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## Writing Free Verse Poetry [3rd grade]

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# Understanding By Design

## Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Writing Free Verse Poetry

Grade Level: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

Subject/Topic Area(s): Writing

Designed By: Annie Houston Winter

Time Frame: 3 weeks

School District: North East Independent School District

School: Walzem Elementary School:

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### **Brief Summary of Unit:**

This 3 week unit is designed to help students discover that poetry is meaningful and relevant to their lives. This unit will focus on using good word choice to create powerful images in their writing. Students will also gain the understanding that poetry is meant to be read aloud as they prepare for a class performance. Students will discover that they are poets as they write in their poetry notebooks and prepare a piece of poetry for publication in a class anthology.

**Unit: Writing Free Verse Poetry****Grade: 3<sup>rd</sup>****Stage 1: Desired Results****Understandings***Students will understand that...*

- A poem is a piece of writing that is characterized by particular elements
- Free verse is a type of poetry with few rules or boundaries
- Words can be used to elicit vivid imagery
- Writers use tools and processes to bring ideas into a final product
- They are poets
- Poetry is relevant to their lives
- Poems are meant to be heard

**Essential Questions**

- What makes a poem a poem?
- Who is a poet?
- Why should we write poetry?
- How do the words I choose change the images I create?
- What does a poem sound like?
- How do I know a poem is finished?

**Knowledge***Students will know...*

- What resources to use to find replacement words
- Free Verse is a type of poetry that does not always rhyme, does not have a set number of syllables, and that uses poetic language
- Poets use imagery to convey meaning
- Powerful verbs give a sentence energy
- Line Breaks can change the meanings and rhythm of a poem

**Skills***Students will be able to...*

- 3.18 C- Use precise word choice to create vivid images in their writing
- 3.18F- Select and bring drafts of their poetry to publication, demonstrating an understanding of the language
- 3.16H- Use resources such as a dictionary and a thesaurus to find synonyms and replacement words
- 3.18A- Generate ideas by using prewriting techniques
- 3.12H- Demonstrate learning through productions such as oral and written reports and dramatization

**Stage 2: Assessment Evidence****Performance Task:**

Students will keep a poetry journal containing all drafts of their poetry as well as reflections. At the end of the unit, students will have the opportunity to participate in the Open Mike publication party. Each student is expected to select one of his poems and present it to the class. The students will create a class anthology by designing a cover and submitting their favorite poems. Students will be assessed according to the Student Unit Assessment Rubric.

### Other evidence:

- Weekly conferences with teacher
- Student reflections
- Poetry bookmarks

## Stage 3: Learning Activities

*(Steps taken to get students to answer Stage 1 questions and complete performance task)*

### Day One:

Mini Lesson: Welcome to Free Verse Poetry

Ask the students the question: "What is a poem" and give the students some thinking time. The students will then share their thoughts. The teacher and students will repeat the process with the question "Who is a poet". Tell the class that they are going to be writing poetry over the next few weeks. Explain the performance piece to the students. Pass out the rubric and go over expectations.

Show the students your poetry notebook, explain what it is, and select an appropriate poem to read. Have the student helper help pass out the notebooks. Give the students time to decorate and personalize their front covers. The class will end with the students writing their first reflection entry. The students will take a few minutes to write their definitions of a poem and a poet.

### Day Two:

Mini Lesson: What is Free Verse?

Read aloud the poem "Black is Brown is Tan" by Arnold Adoff. Is this poetry? What do you think? What makes a poem a poem?

Explain that this is a type of poetry called free verse. Tell the students that you are going to read them another free verse poem and ask them to listen and see what they notice. Read the poem and record student responses on chart paper. Go over some of the elements of free verse: it does not rhyme or a certain number of syllables, it contains poetic languages. Model writing a free verse poem.

Writing Time: The students will begin writing free verse poems in their poetry notebooks.

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: Student's will share their writing in the author's circle (they may choose to pass if their poetry is too personal) and respond using TAG (Tell one thing you liked, Ask a Question, Give a suggestion).

