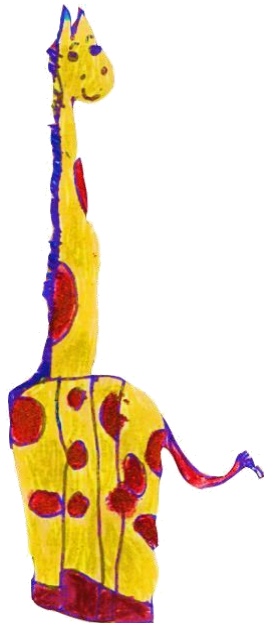


# The TLC Poetry Project: Why Start With Poetry?

For many years, Tufts Literacy Corps writing tutors have begun their tutoring with poetry. There are several reasons for this:

- Poems can be short.
- Writing a poem does not require a heavy reliance on word retrieval. It does not ask the writer to organize complex language.
- Children can express a simple thought with beauty and quick success, and the experience of success is key to achievement. The more capable a learner feels, the easier it is to take the risks necessary to learn and grow.
- Poetry writing is “vocabulary dense.” Words are at the heart of understanding language, and in the art of poetry every word matters. This makes poetry an ideal forum for talking to children about the meaning and power of words.
- Poetry writing involves many of the literary devices and techniques that characterize all skilled writing. It offers a highly accessible way for children to learn these techniques.
- Poetry is a vehicle for self-expression, which is key to the human experience.



# Introducing Poetry to Children

Poems paint pictures with words. Poets choose their words carefully and arrange them to express something they see, think or feel. They often write about experiences we all share, and a good poem can show us new parts of ourselves and connect us to others.

One of the best ways to introduce children to poetry is to read a wide variety of poems with them. Engage them in an informal conversation that calls their attention to interesting aspects of the poems and introduces them to features they can incorporate into their own writing. In addition to reading published poems, share poems written by young poets with your tutees. Here are a few poems written by children working with Tufts Literacy Corps tutors. What do you notice? What might you talk about with your tutees?

## **Different**

I am different from  
my classmates.  
We dress differently.  
We don't have the same skin.  
My cousin's mother teaches him  
to play baseball.  
My mother and father teach  
me math. (I don't like math.)  
My cousin and me  
are the same from the outside.  
From the inside we are  
different.

*Jennifer, Grade 2*

## **Cold Rainy Days**

cold rain driving  
it sounds like rocks  
bumping on the car  
rain clouds  
love to pick up the rain  
mud colored puddles  
like a pool getting filled up  
jumping in the puddles  
the water splashes everywhere  
my clothes feel like  
they came out of the washer  
without being dried.

*Karissa, Grade 2*

## **Snow**

White, falling up in the air  
spinning  
I stick my tongue out snow  
angels soft, cold  
different shapes dirty.

*Alysha, Grade 2*

## **If I Were a Ball of Playdough**

If I were a ball of playdough  
I would feel yellow and squishy and  
scared and I'm cold.  
I wish someone was with me.  
I hope someone will  
play with us.

*Maureen, Grade 4*

## **Sleep**

I am sleepy... ...so sleepy I can't  
hardly stay up  
no longer.  
My little brother wakes me up  
every time.  
I am so cranky  
I hit him for no reason.  
I just want to sleep.

*Ismael, Grade 2*

# Metaphor and Simile

Metaphor is one of the poet's most important tools. Writers can create strong, unforgettable images by comparing things that are not usually linked. When Bobbi Katz writes that "all the leaves have turned to cornflakes... ..millions and millions of cornflakes," we imagine a neighborhood full of curly, crunchy brown cereal-like autumn leaves. On a concrete level, cereal has little to do with trees or leaves. The comparison, however, offers a vivid picture of her experience. James Reeves does the same thing when he calls fireworks "an orchard of the sky."

The term "metaphor" usually refers to a comparison between two dissimilar things. When the metaphor includes the words, "like" or "as," it is called a "simile."

Read the following poem by Douglas Gibson and identify the metaphors and similes.

## **Cat in Moonlight**

Through moonlight's milk  
She slowly passes  
As soft as silk  
Between tall grasses.  
I watch her go  
So sleek and white,  
As white as snow,  
The moon so bright  
I hardly know  
White moon, white fur,  
Which is the light  
And which is her.

Try finishing the following sentences by creating some similes of your own. Feel free to go wild and try out several ideas – even if they seem "wrong" or silly at first. You have your own way of seeing the world. Your writing will be more interesting if you share your unique viewpoint.

Her ringlets curled down her back like \_\_\_\_\_

The air was as crisp and cold as \_\_\_\_\_

The waves crashed against the rocks like \_\_\_\_\_

The toffee was as sticky as \_\_\_\_\_

# Poems that use Metaphor and/or Similes

## Quilt

*by Janet S. Wong.*

Our family  
is a quilt

of odd remnants  
patched together

in a strange  
pattern,

threads fraying,  
fabric wearing thin –

but made to keep  
its warmth

even in bitter  
cold.

