

Synthesizing Poetry

About this Lesson

Synthesis involves taking parts from something that already exists and putting these parts together to create a new whole. This activity can clarify that concept for students and can be modified to focus on other concepts such as tone or figurative language.

Passages for LTF[®] lessons are selected to challenge students while lessons and activities make texts accessible. Guided practice with challenging texts allows students to gain the proficiency necessary to read independently at or above grade level.

This lesson is included in Module 14: Multiple Genres.

Objectives

Students will

- read and summarize four poems about friendship.
- use words and phrases from the original poems to create a new poem.
- compare the new poems to the originals.

Level

Grades Six through Ten

Connection to Common Core Standards for English Language Arts

LTF Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the CCSS Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult their own grade-level-specific Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson

Code	Standard	Level of Thinking	Depth of Knowledge
R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it. Cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	Understand	III
R.2	Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	Analyze	III
R.4	Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	Analyze	III
R.5	Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.	Analyze	III

R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	Evaluate	III
R.9	Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	Analyze	III
L.3	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.	Understand	II
W.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.	Create	IV
W.8	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.	Evaluate	III
SL.1	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	Understand	II
SL.2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	Evaluate	III
SL.4	Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Apply	III

Implicitly addressed in this lesson

Code	Standard	Level of Thinking	Depth of Knowledge
R.10	Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	Understand	II
L.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	Understand	I
L.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	Understand	I
L.5	Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.	Understand	II
W.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Create	III
W.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach	Evaluate	III

W.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.	Apply	III
SL.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.	Understand	II

LTF Skill Focus

The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade 6 and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for each individual lesson identifies the skills actually addressed in that lesson.

Levels of Thinking					
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Close Reading		Grammar		Composition	
<i>written, spoken, and visual texts</i>		<i>purposeful use of language for effect</i>		<i>written, spoken, and visual products</i>	
Reading Strategies Determining Author’s Purpose Determining Main Idea Generalization Inference Paraphrase Literary Elements Theme Literary Forms Verse				Types (modes) Expressive Imaginative Personal The Process of Composition Prewriting determination of purpose generation of ideas organization of ideas Style/Voice Experimentation with Original Forms and Structures	

Connections to AP*

Students who sit for the AP English Literature Exam are often asked to compare literary elements such as theme or tone in two different poems. Students who sit for the AP English Language Exam must synthesize ideas from multiple texts to create a persuasive essay. This lesson serves as an introduction to both skills.

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Materials and Resources

- copies of Student Activity
- sentence strips with words or phrases from the original poems

Assessments

The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:

- guided questions
- synthesis of words and phrases into a new poem

Teaching Suggestions

This lesson includes four poems on friendship, but teachers could substitute other groups of poems with similar themes for this activity. Students should read each poem and determine the theme of the poem (what the poem says about friendship). Teachers may want to complete this part of the lesson as a whole class, or students might complete this activity in small groups and then share their responses with the class as a whole.

The second part of the lesson should be completed in small groups. Teachers should give each group a set of prewritten sentence strips with words or phrases taken from each poem. Students should then arrange these sentence strips to create an original poem. Teachers should set some parameters as to how much of each poem students may/must include in their originals. Teachers may also want to provide a few blank sentence strips for students to add words or phrases that will connect ideas seamlessly.

The next step is for students to write their poems on chart paper or butcher paper (if available) and post the new poems on the classroom wall to create a gallery. Students can then have a gallery walk, using post-it notes to summarize what each new poem says about friendship and posting these notes on the poems. Teachers should then share a few of the summaries with the whole class, discussing how the created poems are similar to or different from the originals.

Teachers may use the following steps to modify this lesson to teach tone:

Have students read each poem, underlining diction that reveals tone.

Have students make an assertion about the tone of each poem.

Either give students pre-selected words or phrases from the poems or have students select their own words or phrases from the poems.

Ask students to cross out or delete the words they underlined when analyzing the tone of the poems and to replace those words with connotative diction that reveals a different tone.

Using words and phrases from the existing poems as well as some of the words and phrases they used to replace the original words, students should create a new poem with a different tone.