### Day Three:

Mini Lesson: What's the Difference Between Free Verse and a Regular Book?

The students will close their eyes while the teacher reads two short pieces of writing aloud (a poem and a paragraph). Ask the students which piece was the poem and which was the paragraph. Show the students a poem and paragraph written on the same topic on a transparency. Are they both poems? What makes one piece a poem? Pass out clipboards and individual t-charts. Have the students come up to the easel and write what they notice does or does not make a piece a poem on the class t-chart, while the other students record on their personal t-charts.

Writing Time: The students will continue writing in their poetry notebooks.

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: The students will share with their writing buddies and give each other two stars and a wish.

### Day Four:

Mini Lesson: Poetry from our Lives

Pose the question "Why should we write poetry". Allow some time for student responses. Ask the students if they have ever felt incredibly angry or extremely happy. Have the students share a few examples. Explain to the students that poetry is a way to show people what is in our hearts. Powerful poetry lets the reader know how the writer was feeling. One way that the writer can accomplish this is by writing about events from their lives. Share a few poems

that show real moments from people's lives. On chart paper, model jotting down moments from your life that might make a good poem. A few student volunteers will add their moments on the chart.

Writing Time: The students will write about moments from their lives that they might want to write into poetry.

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: The students will share their writing in groups of four using the Compass Protocol.

### Day Five:

Mini Lesson: From Notebook to Poetry

On a piece of chart paper, show the student a jotted paragraph from your poetry notebook. Ask the students whether or not it sounds like a poem. Explain to the students that this is a topic that you really care about and you want to turn it into a poem. Ask the students for ideas for how to do this, reviewing the elements of free verse (no consistent rhyme or set syllables, poetic language). Model taking your paragraph apart and turning it into a poem using student suggestions. Read the finished poem aloud and have students give you a thumbs up if they think that it sounds like a poem.

Writing Time: Give the students some extra writing time as they work on turning their ideas into poems.

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: Students will share their writing in the author's circle ( they may skip if their poetry is too personal) and respond using TAG (Tell one thing you liked, Ask a Question, Give a suggestion).

### Day Six:

Mini Lesson: Treasure Hunt For Poetry

Ask students to close their eyes and listen as you read a poem by a famous poet (Robert Frost). Ask them if they can see the poem in their heads. Reread descriptive lines aloud and ask the students what these lines make them see. Tell the students that poets use descriptive language to paint a picture in the reader's mind. Explain that they are going to go on a treasure hunt for examples of descriptive language in poetry. Show a transparency of another poem and model finding examples of poetic language and recording the "treasures" you found on the Treasure Hunt Recording Sheet. Explain that they are going to hunt for their favorite line and record and illustrate it on a bookmark (precut card stock) Have a few student volunteers find examples of poetic language. Place several bins of poetry books in different areas of the room. In partners, have the students take their clip boards and recording sheets and search for good examples of descriptive language.

Have students return to their desk and write their favorite line, the author, and title of the poem on their bookmark. Have the students draw an illustration of the picture the words paint.

(If students make multiple bookmarks, they might donate them to the school library to be given to a younger class)

Writing Time: Students complete their poetry bookmarks

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: The students will share their bookmarks in their table groups, using the Compass Protocol. Model presenting the bookmark (Read the title and the author of the poem. Explain why you chose that line and describe your illustration).Have the students gather in their table groups and take turns sharing.

### Day Seven:

Mini Lesson: Cracking Words

Review the concepts of "tired, overused words" previously learned under the Six Trait's Word Choice. Explain that poets have to be very careful to not use any tired words or phrases. Introduce the activity "Cracking Words" to the students. On sentence strips have several "tired sentences" followed by an equals sign. Explain that these sentences

do not do a very good job of painting a picture in the reader's mind. Model "cracking" apart boring words and replacing them with descriptive language. **How do the words I choose change the images that I create?** Have a few students come to the board and correct the rest of the sentences.

