

Flows and Poems Walkin' Hand in Hand

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I want to explore the possibility of using song lyrics as a hook to connect students to words that will segue into explication of poetry. At first thought I was going to take my passion and understanding of the blues and juxtapose it with poems and poets like Langston Hughes. On further examination, however, I realize that I can broaden the scope and potentially make the Blues/Hughes idea one component of this curriculum unit. It is obvious to me that many of my students are attracted to Rappers and rap lyrics. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that these rappers can be a way to lead students into the heart of a poem. My current prospectus deals with the idea of using rap and blues as two different musical genres that will allow students the opportunity to appreciate some common elements of poetry. There are four components of focus that include the following:

1. lyrics and language
2. structure
3. sound
4. connections to life

These four components will make up a poetry unit that can last from 2-6 weeks. In addition to these components, students will focus on four elements of poetry. These elements are as follows:

1. images
2. word music (sound)
3. metaphor
4. line breaks (structure)

Rap lyrics are called “flows”. There seems to be a rhythm or flow, if you will, to the way the rappers deliver their words. Rap, like poetry, is meant to be heard not read. Oftentimes I have seen high school students “rapping” or flowing their words to a classmate. The words are always delivered with a rhythmic flow. This supports the idea that rhythm or SOUND is essential to the appreciation of the LYRICS and LANGUAGE. Although sometimes I have witnessed the writer/rapper hand his journal of flows to another classmate, it is more often the case that the writer will hold on to his journal and rap his flows to the classmates who will listen with deep rapture. As a teacher, I would like to get close to this kind of involvement with poetry but it rarely occurs. Therefore, it seems to me that I could somehow use rap lyrics as a way of teaching the elements of poetry and ultimately turn my students on to some of the canonized poetry that is considered to contain CONNECTIONS TO LIFE, as well as having

rhythm, meter, imagery, metaphor and other key elements that are more akin to rap and further removed from prose.

Students are familiar with rap. They are interested in what it has to say to them. They enjoy the beats or rhythm that goes with it. Although many times the imagery is given to them by way of music videos, it still contains – I hope at times – strong imagery that can also occur in the reader’s mind just from hearing or reading the words. Furthermore, it hopefully contains examples of deep metaphor and other elements that are common in poetry.

The challenge I encounter is in being able to find rappers who write (or have written) words that contain strong images and metaphors without the overkill of obscene language. My first thought was to go to my students and ask them about rappers who appeal to them. I wanted to challenge my students to show me lyrics that contain the aforementioned elements. Eminem, Tupac, Biggie Smalls, and 50 Cent are the four names that I will focus on.

My goal is to connect these rappers with poets. This juxtapositioning will deal with connections to life. Students will be able to appreciate how the human condition is all about dealing with universal themes that can speak for any time period.

Metaphors will also be examined. “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood...” (Robert Frost). This is a universal theme that must surely be woven into a rap lyric. I have used this poem to compare to the blues song of Robert Johnson (“Crossroad Blues”). My task is to also locate it in a rap lyric. However, I must tread lightly. I fear that if I force students to explicate their flows or the flows of the four aforementioned rappers, they may turn off. The trick is to approach it in a cautious and non-threatening manner.

Assuming that there are elements of poetry in the flows of rappers, I can teach why these elements are used and how effective they are in any given flow or poem. Students can also examine structure and note the distinct differences from ordinary prose. This may be used to justify how some selected poems are as “cool” as flows. It may also help bridge the gap that exists between student and poem. Moreover, it will allow students to gain an appreciation or at least an understanding of some canonized poetry. Potential outcomes of this unit will be to have students write their own flows as well as poems and compare and contrast the two genres. The student pieces will be modeled after some examples that we have examined. Other writing outcomes will be the explication of song lyrics and poetry. If students can see that there are some similarities in the different genres of song lyric and poetry, then perhaps they will gain a better appreciation and deeper understanding of the poetry that high schools and colleges introduce to their world. The idea that there are

universal themes and similar structures and elements will hopefully soften the grunts that occur when poetry is introduced to the class. Furthermore, it will help connect the poetry to their lives.

