

Mindfulness and Poetry

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Introduction

I teach 2nd grade at Thurgood Marshall Elementary in Christina School District. My classroom of 27 students is diverse in many areas: economic, cultural/ethnic, academic abilities, and social skills. I work alongside two paraprofessionals in my classroom to help meet the needs of every learner in my class. I also team teach with another 2nd grade teacher. My teammate takes my students twice a day for reading and writing instruction while I teach math to both classes. Departmentalizing our teaching allows us to focus our energy into one subject and enhances our techniques.

Our departmentalized teaching technique does not exempt me from teaching reading and writing across the curriculum. I use every opportunity to develop reading and writing in my students. Because of the limited amount of time in our daily school schedule and the opportunity for shorter compositions, poetry is ideal for cross-curricular lessons.

Our students are still developing executive functions and need support to aid in the growth of those functions. Mindfulness is a strategy to accomplish this and can be taught and practiced in the short time allowed in our day for character development.

Rationale

Everyone can benefit from practicing mindfulness and I feel that it is essential in my classroom for three reasons: 1) Every student is developing executive functions 2) Some of my students experience learning disabilities, developmental delays and health impairments 3) Some students have experienced trauma. Mindfulness gives all my students tools to be more successful learners and creates a happier, kinder class community.

“If every 8-year-old is taught meditation we will eliminate violence from the world in one generation”
The Dalai Lama¹

Poetry’s many benefits in the second-grade classroom include 1) Length: short passages allow for emerging readers to feel successful and allows time to read closely. 2) Vocabulary: poetry exposes students to specific, rich vocabulary. 3) Flexibility: poetry’s

fluid grammar, syntax and mechanics give students a freedom to express themselves without fear.

It is my hope that this unit will provide opportunities to use mindfulness and poetry in a reflective manner: we will use poetry to share our mindful experiences and we will read poetry mindfully. I will also present visual and performing arts to students and ask them to experience that art mindfully and then reflect on that experience mindfully. I will steer students to look at published poetry and student poetry to analyze for personal perspectives, shared experiences, and deep insights.

As a class we will experience poetry in three ways: listen to it, read it, and write it. These experiences will enhance our mindfulness practice and our mindfulness practice will develop our listening, comprehension and writing skills. The reciprocal relationship of poetry and mindfulness will have far reaching benefits throughout my class.

Content Objectives

Poetry and Ekphrasis

Ars Poetica

Archibald MacLeish, 1892 – 1982 ²

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit,

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds.

*

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs,

Leaving, as the moon releases
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
Memory by memory the mind—

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs.

*

A poem should be equal to:
Not true.

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a maple leaf.

For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—

A poem should not mean
But be.

It is a shame to take something as dynamic and diverse as poetry and reduce it down to a simple definition, but I did find it a valuable starting point as I began our seminars. We formed small groups and labored to write our own definition. With my colleagues an explanation of poetry was formed:

Poetry is an art form consisting of figurative language and intentional structure provided by lines.

While it was a good start, the more I learn about poetry, the more I realized that we ignored a vital component in poetry: rhythm. Rhythm is one of factors that differentiates poetry from prose.

Using Google Chrome for a definition of poetry you will find the following: Poetry is a noun that is a literary work in which special intensity is given to the expression of feelings and idea by the use of distinctive style and rhythm.

XJ Kennedy and Dana Gioia, in *Backpack Literature*, add an important note that “poetry appeals to the mind and arouses feeling. Poetry may state facts, but, more important, it makes imaginative statements that we may value even if its facts are incorrect.”³

To further our progress in poetry exploration we focused on a specific poetry: Ekphrasis. James A.W. Heffernan⁴ describes ekphrasis as a “verbal representation of a visual representation”. This definition has been debated and Claus Cluver contends that,

“it now primarily verbalizes a viewer’s encounter with a non-kinetic visual configuration”⁴

I do not possess the knowledge or understanding of poetry to make a determination of what qualifies as ekphrasis but I do have an understanding of what my second grade students find engaging. To that end, I will use: visual art, music, dance, poetry, and prose to stimulate poetic responses.

At one of our seminars, a colleague shared that she would be using student created art for ekphrasis in her classroom. I love this idea, especially when incorporating mindfulness in poetry, because it can stimulate empathy in students. I plan to coordinate with our art teacher to provide my students with art created by other students and teachers to stimulate ekphrasis. Opportunities to explore the artist’s motivation, an appreciation of technique, and skill are meaningful when there is a personal connection and the art can be more approachable when peers create it.

