

Getting Started.... Some Suggestions to Help Support Poetry Writing Exercises

Discuss the following questions with your students.

Suggestion: short answers / explanations should accompany the questions.

1. Why are poem titles important?
2. Why is the first line of any poem important?
3. Why is the last line of any poem important?
4. Why might word or letter "sounds" be important to a poem?
5. What is meant by the reference: "speaker of the poem?"
6. What does "place" mean in reference to poetry?
7. Why is poetry an important literary form?
8. How has poetry been used throughout the ages?

Have your students define the following literary terms.

concrete
specific

abstract
vague
general

figurative
literal

cliché
irony

image
imagery

metaphor
extended metaphor
simile
epigram

alliteration
prosody

antagonist
protagonist
narrator
persona

rhythm
rhyme

free verse poetry
sonnet
stanza
line break

Avoiding cliché -- Common Knowledge

A cliché is a phrase that has been repeated so often it no longer communicates anything fresh. A cliché may be false or true, but it is so familiar to a writer's or reader's ear that they simply don't think about it. Clichés fool writers into thinking they are saying something meaningful. **AVOID the trap of Clichés!** Clichés take away from any form of writing. Some examples follow:

White as snow...
Dark as night...
Soft as a feather...
Red as an apple...
Hard as a rock...
Icy blue eyes...
Sparkled like diamonds...
the big picture...

Buried in thought...
Silky-like hair...
Board flat
Slimy as worms...
Hotter than fire...
Ruby red lips...
Heavy heart...
A chill in my bones...

Have students come up with additional examples of cliché.

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WHEN WRITING FREE-VERSE POETRY

1. Is the title of the poem working to draw readers into the poem?
2. Does the 1st line of the poem grab the reader's attention?
3. What is literally happening in the poem?
4. What images and scenes are being developed?
5. Are the images and metaphors working for the poem? How? Why?
6. Are the line breaks working? (line end-words / line first words) How?
7. If anything, what else is the poem trying to say metaphorically?
8. Does the poem have a successful rhythm and flow?
9. What is the tone or attitude of the speaker? Poem?
10. Is the last line of the poem strong? Does it leave the reader awed?

POET...POETRY...POEM

- A poet writes that he might better understand himself and the world surrounding him.
- A poet, like a taxidermist, catches and then preserves physical and mental emotion.
- Poetry is the writer's insight to that small piece world others have been too busy to experience or have not noticed.
- Poetry is a means of extracting "the special" from anything.
- Poetry is a means of learning more about ourselves.
- Poetry is a means of touching personal emotions.
- Poetry is the writer's insight.
- A poem is the "magnifying glass" to those pieces of life that people are too busy to see.
- A poem is the "reducing machine" for those things that seem to huge to comprehend.
- A poem, through metaphor, often surprises us into seeing things afresh, as if with new eyes.
- A poem offers us the chance to see things in a new or different light.
- A poem is an emotion or feeling that has been etched in stone.
- A poem is a painting of words.