

Unit Guide

The Fifth Dimension of Fluency: Reading and Writing Poetry in the ELL Classroom

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Language fluency, in the traditional sense of the concept, has four dimensions: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, our “traditional” understanding of fluency can lead us to the narrow-minded conclusion about how best to instruct language learners; these best practices in fluency-building rarely account for the fundamental need of learners to feel fully *understood* as an individual, on a social and emotional level. The desire to connect and seek understanding from others is an energy that drives us daily, an energy that motivates us to connect with others, and an energy that draws us to the humanities-- to music, literature, and art. Our American classrooms are reverberating with the potential energy of English learners, who often desperately want to connect and to be understood as who they believe themselves to be, but who are infrequently given an authentic linguistic outlet. This instructional unit is intended to provide an outlet for English learners in the American classroom. More importantly, this unit aims to help language learners develop an understanding of the beauty and versatility of language as a vehicle for personal expression and human connection-- the 5th dimension of fluency.