Additionally, I would like to give my students opportunities to create their own art for ekphrasis. In our seminar, we had the pleasure of meeting Michael Kalmbach from the Creative Vision Factory. Located in Wilmington, Delaware, it provides opportunities for self-expression, it empowers, and aids in recovery for adults on the behavioral health spectrum. Michael explained, “you see people who gravitate toward making things with their hands and you can see that they are literally working through some of the issues they’re dealing with that day.”⁵ I have witnessed the therapeutic benefits of art for many of the students in my classroom, know the benefits of the creative process from my education in pedagogy, and have experienced it myself. For these reasons I believe creating art is a natural element in mindfulness and ekphrasis.

One of my goals with this unit is that it accomplishes many tasks all at once because I want it to be easily inserted into our current curriculum. In some of my activities I choose to examine the illustrations of read aloud books as the art for ekphrasis. This allows me to meet the goals and objectives of my language arts curriculum while also allowing for opportunities for mindfulness, ekphrasis, and poetry. The illustrations in books are often excellent tools for emerging readers to aid in decoding text. In the Daily 5⁶ method of teaching one of the three ways to read a book is to read the pictures. To successfully read the pictures students need to be mindful of details that will give them clue as to the meaning of the accompanying text. Mindfully examining illustrations in books also offers opportunities for discussions about authors as illustrators, inferring, and the value of art in literature. Another benefit of using illustrations from read aloud books is that the art is engaging to 2nd grade students and developmentally appropriate.

Another way to maximize the power of mindfulness and poetry is to use music with lyrics that cover academic concepts. An amazing resource for this is the website

Flocabulary. With lessons in Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Life Skills, Vocabulary, Current Events all set to a hip hop beat and paired with a vibrant video student engagement is high. I also give my students the opportunity to get up and move during Flocabulary to support their learning. Rhyming and rhythm examples in the Flocabulary raps provide the perfect examples for students to write their own poetry while the lessons on life skills provide vocabulary and ideas to explore mindfulness. For my 2nd grade students I have made the decision to skip explicitly teaching what ekphrasis is but there may be groups of 2nd graders that are ready, either because of intensive poetry study, or due to vocabulary development, to delve into the specifics of ekphrasis.

Poetry in the classroom

Hearing, reading, and writing poetry provides a multitude of benefits in the elementary classroom.

Hearing Poetry

W. H. Auden said, "No poem, which when mastered, is not better heard than read is good poetry."⁷ Historically, poems were part of the oral tradition and reading them aloud to your students and listening to recorded poetry is an important element in studying poetry. The first, and most obvious reason, to read poems out loud or listen to recordings is because some students lack the reading skills to enjoy a poem. Another reason to read a poem aloud is because the poet composed it carefully, considering its acoustic effects. Words were chosen for the sounds they produce and the form was developed to support a rhythm or poetic meter⁸. Students can hear poems with words they may not understand but the beat and rhythm can make them curious to learn more about the words⁹. Finally, when reading aloud, your selection of poetry has an expanded range because you do not have to limit yourself only to poems that match the reading skills of your students. Listening to poetry creates a vibrant experience that can engage even the most distracted student.

Reading Poetry

The most obvious reason to have students read poetry is because, as teachers, our job is to instill a love of learning¹⁰ in our students and poetry's capacity to entertain and captivate is well established. Its gifts go beyond that. Rich in alliteration and rhyme, poetry is ideal for building phonemic awareness. Reading poetry with rhyme can help improve phonemic awareness. Shorter poems can help to build confidence in students struggling with long, cumbersome texts. The rhythm of poetry can assist an English Language Learner make sense of a new word and will assist all learners with reading fluency. Finally, comprehension, inferring, and interpretation of poems, compared to prose, can support the needs of students struggling with attentional issues.

Writing Poetry

“Poetry is a language in which man explores his own amazement.” – Christopher Fry¹¹

Poetry is an ideal tool to engage those students struggling with fine motor and attentional issues, ELL students and emerging writers.

The opportunity to express an idea in very few words is very appealing. A few of my students struggle with fine motor skills so intensely that the mere mention of writing sends them into a flight or fight mode. Others are interested creating a vibrant writing piece but lack the stamina or attention to complete an essay with an introduction, body, and closing. Students lacking organizational skills can participate writing poetry with little struggle. Finally, for the students that love to communicate but lack knowledge of conventions, poetry offers them a way to express themselves freely.

I discuss ways that poetry is ideal for struggling students and it is important to note that it also captivates students that are skilled in reading, writing, and vocabulary skills. It becomes an arena for them to really stretch those skills. Examining poetic techniques such as alliteration, simile, metaphor, personification and onomatopoeia are all techniques that 2nd grade students can grasp even if they aren't yet able to use the terminology¹².

