

6 Week Lesson Plan for Grades 4-6

Creative Writing Workshop—Poetry--Abecedarian Form

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In conjunction with the Inlandia Institute

Dear Teachers,

The following lesson plan can be used as an afterschool workshop or club activity, or if your district allows time in your day, you can be modify it to be used during class time. I know we are all tied to the standards, and pressed for time, so I've included the National Standards for you. Enjoy ☺

National Language Arts Standards Covered in this lesson plan:

NL-ENG.K-12.5 Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

NL-ENG.K-12.6 Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NL-ENG.K-12.8 Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NL-ENG.K-12.9 Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

NL-ENG.K-12.11 Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

NL-ENG. K-12.12 Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Materials: chart paper, bold tip markers, fine tip markers for each student, spiral notebook (college rule) for each student, teacher created line guide (read day 5 for instructions), high quality parchment (at least two per student, but I allow 5 per--for mess ups), pencil and eraser for each student, use of computers or word processors, flash drive to store all student work.

*This 6 week program is intended to meet twice a week for one hour.

Day 1: Begin every session by reading an Abecedarian poem (many can be found online—choose your favorites). Introduce students to the Abecedarian form by reading history of the form. A concise summary can be read from Poets.org <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5767> . Read several poems from link and/or Dr. Seuss poems (ABC book, and others). Inform students that by the end of the six weeks they will have written and perfected at least two Abecedarian poems. Instruct

students on several types of form using simple acrostic format (first with only one word on each line). Then move onto stanza format with Iambic Pentameter (for challenge students).

Provide each student with a spiral notebook of lined paper. Fold the first page into thirds (do not rip it out just fold in from the edge toward the spine) creating three columns on each page. Continue folding the following pages until you have a column for each letter of the alphabet. Label each column (at the top) with its own letter (in order). These letter columns will be used by the students to create lists of words that begin with the letters of the alphabet. While the students are folding, the teacher should create a class list using chart paper as students brainstorm. Students can either come up to add their word to the list or shout out and teacher can write—which ever method you use depends on your style. I like the students to hold the pen as much as possible, but this does take more time. This list can be added to throughout the 6 week period. Students will then have an easily accessible resource when writing their poems. Of course, a dictionary should also be available so that students can confirm the meaning of words they are using—especially since choosing the right word to convey your message is very important. * At first, some students will only copy words that are written on the class list. Tell each student that you would like them to keep their list with them as they work throughout their day/night and simply add words as they come up naturally. Don't worry about staying in order; but do worry about writing the new words in the correct column. Challenge them to come to the next meeting with at least one new word to add to the class list for each letter of the alphabet (assign it as homework if you like). Of course, you can suggest using the dictionary if they get stuck, but it's more fun when words come up in natural conversation or because they saw something interesting—more of an ah-ha moment.

Always save the last few minutes of class/meeting to read a favorite poem. The form doesn't really matter just excite the students' love of poetry ☺

Day 2: Start by reciting or reading an Abecedarian poem of your choice. Ask students to add new words to the alphabet list. Start discussion about the theme of your poems. Ours are going to be regional, so we will have a discussion about favorite places and things to do in the Inland Empire. We will also discuss important people in our region's history and how they helped shape what Riverside (Inland Empire) is best known for. With the help of student brainstorming, write a class poem as a guided practice. Start by creating a template (students should copy this template into their spiral notebooks on the next page after their word list). Down the left margin of your page (I like to use chart paper) write a letter of the alphabet on each line (in order of course). Tell the students to use their school name as the title. Brainstorm words that help create an image or feeling about their school and fill in the words next to the letter it starts with. It is best to accept all suggestions and just write them on the appropriate line. Then, when you think you have exhausted all the word options have students choose a word from each line to be the "star" word for the poem. Rewrite the poem on your chart paper using the new "star words" for each letter of the alphabet. Read the poem aloud with the students. Celebrate your new school poem. Ask if you can have a student read the new poem over the intercom during weekly announcements or post it on your school's web page. Posting your new poetry in the cafeteria or library is also a fun way to share your work with the rest of the school. The students should also copy this poem down in their spiral so they can share it with family and friends. If you still have time, have the students create their own poem using the "left-over" words from your school poem list. Have students share new poems. If you have run out of time, offer this exercise as a homework challenge. Then share them at the opening of the next class/meeting.

Always close with a reading of a favorite poem (eventually students will want to bring in and read their own favorites at the closing—offer this as a little challenge and you'll be surprised at how many students will start reading poetry).

Day 3: Open with Abecedarian poem to get their brains in gear. Add any new words to class list. Have a volunteer read the school poem from last meeting. Ask if anyone was able to create a new school poem and have the students read them (you might want to limit the time—as many poems as we can read in 10 minutes).

Remind students of the guided lesson from the previous day, and of your theme (this is the challenging part). Have the students spend a few minutes thinking about their favorite place(s), people, activities, sounds, tastes, colors, feelings, etc., that represent your theme. Students should create another template (a-z on left margin, one line for each letter), and spend the rest of the period filling in the letters with words. Then just like in the guided lesson, they should “star” the words that they like best and write those on a new sheet to create the poem. If students follow this process of writing several words on each line, then choosing the best, they will be less likely to get stuck on one word. Remind them to use the dictionary or class list if they get stuck. Students work independently for the rest of the period while you provide support as needed.

