

LESSON 1: WELCOME TO POETRY!

MATERIALS

- Student workbooks
- Teacher’s copy of “The Farm” by Joyce Sutphen available at <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/181826>
- Student copies of Poetry of Place Vocabulary Sheet
- Formative Assessment 1 (Exit Card) with Grouping Plan for Lesson 2



BIG IDEA

Poets use concrete language and sensory detail to communicate abstract ideas, emotions, and truths.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will develop ideas for writing.
- Students will learn and use the first step in the writing process.
- Students will develop skills to participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a literary community.



LANGUAGE

Important Vocabulary:

- Imagery
- Abstract and concrete language (antonyms: abstract–concrete)
- *Poetry for appreciation* word bank and comprehension vocabulary on website

SEQUENCE



CLASS

Introductory Activity...

1. Invite students to lie down, close their eyes, and relax by taking deep breaths (continue instructing students to breathe deeply until the room is quiet). Say to students: “I am going to say a word. I want you to concentrate on the first image or picture that comes into your mind when I say the word. Try to notice as many details as you can about the picture or scene that comes into your mind. I will say the word and then give you 30 seconds to quietly get a clear picture with lots of details in your mind. Ready. The word is: *excitement*.” Time students for 30 seconds.

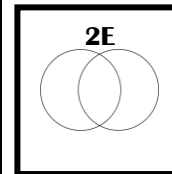


WRITING




2. After the 30 seconds are up, ask students to write (and draw), in their workbooks, some words, phrases, and pictures that describe what

TEACHER NOTES

This activity can also be done with students sitting at their desks with eyes closed, but the opportunity to lie down is likely to catch students’ attention and help them feel ‘looser’ for free imagining.



Some 2E students who struggle with the writing process might prefer to draw the images rather than write about them.

<p>they imagined. Let students know that they only have a couple of minutes to get down as many details as they can.</p> <p>3. Repeat steps 1 & 2 using a different abstract noun instead of <i>excitement</i>. You might try one of these: <i>truth, love, hospitality, serenity, beauty</i>. If time permits, you might repeat steps 1 & 2 with a third word.</p>	<p><i>Make sure students have their notebooks and something to write with already out on their desks or next to them on the floor to make the transition as smooth as possible.</i></p> <p><i>Make sure students know that they will have a chance to share what they imagined with the group, but NOT YET. Their job at this stage is to get the details down quickly in their own notebooks in preparation for the next task.</i></p>
<p>Class discussion...</p> <div data-bbox="203 800 378 997">  <p>CLASS</p> </div> <p>Gather the whole group back together. Give each student a chance to share about one of the words they imagined. Ask what they imagined and what words they wrote down to represent the images they came up with. If they drew a picture, have them share it.</p> <div data-bbox="203 1073 378 1270">  <p>BIG IDEA</p> </div> <p>Ask students, “What did you notice about our responses?” Students might need some prompting but will probably notice that everyone came up with a different image. (They might also notice that some people used a lot of detail or that people used different senses in their descriptions). This observation is important, since it can lead you to introduce a big idea about poetry: Poets describe specific experiences using lots of sensory detail to communicate their ideas about something abstract like beauty or truth. That is, we don’t experience beauty as a general category, but as we interact with specific people, events, and objects. This is the secret to writing good poetry – being able to communicate a very general, universal (abstract) idea using concrete words and images. Let students know that they will be exploring this very important secret known by the best poets as they read and write lots of great poems over the next few weeks.</p>	<div data-bbox="1154 758 1333 961">  <p>TIP</p> </div> <p><i>For some groups, the teacher might need to spend a moment having students recall what makes a good listener. It might also be necessary to limit students by asking them to share “three things” about what they saw, if some are having trouble limiting their response to the main points.</i></p>



LANGUAGE

Write the **vocabulary words** (*imagery*, *concrete*, and *abstract*) on the blackboard or whiteboard and explain what they mean in terms of the discussion you just had (see definitions and suggestions below). Students do not need to write these down. They will be seeing these words again later in the unit.

Introducing vocabulary words:

- **Imagery** in poetry is the expression of sensory detail (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste). This word originates from Latin and has the same root as words such as *image*, *imagine*, *imagination*, and *imitate*, which are all concerned with creating a picture, impression, or copy of something. A good way to introduce this term would be to ask students to suggest as many words as they know that might be related to “imagery,” to list these on the board, and then to have students think about what meaning these words have in common.

After identifying that all the words have something to do with creating a picture or impression of something, introduce the meaning of imagery in poetry, which is what poets create by using details that connect readers to the poem through all of their senses (although mainly sight). Explain to students that in the earlier activity, when they created a picture in their minds of the word you gave them, they were using their *imagination*s to form *images*. When poets describe these images in detail, we call this *imagery*.

