

## Classroom Lesson Plan 3

# Getting Started With Poetry

**Teacher:** Jonathan Holden, Nathan Hale Elementary School, Roxbury, Massachusetts

**Grade Level:** Fourth

**Topic:** Getting Started With Poetry

## Materials Needed:

- A large selection of poetry collections
- Copies of “Last Touch” for each student (included on the Web site as a Teacher Tool)
- Copies of the Student Activity Sheet “Poetry Response Chart” for each student
- Class sets of additional poems selected by teacher (see the Teacher Tool “Creating Poetry Lessons” for directions on assembling appropriate sets for your students)
- Copies of the Student Activity Sheet “Teaching Book Buddies” for each student

## Background Information:

Mr. Holden’s class reflects the general demographics of Nathan Hale Elementary. The majority of the students are African American; there are several Hispanic students and one Caucasian. The group has widely differentiated skills and abilities, and Mr. Holden notes that there are some very strong personalities in the class as well as many resilient children overcoming great obstacles.

In this lesson, Mr. Holden is introducing his students to the pleasures of poetry. His primary goal is to help them develop a love of reading poetry in particular while developing the comprehension and critical-thinking skills they need to remain engaged readers.

As he helps them get started with poetry, Mr. Holden emphasizes the oral nature of the form and focuses his initial lessons on sound (rhythm and rhyme) and surprising language. He chooses poems that are readily accessible to all his students and ones that present experiences to which they can relate personally. By asking them to write poems themselves, Mr. Holden introduces students to the poetic craft from the inside out. Not only do they have the opportunity to play a bit with language as they express their own experiences, as readers they become more sensitive to such language play in the works of others. Asking students to share what they are learning with younger students in the semi-formal setting of a Book Buddy meeting helps Mr. Holden’s students solidify their learning and develop confidence in themselves as readers.

## Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- listen to, read, and enjoy a large variety of poems.
- use language effectively to create knowledge, make meaning, challenge thinking, and expand their literary envisionments.
- respond to what they have heard through informal writing.
- discuss poetic language and form.

## **Classroom Lesson Plan 3: Getting Started With Poetry, page 2**

- experiment with writing their own poems, modeled on those they have heard and read.
- share what they are learning about poems with Book Buddies in a younger class.

### **Expected Products From Lesson:**

- Informal response writing to a variety of poems
- A number of original poems based on poems students have heard and read, including poems that are direct imitations of published poems (see the Teacher Tool “Imitating Poetic Forms” for directions for this activity, as well as student samples)
- A publication of revised poems from each student
- A lesson, planned and implemented, for teaching younger Book Buddies about poetry

### **Instructional Strategies Implemented:**

- Multiple poetic read-alouds
- Modeling reading poems with expression
- Modeling thinking about effective use of sound (rhythm and rhyme), effective language, and the pleasures of poetic surprise
- Modeling responses to poems—“What I like,” “What I don’t like,” “Puzzles,” and “Connections”
- Student discussion of their responses in small groups and in full-class meetings
- Teaching elements of poetic form: use of white space, line breaks, titles as integral to body of poem, repetition, use of sound, etc.
- Individual and small-group coaching
- Modeling poetic revision
- Demonstrating methods and criteria for publication

### **Collaborative Structure of Class:**

In Mr. Holden’s room, the bookshelves are jammed with literature appropriate to a range of reading levels and on many topics, and students are urged to self-select books above and beyond the texts assigned for instruction. His students sit at tables in groups of four. Each student has a plastic crate holding his or her books, folders, and other supplies. A round table to the side of the room provides a staging area for Mr. Holden to meet with individuals or with small reading groups. At the front of the room is a carpeted area where the class gathers for class meetings. Often they return to their individual tables to respond to the literature—in writing, in discussion with their tablemates, or with a combination of writing and discussion.

## Classroom Lesson Plan 3: Getting Started With Poetry, page 3

### Lesson Procedures/Activities:

- Teacher reads and models response to the poem “Last Touch.”
- Teacher discusses poem with class, reviewing information in poem to clarify meaning.
- Teacher reviews guidelines for a good discussion, reminding students that personal connections are often key to good discussions.
- Teacher charts response structure on board. (See “Structuring Literary Responses” in Teacher Tools for help.)
- Students return to small groups with copies of “Last Touch.” Individually they spend time charting their personal responses to the poem.
- Students share and discuss responses in small groups while teacher circulates, coaching and supporting discussions.
- Students return to the rug for whole-class reflection on activity.
- Teacher facilitates discussion: “How is a chart like this helpful to you? How can a chart help you understand difficult parts of a poem?”
- Teacher models concept of a poetry slam, using Elizabeth Swados’s *Hey You! C’Mere: A Poetry Slam*.
- Students use randomly selected topics to create instantly improvised “slam” poems that emphasize rhythm and sound.
- Students share and enjoy their poems in both small groups and in a full-class gathering.

Note: the following components of the lesson are not seen on the video, but are part of Mr. Holden’s overall plan.

- With a new poem, teacher and students repeat the processes of oral reading and discussion.
- Teacher models ways to develop questions by asking, “Who?,” “Where?,” “What?,” “When?,” “Why?,” and “How?” and to use those questions to understand the poem.
- In small groups, students read and discuss another poem using the questions for support as they work to develop a strong mental image of the poem’s content.
- They use evidence from the poem to support their answers to their tablemates’ questions.
- They participate in a whole-class discussion on the process.
- They discuss what they have learned about poetry so far, and how they might share some of that with their Book Buddies.

### Follow-Up or Culminating Activities:

- Students will read and understand a short poem and respond to it for homework.
- Students will write and revise their own poems, eventually selecting several for publication.
- Students will plan and execute a short lesson for their Book Buddies, sharing what they have learned about poetry. (See the Student Activity Sheet “Teaching Book Buddies;” also see the Teacher Tool “Student Samples: Teaching Book Buddies” for examples of how Mr. Holden’s students responded to this assignment.)

## Classroom Lesson Plan 3: Getting Started With Poetry, page 4

### Assessment:

Students may be assessed on a daily basis through:

- participation in large- and small-group discussions,
- written responses to poetry, and
- poetry drafts.

The following activities might receive holistic or scaled evaluation (see the Teacher Tool Assessment and Evaluation: Some Useful Principles for a detailed explanation of holistic and scaled evaluation).

- Revised poems
- Poetry publication
- Lesson plan for Book Buddy sharing