

Ideas with

IMPACT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

**March Madness
in October!**

MARCH MADNESS IN OCTOBER

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RATIONALE

Evaluation is the highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy and this activity gives kids an engaging and structured way to practice that skill, along with practicing literary analysis. This activity is done with poetry but could easily be replicated using short stories or even art work. Any text that requires analysis would work well with this activity.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this unit is to immerse students in poetry, which is often not a well-liked genre. By making this unit interactive and not tested, students are given permission to interact with poetry in an engaging, low-stakes way where the competition isn't between students but between the poems. Students are using high-level thinking skills to evaluate poems on changing criteria.

B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

ELA.R.1.1: Explain how key elements enhance or add layers of meaning and/or style in a literary text.

ELA.R.1.2: Analyze universal themes and their development throughout a literary text.

ELA.R.1.3: Analyze the influence of narrator perspective on a text, explaining how the author creates irony or satire.

ELA.R.3.1: Explain how figurative language creates mood in text(s).

ELA.R.3.2: Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.

ELA.C.2.1: Present information orally, with a logical organization and coherent focus, with credible evidence, creating a clear perspective.

ELA.V.1.1: Integrate academic vocabulary appropriate to grade level in speaking and writing.

ELA.V.1.3: Apply knowledge of context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials, and/or background knowledge to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words and phrases, appropriate to grade level.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Select the poems (or short stories) you will use.
2. Arrange them on the brackets. Create a larger version of the bracket for class to see. (I used a different bracket for each period.)
3. Print the poems out for the students (not required, but suggested. Also suggested to use colored paper.)

Round 1: 16

4. Set up a discussion circle (depending on size of your class, you could have one circle, or implement inner/outer circles.)
5. Students discuss Poem 1, focusing only on Subject, Speaker, Audience, Tone
6. Repeat with Poem 2
7. Students vote on which of those 2 poems was more effective in communicating those 4 elements. (Can vote via Google Form, Microsoft Form, Secret Ballot, or hand raise – although anonymous is suggested.). Write winner on bracket sheet
8. Repeat with poems 3 and 4, 5 and 6, etc. until entire first round is done.

Round 2: 8

9. For round 2, focus on figurative language, tone, and structure. Can do the same method, or have small groups create presentations on an assigned poem (I did 4 a day.)
10. After each 2 poems are presented, have them vote on same method. Update the brackets.

Round 3: 4

11. Focus on theme. Have students write out the theme statement for each poem. Have them identify the evidence from each poem that support that theme. OR if you're teaching AP, write a Q1 prompt for each of the remaining 4. Have them write practice thesis statements for each poem. OR if you're teaching AP, write a Q1 prompt for each of the remaining 4 and pass out 4 separate prompts at random and have them write an AP style essay. Can workshop the essays afterwards.
12. Have them vote on Final 4 in pairs based on which is the more clearly expressed theme OR more accessible theme.

Round 4: 2

13. Have them create criteria on what makes a good poem. Then have them discuss which of the final 2 poems best follows that criteria. (I did this by having them stand on opposite sides of the room and discuss and move as their mind changed.
14. Declare your winner!

ASSESSMENT

You have many options for Assessment.

- Tally the amount of times they meaningfully participate
- Have them write a summary of the discussion
- Have them write an argument paper/persuasive paragraph supporting one of the poems up for discussion.

I don't recommend giving tests or quizzes on the poems you've discussed. It could take away from the engagement.

RESOURCES

This is my poem list, but select poems based on whatever criteria you choose.

1. Knoxville, TN: Nikki Giovanni
2. a song in the front yard: Gwendolyn Brooks
3. Blackberry Picking: Seamus Heany
4. [in Just-] : ee cummings
5. The Night is Darkening Around Me: Emily Bronte
6. She Walks in Beauty: Lord Byron
7. Oranges; Gary Soto
8. Fifth Grade Autobiography: Rita Dove
9. The Waking: Theodore Roethke
10. Death Be Not Proud: John Donne
11. The Sound of Trees: Robert Frost
12. Wild Geese: Mary Oliver
13. Kindness: Yusef Komunyakaa
14. Dream of the Raven: Ada Limon
15. Wind: Ted Hughes
16. Crossing Jordan: Langston Hughes

I modified this idea from this website:

<https://muchadoaboutteaching.com/poetry-march-madness/>

Websites to find good poems:

Poetry 180: <https://www.loc.gov/programs/poetry-and-literature/poet-laureate/poet-laureate-projects/poetry-180/all-poems/>

Poets.org: <https://poets.org/>

Poetry Foundation: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

Wild Geese
by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

a song in the front yard
BY GWENDOLYN BROOKS

I've stayed in the front yard all my life.
I want a peek at the back
Where it's rough and untended and hungry weed grows.
A girl gets sick of a rose.

I want to go in the back yard now
And maybe down the alley,
To where the charity children play.
I want a good time today.

They do some wonderful things.
They have some wonderful fun.
My mother sneers, but I say it's fine
How they don't have to go in at quarter to nine.
My mother, she tells me that Johnnie Mae
Will grow up to be a bad woman.
That George'll be taken to Jail soon or late
(On account of last winter he sold our back gate).

But I say it's fine. Honest, I do.
And I'd like to be a bad woman, too,
And wear the brave stockings of night-black lace
And strut down the streets with paint on my face.

1 Team Single

