

POETRY: Reading / Writing / Speaking / Listening Series

(Musselwhite, 2011)

WHAT

It is very important to integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This tip suggests strategies for integrating these areas through poetry activities.

Background

In her delightful book, *Teach Me a Poem*, Lorraine Wilson (1994) suggests that students must engage in four activities:

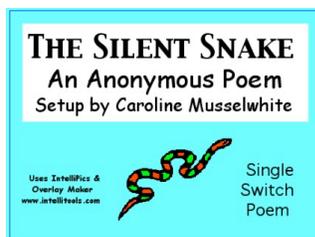
- **Immersion:** Listening, reading, interpreting by talking, moving, group presentation, painting
- **Demonstration:** Observing accomplished writers write poetry
- **Students Write:** Approximation not only of spelling and punctuation, but also of the particular poetic form (drafting!!!)
- **Response:** From individual classmates and the teacher. This may lead to students making revisions.

Poetry Listening

Poetry listening is an important part of the **immersion** stage.

Students can listen to poems in a range of ways:

- on the internet (e.g., www.poetryalive.com)
- on CDs (e.g., poetry CDs from Poetry Alive; *Joyful Noises* CD)
- on the computer (e.g., single switch poems in Classroom Suite, Clicker, or BoardMaker +, on the *Poetry Power* CD)



- shared by friends, reading poems or performing poems using communication devices

Poetry Reading

Poetry reading is also an important part of the **immersion** stage. Thus, instead of merely reading poems TO students, we must make poems available for echo and choral reading by putting them on charts, either light tech or high tech. This is a common practice for kindergarten and first grade teachers, but often does not follow through to higher grade levels. The picture below shows a chart on which a poem has been written for choral or echo reading. Color coding is used to depict rhymes visually. It can be fun to point out words that sound the same and **are** spelled the same (crouch / ouch), versus those that sound the same but are **not** spelled the same (leopard / peppered).

The Panther by Ogden Nash

The panther is like a leopard.
Except, it hasn't been peppered.
Should you see a panther crouch . . .
Prepare to say . . . OUCH!
And if called by a panther . . .
Don't anther!!

Poetry Speaking: Performance

Poetry performance is another important part of poetry immersion. Students can perform poems using natural voice or a communication display. We have found it helpful to use color-coding to show each student's line. For example:

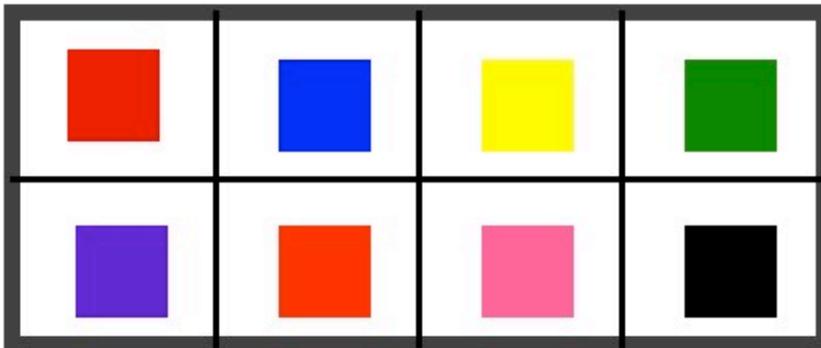
Red = Jennifer, who speaks the title & author

Blue = Katie, who speaks the first line, using a blue Big Mac

Yellow = Matt, who speaks the second line

Green = Cortis, who speaks the third line, pressing the green button on his Cheap Talk 8

- The Panther by Ogden Nash
- The panther is like a leopard.
- Except it hasn't been peppered.
- If you see a panther crouch,
- Prepare to say . . .
- OUCH!
- And if called by a panther . . .
- Don't anther!



Poetry Writing

Teachers must first demonstrate poetry writing, then scaffold students in writing a group poem, and in writing individual poems. A range of light and high tech poetry templates is available on the *Poetry Power CD* (Musselwhite & Wagner, 2011). Sample poetry genre for easy writing include:

- list poems
- shape poems
- cinquain poems
- senses poems
- poems for 2 voices

Poetry Speaking: Sharing

Coming full circle, students should also share their poems orally after revising them. Students can use natural speech or augmentative communication devices to share their poems with an audience.

Resources & References

Musselwhite, C. & Wagner, D. (2006). *Poetry Power: JumpStarting Language, Literacy and Life* (book & CD set). Litchfield Park, AZ: AAC Intervention. www.aacintervention.com

Musselwhite, C. & King-DeBaun, P. (1997). *Emergent Literacy Success: Merging technology and whole language for students with disabilities*. Park City, UT: Creative Communicating.

Wilson, L. (1994). *Write Me a Poem: Reading, writing, and performing poetry*. Armsdale, Australia: Eleanor Curtain Publishing. (I ordered from Amazon.com).

Wolf, A. (1993). *It's Show Time! Poetry from the page to the stage*. Asheville, NC: Poetry Alive! Productions. ISBN: 1-883731-00-3.

Wolf, A. (1990). *Something is going to happen: Teacher's Edition*. Asheville, NC: Poetry Alive! Productions.