

Tutor Exchange

FALL 2005

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“Most
important,
write from
your heart.”

—Student,
Palmdale Library

Playing With Poetry

By Rod Williams, Palmdale City Library

What do we mean when we call something “poetry”? And what does poetry have to do with literacy? I found myself asking those questions when I facilitated a “Playing With Poetry” workshop at the SCLLN Literacy Conference in January 2005.

As it turns out, the answer to both questions is “everything.” Let me explain.

I don’t necessarily mean that everything is poetry, but that there is poetry in everything. For the workshop, I wanted to encourage people to look for the poetry in everyday life; not only in the traditional topics of nature and romance and heroism, but also in a bad day at work, a small sweet moment with a friend or a family member, a news story with an emotional punch, a favorite song, or a vivid dream.

What about poetry’s connection to literacy? Well, that ranges from the obvious uses of rhyme and rhythm (in learning word patterns and recognizing syllables), to the appreciation of wordplay, repetition, and metaphors. Poems can be used as exercises in compare-and-contrast, general-and-specific, concrete-and-abstract. Poems teach ideas, are full of colors and imagery, and can be used as expressions of hope

as well as howls of inexpensive therapy.

Like I said, everything.

Then there’s that word “playing.”

Many people will remember poetry as a necessary evil to get through high school English. Let’s not go there.

Maybe start with Dr. Seuss and Shel Silverstein to realize that poetry (like reading and writing) doesn’t have to be grim to be effective. Later, move on to more accessible and playful poets like Billy Collins, Lucille Clifton, e. e. cummings, Langston Hughes, Rita Dove, and many more. Sample poems in rhyme schemes and free verse, serious and nonsense poems.

Then try writing a poem. Begin with a simple format—acrostic, haiku, limerick; or encourage a free verse approach. Keep a journal of potentially poetic ideas. Use idioms and homonyms. Write in different voices. Discover that “rain” and “Jane” rhyme but are spelled differently and that one is capitalized while the other is not. Learn that “bead” and “head” rhyme by sight, but not by sound.

I could go on and on, and I will when I conduct the poetry workshop at the 2006 SCLLN Literacy Conference on January 28, 2006, at Cal State University, Dominguez Hills. Tutors and

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Now, That's Cold!

Do you know which continent was the last one to be explored? Africa? South America? Believe it or not, it was Antarctica. Antarctica is located at the most southern part of the earth. The South Pole is located on the continent of Antarctica. It is so cold that the snow never melts. Parts of the snow pack are over two miles thick. It is a hostile environment rarely explored. Here are some questions about significant events that occurred during the exploration of Antarctica and the South Pole.

1. Who was the British explorer who unsuccessfully attempted to reach the South Pole?
2. When did Ernest Shackleton and his team attempt to reach the South Pole?
3. One of the most famous trips to the South Pole was by a British team that competed with a Norwegian team. Who led the British team to reach the South Pole in 1911?
4. Who led the Norwegian team to reach the South Pole?
5. Who won the competition, and how long did it take?
6. What happened to Scott's team on its return trip?

Activity

This activity can help students develop research skills. Using a map, locate the South Pole and Antarctica. Discuss where it is located in relation to the United States. Then find the answers to the questions listed above by using search engines on the Internet, reference materials from the library, maps, and encyclopedias. Discuss how these research skills can be used to investigate other topics of interest. The answers to the above questions are shown below.

1. Who was the British explorer who unsuccessfully attempted to reach the South Pole? Explorer Ernest Shackleton and his team traveled over eight hundred miles to reach the South Pole, but turned back only one hundred miles from his destination after running out of food.
2. When did Ernest Shackleton and his team attempt to reach the South Pole? Shackleton and his team attempted to reach the South Pole in 1908.
3. One of the most famous trips to the South Pole was by a British team that competed with a Norwegian team. Who led the British team to reach the South Pole in 1911? Robert Scott was the leader of the British team.
4. Who led the Norwegian team to reach the South Pole? Rolad Amundsen led the Norwegian team.
5. Who won the competition, and how long did it take them? In December 1911 Amundsen's team won the competition, reaching the

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Tutor Exchange

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Editor Evey Renner, Anaheim
Copyeditor Corrie Miles, Oceanside

Please direct all correspondence to the editor at P.O. Box 15117, Anaheim, CA 92803-5117. E-mail: EveyRenn@sbcglobal.net Fax: (714) 535-1929

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Cold

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South Pole in seven weeks.

