

Ekphrastic Poetry in Kindergarten, Oh My! Exploring and Responding to Art through Speech Bubbles, Rebus, Free Verse and more!

Mary Beth Barbro

Introduction

I can still remember quite vividly my first experience with the arts. I was in third grade, and my mom took me to see the musical *Cats* at The Playhouse in Wilmington, Delaware. I loved everything about it: getting dressed up, the heavy burgundy drapes and opulence of the crystal chandeliers, the costumes and make-up, and of course the captivating singing and dancing. I proudly sported my “Cats” t-shirt my mom had purchased for me (a big treat) for weeks afterwards and I even requested to be Mr. Mistoffelees, my favorite character, for Halloween that year. This experience spring boarded me into an appreciation for the arts that has lasted and expanded throughout my life.

In a world heavily dominated by technology, where five-year olds spend on average 6 and a half hours a day in front of a screen, it is more critical than ever to expose children to various formats of art¹. First, exposure to the arts can help encourage and develop children's' imaginations which are so often thwarted by the extensive hours they spend in front of a screen. In addition, children need exposure to various art forms as it can help students, particularly those who may not have strengths in traditional academics, develop gifts and talents they may never have realized they possessed. Early elementary students should be exposed to a variety of art forms including, but not limited to painting, music, sculpture and dance. Children can begin to develop personal connections to these works. Through my studies in this seminar I believe that students, even those as young as kindergarten, can engage in ekphrasis poetry responses. Ekphrasis poetry is a response to any art form created to evoke a sensory response. It is my goal to use art to serve as a springboard into various ekphrastic writing responses with my students. Ekphrastic poetry responses will help beginning writers develop a “can-do” attitude and build confidence with writing.

Background

Thurgood Marshall is a bright and cheery elementary school located in suburban Newark, Delaware. Marshall services about 870 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Marshall has a very diverse population with about one-third Asian students, one-third African American students, and one-third Caucasian students. Due to this diverse composition of the school a wide variety of languages are spoken and English is not the

native language of many of the students. Thus, about thirty percent of students receive English Language Learning supports. In addition, about forty percent of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Thurgood Marshall students consistently perform above the state average on standardized assessments. Teachers and staff work together to provide students with a safe, well-rounded and goal driven environment to prepare them for success not only in the rest of their schooling careers, but a strong foundation for success in life as well.

This year my classroom is comprised of 25 students, 11 girls and 14 boys. Unlike more recent years, I have a number of students who have not attended any type of formal preschool program. This has meant beginning the year with additional time reviewing foundational skills such as letter names/sounds, concepts of print, letter formation, and name writing. In addition, we have focused on building stamina for whole group instruction.

This school year I am focusing on developing a mindfulness practice with my students. We begin each day with 2-4 minutes of breathing and meditation. We try to focus on a skill or intention for the day such as kindness, compassion, perseverance, etc. This mindful approach to learning coordinates with the classroom culture and environment that we develop throughout the year. In our classroom, we consider ourselves a “school family” and learn and grow together throughout the year. Like a real-life family, we celebrate each other’s successes as well as setbacks. We fight and make-up. We laugh (a lot) and we cry (a little,) but regardless we develop and thrive in an environment where we support each other.

Rationale

Kindergarten is the “new” first grade. While I may not necessarily agree with this change, it is the reality that I teach in each day. Students in my classroom engage in a variety of reading and writing activities throughout the day. While I feel a strength of mine is helping my students establish pre-reading and reading skills, I often struggle with helping my students to develop beginning writing skills. I have an internal struggle of a variety of questions: “Where should I begin? What type of writing should my students engage in throughout the day? How much support should I provide? How do I encourage them to be more independent and confident with their writing? How important is it to teach writing mechanics to kindergarteners? Do I seriously have to use a rubric to assess my students’ writing? Can’t my goal be to simply develop young writers who have a confident “I can” approach to writing?” Through my work in this seminar I have found that engaging students in ekphrasis poetry activities I can tame the overwhelming nature of the writing process and use it as a starting point to enter my students into the world of writing.

When I first introduce writing to my students it is typically at the beginning of October as I am teaching my students the components of Daily 5². The Daily 5 is a program developed by two sisters, Gail Boushey and Joan Moser, that focuses on helping students develop independent reading and writing skills. The use of Daily 5 in the classroom helps students develop reading and writing independence, stamina, and accountability. In addition, The Daily 5 provides students with abundant time for practicing reading and writing skills. The Daily 5 program consists of five critical components: Read to Self, Read to a Friend, Listening to Reading, Word Work, and Working on Writing. Typically working on writing is the second component I introduce to the students. I introduce this skill to them by providing each student with their own writing journal. The journal consists of pages with a space for the date, a large blank space for a picture, and about five dotted lines for sentence writing. For the next two months, I encourage the students to develop writing confidence and writing stamina. We use a variety of tools and strive to get a complete sentence on the page. We use “slinkies” to stretch out the sounds in difficult words to help with inventive spelling, use “spacemen” for spacing between words, and even use special journaling pencils which are stored in a straw dispenser. I use all of these accessories to assist with the writing process which can be difficult for kindergarteners, but also to excite and motivate them to write. While some can write more than one sentence on a topic with minimal guidance and support, the majority of kindergarteners struggle to get one complete sentence on their journal page. I feel that often there is too much focus on teaching budding writers the mechanics of writing rather focusing on the content and enjoyment of writing. I feel ekphrasis poetry can be used to shift the focus for early writers back to purpose and content rather than mechanics. This can lead to a passion and enjoyment of writing rather than the view that it is another school task with a lot of rules to follow. Engaging in a variety of ekphrasis poetry writing responses can give kindergarteners that “I can” attitude and confidence with writing.

