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# Promotion of Critical and Creative Thinking Skills through the Teaching of Poetry

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Promotion of Critical and Creative  
Thinking Skills Through the Teaching  
of Poetry

A Thesis Presented  
By  
Maura H. Albert

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies  
University of Massachusetts, Boston in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
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Critical and Creative Thinking

PROMOTION OF CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS  
THROUGH THE TEACHING OF POETRY

A Thesis Presented


by


Maura Albert

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## Table of Contents

Chapter		
I.	Introduction	1
	Background	1
	Rationale	4
	Proposal	9
II.	Review of the Literature	12
	Goals	13
	James Moffet	14
	Donald Graves	19
	Kenneth Koch	25
	Nancy Larrick	29
	Elizabeth McKim & Judith Steinberg	32
III.	Curriculum Overview	37
	Objectives	37
	Teaching Approach	52
	Selection of Poetry	64
IV.	Lesson Plans	79
	Description of Lessons	79
	Actual Lesson Plans	86
V.	Anthology	143
	Weather & Seasons	145
	Holidays	162
	Problems in the Life of the Child	175
	School Life	187
	Nonsense	193
	Seeing Real Objects in New Ways	201
	Animals	215
	Personalities	222
VI.	Conclusion	229
	Notes	237
	Bibliography	243

## Chapter I

### Introduction

This curriculum project has developed gradually over the past fourteen years during which time I have been teaching in the public elementary schools. I have always loved poetry; therefore, it seemed natural to make the reading of poetry a standard part of my curriculum even in my first years of teaching. As the years went by and my own increasing enjoyment in reading poetry was coupled with and encouraged by the positive reactions of the children I taught, it seemed only natural not only to read more poetry in the classroom, but, also, to begin to do some exploration of poems in terms of asking questions about them—both factual and speculative. I began to collect poetry books and to read poetry to my pupils every day. Before school each day, I would search through my books looking for a poem that would suit the weather, the time of year, a current holiday, or some event which had recently taken place in our classroom or school. After a few years of doing this, I had a mental file of poems which were both appropriate for certain circumstances and greatly enjoyed by the children. An example of such a poem is

"I Like It When It's Mizzily" by Aileen Fisher. It's a perfect poem to read on a misty, foggy day and the children love the nonsense words in it.

I began to put slips of paper in my many poetry books to mark our favorite poems. Even still, many frustrating moments were spent either trying to find where a particular poem was, or searching to find a poem to fit a particular mood or event. Nonetheless, both my students and I really enjoyed and treasured our "poetry times" and I soon became known as "the teacher who loves poetry and reads it every day!"

I was not the only one enjoying the daily poetry readings. My students responded with enthusiasm, and many developed a love of poetry themselves. I even had success with a tough sixth grade class. The students were skeptical and a bit cynical in September when I first started reading poetry to them, but by December they were reminding me to read, bringing in poetry they had found, and requesting favorite poems to be reread to the class!

It wasn't until I was involved with the Master of

Arts Program in Critical and Creative Thinking at the University of Massachusetts, in Boston, that I was able to begin to expand my poetry curriculum and then develop it into what is presented in this thesis. During my course on "The Teaching of Literature," I organized an anthology of poetry drawn from the many favorite poems my students and I have loved over the past fourteen years of my teaching career. My regular reading of quality poetry, along with short questions and discussions, became a perfect teaching vehicle for the promotion of critical and creative thinking skills. Armed with a knowledge of the skills to be taught and the best techniques with which to teach them, I began to develop some poetry lessons which went far beyond what I was already doing in the classroom.

The anthology and the poetry lessons seem to go together quite naturally and they form the curriculum core of this thesis. In my review of literature on the teaching of poetry, I discovered that my approach was unique. Not only did all other poetry curricula which I studied emphasize the writing of poetry by the students rather than the reading, sharing, and appreciation of poetry, but none of the other approaches or curriculums

which I surveyed attempted to use poetry as a basis for the teaching of critical and creative thinking skills.

The curriculum lessons, teaching strategies, and poetry anthology included in this thesis constitute a response to four major problems which my experience with the teaching of poetry helped me to identify. The first one is the neglect of the teaching of poetry in elementary classrooms. Although I have not done a formal survey, I have observed carefully in the three different schools and five different grades I have taught during my fourteen year teaching career. I have also discussed curriculum with countless numbers of teachers in the many courses and workshops in which I have been involved. In all of my encounters with elementary teachers, I have found only a few who even include poetry in their curriculum and none who read poetry on a daily basis or who share my enthusiasm for poetry, as well as its marvelous potential for teaching thinking skills. Aside from the occasional poem read aloud, usually from a basal reader, the week or two of poetry writing as part of a creative writing program, or the visit of a local poet to the school, the teaching of poetry seems to have been all but lost and/or forgotten



in the vast jungle of elementary curriculum.

I feel that poetry is a perfect teaching model for the modern, busy classroom. Most poems are short, yet within their few words, poems can open the doors to new worlds. Poetry is interdisciplinary. A poem can explore any subject area, feeling, geographical location, or personality. Poetry is a model of efficiently used language. A good poem has rich, varied, descriptive language in which every word is important. Poetry can evoke feelings of all kinds. It can cajole, inspire, titillate, puzzle, encourage, etc. Poetry teaches. It can give information; it can attempt to solve problems; or it can pose questions. Poetry can give significance to everyday experiences. The singing of a bird, a little boy's shadow, a simple garden hose can become special through poetry.

As one teacher who has always chosen to make poetry an important part of her curriculum, I find a second major problem; that is the lack of readily available resources from which to find poems of quality to use in the classroom. Opportunities for the sharing and/or teaching of poetry often occur spontaneously from an

immediate event, mood, or activity which occurs in the classroom or in the child's world, yet many of these events or moods are predictable. The seasons, the weather, holidays, spring fever, a friend moving, the beginning of baseball season are some examples of some predictable situations. Although I have collected many fine poetry books over my many years of teaching, I have found that I do not have one dependable, ready resource at my fingertips which includes both quality poetry and the panorama of poetry topics to suit the needs of my students—their lives, their environments, their feelings. Some of the anthologies I own are large editions which are divided into categories, but the categories are often too broad or vague such as "Humorous Poetry". Other anthologies include only modern poets, or poets who write specifically for children and tend to be dull or trite, or are adult anthologies filled almost entirely with poetry beyond the life experiences or understanding of most children. I felt the need for a personal anthology—one which would be useful to teachers, one which would cut down on some of my frantic searching for "the right poem," one which would help me make the most of the moment through poetry.

The current and important emphasis on the teaching of thinking skills leads to a third problem. When and where are critical thinking skills being taught in a purposeful, organized fashion in our elementary classrooms? The evidence around me in the three schools and five grades in which I have taught, in magazine and newspaper articles on the subject which I have read, and from discussions with other teachers in other school systems which I have had, indicates that critical and creative thinking skills are not being taught in most classrooms. Many teachers I have spoken with feel that they are teaching thinking skills because they do ask abstract, "higher level" questions in their classrooms which in the teachers' words "make the students think." While this kind of teaching is commendable and should be continued, it does not constitute the teaching of thinking skills. I engaged in the same kind of teaching and thought I was teaching thinking skills until I entered the Critical and Creative Thinking Masters Program and found out how much more there is to the teaching of thinking skills than posing provocative questions and leading stimulating discussions. There are whole sets of skills to be taught and procedures to be learned and practiced which

must be done in a regular, purposeful way as well as infiltrated into all subject areas and aspects of teaching. These skills and procedures will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters. It is the opinion of many, including myself, that the teaching of thinking skills should constitute a basic foundation of a student's education in our public schools, and if taught, will in fact enable students to be more successful in their educational experiences and in their lives.

Well selected poetry has great potential for fostering and developing critical and creative thinking skills. It invites immersion, visualization, metaphorical, abstract thinking, and a sense of wonder—all important elements in the creative process. It is full of opportunities for original and divergent thinking. It provides possibilities to present tasks which are open-ended, fantastical, and combinatorial. In the area of critical thinking, poetry can help learners to identify problems, formulate and test hypotheses, and draw conclusions among other skills. It is the participation and practice in these skills that enables students to more effectively sort out, order, play with, reflect upon, and understand new ways of looking at

things. Learning these skills not only gives new insight into poetry, but can give children an additional outlook and approach to everything they encounter.

The last problem is the problem of time. Most teachers would probably blame lack of time for the three previously stated problems. Where is the time to read and share poetry on a regular basis? Where is the time to scan several poetry books to find just the right poem for the moment and audience at hand? Where is the curriculum time allotted for the teaching of critical and creative thinking skills? As a teacher who is sensitive to the cries for help to these questions and who has, in fact, asked the same questions herself, the problem seems to be how to find solutions to the above problems without adding unnecessarily to the already overwhelming curriculum responsibilities of the elementary classroom teacher. This thesis accepts the challenge of these problems and has attempted to provide some viable solutions.

The curriculum project described in this thesis synthesizes two important areas of study—poetry and critical and creative thinking skills. Both have been

touted in current educational literature as new directions for educational institutions to follow. The emphasis in education journals, from administrators, school boards, and from parents has been on a return to the study of humanities. Certainly poetry fits into this category. Thinking skills have been written about in great detail in publications ranging from Psychology Today to the Boston Globe. Courses like the Masters Program in Critical and Creative Thinking at UMass/Boston have evolved. Conferences are being held like the one at Harvard University in the summer of 1984 entitled "Conference on Thinking." In the words on its brochure: "The conference will bring together the major thinking innovators from across the United States and around the world to explore the current programs and research in this challenging, interdisciplinary field."

This thesis is divided into four major parts. The first briefly reviews some representative language arts curricula, some of which focus on the teaching of poetry. The second describes the philosophy underlying the curriculum being presented here, the objectives of the curriculum, the teaching approach taken to the reading and sharing of poetry, and the selection methods

used for the poetry included in the anthology and in the lessons. Twelve lesson plans, with a brief discussion of the format of the lessons and an example of how a lesson evolves, constitute the third section. The last major part of the thesis is an anthology of poetry. It is divided into eight category sections with poems carefully selected by me comprising each section.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

This chapter will provide a review of five proposals for the teaching of language arts, some of which are designed for the teaching of poetry itself. These particular proposals were chosen for review because they are important and representative approaches. Included will be two major curriculum approaches formulated by two people who are well respected for their literature and philosophy on the teaching of language arts. One is James Moffet whose book called, Teaching the Universe of Discourse is a rationale and philosophy of teaching language arts in general, and whose other book entitled, Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading K-13, is a handbook for teachers on how to apply his principles. The other is Donald Graves. More specific than Moffet, Graves' book Writing: Teachers and Children at Work centers, as the title indicates, on the writing aspect of language arts. One book on the actual teaching of poetry is reviewed here. It is Kenneth Koch's, Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Two other sources included involve the teaching of poetry. One is Nancy Larrick who is primarily a collector of poetry for children but



who expresses her philosophy on the teaching of poetry in all of her anthologies and particularly in the book she edited called, Somebody Turned on a Tap in These Kids - Poetry and Young People Today. Finally a very new source on the teaching of poetry will be reviewed- one that was just published in 1983 and is not yet well known. The authors are Elizabeth McKim and Judith Steinbergh and their book is called, Beyond Words - Writing Poems with Children.

The goals in the forthcoming review of the literature are to:

1. Give an overview of each approach to the teaching of language arts.
2. To explain how each approach specifically views the teaching of poetry.
3. To point out some similarities and differences between each approach to the teaching of poetry with my own curriculum approach.

James Moffet's approach to the teaching of language arts is discussed and presented in two of his books. One called, Teaching the Universe of Discourse has the subtitle "A Theory of Discourse - a Rationale for

English Teaching Used in a Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum." In it, he discusses kinds and orders of discourse and presents his schematic representation of the whole spectrum of discourse which he says is also "a hierarchy of levels of abstraction". This book of theory and philosophy goes hand in hand with his other book which is a handbook for teachers - entitled Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13. As the title informs the reader, this handbook is for teachers of grades kindergarten through high school and focuses on the teaching of language arts and reading in a student-centered learning environment. This lengthy book covers Moffet's rationale, classroom organization and materials, and a discussion of and teaching strategies for all the levels of his "Spectrum of Discourse," which have been broken down into smaller components such as word play, dialogue, dramatic inventing, reading, writing, etc.

James Moffet's philosophy of the teaching of language arts stems from the basic concept that language arts should not be taught as a specific subject, but should be the means through which all subjects are studied.<sup>1</sup> He believes that language is thinking

itself.<sup>2</sup> The ability to communicate, he says, is learned through a process of thinking, speaking, listening, reading, and writing.<sup>3</sup> The process he mentions involves a student-centered curriculum in which children learn by doing, not by answering comprehension questions, memorizing rules, or reciting. An important component in this doing process is "kids teaching kids," which involves lots of interaction and immediate feedback from the group. Moffet has set up a "schematic representation of the whole spectrum of discourse,"<sup>4</sup> along which teachers should guide their students. This spectrum ranges from Interior Dialogue which is most personal and least abstract to metaphysics which is the most impersonal and also the most abstract level of thinking. These levels are to be developed and ascended through recording, reporting, generalizing, and theorizing. Specific forms of literature which are most conducive to each level start with plays, progress to fiction, and end with essays. Moffet indicates that poetry transcends all levels. Guidance from teachers that is most effective, says Moffet, is "in clarifying problems after students have encountered or raised them."<sup>5</sup> To do this teachers may often lead problem-solving discussions in which students are led by trial

and error to spotting and solving problems that they have noticed.

Thus, James Moffet's approach to the teaching of language arts is a naturalistic one, one in which the rendering of experience into words is its basic foundation. "Since the richer the experience the better the quality of the communication, it behooves the teachers," says Moffet, "to provide his/her students with a great variety of different kinds of discourse." Moffet's own words, "The most important things children of today will need to know when they are adults are how experience is abstracted, communicated, and utilized whether the data are recurring phenomena of nature and society or the private truths of the heart."<sup>6</sup>

It is both interesting and significant to note that poetry transcends the entire hierarchy of levels in Moffet's Spectrum of Discourse as is clearly shown in his schematic representation in which the word POETRY is written vertically in large, well-spaced letters from the interior dialogue level to the metaphysical level.<sup>7</sup> It is even more interesting and significant to note that throughout his book, Teaching the Universe of Discourse,

there is no chapter or even part of a chapter devoted to poetry. In fact, poetry is barely mentioned throughout the whole book. In the handbook for teachers, there is also no chapter on poetry although there are chapters on Labels and Captions, Invented Stories, Actual and Invented Dialogue, Dramatic Inventing, etc. Poetry is relegated to about seven pages out of 488. In his brief references to poetry, Moffet supports the ideas that students should be exposed to "good mixed anthologies of poetry." <sup>8</sup> Through this exposure he hopes that students will become aware of the array of uses of poetry from the writing of an invitation to expressing a vision of heaven. He also mentions the Three R's of Poetry - rhyme, rhythm, and repetition which he says "teach <sup>9</sup> children about word patterns in memorable ways." In essence, it seems that in Moffet's naturalistic curriculum, poetry is thought to be all encompassing but so "natural" that it precludes a chapter or section expounding upon its worth and use in the classroom.

Obviously, Moffet's view of the importance and usefulness of poetry in the school curriculum differs greatly from the one to be developed in this thesis.

This author, like Moffet, sees poetry transversing the entire spectrum of the universe of discourse from the personal to the impersonal, from simple recording to profound theorizing. Yet, Moffet neglects to show how poetry can do this. In the curriculum to be presented here, which teaches thinking skills through poetry, the selection of poetry and the lessons that go with them show how poetry can teach students everything from different ways to record colors (lowest in Moffet's spectrum) to contemplation of our place in the universe (from Moffet's Metaphysical Level).

Moffet also espouses that language is thinking itself. Yet, in his brief discussions of poetry he merely mentions that poetry teaches children about word patterns and that good exposure to poetry helps children to see the many uses there are for poetry. He says that, "the three R's of poetry - rhyme, rhythm, and repetition - teach children alot about individual words and patterns of words." <sup>10</sup> There is no mention of poetry as a medium for the creative thinking skills which I have selected as the basis for my lessons-fluency, flexibility, originality, transformation techniques, and redefinition for examples. In essence, although

Moffet's views—that language (including poetry) is the means through which all subjects are taught and that language (again including poetry) is thinking itself—provide support for the basic tenets of this paper, his neglect of the worth and usefulness of poetry is to be regretted. My curriculum attempts to fill that very large void.

Donald Graves, unlike Moffet who takes on the whole realm of the teaching of language arts, focuses on the teaching of writing. His philosophy and teaching approach was first exposed to the public in an article published in Learning Magazine called "Balance the Basics: Let Them Write" written by Graves which was excerpted from a report done for the Ford Foundation in a series called Papers on Research About Learning. In the article, Donald Graves espouses putting writing back in the classroom on a daily basis and offers teachers his process-conference approach on how to do this. In his book which was just published in 1983 called Writing: Teachers and Children at Work, he explains in detail his process - conference approach and guides teachers in the whole writing/teaching process from helping children to choose topics to helping them edit and revise their

work. Since Graves' methods are advocated for teachers to use in their own writing as well as with their students, it is assumed that his book would be applicable to any grade level as he does not state this information in his book. On the other hand, since his examples and discussion are all concerned with elementary students and their writing, it is assumed by this author that this book is particularly appropriate for the elementary grades.