Teaching Strategies

There are endless opportunities to extend explorations in poetry I chose poetic forms that support the academic and developmental needs of my 2nd grade students.

When choosing to use styles that are complex or require more structure and form I provide more instruction, support, and scaffolding to enable students to successfully participate and produce high quality work. In general, most activities I chose for my students can be completed independently.

Paint Chip Poetry utilizes paint chips from home improvement stores, students begin by writing a word or phrase at the top, on the lightest color. They then work to further develop the word, or phrase, to increased intensity again and again as the color on the paper intensifies.

When teaching Erasure Poetry students are given a page filled with text (ideally from a book that has been discarded by the library) and a black sharpie and use the sharpie to black out unwanted text leaving behind the words to form a poem.

Reggie Routman, in her book, Kid's Poems Teaching Second Graders to Love Writing Poetry¹³ believes “free verse poetry is the best way I know to teach kids how to write

easily and joyfully.” It allows students maximum choice in their poetry: choice of form, layout, spacing, pattern and conventions. Students really do love it and it is the form I see selected when students are given a choice. Free Verse follows no rules but pays close attention to rhythm, spacing, and free space. The feel of the poem dictates all of the above.

A popular form in elementary education is Acrostic Poems. To write an acrostic poem the author writes, vertically, the topic (a name or word) one letter at a time on the left side of each line. The author then writes, left to right, beginning each line of the poem with the letter on that line.

Particularly useful when combined with mindfulness is the I Am Poem. Focusing on introspection and self-reflection an I Am Poem can be any number of non-rhyming lines but for 2nd graders I suggest no more than 10. The first line begins with I am and students finish the sentence. Following lines all begin with I and have a one or two word prompt written. Some examples: I feel_____, I wonder_____, I see_____. The final line repeats I am_____.

A more sophisticated form of poetry is the Haiku. A form of poetry from Japan consisting of only three unrhymed lines that are formed by 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line and 5 in the final line.

Finally, Concrete Poetry is enjoyed by students because it gives them a starting place to begin their poetry. It is a poem that is written with words arranged in the same shape as the subject of the poem. A combination of poetry and an image.

It has been my experience that Acrostic, I Am Poetry, Haiku, and Concrete Poems work best when students are provided with a worksheet/ fill in the blank/outline worksheet paper. Providing students with prompts and structure reduces the cognitive load on students allowing for better word selection, vocabulary exploration and insight.

“If a poem is worthy at all, it isn’t tough-it is frail and exquisite, a mood, a moment of sudden understanding, a cobweb which falls apart in the clumsy touch.”
-Blanche¹⁴

Mindfulness

*From Emily Dickinson, Complete Poems. 1924.*¹⁵

THE BRAIN is wider than the sky,
For, put them side by side,
The one the other will include
With ease, and you beside.

The brain is deeper than the sea, 5
For, hold them, blue to blue,
The one the other will absorb,
As sponges, buckets do.

The brain is just the weight of God,
For, lift them, pound for pound, 10
And they will differ, if they do,
As syllable from sound

Mindfulness is the conscious awareness of the present moment¹⁶. I tell my students mindfulness is when your MIND is FULL of one thing and one thing only and that it all begins with a breath. Focusing our attention on our breath allows us to let go of things that happened in the past that were worrying us. It also focuses our brain so that we are not worried or thinking about things that may happen in the future. When our MIND is FULL of one thing: we are here now, in the present moment.

When we focus our mind on this moment, our mind tends to quiet allowing us to experience clarity and meaning. Mindfulness, breathing, and, being present help develop self-awareness which leads to less reactive responses and encourages higher awareness of relationships, causes and conditions that create the moments and experiences of our lives.¹⁵

Regular practice of mindfulness improves focus which allows caring and connecting interactions with each other. It also provides opportunities to analyze situations and react more compassionately.

The Mindful Education Workbook by Daniel Rehtschaffen¹⁸ explains the different states of mindfulness and that is separate, and different from, mindful exercise. Mindful exercises are used to strengthen attention and compassion. Most exercises begin with breath as a home base of attention. Exercises build “mental muscles” in the area of compassion, attention and emotional balance.

There are five realms of mindful literacy (each paired with a variety of specific lessons to support growth in that area) outlined in Rehtschaffen’s workbook:

Physical Literacy
Mental Literacy
Emotional Literacy
Social Literacy
and Global Literacy.