Poetry is a word that often brings moans from the classroom. Students seem to have had experiences with poetry that have conditioned them to respond negatively at the mere mention of the word. What's an English teacher to do? I have found joy and difficulty in studying poetry. My solution to solve this problem is to use music as a way of hooking the students and in essence teaching them the power of words. As a blues musician, I have a deep respect for the power of music. Music is everywhere we go. It's on television commercials, radio, stores in the mall, and just about everywhere else we go. My theory is that if I can use the power of this universal language to capture the attention of my students then maybe I will be able to slip in some poetry and turn them on to the power of words and ideas without them even realizing it. I first thought of using the blues and then I considered rap. Now I have finally come to the decision of connecting lyrics thematically with specific canonized poetry. The experience has been exciting for me, as I am able to connect the lyrics of songs to certain poems.

It occurs to me, however, that simply connecting the two genres by theme is not enough. Therefore, my challenge is in being able to connect certain literary terms to the two writing genres. Although, as we discussed during one of the seminar sessions, feeding the students certain language like "allusion" and "metaphor" may be the very thing that has caused them to moan out in my class upon introducing the word poetry. It seems that students look at these "teacher" words as language from another planet. Literary terms are something that they either cannot or simply will not allow to sink into their psyche. Therefore, the teacher must come up with ways of teaching these concepts in a way that is non-threatening. For example, rather than ask the student, "what is the symbolism in this poem?" One can ask, "What is suggested by this particular line?" It may seem like an insignificant argument, but the clarification of terms is important.

It seems to me that one must consider the outcomes that they want the students to achieve. If, for example, the students will be taking the AP English exam, then they will without a doubt need a solid understanding of the specific terms that are found on that exam. If, however, the student is in the mainstream population and is simply passing through the class, it may be more practical to avoid the literary terms that seem to be so lofty

and dry to the average student. Rather, it is the very concepts of these terms that should and, I believe can be taught in a way that will allow the students to learn in a non-threatening environment.

Most of my experience with teaching poetry comes in the form of having the student write poetry. While taking the classes offered by the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project and becoming a fellow, I learned how to deal with poetry in laymen's terms. It was through the teaching of poet Len Roberts that I was able to think that I could actually write poetry and enjoy it. The techniques that I learned from Len led me to use them in my own classroom and generate student poetry. At its best, I was able to compile class sets of literary magazines that contained student poetry. At its worst, I was simply collecting formula poems that after years of reading began to sound the same. What the students were not getting was the ability to find their own voice and take a general idea and expand upon it. During these lessons, I devoted more time to writing than to reading. My new way of thinking is leading me to the idea that I must expose students to a variety of poetry, and that I must find ways of leading them into the heart of the poem. Some of these ways would be to identify the speaker and consider what is being said. The trick is being able to give the students enough insight and entry into the poem to allow them to make their own discoveries rather than simply mimicking what the teacher has said. Although I would not discontinue the art of writing poetry, I will shift my focus more in the direction of reading poetry. It is my belief that the more one reads a particular genre, the better opportunity one has in writing in that style.

First time readers of poetry will often make the mistake that the writer of the poem is the speaker of the poem. It is important to understand that the writer is not necessarily the speaker. For example, in Frost's "Road not Taken", although the speaker could be Frost, it is more of a universal character who is facing a major choice in life. Therefore, poetry is a response or observation on the human condition. It should speak to the reader so he or she can connect with the speaker of the poem. As James H. Pickering points out, "All imaginative literature – whether poetry, prose, or drama - is primarily concerned with human feelings and attitudes" (621). When speaking about poetry specifically Pickering says that "... The goal of a poet is to recreate human experience as vividly, powerfully, and originally as possible" (623). Therefore, we shouldn't make the mistake of assuming that Shakespeare's sonnets, although personal at times, cannot come from the voice of a more universal speaker – one who longs for love, which is a condition that all humans hunger for. By being able to identify the speaker as one who represents a universal ideal, the reader can begin to make connections to his or her personal experiences. As Pickering says, "In principle we should not be

influenced by our knowledge of the author's name. After all a good poem should be able to stand on its own merits" (622). Therefore, we must always look inside the poem and try to locate the universal speaker.

