



## Finding Characters in Poetry

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K-6

Language Arts/Drama

### Core Curriculum:

#### **K - Reading: Literature Standard 5**

Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems).

#### **1<sup>st</sup> - Reading: Literature Standard 4**

Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> - Reading: Literature Standard 6**

Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> - Reading: Literature Standard 3**

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> - Reading: Literature Standard 5**

Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage

directions) when writing or speaking about a text.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> - Reading: Literature Standard 2**

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

#### **6<sup>th</sup> - Reading: Literature Standard 7**

Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

### Art Area:

#### **K- 6.T.P.5:**

Communicate meaning using the voice through volume, pitch, tone, rate, and clarity.

**Objective:** Students will learn to mark poetry in ways that will help break up the singsong rhythms, and get the real meaning of the poem across to their audience. They will learn to find characters and emotions in poetry and will learn ways of demonstrating these.

### Materials:

You will need copies of poems to work with. Choose poems appropriate for your class’s reading level. For further integration, choose poems with subjects that correlate to curriculum your class is studying.

For the warm-up games, print off the cards on cardstock, laminate them and cut them out.

### Resources:

Fleischman, Paul, and Eric Beddows. *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. Print.

Nesbitt, Kenn. *Kenn Nesbitt's Poetry for Kids*. www.poetry4kids.com

Silverstein, Shel. *Where the Sidewalk Ends: The Poems & Drawings of Shel Silverstein*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974. Print.

## **Day 1**

### **Warm-up: Emotion Cards**

Write a simple sentence on the board that will be easy for the students to remember. I use the sentence, "I can not go to the ballgame." Have the class read the sentence together. Now have them read it while emphasizing the first word in the sentence. Continue reading the sentence until you have read it enough times to emphasize each word. Draw out an emotion card. Ask a student to give you a word to emphasize while reading the sentence with the emotion. Read the sentence emphasizing the word and using the emotion. Repeat this a couple more times, allowing the entire class to read the sentence with the emotion.

Have the students sit in a circle on the floor. Give each student an emotion card, telling him/her to keep it secret. Go around the circle, allowing each student the opportunity to repeat the sentence while using the emotion that is printed on their card. As you go around, do not allow other students to guess at the word on the card. If you have a student who is reluctant, encourage the student to simply do their best so the class can move on. Remind them that no one knows what is on their card; no one is going to guess at it.

When everyone has had a turn, ask the class how they can make it better. Trade cards by passing them several times to the right. Remind the students of a couple of ways we are going to make it better and then go around the circle again.

Evaluation: Ask the students some or all of the following questions: How did we do that time? Which emotions were easy to tell? Why? What is more important: What you say or how you say it? Why?

### **Poetry Activity**

Begin by reading or reciting a poem that contains a lot of emotion. Ask the students to listen for different emotions as you read the poem. When you are done, ask what emotions they heard and when they heard them.

Select a poem for the class that has potential for a variety of emotions. Divide the poem into groups and solos for a class choral reading. Some of the stanzas may be left for whole group participation. Start with stanzas designated as whole group. Read through the stanza together with the class.

Ask them what emotion they think the character(s) is feeling. Write that emotion next to the stanza. Break the class up into the number of groups you are using in the choral reading. Have each group work together to decide on an emotion to use with their assigned stanzas. If you have solos and duets in the choral reading, assign those and give those students a few minutes to decide on their emotions.

Bring the class back together and read through the poem, using the chosen emotions.

### **Evaluation**

Why is it important to use emotions when reading poems? What did the emotions add to the poems?

### **Differentiating:**

Younger grades may want to simply continue with pulling out emotion cards and saying the sentence together as a class. Instead of doing a choral reading that is broken up in groups, work on the poem as a whole class activity.