In the article Donald Graves wrote for Learning Magazine in April 1978, Graves states that writing contributes to intelligence, develops initiative, develops courage, serves as an aid to reading, and can be "the means to personal breakthrough in learning."<sup>11</sup> His premise is that the child's first urge is to write. Because of fear of writing on the part of teachers, an over emphasis on the teaching of reading and the teaching of before-writing skills, as well as the transformation of writing from a discipline into a punishment, he says very little writing is going on in the public schools today. Graves' curriculum involves a process-conference approach. Children are given time to write every day and choose their own topics.



Teachers confer frequently with students for brief periods of time during the writing process. The emphasis of these conferences is to help the students explore what they know about the topic they have chosen through the teacher questioning and restating what is already written. There is minimum editing. Grammar is introduced only as it becomes important to the child's satisfaction with his/her work. Publishing is encouraged in the form of binding the children's pages into a hardcover binder, but this is not done for every written piece. The teacher's role in this curriculum, besides conferring with students and publishing their works, is to organize the classroom for writing, to write with the children, and to surround the children with literature. Emphasis is given to helping children discover what they do know, not what they do not know.<sup>12</sup> Children are encouraged to help each other and take charge of their own writing as opposed to being carefully guided by the teacher.

Donald Graves' treatment of poetry in his writing programs as described in his book, Writing: Teachers and Children at Work, occurs on pages 70-72 in the middle of a short chapter called, "Surround the Children

with Literature." His premise in this chapter is that literature provides children not only with facts but with "drama, problem solving, and precise language."<sup>13</sup> In the short section on poetry, Graves' describes Mrs. Andersen's class in which she emphasized poetry primarily through choral speaking of specific poems introduced by her. Her intent was for the children to enjoy the taste or flavor of the poem and the beat of the words. The children also read, wrote, and copied poems. Most importantly, Graves writes, "Because they were able to recite the poems they carried language with them, whether they were riding a bus or lying in bed waiting for sleep. And the language became part of their writing."<sup>14</sup> Graves goes on to mention quite clearly that "the children did more than work on poetry."<sup>15</sup> He makes it very evident that the poetry was only a means to the all important end of getting the children to write.

In addition to summing up the contributions of poetry to language development in three pages, Graves short changes poetry in his many examples of children's writing both in his book, Writing: Teachers and Children at Work and in the article he wrote for

Learning Magazine. This author could not find even one example of poetry being used to demonstrate the process-conference approach which is central to Graves' writing curriculum and is explained in great detail throughout his book.

In Graves' work, as with Moffet's, we see a gross neglect of the area of poetry. One excuse for this lapse can be found in the fact that throughout Graves' work he does not delve into the different forms that writing can take. Instead, he concentrates on the personal narrative voice, i.e., the children's own experience. Yet his two pages on poetry which concentrate only on the choral speaking aspect of poetry and his lack of examples of poetry among the children's writing shows the relative unimportance of this topic to Graves. Again, as with Moffet, there is a philosophical core of this curriculum which provides support for my poetry curriculum. Graves' idea of surrounding the children with literature is translated in my curriculum into surrounding them with different types of poetry. Graves' premise that literature provides children with problem solving opportunities is one of the main foundations of my entire curriculum. Additional

supports to my curriculum on poetry espoused by Graves are his emphasis on the asking of questions, the importance he places on enthusiasm and getting kids to want to know, and his de-emphasis on deep analysis.

Thus, the tone of and classroom climate encouraged by Graves' curriculum is indeed similar to the one presented in this thesis, but the content and goals are not. The content of Graves' curriculum is totally oriented toward writing, and specifically writing in the personal narrative style. Graves' goals are most clearly stated in this quote, "At every turn the teacher seeks to have the children live the literature. The most important living occurs at the point at which children make literature themselves through writing." <sup>16</sup> This author agrees totally with the above quotation except for the very last word: writing. I agree that writing is a very important skill, a very worthy expressive medium, and a justifiable way for children to "make literature themselves." But, I feel equally as strongly that writing is not the only way to have children live literature or make it part of themselves. The poetry curriculum presented here will explore the many different avenues by which teachers can help children to "live literature".

Kenneth Koch is the only educator whose work will be considered here whose literature totally involves the teaching of poetry. His book entitled Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? has the subtitle "Teaching Great Poetry to Children". This book, which is aimed towards the teaching of elementary school children, presents Koch's rationale for teaching great poetry to children and presents ten lessons which demonstrate the use of teaching great poetry to promote poetry writing among children. Each lesson contains the poem, three or four pages of general discourse on how Koch introduces, discusses, and explains basic concepts in the poem followed by the "poetry ideas" for writing which he gives to the children. There follows several pages of the children's original work done on the basis of the lesson.

Feeling that children are often doomed to hear and read "goody-goody" rhymed poetry thought to be most appropriate for children, he presents the concept of introducing children to the great poetry of people like Shakespeare, Donne, Blake, Stevens, etc. He teaches the reading of poetry and the writing of poetry as one  
17  
subject. He brings these two activities together

through the use of "poetry ideas".<sup>18</sup> These ideas are in the form of suggestions given to the children for writing poems of their own which are in some way similar to a great poem they have heard. The process involves the reading of a great poem, a discussion with suggestions for writing, the actual writing of original poems by the children, and then an oral reading by the children of the poems they have written. In his book, Koch discusses his great success with this method of teaching the reading and writing of poetry. He found that his students were capable of and enjoyed hearing "adult" poetry. Using the "poetry idea" was a way to "give the students a way to experience, while writing, some of the main ideas and feelings in the poem."<sup>19</sup>

Koch clearly expresses his lack of concern for the children understanding all that is in a poem. He says, "I didn't think it necessary to teach every detail of a poem, just those that would help give the children a true sense of its main feelings."<sup>20</sup> And, "To reject

every poem the children would not understand in all its detail would mean eliminating too many good things."<sup>21</sup>

To him, making the children feel close to a poem is the important thing. He does this by asking questions, at first concrete and then speculative, by explaining

briefly and clearly any difficult words or sections, and by dramatizing the poetry through physical activities or objects brought into the classroom. <sup>22</sup> The book, Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? gives ten examples of Koch's approach to poetry with poems such as Blake's "The Tiger" and Wallace Stevens's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." Included are the poems themselves, a discussion of the "poetry idea" and general approaches to the teaching of the poetry writing, and many fine examples of the student's poems. The latter part of the book is an anthology of about fifty poems with poetry ideas and suggestions for turning those ideas into poetry writing experiences.

Of the three approaches thus cited, Kenneth Koch's comes closest to the principles and practices of my own poetry curriculum. Most obviously, his curriculum focuses solely on the teaching of poetry as mine does. He has a firm belief in the practice of exposing great poetry to children and of his students' ability to accept and enjoy such poetry. "Great" poetry also has a central spot in the curriculum presented in this thesis but "great" is defined in different terms from Koch's, namely as poems of quality. To be of quality, a

poem does not have to be either well known or written by a Donne or a Shakespeare. Eve Merriam, David McCord, and Shel Silverstein all have written poems of quality. To exclude them from a child's experience would be to shut him/her out from a worthy portion of the poetry world. Elsewhere in this thesis I will define how I determine if a poem is one of quality. Koch's ideas of bringing a poem close to his students through clarification and drama fit in with my curriculum. His "poetry ideas" also capture my goal to help children connect poetry with their everyday lives and experience. Once again, though, the final goal of Koch's curriculum is the writing of poetry. Although the reading of the poetry, the discussion of its meaning, and the poetry ideas have significance to Koch, these activities pale before the all important end goal of writing original poetry.

It is my contention that the writing of poetry—or writing of any kind—need not be, in fact, should not be, the only end of the teaching of poetry. My curriculum will show how poems of quality can motivate children to other worthwhile ends.



In teaching "great" poetry only to stimulate the writing of poetry, Koch misses a great deal of what poetry has to offer - both to the teacher in terms of magnificent teaching tools and to the student in making connections with the many segments of life and art that lie outside the realm of the written word.

Nancy Larrick has not published a curriculum on the teaching of poetry yet she is deeply involved in connecting children with poetry. She has published several poetry anthologies containing poems of good quality on themes which appeal particularly to young people. One is called, On City Streets and is a collection of poems on city sights and city people. Another is Room for Me and a Mountain Lion which captures the essence of nature in the "wide open spaces". Each book contains a variety of poems from those of Robert Frost to Denise Levertov to Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Her selections are made carefully with their appeal to children uppermost in her mind. Her sincerity in this endeavor is captured in a line on the About the Editor page at the back on one of her anthologies. "For each book, selections have been made with the help of young people, who insist upon poems that 'tell it like it is' and reject those they

call 'too sweet'."

The book she edited which applies most directly to my thesis is called, Somebody Turned on a Tap in These Kids with the subtitle "Poetry and Young People Today". In it several contributors from Myra Cohn Livingston to Eve Merriam give their views on poetry and the young people of today. Nancy Larrick herself has contributed two articles and it is her philosophy which weaves its way throughout the book. Her view is that, "Poetry, beyond any other literary form, solicits participation from the listener or reader. Indeed, some people insist that a poem is not complete until there is a partner adding his own experiences and feelings to those of the poet."<sup>24</sup> She goes on to describe a classroom visit she made where children would ask their teacher, "When can we do poetry?" The teacher in that classroom involved her students in poetry through firsthand experiences such as jump-rope jingles, counting rhymes, and dramatization. Larrick strongly supports this type of poetry involvement. To her, this involvement and the use of poetry which is "real" to young people are of paramount importance. Apparently, these things are important to children, too, as she states, "The poetry

young people want today is real. It relates to the world they know, and it invites them to become physically and emotionally involved. Involvement is what they demand."<sup>25</sup>

Nancy Larrick's viewpoints on poetry and children support the validity and usefulness of the poetry curriculum which I am proposing. I agree with her claims that young people respond best to poetry which is real to them and that poetry is best connected to young people when they become involved with a particular poem. The curriculum I am presenting goes farther than this however. Yes, poetry should be "real" to children, but I propose that a poem can be made real through the teacher finding a connection between that poem and the children she is teaching. As an example, Larrick proposes that Wordsworth's "Daffodils" would not be "real" to today's youth.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps if it were given just one reading, she would be right. Yet a connection can be made between "Daffodils" and young readers to make this poem real. Even an inner city youth can connect with the idea of coming across a vision of nature which remains in one's memory and refreshes the spirit in times of need. Maybe this vision is a section

of cultivated flowers in a public garden or maybe it is the way a dandelion has pushed its way up through a crack in the sidewalk or beside a garbage pail. My curriculum shows how many such connections can be made.

Unlike the other approaches already mentioned whose idea of "doing poetry" is writing original poems, at least Larrick mentions other valid ways to involve students like singing, chanting, dramatizing. The poetry curriculum which I set forth expands upon these to involve such areas as art, dance, and the creation of new ideas.

The last approach to literature I would like to review is a poetry writing curriculum called, Beyond Words by Elizabeth McKim and Judith Steinbergh which was published in 1983. I was privileged to be able to see Judith Steinbergh teaching her curriculum to the children in my school when she came as our guest to give a poetry workshop. McKim's and Steinbergh's curriculum involves taking students "beyond words" to body, feelings, environment and then bringing them back to words to write original poetry. The children become involved in such activities as examining

closely a particular fruit or vegetable and pretending they are that vegetation; recording sounds they hear in the hallways, and drawing words and phrases from a "word bowl". They then transform these experiences into the writing of original poetry. The overall goal of the curriculum is as stated in the forward: "This book is meant to help teachers and parents make poetry a part of their own and their children's lives,"<sup>27</sup> The specific goals involve creating an environment that is conducive to self-expression, encouraging children to use all their senses, sensitizing children to words and to extend their use of language, and to get children<sup>28</sup> involved in the process of making a poem.

This creative, refreshing curriculum is a wonderful way to help children discover the joys of writing poetry. Yet once again, although many other creative activities are involved, everything in this curriculum is geared toward that all important, final goal of writing. I would like to reaffirm that I am not trying to imply here that writing is not important. As a classroom teacher, I spend a great deal of time motivating for, providing time for, and teaching the skills of writing. In fact, I often use techniques such

as the one Donald Graves and McKim and Steinbergh suggest. What I am saying is that writing is not the "end all and be all" of poetry experience. McKim and Steinbergh verify this themselves when they state, "Making connections is at the heart of poetry."<sup>29</sup> My curriculum attempts to make these connections and then truly move "beyond words" to help the children make further connections which enhance and increase their critical and creative thinking skills.

Each curriculum reviewed in this chapter has at least one basic tenet which strongly supports the poetry curriculum which will be presented here. From James Moffet comes the principle that language is thinking itself and should be the means through which other subjects are taught. In my curriculum, poetry transcends all subjects and the purpose of my lessons is to elicit critical and creative thinking. From Donald Graves comes the emphasis on asking questions to help children discover what they know. A basic part of my poetry and lessons involves the asking of questions to find out both what students know about the poems, and what they know via connections they make to their own lives which go beyond the poem itself. Kenneth Koch's

belief in the power of "great" poetry to reach children is most closely connected to my own beliefs about poetry and children. In the anthology included here will be found poems of all types which speak to children--all of them poems of quality--some of them what Koch would call "great" poetry. Along with Nancy Larrick, I agree that participation or involvement is a key factor in experiencing poetry. All of my lessons are set up to get each student involved with a particular poem through activities which demand physical, intellectual, and emotional participation. McKim and Steinbergh support one of my main objectives in the teaching of poetry--that of making connections.

Each curriculum discussed in this chapter also has a basic void which my curriculum fills. Moffet and Graves all but ignore the contribution of poetry to the learning process. Koch and McKim and Steinbergh make the mistake of seeing the sole end of the experience of poetry to be the original writing of poetry by the children. Even Nancy Larrick fails to see the whole picture when she says that the only poetry that reaches children must immediately connect with their lives.

Each curriculum reviewed in this chapter is a well thought out, workable plan of action with good foundations which is likely to produce growth in children in the language arts area. Yet, therein lies each one's biggest lack. My curriculum works, through the means of poetry, to stimulate, strengthen, and liberate critical and creative thinking processes in the minds of children—processes which go beyond language arts and try to involve the whole child. In the chapters to come, a full explanation and exploration of my philosophy and curriculum will show how this can be done.



## Chapter Three

### Curriculum Overview

This chapter sets forth the foundation of the poetry curriculum presented in this thesis. The chapter discusses the objectives of the curriculum, the teaching approach taken to the reading and sharing of poetry, and the rationale for selecting the poetry included in the anthology and used for the lessons. Concrete examples from the curriculum will be included whenever possible for illustrative purposes.

#### Objectives

The curriculum's objectives are three-fold:

1. To expose the children to different types of poetry.
2. To make connections between poetry and students' life experiences.
3. To learn and practice critical and creative thinking skills.

Through the curriculum presented in this thesis, elementary school children from grades one through six will be introduced to a great variety of different types

of poetry. Much of this poetry was originally written for adults. Included in the lessons and the anthology are short poems like Sandburg's "Fog", and long poems like Thayer's "Casey at the Bat", rhymed poetry like that of Robert Frost, as well as the free verse style of e.e. cummings, anonymous limericks and Japanese haiku poetry. There is nonsense poetry such as "Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll, poetry about absence and death like Langston Hughes' "Dream Keeper", and poems about everyday occurrences like "I Woke Up This Morning" by Karla Kushin. Some poetry is simply written with children in mind, such as the poetry written by Eve Merriam and Aileen Fisher. Other poetry is somewhat complex in content and form and was written for adults, such as the poetry written by Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, and Emily Dickenson.

Offering children a variety of types of poetry is important both to the children's general educational experience and, more specifically, to the success of the poetry curriculum being presented. Exposing students to many types of poetry can serve to expand their general and literary knowledge, increase their awareness of the great possibilities inherent in the form and content of

a poem, and help them begin to develop an appreciation for poetry which has "stood the test of time". Through the curriculum the children should be encouraged to see poetry as "a natural ornament" to heighten, enhance, and clarify their sensory, emotional, and intellectual experiences. They can also begin to develop their own taste in poetry. Presenting a variety of poems to be read and shared with children is important to the curriculum because poems are the vehicles by which critical and creative thinking skills are taught. The variety of poetry presented offers the opportunity to teach and practice many of the various critical and creative thinking skills. The repetitive sounds in David McCord's "The Pickety Fence", leads to a lesson promoting flexibility through rhythmic movement. The nonsense words in "Eletelephony" by Laura F. Richards, offers the opportunity for the children to use forced relationships to invent their own nonsense animal. The free verse, story form of e.e. cummings' "Chanson Innocente II" presents the children with an opportunity to practice visualization and understand personal analogies. The brevity of Carl Sandburg's "Fog" provides an excellent opportunity to promote elaboration of ideas by adding details to further describe fog.