The following is a mini-curriculum written in standard teacher talk. It is designed to illustrate how one may follow specific procedures to elicit objective outcomes from the students:

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will be able to locate similar **themes** as well as poetic elements such as **imagery**, **metaphor** and **word music** within the following selected songs and poems: (word music can be identified as alliteration and assonance).

These pieces contain the **theme of Making Choices**

- "Crossroad Blues" by Robert Johnson
 - "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost
 - "My Way" sung by Frank Sinatra
2. Students will examine **structure** by comparing and contrasting **rhythm**, **rhyme**, and **stanza**.
 3. Students will understand **parody** and be able to write one of their own.
 4. Students will identify **tone of voice** by listening to the singing of Robert Johnson and by reading the words of Robert Frost.

DAY ONE PROCEDURE:

1. Read the lyrics to Robert Johnson's classic blues song "Crossroads"
2. Identify the **metaphor** of "Standing at the crossroads". Many students have had major decisions in their young lives and should be able to understand the metaphor that Johnson alludes to in his song.
3. Identify the 12 bar blues structure. (Similar to iambic pentameter except that there are approximately twelve syllables per line). Show the **rhythm** by having students play the beat or count the syllables.
4. Observe the structure of a twelve bar blues song. There is a line that is always repeated and then followed by a response that rhymes with the first two lines. This is a good place to introduce **assonance** or end rhymes within the piece.
5. Continue to make a mess of the text by having students underline **images** in the lyric. Explain how the concrete images are used to create metaphors in the piece. For example, the line about "tryin' to flag a ride" is more than the concrete image of one hitching at the crossroads. It can metaphorically represent how we often "ask others for help" and since "every body seem to pass me by" ends Johnson's phrase it could be the realization that sometimes we are all alone; alone to make our own

decisions. We may ask our parents, our teachers, and our friends; but ultimately the choice is ours alone.

6. Play Johnson's song and point out the **tone of voice** that he uses in his plea.
7. At this point you may have the students begin either of the first two "Writing Options" (see below).

WRITING OPTIONS:

The teacher may choose to have the students complete any or all of the following writing assignments. All written work can be used in the *New Standards Portfolio* as long as the teacher has the student go through the writing process.

1. Students will be able to write a **narrative account** about a time in their lives when they came to a significant "crossroads".
2. Students will be able to write a 3-4 stanza "blues lyric" modeled after the Robert Johnson song "Crossroads". This will fit into the *New Standards Portfolio* under the "Writing in a Literary Genre" cover sheet.

DAY TWO PROCEDURES:

1. Read Robert Frost's "Road Not Taken" poem and have students mark the A,B,A,A,B **rhyme structure** next to the end of each line. Identify the importance of structure and contrast this with Johnson's "Crossroads" lyric. Inform students that each piece has a structure that is consistent throughout all of the stanzas. The two pieces are similar in that they have consistent structure, yet they are different in their individual patterns.
2. Have all students work alone explicating each stanza of Frost's poem. Students must make a mess of the text by identifying **images**, **metaphors**, **word music** and any other thing that they find interesting.
3. Students will discuss the poem one stanza at a time.

While doing this exercise with my tenth grade gifted students, I came to some interesting conclusions. When I asked what road the student would take, they almost unanimously choose the one "that was grassy and wanted wear" (Frost). Students support their choice by saying how they long to be individuals who do not follow a crowd. They explain how they are daring enough to take chances, and even though the road not taken is tried and true, most students were firm that they would choose the path of the speaker in the poem.

When we examine the fourth stanza, however, we focus on Frost's choice of words. Specifically, the word "sigh". When the speaker says, "I shall be telling this with a sigh/ somewhere ages and ages hence/ Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and I? I took the one less traveled by? And that has made all the difference".