6. What happened to Scott's team on its return trip? Tragically, Scott's entire team perished.

Dash Or Hyphen?

Dashes and hyphens are often confused, yet they have very different uses. A dash looks like a long hyphen. On a computer keyboard, a dash is made by pressing the hyphen key twice with no spaces between, before, or after the hyphens. (A hyphen can be found on a computer keyboard on the top row just right of the zero.) When a word is typed following the two hyphens, and the space bar is tapped, the hyphens are automatically connected together and elongated into a dash. Here is an example of a sentence using dashes: *The two dogs—the larger shepherd and smaller dachshund—ran straight into the lake.* They are used to further explain or emphasize. They can be used in pairs, such as the example above, or alone. When using two dashes, avoid including too much information between the dashes. If this occurs, we suggest the sentence be rewritten to avoid confusion.

A hyphen is shorter than a dash. Hyphens have several uses. They are used to connect words such as *mother-in-law* or *right-handed*, and to connect certain prefixes to other words such as *semi-finals* or *anti-theft*. They are also used to separate syllables of a word at the end of a line when the rest of the word is shown on the next line. For example, if the word *submarine* occurs at the end of a line and the entire

word will not fit on the line, it can be written with the first syllable and a hyphen on one line (*sub-*) and the other syllables on the next line (*marine*). In general, when a word does not fit on one line, divide it into syllables. Then write at least one syllable and a hyphen on the first line and the rest of the syllables on the next line.

Hyphens and dashes do not have spaces on either side of them. Notice that there are no spaces in the example *The two dogs—the larger shepherd and smaller dachshund—ran straight into the lake.* It is incorrect to write *The two dogs — the larger shepherd and smaller dachshund — ran straight into the lake.* Likewise, *mother-in-law* and *right-handed* have no spaces on either side of the hyphens. It is incorrect to write these words as *mother - in - law* or *right - handed*.

In summary, use dashes to further explain or emphasize. Use them in pairs or alone. When used in pairs, the phrase in between the dashes should be brief. Use hyphens to connect two words, to connect certain prefixes to other words, or to separate syllables of a word at the end of a line when the rest of the word is shown on the next line. In general, there are no spaces between the word directly to the right or left of the hyphen or dash, except for incomplete words such as *non-*.

This is a simplified explanation and a brief summary about hyphens and dashes. For more information, check with the reference desk at the library for books on writing styles.

Activity

With your student, find hyphens and dashes in a newspaper or magazine he reads. Discuss the use of these punctuations. Work together to determine if the hyphens and dashes found follow the guidelines discussed in this article. When a hyphen or dash is found that does not follow these guidelines, check with a style guide or grammar book, or check with your library's reference desk.

Using a computer keyboard, enter a word processing program and practice the following:

1. Use a hyphen to separate syllables of a word at the end of a line. Write several words on a line

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WANT MORE?

Tutor Exchange is published in January, March, June, and September. A one-year subscription is \$18. Contact Beatriz Sarmiento, City of Commerce, by calling (323) 722-7323, or contact her online at beti65@hotmail.com. Please be sure to include your name, mailing address, phone number, and library or program name.



Cut It Out ~ Cut It Out ~ Cut It Out

Activities to clip and use

Dash

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until there are only a few spaces left on the line. Select a multi-syllabic word to type next and see how that word processing program deals with hyphenating words at the end of a line. (Most programs will automatically hyphenate words, if set to that mode.)

2. Write dashes to emphasize or explain an idea. Use a sentence taken from the newspaper or magazine that contains two dashes. Practice typing two hyphens to form a dash. Be sure there are no spaces between the words preceding and following the dash.