In addition to serving as excellent vehicles for the promotion of critical and creative skills, the variety of poetry presented to the children also provides more opportunities for connections to be made between poetry and the children's personal lives. The list of weather sounds in Aileen Fisher's poem "Weather is Full of the Nicest Sounds", corresponds to the way many young children perceive weather. Rachel Field's poem "Skyscrapers" imitates the questioning that children engage in when they want to know more. Lastly, the very "adult" poem called "The Eagle" by Alfred Lord Tennyson connects well with the children's awe of the power and beauty of speed.

Connections is the key word in the second objective of this curriculum: To connect poetry to the student's lives. Connection means a poem has relevant, familiar meaning. That is, a poem which makes a connection is one which relates to or fits into the child's personal experience or knowledge base. Connections can also mean the interconnections within the poem: that is how the words, sounds, and meaning connect with one another. The more inner connections that are made make it more

likely that students will be able to connect the poem to their lives.

There are two basic types of connections. One is a natural connection which occurs effortlessly merely from the reading of a well chosen poem. This type of connection is made by the children without help or guidance from the teacher. Naturally, not all children will respond to a poem in the same way, but from my experience, I have found that there are certain characteristics of particular poems which bring out some common responses in a class of children. An example of a natural connection occurs with the reading of Bernice W. Carlson's "The Witch on a Windy Night". The repeated refrain of the sound of the wind "Shu-u-u-u!" at the end of each stanza connects readily with the children's natural love of repetition and rhythm. Also, the sound of the wind is part of the sound play that children often engage in. Another poem in which a "natural" connection occurs is "Pickety Fence" by David McCord. Most children can easily connect with or relate to the sound that a stick makes as it is dragged across a picket fence, because they have tried it! I know these connections occur when the children begin smiling,

nodding their heads, and reciting repeated lines of the poem along with me. These poems are also frequently requested for our daily poetry readings.

The second type of connection is one in which the teacher is required to help the connection occur. This process can be as simple as the explanation of some difficult words or as complex as having the children explore the feelings of the poems through their own creative writing. Once the word "galoshes" is defined in Rhoda Bacmeister's poem "Galoshes", Susie's experiences in the slush, mud, and muck easily connect with the children's own experiences tramping about in their boots. To connect e.e. cummings' poem about a little Christmas tree, "Chanson Innocente II", to students' personal lives, it is helpful to discuss with the children what it would be like to be a little Christmas tree and to have them write about their feelings as they "become" the tree in cummings' poem.

Whether the connection occurs naturally or is elicited by the teacher, connections are essential for a successful poetry experience to happen. If the children cannot relate a poem to themselves, it is likely to have little meaning for them. For example, children can

"connect" with the feelings of being small and helpless like cummings' Christmas tree, but even with much discussion and many exploratory activities, it would be difficult to connect a poem on life in a ghetto to the experiences of young children who live in suburbia. Connections are important because through them a poem can become "part" of a child. A picket fence may forever after be associated with the delightful sounds found in David McCord's poem. A peaceful walk in a snowy wood may bring to mind Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". Conversely, in May Hill Arbuthnot's words, connections found through poetry "give significance to everyday experience".<sup>30</sup> By significance, I mean not only importance but meaning and uniqueness. The process of arriving at this uniqueness begins with the sorting out and ordering which Arbuthnot speaks of. A poem can help a child sort out the feelings, colors, shapes, sounds, and rhythms evoked by the particular image or experience. Thus, in "April Rain Song" by Langston Hughes, the children can sort out the different ways one can experience rain-i.e., feel it, see it, hear it, as well as notice that there are different types and effects of rain.

Not only is poetry applicable in the practical sense of connecting with the feelings, events, and realities of the child's life, but it also presents new ways to look at everyday things. Thus, in "April Rain Song", the children "see" that rain can "kiss you", "sing you a lullaby", and look like "silver liquid drops". In Sandburg's "Arithmetic", they "see" numbers turn into pigeons which fly in and out of their heads. Beatrice Janosco convinces them in her poem "Garden Hose", that a garden hose is really a serpent, and William Jay Smith's poem, "The Toaster" shows them that a toaster is a "silver-scaled dragon with jaws flaming red". New ways of viewing things seem to naturally stimulate and require reflection. Hopefully, this reflection will give a new and richer meaning to the child's experience--making that experience memorable so that rain, garden hoses, and toasters may never feel, look, or sound quite the same way ever again.

The third and perhaps the most important objective in the curriculum presented in this thesis is the learning and practicing of critical and creative thinking skills through the vehicle of poetry. It is not my intent to give a complete definition of these



skills, but rather to explain those aspects which are relevant to my curriculum. Basic characteristics of both critical and creative thinking will be described and specific skills will be listed and briefly defined.

Although critical and creative thinking can never be totally separated from one another, two basic ways to differentiate them are offered here. W. Edgar Moore in his book called Critical and Creative Thinking, says: "Creative thinking may be defined as the formulation of possible solutions to a problem or explanations of a phenomenon, and critical thinking as the testing and evaluation of these solutions or explanations."<sup>31</sup>

Another way is to see creative thinking as divergent thinking and critical thinking as convergent. J.P. Guilford, in an article called "Traits of Creativity", defines these terms this way: "Most of the aptitude factors identifiable as belonging in the category of creativity are classifiable in a group of divergent-thinking abilities. These abilities, by contrast to convergent-thinking abilities, emphasize searching activities with freedom to go in different directions, if not a necessity to do so in order to

achieve an excellent performance. Convergent thinking activities proceed toward one right answer, or one that is more or less clearly demanded by the given information." <sup>32</sup> In support of my view that critical and creative thinking are not completely separate or opposite, he also says: "We might arbitrarily define creative thinking as divergent thinking, but it would be incorrect to say that divergent thinking accounts for all the intellectual components of creative production." <sup>33</sup>

In an article called "Critical Thinking", Joseph Decoroli summarizes critical skills as follows: Defining, hypothesizing, information processing, interpreting, generalizing, reasoning, and evaluating. <sup>34</sup> Aylesworth, in his book, Teaching for Thinking devotes a chapter to "The Process of Critical Thinking" in which he describes the teaching process as being very similar to Decoroli's list of skills. This process is:

1. Helping learners to identify problems
2. Helping learners to formulate hypotheses
3. Helping learners to test hypotheses <sup>35</sup>
4. Helping learners draw conclusions

Occasions for practicing critical thinking skills are provided in the lessons presented in this thesis. The children are asked to define words, for example, "pickety" from the poem "Pickety Fence". They are asked to identify problems, i.e., "What is the long, green serpent in the grass?" in "The Garden Hose". They are asked to form the hypothesis i.e., of what a "Mr. Nobody" from the poem by that name might look like. They are asked to test hypotheses i.e., about the sounds of rain by experimenting with real water, and about the signs of autumn by going on a nature walk. Lastly, they are asked to make evaluations and draw conclusions, for example, when they must draw a picture of a Jabberwock from its description in the poem "Jabberwocky", or determine the title and subject of a poem through the clues in its content as they must do for the poem "Child on Top of a Greenhouse" by Theodore Roethke.

In defining divergent thinking or creativity, J.P. Guilford prefers to speak of "Primary traits related to creativity".<sup>36</sup> Among these traits the primary ones which apply to my curriculum are sensitivity to problems, fluency of thinking, flexibility, and originality. Two additional traits

are redefinition and elaboration. Guilford ascribes sensitivity to problems as being in the category of "evaluative abilities" and says it involves judgements that things are not all right, that goals and desires have not been achieved. Fluency involves the "fertility of ideas" or, in other words, the number of ideas a person can come up with. Flexible thinkers, according to Guilford, "readily desert old ways of thinking and strike out in new directions". Originality refers to "unusualness of responses", and is the most common trait one would associate with creativity. Guilford says redefinition means "an ability to give up old interpretations of familiar objects in order to use them or their parts in some new ways." Another term closely connected to redefinition which will be found in this thesis is low functional fixedness. Finally we come to the factor called elaboration which involves the amount of complexity put into the project, i.e., the ability to incorporate many details.

Opportunities to practice and strengthen these creative traits--sensitivity to problems, fluency, flexibility, originality, redefinition, and elaboration

are plentiful throughout the poetry curriculum presented in this thesis. The children learn to become sensitive to what it would be like to be a Christmas tree. They become fluent as they try to think of as many ways as they can to describe a particular color. They practice flexibility when they choose a common household object and turn it into a creature which it reminds them of. They strive for originality when they create an autumn trinket from materials they have collected on a nature walk. Redefinition is the goal when Shel Silverstein's poem "How to Make a Swing With No Rope or Board or Nails" is patterned and the children are required to explain how to make something without its essential materials. Elaboration is encouraged when they draw their own version of what Mr. Nobody, turned into Mr./Mrs. Somebody, might look like.

There are several additional skills which foster creative thinking which are included in the lesson plans. They are transformation techniques, immersion, forced relationships, and brainstorming. Alex F. Osborn in his book Applied Imagination, lists the transformation techniques. They are: magnify, minify, modify, rearrange, combine, use unusually, substitute,

adapt, reverse, and make metaphors. Practicing these transformation techniques helps students to improve their flexibility and their ability to redefine problems. The technique of brainstorming, which is a quick, unevaluated listing of responses which comes to mind on a particular subject, was developed by Osborn. This technique obviously increases fluency, but also promotes originality by providing freedom from evaluation and exerting pressure to give more and more responses.

E. Paul Torrance supports the technique of immersion which he calls absorption. He lists some types of absorption: absorbed watching, absorbed thinking, or absorbed doing.<sup>44</sup> This absorption or immersion comes quite naturally to young children but needs to be encouraged and practiced as children get older and may lose some of that natural ability. Immersion can help with nearly all of the critical and creative skills because of the involvement and concentration which goes along with it.

Delores Gallo, in her work called Traits and Techniques of Creative Production, defines the technique

of constructing forced relationships; "finding a relationship between two seemingly disparate items (e.g., a dowel and a cookie) or words (e.g., coffin-ice cream)."<sup>45</sup> She also supports the use of "direct instruction to induce innovative, non-judgmental sets, which promote spontaneous flexibility, originality, fluency, and abstract, metaphorical thinking."<sup>46</sup> The lessons presented in this thesis attempt to achieve those very goals.

Three curriculum objectives have been discussed through the previous explanation and examples:

1. The exposure of children to a great variety of poems - some written for children, some for adults.
2. The making of connections between poetry and children's lives.
3. The acquisition of and practice in critical and creative thinking skills using poetry as the vehicle.

The sections to follow will feature a general approach to the sharing of poetry, and the basis for selection of the poetry used in the lessons and found in the anthology.

## Teaching Approach

First and foremost, poetry should be read and shared with enthusiasm on the part of the teacher. Enthusiasm is contagious, and if the teacher makes his/her delight in poetry evident to the students, that enthusiasm will be conveyed. Especially among older elementary students, poetry may have a "bad name" already. Somehow they pick up some of society's stereotypes about poetry: that it is boring, flowery, hard to understand. From my poetry experience with a tough sixth grade class, I can say that the teacher's enthusiasm for poetry can overturn these stereotypes. Of course, choosing the right poem to share at the right time is also very important.

Poetry is shared best with children when it is a meaningful part of their work and experience. When everyone is restless due to a case of spring fever, it is time to pull out Le Gallienne's "I Meant to do My Work Today." When the weather reporter for the day is having trouble deciding if it's raining or drizzling, Aileen Fisher's "I Like It When It's Mizzly" is the



perfect poem to read. When a student has just moved away, Langston Hughes' "Dream Keeper" helps to express how the children might feel. Certainly it is difficult to always find the right poem for the right moment. The point is to make some connection between the poem and the world of the child. I make a practice of reading a poem to my classes first thing each school day as well as at other appropriate times. Many times I choose a poem which describes the weather, the season, a coming holiday, or the present mood in the class. Other times, I choose a poem which seems unrelated to anything at the present, but has a future connection. For example, when I read Aileen Fisher's "Houses", I tell the children to "check out" their own houses for a face on their way home from school and to report back their findings the next day. Or, when we giggle over Laura Richards "Eletelephony", I ask them to notice other mix-ups in speech they might hear or try out during the rest of the school day.

I agree with May Hill Arbuthnot on the importance of reading poetry in a relaxed atmosphere.<sup>47</sup> I also agree that a poem should be read to children rather than having them read it on their own. That way the children

can hear the poem as it should sound, and not have to struggle through sounding out the words and figuring out the correct phrasing. I always read a poem, pause silently for a few seconds, and then read it again. Discussion, questions, sharing, or feelings may follow, and then a third, perhaps a fourth reading may occur depending on the request of the children. Several readings are important. They give the children a chance to become immersed in the poem and to begin to digest the meanings. I know that the children are immersed in a poem when they lean forward eagerly to hear each word; when they move their heads to the rhythm of the words; when their faces show pleasure, surprise, wistfulness; or when they join in with me on some of the words. Arbuthnot says that a new poem is like new music--it may have to be read several times before we learn to like it. If, by the end of two or three readings, I get few of the above responses, I know that this particular poem is not a good poem for this group of children at this time, and I drop it.

Charlotte Huck's rationale for more than one reading is the evocation of the "inner poem." She says, "Every poem is a poem within a poem; the poem of the idea

within the poem of words." I'm not sure that this idea of an "inner poem" is a valid one for most adults who read poetry, but it does seem to apply to children-- at least for some poems. Perhaps because children's minds are still in early developmental stages, and because their vocabularies are limited, they often seem to just hear the words of the poem during the first reading without considering much about the meaning contained in those words. Sometimes they like a poem just for its sound(s). When they have heard the poem more than once and especially if we have discussed it and/or done a creative activity suggested by the poem, they learn to appreciate the meaning in the poem as well as the sound and general feel of it. An example of a poem where this has always happened in my experience is David McCord's "Pickety Fence". On the first reading, the children love it just for its sound. When we have discussed what a pickety fence is and have recalled our personal experiences of hitting sticks against fences, they love the poem even more. In a way, we can say they have discovered the "inner poem". I don't really believe that a poem has an inner and outer part which are distinct from one another, but this distinction can be interpreted as referring to a process by which

children, and perhaps even some adults, experience some poems.

Whatever the theory, reading a poem over and over again works! Some children begin to memorize a poem after its second or third reading. Others ask me to read it over and over and sit there smiling and just reveling in the sounds of the words--immersion.

Once a poem has been read aloud to children, I think it should be readily available to children to read on their own. In fact, many kinds of poetry should be made available to children. Many a time, in an atmosphere of freedom and choice, children have brought a new poem to me which has delighted or intrigued them and have asked me to read it to the class.

At the end of each school year, I have a Poetry Reading Day for older elementary students. For about a week in advance I leave out all sorts of poetry books for them to peruse. Each child chooses a favorite poem--either one that has already been read in class or a new one, practices reading it aloud, and marks the place with a slip of paper with his or her name on it. On

Poetry Reading Day, the children take turns reading their poems aloud before the class. It is remarkable to see the great number of "old favorites" chosen, how attentive the children are to one another, and how eager they are to read aloud. It is also remarkable to hear the fine quality of their oral reading which may be due both to the children's familiarity with most of the poems and to hearing poetry read well on a daily basis. The success of this activity has led me to experiment with children reading poetry aloud to others throughout the year. I have found that a good deal of modeling by the teacher is essential for everyone to have a successful poetry experience. My biggest problem is time--they just want to keep going!

I rarely formally "analyze" a poem with young children. I am not interested in getting children to analyze or explain poems. What I strive for as Kenneth Koch explains, is to bring a particular poem close to the children and then stimulate some excitement!<sup>49</sup> An introduction to the general theme of the poem might involve a question of a statement which will help to "connect" the poem to the children's world. I might introduce "I Like It When It's Mizzly" by asking, "Did

you notice that it's rainy and mistly and foggy all at once outside today?" Another type of introduction might contain a statement like, "Since we've been reading about Paul Bunyan, I'd like to read you a poem which was written about him."

After reading and rereading the poem, we share our feelings, our wonderings, our favorite parts. Although with older children analysis is possible and more appropriate, I still try to limit it to what is important to the central meaning and feeling of the poem so that an experience which should be joyous and uplifting does not turn into drudgery. I try to follow the children's lead in determining how much analysis we will do.

We may then go on to do some exploratory activities which the poem suggests. Twelve complete lessons to go along with selected poems which have been used in my classroom are included in this thesis as examples of exploratory activities which can be done with classroom children. Some of these activities involve drawing pictures, making up nonsense words, writing creative stories, composing a song, collecting nature objects,

dancing, and inventing riddles. Analysis of a particular poem often occurs painlessly along with these activities. Many times I only attempt to clarify words when the children make a request that I do so. Even then, this clarification or explanation is done in a suggestive, eliciting manner so that the children do most of the thinking and then form their own conclusions. With poetry, there may be more than one possible conclusion. I always try to help the children to see that this is all right, and that even their teacher does not have all the answers. The reasoning behind my whole approach to the reading and sharing of poetry is to maintain as much as possible the joy and exuberance of experiencing poetry.