Content Objectives

This unit is designed for use with kindergarten students, but could easily be modified for use with other grades. The goal of the unit is to develop confident, “I can” kindergarten writers who are able to respond to a work of art in the written form of their choosing. I will establish a “tool box” of poetry writing techniques for students to practice and utilize to express themselves. The students will explore and respond to various types of art forms including photographs, music/meditation/mindfulness and paintings. Each of these forms will be paired with an ekphrastic poetry response including speech bubbles, rebus responses and free verse poetry. The students will examine examples of each type of art form and then engage in a collaborative framework in which an example is shared, discussed, a writing response is modeled by the teacher, then the class develops a response together, brainstorming of ideas in a whole class format occurs, students write

and illustrate their own responses independently, and finally students share and celebrate each other's work (both informally in class and with the school community.) In an article by VanNess, Muren, and Bertlesen (2013, 574) the importance of writing and developing this “can do attitude” in kindergarteners is highlighted:

Writing in {the} classroom became the central tool for helping students shape their own understandings and is thus an important tool in all content areas. When writing is engaged in this purposeful manner even with kindergarteners, authorship emerges.³

The goal of this unit will be for the kindergarteners to develop a love of art, poetry, and writing and to carry on their appreciation of art and poetry writing both inside and outside of the classroom.

Teaching Strategies

The first concept that will need to be introduced to the kindergarteners is what ekphrasis is and does. Ekphrasis is a word that most adults are not even familiar with (I know I wasn't until this course) so explaining and introducing ekphrasis and ekphrastic poetry will be critical. I am excited to teach them this concept because my students love showing off vocabulary words they have learned to impress their parents and other adults in the building. It is an instant hook when I introduce a concept/vocabulary word and tell them people will think they are geniuses when they use and define a new word.

Ekphrasis will be a fun concept to introduce to the students because it is really a two-fold idea. First, there is the actual art form one is examining, but then there is the art the comes from an individual's response to the work. So, from one piece of art another is born, which is really a fun notion to introduce to children. Art begets art and this inspirational cycle makes our world beautiful and awesome! Since ekphrasis is poetry about any art form created to evoke a sensory response, a large focus with the students will be talking about the five senses. This is great because it is cross-curricular, as we often talk about using our five senses in science. In addition, it gives five-year old students a concrete way to enter into a piece of art. Through classroom discussion students will be able to express what they see, feel, hear, and possibly even smell and taste when experiencing a work of art. Exploring a work of art in an ekphrastic manner and using the senses to explore it helps make art tangible for all, but especially five-year olds. One of our classmates has shared that when responding to literature or art in his first-grade class he teaches the students to answer three simple questions: “What do you see? Think? Wonder? about a work. This simple framework gives a concrete way for young students to engage and think critically about a work they are examining. In an article by Martens et al it is stated that “Opportunities to compose in art and writing, enhance student's creativity and literacy development and challenge them to think critically and compose multimodally.⁴ Introducing my kindergarten students to ekphrasis

will help me engage students across the curriculum and work on a variety of critical skills such as speaking and listening skills, science via the use of the five senses and reading/writing skills. The similarities between art and writing make them a wonderful teaching tool. This fusion is illustrated in an article by Marten et al who reference Say (2011) in their work *Painting Writing, Writing Painting: Thinking, Seeing, and Problem Solving Through Story*. Say, an author and artist, references his mentor who once stated, “With Van Gogh, each brushstroke is like a word in a book. Painting is a kind of writing, and writing is a kind of painting—they are both about seeing.”⁵ This is the point that I want to drive home to my budding kindergarten writers. Writing is much like art, there is no right or wrong, good or bad, so just try!

Another critical concept to convey to students is the collaborative aspect of ekphrastic poetry. This concept was shared by a guest artist in our class, Michael Kalmbach. Michael is an artist who struggled with addiction, but art was always his outlet. Since getting sober and back on track, he has started an amazing institution in downtown Wilmington, Delaware called The Creative Vision Factory⁶. The Creative Vision Factory provides individuals with health and behavioral needs access to the arts and provides as outlet of self-expression as an approach to recovery. Individuals are encouraged to pursue visual, literary and performing arts. These artists explore their own creative outlets through personalized instruction, workshops, and open studio time. Michael’s journey was very inspiring and I gained a great deal of knowledge and compassion from his story and art. One concept he shared that stuck with me and seems very applicable to include when teaching about ekphrasis is that an art room is a place for social development. Making, examining, responding to art helps develop relationships and develops a sense of community. In an NAEYC journal article, *Three Teachers’ Quest: Providing Daily Writing Activities for Kindergarteners*, Moutray and Snell state that, “Writing creates a collaborative environment in which children interact with and help one another.”⁷ I have seen this first hand in our class. I have learned more about my colleagues from my own school in seminar through our class discussions and reflections. I have gained insights into the lives of my classmates who I did not know before taking part in the Ekphrastic Poetry course. Through our discussions and activities about various art forms I have learned more in-depth, personal knowledge about each classmate, much more than would be gained through day-to-day surface level conversations with these individuals. These authentic conversations will be vital for helping students get students willing and comfortable with creating ekphrastic poetry. In addition, these social relationships will help foster the “I can” attitude towards writing when students work together and socialize throughout the unit. This quote from Michael during our seminar really resonated with me, “Art is not always about what is being made, but how it is produced. When you give people freedom good things will come out of it.” This is what I hope to achieve in my ekphrastic poetry unit with my students: confidence, a can-do attitude, and freedom of expression-good things!

