

## LESSON 16: HOW TO READ AND UNDERSTAND A POEM

### MATERIALS

- Student notebooks
- Student anthology books
- Teacher’s copy of “Marcus Millsap: School Day Afternoon” by Dave Etter (available at <https://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/index.php%3Fdate=2007%252F10%252F01.html>)
- Collection of poems/poetry books from school library or teacher’s collection
- Skeleton frame for guide

**Poetry helps readers see the extraordinary in the ordinary.**



**BIG IDEA**

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

**Poets use metaphor to connect readers to important ideas through imagery.**

**The structure of a poem often contributes to its meaning.**

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify literary devices, including **metaphor, personification, rhyme and rhythm.**
- Students will identify poetry structures.
- Students will participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a literary community.



**LANGUAGE**

#### **Important Vocabulary:**

- Metaphor
- Personification
- Rhyme
- Rhythm
- Imagery
- Sensory language

### SEQUENCE

### TEACHER NOTES



**CLASS**

#### **Poetry for Appreciation...**

Invite students to find a comfortable place for listening. Remind students to enjoy the way the poem sounds and to listen for some of the imagery and details used by the poet.

Read “Marcus Millsap: School Day Afternoon” by Dave Etter. Afterwards, have students imagine that they are in their own special moment, like the boy in the poem. You might ask students to think about the moment in time they are currently experiencing. If they were to capture this exact moment in poetic images, what would they describe?

*In this poem, the poet simply tries to capture a single moment in time and describe that moment in terms of brief, concrete images.*

### How to understand a poem



CLASS

- This lesson is designed to bring together the big ideas and vocabulary of the unit as students create a “How To” guide for understanding a poem. Students will then use that guide to critically analyze a poem of their choice.



COMPREHENSION

- Say: “Think back to all of the poems we have read and written, and the discussions we have had about poetry over the past few weeks. What are some of the most important things you have learned about poetry?” Write students’ responses on the whiteboard or somewhere visible to all. Try to steer the discussion towards the big ideas of the unit.



BIG IDEA

- Say: “Suppose you were going to write a *How To* guide for younger students that would explain how to understand a poem. Your guide would include tips about what to look for in a poem that would help a student understand the important ideas in the poem. What advice would your guide include?” Have a discussion about what could be included in the guide, and write students’ responses on the board. Model for the students what kinds of *questions* a student should ask about a poem (e.g., Does the poem rhyme? Does the language in the poem speak to all five senses?).



TOOLS

- If needed, use the skeleton frame for generating ideas for the guide.



LANGUAGE

- Explain to students that they will write a draft of their guide first and then engage in a peer conference and a teacher conference (teacher conferences can be conducted with small groups of students as they finish their drafts).

- Final drafts of these guides should be written on colored paper or card so that they can eventually be displayed in the classroom.



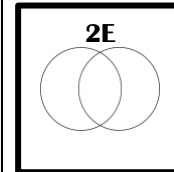
TIP

*If you are not sure that your students will recall the various forms of poetry they have studied and discussed, ask them to identify them and write their answers on the board as a reminder.*


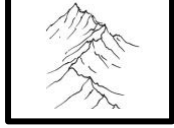


PROFILE

*Consider allowing students to work with a partner on this task.*



*Some 2E students might struggle with this activity, not because they haven’t learned how to understand a poem or acquired solid comprehension of the concepts of the unit, but because they struggle with the writing process. In this case, be sure to partner a 2E student with a student of a similar readiness level who can be a positive peer mentor. Alternatively, you can act as a scribe for the student in creating the How*

	<p><i>To guide and help him/her synthesize and demonstrate understanding.</i></p>
<p><b>How to read a poem... in action!</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If students finish their guide during this lesson, they should work on selecting a poem they would like to analyze (from the classroom collection or one of the model poems used in earlier lessons).</li> <li>▪ Students will “road test” their guide by using it to analyze a poem of their choice. One of the final assessment pieces for this unit is a one-page review of a poem, and students will use their guide to work on this project.</li> <li>▪ Students will have time to work on their review during the next lessons, so they do not need to finish the whole project in this lesson.</li> <li>▪ As students finish this task, they may return to writing and revising their own poems in progress.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PLACE</b></p>  <p><i>It might be engaging to have pen pals or even online pals with another rural school. Students could share their “how-to” guides and poems and see if the other students can compose a poem using just their guide. It would then be fun for them to share the poems they created with the help of those guides. Or students could take their guides and be a poetry mentor, and help a younger student write a poem.</i></p>
<p><b>PREPARATION:</b>          Before the next lesson, read over each student’s “How To” guide. If students are missing key information, be sure to include this for them since they will use their guide to analyze a poem for the final unit assessment. Refer to the summative assessment rubric as a guide to the elements students should include, but ensure that the “How To” guide includes these elements in language that students can easily understand.</p>	