



Favorite Poems: Ours and Others

Recommended Grade Range: Middle School

Learning Objective(s)

Students will be able to...

- ✓ Understand and discuss the ways in which people make personal connections to poems.
- ✓ Discover and unpack new poems.

▶ *This is a multi-day unit that relies on students' prior knowledge of poetry and gives them the opportunity to build community through poetry; teachers may choose to lengthen or combine a given day's lesson, below, as they see fit.*

Lesson Agenda

Day One

- ◆ Launch this unit by **asking students to name (one of) their favorite poem(s)**.
 - ◆ If a student has no prior experience with poetry, you could invite them to choose a song they find poetic.
- ◆ Give students time to **find their poems** online in order to read their poems to the class, with some discussion around what makes this poem their favorite.
- ◆ Then, ask students to think of **three people in their life** (friends, family members, neighbors, past teachers...) who might have their own favorite poem.

Homework

- ◆ Students will reach out to their three chosen people and ask each of them to share their favorite poem.
- ◆ Students should write down each favorite poem by hand, as well as a short statement from each person about why this poem is their favorite.
 - ◆ (Note for bilingual students that the poems can be in any language, as long as an English translation is brought in to accompany it.)

Day Two

- ◆ Students will bring their handwritten poems to class. **Display the favorite poems and accompanying statements in the classroom.**
 - ◆ The poems could be displayed on a bulletin board, on desks, on a projector, or anywhere else you see fit.
- ◆ Invite students to take a **"gallery walk" around the room** in order to read their peers' poems and statements.
 - ◆ As they are engaging with their peers' work, ask students to take note of any poems they especially enjoy, or any accompanying statements that added to their experience of reading a particular poem.



- ◆ Once students have browsed their peers' work, they should return to their seats. **Students should take a moment to write down which poems/statements they enjoyed** and why.
- ◆ End class with a **share out**: student volunteers will share the poems/statements they enjoyed and their reasoning. Ask students to hold onto their responses, as they will be used in class the following day!

Day Three

- ◆ **Arrange the room** so that student responses are posted near the poems/statements they wrote about.
- ◆ Take a few minutes for **another gallery walk**. This time, ask students to think about any similarities/differences they notice between the statements made by the people who chose the poem, and the explanations of students written in the previous class.
- ◆ After students have had the chance to read a few poems and responses, they should return to their seats. **Discuss the similarities and differences they noticed** between the student responses and the statements.
 - ◆ If fruitful to the discussion, the student who interviewed their chosen person and collected their statement may want to share some more details about their chosen person and how that person may have a connection to their favorite poem.
- ◆ Discuss as a class: **how does one's life story or lived experiences influence the poems they enjoy or find meaningful?**

Suggestions for Next Steps

- ◆ This mini-unit could culminate in the class creating a multimedia anthology of poems, in which they add poems from these lessons and illustrate them.
- ◆ Students could also write their own poem in response to the themes encountered in the poems from these lessons. The poem could also be about the life of someone they interviewed.

Lesson Resources

- All poems for this lesson are contributed by the people interviewed by students.
- If a student has trouble finding three people, they could select a video from the Favorite Poem Project and summarize, in a written statement, the readers' explanation for why they read their chosen poem.

The Favorite Poem Project is a nonprofit organization dedicated to celebrating, documenting, and encouraging poetry's role in our lives.



This lesson was made possible by submissions from Kathleen O'Connor Abrams (Williams Middle School, Chelsea, MA) and Rachel M. Dillon (NYC Public Schools).

For more lesson plans, videos, and classroom resources
visit www.favoritepoem.org.



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