## The Toaster

*by William Jay Smith*

A silver-scaled Dragon  
with jaws flaming red  
Sits at my elbow and  
toasts my bread.

I hand him fat slices,  
and then, one by one,  
He hands them back  
when he sees they are  
done.

## I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

*By William Wordsworth*

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

(And now) when on my couch I lie  
in (a) pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

## The Base Stealer

*by Robert Francis*

Poised between going on and back, pulled  
Both ways taut like a tightrope-walker,  
Fingertips pointing the opposites,  
Now bouncing tiptoe like a dropped ball  
Or a kid skipping rope, come on, come on,  
Running a scattering of steps sidewise,  
How he teeters, skitters, tingles, teases,  
Taunts them, hovers like an ecstatic bird,  
He's only flirting, crowd him, crowd him,  
Delicate, delicate, delicate, delicate - now!

# Free Fall Metaphor

Andrew Green, the founder of Potato Hill Poetry, describes an exercise he calls “free fall metaphor.” “Free fall metaphor,” he writes, “is just that – to list as many metaphors as possible, falling freely beneath a given image, object or idea.”

He includes several examples:

## **Idea: Loneliness**

lonely as the willow tree swaying in the field  
lonely as the old man waiting at the bus stop in the rain  
lonely as the night sky without the moon

Make a list of ideas and try this activity with your tutee. Some possibilities are:

excitement                      silence                      happiness                      anger

You can also use objects to generate free falling metaphor. (Ask your tutee to bring a couple from home!)

## **Object: desk**

A desk like a football field              as broad as a hippo's back              as big as a barn

Green points out that nature is full of images to use for practicing free fall metaphor. The moon, for example, can be described as “a giant lollipop in the sky, a butter cookie, a birthday balloon or a lemon wedge. He includes a poem written by a second grade class after one of the children came to school with her hair newly braided with beads. “Ashkeeya's Braids” illustrates the associative quality of poetic writing and how images need not have a literal connection to their topic.

## **Ashkeeya's Braids**

Rapid waterfalls  
Jingle Bells  
Clicking castanets  
Shining like the moon, the stars, the sun  
Little bubbles  
Shake, shake, shaking maracas  
Reindeer bells  
Bath water running  
Icicles  
Jewels  
Tiny snowballs  
Glass candlesticks  
Ashkeeya's braids!

# Working the Metaphor

(from the Potato Hill Poetry Handbook, page 43)

Try to create metaphors out of the following list. Feel free to add your own to the list. You might try to write several metaphors for each one. See if you can extend each metaphor, as in the following example: *I am the curtain of darkness unfolding across the evening sky.*

I am the silence of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the quickness of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the happiness of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the color of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the sadness of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the music of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the strength of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the taste of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the whisper of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the sweetness of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the curtain of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the calm of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the size of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the yellow of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the teeth of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the sound of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the stillness of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the anger of \_\_\_\_\_

I am the laughter of \_\_\_\_\_

# Experimenting with Simile

(from the Potato Hill Poetry Handbook, page 42)

A simile is a direct comparison between two unlike things that have something in common. This comparison between two unlike things is made with the connecting words “like,” “as” or “than.” By using a simile, the poet heightens the object or individual being compared, and presents the reader with a new way of seeing.

**Write a series of list poems in which each line contains a simile. Then write a poem full of similes that all focus on one topic or object.**

**A few examples to get warmed up:**

The pond is as clear as \_\_\_\_\_

The clouds are as soft as \_\_\_\_\_

The grass is green like a \_\_\_\_\_

The clock is round like a \_\_\_\_\_

The branches of the trees hung like \_\_\_\_\_

I am sad as \_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes I am as lonely as a \_\_\_\_\_

The wind whispered like \_\_\_\_\_

The old dog's bark sounded like a \_\_\_\_\_

This morning it was as cold as \_\_\_\_\_

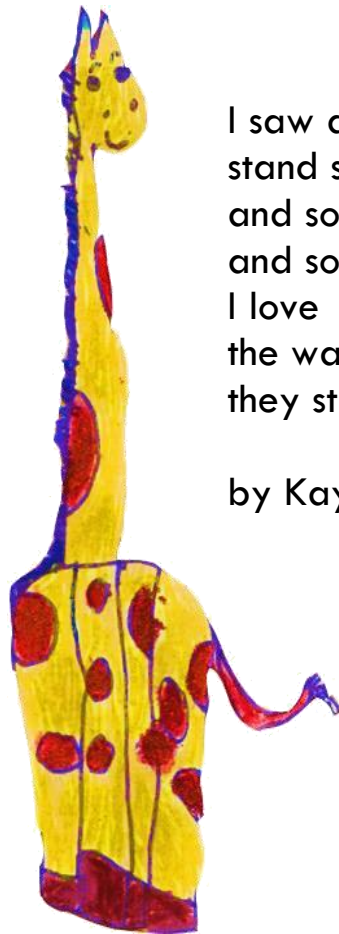
His hands are tougher than \_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes I feel tall as a \_\_\_\_\_