Finding It Online

There are Web sites on the Internet known as search engines that are designed to help you find information you need online. Some search engines are found on the home page for your Internet Service Provider such as *America Online*[®] and *SBCYahoo!*[®]. Many Internet service providers have an area at the top of their home pages that says *Search For*. This search engine scans the Internet looking for Web sites that contain information you requested. Other search engines are on separate, independent Web sites such as *Google*[®] or *Yahoo!*[®]. Each site also has an area to enter key words that describe what you are looking for.

Whether you use a search engine on your home page such as *America Online*[®] or a separate, independent search engine such as *Google*[®], the key to success is using very specific information describing what you need.

For example, if you are looking for an RV park near the beach in Central California, by typing in *RV parks* the search engine provides you with thousands of listings for RV parks in the United States; it may

also include RV parks in Canada or Central America. The results will include Web sites for specific areas of the country. You can select one of these more specific Web sites to narrow your search.

The more specific the description entered, the fewer the listings. For example, searching for *RV Parks California* is not as specific as searching for *RV Parks San Diego*. A search for *RV Parks California* will give you hundreds of listings for all of California; a search for *RV Parks San Diego* will give you fewer, but more relevant listings. The term used for more specific searches is *narrowing the search*. Most search engines will recommend that you narrow the search and be as specific as possible.

The results of a search usually include information about Web sites you can use to retrieve information that targets, for example, Northern, Central, or Southern California, and options for RV parks in the mountains, deserts, or by the ocean.

Let's use another example. If you are looking for a specific restaurant in Central California near the RV Park you have chosen, you can go to *MapQuest*[®].com and enter the specific name of the restaurant under 'location.' This type of search engine looks for your location and may ask you to select a distance around that location where you want the search engine to look—such as a five, ten, or twenty-five mile radius of the RV park you selected.

One of our favorite search engine Web sites, *Ask Jeeves*[®], is unique. You enter a question such as "Where can I find low-carbohydrate recipes?" or "How do I use a computer mouse?" Log onto *Ask Jeeves*[®] and enter a question. The search results can be fascinating.

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Cut It Out ~ Cut It Out ~ Cut It Out

Activities to clip and use



Online

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Although we used an example of finding an RV park, search engines can be used to find information on just about anything imaginable. You can look up information about a famous person, an organization or business, your pet, an illness and its related medications, a community, books to buy, movies to rent, and where to purchase everything from common to very unique items. Most stores and businesses have Web sites. You can reach these Web sites by using a search engine and, for example, entering the store name or item wanted.

This is a simplified explanation and a brief summary about search engines and how to use them. There are many others on the Internet and they are all a little different. For more information log on to your home page (or for example, Google®) and review the instructions shown for using a search engine.

Activity

Log on to a search engine and find information about a famous person such as George Washington or Mohammed Ali; or review information about a nonprofit organization you are interested in such as the Red Cross; or plan a trip online using search engines to find locations to go to, hotels to stay at, and/or campgrounds or RV parks to stay in. Find a Web site associated with the hotel, campground or RV park and use its search engine to plan activities for your trip. Find places to go and things to do, such as:

- your favorite restaurant
- local museums
- local attractions
- car rental
- cultural events in the area

When Was That?

Several significant events occurred at the beginning of the space age. Mankind needed to develop the technology for rocket propulsion; to launch satellites to investigate outer space; to invent the technology that would support astronauts in the hostile, radiation-filled environment and vacuum of outer space; to walk in space and land on another planet; and to establish space stations to support space exploration. Among the nations initially leading the race for space exploration were the United States and Russia.

Activity

This activity can help students develop research skills by using search engines on the Internet, reference materials from the library, and encyclopedias. Find the years these events occurred:

1. American Robert Goddard invented the liquid-fueled rocket.
2. The former USSR launched the first satellite.
3. Russian Yuri Gagarin manned the first space flight.
4. John Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth.
5. Russian Valentina Tereshkova orbited the earth and became the first woman in space.
6. Russian Alexei Leonov made the first space walk.

