

# Neighborhood Poetry

## Program Overview

**Grade level:** Third through Fifth

**Focus:** Using architecture as an inspiration for creating poetry

**Sessions:** Three, including one introductory classroom session, one neighborhood walk and outdoor sketching session, and one classroom session with final project.

### Common Core Learning Standards:

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from non-literal language. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy RL.3.4)
- Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy RL.3.5)
- Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting) (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy RL.3.7)
- Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy RF.3.4b)
- With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy W.3.4)
- With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy W.3.5)
- Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy SL.3.3)
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings. (CCSS English Language Arts – Literacy L.3.5)

**Description:** Students explore how buildings in their neighborhood can serve as inspiration for creating poems. In the first session, students explore poems about architecture and their accompanying illustrations and practice visualization. In the second session, students head outside to make observations about an actual building, sketching and writing brief phrases about what they see. In preparation for the final session, the observations are typed up and cut into strips. Students will, in small groups, cooperate to arrange the observations into poems inspired by one building in the neighborhood.

### Goals:

- Students will look UP to notice architecture that they had not seen before.
- Students will see buildings in a new way: Not only as places to live, learn, eat, etc. but as works of art themselves and inspiring of other forms of art.
- Students will work together to create poems made up of their classmates' on-site observations.

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## Lesson 1: Urban Poetry and Visualization

### Goal

For students to start thinking about poems inspired by cities and neighborhoods, and to experience the effectiveness of poetic language in helping with visualization.

### Materials

- Poems (in manila folders or book): *Construction*; *Mural on Second Avenue*; and *Roofscape*; by Lillian Moore
- Plain white paper, 1 per student
- Pencil, 1 per student

### Space

Classroom Meeting Area and Classroom Tables

### Procedure

- 1) Gather in the meeting area. Introduce that we will be thinking about how poets write about buildings and neighborhoods much the same way that an artist might draw or paint a scene on a city street. Ask the students to recall poetic language devices they may have discussed in class (rhyme, personification, repetition, alliteration, metaphor, simile, stanza, imagery, etc.) and introduce that today we will look at a few poems and illustrations by Lillian Moore and thinking about how to create an image through language.
- 2) Have the students look closely at the illustration for *Construction* (cover the accompanying poem with sticky pads) for clues as to what is happening in the picture. The students may notice the city setting, the bridge in the background, the bulldozer and crane, the steel frame of an unfinished building, and a construction worker on the ground. When everyone has a sense of what is happening in the illustration (a skyscraper is being built), uncover the poem and read aloud, then discuss the poetic language used (the machinery is *personified* as a mouth chewing and arm lifting, the first two *stanzas* end with a *rhyme* in the last line, giant vs. tiny, etc.)

If there is time, introduce the second illustration for the poem *Mural on Second Avenue*. The students may first think that the child in the photo is walking through a zoo or jungle looking at giraffes, zebras, and unicorns, but some students will notice the sidewalk and the outlines of bricks apparent in the background, showing that this is a mural painted on a wall. Uncover the poem, read aloud and ask what language stands out as poetic (“dreaming to the slap of a wet brush”, “unwindowed wall”, “a sky of eye-blinking blue”). *Note:* if the students are getting restless or you are short for time, jump ahead to *Roofscape* instead of spending too much time on *Mural*.

- 3) Send students back to their seats for the last poem (*Roofscape*), which you will read three times and the students will illustrate. Before reading, mention that the word “roofscape” is made up, but ask what they think the word might mean (compare to a “landscape” or a “streetscape” if those terms are more familiar to the students). Give the students fifteen minutes to illustrate the poem as they envision it.
- 4) If time, collect drawings and gather everyone back in the meeting area. Flip through the drawings so everyone can see their classmates’ work. Next class, we will go outside to observe a section of the neighborhood. We will do a little more drawing, but will focus on writing poetic words and phrases about what we see.

### Evaluation

- How did the students respond to the poem through their illustrations? Did their drawings reflect the language used?
- Were the students able to identify poetic language devices in the poems we read aloud together?

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## Lesson 2: Outdoor Observation

### Goal

For students to observe a building firsthand. Using their experience with poetic language from the first session, students will write concise, expressive observations which will later be compiled into a class poem. Their sketches will serve to illustrate the poem.

### Materials

- Neighborhood Observation Worksheets
- Pencils, 1 per student
- Clipboards, 1 per student

### Space

Classroom Meeting Area and Neighborhood Blocks

### Procedure

- 1) Before leaving for the neighborhood walk, gather together for a quick meeting. Review the Neighborhood Observation Worksheet, explaining that there are two sections – one for a sketch and one for recording observations. Again, in the observations section, students should write short observations about what they see, hear, smell, etc., using poetic language.
- 2) Leave the school and walk to the pre-chosen block, which should be within a few blocks of the school.
- 3) For their sketches, ask students to focus on the details, to include the features that make this particular area stand out. Stay in one spot for approximately 20 minutes.
- 4) Return to the classroom. If time allows, have students share some of their observations. Explain that next time we will be using the observations from today to make arranged poems.

### Evaluation

- Were the students' observations concise and expressive?
- Were their sketches detailed and clear?

### Next Steps

Before the next session, LW! educator will type up students' observations onto strips of paper. In the third session, groups of students will compile these into short poems.

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## Lesson 3: Class Arranged Poem

### Goal

For small groups of students and later the class as a whole to work together in order to create an arranged poem. The components of the poem are students' observations from the outdoor session.

### Materials

- Strips of typed building observations
- Tape or Glue
- Paper, 1 per small group
- White Board

### Space

Classroom Meeting Area and Classroom Tables

### Procedure

- 1) Gather in the meeting area. Remind students of the activity from the first session, when they used their tables' index cards to create a poem inspired by a building. Today, we're going to do something very similar. I typed up everyone's observations from when we went outside and sketched and am going to distribute them throughout the different tables. With your table, arrange your stack of lines to create a stanza. Later we're going to put all the stanzas together to create our class poem.
- 2) Review rules of working together as a group (compromise, respect, etc.)
- 3) Send students back to their seats to get started. When they think they have their stanza set, ask a teacher to look it over before they tape it together. Once they get approval, they can write out the stanza with marker on a large piece of paper.
- 4) As groups finish up, arrange the stanzas together on the white board.
- 5) Gather back in the meeting area and read the combined poem aloud.

### Evaluation

- How did the students work together to create stanzas?
- Did they arrange their strips creatively, with a sense of rhythm, repetition, etc.?

### Next Steps

The poem could be published along with the students' illustrations in a class book.