## **Day 2**

### **Warm-up: Who are you?**

This game can be played with either the personality cards or the occupation cards or both. First draw out a where card. Next, draw out an occupation or personality card, or both. For example, you might draw out the where card that says “party”, the occupation card that says “dentist” and the personality card that says “bossy”. Without saying the word “dentist” or “bossy”, you have to let others know that you are a bossy dentist while you are at a party. Ask for ideas from the audience on what you could say. Remind them that they are at a party and that whatever they say has to be true to their location. Would a dentist tell you to open wide at a party? Probably not, but he might say, “Don’t eat those jawbreakers! They will break your teeth.”

Give each student a personality card and/or an occupation card. Tell them to keep them a secret. Instruct them not to make guesses at each other’s cards. They will be given a chance to guess later. Draw out a where card that will apply for the entire group. Give everyone a chance to mingle around the room, learning what he or she can about each other. Have them return to their seats. Evaluation: Do you think you know what anyone’s occupation/personality was? If you want to make a guess, you must support your guess with evidence. What did that person do or say to make you think that? Is that something someone would really say in that location?

### **Poetry Activity.**

Find some poems that have clear-cut characters, preferably two. Begin by reading one of the poems to the students. While you are reading the poem, portray each character in a distinctive way, making it easy for the students to pick out the characters. Ask them about the characters. Were there personality traits or emotions that they notice? When did they notice those traits? What was done to allow those traits to come through?

The students will work with a partner to find the characters in a poem. You may use poems that do not have distinctive characters. For those poems, the students must create characters that make sense with the lines of the poem. Give the students highlighters so they can highlight the parts that they will say. Students should be able to tell you a personality trait and an occupation for their character.

### **Evaluation:**

Let’s talk about some of the characters that you saw in the poems today. What characters stand out to you? What made those characters so interesting? Are there ways that you can make your own character more interesting?

### **Differentiating:**

Younger grades may wish to use animals instead of occupations. For the poetry activity, use simple nursery rhymes that contain distinct characters. You can change the personality trait of the character and see how it changes the rhyme. Watch for children who are creating fun characters and have them recreate the characters for the whole class.

## Day 3-4:

### Warm-up: Mannerism Cards

Explain to the students that mannerisms are the way we do things; the way we walk, the way we talk, the way we sit, etc. They can also be little habits we have. Ask for a volunteer to help you demonstrate the activity. Give that person a mannerism card and ask them to keep it a secret. Take a card for yourself. Each of you stands in front of the class, at opposite ends. As you walk toward each other, perform your own mannerism while watching for the other player's mannerism. As you pass each other, stop doing your mannerism. Walk the rest of the way across the front, doing your partner's mannerism.

Give everyone a mannerism card and ask them to keep it a secret. Two by two, invite the students to come to the front of the class and perform their mannerisms.

Evaluation: Ask the students some or all of the following questions: Why would I want you to add a mannerism to your characters? Which mannerisms seemed like things that people normally do? What are some other mannerisms you have seen people do?

### Poetry Activity

Write a simple poem on the board. Pick one that most of the students will be familiar with. Make sure it has a strong rhythm. Your objective with this poem is to demonstrate how to break up that rhythm. I like to use Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. Have the class read through the poem together, emphasizing the rhythm. Ask the students, "What seemed to be more important as we read that poem, the words or the rhythm? Let's see if we can mark it in ways that will help us emphasize the meaning of the words.

- First of all, let's take a look at where our sentences are, and place punctuation to help us read the poem as sentences.
- Now, let's decide which word in each sentence is the most important. If we choose a word in one sentence, and that same word is in another sentence, do we have to choose that same word again? No, we want our poem to have variety so let's not restrict ourselves to the same word in each sentence. Go through and underline the words that are deemed most important.
- The first time we read the poem, we paused at the end of every line. Let's choose where we want to pause. Choose places that will make the most sense in regards to the meaning of the words. We can also choose places that will give dramatic impact to what we are saying. Go through and mark pauses with vertical lines. Two vertical lines together would indicate a longer pause. You may want to place arrows at the end of lines that you do not want to pause after, to remind the reader to keep going.
- Just like a play builds to a climax, a poem should also build to a climax. A climax should come close to the end of the poem. Where do you think the climax of the poem is? We can use volume and rate to make that the most exciting part of the poem. Borrowing from music, mark the poem with crescendo signs to indicate a build in rate and volume, and decrescendo signs to indicate slowing down and a decrease in volume.
- Let's create some background for our poem now. Who do you think is saying this poem? Tell me about the character. Where are they? How are they feeling? Can emotions change during the course of the poem? Let's decide what emotions we want to use in this poem.

