

Lesson Plan: Write an "I Am" Poem

Introduce a poetry unit with this foolproof approach to writing.

Grades: 3 to 6

Duration: One writing period

Objectives

- To introduce the idea that poetry needn't rhyme
- To show students that anyone can write poetry
- (Optional) To help students get to know each other

Materials

- Sample poems to share during the introductory discussion
- A copy of the "I Am" poem template for each student

Overview

An "I Am" poem uses a fill-the-blank template. Thus every student can enjoy success! At the same time, writers have the opportunity to be creative and even profound.

Introductory Discussion

Have a discussion to answer the question "What is poetry?" This discussion can have three parts:

1) It's likely that a student will mention *rhyming*. If not, then ask if poems need to rhyme. Acknowledge how *some* poems rhyme, and say that rhyming is a fun way to use language. Have an example ready. (See next page)

2) Then emphasize that poems don't *necessarily* rhyme. Share an example. (See next page)

3) Ask, "If poems don't need to rhyme, then what is a poem? How is it different from a non-poem?" Help your student(s) to understand that *poetry is meant to let words and ideas shine*. It *doesn't need to follow our usual rules* for writing, such as using complete sentences.



Rhyming Poem Examples

You have infinite choices! If you don't have poetry books handy, you could recite a famous nursery rhyme or the lyrics to a popular contemporary song.

At Sudden Homeschool we always have a Shel Silverstein book handy. Here are a few rhyming suggestions of his that are legally published online with illustrations:

- "The Homework Machine" from *A Light in the Attic*
- "Snowball" from *Falling Up*
- "Pancake?" from *Where the Sidewalk Ends*

Non-Rhyming Poem Examples

Compared with rhyming poems, this style is closer to natural speech... so why isn't regular writing used? Share an example that helps you focus on the power of *imagery* and how the *line breaks* of a poem help highlight ideas.

Here are some poem examples:

- Dream Variations by Langston Hughes
- Fog by Carl Sandburg
- This Is Just To Say by William Carlos Williams

Assign the "I Am" Poem

Tell your student(s) that you're assigning a poem that isn't meant to rhyme. It's not difficult to write; they just need to fill blanks. Share an example such as the poem "I Am Cute and Sweet."

Read over the blank template (next page) together.

- Point out the line that appears four times Here the word choice will help build a theme.
- Explain that answers may be figurative. For example, "I touch" could be literal, but one might figuratively touch the stars or fame. "I say" might be a literal quote, but generally it's a chance to express a belief.

Tell students that they'll have X minutes to work on their poems. At the end of class (or the next day?) they'll have the option to share their work. For creative presentation, students might use paper besides the template worksheet.