It is the teacher, more than the poetry or the lesson plans, who is responsible for maintaining the joy of the poetry experience and for successfully promoting critical and creative thinking through this poetry. Dolores Gallo says, "Curriculum materials designed to foster creativity fail to achieve their objectives when used by teachers without creative motivation." <sup>50</sup> The poetry selected and the lesson plans developed present many opportunities to promote critical and creative

thinking skills, but it is only the teacher who can provide the climate and motivation to make it all "work". In terms of climate, Gallo says that creative expression occurs best in a "psychologically-safe, non-authoritarian, stimulating, responsive environment" which would "provide opportunities and requests for the free expression of thoughts and feelings."<sup>51</sup>

R. E. Myers and E. Paul Torrance list five specific ways in which teachers can encourage creative thinking.

They are:

1. Treat questions with respect.
2. Treat imaginative ideas with respect.
3. Show your pupils that their ideas have value.
4. Occasionally have pupils do something "for practice" without the threat of evaluation.
5. Tie in evaluation with causes and consequences.<sup>52</sup>

Although I agree with all of these principles, I want to specifically explain the fourth and fifth in relation to the poetry curriculum presented in this



thesis. Throughout all of these lessons a formal evaluation is rarely made of a student's final product. In some lessons this would be difficult to do anyway as the activity is purely verbal in nature and/or is worked on by a whole group. In other cases where a story, poem, or picture is requested, the only formal evaluation would be, perhaps, a check, check-plus, check-minus system along with comments. Most of the evaluation which occurs is of an informal nature, i.e., positive comments by the teacher and/or the class about the ideas expressed in verbal, pictorial, or written forms, requests by the teacher or students to "publish" ideas before the class, and self-evaluation by each individual student. As can be seen in the lessons, a way to share or "publish" the products of critical and creative thinking is included in almost every lesson plan, whether it be a display on a bulletin board, a group performance, the making of a class book or the reading of a story--to just one other person or to the whole class. The advantage of this emphasis on informal evaluation is having students who love "to do" poetry and who are more eager to please themselves and their audience than to get a good grade. In addition, formal evaluation, either positive or negative, of a

student's work as he/she is developing their creativity can actually curtail growth. Because the student's natural inclination is to please the teacher, she/he may stick to more traditional routes which can assure approval. Even if a teacher sets up an atmosphere of creative freedom, the student may still be wary of wandering out too far if an A or a B is waiting at the end of the path.

J. Smith in Setting Conditions for Creative Teaching lists eighteen principles of creative teaching. The potential for all of them is present in the twelve lessons in this curriculum. For example, Smith states that "In creative teaching, something new, different, or unique results."<sup>53</sup> In the lessons to follow, the children create autumn trinkets, choreograph a dance, and compose music with the sounds of rain. He says that "In creative teaching, the process is as important as the product."<sup>54</sup> In the lessons, the children learn and practice brainstorming, transformation techniques, hypothesizing, and evaluating to name a few processes. As a last example, Smith states that "In creative teaching, methods are used which are unique to the development of creativity."<sup>55</sup> All of the lessons are

based on the principles and techniques arrived at by researchers which have been found to best promote the development of critical and creative thinking skills. Some of these mentioned by Smith which are present in the lessons are "application of deferred judgement, brainstorming, sensitivity to problems, redefinition, application of technique of forced relationships, and removal of known blocks to creativity."<sup>56</sup>

Thus, creative teaching along with creative lessons are what promote creative thinking. Also, I agree with Smith that "These lessons must be everyday occurrences rather than occasional spectacles."<sup>57</sup> That is why I include poetry as part of every day's curriculum. Sometimes the "lesson" might be one "what if" question to explore with the class. Other times we might get involved in a full scale activity which takes a good deal of time to complete and share. Regardless, using poetry as the vehicle, critical and creative thinking is promoted and practiced every day.

## Selection of Poetry

The poems used in the lessons and contained in the anthology of this thesis have been read and shared with children in grades one through six throughout my fourteen years of teaching elementary school. Sometimes the poems were merely read aloud. Other times they were discussed - either briefly or in great detail. At still other times, I involved the class in exploratory activities in which they might draw, write, or create new ideas. These activities turned into fully developed lessons. Most of the poems which were shared with the classes were selected by me according to the rationale which will be explained further along in this section of the chapter. Some of the poems were suggested to me by the children. The poems found in the anthology and used in the lessons have worked successfully with many groups of children. From the children's reactions, from their voluntary memorizations, and from their frequent requests for rereading, I have determined that the poems which are included are among their favorites. Not only are they favorites of my classroom children, but they are also my favorites. The initial selection of the

poems was based on three important criteria:

1. The quality of the poetry.
2. Their applicability to the children's lives.
3. Their potential for fostering and developing critical and creative thinking skills.

All of the poems included in the anthology and lessons are what I consider to be poems of quality. To explain my definition of quality poetry, I will start off by describing what it is not.

Quality poetry is not necessarily poetry which is written for children. Quality poetry is not only great poetry written by well-known poets. Quality poetry is not, as Kenneth Koch says, "cloyingly sweet" nor does it portray a trouble free life. <sup>58</sup> Poems of quality do show a richness and variety in vocabulary, imagery, and form. They may be written by well-known poets who write for adults but whose poems have a universal appeal. Those poems of quality which are written for children treat the child's life with respect and honesty. Most important, in terms of teaching poetry to children, I do

not consider a poem to be of quality unless it is received as such by the children themselves.

May Hill Arbuthnot would disagree with my trust in the children's taste in poetry. In a chapter called "Using Poetry with Children" from her book Children and Books, she claims that children's lack of experience with poetry makes them poor critics and that they are satisfied with rhyming jingles which she calls  
59  
doggerel. She states, "So we should be patient with children's enjoyment of poor poetry. Their taste will improve if they have repeated experiences with good poetry. This means that adults must know what is good and must also be able to recognize the characteristics of hackneyed doggerel not worth the children's time or  
60  
attention." She goes on to say that good poetry for children should have singing quality, story element,  
61  
nonsense and humor, and sensory content. In her opinion, there should be "no blank verse for children and very little free verse" because marked rhythms and  
62  
rhymes are what children like. She also maintains that poetry with figures of speech should be limited, as  
63  
children do not understand them. In fact, a whole section of Ms. Arbuthnot's chapter is called,

"Why Poetry is Difficult for Children." Contrary to Arbuthnot's view, I have always found my students to be good judges of quality poetry and to have a natural love for it. Perhaps I view them as good judges because the most important qualification of quality to me is a poem's good reception by the listener. By good reception I do not mean that the children automatically love a poem after its first reading, although that does happen. Good reception is what, hopefully, will happen after a poem has been read two or three times, has perhaps had one or two difficult words defined, and has been explored with gentle questioning by the teacher. If the children show little interest after these things have occurred, I determine that this is not a quality poem for them at that time. Continued poor reception by other classes or by this class at another time means that no matter how famous the poem may be, it will not be added to my anthology.

My students choose poems as their favorites which have the characteristics which Arbuthnot mentions: singing quality, story element, nonsense, and sensory content, but they also choose poetry written in blank verse and that which uses figures of speech. They

choose adult poetry as well as poetry written for children. They enjoy "jingles" as well as Shakespeare. I feel, as Kenneth Koch does, that children are not bothered by the same kinds of difficulties that adults are bothered by. He says that they are not intimidated when they don't understand all of what they read in poetry.<sup>64</sup> He also feels, as I do, that "Restricting children to poems supposed to be on their age or grade-level deprives them of too many good things."<sup>65</sup> In fact, restriction of any kind is not desirable, especially in introducing poetry to young children. Getting children to love and make a connection with any type of poem is far more important than making sure they hear a poem which is considered to be of good quality. Besides, poetry is a particularly personal form of literature--for children as well as for adults. Because young children so readily accept the opinions of their teachers, I try to point out the features of quality that I see in the poems I read to them-- i.e., rich sensory images, wonderful word sounds, and rhythm and creative ways to look at familiar things. The validity of my approach lies in its success in selecting for my anthology poetry which is loved by the children. Involved in this selection process then are



the teacher's values, her sensitivity to her students, and her ability to unlock the quality she sees in a poem. To sum up, although I choose to lead children down a path toward what I see to be quality poetry, the genuine enjoyment a child gets from a poem is what gives that poem its immediate good quality.

Thus, to my mind there are really two types of poetry quality. There is the generally accepted type which says that "good" poetry is rich in images, full of sensitivity, sophisticated in its use of language and rhythm. The standard "good" poetry has stood the test of time and is considered by adult critics to be of good quality. The other type of quality has more to do with the direct effect the whole poem has on its listeners regardless of the poem's individual characteristics. Naturally, a poem with the qualities mentioned above is more likely to be well received by its listeners, but this is not always true - especially for children.

The following poem by Shel Silverstein serves as an example:

Warning

Inside everybody's nose  
There lives a sharp-toothed snail.  
So if you stick your finger in,  
He may bite off your nail.  
Stick it farther up inside,  
And he may bite your ring off.  
Stick it all the way, and he  
May bite the whole darn thing off.

This is one of my children's all time favorite poems, not because of its traditional characteristics of good quality, but because the whole poem speaks directly to the children. It deals with a rather taboo subject which is important in the life of a child. This poem makes connections with my students' lives by dealing with the subject in a humorous way. A lot of the taboo quality of nose picking is dissipated. Yet some school administrators and librarians have banned Shel Silverstein's book of poetry from their shelves because of that very reason.

The poems included here are favorites of mine not only for their overall good quality, but because they make connections with the children's lives. This can be seen in the way the poems have been categorized into sections: Weather and Seasons, Holidays, School Situations, Problems in the Life of the Child, Seeing Real Objects in New Ways, Nonsense, Animals, and Personalities. All of these topics are, from my experience, ones in which elementary school children are keenly interested and curious, and which also fit into their daily experiences. These sections and the poems in them are extremely applicable and useful to the elementary school teacher as well. They can embellish, complement, and supplement the school curriculum and experience, and were designed specifically to accomplish just those aims. For example, when the children enter school on a rainy morning, there's Langston Hughes' "April Rain Song": when they're struggling with the complexities of addition and subtraction, Carl Sandburg's "Arithmetic" can help to relieve the tension: when Abraham Lincoln's birthday is coming up on the calendar, a poem like the Benets' "Nancy Hanks" can easily and pleasantly stimulate a discussion on our sixteenth President.

Several authors have offered support for the applicability of poetry to the particular thematic sections chosen for use in this anthology. The poems in Weather and Seasons can "help a child see and feel in new and different ways things that are often taken for granted,"<sup>66</sup> says Charlotte Huck, co-author of the Scott Foresman Basic Reading Program. May Hill Arbuthnot speaks of how a poem sorts out experiences (and knowledge I might add) and gives them order and meaning.<sup>67</sup> Thus comes a likely rationale for Holidays. This same rationale could be used for School Situations. Arbuthnot supports this theme further when she suggests that teachers "correlate school subjects with poetry when you can do so with authentic poetry."<sup>68</sup>

Benjamin DeMott lends credibility to Problems in the Life of the Child when he expresses his view that teachers should draw their students "into an effort to reflect upon and understand their own experience."<sup>69</sup> Poems which describe feelings and problems of children can help children discover what DeMott calls "man's awareness of the immediacy of himself."<sup>70</sup>

The poems in Seeing Real Objects in New Ways are particularly rich in metaphors. Robert Frost says that "Education by poetry is education by metaphor."<sup>71</sup> He goes on to extol the metaphor by saying that it is the height of poetry, even the height of all thinking.<sup>72</sup> How meaningful it is then to share and explore metaphors with children--the younger the better--especially when these metaphors give fresh meaning to images which are familiar to a young child and can thus help him or her to see things in new ways.

Much could be written on the use of metaphors in poetry and in teaching critical and creative thinking skills. What applies most directly to the twelve lessons included in this chapter are two of the metaphorical forms presented by J. J. Gordon. They are direct analogy and personal analogy. Direct analogy is defined as "a simple comparison of two objects or concepts."<sup>73</sup> Many of the lessons to follow work with direct analogy. "How to Eat a Poem" in which a poem is compared to a fruit and "The Garden Hose" in which the hose becomes a green serpent in the grass are two examples. The similies taught in the lesson on "Velvet Shoes" could also be placed under the direct analogy category.

The other form of personal analogy is defined by Gordon as "a description of how it feels to identify with a person, concept, a plant or animal, or a non-living thing." <sup>74</sup> The lesson on Cummings' "Chanson Innocente II" in which the children are asked to explore how it feels to be a Christmas tree is a good example of this metaphorical form.

The lessons found in the next chapter introduce types of metaphors, recognize the richness of them, and help the children experience the pleasures of inventing some of their own. I agree with Frost who said, "Unless you are at home in the metaphor, unless you have had your proper poetical education in the metaphor, you are not safe anywhere. Because you are not at ease with figurative values: you don't know the metaphor in its strength and its weakness." <sup>75</sup>

Arbuthnot cites several reasons for including Nonsense poetry in this anthology. She claims that it releases tension, gives relief from reason, offers good ear-training and serves as bait to better poetry. <sup>76</sup>

stimulates the playful manipulation of words and combinations of words.

I would justify the inclusion of a section on Animals because of the love and feelings of identification that most children have for animals. Similarly, poems on Personalities help children to identify with their fantasies and aspirations of themselves to be.

Along with quality and relevancy, the poems selected for this anthology are favorites of mine for a third important and useful reason: their potential to foster and develop critical and creative skills. As will be seen in the lessons that accompany some of the poems to follow, the poems I have selected have extensive possibilities for promoting creative thinking skills because they invite immersion, visualization, metaphorical, abstract thinking, and a sense of wonder--all important elements in the creative process. They are full of opportunities for original and divergent thinking through the answering of "what if" questions, their definition of problems, the use of transformation techniques, and the finding of forced relationships.

They provide possibilities to present tasks which are open-ended, fantastical, and combinatorial. In the critical thinking area, they give students practice in identifying problems, forming and testing hypotheses, and drawing conclusions. They help students to reason, evaluate, interpret, and generalize.

One poem which illustrates well the wonderful opportunities to teach thinking skills is Eve Merriam's "How to Eat a Poem."

How to Eat a Poem

Don't be polite,

Bite in.

Pick it up with your fingers and lick the  
juice that may run down your chin.

It is ready and ripe now, whenever you  
are.

You do not need a knife or fork or spoon  
or plate or napkin or tablecloth.

For there is no core

Or stem

Or rind

Or pit

Or seed



Or skin

To throw away.

77

Eve Merriam

The primary aims of the lesson that goes along with this poem are to promote low functional fixedness, and to encourage sensitivity to the meaning of a poem. Although not stated, also evident in this lesson is the promotion of flexibility and originality. In the lesson, the children engage in such activities as thinking of all the uses for a poem (fluency), hearing the poem without its title and making up their own title (forming and testing hypotheses, originality), inventing a unique fruit which fits the description given by Merriam in the poem (low functional fixedness, redefinition, flexibility), and discussing why the poet chose to compare a poem to something to eat (sensitivity to problems, reasoning, interpreting). As can be seen in the above explanation of a lesson, one poem can promote many thinking skills when it is used as a starting point for exploration.

It is the exposure to and practice in thinking skills that enable students to sort out, order, play

with, reflect upon, and understand new ways of looking at things. These skills not only give new insight into poetry, but can give children an additional outlook and approach to everything they encounter. In short, to quote Eve Merriam's poem, each poem is pregnant with creative suggestions which are "ready and ripe now, whenever you are."  
78

## Chapter IV

### Lesson Plans

This chapter includes selected poems from the anthology for which twelve lesson plans have been created and developed. Each lesson plan incorporates the objectives already stated and explained in the previous chapter:

1. To expose children to different types of poetry.

It should be noted that among the twelve poems are simple, whimsical, rhythmic poems like David McCord's "The Pickety Fence," and more serious, difficult, and free verse poems like Theodore Roethke's "Child on Top of a Greenhouse".

2. To make connections between poetry and the student's life experiences.

The motivation activities for each lesson are directly aimed at connecting each poem to the children's everyday experiences. The form of these activities may range from a probing

question to a class-made list to a physical activity.

3. To learn and practice critical and creative thinking skills.

As can be readily seen, both the aims and activities of each lesson features the promotion and practice of the many and various critical and creative thinking skills mentioned in this thesis.

As a preface to these lesson plans, the first pages of this chapter will explain how I arrived at the twelve lesson plans included in this chapter and how these lessons relate to the anthology at the end of the thesis. There will also be a review of the skills being taught in the lessons and an explanation will be made of any skills which have not been explained in previous chapters. Lastly, there will be a review of the types of lessons presented and an explanation of the model used in writing the lesson plans.

