

## LESSON 2: CONCRETE vs. ABSTRACT

### MATERIALS

- Student notebooks
- Teacher’s copy of “Taking to the Woods” by Henry Taylor (available at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=35971>)
- Teacher’s copy of “Dewdrops” by Myra Viola Wilds
- [Grouping Plan for Lesson 2](#) (Results from Formative Assessment 1, previous lesson)
- Copies of [Concrete vs. Abstract Activity Handout \(Version 1, Version 2, Version 3\)](#)
- Teacher’s copy of “The Red Wheelbarrow” by William Carlos Williams (available at: <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/wcw-red-wheel.html>).



**BIG IDEA**

**Poets use concrete language and sensory detail to communicate abstract ideas, emotions, and truths.**

**Poetry helps readers see the extraordinary in the ordinary.**

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will build a vocabulary list
- Students will identify and use various parts of speech (concrete and abstract nouns; adjectives)
- Students will develop their skills as becoming knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a literary community



**LANGUAGE**

### **Important Vocabulary:**

- Abstract and concrete nouns
- Imagery

### SEQUENCE

#### **Poetry for Appreciation...**



**CLASS**

Invite students to find a comfortable place for listening (this could be at their desks or lying or sitting on the carpet with their eyes closed). Remind students that one very important purpose of reading is for personal enjoyment. Their job during this time is to listen to and enjoy the way the poem sounds, and they might also listen for some of the imagery and details used by the poet.



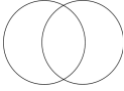
Read “Taking to the Woods” by Henry Taylor aloud.

### TEACHER NOTES

You may wonder, *aren't these poems too difficult for my students to understand?*

The goal of ‘Poetry for Appreciation’ is simply to expose students to the sounds and rhythms of good poetry, which many students might not have encountered before.

**The poems selected are deliberately above the**

<p>After the reading, have students draw the image or scene that stuck out to them, and caption it. Set up a student gallery walk so students can view each other’s images. A gallery walk can be as simple as taping pictures to the walls and asking students to rotate around the room. You can also call this “class art museum” and prep students by showing them images of art galleries or museums. See if students can recall any of the specific words used in the poem.</p> <p>As you finish reading the “poetry for appreciation” poem each day, you might invite a student to come forward and pin or tape a copy of the poem to a class poetry wall or board, so that students can see the collection building over time and also look at these more closely if they wish. Some students might have favorite poems of their own that they wish to bring in and add to the poetry wall.</p>	<p><b>comprehension and independent reading level of most elementary school students.</b> This allows students to concentrate on how the poems sound rather than analyzing every aspect of their meanings, as they will do with other poems used in the lesson activities. The poems have also been carefully selected because they each contain a lot of sensory detail and are, therefore, consistent with the imagist movement which forms the basis for the big ideas about poetry that are explored throughout this unit.</p> <p>These poems have also been selected to highlight a connection with a variety of rural contexts.</p>
<p><b>Parts of speech: Abstract and Concrete Nouns</b></p> <p>In this independent activity using the Concrete vs. Abstract Activity Handout (3 versions), students will work with word lists appropriate to their readiness levels as they practice identifying the distinction between concrete and abstract nouns. Some of the nouns students work with during this activity will be incorporated into a subsequent poetry-writing activity.</p> <div data-bbox="228 1234 427 1444">  <p><b>INDEPENDENT</b></p> </div> <div data-bbox="228 1562 427 1772">  <p><b>LANGUAGE</b></p> </div> <p><b>Introducing the task:</b> Ask students to think back to the previous day’s lesson. Remind them that they were introduced to some new vocabulary words and see if any students can recall the words (imagery, abstract, concrete). Write the terms on the board and redefine these with input from students. Remind students about the importance of distinguishing between concrete and abstract language to</p>	<div data-bbox="1027 1115 1192 1276"> <p>2E</p>  </div> <p>Some twice-exceptional students have difficulty transferring words and ideas they read (from text, blackboard, etc.) to words and ideas they write down. They might also struggle with tasks requiring manual dexterity such as using scissors. You can allow these students to simply distinguish abstract and concrete nouns by highlighting or underlining each type of noun in a different color. Their poem</p>

expert poets.

**Review activity:** Give each student a piece of paper, fold it, and ask them to draw or write a concrete noun on one side and an abstract noun or image on the other side. Explain that for the next task, students will be working on different activities, but that they will all be working on recognizing the difference between concrete and abstract nouns to prepare them to write some of their own poems later in the lesson.

For this activity, everyone will work together as a class to practice identifying concrete and abstract nouns in the poem “Dewdrops” by Myra Viola Wilds. Project the poem so that students can follow along as you read the poem aloud. Ask students if there are any words they don’t understand; prompt them to use context clues to determine their meaning. Then, create a t-chart on the board for abstract and concrete nouns. Have students volunteer words that are abstract and words that are concrete. After each word, pause to explain why that word is classified the way it is (i.e., “Can we touch love?”). This will prepare students for the following group activity.



