a good father
you should make a lot of money
you should play with your children
you should come home early
you should help with homework
you should not smoke
you should not drink
you should not cancel family appointments
you should not go to bed late
you should not scold your children.

If you want to be a 'F' student
you should not do homework
you should ditch class
you should snore in class
you should cheat on exams
you should interfere with class
you should drink a lot before exams.

(both poems by Shad's Science and Engineering class)

If you want to be an A student
you should go to the library
you should live at the library
you should sleep at the library
you should be with many book
you shouldn't go to the billiards room
you shouldn't go drinking
you shouldn't miss lectures
you shouldn't sleep during class.

(both poems by Shad's Architecture class)

Activity 20 – TEACHING EDITING THROUGH POETRY

WHAT & WHY

Another part of the writing process that lends itself to poetry is editing. Certainly we want to teach our students that it's a rare poem that is written in ten minutes and needs no revision or editing. Additionally, many students are obsessed with the number of words (or pages) they need to write for an assignment. They feel that more is better, even though that's not necessarily the case. This activity is to drive home that finding the best word is better than using five words. Another by-product of this activity is exposing students to a well-written poem

I have taken a poem by Jane Kenyon and have ruined it by adding unneeded words, making a concise poem bloated and unharmonious. Teachers may choose any poem they want, but it's better if it's a poem students are unfamiliar with. Give students a copy of the 'doctored' poem, have them read it (preferably out loud to really hear it), and strike out the words that aren't needed. My changes are in italics.

The Suitor

We lie *with your* back to *my* back. Curtains *in my window*
lift and fall, *up and down,*
like the chest of someone *who is* sleeping.
The Wind moves the leaves of the box elder *plant*;
and they show their light undersides,
turning *around* all at once

just like a school of fish *that you see at an aquarium*.
Suddenly I understand that I am *really, really* happy.
For months this *really, really happy* feeling
has been coming closer *and closer to me*, stopping by
for *very* short visits, like a timid suitor *who is rather afraid*.

I added thirty six words that do not make the poem better and, in fact, weigh it down and make it sound amateurish. Without the unnecessary words, the poem is a spare sixty words, about a third less – and a much better poem. It sounds more mature, more succinct, and more poetic. Rid of the purple prose, the poem is more powerful.

We do want to teach our students about adverbs and adjectives, but, especially as they mature as writers, we want to teach them not to rely on these easy descriptors. Mark Twain said, 'When you catch an adjective, kill it.' We need to show them that a strong verb – *lumber* – trumps an adverb and verb – *walk slowly* – and that the right noun – *shout* – is preferable to a redundant adjective and noun – *loud shout*. This activity should get students to think about why words are used. If they choose to be redundant, they should have thought about it and be able to explain the decision. If they choose to use flowery words, they should be able to justify it.

This activity was adapted from Stephen Wilbers' book *Keys to Great Writing* in which he altered Langston Hughes' poem *Harlem*.

Conclusion

There are many reasons to use poetry in a classroom. Students can improve vocabulary through use of metaphors and similes. They can practice listening skills while doing dictation exercises or listening to actors or the actual poet read poetry. They can better writing skills by writing poems and by editing their work. In addition to the fun and pride students feel when reading their or other poets efforts, they will be practicing pronunciation. When we expose our students to poetry, we don't just help them with their English lessons, we open up new cultures and new ways of thinking or looking at the world. Teachers who have little background in poetry can still share it with students. For Better or Verse, I hope this IPP offers some ideas and inspires others to help students tread the road less traveled.

Paul Valéry said that a poem is never finished; only abandoned. And so it's time to abandon this IPP but not before a last poem by a former ESL teacher, Gary Soto.

Teaching English from an Old Composition Book

My chalk is no longer than a chip of fingernail,
Chip by which I must explain this Monday
Night the verbs “to get;” “to wear,” “to cut.”
I’m not given much, these tired students,
Knuckle-wrapped from work as roofers,
Sour from scrubbing toilets and pedestal sinks.
I’m given this room with five windows,
A coffee machine, a piano with busted strings,
The music of how we feel as the sun falls,
Exhausted from keeping up.
I stand at
The blackboard. The chalk is worn to a hangnail,
Nearly gone, the dust of some educational bone.
By and by I’m Cantiflas, the comic
Busybody in front. I say, “I get the coffee.”
I pick up a coffee cup and sip.
I click my heels and say, “I wear my shoes.”
I bring an invisible fork to my mouth
And say, “I eat the chicken.”
Suddenly the class is alive—
Each one putting on hats and shoes,
Drinking sodas and beers, cutting flowers
And steaks—a pantomime of sumptuous living.

At break I pass out cookies.
Augustine, the Guatemalan, asks in Spanish,
“Teacher, what is ‘tally-ho’?”
I look at the word in the composition book.
I raise my face to the bare bulb for a blind answer.
I stutter, then say, “*Es como adelante.*”
Augustine smiles, then nudges a friend
In the next desk, now smarter by one word.
After the cookies are eaten,
We move ahead to prepositions—
“Under,” “over,” and “between,”
Useful words when *la migra* opens the doors
Of their idling vans.
At ten to nine, I’m tired of acting,
And they’re tired of their roles.
When class ends, I clap my hands of chalk dust,
And two students applaud, thinking it’s a new verb.
I tell them *adelante*,
And they pick up their old books.
They smile and, in return, cry, “Tally-ho.”
As they head for the door.

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