The concept of aesthetic education is one that will be important for me to focus on as I develop my unit. According to Maxine Greene aesthetic education or aesthetic encounters are:

. . . situated encounters. That means that the perceivers of a given work of art apprehend that work in the light of their backgrounds, biographies, and experiences. We have to presume a multiplicity of perspectives, a plurality of interpretations. Clearly, this opens aesthetic educators to the likelihood of more than one interpretation of a poem, a dance, a play, a musical piece.⁸

Keeping this in mind it will be critical to explain to the students that there is no right or wrong answer when responding to a work of art. Nanci Hersh a guest lecturer in our class illustrated the importance of background knowledge and experience when examining works of art in our seminar. She explained that scaffolding students' responses to art is important and gives students a way to enter into the piece and build confidence to share their feelings. Nanci stated that even just posing a simple question, such as, "What do you notice?" enables individuals to begin to access a work of art.

Many of the activities and experiences with art that Nanci shared with us would be beneficial for students. One activity in particular would be a wonderful and useful activity to try stimulate conversation and give students a list of words and phrases to create an ekphrastic response to a work of art. Nanci scattered various works of art around the room. Then each student wrote a word or phrase for each work of art. Nanci then assigned each student a work of art and read the words and phrases that individuals had written about the work. We then used those words and phrases to create our own ekphrastic poems. This activity was valuable for several reasons. First, it developed a word bank which gave us confidence to write an ekphrastic response to the work of art we were given. In addition, when you heard other classmates share the poem they had created that used your thoughts/ideas/words it made you feel validated that your ideas were valued by another. This activity would definitely be a great one to use with kindergarteners to build confidence with both their writing and their ability to respond to works of art.

Unit Vocabulary

In addition to the conceptual ideas listed above it will be important to introduce some specific poetic terms to the students as we work through the unit. Since these are kindergarten students, I will not expect mastery of these skills, but it will be important for them to have exposure to some of the basic poetry terms and concepts. These definitions are taken from Ken Nesbitt's website Poetry Dictionary for Kids:⁹

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

Engaging students in reading and writing poetry has many benefits. According to Andrews, poetry cultivates a love of reading, promotes language development, highlights words sounds, creates awareness of feelings and experiences, calls attention to the world's wonders, increases interest in science, encourages group participation and encourages rhythm and movement¹⁰. Many of these are skills that are critical for kindergarteners to acquire and are a large focus in our curriculum. Therefore, poetry is a natural tool to utilize with kindergarten students. Andrews states that teachers can use poetry to encourage curiosity and involvement with everything! So, our unit will use poetry to engage curiosity about art.

Poem-a written composition, often using rhythm, rhyme, metaphor and other such artistic techniques to express an idea, feelings, or a story.

I will introduce the concept of poetry using the definition of poetry we created in our seminar in a kindergarten friendly way. I will compare poetry samples with a story to illustrate the differences between the two forms to the students so that they begin to understand, recognize and identify poetry pieces.

Poet-a person who writes poems.

I will introduce this term to the students and explain to them that they will become poets. I will refer to them as poets throughout the unit to help build their writing confidence. In addition, I will encourage them to refer to each other as poets. At the end of each lesson, we will encourage each other by giving "snaps" to each poet who shares their work. Giving "snaps" to a classmate that shared a poem they wrote was a part of our seminar that I loved and valued. It certainly helped me build my writing confidence, so I am certain that it will build confidence and enthusiasm for poetry with my kindergarten students as well.

Nursery Rhyme-a short, rhyming poem for young children, often telling a short story or describing an interesting character. The most well-known nursery rhymes in the English language are those attributed to Mother Goose.

Using nursery rhymes as examples of poems will be helpful when introducing the poetry unit. Many students may be familiar with nursery rhymes and that familiarity will help build a comfortableness and confidence as we embark on a poetry unit. In addition, nursery rhymes are typically easy to memorize and can illustrate some poetic elements to the students such as rhyme, alliteration and rhythm.

Concrete poem- a poem in which meaning is conveyed by the placement and design of the words on the page instead of, or in addition to, the usual arrangement of words. Concrete poems are fun and young students would certainly connect to this form of poetry. Sharing some examples of concrete poems written by children would be another great way to introduce and excite children about a poetry unit. Since they have a very physical structure to them concrete poems may help students begin to discuss/share/reflect on poetry.

Free Verse- a poetic form that avoids using fixed patterns of meter.

This will be one of the main forms we focus on during the unit. It will encourage the students to simply write their thoughts/feelings/reactions and not to worry so much about the rules/mechanics of writing poetry. Engaging students in free verse poetry is a great place to start according to Andrews,

One of the greatest experiences' children can have with poetry is to write it. Even kindergarteners and preschoolers can be poets. In fact, because of their unique, colorful language, the poetry of young children is very special. One idea for letting children started as poets is to let them write free-verse poems.¹¹

I read a book while researching this summer called *Kids' Poems: Teaching Kindergarteners to Love Writing Poetry*¹² which may be the answer to all of writing struggles. While I initially thought teaching kindergarteners to write free verse poetry would be a challenge, author Regie Routman has had quite the opposite results with kindergarten students. She states,

Amazing as it seems, kindergarteners can easily write free verse poems about their lives and interests. When released from the structure of "school writing: and shown poems by other kindergarteners in their original handwriting, developing writers quickly experience the fun and possibilities that poetry writing provides.