**Assigning the task:** Students will be assigned one of three versions of the task, based on their readiness as assessed through Formative Assessment 1:

Students in Group A will each be provided with an excerpt from Elizabeth Bishop’s poem “The Fish.” Their job will be to find as many concrete nouns and as many abstract nouns as they can in the excerpt. They should mark each kind of noun to keep track (e.g., by using two different colored pencils to underline or colored highlighters). Then, they should write two lists of the nouns they identified, one for each category of noun in their own notebooks. Students will reflect on which type of noun was used most in the excerpt, and what that might tell us about the poet. If they come across any words they do not know, they should look up the definitions.

Students in Group B will be provided with a set of vocabulary cards made by cutting out the words provided (to save time, these can be prepared ahead of time and handed to the students in baggies). In their notebooks, students will make a T-chart with headings labeled “CONCRETE” and “ABSTRACT.” Students will sort the words from their list

copy or word list can be kept in their poetry folders.



Ideally, students will be working with some

words that are familiar to them, and with vocabulary words they have been working with elsewhere and which you wish them to practice. For this reason, if you can adjust one or more of the word lists to include current vocabulary.

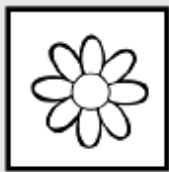
Review adjectives prior to this activity, giving examples such as the *green* string, the *huge* alligator, and the *quiet* child. As a class, discuss how the adjective describes the noun, and be sure to note that this lesson’s activity focuses on nouns, not the adjectives attached to the nouns.



The answer about whether a noun is concrete or abstract is not always clear, and students may have different opinions about certain words—and that is OK! Talking over the reasons for and against placing words into a given category allows for higher-level thinking and “low-stakes” debate practice.

<p>into the two columns, then glue them into their notebooks. If they come across any words they do not know, they should look up the definitions. Students should be encouraged to add to their lists when they have finished sorting the given words.</p> <p>Students in Group C will be given the same set of vocabulary cards provided to Group B, but in this case, students are shown a T-chart that includes a definition for each term (concrete and abstract) and several examples to help them sort their words. In their notebooks, students will make a T-chart with headings labeled “CONCRETE” and “ABSTRACT.” Again, students will sort the words from their list into the two columns, then glue them into their notebooks. If they come across any words they do not know, they should look up the definitions. Students should be encouraged to add to their lists when they have finished sorting the given words.</p>	<p>To make this activity more engaging, the students could do a speed sort with partner, or play memory before gluing.</p> <p>As students finish, they can compare notes with a peer who has also completed the same task. During sorts – early finishers can do a “Word Hunt” (look for extra concrete/abstract words in poetry books or online using sites like poets.org). At the end of the lesson, collect students’ notebooks so that you can address any ongoing misunderstandings before the next lesson.</p>
<div data-bbox="235 1045 418 1249" data-label="Image"> <p><b>CLASS</b></p> </div> <p><b>“The Red Wheelbarrow” by William Carlos Williams</b></p> <p>Gather students together somewhere where they can all see the pocket chart or board.</p> <p>Before showing students “The Red Wheelbarrow,” take a quick poll (by show of hands), asking: (1) “Does a poem have to rhyme?” and (2) “Could a poem be only one sentence long?”</p> <p>Inform students that the poem you are going to share is quite famous and was written in 1923 by a well-known poet from New York. Before you read the poem, invite students to close their eyes and try to create a picture in their minds of the scene the poem describes.</p> <p>Go ahead and read the poem, then give students a chance to share their initial impressions. Use the following questions to guide a discussion about the poem:</p>	<p>Prior to this lesson, write out this very short poem on sentence strips and place in a pocket chart, which is a storage system with plastic pockets that teachers can use to display materials. Alternatively, you may write the poem out on the blackboard or whiteboard.</p> <p>The introduction of “The Red Wheelbarrow” in this lesson is designed as a ‘teaser’ to get students thinking about the poem and to share their initial thoughts. Let students know that they will be seeing this poem again in the next lesson.</p>

- Did you form a clear, vivid picture in your mind as you listened to the poem? (Some students might like to describe in more detail what they visualized.)
- How did the poet help his readers create a clear, vivid picture?
- What questions are you left with after hearing this poem? (Why does so much depend...? Why did he choose something so ordinary to write about?)
- Tell students that “New York” means more than “New York City.” In fact, much of the state is rural. Williams is writing about his rural place, and in that place he uses a wheelbarrow. Even if rural places look different, they do have some things in common.



**DETAILS**

What do you notice about the punctuation in this poem? Why do you think the poet arranged the words in this way? Point out that this poem has stanzas, and indicate how each stanza is made up of lines. (You might rearrange the words in the pocket chart or write them out on the board so

that they form a conventional sentence and ask students to reflect on which they like better.) In this poem, the structure helps to create a sense of suspense or a feeling that the poet is walking you through the scene.

After the discussion, give students an opportunity to revisit their initial impressions about poetry by asking again (by show of hands): (1) Does a poem have to rhyme? (2) Could a poem be only one sentence long?

This closure activity will help students realize that poets use many forms and that poems can come in different lengths with and without rhyming. Ask students to write a sentence about an object they are familiar with upon which “so much depends.” Many rural students have experience with wheelbarrows, for example...why does so much depend on their own wheelbarrows?

In this discussion, focus students’ attention on the imagery of the poem, created through sensory detail and concrete language. In the next lesson, students will revisit this poem and analyze it more closely by using background information and by using the form of the poem to plan their own poems.