The order of these literacies and a progression through them is intentional because practices need to be built upon previous activities. Once students have been exposed to the 5 literacies integration activities can be used to weave practices into the school day. The activities presented in this unit follow this evolution, although it should be noted that not every classroom will be ready to progress through the entire process in a linear fashion. Social and Global literacy are concepts that are still developing in 7 and 8 year olds. Depending on the needs of your class you may choose to spend more time developing one literacy in your students before moving on, if you move on at all. Participation in practicing mindfulness is always a choice for my students. They are invited to participate, and their experience is completely individualized by their own choices. Ideally, a class has an opportunity to learn mindfulness, practice it and share mindful experiences prior to using mindfulness for ekphrasis.

Following mindful exercise, it is important to immediately share our experiences verbally, as a class. I have found that taking a few minutes to share after practicing has improved the quality of our practice and increased meaningful participation.

There are several ways to share out spontaneous reactions to mindful practice.

- Class discussions
- Interactive journals
- Turn and talk opportunities
- Creating a word splash as a class to display on our classroom wall.

Finding time for mindfulness in our busy classroom schedule can be difficult. Research supports, and my own experience can confirm, that mindfulness practice increases efficiency in the classroom. The Mindful Education Workbook¹⁹ cites a 2011 study by Holzel et al. that found in only eight weeks, beginning mindfulness practitioners had a positive transformations in the brain regions correlated with learn, emotion regulation, and self-awareness.

Beginning each day with a short mindful meditation and sharing our experience allows students to prepare their brain for learning. For students experiencing trauma in their home a moment of mindfulness before beginning the school day give them an opportunity to be in the present and leave behind any troubles they may be experiencing at home. Both of these scenarios support student learning and facilitate smooth transitions from one activity to the next.

I also like to use mindful practice when my students return from recess and lunch to refocus and refresh their brains for the intensive academic work that is required in our long day.

Lastly, using mindfulness before our students go home provides a nice, calm, closure to our day, supports improved relationships with families and friends, and sends our

students home with a positive perception of the school day. What parent doesn't appreciate that?

In addition to The Mindful Education Workbook resources such as the Mind UP curriculum, Class Dojo, and Go Noodle all offer mindful exercises appropriate for use in the 2nd grade classroom. They all require very little preparation and designed to be completed in as little as three minutes. Mindfulness practice can be easily inserted into existing curriculum and current schedule.

There could not be a better time, with more resources, and supportive research to begin a practice of mindful exercise as a teacher and with your students.

Poetry and Mindfulness

In the introduction of her book, Poem A Week, Maria Fleming made the observation, "After all, the poet's tools- observing the world closely with the five sense, making comparisons, experimenting with sound and meaning of words- are all the same ones young children use to understand and interpret their own universe." ²⁰

The same could be said for mindfulness. Poetry and ekphrasis are practices in mindfulness. To fully experience a poem you must be listening mindfully, to write poetry each word is selected mindfully, and art must be experienced mindfully if we are to write about it. Poetry and mindfulness are natural partners. Our children, growing up in a world of distractions, need to be taught both these tools explicitly.

More than prose, a connection exists between introspection and poetry. Perhaps that lack of conventions and the rhythm of a poem sound similar to our stream of consciousness? Is it more enjoyable to read poetry? A 2017 article, by JR Thorpe²¹ explained that research, utilizing functional MRI scans, suggests beneficial benefits of reading poetry. Reading poetry stimulated strong emotional responses in test subjects. Also, in that same study, they found that reading poetry resulted in activity in the part of the brain associated with introspection.

As a Teacher

A Teaching Fantasy

by Margaret Hatcher ²²

I teach.
Ideas and words are my business.
I toss them into the air
and watch them float

softly
as autumn leaves
(though with much less color
and grace)

They float around your heads,
drift in piles on your desk tops.
glide along your sleeves
and whisper- dance
around your ears.

Someday
one may catch your attention
and inspire you with its color-
at least for a season.

A teacher's enthusiasm for poetry and mindfulness is a key factor in your students experience and educational outcome.

I encourage any teacher embarking on a poetry unit to read poetry on their own, to listen to it in the car while driving to work and write it! For all the same reasons it appeals to students, brevity, lack of conventions, rhythm, it is perfect for the busy teacher. It can be the 2-minute motivation you need to start your day. It can be a quick recap of the hilarity that took place in your classroom, scrawled on a paper napkin while you wait for your food in a restaurant. Most importantly, it can be a quick, therapeutic way to help you leave the stress of your day in the classroom so that you may go home and enjoy your family.

Encouraged by my seminar leader, Dr. David Teague, my appreciation, understanding and curiosity of poetry really took off when I began to write poetry for myself. I used prompts and templates, looked for new styles to try, wrote with collogues in seminars, and, sometimes, shared it with my students. Exploring my own experience with poetry greatly enhanced my teaching.

