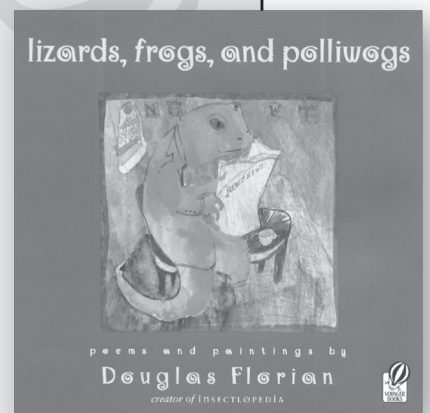
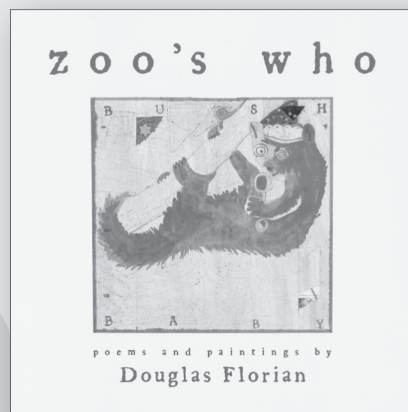
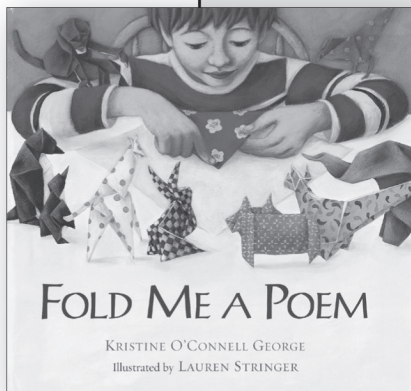
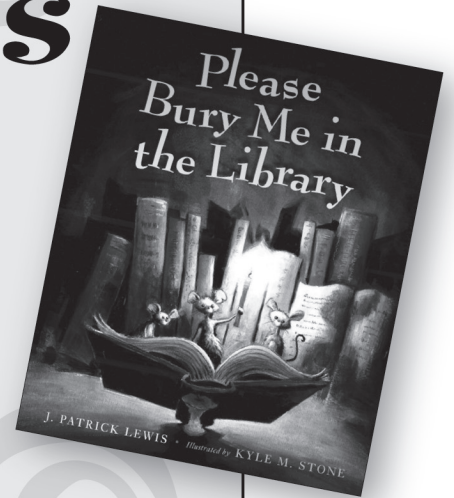
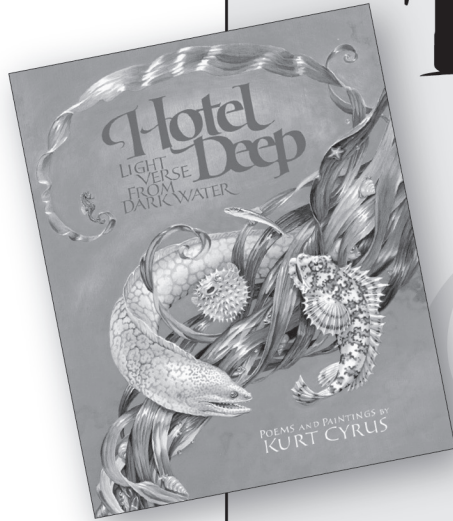


A Teacher's Guide to Poetry



IDEALLY, POETRY SHOULD BE an ongoing part of the language arts curriculum, not just a one- or two-week unit. Many teachers routinely read a poem aloud every day as part of their opening activities. After this exposure to poetry, many children spontaneously begin to write poems in their journals, with no instruction or direction to do so. Favorite poems can be shared repeatedly. Try for a variety of humorous, narrative, and descriptive poems, in different styles.



General Concepts

SENSE COMES FIRST

Poetry is meant to be read aloud, and children need a good model for how to do this effectively. The sense of a poem can be lost when children simply stop at the end of each line. Children must be taught to look for the end of a thought before pausing. Simply listening to an adult who pauses appropriately while reading a poem is the best instruction.

LOOKING CLOSER

After children have absorbed the poem as a whole, and reacted to or discussed it, they are ready to look more closely. Guide them in deciding whether the poem is rhymed or not. If it is, point out the rhyme scheme.

Also mention that some poems (shape poems) are written to look like the thing they describe, and that poets may indulge in wordplay with odd spellings or “almost” rhymes. See “The Snake” on page 21 of *zoo's who*, and “The Python” on page 25 of *lizards, frogs, and polliwogs*

for examples of shape poems. “What If Books Had Different Names?” on page 4 of *Please Bury Me in the Library* is an example of a *wordplay* poem.