We discuss the ambiguity of this sigh. Is it a sigh relief or sorrow? Furthermore, why is the poem titled “The Road Not Taken”? This title seems to emphasize the road NOT taken rather than the one “less traveled.” Then I suggest that perhaps the speaker has regrets and wishes he had a second chance. Yet, “Knowing how way leads to way...” he doubted that he would ever get a second chance. Sometimes adolescents choose the road of taking drugs. It’s experimental and they never think they’ll get hooked. Sometimes, however, addictions lead one so far down the wrong path that it is very difficult to go back and “Save the one for another day.”

Most of my gifted students are confident that they will always be able to accomplish anything they desire as long as they really put their minds to it. Although I tell them that they have the whole world in front of them, I also remind them of evil temptations, and the fact that as we get older, life tends to get in the way of our plans. We also look at T. S. Eliot’s “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and note the sadness of his indecisiveness. The speaker in this poem wants to believe that “There will be time for a hundred indecisions and revisions... Time to turn back and descend the stair/ With a bald spot in the middle of my hair....” Although some students feel empathy for Prufrock, they feel that they will never fall into the trap of indecisiveness and that they will always have time. Frost’s poem, however, reminds us that this isn’t always so.

DAY THREE PROCEDURES:

1. Explain the concept of **parody** by looking at caricatures of famous people and watching “The Simpson’s” do a **parody** of Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Raven”
2. After observing the above models, students will begin writing a **parody** of Frost’s poem. This writing option should follow the rhyme scheme that is consistent in Frost’s poem.
3. The teacher should create a rubric that will fulfill the specific requirement for this writing option. One may also look at the *New Standards* cover sheet for “Writing in a Literary Genre”. This will aid the teacher in shaping and creating the rubric.

WRITING OPTIONS:

1. Students will be able to write a four stanza poem modeled after Frost’s “Road Not Taken”. This will be a **parody** that follows the same rhyme scheme and sticks to the same theme(s). This piece of writing can also be used in the *New Standards Portfolio* under the “Writing in a Literary Genre” cover sheet.

DAY FOUR PROCEDURES: (This may take several days longer depending on the amount of writing options that the teacher requires the student to do).

1. Students should be able to work on revising their written pieces. This writing workshop may consist of peer evaluation, teacher evaluation, self-evaluation and ultimately revision.
2. Close attention should be paid to the writing rubrics.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will be able to locate similar **themes** as well as poetic elements such as **imagery**, **metaphor** and **word music** within the following selected songs and poems: (word music can be identified as alliteration and assonance).

These pieces contain the **theme** of *carpe diem*.

A. POEMS

- “Gather Ye Rosebuds” by Robert Herrick
- “Lesson of the Moth” by Robert Marue (located in the 9th grade *Literature and Language* anthology).
- “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” by Dylan Thomas

B. SONGS

- “Lose Yourself” by Eminem (the edited version)
- “Hey Hey, My My” by Neil Young

2. Students will examine **structure** by comparing and contrasting **rhythm**, **rhyme**, and **stanza**.
3. Students will identify **tone of voice** by listening to the singing and reading the words of selected poems.

DAY ONE PROCEDURES:

1. Ask the students if it is better to “Die young and leave a beautiful corpse”. Identify famous people who for various reasons died young. This list could include Kurt Cobain, Sid Vicious, Marilyn Monroe, John F. Kennedy etc. You may also choose to have the students brainstorm a list of their own.
2. Have a class discussion about the choices and decide what affect these deaths had on the individuals. For example, would Marilyn Monroe be as popular today if instead of dying she lived to be as old as Elizabeth Taylor or Marlin Brando?
You may choose to show photos of young Brando and Taylor juxtaposed with more recent photos of the aged stars.
3. Have students answer the following questions in their notebooks:

- What do we like about youth? Is it better than old age? (Compare the pros and cons of both).
 - Is the young Elvis Presley “better” than the obese “Vegas” Presley?
 - Is it better to burn out than to fade away?
4. After discussing the answers to these questions identify and have students write down the Latin phrase “Carpe diem”. It means to seize the day; live life to its fullest; do it while you’re young
 5. Have students go back to the brainstorm list and identify the names of the people whom they feel were able to fit into the mold of carpe diem. Have them do this by giving a logical reason for their choices.
 6. Read “The Lesson of the Moth” by Robert Marque.
 7. Discuss the lack of **structure** and have students explain the lesson of the moth by writing about it in their notebooks.