Remember: save the last few minutes for a favorite poem to close.

Day 4: Open with Abecedarian poem. Add new words to class list. Have a few students share what they’ve written so far. Model positive criticism, with helpful and specific suggestions, so that other students can learn to critique peer work. Students continue to work on their poems. Students should reread their poems and ask themselves “what image or feeling comes to mind when I read this poem?” Then search for more descriptive words to replace “weak” words. Search for words that help the reader create an image in their mind or words that evoke a certain feeling. Have students break up into triads (if odd number), or pairs to listen to and help critique peer work. Remind them to provide POSITIVE and HELPFUL criticism. Provide students with a few helpful phrases like: When I read your poem I see _____. Is that the image you were going for? Or When I read your poem I feel _____. Is that the feeling you were trying to evoke? If the writer answers “no” to these prompts the peer could ask, “What image did you want me to see? Or feeling were you hoping I’d feel? Let’s try to find some words that more strongly evoke that feeling or image. There are a million positive things peers could say to help one another, but remember it only takes one “oh, that’s dumb!” comment to completely undo someone’s new found love of poetry (or anything else)—so make it clear that you will not tolerate negative comments in your class (or the student will be asked to leave the workshop).

As always, close with a favorite poem (yours or students’) 😊

Day 5: Open with Abecedarian poem. Add new words to the class list. When students have peer edited/critiqued their poems and made improvements, they should sign up for a teacher/student writing conference to get final clearance/approval for publishing. All of the students will not be done at the same time, so a sign-up sheet is the best method. This allows the teacher to have conferences while others continue working independently or with a partner. When students are ready for publishing, give them nice parchment and a fine tip black marker. Have the student tape down the line guide (a lined sheet of paper that you have traced over the lines with black marker so you can see the lines when another paper is placed over it). Over the line guide tape the parchment. The student should use a pencil to lightly write the poem. Then trace over the pencil with fine tip black marker and gently erase the pencil when finished.

If students have published their first poem, challenge them to write another using the same form but with a theme of their choice.

Close with a favorite poem.

Day 6: Open with Abecedarian poem. Add new words to the class list. Introduce the new challenge: An Abecedarian poem using the iambic Pentameter format (10 syllables per line with 5 pairs of alternating unstressed and stressed syllables). This is a method used most famously by Shakespeare. The rhythm sounds like: ba-**Bum**/ba-**Bum**/ba-**Bum**/ba-**Bum**/ba-**Bum**. For more examples and information on iambic Pentameter go to Poets.org again—it's a very helpful site.

As a guided practice, work interactively with students to transform the school poem that you already have into the new format. You may have to change some of the words, or add in articles or conjunctions to make it flow with the pattern. Some students will find this lesson a welcome challenge while others will be frustrated with it. So find some Abecedarian poems that follow iambic Pentameter pattern and have them tap out the beat while you read. Allow the frustrated students to have the poem you have found at their desk and/or to work with a partner. When the guided poem has been completed have all students read it aloud and tap out the rhythm. Then challenge students to either transform their own finished poem into one using iambic Pentameter, or to create a completely new Abecedarian poem using the learned pattern.

Close by reading a favorite poem.

Day 7: Open by reading an Abecedarian poem. Add any new words to the class list. Allow a few volunteers to share what they have written thus far. Give students most of the hour to work independently on their new poems as you provide support when needed. If they finish quickly (which is not likely) have them pair up to peer edit their work.

Close by reading a favorite poem.

Day 8: Open by reading an Abecedarian poem. Add any new words to the class list. Allow a few volunteers to share what they have written thus far. Students should be finishing up their first drafts and finding a partner to peer edit with. You may have a few quick finishers to have a writing conference with. So start a new conference sign-up sheet and start conferences.

Close by reading a favorite poem.

Day 9: Open by reading an Abecedarian poem. Add any new words to the class list. Allow a few volunteers to share what they have written thus far. Continue conferencing and allowing students to publish on parchment.

Close by reading a favorite poem.

Day 10: Open by reading an Abecedarian poem. Add any new words to the class list. All students that are finished writing poems should choose two to type using a computer or word processor. Their files should be saved as a Word Document so that they can be given a printer for publishing. We will be creating a chapbook of student work from the six week workshop. If you choose not to publish a chapbook, you should have students choose two hand written poems each to be bound together in any fashion you like.

Close by reading **student** poems.

Day 11: Open by reading an Abecedarian poem. Add any new words to the class list. Continue work on publishing. If finished, have each student recite his/her own poems to the class. Applaud their efforts and success.

Close by reading **student** poems.

Day 12: Open by reading an Abecedarian poem. Add any new words to the class list. Encourage students to finish any last minute typing/writing. Collect all work to be submitted. Merge all files into one folder and copy onto flash drive to give to printer. If you are not typing, use this day to take your troupe to read at the library and invite anyone who may be interested to listen (Principal, librarian, other classes, parents, and friends). Celebrate your love of poetry!

Close with a Thank You and applaud your students' efforts and success!

Options for sharing

Set up a lunch time poetry circle wherein students can read their poetry to interested listeners

Join a literary blog to submit student work like the Inlandia Literary Page

Encourage students to enter poetry contests. You can find links from the Poets.org page

You can also submit student work to the Poets.org regional student works (try the contact us tab first and ask how to submit work from your region)

Hold a poetry read-a-thon