WRITING POETRY

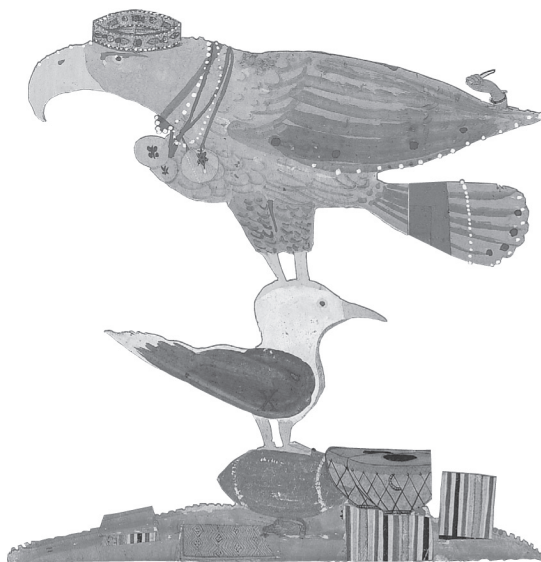
Some children love to write poetry and almost intuitively understand how to do so. For those who are daunted—or even frightened—by the challenge, try “copy change” exercises. Have the children choose a poem and then re-create its style or structure, but with their own adaptations of content. For instance, a child doing a copy change with “Little Miss Muffet” might write:

*Little Bobby Blair
Sat on a chair,
But wanted to run and shout.
His teacher said, “Dear,
We don’t do that here!
That’s why you got a time-out.”*

Ideas for Working with

zoo's who

by Douglas Florian



1. Explain the annual book called *Who's Who* to the class. *Who's Who* is a book that lists important people. With that information as context, ask the children if they can guess the content of *zoo's who* based on the book's title. The title is an example of wordplay.
2. Before reading “The Tortoise” (p. 17), tell or read the fable “The Tortoise and the Hare.” Then read “The Tortoise” to the class. Ask the children to draw comparisons between the poem and the fable. How do the words used by the poet reflect the story of the Tortoise and the Hare?
3. After reading “The Ant” (p. 38), discuss how the poet “hid” the word

ant in other words. Choose a passage from another book, newspaper, or write your own passage on the chalkboard and ask the students to find as many “hidden” words in other words as they can.

4. Have each student choose one of the animals from the book and do a mini-science report about its habitat and behavior. Ask the children to include a realistic picture of the animal. Have each student present his or her report orally, along with a reading of the poem. Does the poet's illustration of the animal resemble the realistic picture?

5. People are sometimes described as being like various animals. Ask the children what it means when someone is called a pig. A snake? Or a shark? Can they think of other comparisons?
6. Read the first sentence on the last page of the book, which tells how the illustrations were created. Have each child bring in a brown paper bag and some “found” materials, such as those listed in the description of the artwork. Making glue, newspapers and magazines, and poster paint available to the children, have them create a collage depicting any animal.



Ideas for Working with

FOLD ME A POEM

by Kristine O'Connell George

Illustrated by Lauren Stringer

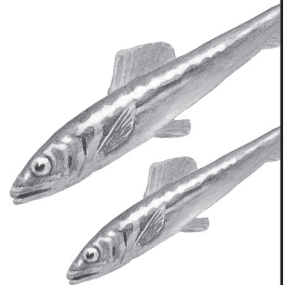
1. Arrange for an art teacher or other knowledgeable person to present instruction for simple origami folding to your students. They will appreciate the poems and illustrations in this book all the more if they have actually done a bit of folding themselves. It would also be helpful to have at least one book about origami (which clearly shows directions) in the classroom for this project. Several such books are listed in "A Note from the Illustrator" at the back of the book.
2. Read aloud the first poem, "Origami." Ask the students if this is how they felt when they did their folding—that the piece of paper had suddenly become something else?
3. After reading "Camel," point out that following directions doesn't always make your projects turn out perfectly! Rather than giving up or becoming frustrated, the boy in the book turns his camel mistake into a joke and tries to find out what went wrong.
4. Have each child choose some animal to fold. Then have the students write a poem about the *process*. How did they start? What steps did they go through? Were they pleased with their result? Just to be fair, the teacher should fold, too!
5. Using the same piece of origami, have the children write a poem *to* their animal.
6. Using the same piece of origami, have the students do a miniscience report about the animal's habitat and behavior. Ask the children to include a realistic picture of the animal. Have each student present his or her report orally, along with a reading of the poem. Does the poet's illustration of the animal resemble the realistic picture?
7. For each child, mount the piece of origami, both poems, and the science report on large pieces of newsprint or construction paper. This makes an impressive display for visiting parents.