When talking about structure in a poem, it may be interesting to point to the fact that Marque’s poem lacks any conventional structure in the same way that the moth (one of the speakers in the poem) lacks structure in his life. Although the moth is passionate and daring, he is also too hasty in his foolish decisions and brings to mind the similar hastiness, and ultimate untimely deaths, of Romeo and Juliet. These two, like the moth, are characters who had great passion for one another yet lacked the structure that could have aided them in making more appropriate choices. Therefore, “The Lesson of the Moth’s” chaotic structure parallels the life of the moth itself. This is one way of examining how unstructured poetry, or free verse, can still bring some sense to the poem. A further study that supports this claim would be to examine the following poems: “Sound and Sense by Alexander Pope; “Constantly Risking Absurdity” by Lawrence Ferlinghetti; and “Grasshopper” by E.E. Cummings.

DAY TWO PROCEDURES:

1. Teach the lesson that a poem does not have to rhyme! “The Lesson of the Moth” is a poem because it contains the poetic elements of imagery and metaphor. Have students identify specific images and metaphors within the poem.
2. Ask students to identify what fire represents (this is an essential metaphor in the poem)
3. Allow students to compare and contrast the two opposing views on life as shown by the moth and its narrator.

WRITING OPTION:

1. Students will be able to write an autobiographical narrative account about their views on life. Do they agree with the moth or the narrator? Also, students must identify one positive thing in their life that they are passionate about.

DAY THREE PROCEDURES:

1. Read aloud Robert Herrick's "Gather Ye Rosebuds" and mark the rhyme scheme of the stanzas.
2. Identify the poetic elements that are located in the poem and have a class discussion.
3. Have students choose which of the two poems they prefer. Be clear to emphasize that even though the themes are similar one poem is very structured and the other is not. Do the students prefer the poem with structure? Or is the language too archaic? Do they prefer the "Moth" Poem? Have them explain their answers in writing and class discussion.
4. Next, the students will be able to compare two songs that follow along with the theme of carpe diem. One song, like the "moth" poem, has little structure ("Lose Yourself" by Eminem). The other song, Neil Young's "Hey Hey, My My" has structure and in that sense can perhaps be more akin to the Herrick poem.
5. Pass out the edited lyrics to "Lose Yourself" and read it aloud.
6. Have students identify poetic elements within the poem.
7. Discuss the findings and introduce the concept of **allusion**. See if students can identify the **allusion** of "Salem's Lot" that is located at the end of the poem. Explain that it is an indirect reference to a Steven King story that has a devilish connotation. It is essentially a story about a town devoured by evil. Now ask the students what the speaker may be saying by making this **allusion**. (Could he be longing to escape his surroundings and get out of the "hell" he's living in?)
8. You may also want to examine the shifting of tenses within the poem.

WRITING OPTION:

1. Students may be able to write a parody or use "Lose Yourself" as a model to write their own situation. Have students include at least one allusion. Also have them shift the tenses in various stanzas to note the effect this has on the poem

I teach 10th Grade gifted students as well as 9th grade mainstream. The approaches to these classes are very different. However, one constant in

the lives of all of these students is the power of music and the appreciation students have for musical artists. Therefore, this curriculum is designed for any grade level of high school student. Music has become as much a part of our daily lives as eating and breathing. With the advent of MTV, and portable CD players, music has taken on a more forceful presence in our society. Not a day goes by that my students are not exposed to some form of music; either by choice or by what is given to them by the media. I feel, however, that many of my students are only exposed to the music that is fed to them, and ultimately shoved down their throats by the likes of MTV and commercial radio. Although there must be some substance to some of the music that is mass produced today, I feel that it is essential for the well being of an educated society to understand where the roots exist.

