

Rhyme Time

Skills Focus**Language, Writing****Connection to Habits of Good Readers**

Clarifying, Connecting, Visualizing

Overview

Poetry is a great way to get children excited about language. Our children usually get their first taste of poetry in the form of lullabies, nursery rhymes, and songs. Poetry is also a wonderful way for children to learn how to share their experiences and feelings. We should encourage our children to pay attention to how specific words used in poems create images or pictures in their minds.

Guiding Questions and Talking Points

Consider sparking a discussion about poetry by asking your child the following questions:

- What is poetry?
- Have you read any poems that you remember?
- What did you like about the poems?
- Have you ever written a poem? If yes, what did you write about?
- How are songs like poems?

Present different objects, foods, and fabrics to your child and have him/her describe what you have presented. Then, ask your child to describe each object using the five senses: What do they see, hear, feel, taste, and smell? Finally, talk about how your family uses their senses on a daily basis.

Intro Activity

Look at another family member and finish this poem, "Roses are red. Violets are blue. _____ is something I love about you!"

Before (Background Knowledge and/or Vocabulary)

To build background knowledge, consider finding poems that you can read to your child. You may look online or in a local library. You may choose poems about any subject or look specifically for poems about nature or poems that specifically emphasize some aspect of the readers' senses. After reading, ask your child what images came to his/her mind as you read.

The following are helpful terms for children to know when they are learning about poetry:

- Emotion: a feeling or mood that arises based on a particular circumstance.
- Figurative language: an expressive use of language.
- Free verse: poetry without a regular rhyme pattern.
- Imagery: language that appeals to the senses.
- Line: a series of words that form a single component of a larger piece of writing.
- Rhyme: two or more words that match in the same last sound.
- Rhythm: musical quality produced by the sound patterns in a poem.
- Speaker: the voice talking to us in a poem.
- Stanza: a group of consecutive lines in a poem that form a single unit (like a paragraph in an essay).

Rhyme Time (cont.)

Skills Focus

Language, Writing

During

Go on a nature walk with your family. This walk can be on your block, in your neighborhood, at a local park, or a community nature center. Tell your children that, when the walk is over, you will all write a poem about the experience.

As you walk, take time to pay attention to the ways in which your senses are engaged. What do you see, hear, feel, and smell? Also, is your sense of taste engaged in any way? Note: Make sure family members do not put any unfamiliar objects in their mouths. Consider bringing a notebook with you so that you can record any thoughts or ideas that come to you as you walk or sit quietly in a particular location.

After you have completed your walk, invite each member of the family to write a poem that captures the experience of the walk. Encourage your child to write a poem that will help someone visualize and experience the walk. Remind your child that the poem can rhyme, but it doesn't have to.

- **Emergent readers** can gather a specific number of examples for each sense. For example, encourage him/her to record three (3) things that are seen, three (3) things that are heard, etc. When it is time to write the poem, consider encouraging your child to focus on only one sense. Children may also draw a poem to accompany his/her poem.
- **Proficient readers** can gather as much sensory evidence as he/she feels during the walk. When it is time to write the poem, encourage him/her to use an example of each sense in the poem. Children may also draw a poem to accompany his/her poem.
- **Advanced readers** can write a poem that delivers a larger message for the reader. In other words, although the nature walk is the inspiration for the poem, what are some important lessons about life that your child has learned and how can the nature walk poem be used to explain this understanding?

After (Extension Activities)

- Once family members have written their poems, host a poetry reading at home. Have each family member share his/her poem with other members of the family.
- As family members listen to one another's poems, draw pictures to represent what they hear being described.
- Check the local library and cafes to find a poetry reading that is being held in the community. Attend the event as a family.

Web Resources

Visit the following websites to read and write more poetry:

- www.gigglepoetry.com
- www.rif.org/kids/readingplanet/gamestation/poetrysplatter.htm
- www.jackprelutsky.com
- www.zuzu.org

Suggested Readings

Sharon Creech
Kenn Nesbitt
Jack Prelutsky
Shel Silverstein
Marilyn Singer