# Taking A Close Look at the World

Poetry writing encourages children to take a close look at the world. Naomi Shihab Nye writes, "For me poetry has always been a way of paying attention to the world. We hear so many voices every day, swirling around us, and a poem makes us slow down and listen carefully to a few things we have really heard, deep inside."

The activities on the following pages offer a variety of ways to encourage children to take a close look at the world, pay attention to details, consider the meaning of words and express themselves. Try them out!



I saw a giraffe  
stand so still  
and so orange  
and so bright.  
I love  
the way  
they stand.

by Kayla, grade 2



# The Apple of Your Poetic Eye

**Purpose:** The goal is to foster close attention to detail, help your student generate descriptive language and engage her in an activity that cannot help but produce a poem.

**Materials:** Two fabulous apples  
Writing paper, pencils  
Markers, glue sticks  
Construction or colored paper



Take to your session two of the largest, most interesting apples you can find. Also take an assortment of colored paper, a set of markers and glue sticks. Tell your student that the two of you are going to use these apples to explore descriptive details, write a poem – and then turn your poem into a work of art.

**Collaborate!** As both of you explore – and eat – your own apple, take turns contributing “describers.” It sometimes works well to follow a pattern: four descriptive details or phrases, and a memory. Use metaphors and similes if they emerge (it’s fine to encourage their use here). Use the checklist below to make sure you think broadly about your apples.

## Think about...

- anything you see on the surface: shape, colors, lines, marks, plus labels
- light and the way it reflects off the apple
- taste, sound, smell, touch
- memories of apples in your lives
- things you know about apples
- whatever you associate with apples: MacBooks, Eve, strudel, the Wizard of Oz...
- any questions you have about apples in general or this apple in particular

Start with whatever category you’d like and write down all the descriptive words and phrases you and your tutee can generate. If it keeps things moving, feel free to do the writing yourself and allow your student to talk. Play with the process. Share ideas as you go along. Explore tangents (keep them relevant to apples). Applaud your student’s efforts, particularly the interesting ones. Encourage her to look more closely than “red” and “round.” Is it really red? What other colors do you see? Round? Don’t forget the memories and associations, because they will make your poems personal and interesting.

Pick out 10 to 20 of your favorite descriptive words and phrases (you and your student do not need to select the same phrases). Write them down on strips of paper and arrange your own poems. Help your student play with different arrangements. How does changing the order change the poem? What sounds best to you and your student? Make sure to give your student most of the control, and remember: there are no right answers.

Turn your poem into art by using the words, phrases and colored paper to build a “concrete apple poem.”

# The Six Room Image Poem

From *Awakening the Heart*, by Georgia Heard

In her beautiful book, *Awakening the Heart*, Georgia Heard builds on an image of poems as collections of rooms to be entered and experienced (she attributes the view to the 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century poet, Rainer Maria Rilke). Here are the instructions:

Take a blank sheet of paper and divide it into six parts, or rooms. (You may have to help your tutee manage this task. Try it yourself first, so you know how to help.)

Room Number 1: Think of something that you have seen outside that is amazing, beautiful, interesting, or that has just stayed in your mind. Close your eyes and try to see it as clearly as a photograph—notice all the details about it—and describe it as accurately as you can in room number one. Don't think about writing a poem, just try to describe your object as specifically as possible.

Room Number 2: In room number two, think about the same object/image, but focus on the quality of light. For example: Is the sun bright? Or is it a dull, flat day? Are there any shadows? If it's unclear what the light is like you might have to use some poetic license and make it up. You can also describe colors.

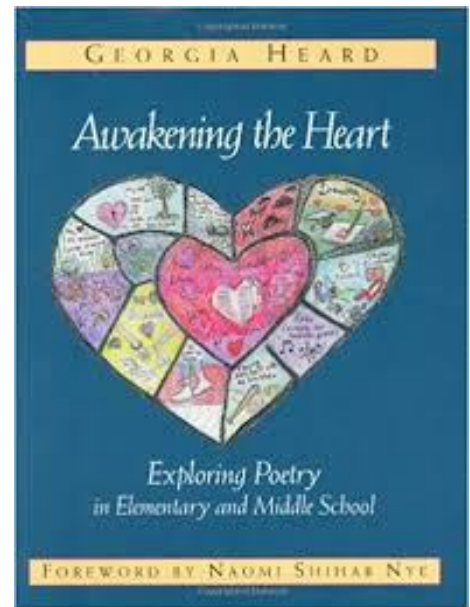
Room Number 3: Picture the same object/image and focus only on the sounds. Are there any voices? Rustling of leaves? Sound of rain? If it's silent—what kind of silence? Empty? Lonely? Peaceful?