As a guitarist who has studied the musical genres of Blues, Jazz, and Rock-N-Roll, I have a particularly direct desire to share this somewhat forgotten music with the students in my classroom. Although I am an English teacher, it is just as essential to me to have the students get a taste of the delta blues of Robert Johnson, as it is to have them taste the writing of William Shakespeare. Although, at first, both “writers” may be exposed to groans and moans throughout the classroom, it is the presentation that will allow the teacher to hook the students enough to give them a taste of these two older yet significantly important writers. It is just as important to examine the lyrics of a Johnson song as it is to explicate a Shakespearean sonnet.

To fully appreciate the strength of all existing art forms, one must embrace the roots from which all modern branches ultimately extend. Therefore, when students are so engrossed with the Rap music today, I feel that it is important to turn them on to some of the originators of Blues and Jazz, and thereby show them how all things are in some ways connected. One must emulate before one can begin to create. I also feel that things should not be accepted just because the majority embraces it. This is a problem with society in a way that we are often led like lambs to slaughter. One of my ultimate objectives is to have the students understand that all things of substance are deeply rooted and one can only gain a fuller appreciation of art today by examining the originators. I want my students to be critical thinkers who do not accept things just because it is written or voiced from an authority figure. We must all be aware of propaganda and be able to make our own informed judgements. Too often we accept things as they are without ever pausing to question the substance of a particular song, poem, or piece of art. Why, for example, do students always think that poetry must rhyme? Perhaps this stems back to our childhood when we learned through osmosis how to memorize the rhymes of the children’s

games that we played. For example, “Apples, peaches, pumpkin pie, who’s not ready holler I!” Or, “My mother and your mother were hanging up clothes; my mother punched your mother right in the nose...”

Robert Herrick’s “Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May” can be used along with Robert Marque’s “Lesson of the Moth” (found in the Literature and Language text 9th Grade) as poems that follow the theme of *carpe diem*. That is that one should live life to the fullest; do it while you’re young. This is an important lesson for high school students to learn, however, it is equally important that they learn the difference between ceasing the moment and making foolish and destructive choices. Vendler claims that Herrick’s poem is about “...giving moral advice, in the form of argument against an implied other moral position” (90). Students can examine the argument of whether or not virgins should hasten to marry or engage in teenage promiscuity. The MTV culture seems to allude to the ideas that support Herrick’s argument and, therefore, this one poem can bring up great discussions and even persuasive essays on the aforementioned topic. Marque’s poem also embraces the idea of living passionately for the moment. Remarque’s poem says, “It is better to be happy/for a moment/ and be burned up with beauty/ than to live a long time/ and be bored all the while...” (Literature and Language 9th Grade 601). The speaker of the poem (a moth) ultimately “...immolated himself/ on a patent cigar lighter...” leaving the recipient of this dialogue to wonder why, yet to also have an epiphany and proclaim that, “...I wish/ there was something I wanted/ as badly as he wanted to fry himself” (601). It is important for students to express their passions and live a life that is full of good choices. Although we all take the wrong road from time to time, it is essential that students have something worth living for. Too often many of my students (especially the mainstream population) feel that life is boring and their only desire is to go to sleep. We as teachers must never give up the effort to inspire greatness in our students and to constantly remind them to cease the day and make their lives extraordinary.