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We Welcome Your Comments

Address your questions or comments to Editor, *Tutor Exchange*, P. O. Box 15117, Anaheim, CA 92803-5117 or EveyRenn@sbcglobal.net. Please include your name, library or program, and phone number. For a list of criteria for articles submitted, please contact the editor. Please submit articles by February 5, 2006; May 5, 2006; August 5, 2006; or December 5, 2005 for consideration in subsequent issues. Articles or letters submitted for consideration become the property of SCLLN and are subject to editing for clarity, message, and space.

When

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- 7, Americans Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first human beings to land on the moon.
8. USSR launched the first space station.

Discuss how the use of the Internet and reference materials can help your student find other information he may need.

Answers

1. In 1926 American Robert Goddard invented the liquid-fueled rocket.
2. In 1957 the former USSA launched the first satellite.
3. In 1961 Russian Yuri Gagarin made the first manned space flight.
4. In 1962 John Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth.
5. In 1963 Russian Valentina Tereshkova orbited the earth and became the first woman in space.
6. In 1965 Russian Alexei Leonov made the first space walk.
7. In 1969 Americans Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first human beings to land on the moon.
8. In 1974 USSR launched the first space station.



*“No one is useless
in this world
who lightens
the burdens of others.”*

– Charles Dickens (1812-1870)



Information contained in Tutor Exchange summarizes and/or focuses on a portion of the information available about a topic. Different reference materials may conflict with the information shown.

Poetry

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learners are welcome to attend and to receive handouts, booklists, Web sites, and whatever else I can get my hands on. And if you still don't care about poetry, no hard feelings. Come to the conference anyway! There will be plenty of other good workshops on topics such as spelling, ESL curriculum, phonics, writing strategies, new tutoring tips, and much more.

Hope to see you there.

Activity

Have learners write their own poems. You may have to model this for them until they get comfortable with a format (or formats). There are many Web sites that can help with poetic resources. I like shadowpoetry.com. When you reach the home page, look under "Features," then find "Resources," then click on "Poetry types." This will take you to a page that offers definitions of various formats (haikus, sonnets, limericks, acrostics, etc.), "how-to" exercises, and examples of each style.

Here are some ideas to get started:

- Have the learner write an acrostic, using his or her name as its base. Each letter of the name will be the first letter of a descriptive word, or even a group of words. This teaches initial sounds and word choice skills, and also sparks the imagination.
- Try forming a haiku. Typical themes for this format are nature and romance, but use those as guidelines, not as iron-clad rules. Because haikus have specific syllable structures, they provide many teaching opportunities. What *is* a syllable? What is meant by the terms "open" and "closed" syllable? How do syllables contribute to the rhythms and music of the language?
- If your student likes a challenge, try making a limerick. Limericks require some proficiency because of the rhyme schemes, but they can be a lot of fun and can serve as great launching pads for making word attack lists, practicing like vowel sounds, and recognizing those troublesome spelling quirks (like

will probably be most at home with the first-person voice (the "I"). A good model for this is Frank O'Hara, who invented and popularized the "I did this, I did that" poem, writing about ordinary life (buying a sandwich at a deli, reading a magazine, listening to jazz, and so on). To stretch the writing muscles, assign a poem written in the third-person (he, she, they), and even from a completely different point-of-view. What does the world look like through the eyes of an astronaut, a bullfighter, a Gulf War widow, an immigrant, a child, a member of a royal family, a homeless person, a lottery winner? As you can see, once you get going the possibilities are endless.

Feel free to play and to experiment. Last year, one learner advised me (and I quote), "Most important, write from your heart." So this is the end of my message, because I can't add anything more to that.



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SCLLN Launches New Web Site

The Southern California Library Literacy Network has launched a new Web site. Explore the services and features of our newly designed site. You can access recent issues of *Tutor Exchange* and explore other great resources as well.

The Web site features information about SCLLN, an area for tutors and adult learners, a master calendar of events, and links of other Web sites of interest. It also includes a list of library literacy programs in Southern California.

Plans are under way to include an archive of past editions of *Tutor Exchange* and an index to find articles about topics of interest.

**Our new Web
site:
sclln.org**

**2006 Literacy Conference
Mark Your Calendars! Save the Date!**

**January 28, 2006
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Dominguez Hills**

**Check our Web site and your library
literacy programs for details!**

sclln.org

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SAVE THE DATE!**

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