Room Number 4: Write down any questions you have about the image. Is there anything you want to know more about? Or wonder about?

Room Number 5: Write down any feelings that you have about this same object/image.

Room Number 6: Look over the five rooms you have already created and select one word, or a few words, a phrase, a line, or a sentence that feels important and repeat it three times.

Read over what you wrote in the six rooms, and then see if you can create a poem. You can rearrange the rooms in any order; eliminate rooms, words, or sentences.



## **More Structures to Guide Poetry Writing**

- The Pantoum, from the *Potato Hill Poetry Handbook* by Andrew Green
- Reversos by Marilyn Singer
- Summer Afternoon
- Where I'm From, by George Ella Lyon
- He Shaved His Head, "This is just to say" and Other Poems That Work as Models

# **The Pantoum**

from *Potato Hill Poetry* by Andrew Green

The pantoum is a poem composed of four-line stanzas in which the second and fourth lines of each stanza are repeated as the first and third lines of the next stanza. The last line of a pantoum is often the same as the first. The pantoum was first used in 15<sup>th</sup> century Malaysia, was adopted by Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Andrew Green, it has become increasingly popular in the United States in recent decades.

Read the poem below with your student. Do not explain the pattern first, however. Instead ask her to listen for the pattern as you read it aloud while she follows along with the print. If need be, read the poem a second time (you may want your tutee to read it this time). Continue playing with the poem and your student until the pattern is clear.

Have your student try writing her own pantoum.

## **Mom, Please Listen**

Please listen to me...

I love you very much,

But between work and school,

Sometimes I feel left out.

I love you very much,

It seems like you always have time for Michelle and Katie,

Sometimes I feel left out.

I miss the time we used to spend together.

It seems like you always have time for Michelle and Kate,

I wish you had more time for me...

I miss the time we used to spend together,

Doing mother-daughter things.

I wish you have more time for me...

Playing games, watching T.V., you know,

Doing mother-daughter things.

Maybe someday things will settle down and we'll have more time together.

Playing games, watching T.V., you know,

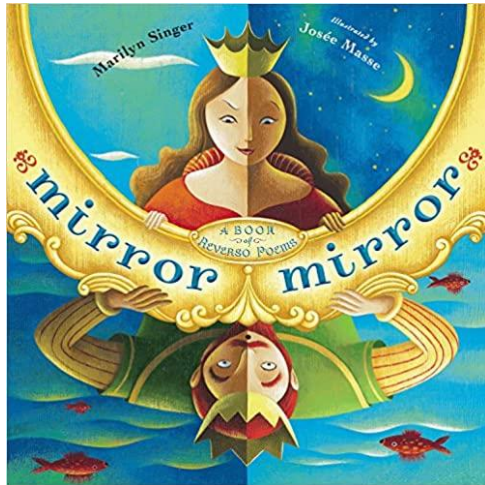
The things we do when you have spare time.

Maybe someday things will settle down and we'll have more time together,

Like when it's just you and me.

*Kristi Nigel, Grade 9*

# Reversos



## The Road

It may be such  
a fairy-tale secret,  
this much  
I know:  
The road leads  
wherever  
you need to go

you need to go  
wherever  
the road leads –  
I know  
this much.  
A fairy-tale secret?  
It may be such.

## in Reverse

Who  
says  
it's true –  
down  
is  
the only view?  
If you believe that,  
this poem  
will challenge  
you.  
Up  
is  
something new.

Something new  
is  
up.  
You  
will challenge  
this poem  
if you believe that  
the only view  
is  
down.  
It's true  
Says  
Who?

A cat  
without  
a chair:  
Incomplete.

Incomplete:  
A chair  
without  
a cat.

# Poetry Inspired by Poetry



## Poetry inspired by Poetry – Margriet Ruurs

When I conduct poetry writing workshops in schools, one of my favorite activities is to invite students to write their own poetry based on well-known, celebrated examples. One such example is the poem “Abandoned Farmhouse” by Ted Kooser, past poet laureate of the United States.

The entire poem can be found on the Poetry Out Loud website of the National Endowment for the Arts and Poetry Foundation:

[www.poetryoutloud.org/poems/poem.html?id+237648](http://www.poetryoutloud.org/poems/poem.html?id+237648).

I use the first verse only. I ask students to close their eyes and picture the scene in their minds as I read it slowly aloud.