Your time spent enjoying poetry will enhance your instruction, build confidence, and encourage participation. Writing poetry in front of your students makes it approachable and inspires them to try their hand. After all, how hard could it be? My teacher just wrote a complete poem in just a few minutes!

The same goes for practicing personal mindfulness: enhancing instruction, building confidence, and encouraging participation. As an important bonus you, yourself, will receive all the benefits of mindfulness: developing self-awareness, improved focus,

enhancement of caring and connecting interactions with each other and increased capacity to react more compassionately. All things that, we as teachers, want for ourselves but sometimes find in short supply.

Teachers are notorious for prioritizing the needs of others over themselves and am definitely guilty of this. While I had read a few books on mindfulness and would practice it now and then I did not make a commitment to self-care and the effects were evident. After participating in a mindfulness workshop with James Walsh. I began to understand the need for a consistent commitment to mindfulness and its benefits in my life. Since dedicating myself to personal mindfulness practice I have experienced enhanced relationships in my professional and personal life, greater compassion stamina and dramatic improvement in my ability to respond less reactively. After experiences the difference in my life and the improvement in my teaching and classroom climate I would highly recommend mindfulness to every teacher and especially those interested in teaching it in their classroom. Finding fellow teachers, at my school, to practice with me and downloading the Calm app are both easy, accessible, valuable tools that support and enhance my mindfulness. The impact of mindfulness on my teaching has been vast and significant.

“Each of us can learn the art of nourishing happiness and love. Everything needs food to live, even love. If we don’t know how to nourish our love it withers. When we feed and support our own happiness, we are nourishing our ability to love. That’s why to love means to learn the art of nourishing our own happiness.” -Thich Nhat Hanh ²³

Classroom Activities

Introductory Mindfulness Activity: ClassDojo Big Ideas

ClassDojo is a computer application designed to build classroom community among students, teachers and parents. It allows teachers to encourage positive behaviors, set up a reward system, and recognize students for building skills. Included in the app are a series of short videos followed by activities to support character development. These videos are found in the section titled Big Ideas. Since I already use ClassDojo in my classroom for behavior management and home communication this is an ideal tool to introduce mindfulness. The two short videos, a writing activity and yoga activity can be completed in one 45-minute session, or, can be split into four shorter sessions. The best part is, that upon the completion, there is an option to share the idea with parents and let them know that mindfulness was taught in class that day. Parents can learn more about what was discussed in class and support their child’s mindfulness practice.

Introductory Mindfulness Activity: GoNoodle Mindfulness

GoNoodle is a website that aims to power up the best in every kid! GoNoodle gets over 14 million kids moving in classrooms and homes around the world! The videos found on GoNoodle boost productivity, improve behavior, and build community. There is a wide variety of activities on the site: from fitness and singing to yoga and meditation.

Under the categories tab all activities are organized with a specific tab for mindfulness activities. I would begin with an activity from the Flow channel: From Mindless to Mindful. This activity introduces the idea of your MIND being FULL of one thing only. It also introduces mindful listening and mindful looking.

Other mindful activities found on GoNoodle that my student enjoy are Melting and Swirling (both included in the Flow Channel) Bee Breaths (included in Moose Tube) and Have Compassion (from Empower Tools). The mindful category keeps growing and more activities are added frequently. You could keep your class busy learning about and practicing mindfulness with this one resource alone.

After participating in a mindfulness exercise, I prompt my students to share their experience. The first few times we share with a class discussion calling on volunteers. After a few lessons on mindfulness I then distribute small journals and prompt students to write a few words to describe their mindful practice. I let them know that they could write just a few words, create a word splash or write sentences. This reflection, in writing, provides a foundation for poetry later on.

The following seven activities proceed through the five realms of mindful literacy as described in [The Mindful Education Workbook](#) and follow the format of a mindful introduction beginning with the breath, followed by a mindful experience, a poetic response, sharing our poetry with friends.

Activity: Physical Literacy and Paint Chip Poetry

Mindful practice

I begin this activity by asking students to sit up tall in their seats, relax their hands in their laps and begin by inhaling, filling the lungs completely then exhale completely. We continue to breathe deeply 4- or 5-times asking students to focus completely on the breath.