The twelve lesson plans were developed by me and have been tried out in the classrooms in which I have been teaching. They have been used with students in grades one through six with appropriately varying levels

of sophistication. Most of the lessons were developed from an idea which evolved from a simple poetry reading and sharing with the children.

An example of such a lesson is the one which goes along with David McCord's "Pickety Fence". The lesson evolved from my observation of the children's love of the rhythm in the poem. They asked me to read it over and over and couldn't refrain from both joining in with me on the second and third readings and from bobbing their heads and moving their bodies in rhythm with the poem. From my observations, I developed a lesson plan in which the children are asked to further explore the rhythm of the poem by moving around the room in different ways. They are then asked to think of some favorite words of their own and develop some rhythmic motions to go along with them.

In the development of the lessons, I not only worked with the reactions of the children to a particular poem, but I tried to discover how their initial reactions could be extended to learn and practice critical and creative thinking skills. For example, I observed that the children loved the nonsense

words and images in Laura E. Richard's "Eletelephony". The lesson I developed from this delight in Ms. Richard's nonsense poem asks the children to experiment with a creative thinking skill called forced relationships. The children must make connections between seemingly unrelated objects and make up some nonsense words to explain their new creations.

Each lesson plan is set up in the following fashion: The first section is labelled Aims. It sets forth the critical and creative thinking skills taught, practiced, or promoted in the lesson. Next comes Behavioral Objectives. This section describes what the children are supposed to have accomplished by the end of the lesson. It describes in more concrete terms exactly what the children will do to reach the goals set forth in Aims. Most of the lesson plans have a section called Motivation which comes next. In it are suggestions, sometimes with the exact words to say, for piquing the interest of the children and preparing them for the lesson to follow. A few lesson plans have a section labelled Articulation. This part is similar to Motivation but it is more specific to the poem and always includes exact words which can be said by the

teacher. The section called Procedure is exactly what it says--the part of the lesson which explains what to do. It is often the longest part. The Activity section is related directly to Procedure and highlights a particular activity about to be described. The Summary section describes what can be done to review or share what has been learned and/or accomplished in the lesson. The Follow-up section can also involve review and sharing but describes a different type of activity which can be done at a later time.

The twelve lesson plans to follow take many forms. Unlike Kenneth Koch's poetry curriculum, as well as the curriculum of Elizabeth McKim and Judith Steinbergh, which focus solely on the writing of poetry, my curriculum involves the children in many different types of activities. Thus, the children can explore poetry in many different ways which appeal to all of their senses and abilities. Some example directions which the lesson plans take are:

- the development of an idea or several ideas,  
i.e., how a garden hose is like a serpent.
- a piece of writing, i.e., what it's like to be a  
Christmas tree.

-artwork i.e., a drawing of what results when an image of an animal and that of an object are merged together.

-an activity, i.e., different ways to move rhythmically to "Pickety Fence".

Any or all of the poems in my anthology could be developed into a lesson plan which helps children learn and practice critical and creative thinking skills. I use countless unwritten lessons with my students in our poetry experiences together. The process I use is as follows:

1. I share a poem with the children i.e., John Travers Moore's "Cloud Horses".
2. We discuss the images of the cloud horses in the poem and we talk about cloud formations.
3. If the children respond enthusiastically, a natural exploratory activity would be to go outside, lie on the grass, and observe the clouds. As the children describe to one another what a particular cloud looks like to them, they are practicing flexibility, making forced



relationships, and are engaging in immersion.

4. We can then come back to the classroom and extend these skills even further by seeing images in ink blots, cracks in the ceiling, even in mistakes in our own drawings.

#1 How to Eat a Poem

Don't be polite.

Bite in.

Pick it up with your fingers and lick it

juice that may run down your chin.

It is ready and ripe now, whenever you

are.

You do not need a knife or fork or spoon

or plate or napkin or tablecloth.

For there is no core

or stem

or rind

or pit

or seed

or skin

to throw away.

Eve Merriam

#1 "How to Eat a Poem"

Eve Merriam

AIMS:

1. To promote low functional fixedness.
2. To promote fluency of ideas.
3. To encourage sensitivity to the meaning of a poem (through discussion and questions).

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the lesson each child will have:

1. Contributed to a list of unusual uses for a poem.
2. Helped to make up a title for a poem.
3. Understood through discussion the meaning of "How to Eat a Poem".
4. Invented a fruit which has the attributes listed in the poem and thought of some possible uses for such a fruit.

MOTIVATION:

"How many different things can you do with a poem besides read it?" Make a board list.  
Encourage originality.

PROCEDURE:

"I have a poem to pass out to you. (pass out poem with no title). Read it to yourself

while I read it aloud. (Read and re-read)  
You'll notice it has no title. What do you think it's about? (Give a hint: It's about how to eat something). Let's make up a title. (Discuss and put suggestions on the board. Select favorite ones). Here's what the title really is--

Let's re-read the poem with the correct title in mind."

Discussion of poem to follow. Some leading questions:

1. Can you think of some words to put in the place of eat that might explain what the poem means?
2. What does the poet want you to do with a poem?
3. What don't you have to worry about when you read a poem?
4. Why do you think the poet describes a poem like a food?

#### ACTIVITY:

Invent a new fruit which is like the one described in the poem. Draw it. Name it if you wish. Under your picture think of

and list some uses for this special food besides just eating it. (Ex. would be useful to serve for school lunches as there would be no trash)

**SUMMARY:**

Share and display fruits, perhaps on a bulletin board with a large cut out fruit basket. Beside it, display a list with all the possible uses for such fruits.

**FOLLOW-UP:**

Choose any object at home and see if you can think of as many unusual uses for it as you can. Bring in your ideas to share with the class.

#2 The Pickety Fence

The pickety fence

The pickety fence

Give it a lick it's

the pickety fence

Give it a lick it's

a clickety fency

Give it a lick it's

a lickety fence

Give it a lick

Give it a lick

Give it a lick

With a rickety stick

Pickety

Pickety

Pickety

Pick

--David McCord

#2 "The Pickety Fence"

David McCord

AIMS:

1. To promote flexibility through rhythmic movement.
2. To promote sensitivity to students' own ideas.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the lesson each child will have:

1. Experimented with rhythms by clapping, tapping, repeating words, etc.
2. Listened to David McCord's "Pickety Fence" and will be able to recite it with only minimal assistance from the teacher and/or the group.
3. Tried various rhythm activities to go along with the poem.
4. Identified an object or word which is a favorite of theirs because of its meaning and sound.
5. Used the above word(s) to make-up and/or write a rhythmic poem or song.

MOTIVATION:

"Do What I Do". Teacher goes through several rhythmic clapping patterns, then goes on to

tapping with foot, pencil, on checks, etc.  
(Children may have some good suggestions).  
"We've been making rhythm. Words can make  
rhythms, too. We can use any word, but it's  
more fun to use a word whose sound we like.  
Can anyone think of such a word or a few words  
that go together? Long words might be better  
than short words. (Ex. delicious, hippity,  
hoppity, Tinkerbelle) Let's try making rhythms  
with them." Note: This is an excellent  
activity to introduce or reinforce the idea of  
syllables.

**PROCEDURE:**

"Listen to the rhythms in this poem." Read  
"The Pickety Fence" and re-read trying to get  
the children to join in. Briefly explain what  
a pickety fence is and the relationship  
between it and the rickety stick. Bring out  
how the poem sounds like a stick hitting the  
fence.

"Stand up and find a space in the room to move.  
As I read the poem again, try to move a part,  
some parts, or all of your body to the rhythm  
of the poem. You may do this with or without



sounds like clapping or tapping. Try to say the parts of the poem that you remember along with me."

Repeat several times (or as long as the children's interest lasts). Suggest that a new movement be tried each time.

**ACTIVITY:**

"Think of a word or words that you like both the sound and meaning of. Let's make a list of suggestions on the board. Take the word or words you've chosen and make up a poem or song that has rhythm. You may write down your poem or practice it until you know it. You may want to move around or stand still."

**SUMMARY:**

"Read and/or show your poem or song to the group." The group can participate by imitating the favorite poems or song they hear.

**FOLLOW-UP:**

"Try making up rhythms with words when you come across a word or a few words that you like the sound of."

#3 Eletelephony

Once there was an elephant,  
Who tried to use the telephant--  
No! No! I mean an elephone  
Who tried to use the telephone--  
(Dear me! I am not certain quite  
That even now I've got it right.)

Howe'er it was, he got his trunk  
Entangled in the telehunk;  
The more he tried to get it free,  
The louder buzzed the telephee--  
(I fear I'd better drop the song  
Of elehop and telephong!)

--Laura E. Richards

### #3 "Eletelephony"

Laura E. Richards

#### AIMS:

1. To promote the opportunity to experiment with forced relationships.
2. To promote flexibility through playing with words.
3. To provide opportunities for elaboration.

#### BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the lesson the children as a group will have:

1. Made a list of all the ways an elephant could be related to a telephone.
2. Made a list of some nonsense words that could be formed by combining elephant and telephone.
3. Listened to the poem "Eletelephony" by Laura E. Richards.

Each child will have:

1. Cut out some pictures of animals and objects from magazines.
2. Randomly selected one animal and one object.

3. Forced the two together pictorially and added details.
4. Written a silly sentence about the picture by rearranging the name of the animal and the object in different ways to make some nonsense words.  
  
Optional: Written a story about their picture.

**MOTIVATION:**

Hold up a picture of an elephant and a telephone. "Here's a picture of an elephant and another one of a telephone. Can you think of some ways these two could go together to tell us something?" Answers could show their relationship or a real merging of the two. "Have you ever gotten your words mixed up? Let's mix up elephant and telephone and see how many silly words we can get." List them on the board.

**ARTICULATION:**

"We are going to hear a poem about an elephant and a telephone. Listen for what happens to them and listen for what happens to the words.

PROCEDURE:

Read the poem twice. Discuss what happens to the elephant and the telephone and what happens to the words. Try to relate back to the experimentation the children did during the motivation.

ACTIVITY: "It can be a lot of fun forcing together very different things. Let's try some.

1. First we will each cut out at least two pictures from a magazine--one of an animal and one of an object.
2. Next we will each choose an animal picture and an object picture with our eyes closed.
3. Make your two pictures go together by pasting them on a piece of paper in any way you choose. Add details to your picture to tell a little story. (Children may want to cut the pictures, superimpose one on the other, use them in relation to one another, etc.)

4. Make up a silly sentence about your picture by changing the animal and object words as Ms. Richards did in the poem--An elephant tried to use the telephant. Or an elephone who tried to use the telephone.

**SUMMARY:**

What are some ways you discovered that two things can be forced together?

**FOLLOW-UP:**

Write a story about your picture. (Collect these into a book).

#### #4 Arithmetic

Arithmetic is where numbers fly like pigeons  
in and out of your head.

Arithmetic tells you how many you lose or win  
if you know how many you had before you  
lost or won.

Arithmetic is seven eleven all good children  
go to heaven--or five six bundle of  
sticks.

Arithmetic is numbers you squeeze from your  
head to your hand to your pencil to your  
paper till you get the answer.

Arithmetic is where the answer is right and  
everything is nice and you can look out  
of the window and see the blue sky--or  
the answer is wrong and you have to start  
all over and try again and see how it  
comes out this time.

If you take a number and double it and double  
it again and then double it a few more  
times, the number gets bigger and bigger  
and goes higher and higher and only  
arithmetic can tell you what the number  
is when you decide to quit doubling.

Arithmetic is where you have to multiply--  
and you carry the multiplication  
table in your head and hope you  
won't lose it.

If you have two animal crackers, one good  
and one bad, and you eat one and a  
striped zebra with streaks all over  
him eats the other, how many animal  
crackers will you have if somebody  
offers you five six seven and you  
say No no no and you say Nay nay nay  
and you say Nix nix nix?

If you ask your mother for one fried egg  
for breakfast and she gives you two  
fried eggs and you eat both of them,  
who is better in arithmetic, you or  
your mother?

--Carl Sandburg



#4 "Arithmetic"

Carl Sandburg

AIMS:

1. The exploration and identification of transformation techniques (magnifying, minifying, modifying, combining, etc.) as seen in the poem.
2. To provide an opportunity to think of arithmetic in a fanciful, abstract way that might relate to the students' feelings.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the lesson each child will have:

1. Used some transformation techniques to tell how a number could change in appearance or activity.
2. Listened to the poem "Arithmetic" by Carl Sandburg.
3. Identified the many ways numbers are described in the poem.
4. Participated in a discussion of which parts of the poem connect with feelings they have about arithmetic.
5. Drawn a picture using only numbers.

MOTIVATION:

Hold up a large, bright cut out numeral.

Say: When we say the magic word "Arithmetic," this number will become magic and will be able to change its appearance and be able to do unusual things. Ready? "Arithmetic!" "Tell me some ways this number could change." Write list if desired. If the children get stuck, encourage transformation techniques, i.e., can we make it bigger, can we add something to it, change around its parts, make it move?

PROCEDURE:

Say: A poet named Carl Sandburg thinks of arithmetic in many different ways, some of them "magic", some of them not. Listen to his poem. READ ONCE. Say: I'm going to read the poem again slowly. Let's see if we can decide in each part how the poet has changed what arithmetic is and whether that change is "magic" or not. (Proceed through each stanza of the poem).

- Discussion:
1. Which part of the poem is your favorite and why?
  2. How does arithmetic make you feel?

SUMMARY AND FOLLOW-UP:

Draw a picture of something in our classroom using only numbers for all the parts. How many different ways did you change your numbers? SHARE AND DISPLAY PICTURES.

#5 Mr. Nobody

I know a funny little man,  
As quiet as a mouse,  
Who does the mischief that is done  
In everybody's house!  
There's no one ever sees his face,  
And yet we all agree  
That every plate we break was cracked  
By Mr. Nobody.

Tis he who always tears our books,  
Who leaves the door ajar,  
He pulls the buttons from our shirts,  
And scatters pins afar;  
That squeaking door will always squeak,  
For prithee, don't you see,  
We leave the oiling to be done  
By Mr. Nobody.

The finger marks upon the door  
By none of us are made;  
We never leave the blinds unclosed,  
To let the curtains fade.

The ink we never spill; the boots  
That lying round you see  
Are not our boots—they all belong  
To Mr. Nobody.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

#5 "Mr. Nobody"

Robert Louis Stevenson

AIMS:

1. To introduce redefinition of problems.
2. To promote the use of transformation techniques.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the lesson each student will have:

1. Contributed to a list of things that children do wrong or leave undone.
2. Listened to the poem "Mr. Nobody" and noted the mischief mentioned in it.
3. Chosen at least three things from the list in #1 or mentioned in the poem from #2.
4. Designed a Mr. or Ms. Nobody using transformation techniques to change the human figure.
5. Written a few sentences describing their creations.

MOTIVATION:

"Don't you hate to get scolded for little things you do wrong or forget to do around the house? Let's make a list of some of these things." (Ex. leaving fingermarks on

the towels, forgetting to close the screen door)

**ARTICULATION:**

"Wouldn't you and your brothers and sisters like to have someone or something to blame for all this trouble and mischief? Listen to a poem which might be able to help."

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Read poem twice.
2. After the second reading, have the children identify the mischief mentioned in the poem. A list could be made on the board.
3. Say: Let's change Mr. Nobody into a Mr. and Ms. Somebody and see what he or she might look like. The poem says he's a "funny little man," but he can be a she and look any way you imagine. Choose two or three things from either of our lists. Draw a Mr. or Ms. Nobody or Somebody who will be unlike any real person you or I have ever seen. He or she should look especially right for the kinds of mischief they get into. Think of changing around parts of a real human body and perhaps adding things to it. Make your creation different from anyone else's.

SUMMARY:

Write a few sentences describing your Mr. and Ms. Somebody to someone who is not able to see your picture.

FOLLOW-UP:

Read your description to a friend. Have them draw the creature you wrote about. Compare their picture with your picture. Ask yourself: Did I write a good description? Are there some things in my friend's picture that give me some good ideas for my picture or my friend some good ideas for her's?

FOR FUN:

Read the book Nobody Comes to Dinner by F. Emerson Andrews. Have fun making up Nobody sentences.



#6 Chanson Innocente

II

little tree  
little silent Christmas tree  
you are so little  
you are more like a flower.

who found you in the green forest  
and were you sorry to come away?  
see i will comfort you  
because you smell so sweetly

i will kiss your cool bark  
and hug you safe and tight  
just as your mother would,  
only don't be afraid

look the spangles  
that sleep all the year in a dark box  
dreaming of being taken out and allowed  
to shine,  
the balls the chains red and gold the  
fluffy threads,

put up your little arms  
and i'll give them to you to hold  
every finger shall have its ring  
and there won't be a single place dark  
or unhappy

then when you're quite dressed  
you'll stand in the window for everyone

to see  
and how they'll stare!  
oh but you'll be very proud

and my little sister and i will take hands  
and looking up at our beautiful tree  
we'll dance and sing  
"Noel Noel"

--e.e. cummings

#6 "Chanson Innocente II"

e.e. cummings

AIMS:

1. To provide children with the opportunity to express their opinions and give evidence for them.
2. To develop an understanding of personal analogy through poetry and visualization.
3. To promote the enjoyment of creative writing through writing a story using personal analogy.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the lesson each child will have:

1. Expressed their opinions about whether they'd like to be a Christmas tree or not.
2. Helped make a list stating the benefits and deficiencies of being a Christmas tree.
3. Listened to e.e. cummings' "Chanson Innocente II."
4. Written a story in which they are a Christmas tree and are telling what it would be like.