Rationale:

The Moth in a way speaks the voice of adolescents when he says, “We get bored with routine.” Kids get bored. They’re always looking for something to do but rarely seem to find the passion or inspiration to move forward in a positive manner. The age-old voice of adolescence is that they know it all. “Have you know sense?” Asks the cockroach. “Plenty of it...” is the moth’s reply. But the adolescent is a thrill seeker and like the moth, “We crave beauty and excitement.” They are risk takers looking for

kicks and often end up like Romeo and Juliet, making hasty decisions that could be destructive. Decisions that sometimes lead them down the wrong road. This is why it is imperative that students are passionate about something other than drugs, teenage sex, and violence that is so often glorified in the media and on MTV. Students need to fill the void of boredom that exists in their lives but they must be guided and taught not to make destructive decisions. They must not go into the flame like the moth and seek the instant gratification of sex, drugs, and violence. They must not “immolate” and burn out by destructive choices but find passion in a constructive and positive way, despite the fact that many of my students live in a society that is filled with sex, drugs, and violence.

A society inundated with the glorification of sex and drugs is a constant today. Many of their heroes are rappers who made money and have fame and fortune by singing about drugs and sex in a manner that is often derogatory toward women. Their heroes are built on the premise that sex and drugs equal money and power. This kind of idolatry glorifies tainted values and can influence adolescents to make bad choices in their lives. 50 Cent is a common hero that started out as a drug dealer and now has made it to the big time. Even the media brags about how he was shot nine times at point blank range and now lives to tell about it in his songs. He even has a bullet that is permanently lodged in his jaw. This, I have read on more than one occasion, gives him a unique voice when he raps. These heroes can influence adolescents to seek the flame, much like the moth in Marquē’s poem. “Fire is beautiful.” It is also dangerous, yet appealing in the same way that sex and drugs can bring satisfaction to an otherwise “boring” existence. The moth says, “We know that if we get too close it will kill us....” Likewise, students know the results of drug use and having unprotected sex. They see it everyday in their neighborhoods and in the hallways of school where pregnant teenage girls try to walk with dignity during the crowded changing of classes. Too often students, like the moth, are only interested with instant gratification and do not consider the consequences of their choices.

Likewise, Robert Herrick’s poem, “To the Virgins to Make Much of Time”, is worthy of examination. Although it could be argued that the speaker in this poem is addressing young women and attempting to seduce them, it could also represent the many other temptations that students are faced with on a daily basis. Unlike “The Lesson of the Moth” Herrick’s poem has a very specific rhyme structure. The “Virgins” in the title can be identified as a metaphor that suggests the poem be addressed not just to young ladies but those who haven’t experienced life yet. The “rosebuds” in line one represent the youth who haven’t fully bloomed and who still

have a lot of life in them. The stanza ends with a reminder that we are all born to die. Students will be able to comment on the possible message in this stanza. The second stanza shows the passage of time by referring to “The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun”. This stanza is another reminder to cease the day and do it while you’re young. Students will be able to discuss things they dream of and how badly they desire to have these dreams come true. Students will also talk about how far they would stoop to achieve these desires. The third stanza is perhaps the most complicated. Have students explain this section of the poem and discuss the message that the speaker may be giving. The main premise, however, is to cease the day because once you’re older “being spent” the “worst/ time still succeeds the former.” In other words, Herrick seems to be suggesting that life only becomes more complicated as one gets older. This ties directly into one of the major themes of this unit. This is the very message that we examine when reading Frost’s “Road not Taken”. Life does tend to get in the way.

Students can read the final stanza of Herrick’s poem and circle unfamiliar words. Usually “coy” and “tarry” are identified by the students as words that need to be defined. Therefore, I ask my students to guess the meanings of the words based upon context clues. After a discussion of possible meanings, which can also lead into a lesson on denotation and connotation, we identify “coy” as being “shy” and “tarry” as one who forever procrastinates. Therefore, the message is consistent throughout the poem. To justify that this poem can speak to more than just young ladies, whom the speaker may be attempting to woo into wedlock, the word “marry” is discussed. To “marry” is to become one with all, to embrace and become one with life, to cease the day.