Answers

Answers for this lesson are subjective and will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses.

Synthesizing Poetry

To **synthesize** means to take parts of an existing text and to put those parts together to make something new. In the following activity, you will use parts of existing poems to create a new poem.

Directions:

1. Read each poem.
2. Answer the questions below each poem.
3. With your group, using the word/phrase strips provided, create a poem of no fewer than ten lines, using existing words and phrases from the original poems. You may add a few words to the existing words and phrases or even a line or two of your own in order to create a new poem about friends/friendship.
4. Write your new poem on paper.
5. Answer the following question about your group's new poem:

What does the poem have to say about the topic of friends or friendship?

My poem suggests that friendship

6. Post your new poem on one of the walls of the classroom.
7. Answer question #5 (above) about all of the other groups' poems.
8. Discuss with the whole class:
 - a. How are the new poems similar to or different from the originals?
 - b. Which poem (new or original) is your favorite? Why?

Be a Friend

Be a friend. You don't need money;
Just a disposition sunny;
Just the wish to help another
Get along some way or other;
Just a kindly hand extended
Out to one who's unbefriended;
Just the will to give or lend,
This will make you someone's friend.

Be a friend. You don't need glory.
Friendship is a simple story.
Pass by trifling errors blindly,
Gaze on honest effort kindly,
Cheer the youth who's bravely trying,
Pity him who's sadly sighing;
Just a little labor spend
On the duties of a friend.

Be a friend. The pay is bigger
(Though not written by a figure)
Than is earned by people clever
In what's merely self-endeavor.
You'll have friends instead of neighbors
For the profits of your labors;
You'll be richer in the end
Than a prince, if you're a friend.

—Edgar Guest

1. ***What is the topic of the poem?***
2. ***What does the poem have to say about this topic?***

We Have Been Friends Together

We have been friends together,
In sunshine and in shade;
Since first beneath the chestnut-trees
In infancy we played.
But coldness dwells within thy heart,
A cloud is on thy brow;
We have been friends together—
Shall a light word part us now?

We have been gay together;
We have laugh'd at little jests;
For the fount of hope was gushing
Warm and joyous in our breasts.
But laughter now hath fled thy lip,
And sullen glooms thy brow;
We have been gay together—
Shall a light word part us now?

We have been sad together,
We have wept, with bitter tears,
O'er the grass-grown graves, where slumber'd
The hopes of early years.
The voices which are silent there
Would bid thee clear thy brow;
We have been sad together—
Oh! what shall part us now?

—Caroline Norton

1. ***What is the topic of the poem?***
2. ***What does the poem have to say about this topic?***

"Be A Friend" by Edgar Guest from *A Heap O' Livin.* 1916.

"We Have Been Friends Together" by Caroline Norton in *A Victorian Anthology, 1837–1895; Vol. 2* by Edmund Clarence Stedman. 1895.

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To a Friend

I ask but one thing of you, only one,
That always you will be my dream of you;
That never shall I wake to find untrue
All this I have believed and rested on,
Forever vanished, like a vision gone
Out into the night. Alas, how few
There are who strike in us a chord we knew
Existed, but so seldom heard its tone
We tremble at the half-forgotten sound.
The world is full of rude awakenings
And heaven-born castles shattered to the ground,
Yet still our human longing vainly clings
To a belief in beauty through all wrongs.
O stay your hand, and leave my heart its songs!

—Amy Lowell

1. *What is the topic of the poem?*
2. *What does the poem have to say about this topic?*

The Perfect Friend

Today I found a friend
who knew everything I felt
she knew my weakness
and the problems I've been dealt.
She understood my wonders
and listened to my dreams,
she listened to how I felt about life and love
and knew what it all means.
Not once did she interrupt me
or tell me I was wrong
she understood what I was going through
and promised she'd stay long.
I reached out to this friend,
to show her that I care
to pull her close and let her know
how much I need her there.
I went to hold her hand
to pull her a bit nearer
and I realized this perfect friend I found
was nothing but a mirror.

—Shannen Wrass

1. *What is the topic of the poem?*
2. *What does the poem have to say about this topic?*