MOTIVATION:

"Would you like to be a Christmas tree?" Take an informal vote. "Why or why not?"

tree. You can be the one in this poem or another tree that you imagine. Tell how you feel about being a Christmas tree. You might want to include good and bad things. You can be talking to everyone or to a special person--for instance your owner or even to an object or an animal in the house. Do your best to imagine what it might be like to be a Christmas tree. Close your eyes like we did before and think for a few moments if it helps.

**SUMMARY:**

Share stories. Point out and/or elicit from the children the features in each story which best describes how a Christmas tree might feel. (Be sure to say something positive about each story read).

**FOLLOW-UP:**

Have the children repeat the visualization/immersion experience with another object or animal and write about it. They might also role-play and talk to class or have a dialogue between two similar or different objects.

PROCEDURE:

"Let's make two lists--one which tells what would be good about being a Christmas tree, and one which tells what would be bad.

(Examples: being decorated to look beautiful, being thrown out after Christmas) Listen to this poem in which a child is talking to his or her Christmas tree as if it were a child, too." Read "Chanson Innocente II." "The second time I read it, listen for the good and bad things about being a Christmas tree. What are the bad things? The good things? I'm going to read the poem one more time. This time close your eyes and imagine that you are the little tree. You are little, green, smell sweetly, and have cool bark. How do you feel about leaving the forest and coming to a strange house? How do you feel when the decorations are hung on your arms? How do you feel when you're standing in the window with the children dancing around you?" READ POEM. Let the children express verbally how they felt. ACTIVITY: "I would like each of you to write a story as if you were a Christmas

#7 April Rain Song

Let the rain kiss you.

Let the rain beat upon your head with  
silver liquid drops.

Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.  
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.  
The rain plays a little sleep-song on our  
roof at night --

And I love the rain.

--Langston Hughes

#7 "April Rain Song"

Langston Hughes

AIMS:

1. To promote fluency of ideas through attribute listening.
2. To present various types of songs--including poetry.
3. To give practice in the creative redefining of a problem.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, the children as a group will have:

1. Thought of many sounds that rain can make.
2. Listed words that describe different types of rain.
3. Participated in an orchestra of rain sounds.
4. Listened to "April Rain Song" by Langston Hughes.
5. Shared and identified kinds of rain described in each other's songs.

Each child will have:

1. Made up an original rain song using either words or sounds or both.

**MOTIVATION:**

"If I asked you to make a sound like the rain, what sound would you make? (Share verbally) Everyone think of a sound they like and let's put them together into an orchestra.

Ready--go."

**PROCEDURE:**

"That was fun, but let's work on composing our own song.

1. As you give me a sound of rain, see if you can tell me a word that describes what kind of rain it is or how it is raining. (Make a list. Children may need help with word choice. Ex. pouring, sprinkling, drizzling, etc.)
2. Let's listen to a poem which tells about the rain's song. Poems can be like songs. This poem is like a song about a song." Read the poem twice. Talk over.

**ACTIVITY:** Each of us is going to make up a rain song. You may use any method you wish. Some suggestions:

1. Put sounds or sound words together in a certain way that pleases you and/or tells a story.



(Ex. the sounds or sound words of a storm)

2. Write a poem about rain which is like a song.
3. Use real water to perform its own song. (Use eye dropper, squeeze bottle, etc.)

**SUMMARY:**

Share songs. Ask: What kinds of rain do you hear? What are some different ways we can make up songs?

**FOLLOW-UP:**

Help the class put together a Rain Show with descriptions, music, and poems about rain.

#8 Autumn

The morns are meeker than they were,

The nuts are getting brown;

The berry's cheek is plumper,

The rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf,

The field a scarlet gown.

Lest I should be old-fashioned,

I'll put a trinket on.

--Emily Dickinson

#8 "Autumn"

Emily Dickinson

AIMS:

1. To provide visualization experience.
2. To promote play with elements.
3. To promote elaboration.

Note: This lesson is best done in early autumn.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the lesson each student will have:

1. Helped list the signs of autumn.
2. Listened to the poem "Autumn" by Emily Dickinson.
3. Gone on an autumn walk and collected signs of autumn.
4. Selected their favorite autumn materials to work with.
5. Designed and made an original and appropriate autumn trinket for the poet and/or reader to wear.
6. Had a chance to visualize the signs of autumn in concrete terms.

PROCEDURE:

"Close your eyes and imagine a town called Autumn. Listen to a poem which tells what some of the inhabitants look like or are doing." Read and re-read "Autumn." "What is going on? What do the inhabitants look like? What details can you add which are not in the poem?"

- ACTIVITY 1. Pass out written copies of the poem. "Draw a picture of this town and make the inhabitants look as much like real people as you can. Use the descriptions in the poem to help you. You may also add other details.
2. Go out for a walk with the class and collect signs of autumn. (leaves, dry grass, nuts, etc.) Children may keep things they like and/or contribute to a central table. Explain what a trinket is. (i.e., piece of jewelry, pin, bracelet, decoration, etc.)

Say: "We are each going to make a special autumn trinket. It's going to be made of some real signs of autumn combined together in an interesting way that you choose. From our collected materials, choose the ones you like best. Play with them (re-arrange them) until you come up with an interesting looking trinket. You may use paper, string, glue, etc. to add to your trinket or to hold it together. Try to make your trinket different trinket different from everyone else's.

**SUMMARY:**

Have a mock Trinket Fashion Show with each child displaying and describing his or her trinket. Point out the interesting features of each which show elaboration and playfulness.

**FOLLOW-UP:**

Ask: "Who in the poem would most like your trinket and why?"

#9 Fog

The fog comes  
on little cat feet.

It sits looking  
over harbor and city  
on silent haunches  
and then, moves on.

--Carl Sandburg

#9 "Fog"

Carl Sandburg

AIMS:

1. To provide immersion and visualization experiences.
2. To understand and invent an analogy.
3. To practice predicting events and outcomes.
4. To promote elaboration of ideas by adding details.
5. To practice brainstorming.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson each student will have:

1. Made analogical connections between two different kinds of things.
2. Used the words of the poem to dramatize it.
3. Orally contributed to some lists comparing animals and "things" with weather.
4. Selected a type of weather and a "thing" to form their own analogy.
5. Written and/or drawn a description of this analogy.
6. Tested the validity of their analogy by trying it out on a partner.

MOTIVATION:

"Think about fog for a few moments. Close your eyes if it helps you to think. What color is the fog? Reach out and touch it. How does it feel? What does it sound like? How does it move? If I asked you to draw, to tell about fog as a "thing"--either living or non-living, what would you choose?" (Let children give responses).

PROCEDURE:

"Listen to this poem about fog and find out how the poet would draw his picture." READ POEM. "What would he draw?" RE-READ.

1. Let's all be the cat in Mr. Sandburg's poem. What words in the poem help to tell us how to move?
2. Why do you think the poet chooses a cat to show what fog is like? Let's list the ways a cat and fog are alike and use our five senses to help--see, touch, hear, feel, taste.

ACTIVITY 1. Let's brainstorm two lists--one with different types of weather --the other with different types of animals.



2. Choose one type of weather and an animal which best reminds you of that particular type of weather. You may choose words from the board or use other words. (Example: bull and storm) Describe the animal you chose with as many details as you can, being sure to show the ways in which it is like the weather you chose.
3. Write a poem, tell or write a story, draw a picture, or make a model to illustrate your choices.

**SUMMARY:**

1. Choose a partner. Tell each other what type of weather each of you chose.
2. Describe your animal without telling (or showing) your partner what it is. See if he/she can guess.
3. Select other partners if you have time and do the same thing.
4. Ask yourself: How do I feel about the two

things I put together? Which of my classmates' choices do I like best and why?

**FOLLOW-UP:**

Find animals which are like common objects and activities at home. (Examples: easy chair and bear, teapot and whale spouting) Bring in your ideas to share by writing or drawing about them.

#10 The Garden Hose

In the grey evening  
I see a long green serpent  
With its tail in the dahlias.

It lies in loops across the grass  
and drinks softly at the faucet.

I can hear it swallow.

--Beatrice Janosco

#10 The Toaster

A silver-scaled Dragon with jaws  
flaming red  
Sits at my elbow and toasts my bread.  
I hand him fat slices, and then, one  
by one,  
He hands them back when he sees they  
are done.

--William Jay Smith

#10 Radiator Lions

George lives in an apartment and  
His mother will not net  
Him keep a dog or polliwog  
Or rabbit for a pet.

So he has Radiator Lions.  
(The parlor is their zoo.)  
They love to fight but never bite  
Unless George tells them to.

But days when it is very cold  
And George can't go outdoors  
His parlor pets will glower  
And crouch upon all fours

And roar most awful roarings,  
The noise is very bad.  
Up their noses water goeses--  
That's what makes them mad.

But George loves Radiator Lions.  
He's glad, although they're wild,  
He hasn't dogs or polliwogs  
Like any other child.

--Dorothy Aldis

#10 "The Garden Hose" "The Toaster" "Radiator Lions"

BY: Beatrice Janosco William Jay Smith Dorothy Aldis

AIMS:

1. To develop an understanding for and enjoyment of metaphors.
2. To provide opportunities for children to discover metaphors in their environment.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the lesson each student will have:

1. Heard the three poems--"The Garden Hose," "The Toaster," and "Radiator Lions."
2. Had a chance to express how the poems make them feel.
3. Guessed at the titles of the poems.
4. Helped to brainstorm a list of other common objects which remind them of scary creatures.
5. Chosen a common object and its scary creature metaphor and drawn a picture or written a story about it.

MOTIVATION:

"Listen to this poem and see if you can guess what it is describing." Read the poem

"The Garden Hose" without the title. In the discussion of what it's describing, re-read the poem a few times and ask: Did you ever see some ordinary thing around the house or your room and think or imagine for a few moments that it was a scary creature? What are the clues in this poem that help us to guess what it's about? Why might the grey evening be important? What would you do or how would you feel if you really met such a creature in your yard? Once a garden hose is guessed, ask: How is a hose like a serpent?

PROCEDURE:

"Let's think of some common things around the house that might look like or remind us of scary creatures." (Ex. vacuum=vampire, shears=crocodile, rake=giant hand) Make a list. Accept whatever children offer. "Here are two more poems about ordinary things which seem to be like scary creatures. The first poem is easy to guess and you won't have to guess at all in the second poem." Read and re-read "The Toaster" and "Radiator Lions." Discuss how each is like the creature described.

ACTIVITY: "Choose a common object and the creature it reminds you of. You may choose from the list we've made, or think up your own, but don't use the hose, toaster, or radiator unless they remind you of a different creature. Write a riddle or riddle-poem to describe your object as a scary creature. Try not to mention the object's name. Try to mention at least two ways your object is like the scary creature you've chosen. On the back, draw a picture to give the answer. It might be fun to draw the picture so that it looks like the object and the scary creature at the same time.

SUMMARY:

Share the riddles with the whole class guessing.

FOLLOW-UP:

Display the riddles on a bulletin board to which children add other riddles as they discover metaphors in their everyday world.

#11 Child On Top Of A Greenhouse

The wind billowing out the seat of my britches,  
My feet crackling splinters of glass and dried putty,  
The half-grown chrysanthemums staring up like  
accusers,  
Up through the streaked glass, flashing with  
sunlight,  
A few white clouds all rushing eastward,  
A line of elms plunging and tossing like horses,  
And everyone, everyone pointing up and shouting!

--Theodore Roethke



#11 "Child on Top of a Greenhouse"

--Theodore Roethke

AIMS:

To practice the process of critical thinking  
(as described by Aylesworth):

1. Identify problems
2. Formulate hypotheses
3. Test hypotheses
4. Draw conclusions

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the lesson each child will have:

1. Listened to and read the poem "Child on Top of a Greenhouse" by Theodore Roethke--without the title.
2. Helped the class identify what they need to know to discover what the poem is about.
3. Contributed to a class brainstorming experience to gather information and formulate possible hypotheses.
4. Worked in a group to test hypotheses and come up with a conclusion.
5. Evaluated conclusions with the class to try to come up with the correct title or subject matter of the poem.

#### MOTIVATION:

Say: The poem I am going to read to you today is going to require some detective work to find out what it's about. I am going to read it to you without the title which gives the secret information. Your job will be to find clues in the poem and then use what you know about them to figure out what is going on in the poem. You will be operating like a detective trying to solve a difficult case.

#### PROCEDURE:

1. Read the poem to the class without the title. Two readings are recommended.
2. Ask the children: What do you need to know? Make a list of these questions on the board. Two main questions should be starred or suggested by the teacher: 1. Who is in the poem? 2. What is he or she doing?
3. Say: Let's brainstorm and make a list of all the things we know from the clues in the poem. (For example: windy day, broken glass, etc.) If the children have difficulty doing this, try reading one line at a time and leading them to tell what they know from each clue.

Define with the class any troublesome words like britches or putty.

4. Give each child a copy of the poem without the title. Divide the class into small groups of 5 or 6 students. Say: Your job now is to work with your group to test the guesses or hypotheses we have made with all the clues in the poem and to decide which one makes the most sense. Possibly your group might come up with a new hypothesis. Do this by asking lots of questions and by making sure that your facts or clues match your hypothesis.
5. The teacher should travel from group to group giving guidance. Give enough time for each group to come up with a conclusion.
6. Write the conclusion each group comes up with on the board. Test each one together as a class and come up with a class consensus of the best one.

**SUMMARY:**

Read the actual title of the poem and read the poem again. Test the title by pointing out all the supporting clues if necessary.

FOLLOW-UP:

Speculate with the class about the possible circumstances for this child being on top of a greenhouse. Story telling or story writing might also be done.

Note: A similar procedure can be used for other poems.

Two suggestions are:

"The Listeners" Walter de la Mare

"The Steam Shovel" Charles Malam

#12 Earth

If this little world tonight  
    Suddenly should fall through space  
In a hissing, headlong flight,  
    Shrivelling from off its face,  
As it falls into the sun,  
    In an instant every trace  
Of the little crawling things--  
    Ants, philosophers, and lice,  
Cattle, cockroaches, and kings,  
    Beggars, millionaires, and mice,  
Men and maggots all as one  
    As it falls into the sun...  
Who can say but at the same  
    Instant from some planet far  
A child may watch us and exclaim:  
    "See the pretty shooting star!"

--Oliver Herford

#12 Earth

"A planet doesn't explode of itself," said drily  
The Martian astronomer, gazing off into the air -

"That they were able to do it is proof that  
Highly Intelligent beings must have been living there."

--John Hall Wheelock

#12 "Earth" Oliver Herford

#12 "Earth" John Hall Wheelock

AIMS:

1. To provide students with the opportunity to use transformation techniques, especially reversal.
2. To promote fluency of ideas.
3. To give experience in exploring other points of view.
4. To provide motivation for writing.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

Each student will:

1. Listen to "Earth" by Oliver Herford and "Earth" by John Hall Wheelock and tell how they are alike.
2. Be able to identify the point of view in each poem and tell how it is the reverse of the point of view we are used to.
3. Contribute to a class list of situations which reverse a usual point of view.
4. Choose a reversed situation--either from the board or one of their own.
5. Write a story or poem stating and explaining that point of view.

6. Share his/her story or poem with the class.

MOTIVATION:

"Have you ever heard the expression, 'Take a walk in someone else's shoes?' What is this expression trying to tell you?" Elicit the idea of other points of view through a class discussion.

ARTICULATION:

"How many of you have ever seen a shooting star?" (Have a description given) "Did you ever wonder what caused it to happen? Listen to this poem which tries to explain a shooting star from a very different point of view."

PROCEDURE:

1. Read "Earth" by Oliver Herford and discuss the point of view with the class.
2. Read "Earth" by John Hall Wheelock. Have the children explain how the points of view in the two poems are alike.
3. Help the children to make a class list of situations in which a reverse point of view is possible. Such situations might be considered positive from one point of view and negative from the opposite one.



- Ex. - a fish struggling on a line
- a TV being turned on
  - a beautiful day as seen by two different people

4. Have the children choose a situation from the board or make up one of their own.

ACTIVITY: Explain to the class that each child will write a story or poem which states and explains a point of view. Possible formats are:

1. First person story
2. Poem or story which gives a point of view but leaves out whose point of view is given so that it must be guessed.
3. Dialogue showing both points of view, i.e., fish and fisherman.

SUMMARY:

Have the children read their story or poem aloud to the class. The class should be able to state what the point of view is in each.

FOLLOW-UP:

Keep an on-going class chart of unusual points of view for future writing ideas or just for fun.