*He was a big man, says the size of his shoes  
on a pile of broken dishes by the house:  
a tall man too, says the length of the bed  
in an upstairs room; and a good, God-fearing man,  
says the Bible with a broken back  
on the floor below the window, dusty with sun;  
but not a man for farming, say the fields  
cluttered with boulders and the leaky barn.*

After listening to the verse, I ask students to describe the picture this poem painted in their minds. We discuss it, and I make a point of asking them, “Who or what gave us the information about the person we never met?” It was the shoes that told us about the size of the man, and the Bible that showed us that he read it a lot. How do we know that he read it often? What does a book look like if you read it over and over?

I also point out that the voice of the poem is in the third person and speaks in the past tense: “He was...”

After this discussion, I make a list on the blackboard of the information we were given,

including the “but” at the end with the statement that he was not a good farmer. I write down:

- ❖ He was big (told by his shoes).
- ❖ He was tall (told by the bed).
- ❖ He read a lot (told by a tattered Bible)
- BUT
- ❖ He was not a good farmer (told by the boulders and the leaking barn).

Next, I invite students to make their own lists of three pieces of information about themselves, followed by a “but” listing of something they are not good at or don’t like to do.

Nick (in sixth grade) made a list that included:

- ❖ I like to play video games
- ❖ I play soccer
- ❖ I like pizza.
- BUT
- ❖ I am not good at math.

He then decided on the objects that would convey the information in his poem. Nick’s poem now reads:

*He excelled at playing video games, says the  
unbeatable high score,  
He loved soccer says the scruffy ball;  
He sure liked pizza say the empty boxes on the  
kitchen table,  
But he wasn’t very good at math says the “C”  
on his report card.*

Have fun writing similar poems with your students. And be sure to write and share your own poem about yourself with them!

*This short piece was originally posted on Margriet Ruur’s  
website: Write Away!*

*By Grace M., Grade 4*

[illegible]

# **This is Where You Will Find Me . . .**

Poems from Literacy & the Arts

## **Queso Americano**

*Natalie, grade 4*

This is where you will find me  
In my room,  
With my dog,  
In her bun.  
And my swag flags  
Hang on my walls.  
I feel happy,  
I am in my happy place.  
My posters smile at me,  
And Hazel is as warm as *queso*.

## **Writing a Poem**

*Matt, Grade 4*

This is where you will find me,  
In Tufts University  
Underneath the yellow lights  
On the ceiling of the Library.  
The clock ticking on the wall  
On top of the book shelf,  
Next to the door.  
The pencil feels hard, sitting in a chair  
writing a poem.

## **This is Where You Won't Find Me**

*By Larkin, Grade 2*

This is where you won't find me  
I hate my brother's room  
it always smells like  
barf, he forgets to close his poor fish tank.  
He makes so much noise.  
he always makes a fuss when I come in  
there and that is why  
you will not find me  
In my brother's room.

## **Sea Water**

*By Amelia, Grade 2*

This is where you will find me,  
In the sea,  
Where there is no danger and  
special water.  
I am happy, a happy sea horse.  
I can swim as long as the sea,  
Longer than a skyscraper.  
I am really fun to see.



# List Poems

## *Where I'm From*

I am from clothespins,  
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.  
I am from the dirt under the back porch.  
(Black, glistening,  
it tasted like beets.)  
I am from the forsythia bush  
the Dutch elm  
whose long-gone limbs I remember  
as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,  
from Imogene and Alafair.  
I'm from the know-it-alls  
and the pass-it-ons,  
from Perk up! and Pipe down!  
I'm from He restoreth my soul  
with a cottonball lamb  
and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,  
fried corn and strong coffee.  
From the finger my grandfather lost  
to the auger,  
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box  
spilling old pictures,  
a sift of lost faces  
to drift beneath my dreams.  
I am from those moments--  
snapped before I budded --  
leaf-fall from the family tree.

George Ella Lyon

## Where I'm From (A Guide Inspired by George Ella Lyon)

George Ella Lyon has written that *Where I'm From* began with a list of everyday details, the small, concrete things that can be seen, heard, touched, tasted or smelled. They are the “stuff of life.” This template is intended to help you generate a list of details that captures the most essential details of your own life. Try filling out the template and then play with the details until you find a way to arrange them into a poem that tells others “where you are from.”

