

Reading & Writing Poetry

Working with poetry can be challenging for both student and tutors, but it is great for improving writing techniques, practicing grammar, and learning how to analyze a text. **Here are some tips to get the ball rolling when reading or writing poetry.**

Tip #1:

Make the student feel comfortable using their own unique voice.

Whether they are reading or writing a poem, students can rely on the power of their own voices to express their ideas or interpret another writer's thoughts. When a student uses their own voice, they are not only coming up with original ideas, but also showing that they feel comfortable enough to share their true thoughts and feelings with an audience. To encourage students to use their voices, you could ask them to relate a poem to their life. How would they incorporate the imagery and sounds of their own world? What emotions are they feeling? What's the message they want to share? Here are some more tips on how to get student writing and using their voice:

Write Collaboratively

Brainstorm themes related to students' identities and interests, then freewrite together for a few minutes.

Celebrate Students' Work

Always be enthusiastic about students' ideas, and always affirm their efforts. Pick a specific line or phrase that really speaks to you.

Ask:

"What do you like to do? What are you passionate about?"

"What do you see every day? (Focus on details like colors, sounds, etc.)"

"How are you feeling? How would you describe that emotion?"

Tip #2:

Encourage new and different interpretations.

One of the first and biggest misconceptions about poetry is that it is written only to be analyzed. Poetry, just like all other forms of literature, can be created for many different reasons, including simply to be enjoyed. Here are some strategies and questions to help students form their own readings and draw their own conclusions about poetry.

Do:

Have students explain **why** they think poetry is amazing, or powerful, or boring, or hard.

Encourage students to find textual evidence to support their interpretation.

Paraphrase what the poem is saying.

Have students identify characteristics of the poems they like to read.

Ask:

"How do you feel about poetry?"

"What do you see, or read, that makes you say that?"

"Do you see any patterns in the poem's structure?"

"What could the title mean? Does it relate to the poem's message?"

Tip #3:

Ask good questions and use shared vocabulary to talk about poetry.

Alliteration: The repetition of initial stressed consonant sounds in a series of words within a phrase or verse line ("Pizza place").

Hyperbole: Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.

Simile v. Metaphor: A simile is a comparison using the words "like" or "as"; a metaphor is a comparison without using the words "like" or "as."

Onomatopoeia: A figure of speech that occurs when the sound of a word imitates the sound of an action (for example, "choo-choo," "hiss," or "buzz").

Personification: The attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something nonhuman.

Tone: The poet's attitude toward the speaker, reader, and subject matter.

First Draft of "I'll Persevere"

By Isabel Costa-Smith

When I get to be a fashion designer,

I'll knock you off your feet. → *How? Add imagery.*

Trying hard to save my dream.

If you don't believe me, come and see.

When I'm older, → *How much older?*

I'll be the biggest brand → *How big?*

You can be sure of that.

I have no fear, so I'll persevere.

At the end of the day, you'll → *What kind of clothes?*

Be proud to say you wore my clothes

Flowing dresses, shimmering,

I'll prove all the haters wrong. → *What will you say to them?*

Red carpet interviews on my to-do list

Teens screaming my name,

Taking my pic → *What are the sights and sounds?*

I have no fear, so I'll persevere.

Excerpt from "I'll Persevere"

By Isabel Costa-Smith

When I get to be a fashion designer,

I will be the wind that knocks

You off your feet. Blowing hard

To save my dream.

If you don't believe me, come and see.

I have no fear, so I'll persevere.

In twenty years, I'll be as powerful as the sun

I'll be the brand on your back, the next big thing.

You can be sure of that!

I have no fear, so I'll persevere.

At the end of the day, you'll

Be proud to say you wore my flawless clothes all day!

Flowing dresses, shimmering like stars.

When I prove the haters wrong, the first thing I'll say is, "Boom Roasted!"

In your face

Red carpet, interviews will all be on my to-do list

The teens screaming my name,

"Click, Click" peck the cameras when they take my pic

I have no fear, so I'll persevere.

Hyperbole

Rhyme

Repetition

Simile

Alliteration

Tone

Onomatopoeia

Personification