Mindful Experience

Once we are completely focused, we are ready to begin mindful tasting. I pass out 1 jelly bean to each student and ask them to just hold it in their hands to begin with. I prompt them to observe the jelly bean and let them know that in a minute you will be mindfully tasting the jelly bean. If they feel comfortable, they can close their eyes. Now they are ready to put the jelly bean in their mouths. I then instruct students to notice the feel of the

jelly bean in their mouth. Is it hard or soft? What are you noticing about the shape? Next, they are ready to taste the jelly bean: noting texture, tastes, smells and any another sensations. Allow a few minutes for each child to experience the jelly bean. Encourage complete silence so that each may keep their mindful of the tasting experience.

Poetic Response

Paint Chip Poetry

Provide a variety of paint chips for students to choose from. Begin by asking them to write a sensation they experienced at the top of the paint chip on the first color. Then ask them to dive deeper into that sensation and find another, more colorful, more complex way to describe that same sensation and write that sensation on the next color. Repeat the process until all colors have been filled.

Share Out

Collect all paint chips with student names printed at the bottom of the paint chip and display the collection of poems. I find that propping them up in the tray of the chalk board where the children can walk by, reading them, has worked well. Later the paint chips can all be stacked, a hole punched through and put on a ring before adding them to the classroom library.

Activity: Mental Literacy and Erasure poetry

Mindful practice

Begin with the breath, encouraging students to focus on their breathing giving cues that are comfortable, relevant to my class or something I have recently learned from my own mindfulness practice. Alternately, resources such as Go Noodle or Calm can be used to aid students in focusing on breath.

Mindful experience

Once students are focused and breathing introduce students to the idea of mindful listening. Cue them to close their eyes, if they feel comfortable, focus all of their mind on their ears and many different sounds they may hear. Mention that they will hear different instruments, lyrics with words they may not recognize, and, they will hear a beat. Ask them to fully experience the song and notice the tiniest details. Play a song, or a nature sound track of your choice. I have used music with lyrics, Floccabulary songs that rap about character development, and classical music without lyrics. Using music that best suits the needs of your students will make the experience more authentic.

Poetic response

Erasure Poetry

Provide each student with a page of text. Every student can have a different text selection (pages torn out of an old book) or they can all work with the same text (lyrics of a song). Another idea can be to use a teacher created word splash using vocabulary that describes

sounds, emotions, or instruments. Be sure and include a large variety of words for students to choose from. Give each student a marker with a wide tip and ask them to mark out everything EXCEPT the words they wish to include in their poem. They should not add any words to the text, just blackout all words they are not using.

Share Out

This type of poetry really lends itself to reading out loud. Students can add emphasis to words or form breaks that would be hard to see on the paper. Many students may want to share in front of the class but others may feel more comfortable in small groups, so I usually try to offer opportunities for both.

Activity: Emotional Literacy and Acrostic Poetry

Mindful practice

Begin with the breath. Find what works best for you and your class. If you haven't tried Bee Breaths, or Bunny Breaths on Go Noodle's Moose Tube channel this might be an ideal time to experiment!

Mindful experience

Provide students with a variety of chenille craft stems and instruct them to create a sculpture that shows how they are feeling at the moment. Remind them to consider color and shapes. Prompt them to spend a mindful, silent moment to visualize their emotion before beginning. Give them a few minutes to work on their sculpture.

Poetic Response

Acrostic Poetry

Provide plain paper and ask them to write the emotion that matches their sculpture in vertical orientation, one letter per line, along the left side of the paper. Trace these letters with colored markers or crayons. Then create a poem where each line of the poem begins with a letter from the emotion labeled. Be sure to provide dictionaries. Each line can be one word or a line of words.

Share Out

Mounted on colored paper along with the sculpture these look great displayed on a bulletin board.

Activity: Social Literacy and Free Verse

Mindful practice

Invite students to focus on their breath and close their eyes, if they feel comfortable. Prompt them to let their breath completely fill their lungs, expanding their chest and belly as they breath in and then to gently push all the air out before beginning the next breath.

Continue on with the breathing explaining that distractions may momentarily take us away from the breath. That is normal and natural for our brains to wander but we can notice that we were distracted and return to the breath.

Mindful Exercise

Display a photograph or painting for the entire class to observe. Prompt students to mindfully and silently observe the painting. Does the painting make them feel a particular emotion? Do they like it or dislike it? Can they feel any response in their body? Now ask them to look at the same art without any opinions or emotions. Simply observe the shapes and colors. Now ask them to think about their classmates and the emotions they feel for their classmates. Finally, ask them if it would be possible to take a new look at classmates without any opinions or emotions.