Writing Time: The students will revisit their own writing and "crack apart" tired, nondescriptive words and sentences.

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: The students will share with their writing buddies and use TAG (Tell one thing you liked, Ask a Question, Give a suggestion)

## Day Eight:

Mini Lesson: Slow and Fast Verbs

Show the students a picture of a race car and a regular car. Which car do they think would win a car race? Explain that verbs are the engines of sentences and can either be like the race car or like the regular car. Show the students an example of a slow, medium, and a fast sentence. Read the following words written on index cards out loud "went, darted, said, whisper, cut, slice, jumped, plunged. Tape each index card to the board. Which words paint a more vivid image in your mind? Have the students come up to the board and place each verb under either the "Fast Car" heading or the "Slow Car" heading.

Writing Time: The students will continue writing poetry and consider whether they have "fast" or "slow".

Conference Time: **The teacher will conference with 3-4 students**

Share Time: The students will share their writing in the author's circle and give two stars and a wish

## Day Nine:

Mini Lesson: Using Resources

Show the students an example of a poem that you have written that has some overused words and misspellings. Model using a dictionary and thesaurus to help you find the correct spelling, word meanings, and synonyms. Have a few students model using a dictionary and thesaurus. Place bins full of dictionaries, picture dictionaries, and thesauruses around the room. Pass each student a page with a poem that contains misspellings and overused words. In groups of 2-3, have the students correct the poems using their dictionaries and thesauruses.

Writing Time: The students will correct their poems. Students who finish early may begin writing in their poetry notebooks.

Conference Time: **The teacher will conference with 3-4 students**

Share Time: Students will share their different versions of the poem and listen for the different word choices that they used.

## Day Ten:

Mini Lesson: Line Breaks

Ask the students the question **"What does a poem sound like"**. Allow time for a few student responses. Focus the students thinking by telling them that we are going to think about what a poem looks and sounds like. Provide the students copies of the poems "Cricket" by Valerie Worth and excerpt of "Song of Myself" by Walt Whitman. Give the students time to read them. What do they notice about each poem? If need be, guide them into noticing that one has short lines and the other long lines. Tell students that where a line ends is called a line break. Line breaks can change the way a poem sounds. Go over how short lines are meant to be read slowly and long lines cause a poem to gain momentum and are read more rapidly. Model reading each poem.

Show students a short poem in paragraph form. Tell the students that you are going to read the poem aloud and that they are to listen for natural pauses and shout "pause" as you read. Every time they shout pause, draw a line break

(//). Model rewriting a poem using the line breaks.

Tell the kids that they can also change the meaning of the poem by moving the line breaks around. Rewrite the poem using different line breaks. Ask the students how the meaning has changed. Encourage students to experiment with line breaks in their poetry today.

Writing Time: Students will continue writing poetry and experiment with making line breaks.

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: The students will share their writing by practicing reading it with their writing buddies. The students will practice pausing after a line break.

## Day Eleven:

Mini Lesson: Revisiting our poems

Begin the lesson by posing the question “How do you know that a poem is finished”. Allow time for student responses and a brief discussion. Explain that we are going to be thinking about that question today. Have the students give you a thumbs up or down if they have ever heard of the poet Janet Wong. Give the students some background knowledge of her and show them some pictures of her from her website [www.janetwong.com](http://www.janetwong.com). Using her website let the children listen to the author reading some of her own poetry. Tell the students that this poet actually tells us how she writes. Show the students the video of “The Power of Poetry” on [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org) in which Janet describes how she writes poems more than one time.

Show the students one of your own rough drafts. Explain that this is poem that you would like to revisit. Model taking out unnecessary words, adding words, changing line breaks etc (By this point in the year the students are all very familiar with these processes). Before dismissing the students to write, once again ask “How do you know that a poem is finished” and see if their thinking has changed. Encourage the students to revisit their poems just like real life poets.

Writing Time: The students continue to write and revisit their own poetry.

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: The students will share their drafts with each other in groups of four using the Compass Protocol.