I had a total "ah-ha" moment! Perhaps teaching students to respond to art/music nature via free verse poetry will allow me to teach writing in a more developmentally appropriate way. It allows for more creativity and encouragement of writing with less of a focus on the numerous "rules" of writing. Perhaps teaching students to become free verse poets is the answer to helping to strike a balance between developing a love of writing in kindergartens while introducing, but not focusing as much on the mechanics of writing such as capitalization, punctuation, and spacing.

Rebus- a representation of a word by or phrase by pictures or symbols

Rebus writing/responses will be one form of ekphrastic response we will work on in the unit. This may help struggling writers to be able to draw some of the words they want to convey or could even allow for students to engage in writing a rhyming couplet response to a work of art.

Speech bubble-a circle around the words that someone says like in a cartoon.

I will use speech bubbles as an ekphrasis response to pictures and works of art to have the students communicate what they think the person/animal in the work might be thinking/saying.

Alliteration

Repeating the consonant sounds at the beginnings of nearby words, such as the “p” sound in the words “My **p**uppy makes **p**izza”

Alliteration is fun and tongue twisters will be included in the unit. Kindergarteners work on segmenting words by sounds. Beginning sounds in words are typically the first sounds they are able to identify. Therefore, my students may tune into beginning sounds and with exposure to this concept may be able to include an alliteration in their writing.

Rhyme

Having the same sound at the end of two or more words such as **pine / fine, nickel / pickle, and ability / fragility.**

Close Rhyme- a rhyme of two words that are next to one another or close to one another, such as “Humpty Dumpty,” tighty-whitey,” “fat cat,” or “fair and square.”

End Rhyme

Rhyming words at the ends of the lines of a poem.

Single Rhyme

A rhyme in which the stress is on the final syllable of the words, such as **cat / hat, and play / away**

Rhyming is an important phonemic awareness skill that we focus on a great deal in kindergarten. Rhyming words are typically easy for many students to identify. Identifying and highlighting rhymes in poems will help the students to feel confident in their poetic abilities and they may be able to include them in their own poetic responses.

Imagery

Language and poetic techniques used to create mental pictures and cause emotions in the reader.

We talk about visualization and creating pictures in one’s mind when reading stories. Therefore, the students are familiar with this concept. Using this term will be familiar to the students and help them as we work through various types of poems and works of art.

Contrast

Contrast is the difference artists create to make images distinct from one another. This concept can be illustrated to students by teaching them in and engaging them in the Seesaw Story Structure. Sharing art samples with contrast can lead to a brainstorming of opposite words. We could use this word bank create a class “seesaw” poem and then students could create on their own¹³.

Line

A single row of words in a poem.

It will be important to illustrate to the students that a line is different from a sentence and that a line does not have to follow the same rules as a sentence. This freedom and release from the rules of writing may ease students stress about writing and “getting it right” and allow for more creativity and confidence in their writing.

Onomatopoeia

A word whose sound is similar to the thing or action it refers to, such as “buzz” or “hiss.” Onomatopoeia is just plain fun and one of my favorite concepts to introduce to young learners. We will explore poems that use onomatopoeia so that students may begin to identify this technique and begin to incorporate it into their own writing. Onomatopoeia may work well when we explore speech bubbles as an ekphrastic poetry response.

Refrain-a phrase, line or stanza that is repeated throughout a poem, often after each stanza.

Repetition-using the same word, phrase, line, or stanza two or more times in a poem. Refrain and repetition will be useful poetic tools to teach the students. These techniques may help writers who are “stuck” or those who are not confident in their writing abilities.

Classroom Strategies

The general structure of my unit will follow a lesson format based off of Regie Routman’s poetry lesson framework in her book, *Kids’ Poems Teaching Kindergarteners to Love Writing Poetry*¹⁴. The format is to demonstrate poetry writing with students through sharing and discussing examples of kids’ poems (about 10-15 minutes.) Then the teacher models and writes how to write a poem in front of the students (5-7 minutes.) Next, shared writing occurs in which the students work together with the teacher to write a poem (10 minutes.) This is followed by oral brainstorming with students before writing (5-7 minutes.) Students then work on writing and illustrating a poem independently (15-20 minutes.) The lesson ends with sharing and celebrating of work (10 minutes.)

This approach to the writing process is beneficial because it incorporates a variety of writing techniques. In the journal article *Comparing Two Methods of Writing Instruction: Effects on Kindergarten Students’ Reading Skills* the authors state that using a variety of writing strategies and techniques is ideal because “no single method of writing instructions best fits the needs of every student and teacher¹⁵. In addition, they state that there are in fact instructional advantages to blending various writing instruction programs together to create an interactive model of writing instruction. Modeling as well as shared writing will be critical components in my unit as well. Since kindergarteners are novice writers and many can be reluctant these two approaches will help students to feel more confident when they engage in ekphrasis poetry responses.

A large focus will also be on discussion and reactions to various works of art. Discussions will be both whole group format as well as “hand-sandwich” pair shares. The students are familiar with the “hand-sandwich” technique in which they quickly turn and find a partner to share and discuss on a given topic. The students claim a partner by putting their hands together-one person’s palms up and the other person’s hand palms

down. Then a quick directive is given such as, “the person whose hands are on the bottom shares first.” This makes for a quick and easy way for students to share on a topic.