Poetic response

Free Verse

When writing free verse with my students I like for them to use their mindful journals. These small journals are used for sketching a quick reaction to mindfulness exercises, writing prose, and jotting down a few words when time permits. I also find them ideal for free verse because it is a space where my students feel comfortable and their words flow freely. I emphasize that their journals are a place to experiment with spelling because they will never be corrected and writing conventions will not be judged. I do encourage re-reading, editing, and expanding ideas. In this activity I simply ask them to share their experience with the art that was presented. The only prompt I would give for this activity is to ask my students write a poem about their experience with the art we just mindfully observed.

Share out

Publishing a book of free verse poems, with illustrations, can motivate students to create beautiful poems. Typing up each poem, allowing space for simple black and white illustrations and binding them all together elevates our students' attitudes towards writing poetry and builds confidence.

Activity: Global Literacy and I Am Poem

Mindful Practice

Ask a student to volunteer to lead the beginning breaths for the mindfulness practice.

Mindful Exercise

Read aloud the book I am Peace. Ask students to mindfully observe the illustrations and mindfully listen to each word.

Poetic Response

Students will write and I Am poem using the template found in the resources section.

Share Out

Reading aloud in small groups.

Activity: Integration and Haiku

Integration activities utilize all five realms of mindful literacy and, therefore, are best for classes that have been practicing for some time. Integrating all five realms aid awareness of many aspects of our lives simultaneously therefore allowing for regulation, attention and prosocial behavior.²⁴

Mindful Practice

Begin by focusing on the breath and tell the students that we will be checking in on our bodies and our worlds. Tell students that we are not looking to make any feelings go away we are just making observations. Our sensations, thoughts, feelings, relationships, and our world is experiencing weather patterns and those weather patterns will pass. Guide them to scan their bodies and notice any sensations. Move next to our mind and observe if it is busy or calm? No need to change what you notice, just make an observation and then move onto the emotions you are feeling. What emotions are present at this moment? Is your heart open? It is now time to look at our relationships. Take a moment to notice acts of kindness you have observed. Reflect on personal moments of love or anger, frustration or acceptance. Finally, observe the world around you, as if you have a wide view and can see everything at once.

Mindful Experience

Using the Calm app, project the image titled Silent Earth and give students a moment to silently observe the photographic image of the earth from space.

Poetic Response

Introduce haiku using <https://www.kidzone.ws/poetry/haiku.htm> to give student examples. After hearing some haikus students are ready to explore the structure of a haiku: three lines, the first line consisting of 5 syllables, the second 7 syllables and the last line 5 syllables. I encourage my students to think about the syllables contained in each word but do not change incorrect usage of syllables in their writing. Using the template in the resources section allow student to compose their Haiku. Suggest the subject of the Haiku be passing weather patterns.

Share Out

Ask for volunteers to share their poem aloud.

Activity: Integration and Concrete Poem

Mindful Experience

Using the GoNoodle app find the FLOW channel and have students participate in the Melting activity.

Mindful Practice

Read aloud the story Sneezzy the Snowman by Maureen Wright. Ask students to mindfully observe the illustrations in the text and use the illustrations to help understand the text make predictions.

Poetic Response

Concrete Poem

Using the template provided in the resources section ask students to create a concrete poem by writing the words of poem along the silhouette of the snowman.

Share Out

Concrete poems are best presented visually. Ask students to leave their poems on their desks and then ask them to circulate around the room reading classmates poems. These poems also make a great bulletin board display.