Ideas for Working with

Hotel Deep

LIGHT VERSE FROM DARK WATER

by Kurt Cyrus

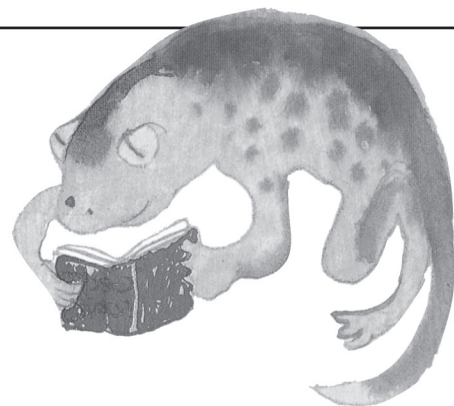


1. Have the children read the book's title and look at the front and back jacket illustrations. Then ask them to guess what the content of the poems in this book might be. Have them make a short list of the creatures they expect to find in the book.
2. Unlike the poems in many collections, these poems should be read in sequence, in just one or two days, so that the children can easily follow the story.
3. After reading the entire book to them, ask the children to discuss their feelings. Unlike most poetry books, this one has a plot; a beginning, middle, and end; suspense; and even good guys and bad guys. Did the students feel anxious for the sardine as he encountered danger? Were they happy about or relieved by the ending?
4. Go back through the book and make a list of the creatures mentioned. Put a star next to the ones that the children had predicted the book might include.
5. Discuss the last page of the book, which includes pictures and names of twenty-eight sea creatures. Have each student choose his or her favorite and do a miniscience report about the animal's habitat and behavior. Ask the children to include a realistic picture of the animal. Have each student present his or her report orally, along with a recitation of the poem. Does the poet's illustration of the animal resemble the realistic picture?
6. Create a large wall mural titled *Under the Sea*. Using a dark blue background, have the students paint and label denizens of the deep. This is a good project to display for visiting parents.



Ideas for Working with lizards, frogs, and polliwogs

by Douglas Florian



1. After reading "The Tortoise" (p. 9), have the children look carefully at the accompanying illustration. What do the three white lines on the shell represent? How does that idea fit in with the words used in the poem?
2. After reading "The Gecko" (p. 10), ask the students if they have ever seen a gecko climbing walls. Ask them if they know of any other animals that can literally walk on the ceiling. Ask the children if they know why certain animals can walk on the ceiling without falling.
3. After reading "The Iguana" (p. 14), divide the class into small groups and ask each group to continue the poem for two more stanzas, ending each new stanza with a rhyming line.
4. After reading "The Chameleon" (p. 26), have the children do some research to find out when, why, and how these creatures change colors.
5. After reading "The Diamondback Rattlesnake" (p. 29), have the children do some research to find out which venomous snakes live in their own state. (Note: There are no native terrestrial venomous snakes in Hawaii or Alaska.) A park ranger or other appropriate state or county employee might be enlisted to present information (and safety tips) about those snakes.
6. After reading "The Polliwogs" (p. 30) and "The Bullfrog" (p. 42), begin a class science project about the metamorphosis of a polliwog into a frog.

To support this project, you may want to purchase polliwogs through a science supply company for the classroom. The students will be able to study and document the metamorphosis.

7. Have each student choose his or her favorite animal and do a miniscience report about its habitat and behavior. Ask the children to include a realistic picture of the animal. Have each student present his or her report orally, along with a recitation of the poem. Does the poet's illustration of the animal resemble the realistic picture?



Ideas for Working with

Please Bury Me in the Library

by J. Patrick Lewis Illustrated by Kyle M. Stone

1. Have the children look carefully at the front and back of the jacket. Invite their observations. They might comment on the anomaly of mice reading books; on how old some of the books look; the clever book stand, etc. Help the students see that the front of the jacket depicts the mice from the front and the back of the jacket details them from behind.
2. Discuss the title page illustration. Ask the children if they have ever heard the phrase "She had her nose buried in a book." This girl has her *whole body* buried in books!
3. After reading "Necessary Gardens" (p. 7), make sure the children read the vertical anagram. Have them write anagram poems using their own names, or using school subjects, such as Reading, Math, Spelling, and Science.
4. After reading "Great, Good, Bad" (p. 10), put those

categories on a chalkboard or poster paper and have the students nominate books or stories for each category. Encourage debate!

5. After reading "Pictures, Pictures, Pictures" (p. 20), check out of the library a variety of wordless picture books. Working in small groups, have the children write a narrative for one of the wordless books and present it to the class.
6. Point out that "Acknowledgments" (p. 32) is also a poem. Have small groups of students, or interested individuals, research one of the named poets. Have them share their information as well as a poem written by their subject to share it with the class.
7. Have the students draw or paint two pictures, one revealing a scene from the front and the second detailing the same scene from behind, as illustrator Kyle M. Stone did for the jacket.

The activities in this guide were written by Mary Lou Meerson, an educational consultant who lives in San Diego, California.



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