Classroom Activities

Week One-Introduction and establishing ourselves as poets

Content Objectives- Students will develop an understanding of poetry and ekphrasis. Students will respond to works of art with illustrations.

Common Core Standards-RL.K.1, RL.K.5, RI.K.10, SL.K.5, SL.K.6

I will introduce the key terms poetry, poem, ekphrasis and poet. We will begin referring to each other as poets. The students will enter into this unit by viewing a work of art, listening to a piece of music or listening to a poem and then respond to it with their own illustrations. Students will be provided the opportunity to share their illustrated response. We will begin our routine of giving “snaps” to those individuals who share their awesome ideas. I especially like the video *Starry Night*¹⁶ because of the realism and 3D nature. I feel this video that will engage students and be a great “hook” as we begin the unit. To introduce music, I will use *Beautiful Spring*.¹⁷ This piece is lengthy so pieces of it could be used or it could be used over multiple sessions. The various melodies will evoke a variety of emotions and stimulate emotions for students to illustrate.

Weeks Two and Three-Building Our Ekphrasis Tool Box -

Content Objectives-Students will engage with a variety of art forms. Students will try a variety of poetic responses to various art forms. Students will share their response and discuss with small or large groups of students.

Common Core Standards-W.K.1, RL.K.5, RI.K.10, SL.K.5, SL.K.6

Week Two

Day One: Speech Bubbles with Garfield and Friends- As a class we will examine and discuss *Garfield* comics¹⁸ and discuss speech bubbles. We will then work through the lesson framework (see above) The students will be shown 4-5 pictures of my dog Penny Lane who is a therapy dog at our school. I will select one of the photographs and then model how to write a speech bubble response as to what I think Penny is thinking in the photograph. The students and I will then select a different photograph of Penny and we will write a speech bubble response together as a class. We will then brainstorm a list of different words and phrases the students feel work for the various photographs. Students will be paired together and will then select a photograph of Penny as well as a speech bubble shape and work together to create a speech bubble response for the photograph of Penny. The lesson will close with each pair sharing their speech bubble response with 1-2 other groups.

Day Two: Seesaw/Opposite Day- As a class we will examine Kenn Nesbitt's poem *Opposite Day*¹⁹. We will highlight the words that are opposites in the poem. We will also look at graphic images on the web illustrate the concept of contrast in art. As a class we will then brainstorm and record our own list of opposites.

Day Three: Hybrid Concrete Seesaw Poems- I will introduce the concept of concrete poetry to the students. We will examine some examples of concrete poems.²⁰ We will reread the list of opposite words we had created the previous day. I will select a graphic image that shows contrast and write a concrete poem on the outline of a seesaw to construct my own "concrete seesaw poem" in which one word is placed on one end of the seesaw and the opposite word on the other end of the seesaw. As a class we will then select a new graphic image and write a "concrete -seesaw poem" together. Students will then be placed into pairs. Each pair will be given a seesaw outline and a new graphic image that displays contrast. Pairs will use their own words or the words generated by the class to create their own "concrete seesaw poem." Each pair will then share their poem with another pair.

Day Four: Tongue Twisters with Real-Life Art- We will explore the topic of alliteration through tongue twisters. We will listen to and practice some tongue twisters²¹ via a fun and engaging clip from YouTube. We will highlight the letter sound and the words repeated in each segment of the clip. My dog Penny will make a guest appearance as a real-life piece of art. As a class we will brainstorm and create a list of words that begin with the /p/ sounds. Then we will write an alliterative poetry response about Penny. Students will then work in pairs to create their own alliterative poetry response about our live work of art. Miss Penny Lane. She will be sure to stroll around the classroom to inspire the budding ekphrastic poets! Each pair will then share their poetic response about Penny with another pair.

Week Three

Day One Erasure Poems with Dr. Seuss- When our class created erasure poetry in our seminar, I really enjoyed it and I thought what a shame because I am not sure kindergarten students could engage in this type of poetry. However, upon further consideration I think kindergarten students can and should engage in erasure or "blackout" poetry. First, I think it is just pure fun that they can color over and get rid of words. In addition, if we use very familiar and easy to read poems/literature they will be capable of reading many of the words and feel successful. This process will continue to build their confidence as writers and poets. We will begin by reading a page from a familiar work such as Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat*. I will then demonstrate the process of blacking out certain words while choosing to leave other words. We will then reread the new poem created from the blackout process. As a class we will then work together on a different Dr. Seuss passage and blackout words to create a new poem. Students will

then be grouped in pairs with various Dr. Seuss passages to create their own erasure/blackout poems. Pairs will also be encouraged to illustrate their new Dr. Seuss poem as well. Each pair will share their completed erasure/blackout poem and illustration with the class.

Day Two: Plop, Drip, Boing! Onomatopoeia- This literary concept is typically a favorite of kindergarten students. Whenever we read a story, I point out onomatopoeia if it occurs in the text or graphic features. Students love both the words that exemplify onomatopoeia as well as the word onomatopoeia itself. I will introduce the concept of onomatopoeia by sharing a brief clip that has a variety of examples of onomatopoeia.²² Then I will put an image of popular cartoon characters, such as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles or Batman and Batgirl, up on the smart board for the students to view. We will discuss what is happening in the picture. Then I will create speech bubbles that include an onomatopoeia word/phrase. Then as a class we will create a word bank of various onomatopoeia words that could be used to respond to any cartoon image. As a class, we will then create an onomatopoeia response to a different cartoon image. Students will then be released to work independently with a new cartoon image of their choosing. Students will have access to the onomatopoeia word bank we created as a class. They can use words we brainstormed as a class or words of their own choosing to create onomatopoeia speech bubbles for their cartoon scene. To close the lesson, students will share their work with the whole class.

