

POETRY AND LOSS  
PART I



LESSON PLANS | EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES | VIDEOS | POETRY

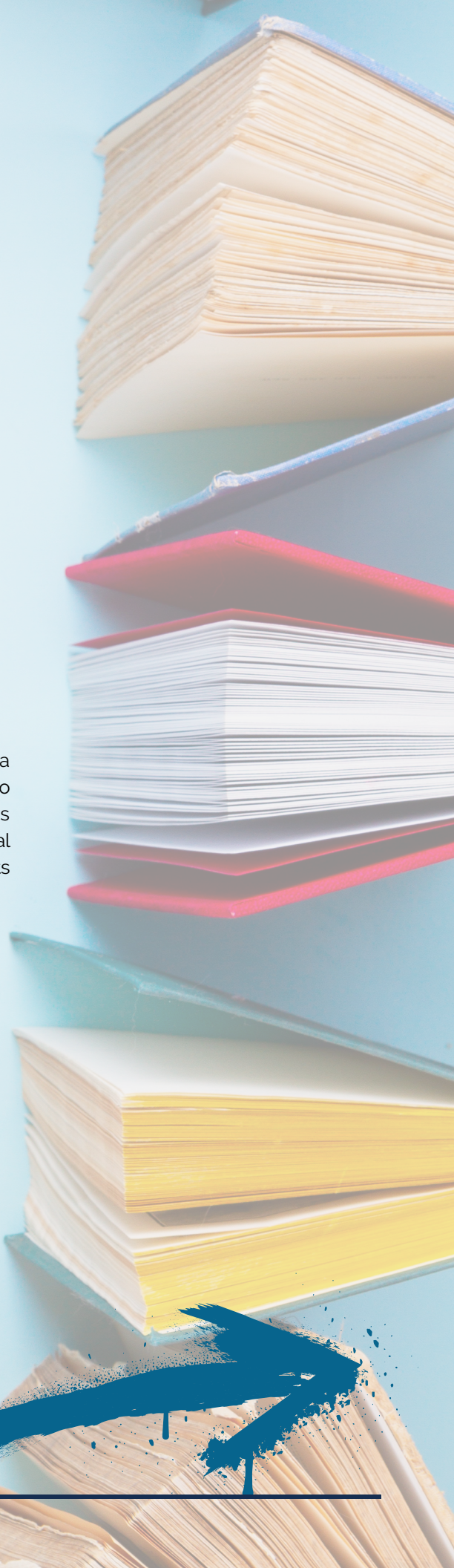
THE FAVORITE POEM PROJECT IS DEDICATED TO CELEBRATING, DOCUMENTING  
AND ENCOURAGING POETRY'S ROLE IN OUR LIVES. **FOR MORE LESSON PLANS  
AND RESOURCES VISIT** [FAVORITEPOEM.ORG](https://www.favoritepoem.org)



# Outcomes

Many students run into difficulty with poetry because they believe that a single poem has one purpose, one true meaning, and/or speaks only to one person. By viewing the Favorite Poem videos and then seeking poems significant to them, students can see and experience the various personal meanings ordinary people find in poetry. The lesson aims to help students consider poems in a deeper, richer way.

*This lesson was made possible by submissions from  
Lauren Manganiello, Wilmington High School, Wilmington, MA*







# Ideas and Methodologies

- (The teacher may choose to begin this lesson by reading to the class Elizabeth Bishop's wonderful villanelle "One Art," which begins with the line: "The art of losing isn't hard to master.")

## Part One: Free Write

Students will write about a significant experience in which they lost something or someone, or they were lost. The "something" can be anything: money, a pet, a shoe — but should aim to record a loss they felt deeply; the "someone" can be a friend or family member and can refer to separation or changes in a relationship, or to a death. Their writing should address the questions of:

- What is the overall feeling you have about this experience?
- What, if anything, helped you through this time?
- What happened later? Did your life change?

## Part Two: Favorite Poem Videos

- Watch four Favorite Poem segments:
  - "Facing It" by Yusef Komunyakaa read by Michael Lythgoe
  - "We Real Cool" by Gwendolyn Brooks read by John Ulrich
  - "Sonnet 29" by William Shakespeare read by Daniel McCall
  - "The Holy Longing" by Johann Wolfgang read by Olivia Milward
- Questions for discussion:
  - What types of loss did each person address? (e.g., loss of innocence, loss of loved ones, loss of identity).
  - How were these losses similar? How different?
  - How has poetry helped this person through his or her loss?
  - What are the connections between the person and the poem?

## Part Three: Student Reflection

Some Final Questions/ Activities to ask

- Take another look at your free write. Could poetry have helped you through your loss? Why? How?
  - Through additional searching and reading, choose a poem that speaks to your loss. Become comfortable with the poem; write it out in your own handwriting, read it aloud and be prepared to read it aloud for the class.
  - Why did you choose this poem? What is the connection between it and you? Write about your choice.
  - Create a poem, using your free write as a base, but concentrating on making forceful and memorable lines and honing out the best images. Refine your poem still further. How does this new poem express your experience in a way different from your free write?
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# Lesson Resources

## *Suggested Poems:*

"The Farmer" by William Carlos Williams

"This is Just to Say" by William Carlos Williams

"One for the Rose" by Galway Kinnell

"A Lover" by Amy Clampitt

"Song" by H. D.

"The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams

"a(l)" by E. E. Cummings

"in-Just Spring" by E. E. Cummings

(For additional suggestions, and a variation on this lesson, look at

"Learning the Lines" in the middle school lesson plans).

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