When the poem is marked, it may look something like this, but will probably not be exactly like this. Keep in mind, there are no right or wrong answers to the above questions on how the poem will be interpreted.

Character: a curious child

Where: In bed, looking out the window

Twinkle twinkle | little star.

How I wonder what you are?                      curious

Up above the world | so high →

like a diamond | in the sky. ||                      excited

Twinkle | twinkle little star,

How I wonder | what you are.                      sleepy

- When you are finished marking the poem, read it to the children, following the markings. Ask them which version held more meaning to them, the first way you read it together or the way the teacher read it after it was marked.
- Working with a partner or independently, let the students select a poem that they will mark and present to the class.
- When a student has finished marking the poem, have them pair up and read their poem to another student. Students may give each other effective feedback. Have the students continue to find other students to read their poem to.
- If you are short on time, ask students to nominate someone who did an excellent job of reading their poem. Invite that person to read their poem for the class.
- If you have the time, continue the lesson onto another day so that all of the students have the opportunity to present their poems.

Evaluation: When a student nominates another student be sure to ask them why they think that person should read their poem for the class. When the student has finished reading the poem to the class, ask the class what they liked about the poem. Try to stir them away from answers that involve just the poem and not the delivery of the poem. If you choose to, you may ask the students to give the performer one thing that they can work on to improve their performance.

**Differentiating**

For younger grades, work together as a class on a poem that they enjoy. Decide where the poem needs to be loud and where it needs to be soft. Also find places to speak quickly and to slow down.

Occupation Cards:

secretary

plumber

soldier

hunter

banker

cowboy

athlete

model

baker

doctor

painter

lifeguard

tailor

nurse

police

farmer

dancer

reporter

fire fighter

president

gardener

veterinarian

fisherman

barber



dentist

mechanic

teacher

scientist

janitor

librarian

butler

movie star

pilot

taxi driver

photographer

zoo keeper

Where Cards:

park

jungle

gym

boat

party

store

beach

backyard

ballroom

jungle

castle

campsite

forest

garden

farm

mall

zoo

subway

pool

library

rainforest

museum

mansion

lake

Mannerism Cards:

click tongue

chew lip

clear throat

growl

slurp

gasp

wink

cough

shrug shoulders

grumble

whistle

snap fingers

wipe nose

look at watch

sigh

rub hands

snort

shuffle feet

yawn

evil laugh

crack knuckles

sniff

adjust hair

rub chin

sing

hum

twitch

lick lips

scratch

giggle

tap finger

wheeze

moan

wiggle

twirl hair

rub eyes

Personality Cards:

bossy

helpful

selfish

charming

tough

careful

forgetful

indecisive

thoughtful

spoiled

stubborn

jittery

rude

cheerful

caring

polite

cool

snobby

competitive

hotheaded

obedient

generous

peaceful

sensitive



chatty

honest

clumsy

friendly

nice

tidy

lazy

serious

curious

suspicious

shy

enthusiastic

Emotion Cards:

frustrated

happy

furious

excited

hurt

nervous

depressed

disgusted

disappointed

bored

amazed

stressed

shocked

sad

relaxed

scared

relieved

mean

jealous

overjoyed

mad

lonely

exhausted

surprised

hopeful

panic

sympathy

annoyed

longing

proud

shy

suspicious

sleepy

terrified

thrilled

guilty



# Character Analysis

Actor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Character's Name \_\_\_\_\_

## External Characteristics

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Speech \_\_\_\_\_

Mannerisms \_\_\_\_\_

Walk \_\_\_\_\_

## Internal Characteristics

Personality \_\_\_\_\_

Emotions \_\_\_\_\_

Objective (want) \_\_\_\_\_