Chapter V

Poetry Anthology

How to Eat a Poem

Don't Be polite.

Bite in.

Pick it up with your fingers and lick the  
juice that may run down your chin.

It is ready and ripe now, whenever you are.

You do not need a knife or fork or spoon  
or plate or napkin or tablecloth.

For there is no core  
or stem  
or rind  
or pit  
or seed  
or skin  
to throw away.

--Eve Merriam

Where is a Poem?

Where is a poem?

As far away

As a rainbow span,

Ancient Cathay,

Or Afghanistan;

Or it can be near

As where you stand

This very day

On Main Street here

With a poem

In your hand.

--Eve Merriam

## Weather and Seasons

Weather is Full of the Nicest Sounds	Aileen Fisher
Autumn	Emily Dickinson
Fog	Carl Sandburg
November Night	Adelaide Crapsey
Galoshes	Rhoda W. Bacmeister
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening	Robert Frost
Sparkle Snow	Aileen Fisher
Daffodils	William Wordsworth
Chanson Innocente	e.e. cummings
I Like It When It's Mizzly	Aileen Fisher
April Rain Song	Langston Hughes
The Garden Year	Sara Coleridge

Weather is Full of the Nicest Sounds

Weather is full  
of the nicest sounds:  
it sings  
and rustles  
and pings  
and pounds  
and hums  
and tinkles  
and strums  
and twangs  
and wishes  
and sprinkles  
and splishes  
and bangs  
and mumbles  
and grumbles  
and rumbles  
and CRASHES.  
I wonder  
if thunder  
frightens a bee,  
a mouse in her house,

a bird in a tree,  
a bear  
or a hare  
or a fish in the sea?  
NOT ME!

--Aileen Fisher

Autumn

The morns are meeker than they were,

The nuts are getting brown;

The berry's cheek is plumper,

The rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf,

The field a scarlet gown.

Lest I should be old-fashioned,

I'll put a trinket on.

--Emily Dickinson



Fog

The fog comes  
on little cat feet.

It sits looking  
over harbor and city  
on silent haunches  
and then, moves on.

--Carl Sandburg

November Night

Listen...

With faint dry sound,

Like steps of passing ghosts,

The leaves, frost-crisp'd, break from the trees

And fall.

--Adelaid Crapsey

## Galoshes

Susie's galoshes  
Make splishes and sploshes  
And slooshes and sloshes,  
As Susie steps slowly  
Along in the slush.

They stamp and they tramp  
On the ice and concrete,  
They get stuck in the muck and the mud;  
But Susie likes much best to hear

The slippery slush  
As it slooshes and sloshes  
And splishes and sploshes,  
All round her galoshes!

--Rhoda W. Bacmeister

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose Woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

The little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely and dark and deep  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.  
And miles to go before I sleep.

--Robert Frost

Sparkle Snow

Last night the sky was reckless,  
A reckless millionaire:  
It threw down chips of diamonds  
And strewed them everywhere.  
And now this bright cold morning  
When we go stomping out  
Footprints full of diamonds  
Follow us about.

--Aileen Fisher

Daffodils

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,--  
A host of golden daffodils  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the Milky Way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I, at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they  
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;  
A poet could not but be gay  
In such a jocund company;  
I gazed--and gazed--but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought.

For oft, when on my couch I lie,  
    In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
    Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
    And dances with the daffodils.

--William Wordsworth

Chanson Innocente

I

In Just--

spring when the world is mud--

luscious the little

lame balloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come

running from marbles and

piracies and it's

spring

when the world is puddle--wonderful

the queer

old balloonman whistles

far and wee

and bettyanddisbel come dancing

from hop--scotch and jump-rope and



its  
spring  
and  
the  
goat--footed

balloonMan whistles  
far  
and  
wee

--e.e. cummings

I Like It When It's Mizzly

I like it when it's mizzly  
and just a little drizzly  
so everything looks far away  
and make-believe and frizzly.

I like it when it's foggy  
and sounding very froggy.  
I even like it when it rains  
on streets and weepy windowpanes  
and catkins in the poplar tree  
and ME.

--Aileen Fisher

April Rain Song

Let the rain kiss you.

Let the rain beat upon your head with silver  
liquid drops.

Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.

The rain makes running pools in the gutter.

The rain plays a little sleep-song on our roof  
at night--

And I love the rain.

--Langston Hughes

## The Garden Year

January brings the snow,  
Makes our feet and fingers glow.

February brings the rain,  
Thaws the frozen lake again.

March brings breezes, loud and shrill,  
To stir the dancing daffodil.

April brings the primrose sweet,  
Scatters daisies at our feet.

May brings flocks of pretty lambs,  
Skipping by their fleecy dams.

June brings tulips, lilies, roses,  
Fills the children's hands with posies.

Hot July brings cooling showers,  
Apricots, and gillyflowers.

August brings the sheaves of corn,  
Then the harvest home is borne.

Warm September brings the fruit;  
Sportsmen then begin to shoot.

Fresh October brings the pheasant;

Then to gather nuts is pleasant.

Dull November brings the blast;

Then the leaves are whirling fast.

Chill December brings the sleet,

Blazing fire, and Christmas treat.

--Sara Coleridge

## Holidays

Halloween	Harry Behn
The Witch on a Windy Night	Bernice W. Carlson
Thanksgiving Day	Lydia Maria Child
Chanson Innocente II	e. e. cummings
A Valentine	Eleanor Hammond
Nancy Hanks	Rosemary and Stepehn Vincent Benet
As I Was Going Out One Day	Anonymous

Hallowe'en

Tonight is the night  
When dead leaves fly  
Like witches on switches  
Across the sky,  
When elf and sorite  
Flit through the night  
On a moony sheen.

Tonight is the night  
When leaves make a sound  
Like a gnome in his home  
Under the ground,  
When spooks and trolls  
Creep out of holes  
Mossy and green.

Tonight is the night  
When pumpkins stare  
Through sheaves and leaves  
Everywhere,

When ghoul and gnost  
And goblin host  
Dance round their queen.  
It's Hallowe'en.

--Harry Behn



The Witch on a Windy Night

An old witch sat at home all alone,  
Cooking and cooking a big soup bone.  
And the wind blew all around the house.

Shuuuuuuuuuu!

"Oh, who will share my soup?" she crowed.  
"If I drink it all, I'll surely explode!"  
And the wind blew all around the house.

Shuuuuuuuuuu!

A big dog barked at her front door.  
"Go away!" she said. "I chased you before!"  
And the wind blew all around the house.

Shuuuuuuuuuu!

"Oh, will you share your soup with me?"  
The black cat purred, "With me? With me?"  
And the wind blew all around the house.

Shuuuuuuuuuu!

"I've changed my mind! I hate to share!"  
"Let everyone starve for all I care!"  
And the wind blew all around the house.

Shuuuuuuuuuu!

"I'll drink the soup myself!" she sang.

What happened then? She exploded.

Bang!

And the wind blew all around the house.

Shuuuuuuuuuu!

--Bernice Wells Carlson

Thanksgiving Day

Over the river and through the wood,  
To grandfather's house we go;  
The horse knows the way  
To carry the sleigh  
Through the white and drifted snow.

Over the river and through the wood--  
Oh, how the wind does blow!  
It stings the toes  
And bites the nose,  
As over the ground we go.

Over the river and through the wood,  
To have a first-rate play.  
Hear the bells ring,  
"Ting-a-ling-ding!"  
Hurrah for Thanksgiving Day!

Over the river and through the wood  
Trot fast, my dapple-gray!  
Spring over the ground,  
Like a hunting-hound!  
For this is Thanksgiving Day.

Over the river and through the wood,  
And straight through the barnyard gate.  
We seem to go  
Extremely slow,-  
It is so hard to wait!

Over the river and through the wood--  
Now grandmother's cap I spy!  
Hurrah for the fun!  
Is the pudding done?  
Hurrah for the pumpkin-pie!

--Lydia Maria Child

Chanson Innocente

II

little tree

little silent Christmas tree

you are so little

you are more like a flower

who found you in the green forest

and were you sorry to come away?

see i will comfort you

because you smell so sweetly

i will kiss your cool bark

and hug you safe and tight

just as your mother would,

only don't be afraid

look the spangles

that sleep all the year in a dark box

dreaming of being taken out and allowed to shine,

the balls the chains red and gold the fluffy threads,

put up your little arms  
and i'll give them to you to hold  
every finger shall have its ring  
and there won't be a single place dark or unhappy  
  
then when you're quite dressed  
you'll stand in the window for everyone to see  
and how they'll stare!  
oh but you'll be very proud  
  
and my little sister and i will take hands  
and looking up at our beautiful tree'  
we'll dance and sing  
"Noel Noel"

--e.e. cummings

A Valentine

Frost flowers on the window glass,  
Hopping chickadees that pass,  
Bare old elms that bend and sway,  
Pussy willows, soft and gray,  
  
Silver clouds across the sky,  
Lacy snowflakes flitting by,  
Icicles like fringe in line--  
That is Outdoor's valentine!

--Eleanor Hammond

Nancy Hanks

If Nancy Hanks  
Came back as a ghost,  
Seeking news  
Of what she loved most,  
She'd ask first  
"Where's my son?  
What's happened to Abe?  
What's he done?"

"Poor little Abe,  
Left all alone  
Except for Tom  
Who's a rolling stone;  
He was only nine  
The year I died.  
I remember still  
How hard he cried.

"Scraping along  
In a little shack,  
With hardly a shirt  
To cover his back,



And a prairie wind  
To blow him down,  
Or pinching times  
If he went to town.

"You wouldn't know  
About my son?  
Did he grow tall?  
Did he have fun?  
Did he learn to read?  
Did he get to town?  
Do you know his name?  
Did he get on?"

--Rosemary and Stephen  
Vincent Benet

As I Was Going Out One Day

(For April Fool's Day)

As I was going out one day,  
My head fell off and rolled away.  
But when I saw that it was gone,  
I picked it up and put it on.  
And when I got into the street,  
A fellow cried, "Look at your feet!"  
I looked at them and sadly said,  
"I've left them both asleep in bed!"

--Anonymous

Problems in the Life of the Child

Mr. Nobody	Robert Louis Stevenson
I Woke up This Morning	Karla Kuskin
The Dream Keeper	Langston Hughes
Every Time I Climb a Tree	David McCord
Child on Top of a Greenhouse	Theodore Roethke
My Favorite Word	Lucia and James L. Hymes, Jr.
Sometimes I Feel This Way	John Ciardi

Mr. Nobody

I know a funny little man,  
As quiet as a mouse,  
Who does the mischief that is done  
In everybody's house!  
There's no one ever sees his face,  
And yet we all agree  
That every plate we break was cracked  
By Mr. Nobody.

'Tis he who always tears our books,  
Who leaves the door ajar,  
He pulls the buttons from our shirts,  
And scatters pins afar;  
That squeaking door will always squeak,  
For prithee, don't you see,  
We leave the oiling to be done  
By Mr. Nobody.

The finger marks upon the door  
By none of us are made;  
We never leave the blinds unclosed,  
To let the curtains fade.

The ink we never spill; the boots  
That lying round you see  
Are not our boots--they all belong  
To Mr. Nobody.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

I Woke Up This Morning

I woke up this morning  
At quarter past seven.  
I kicked up the covers  
And stuck out my toe.  
And ever since then  
(That's quarter past seven)  
They haven't said anything  
Other than "no."

They haven't said anything  
Other than "Please, dear,  
Don't do what you're doing,"  
Or "Lower your voice."  
Whatever I've done  
And however I've chosen,  
I've done the wrong thing  
And I've made the wrong choice.

I didn't wash well  
And I didn't say thank you.  
I didn't shake hands  
And I didn't say please.

I didn't say sorry  
When, passing the candy,  
I banged the box into  
Miss Witelson's knees.  
I didn't say sorry.  
I didn't stand straighter.  
I didn't speak louder  
When asked what I'd said.  
Well, I said  
That tomorrow  
At quarter past seven,  
They can  
come in and get me  
I'M STAYING IN BED.

--Karla Kuskin

The Dream Keeper

I loved my friend.  
He went away from me.  
There's nothing more to say.  
The poem ends,  
Soft as it began--  
I loved my friend.

--Langston Hughes



Every Time I Climb a Tree

Every time I climb a tree

Every time I climb a tree

Every time I climb a tree

I scrape a leg

Or skin a knee

And every time I climb a tree

I find some ants

Or dodge a bee

And get the ants

All over me.

And every time I climb a tree

Where have you been?

They say to me

But don't they know that I am free

Every time I climb a tree?

I like it best

To spot a nest

That has an egg

Or maybe three.

And then I skin  
The other leg  
But every time I climb a tree  
I see a lot of things to see  
Swallows rooftops and TV  
And all the fields and farms there be  
Every time I climb a tree  
Though climbing may be good for ants  
It isn't awfully good for pants  
But still it's pretty good for me  
Every time I climb a tree.

--David McCord

Child on Top of a Greenhouse

The wind billowing out the seat of my britches,  
My feet crackling splinters of glass and dried putty,  
The half-grown chrysanthemums staring up like accusers,  
Up through the streaked glass, flashing with sunlight,  
A few white clouds all rushing eastward,  
A line of elms plunging and tossing like horses,  
And everyone, everyone pointing up and shouting!

--Theodore Roethke

My Favorite Word

There is one word--

My favorite--

The very, very best.

It isn't No or Maybe,

It's Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, YES!

"Yes, yes, you may," and

"Yes, of course," and

"Yes, please help yourself."

And when I want a piece of cake,

"Why, yes. It's on the shelf."

Some candy? "Yes."

A cookie? "Yes."

A movie? "Yes, we'll go."

I love it when they say my word:

Yes, Yes, YES! (not No.)

--Lucia and James L. Hymes, Jr.

Sometimes I Feel This Way

I have one head that wants to be good,

And one that wants to be bad.

And always, as soon as I get up,

One of my heads is sad.

"Be bad," says one head. "Don't you know

It's fun to be bad. Be as bad as you like.

Put sand in your brother's shoe--that's fun.

Put gum on the seat of your sister's bike."

"What fun is that?" says my other head.

"Why not go down before the rest

And set things out for breakfast?

My, that would please Mother.

Be good--that's best."

"What! Better than putting frogs in the sink?

Or salt in the tea-pot? Have some fun.

Be bad, be bad, be good and bad.

You know it is good to be bad," says One.

"Is it good to make Sister and Brother sad?

And Mother and Daddy? And when you do,

Is it good to get spanked? Is it good to cry?

No, no, Be good--that's best," says Two.

So one by one they say what they say,

And what they say is "Be Good--Be Bad."

And if One is happy that makes Two cry.

And if Two is happy that makes One sad.

Some day maybe, when I grow up,

I shall wake and find I have just one--

The happy head, But which will it be?

I wish I knew, They are both some fun.

--John Ciardi

## School Life

Arithmetic

Carl Sandburg

I Meant to do My Work Today

Richard Le Gallienne

Better Than Gold

Adapted From Old English

Books

Joseph Joel Keith

## Arithmetic

Arithmetic is where numbers fly like pigeons in and out of your head.

Arithmetic tells you how many you lose or win if you know how many you had before you lost or won.

Arithmetic is seven eleven all good children go to heaven--or five six bundle of sticks.

Arithmetic is numbers you squeeze from your head to your hand to your pencil to your paper till you get the answer.

Arithmetic is where the answer is right and everything is nice and you can look out of the window and see the blue sky--or the answer is wrong and you have to start all over and try again and see how it comes out this time.

If you take a number and double it and double it again and then double it a few more times, the number gets bigger and bigger and goes higher and higher and only arithmetic can tell you what the number is when you decide to quit doubling.

Arithmetic is where you have to multiply--and you carry the multiplication table in your head and hope you won't lose it.



If you have two animal crackers, one good and one bad,  
and you eat one and a striped zebra with streaks all  
over him eats the other, how many animal crackers  
will you have if somebody offers you five six seven  
and you say No no no and you say Nay nay nay and you  
say Nix nix nix?

If you ask your mother for one fried egg for breakfast  
and she gives you two fried eggs and you eat both  
of them, who is better in arithmetic, you or your  
mother?

--Carl Sandburg

I Meant to do My Work Today

I meant to do my work today

But a brown bird sang in the apple-tree,

And a butterfly flittered across the field,

And all the leaves were calling me.

And the wind went sighing over the land,

Tossing the grasses to and fro,

And a rainbow held out its shining hand--

So what could I do but laugh and go?

--Richard Le Gallienne

Better Than Gold

O for a book and a shady nook  
    Either indoors or out;  
With the green leaves whispering overhead,  
Or the street noise all about.  
Where I may read all at my ease,  
    Both of the new and old;  
For a jolly good book whereon to look,  
    Is better to me than gold.

--Adapted from Old English

Books

Books are more than words,  
More than birds'  
Brightness, more than song.  
They last long.

When the covers close  
Wisdom grows;  
Every thought is root,  
Leaf, and fruit.