*Note ekphrasis responses begin to shift from partner/group work to more independence at this point in the unit. The goal is that at this point in the unit students have developed that “I can write!” confidence and can begin to work independently. However, if some students are still reluctant or struggling partner work will be utilized

Day Three: Rebus Responses-Since kindergarteners are emerging readers and writers one skill we often teach them is to use illustrations in a story. This can help them figure out unknown words, glean meaning, aid comprehension and help with inferencing to name a few. Since we teach kindergarten students how important illustrations are why not encourage them to use drawing in their poetry responses. To begin I show students an example of a rebus story from Highlights magazine.²³ We will read through the story and discuss the illustrations in the passage. We will talk about how they help the reader, but also give the writing a different feel. Then I post an image of a work of art from The Art Book for Children²⁴. I will write a rebus poetry response to the image. I will then display a different image from the book. Together as a class we will create a word bank that students could use to help them formulate their responses. This word bank will include labeled drawing so that students have access to both word and a picture to help them formulate their rebus poetic responses. As a class we will use the word bank we created to formulate an ekphrasis rebus response to the image. Students will then select one image from the book and create their own ekphrasis rebus response. The class created

word bank with pictures will be available as a resource. Students will then pair-share their response with a partner.

Day Four: Let Your Mind Wander Free(Verse)- This year I have been working on mindfulness with my students. I am seeing many benefits for myself, my students, and our class as a community. Engaging in mindfulness is a part of our daily routine. After we finish a mindfulness session, we typically share and discuss how we are feeling, how we can put the skill into practice throughout the rest of our day, etc. Due to this familiarity mindfulness should serve as a springboard into an ekphrasis free verse poetry response. We will engage in a mindfulness activity on gonoodle.com. This activity from Mindless to Mindful²⁵ is one of the class favorites. Upon completion of our mindfulness routine, I will demonstrate a free verse ekphrasis response. Then as a class we will brainstorm a list of words to create a word bank. As a class, we will then create a shared ekphrasis response to our mindfulness practice. Students will then work independently to create an ekphrasis response about today's mindfulness practice or their mindfulness practice in general. Students can share their free verse response with the whole group if they choose to and feel comfortable.

Week Four

Content Objectives-Students will select a piece of art they value. Students will use one of the skills from their “ekphrasis tool box” to write a poetry response to the work selected. Students will share their ekphrasis response at a culminating family event.

Common Core Standards W.K.1, RL.K.5, RI.K.10, SL.K.5, SL.K.6

Ekphrasis Free Choice-We will take a class trip to The Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington, Delaware. As a class we will explore the museum inside as well as the gorgeous grounds outside. Each student will be allowed to use one of the class iPads to photograph a work of art they make a connection with and would like to create an ekphrasis response to as a culminating project. When we return to school, each student will receive a photograph of their art selection. Each student will then select an ekphrasis response technique from the tool box we have developed over the past three weeks (speech bubble, rebus, free verse, etc.) Students will work over the course of two to three days to create an ekphrasis response to their art. Students will then share their photograph as well as their ekphrasis poetry response at a Poetry “Coffee House” for families. This “Coffee House” will be in conjunction with a group of second grade students and fourth/fifth grade students who have also been working with ekphrasis. Of course, this culminating event will be filled with lots of “snaps” celebrating the work of our fellow ekphrastic poets.

Resources

- "(no Title)." Thecreativevisionfactory.org. Accessed December 11, 2018.
<https://thecreativevisionfactory.org/>.
- "About Aesthetic Education." The Maxine Greene Institute. Accessed December 11, 2018.
<https://maxinegreene.org/about/aesthetic-education>.
- Andrews, Janice Hayes. "Poetry:Tool of the Classroom Magician." *Young Children*43, no. 4 (May 1988): 17-25. Accessed July 24, 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42726092>.
- Boushey, Gail, and Joan Moser. *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2014.
- Fitzpatrick, Jo. *Spring Rebus Writing: Combining Pictures and Print to Support Beginning Writers*. Huntington Beach, CA: Creative Teaching Press, 2004.
- "Flocabulary - Educational Hip-Hop." Using Descriptive Language - Common Core Standards ELA - Descriptive Language - Flocabulary. Accessed December 14, 2018.
<https://www.flocabulary.com/>.
- "Garfield & Friends." Garfield & Friends. Accessed December 13, 2018.
<https://garfield.com/>.
- HolaBriannaBee. "Onomatopoeia Creative Project." YouTube. December 03, 2013.
Accessed December 14, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1GC1yWdM_c.
- Hooks, William H., Joanne Oppenheim, Betty Virginia Doyle. Boegehold, and Lynn Munsinger. *Read-a-rebus: Tales & Rhymes in Words & Pictures*. New York: Random House, 1986.
- Ibiza, Chillout King. "Beautiful SPRING RELAXATION Lounge Del Mar Chill Out Mix." YouTube. April 12, 2013. Accessed December 08, 2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiRZ7YQKUgQ>.
- Jones, Cindy Don, D. Ray Reutzler, and Jamison D. Fargo. "Comparing Two Methods of Writing Instruction: Effects on Kindergarten Students' Reading Skills." *The Journal of Educational Research*103, no. 5 (2010): 327-41. doi:10.1080/00220670903383119.