- **Abstract and concrete nouns/ language:**
Concrete originates from the Latin *concretus*, from *com-* (“together”) and *crescere* (“to grow”). Originally it meant “to grow together,” or to combine, as in the building substance, concrete, which was used as far back as in Ancient Rome (although the art was “lost” for many years after that) and was made by combining water, gravel, sand, and some cement. When these ingredients are mixed together, they turn into a hard, rigid solid. Thus, when we use “concrete” as an adjective, especially when talking about language, it can mean *representing an actual substance or thing*, as opposed to **abstract** (*expressing a quality or characteristic apart from any specific object or*



TIP

This is a good time to stop and explain the “Poetree.” This was created to help students have a visual and conceptual understanding of the unit and how the essential components of a poem fit together. Students could make “poetree” vocabulary walls with vocabulary words as leaves (noun, concrete, abstract, imagery). Students could also have mini “poetrees” in their workbooks to keep as a reference.



WORD STUDY

*When discussing words related to “imagery,” some students might suggest words like “**im**possible” or “**im**mature.” These are words in which the prefix “**im-**” (meaning “not” or the negative form of) changes the meaning of the base word. These words do not share the same root as “**imagery**.” It will be important to clarify this distinction for students to avoid confusion. You might do this by generating two lists with students- one for words sharing the same root as imagery and another for words in which the prefix **im-** is at work.*

instance). To illustrate this, consider showing the students examples of “concrete” and “abstract” art that you can find online.

After explaining the origins and meaning of the words *concrete* and *abstract* to students, ask them to identify what type of ‘-nym’ is represented by this pair of words (antonyms=opposite in meaning). You might also ask students to suggest synonyms (similar in meaning) for concrete (examples might include: solid, specific, actual, real, material, tangible).

Explain to or remind students that a **noun** (a “naming” word) is the name of a person, place, or thing. Explain that during this poetry unit, they will be interested in two special kinds of nouns:

- Some nouns are the names of things or people that you can point to, see, or touch: fence, pickle, fair, hay, fence, boat, or concepts that we can clearly define (e.g, a week is a period of time lasting seven days. These are called **concrete nouns**.
- Some nouns refer to qualities and conditions we cannot point to or see or touch: anger, courage, fear. These are called **abstract nouns**.

Based on your earlier discussion, ask students to suggest which kind of nouns poets use most frequently to create imagery (concrete nouns).

Note: Students will have opportunities to reinforce their understanding of these terms throughout the unit, so it is fine if they do not seem to be entirely clear at this stage.

Poetry for appreciation...



CLASS

Explain to students that each lesson for the next few weeks will begin with a poetry reading, where their job is to listen and appreciate what they hear. For today’s poem, tell students they will listen to a poem called “The Farm” by Joyce Sutphen. Encourage students to listen for as many details as they can – not just visual details, but also those where the poet taps into the reader’s other senses to create imagery.

*When discussing the term concrete and how its origins meant “grow together” or “combine” (see definition in left column), ask students to think about the word “combine” and to generate other words they know that begin with the prefix **com-**, meaning “together.” Examples include:*

*community
communication
commune
committee
commonwealth
computer*



You may want to provide a list of vocabulary terms used in the unit for students to refer back to throughout the unit (see Vocabulary Sheet provided).



*Historical Context:
The main type of poetry students will study in this unit is*

<p>Point out to students that all poets have different perspectives about a topic. If 20 people wrote about a farm, you would have 20 different unique poems.</p> <p>Read “The Farm” aloud. If possible, project the poem while reading.</p> <p>Afterwards, have students turn to the person next to them and share one image or phrase that stuck in their minds while listening to the poem. If time permits, you might like to read this poem twice, since there is so much detail involved.</p> <div data-bbox="396 674 581 869" data-label="Image"></div> <p>Some students may have difficulty visualizing details in the poem. If you feel your students may struggle with this, consider starting by telling a story with rich visual imagery, and having students identify the imagery in the story before they listen to the poem.</p>	<p><i>related to a movement in early 20th century Anglo-American poetry known as “Imagism.”</i> Imagism emphasized precise imagery, and clear, specific language (the poet Ezra Pound famously described this in terms of “luminous details”) to connect readers to bigger ideas. This approach was a significant shift from Romantic and Victorian poetry, which favored abstract, sentimental language over concrete details grounded in the physical world.</p>
<p>PREPARATION Administer Formative Assessment 1: Exit Card at the end of this lesson. Use the assessment information to group students for the next lesson</p>	