

Literacy Tips



Tips for middle school educators on various topics such as grammar, writing, reading, spelling, vocabulary, cooperative learning and more.

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Tip #46: National Poetry Month is Coming!

National Poetry Month

Is it too soon to be planning for spring? I don't think so! Yes, National Poetry Month is approaching. *"Inaugurated by the Academy in April 1996, National Poetry Month brings together publishers, booksellers, literary organizations, libraries, schools, and poets around the country to celebrate poetry and its vital place in American culture."* A good place to start is by requesting your free National Poetry Month poster at:

The Academy of American Poets
www.poets.org/npm/index.cfm

This web site also has excellent resources for teachers. Because April is a work-in-progress for them, many of these links are not yet active but will become active as we get closer. This would be a great web site to bookmark and place in your toolbar favorites for easy access. They are constantly adding on new material.

Teachers Read Too

Many teachers throughout the ASD hang signs on their doors with photos showing them reading in their favorite places. Signs look something like this:

Ms. Goodman is currently reading:

The Secret Lives of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

(This link is for you. It really is a good book.)
www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0142001740/qid=1075852848/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_1/002-4185452-2349611?v=glance&s=books

A schoolwide emphasis on poetry would be a nice twist on this. How about if every teacher at your school agrees to display his/her favorite poem? If you start before National Poetry Month, it could get kids wondering about what is to come...

Poetry Tournament

Which segues so nicely into an idea for March. Now you are probably wondering just how much poetry is good for kids, but remember it is a genre this age group can really relate to and is perfect for demonstrating reading strategies. Finding short and interesting text is always the challenge for think-alouds, and poetry fits those requirements well.

So consider motivating your students by holding a March Madness Poetry Tournament. Use the NCAA Final Four tournament structure as a basis for your poetry tournament. The web site below gives lots of suggestions for how to go about this efficiently. The important thing is to start planning now so you can launch it March 1st! *"The idea is to create a basketball tournament-pairing chart like NCAA does each year in March. Then*



locate 64 poems and pair them off, just like basketball teams. Read two poems each day and let kids vote on the winner. Do this until you have a final four and then go to the gym and finish in front of the student body..."

March Madness Poetry Tournament
www.ncte.org/elem/topics/content/110011.htm

Tanka Poetry

I feel like if you have read this far through this tip, you deserve a quick idea to try tomorrow with your students. Most of our students come to us knowing the haiku form of poetry. (If you are unfamiliar with this, use this web site to learn more.)

www.haiku.com

Teach students how to turn haiku into tanka poetry. (Plan on reviewing syllabication. I am always surprised how many students have difficulty clapping out the syllables of words.) After students write haikus, have them swap poems with partners. Each partner should add two more lines to the haiku (each line needs 7 syllables) writing a reaction statement. Students should think of this statement as a unique ending to the original poem. With this opportunity, they can even change the direction the original haiku was taking. To help students understand how to do this, choose a haiku from the web site below.

Children's Haiku Garden
www.tecnet.or.jp/~haiku/index.html

Use the selected haiku for guided practice. Rewrite it on a transparency and ask students to work in partners to add two more lines, 7 syllables each. Have pairs read their new tanka poems out loud and compare the various endings. Discuss how the original haiku changes with each new ending. As an example, I added on two ending lines in red to this elementary student's haiku:

An orca whale jumps
Sending a cry in the air,
Splashing water high.
Wanting to communicate
Hoping for understanding.

Once students get the hang of turning haiku into tanka, let them write their own original tanka poems from beginning to end following the 5/7/5/7/7 pattern. To challenge your students even more, have them write about content area topics being covered on your team right now. Imagine tanka poetry about algebra! (Yes, haiku and tanka are usually written in response to nature, but break the rules and see what happens!)

Tanka Poetry
www.shadowpoetry.com/resources/haiku/tanka.html