Jr., Nick. "#ReadAlong Tongue Twisters W/ PAW Patrol, Shimmer and Shine & Top Wing Nick Jr." YouTube. July 30, 2018. Accessed December 14, 2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuY9AELBhcY>.

Lewis, J. Patrick, Peggy Elizabeth. Gifford, N. Scott Momaday, George Gordon Byron Byron, John Moffitt, Marin Sorescu, Joseph Stroud, W. H. Davies, Issa Kobayashi, Kurt Vonnegut, and Emily Dickinson. *National Geographic Book of Nature Poetry: With Favorites from Langston Hughes, Naomi Shihab Nye, Billy Collins, and More: More than 200 Poems with Photographs That Float, Zoom, and Bloom!* Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2015.

Magic, 幻维数码 Motion. "Van Gogh - The Starry Night梵高《星月夜》VR版 - 3D 360° Experience." YouTube. June 29, 2016. Accessed December 08, 2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSixcSx-5h0>.

Manning, Mick, and Brita Granstrom. *The Story of Paintings - a History of Art for Children*. Hachette Childrens Group, 2017.

Martens, Prisca, Ray Martens, Michelle Hassay Doyle, Jenna Loomis, Laura Fuhrman, Robbie Stout, and Elizabeth Soper. "Painting Writing, Writing Painting: Thinking, Seeing, and Problem Solving Through Story." *The Reading Teacher* 71, no. 6 (2017): 669-79. doi:10.1002/trtr.1668.

Moutray, Carol L., and Carrie Ann Snell. "Three Teachers/ Quest: Providing Daily Writing Activities for Kindergarteners." March 2003. Accessed July 24, 2018.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/42729928>.

Moutray, Carol L., and Carrie Ann Snell. "Three Teachers' Quest: Providing Daily Writing Activities for Kindergarteners." *Young Children* 58, no. 2 (March 2003): 24-28. Accessed July 24, 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42729928>.

"Not Found." GoNoodle. Accessed December 14, 2018.
<https://app.gonoodle.com/activities/from-mindfulness-to-mindful?s=category&t=Enhance Focus>.

"Opposite Day." Poetry4kids. Accessed December 14, 2018.
<https://www.poetry4kids.com/poems/opposite-day/#.VWyOtdKqqko>.

"Poetry Dictionary for Kids." Poetry4kids. Accessed December 14, 2018.
<http://www.poetry4kids.com/lessons/poetry-dictionary-for-kids/>.

Renshaw, Amanda. *The Art Book for Children*. UK: Phaidon, 2011.

Routman, Regie. *Kids Poems: Teaching Kindergartners to Love Writing Poetry*. New York: Scholastic, 2000.

Silverstein, Shel. *A Light in the Attic*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017.

Silverstein, Shel. *Where the Sidewalk Ends: The Poems and Drawings of Shel Silverstein*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017.

Vanness, Amanda R., Timothy J. Murnen, and Cynthia D. Bertelsen. "Let Me Tell You a Secret: Kindergartners Can Write!" *The Reading Teacher* 66, no. 7 (2013): 574-85.
doi:10.1002/trtr.1162.

Wakefield, Jane. "Children Spend Six Hours or More a Day on Screens." BBC News. March 27, 2015. Accessed December 08, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-32067158>.

"What Are Kids Concrete Poems?" Jesus Calms the Storm. Accessed December 14, 2018.
<http://www.short-story-time.com/kids-concrete-poems.html>.

Additional Resources

The following is a list of additional resources I found through my research in developing this unit. While they are not embedded in my activities these resources could be wonderful resources to other educators looking to engage their students in ekphrastic poetry experiences.

Fitzpatrick, Jo. *Spring Rebus Writing: Combining Pictures and Print to Support Beginning Writers*. Huntington Beach, CA: Creative Teaching Press, 2004.

This is a great resource to introduce rebus techniques to young learners. It can help build confidence with writing. A great resource for ESL/ELL learners.

"Flocabulary - Educational Hip-Hop." Using Descriptive Language - Common Core Standards ELA - Descriptive Language - Flocabulary. Accessed December 14, 2018. <https://www.flocabulary.com/>.

This online source teaches students vocabulary in a variety of subjects via rap songs. Students enjoy this engaging approach to vocabulary. These videos could be used to engage students in ekphrastic poetry responses.

Hooks, William H., Joanne Oppenheim, Betty Virginia Doyle, Boegehold, and Lynn Munsinger. *Read-a-rebus: Tales & Rhymes in Words & Pictures*. New York: Random House, 1986.

This children's rebus story book could be used to introduce students to both rebus and rhyming pairs.

Lewis, J. Patrick, Peggy Elizabeth, Gifford, N. Scott Momaday, George Gordon Byron Byron, John Moffitt, Marin Sorescu, Joseph Stroud, W. H. Davies, Issa Kobayashi, Kurt Vonnegut, and Emily Dickinson. *National Geographic Book of Nature Poetry: With Favorites from Langston Hughes, Naomi Shihab Nye, Billy Collins, and More: More than 200 Poems with Photographs That Float, Zoom, and Bloom!* Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2015.

This book has many wonderful examples of ekphrastic poetry as well as many nature images that could be used to elicit student responses.

Manning, Mick, and Brita Granstrom. *The Story of Paintings - a History of Art for Children*. Hachette Childrens Group, 2017.

