

# 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](http://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:

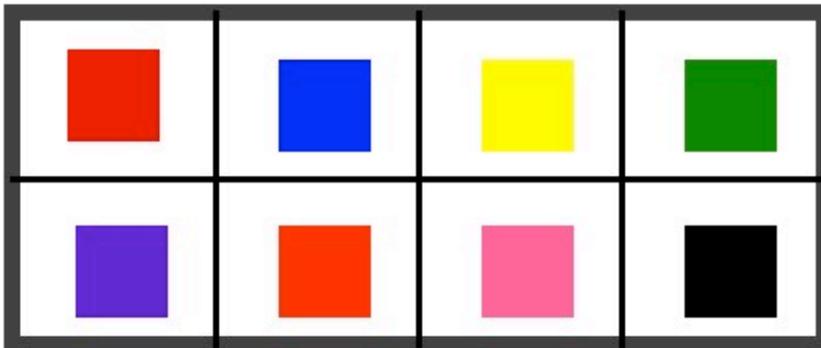
Red = Jennifer, who speaks the title & author

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](http://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.