## Day Twelve:

Writer’s notes: Remind students to turn in a copy of their favorite poem for the class book. Decide as a class how the dedication page is to be worded.

Mini Lesson: Editing Our Poetry

Show the students a transparency of two poems. One poem is very sloppy and clearly not edited. The other poem is nicely polished. Which poem would a reader rather see (show of hands-yes, no, maybe so). Tell the students that they need to select their favorite poem to edit for the Open Mike Celebration. Have a variety of art supplies (construction paper, pompoms, pipe cleaners, glue different colored pens etc.) available. Go over how to frame a poem and how to copy it nicely. Revisit their personal editor’s rubric. Give the students time to select and edit their poem.

Writing Time: The students will work on editing their poems

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: The student’s will share their writing (though they may skip if their poetry is too personal) and respond using TAG (Tell one thing you liked, Ask a Question, Give a suggestion).

## Day Thirteen:

Writer’s Notes: Revisit the questions “Who is a poet” and “What is a poem”. Have their ideas changed? If so, how?

Have the students conclude their poetry journal by writing a brief reflection to each question. After the students have written, brainstorm class definitions of a poet and a poem (definitions to be read at the Open Mike Celebration).

#### Mini Lesson: Performing Poetry

Have the students listen to a recording of the poet James Berry read his poem “Isn’t my Name Magical” Ask the students what they notice about the way the author reads his poem. Tell the students that they are going to read their poems like poets (because that is what they are). Go over reading with expression, line breaks, using a big voice etc (the students will be familiar with many of these concepts because they have already been introduced to reading poetry in a literacy center). Give the students time to practice reading their poem. Model reading/giving feedback with their writing buddy. Have them work with their writing buddy and give each other feedback.

Go over expectations for the Open Mike Celebration (listening to others, applauding politely, saving questions for the end, where to keep their poetry).

Writing Time: The students will practice reading their poetry with their writing buddies. Students who finish can work on designing the cover to the class book.

Conference Time: The teacher will conference with 3-4 students

Share Time: The student may use this time to practice reading their poems with their writing buddy in preparation for the Open Mike Celebration.

#### Day Fourteen:

##### Open Mike Celebration

Set up the class café style- plastic table clothes across desks, vases with tissue paper flowers (made by students) in the middle of each ‘table”, a designated stage area with a microphone, and an Open Mike Celebration poster (created by the students). Welcome all of the poets and any parents or guests. Begin the program by having two students read the class definitions of a poet and a poem. Present the class anthology and have a student read the dedication page aloud. Then, each student will present his/her poem and answer any questions that the audience may have. To conclude the celebration, have a student thank their guests for coming and invite them to look at their poetry notebooks and enjoy some refreshments. The celebration concludes with the students and their guests enjoying refreshments together and looking through their poetry notebooks.

### Student Unit Assessment Rubric

	I Exceed Expectations	I Meet Expectations	I Approach Expectations
Writing Process	I used three or more drafts when writing my poem.	I used two drafts when writing my poem.	I used one draft when writing my poem.
Imagery	It is easy for my reader to picture what I am writing about all of the time.	It is easy for my reader to picture what I am writing about some of the time.	It is hard for my reader to picture what I am writing about.
Final Draft	My poem is easy to read. I took my time on the illustration	My poem is not always easy to read. I did not take my time on the illustration	My poem is hard to read. I did not take my time on the illustration
Performance	I read my poem in my "authors" voice, used line breaks and pauses, and read with expression.	I sometimes read my poem in my author's voice. I sometimes used line breaks and I sometimes read with expression.	I did not read my poem in my author's voice. I did not use line breaks and pauses and I did not read with expression.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Treasure Hunt!



Directions: Find examples of descriptive language and record them on the lines below. Circle your favorite one.

1) Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Line: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Line: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1) 3) Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Line: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Works Cited

Fletcher, Ralph. Poetry Matters: Writing s Poem From the Inside Out. New York: HarperTrophy, 2002.

Heard, Georgia. Awakening the Heart. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999.