This book has many examples of paintings through the centuries. Questions to guide student thought and response are provided.

Silverstein, Shel. *A Light in the Attic*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017.

This classic book is a great introduction to poetry for students. There are a variety of poetry examples and poetic techniques. Illustrations accompany many of the poem and could be used to develop ekphrastic responses.

Silverstein, Shel. *Where the Sidewalk Ends: The Poems and Drawings of Shel Silverstein*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017.

This classic book is a great introduction to poetry for students. There are a variety of poetry examples and poetic techniques. Illustrations accompany many of the poem and could be used to develop ekphrastic responses.

Appendix – Implementing District Standards

CCSS.ELA-Reading Literature.RL.K.1- With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text. *The students will engage in and answer questions about poetry pieces we discuss throughout the unit. In addition, students will ask either questions about poetry responses their peers have written.*

CCCS.ELA-Reading Literature.RL.K.5-Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems). *At the beginning of the unit, students will compare and contrast the literary elements that comprise stories versus poems. Students will identify a poem as such and provide at least one characteristic that makes the work a poem.*

CCSS.ELA-Reading Information-RI.K.10-Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding. *Students will read through a variety of poems throughout the unit. This exposure to a variety of poems will provide students with a variety of poetic techniques that they can use as models to assist them in writing their own ekphrastic responses.*

CCSS.ELA-Speaking and Listening-SL.K.5-Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail. *As an introduction to the unit students will draw their response to different art forms. They will be encouraged to add detail to their drawings to illustrate their feelings and emotional response. Later in the unit, when students engage in erasure poetry techniques, they will draw a picture to go illustrate and provide detail on the Dr. Seuss work they created with a partner.*

CCSS.ELA-Speaking and Listening-SL.K.6-Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly. *This standard will be addressed in each lesson of the unit. Each lesson will include students sharing their thoughts and feeling about various works of art and art forms, responses to poetry and connections to their own work as well as the works of their peers.*

CCSS.ELA-Writing-W.K.1-Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., My favorite book is... *Students will engage in various writing techniques such as speech bubbles, onomatopoeia and free verse to express their opinions about a variety of art forms throughout the unit.*

Notes

¹ Jane Wakefield, "Children Spend Six Hours or More a Day on Screens," BBC News, March 27, 2015, , accessed December 08, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-32067158>

² Gail Boushey and Joan Moser, *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades* (Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers, 2014).

³ Amanda R. Vanness, Timothy J. Murnen, and Cynthia D. Bertelsen, "Let Me Tell You a Secret: Kindergartners Can Write!" *The Reading Teacher* 66, no. 7 (2013): , doi:10.1002/trtr.1162.

⁴ Prisca Martens et al., "Painting Writing, Writing Painting: Thinking, Seeing, and Problem Solving Through Story," *The Reading Teacher* 71, no. 6 (2017): , doi:10.1002/trtr.1668.

⁵ ibid

⁶ Prisca Martens et al., "Painting Writing, Writing Painting: Thinking, Seeing, and Problem Solving Through Story," *The Reading Teacher* 71, no. 6 (2017): , doi:10.1002/trtr.1668.

⁷ Carol L. Moutray and Carrie Ann Snell, "Three Teachers/ Quest: Providing Daily Writing Activities for Kindergartners," March 2003, , accessed July 24, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42729928>.

⁸ <https://maxinegreene.org/about/aesthetic-education>

⁹ Poetry Dictionary for Kids," Poetry4kids, , accessed December 14, 2018, <http://www.poetry4kids.com/lessons/poetry-dictionary-for-kids/>.

¹⁰ Janice Hayes Andrews, "Poetry:Tool of the Classroom Magician," *Young Children* 43, no. 4 (May 1988): , accessed July 24, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42726092>

¹¹ ibid

¹² Regie Routman, *Kids Poems: Teaching Kindergartners to Love Writing Poetry* (New York: Scholastic, 2000).

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ Cindy Don Jones, D. Ray Reutzler, and Jamison D. Fargo, "Comparing Two Methods of Writing Instruction: Effects on Kindergarten Students' Reading Skills," *The Journal of Educational Research* 103, no. 5 (2010): , doi:10.1080/00220670903383119.

¹⁶ 幻维数码 Motion Magic, "Van Gogh - The Starry Night 梵高 《星月夜》 VR版 - 3D 360° Experience," YouTube, June 29, 2016, accessed December 08, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSixcSx-5h0>.

¹⁷ Chillout King Ibiza, "Beautiful SPRING RELAXATION Lounge Del Mar Chill Out Mix," YouTube, April 12, 2013, , accessed December 08, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiRZ7YQKUgQ>.

¹⁸ "Garfield & Friends," Garfield & Friends, , accessed December 13, 2018, <https://garfield.com/>.

¹⁹ <https://www.poetry4kids.com/poems/opposite-day/#.VWyoTdKqqko>

²⁰ <http://www.short-story-time.com/kids-concrete-poems.html>

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuY9AELBhcY>

²² HolaBriannaBee, "Onomatopoeia Creative Project," YouTube, December 03, 2013, , accessed December 14, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1GC1yWdM_c.

²³ https://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/worksheets/Highlights/index.shtml

²⁴ Amanda Renshaw, *The Art Book for Children* (UK: Phaidon, 2011).

²⁵ "Not Found," GoNoodle, , accessed December 14, 2018, <https://app.gonoodle.com/activities/from-mindfulness-to-mindful?s=category&t=Enhance Focus>.