--Joseph Joel Keith

Nonsense

Eletelephony

Laura E. Richards

Jabberwocky

Lewis Carroll

The Owl and the Pussycat

Edward Lear

The Purple Cow

Gelett Burgess

Grandpa Dropped His Glasses

Leroy F. Jackson

## Elelephony

Once there was an elephant,  
Who tried to use the telephant--  
No! no! I mean an elephone  
Who tried to use the telephone--  
(Dear Me! I am not certain quite  
That even now I've got it right.)

Howe'er it was, he got his trunk  
Entangled in the telehunk;  
The more he tried to get it free,  
The louder buzzed the telephee--  
(I fear I'd better drop the song  
of elehop and telephong!)

--Laura E. Richards

## Jabberwocky

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogroves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought---  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
And stood awile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,  
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?

    Come to my arms, my beamish boy!

O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!

    He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig and the slithy toves

    Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:

All mimsy were the borogroves,

    And the mome raths outgrabe.

--Lewis Carroll



## The Owl and the Pussycat

The Owl and the Pussycat went to sea

In a beautiful pea-green boat:

They took some honey, and plenty of money

Wrapped up in a five-pound note.

The Owl looked up to the stars above,

And sang to a small guitar,

"O lovely Pussy, O Pussy, my love,

What a beautiful Pussy you are,

You are,

You are!

What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl,

How charmingly sweet you sing!

Oh, let us be married; too long we have tarried:

But what shall we do for a ring?"

They sailed away, for a year and a day,

To the land where the bong-tree grows;

And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood,

With a ring at the end of his nose,

His nose,

His nose,

With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling  
Your ring?" said the Piggy, "I will."  
So they took it away, and were married next day  
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.  
They dined on mince and slices of quince,  
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;  
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,  
They danced by the light of the moon,  
The moon,  
The moon,  
They danced by the light of the moon.

--Edward Lear

The Purple Cow

I never saw a Purple Cow,  
I never hope to see one,  
But I can tell you, anyhow,  
I'd rather see than be one!

--Gelett Burgess

## Grandpa Dropped His Glasses

Grandpa dropped his glasses once  
In a pot of dye,  
And when he put them on again  
He saw a purple sky.  
Purple birds were rising up  
From a purple hill,  
Men were grinding purple cider  
At a purple mill.  
Purple Adeline was playing  
With a purple doll,  
Little purple dragonflies  
Were crawling up the wall.  
And at the supper table  
He got crazy as a loon  
From eating purple apple dumplings  
With a purple spoon.

--Leroy F. Jackson

Seeing Real Objects in New Ways

The Pickety Fence	David McCord
Skyscrapers	Rachel Field
Cloud Horses	John Travers Moore
Houses	Aileen Fisher
The Garden Hose	Beatrice Janosco
The Toaster	William Jay Smith
Radiator Lions	Dorothy Aldis
Dragon Smoke	Lilian Moore
Corner	Lee Bennett Hopkins
Haiku	Buson
Motor Cars	Rowena Bennett
Earth	Oliver Herford
Earth	John Hall Wheelock

The Pickety Fence

The pickety fence

The pickety fence

Give it a lick it's

The pickety fence

Give it a lick it's

A clickety fence

Give it a lick it's

A lickety fence

Give it a lick

Give it a lick

Give it a lick

With a rickety stick

Pickety

Pickety

Pickety

Pick

--David McCord

## Skyscrapers

Do skyscrapers ever grow tired  
Of holding themselves up high?  
Do they ever shiver on frosty nights  
With their tops against the sky?  
Do they feel lonely sometimes  
Because they have grown so tall?  
Do they ever wish they could lie right down  
And never get up at all?

--Rachel Field

## Cloud Horses

Sitting on a hilltop  
Beneath a windy sky  
And all about me the summer's hum:  
Nothing like it on earth or on high--  
The cloud horses, cloud horses,  
cloud horses come!

Storming down the twilight,  
Straining at the dawn,  
With streaming manes they carry on:  
Silently galloping, vanishing some--  
The cloud horses, cloud horses,  
cloud horses come!

--John Travers Moore



## Houses

Houses are faces  
(haven't you found?)  
with their hats in the air,  
and their necks on the ground.

Windows are noses,  
windows are eyes,  
and doors are the mouths  
of a suitable size.

And a porch--or the place  
where porches begin--  
is just like a mustache  
shading the chin.

--Aileen L. Fisher

The Garden Hose

In the grey evening  
I see a long green serpent  
With its tail in the dahlias.

It lies in loops across the grass  
And drinks softly at the faucet.

I can hear it swallow.

--Beatrice Janosco

## The Toaster

A silver-scaled Dragon with jaws flaming red  
Sits at my elbow and toasts my bread.

I hand him fat slices, and then, one by one,  
He hands them back when he sees they are done.

--William Jay Smith

## Radiator Lions

George lives in an apartment and  
His mother will not let  
Him keep a dog or polliwog  
Or rabbit for a pet.

So he has Radiator Lions.  
(The parlor is their zoo.)  
They love to fight but never bite  
Unless George tells them to.

But days when it is very cold  
And George can't go outdoors  
His parlor pets will glower  
And crouch upon all fours

And roar most awful roarings.  
The noise is very bad.  
Up their noses water goeses--  
That's what makes them mad.

But George loves Radiator Lions.  
He's glad, although they're wild,  
He hasn't dogs or polliwogs  
Like any other child.

--Dorothy Aldis

Dragon Smoke

Breathe and blow  
white clouds  
with every puff.

It's cold today,  
cold enough  
to see your breath.

Huff!

Breathe dragon smoke  
today!

--Lilian Moore

Corner

Crowded corner--

How do you feel holding so much weight?

Do you feel important

... with your lamppost and street sign

... your fire-alarm box and mailbox

... your litter basket and your traffic  
light?

Or do you feel crowded, corner?

--Lee Bennett Hopkins

An umbrella and a raincoat  
Are walking and talking together.

--BUSON

Motor Cars

From a city window, 'way up high,  
I like to watch the cars go by.  
They look like burnished beetles, black,  
That leave a little muddy track  
Behind them as they slowly crawl.  
Sometimes they do not move at all  
But huddle close with hum and drone  
As though they feared to be alone.  
They grope their way through fog and night  
With the golden feelers of their light.

--Rowena Bennett



## Earth

If this little world tonight  
    Suddenly should fall through space  
In a hissing, headlong flight,  
    Shrivelling from off its face,  
As it falls into the sun,  
    In an instant every trace  
Of the little crawling things -  
    Ants, philosophers, and lice,  
Cattle, cockroaches, and kings,  
    Beggars, millionaires, and mice,  
Men and maggots all as one  
    As it falls into the sun...  
Who can say but at the same  
    Instant from some planet far  
A child may watch us and exclaim:  
    "See the pretty shooting star!"

--Oliver Herford

## Earth

"A planet doesn't explode of itself," said drily  
The Martian astronomer, gazing off into the air -  
"That they were able to do it is proof that  
Highly Intelligent beings must have been living there."

--John Hall Wheelock

Animals

Why Nobody Pets the Lion at the Zoo

John Ciardi

The Monkeys and the Crocodile

Laura E. Richards

Caterpillar

Christina Rossetti

The Eagle

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Why Nobody Pets the Lion at the Zoo

The morning that the world began  
The Lion growled a growl at Man.

And I suspect the Lion might  
(If he'd been closer) have tried a bite.

I think that's as it ought to be  
And not as it was taught to me.

I think the Lion has a right  
To growl a growl and bite a bite.

And if the Lion bothered Adam,  
He should have growled right back at 'im.

The way to treat a Lion right  
Is growl for growl and bite for bite.

True, the Lion is better fit  
For biting than for being bit.

But if you look him in the eye  
You'll find the Lion's rather shy.

He really wants someone to pet him.

The trouble is: his teeth won't let him.

He has a heart of gold beneath

But the Lion just can't trust his teeth.

--John Ciardi

The Monkeys and the Crocodile

Five little monkeys  
Swinging from a tree;  
Teasing Uncle Crocodile,  
Merry as can be.  
Swinging high, swinging low,  
Swinging left and right:  
"Dear Uncle Crocodile,  
Come and take a bite!"

Five little monkeys  
Swinging in the air;  
Heads up, tails up,  
Little do they care.  
Swinging up, swinging down,  
Swinging far and near:  
"Poor Uncle Crocodile,  
Aren't you hungry, dear?"

Four little monkeys  
Sitting in a tree;  
Heads down, tails down,  
Dreary as can be.

Weeping loud, weeping low,

Crying to each other:

"Wicked Uncle Crocodile

To gobble up our brother!"

--Laura E. Richards

Caterpillar

Brown and furry  
Caterpillar in a hurry  
Take your walk  
To the shady leaf, or stalk,  
Or what not,  
Which may be the chosen spot.  
No toad spy you,  
Hovering bird of prey pass by you;  
Spin and die,  
To live again a butterfly.

--Christina Rossetti



## The Eagle

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

--Alfred Lord Tennyson

Personalities

Paul Bunyan

Arthur S. Bourinot

Casey at the Bat

Ernest Lawrence Thayer

Paul Bunyan

He came,  
striding  
over the mountain,  
the moon slung on his back,  
like a pack,  
a great pine  
stuck on his shoulder  
swayed as he walked,  
as he talked  
to his blue ox  
Babe;  
a huge, looming shadow  
of a man,  
clad  
in a mackinaw coat,  
his logger's shirt  
open at the throat  
and the great mane of hair  
matching,  
meeting  
the locks of night,

the smoke from his cauldron pipe  
a cloud on the moon  
and his laugh  
rolled through the mountains  
like thunder  
on a summer night  
while the lightening of his smile  
split the heavens  
asunder.

--Arthur S. Bourinot

## Casey at the Bat

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;  
The score stood four to two with but one inning more to play.  
And then when Cooney died at first and Barrows did the same,  
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest  
Clung to the hope that springs eternal in the human breast;  
They thought if only Casey could but get a whack at that--  
We'd put up even money now with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,  
And the former was a lulu and the latter was a cake;  
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,  
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting  
to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,  
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;  
And when the dust had lifted, and the men saw what had  
occurred,

There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from five thousand throats and more there rose a  
lusty yell;

It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;  
It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,  
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his  
place;

There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's  
face.

And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his  
hat,

No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with  
dirt;

Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his  
shirt.

Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,  
Defiance gleamed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through  
the air,

And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.

Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped--  
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one," the  
umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled  
roar,

Like the beating of the storm waves on a stern and distant  
shore.

"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted someone on the stand;  
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised  
his hand.

With the smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage  
shone;

He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;  
He signalled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew;  
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike  
two."

"Fraud!" cried maddened thousands, and echo answered,  
"Fraud!"

But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.  
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his  
muscles strain,  
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched  
in hate;

He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.

And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,

And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;

The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are  
light,

And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;

But there is no joy in Mudville---mighty Casey has struck out.

--Ernest Lawrence Thayer



## Chapter VI

### Conclusion

This thesis presented four problems identified by the author over many years of teaching poetry in elementary classrooms:

1. The neglect of the teaching of poetry in elementary classrooms.
2. The lack of readily available poetry resources for use in the classroom.
3. The neglect of a focus on the teaching of critical and creative thinking skills.
4. The time constraints felt by teachers already teaching a full curriculum.

This thesis has offered solutions to all of these problems through the development of an original curriculum which combines the teaching of poetry with the promotion of critical and creative thinking skills.

This curriculum has been used in my classroom with increasing development, intensity, and regularity over several years of teaching. Student response to it has been extremely favorable. Over the past two years I

have kept an informal journal in which I jotted down some of my students' responses in the form of notes and short anecdotes. Through these notes as well as my careful observations I have determined that each of my curriculum objectives has been accomplished. The children have shown me that exposure to many types of poetry results in their great enthusiasm for it. Their enthusiasm is shown in the way they look forward to "poetry time" and by their attentiveness and interest in the poems being read. It is usually not long into the school year before students start making requests for favorite poems to be re-read. Also, many children begin to bring in poems for me to read in class. They begin to discover and read poetry books in the library. One fifth grade student discovered a copy of my anthology in a plain, untitled black notebook on the reading shelf, and the book soon circulated throughout the classroom. Another sixth grader saved a Frost and a Sandburg poetry collection from being thrown out on attic cleaning day because she not only recognized the poets names but found in the books a few of her favorite poems, which had been read in class.

This past year I had the wonderful experience of having an extremely slow unresponsive learner bring a poem to me and ask me to read it to the class. It was March and this was his first initiative of the year, but the smile on his face as I read "his" poem made the waiting well worthwhile.

One of the best evidences that the children have benefitted from being exposed to many different types of poetry occurs in our unit meetings, which are combined class meetings for the purpose of giving information, sharing accomplishments, and discussing problems. Every meeting begins with a reading of some sort given by a student volunteer. Students from my class invariably choose to read a poem and their choices range from poems by Shel Silverstein to Robert Louis Stevenson to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

My students have shown me in at least these three ways that poetry has made connections with their lives: through their spontaneous writing of original poetry, through their use of poetry in other subject areas, and through the connections they have made between poetry and their personal experiences. My students have

notebooks which they must write in every day for ten to fifteen minutes. During this "Project Write" time, they may choose to write anything of their choice. Many children become so excited at being able to choose what they will write that they do lots of extra writing when their work is done, at recess time, and even at home. Poetry is one of the children's most popular choices. Without any poetry writing instruction from me, the children show in their writing remarkable versatility, creativity, and descriptive language. They often emulate styles of different poets. They use vocabulary from poems which they have heard. They delight in reading their poems aloud to one another.

I really know that poetry has been connected to my students' lives when they spontaneously use poetry in subject areas other than Language Arts. I have had science reports turned in complete with either original or found poetry. Carl Sandburg's "Fog" was penned into a weather report on fog; an original poem was added to a report on lightning; and Eve Merriam's "Caterpillar" poem was used by one child to show examples of consumers, producers, and decomposers. One year during my social studies unit on Black History, a girl wrote

such a beautiful poem about the evils of discrimination that it now goes up every year on my Black History bulletin board. Some of my students have even chosen to write poetry as their voluntary choice for handwriting practice! I know that connections are being made between poetry and my students' personal lives when I hear little comments like "He writes like e.e. cummings," or "I'm talking like the poem Eletelephony!" I know poetry has reached the children when they suddenly recite a line or two of a particular poem at an appropriate time. A very cherished example of a child connecting poetry to his life revealed itself at one parent/teacher conference. A father related to me with awe how he had been standing with his first grade son on a foggy afternoon on a balcony of the Boston Science Museum overlooking the Charles River when his son suddenly and perfectly recited Carl Sandburg's poem "Fog"!

Growth in critical and creative thinking skills has been seen in the way each class of students improved their approach to poetry as the school year progressed. They began to ask more questions about the poetry I read to them, and more of their questions became higher level

questions which involved abstract thinking. They showed an increasing sense of wonder for the poetry they heard, yet at the same time they became less blindly accepting of the written word. They made better hypotheses about the meaning behind the words of the poems and could more quickly draw conclusions from clues in the poem. In terms of their own writing of poetry, I noted more originality, more use of metaphors, and more elaboration of ideas.

Besides showing growth in their approach to poetry, students transferred the critical and creative thinking skills they learned to other subject areas. They used them in reading and discussing literature, in solving monthly problems which I put on a bulletin board, in making classroom decisions, and in solving classroom problems.

The writing of this thesis served not only to solve problems which I had identified, but it also provided me with new challenges and questions for the future. Foremost on my mind is the challenge to enlarge my anthology. I would like not only to add more poems to each of the sections, but also to add some new sections

perhaps relating to specific school subject areas like science and Black History as well as Women's History. I would like to include some of my students' original poetry in the anthology. Since I am now teaching intermediate grade students, I find the idea of students compiling their own personal anthologies quite intriguing.

Another challenge that nags at me is how to more accurately determine if my students have indeed made gains through my program in their ability to think critically and creatively. The examples of growth that I have seen and have written about in this chapter provide very real evidence that changes have occurred. Some of these changes, however, might be due to factors other than the curriculum, including the natural ability of the group, maturational processes, or a general enthusiasm for learning. Also, there may be gains made that I simply do not know about and which some sort of testing instrument might help me to identify.

Two other large questions for future investigation also loom in my mind. One, which I am just beginning to experiment with is: How can the fantastically untapped

resource of poetry be used to teach all subject areas? This past year, I used poetry to teach parts of speech and it worked beautifully. Can poetry also be used to teach science, social studies, mathematics? The other question is: What are the connections between the reading of poetry and the writing done by the children without any teaching time given to instruction or even guidance in poetry writing? I have always read poetry to my classes, yet I have not always had time to fit in a unit on the writing of poetry. Yet, in all my classes much poetry has been written voluntarily and much of it has been very fine. Does poetry come so naturally to children that when given the opportunity, they choose to write poems? Or, does the daily reading of quality poetry have an effect on what they write and the way that they write? As I continue to promote critical and creative thinking skills through the teaching of poetry, I hope to find the answers to some of these questions.



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