

if there were any titles different from the first list. Only two included the titles of other poems or poets. If this restricted frame of poetic reference is at all indicative of English teachers at large, the problem of teaching poetry is indeed a serious one. I suggested to my students that they find a poet of choice, one whom they hadn't met before but whom they found an affinity with. In this way several students discovered Roethke, Plath, and (to my surprise) Blake and Hopkins. I say to my surprise because, although I was aware of the failures of our academic tradition, I had not suspected that licensed English teachers had no acquaintance with Blake and Hopkins. This fact indicates to me that university English departments had better look to the basics in poetry.

To end on a more optimistic note, the evidence of variety (or idiosyncrasy) was indeed heartening. The teachers could carry this fact into their own classrooms with the knowledge that, except for the absolutely retarded or seriously aberrant pupil, each could make his/her own discovery of matters poetic without being unduly limited by text or terminology.

With all due allowance for recordings, photographs, film strips, and so on, the primary goal and instrument should be the student's own senses responding to images and sound patterns.

## Curtain Call

Spare the prod and spoil the shadow  
Cast in my role. Death plays a bit  
Part in the last scene, but no one  
Remembers his lines. Backstage sounds  
Of rehearsing and prompting--  
A new act to follow and follow.  
In the wings the flutters of souls  
Searching for costumes and cues  
To begin the new scene mingle  
With mellow hand claps of souls  
Who sing for a part well played.  
But always the last blackout--  
Curtain fall--the lines spoken,  
But not understood; the lines heard,  
But not remembered, are felt and held.

DALE S. OLSON

## Finding Poetry In The Schools

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A found poem is a piece of prose rearranged into a poetic form by breaking a paragraph into rhythmic or expressive units. This article offers a procedure for implementing the technique of finding poems into the language arts program. Benefits of this approach include the creation of personal reading materials, stimulation of an interest in poetry, improved phrase reading ability, and provision of opportunities for written expression without fear.

A found poem is a piece of prose rearranged into a poetic form by breaking a paragraph into rhythmical or expressive units. Found poetry is not a new idea. William Butler Yeats, for example, produced one in the 1930s from a prose selection by Walter Pater. This article will attempt to demonstrate how found poetry can be successfully introduced into the classroom.

The justification for the inclusion of poetry in a language arts program is well established. Creative writing develops sensitivity, encourages imagination, increases feelings of self worth, stimulates an interest in reading, and provides an opportunity to use previously learned skills. Specifically, the use of found poetry techniques provides a gentle introduction to the study and writing of traditional poetry which children unfortunately sometimes find frightening and dull.

Unless an atmosphere of trust exists in the room, students may be reluctant to express their innermost feelings or to participate at all. Frequently the teacher can remove

the barriers of caution and suspicion by reading and discussing one of her own poems to the class. This enables the students to understand that the teacher wishes to communicate with them on a personal level.

The second step is to have the students list as many "soft, warm, and beautiful" words as they can. A preceding discussion of frequently used words such as tender, delicate, roses, cuddles, laughter, lollipops, and smiles will help clarify the concept. Bear in mind that no standards should be imposed upon the children's selections. Any word that satisfies them is acceptable.

Next, the class is instructed to play a word association game by connecting as many words on their lists as possible into a passage with a central theme. When the students are finished they should carefully read their selections aloud two or three times in private and then place slash marks where natural pauses (breaths) occur. If the impulse strikes you to take this opportunity to teach about phrases, clausal structure, meter, or rhyme, firmly reject it. It is important that the children do not feel that you are trying to mask a grammar lesson. Furthermore, your goal is to preserve the child's vocabulary and syntax so the material conforms more closely to his natural language and is therefore easier to read.

The concluding activity is to have the students place each section between a set of slash marks on a separate line.

Julie, age 13, offers the following example which illustrates the final steps. The delicate fingers/of a new born babe,/the tender,/slender,/shapes of love,/gently kiss their mother's breast/then slowly/return/to sleep.

The delicate fingers  
of a new born babe,  
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Teachers should be lenient when reviewing children's writing. The formal disciplines of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and syntax should not be corrected. If the

child is convinced that your effort to communicate and your acceptance of his ideas are sincere, his pride and his wish to express himself will motivate him to improve his mechanical skills. A desire to communicate must be cultivated before the need for practical skills can be realized. The content of the student's poem must always be commented upon and praised lavishly but not insincerely. Differences of opinion must be handled tactfully, if they are impossible to ignore. Faithful expression of an experience is the only requirement. No idea should be categorically rejected or belittled. Remember the devastation that will result if a piece of a child's heart is red-penciled.

Upon completion of the poetry activities, most students will accomplish the objectives that were discussed previously in this article. These benefits alone clearly indicate the desirability of such activities. However, another accomplishment can be added to the list. A serendipitous effect of this unit, which indicates a possible area for future study, was the improvement of phrase reading among the poorer readers. Apparently this unexpected dividend is the result of the child's heightened attention to thought units. His expectations for finding meaning are expanded from words to strings of words.

Creative writing of any type must be practiced and encouraged to a greater extent than is presently found. Expression is essential to the development of sensitivity and feelings of self worth in children. Teachers must recognize student's communicative needs and provide bountiful opportunities for written expression without fear.