I am from:

*Think of details that come to mind when you think of the inside of your home. What objects do you always see at your house? What sounds do you hear? Smells?*

---

---

*Pick another detail that you would like to describe more fully. Visualize it and write it so that a reader can see it in their “mind’s eye.”*

---

---

*What is it like outside your house? Think of an outdoor space anywhere in your neighborhood, where you love to play, and write down a few details about it.*

---

---

*What about food? What kind of food feels “like home” to you?*

---

---

*Think of the phrases you hear most often at your house. Are there things your parents say over and over? How about your siblings? Do they mark important parts of the day?*

---

---

*Think of one thing that reminds you of the family you are part of – and describe it as fully as you can. Try to write whatever comes to you (remember, you can always change it later, if you want).*

---

---

*Now write these details on notecards and play with different ways to arrange them into a poem that pleases you. Keep the details you like, the ones that tell your story best. Get rid of those you don't like. Feel free to expand some with more description or take out description you think says too much. Rearrange it all in the order you like best – and read your poem over.*

## **“Where I’m From” Poems by Children from Medford and Somerville**

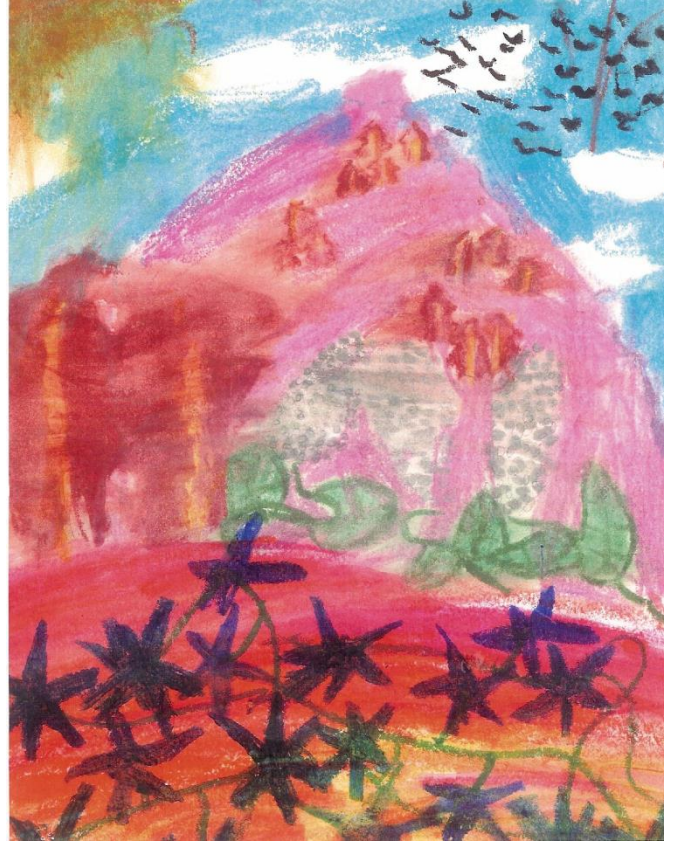
I am from Guatemala, place of grace  
I’m proud to have Latin blood in me,  
I am from a proud race of people.  
I’m from cooking pans all over;  
I’m from a house filled with  
old money and crosses.

I’m from a family that likes soccer and shouting,  
“Kick that rocket!” and “Clean up your room!”  
and “¡Pásame la botella!”  
I’m from a place that cares  
what is happening in the world.

I’m from watching  
yellow and red and orange sunsets.  
I’m from a family that is well respected.  
I’m a Zamora and Gonzalez.  
I’m from giving gifts to show our generosity

I am from a place  
you would think is paradise,  
but I call it Guatemala.  
It is filled with trees  
and it is like you’re sitting  
on Mother Nature’s lap.

*Raul, Grade 5*



I am from piles of cars and trucks  
 I am from roses and mangoes  
 I am from Mexico  
 the home of tacos and burritos  
 I am from movie night  
 I am from "Yaya" and "Flaca"  
 I am from a sweet cat,  
 who can be a little nuts!  
 From my dad cooking yummy things  
 And from my mom buying  
 a lot of math books  
 I am from the Three Kings  
 From sending boxes of snow to Arizona  
 I am from parents who celebrate  
 children's day, all day  
 From a messy, happy kind of home.