Resources

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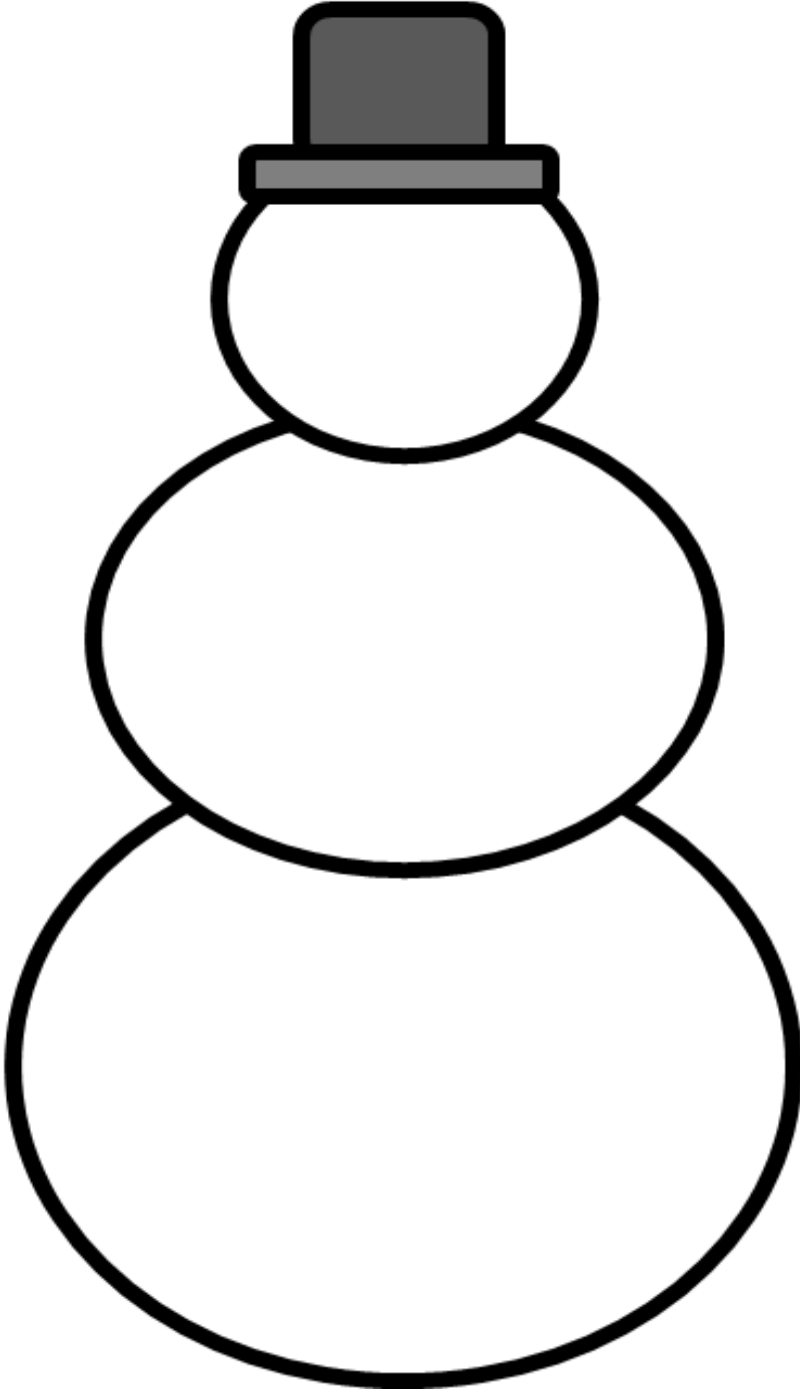
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Concrete Poem Template: By Liles Puleo



Haiku Poem Template
By Liles Puleo

5 Syllables

7 Syllables

5 Syllables

I Am Poem Template: by Liles Puleo

I am

Sensation

I am

Feeling or emotion

I am

Character trait

I can be

How you want to feel

I use

A strategy

I am

Something you dream for yourself

Appendix: Implementing District Standards

At the conclusion of this unit, my students will understand the following:

Enduring Understandings:

- Mindfulness practice is a strategy to enhance our academic learning and character development.
- Poetry can be used to describe a mindful experience.
- We can experience art mindfully.

The unit will explore the following **Essential Questions:**

- What is mindfulness?
- What are benefits of mindfulness?
- What is poetry?
- How can I express my mindful experiences with poetry?
- How can I experience poetry mindfully?
- How can I experience art mindfully?
- How can I use poetry to express my experience with art?

Learning Objectives

This unit is designed for my 2nd grade students. It will address standards from Common Core State Standards, National Standards for Visual Art, and, Delaware Health Education Standards. Learning mindfulness, art appreciation, and poetry will also have benefits beyond the standards listed below. By the end of this unit students will be able to effectively practice mindfulness to enhance their focus to experience art in a meaningful way. They will then be able to use poetry to share their mindful experiences

Appendix A- Implementing District Standards

There are 5 Common Core State Standards in area of Language Arts that are covered in this unit. Specifically, the standards addressing writing, recalling information to answer questions, poetry, comprehension, speaking and listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8

Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.4

Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.10

By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4

Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.5

Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

As a cross-curricular unit, students will also gain knowledge in the area of health education by practicing mindfulness, thus meeting standard 7 from the Delaware Health Education Standards: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks. (Self-management)¹⁰

Lastly, exposure to art will aid in understanding toward the standard from the National Standards for Visual Art (K-4) #5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.¹²

Notes

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² Kennedy, Joe X. J. *BACKPACK LITERATURE: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*. S.l.: Pearson, 2019.

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Brennan, John." Partnership for Arts and Culture: University of Delaware Magazine Volume 26 Number 4 2018

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- ²² Mulvahill, Elizabeth. "10 of Our Favorite Poems About Teaching." WeAreTeachers. July 04, 2017. Accessed February 05, 2019. <https://www.weareteachers.com/poems-about-teaching/>.
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