*Andrea, Grade 5*

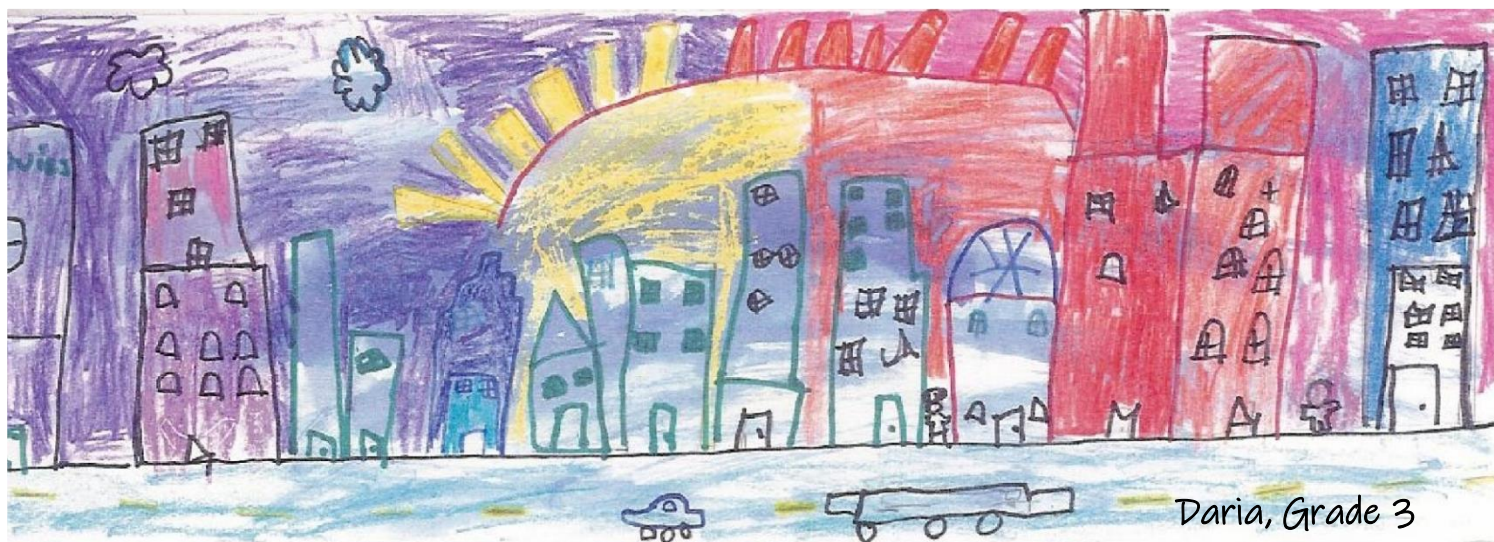
I am from the suburbs of Boston  
 Monday through Friday, and  
 The quietness of Perkins Road  
 every other weekend.

I am from pasta and pancakes  
 I am from books and cats  
 I am from my mom saying,  
 "Go to bed!" "Get up!" and  
 "Brush your teeth!"

I am from the trees,  
 the grass around my house,  
 the pool on Perkins Road.  
 I am from electronics and books.

I am from home-made cookies and dinners  
 made by my grandma.  
 I am from raspberry bushes and blackberry  
 bushes. From peach trees and pear trees.  
 I am from the busy streets  
 and the quiet roads.

*Chase, Grade 5*





I am from the apartment  
close to the middle school with  
the kind people who are willing to help  
I am from the hot summer weather  
rather than the cold winter  
I am from a loving family and a mom  
that tells me to make my bed  
I am from Christmases  
at my friend Alex's house,  
from cheese pizza after the big soccer  
game,  
from playing video games with  
my brother on the weekend  
I am from the river next to the house  
and the geese that live near it.  
I am from the soft fur of kittens,  
the green leaves of trees  
and my friends from school.  
I am from the Warriors series  
and writing, just like this.  
I am from Medford.

*Timmy, Grade 5*

**I am from** the suburbs of Boston  
Monday through Friday, and  
The quietness of Perkins Road  
every other weekend.

I am from pasta and pancakes,  
from books and cats.

I am from my mom saying,  
"Go to bed!" "Get up!" and  
"Brush your teeth."

I am from the trees and  
the grass around my house, and  
the pool on Perkins Road.

I am from electronics and books

I am from home-made cookies and  
dinner made by my grandma.

I am from raspberry bushes and  
blackberry bushes,  
from peach trees and pear trees.

I am from the busy streets  
and the quiet roads.

*Chase, Grade 5*



*Kevin, Grade 3*

## He Shaved His Head

By Rene Ruiz, age 13

from *You Hear Me? Poems and Writings by Teenage Boys*

He shaved his head to release his imagination.

He did it to get a tattoo on his shiny head.

He did it to lose his mortality.

He did it to become a freak.

He did it because he was angry.

He did it to make people angry.

He did it for himself.

She jumped on her brother's bed to get back at him.

She did it to have fun.

She did it to wreck his sheets.

She did it to go crazy.

She did it to get him in trouble.

She did it to get him mad.

She did it to fly real high.

Grace - Grade 5



# Poems and Parodies

*This is just to say  
I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox  
and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast  
forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold  
William Carlos Williams*

This is just to say  
I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox  
and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast  
forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

*William Carlos Williams*

According to Bruce Watson, the webmaster of *The Attic*, a New Jersey doctor came home early in the Great Depression to find a note on the refrigerator.

Dear Bill,  
I've made a couple of sandwiches  
for you. In the ice-box you'll find blueberries,  
a cup of grapefruit, a glass of cold coffee...  
Love, Floss.  
Please switch off the telephone.



Watson writes that “your average doctor would have eaten the sandwiches and switched off the phone. This doctor was different, though. He was also a poet working on a new collection of poetry. Poetry, he insisted, should be “living language.” It should offer a mirror to the world and the experiences of real people. So William Carlos Williams played with his wife’s short note and wrote what became one of his most famous poems: This is just to say...

This poem, with its simple structure and clear message, illustrates Williams's emphasis on crafting poetry from authentic, everyday language. Since he wrote it, many teachers have used it to inspire their students to write their own poems, using a similar structure. The poem became very well known across the U.S. – and eventually writers began posting parodies. Here are a few.

This is just to say  
I have stolen  
The cat  
That was in  
Your garage  
  
And which  
You probably wanted  
To keep  
For yourself

Forgive me  
He was just so cute  
So fluffy  
And so cuddly

*by Annette*

This is just to say  
Oh dear  
I have forgotten  
to get dressed

I was so sleepy  
So tired and  
I have driven  
to school

Why have I forgotten to dress?

Forgive me  
I am so embarrassed  
Sitting in the classroom  
In my underwear  
And so cold

*by Brandin*

This is just to say  
I have spoken  
the words  
that were in  
the letter

and which  
you were probably  
hoping  
to forget

Forgive me  
they were tempting  
so intriguing  
and so heartbreaking.

*Ella*



This is just to say  
I gave away  
the money  
you were saving to  
live on  
for the next ten years  
Forgive me  
The man who  
asked for it was shabby  
And the firm March wind  
on the porch was  
so juicy and cold

*by Kenneth Koch*

This is just to say  
I have taken  
the purple pen  
that was on  
your desk  
and which  
you always used  
for writing.  
Forgive me  
I needed a pen and  
it was sparkly  
so silky and sleek

*Tufts Literacy Corps  
Writing Tutors, 2020*

This is just to say  
I left  
the dishes  
in the sink

I know  
you had  
a midterm

forgive me  
we were out of  
dish soap  
and they were  
so crusty  
and so many.

*Tufts Literacy Corps  
Writing Tutors,  
2021*

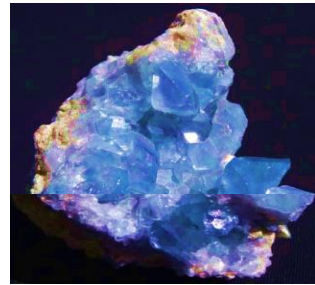
# Integrating Poetry into School Topics: Science

Poets, like scientists, take a close, careful look at their subjects. Writing activities such as “The Apple of Your Poetic Eye” and Georgia Heard’s “Six Room Image Poem” encourage students to observe in detail and thoughtfully record what they see.

Whenever encouraging children to write poetry (or anything else), it helps to provide a model. The following examples model poetry writing as an avenue for exploring crystals.

## Use the topic to teach simile and metaphor...

My crystal glows like  
Moonlight on water.  
It sparkles like sun on a frozen pond,  
Blue, purple and pink  
Facets as slippery as ice, and as  
Enchanting as *abuela’s* opals on Easter.



## ...or invite your tutee to think from different points of view:

### If I were a celestite crystal...

I would wait years and years, hiding inside my geode shell  
Until an enterprising toy company scooped me up  
Put me in a box (along with 11 brothers and sisters) and  
Sold me on Amazon.  
“Break Your Own High Quality Geodes!” my shiny box would read.

I would wait years and years,  
sleeping inside my geode shell,  
Until a child with eyes as bright as my many sides,  
Smashed my gritty armor. Then  
I would fly into the sun,  
Sparkling with secrets revealed and adventures to come.

**I used to think... ...but now I know...**

I used to think rocks were boring lumps of nothing  
that sat in the dirt and made gardening difficult  
but now I know rocks can build cities as strong as a century.

I used to think rocks were boring lumps of nothing  
but now I know rocks that hide secrets inside them...

I used to think rocks were boring lumps of nothing,  
but now I know some rocks hold crystals  
that can call up your guardian angels.

### **A poem of questions**

What will I find inside this geode?  
Will it be as dreary as its outer crust?  
Or does it hold crystals like hidden treasure?  
Will it crumble into dust when the hammer hits it?  
Or break into jagged halves, like a walnut,  
Offering glorious secrets to the sun?

### **A conversation**

Lucy: Hello, Geode. How are you today?  
Geode: I'm fine, Lucy, but  
I've been waiting a long time to meet you.  
Lucy: Where are you from, Geode?  
Where have you been waiting for so long?  
Geode: I was born in northern Arizona, nearly  
6 million years ago.  
Lucy: Six million years  
is a long time to wait  
for someone to find you.

*To Be Continued*