It can also be an exciting exercise to juxtapose Herrick’s “glorious light of heaven, the sun” with John Donne’s interpretation and condemnation of the sun in his poem “The Sun Rising”. In Donne’s poem the image of the sun is personified. The speaker of the poem scolds the sun for disturbing the two lovers who would rather stay in bed. Not only will the students be able to examine the concept of personification; this poem also offers the opportunity to focus on tone within a poem. Students can easily identify with the scolding tone of this speaker. Therefore, they are able to write their own poems where they can pick an inanimate object in their daily lives, personify it, and speak to it in a manner that they may use to speak to a parent when they want to be alone. Such objects will be brainstormed in a whole group setting and placed on the chalkboard. They may include such items as bookbags, lockers, classrooms, old man winter, etc. They may, however, also choose the sun. All poems will be started using

Donne's first line and substituting the word sun with their own choice. Writing this poem that is modeled after "The Sun Rising" can be a good catharsis for students.

Kids don't always consider consequences and want money and power now! Some would rather take a chance on selling drugs to buy nice things than to wait for the rewards that can occur with perseverance. They'd rather chill all day like the speaker in Donne's poem and scold anyone who bothers them. Again, the image of having it all is shoved down their throat every time they turn on MTV and see their heroes living large. Everyone wants to fit in, "To be a part of beauty." Everyone needs to fit in and find attention; to feel loved and wanted. We all want to be somebody! Taking the road less traveled is may seem appealing, so students will follow the crowd and fall into the abyss of making destructive decisions for instant gratification. All adolescents want to be a part of the pack, but as we age we begin to realize that it is the aspiration to stand apart and be unique that really matters. We want to stand apart from the crowd and be recognized as being unique and not ordinary. We all want to ultimately feel like our lives have meaning. Therefore, making the right choices is an essential lesson for the teenage student.

This theme is not only revealed in the aforementioned poems, it can also be found in the blues song "Crossroads" by Robert Johnson. Robert Johnson is a great character to start with when introducing anyone to the history of the blues. His biography and entire recording catalog can be located in *The Complete Recordings of Robert Johnson*. Johnson's myth is part of what makes him so compelling. Legend has it that he went down to the crossroads late at night and sold his soul to the devil in exchange for the ability to write and perform some of the most powerful and influential blue's songs ever recorded. Unfortunately, he lived too fast, and died from too many temptations. The myth of Johnson and his association with the devil hooks the students and sets the stage to play a recorded version of one of his most famous and often recorded songs, "Crossroad Blues". The objectives, procedures, and writing options for this activity are written in standard teacher-talk in the preceding pages of this narrative curriculum.

Perhaps the best way to start this unit on aspirations and ceasing the moment is to give them what they want. Coming into the class and playing "Lose Yourself" by famous rap artist Eminem will without a doubt hook the adolescent audience. I have found that even with one of my students who writes rap and considers himself an expert on Eminem, the metaphors are not always grasped. Too often students do not see

beyond the literal meaning of the words. With “Lose Yourself” I will be able to walk the students through an explication of the song and hopefully shed even deeper meaning into their lives as we take the time to examine the words of one of their heroes.

Eminem is a recent example of the underdog who becomes a hero. He comes from a broken home where the odds were stacked up against him. He could have easily fell into the trap of the lesson of the moth that burned out in the flame. Many of my students come from similar situations and can easily identify with this hero. Eminem comes from nothing yet manages to become a superstar. He speaks directly to many of my students because they can identify with his anger and rage. As adolescents, they too feel discouraged and angry. They feel alone in a cold world where nobody understands them. Eminem is a rapper who speaks to them by tapping into their adolescents’ angst. One such song of his that exemplifies this is “Lose Yourself”. The first three lines of this lyric equal the *carpe diem* theme. He then goes into a narrative poetic rap that the student identifies with. When he speaks of being “nervous”, scared and unsure of his ability, the students at this stage in their life can identify. Likewise, students often feel the pressure of fitting in with a group. Whether it is sports, academics, hanging out with the drug crowd, or simply worrying about the way one looks, students can identify with Eminem’s feelings in this part of the lyric.

Yet Eminem “Won’t give up”! Even though things are against him, he rages on against the dying of the night and faces his adversity with courage and determination. The hook or chorus of the song tells the listener to focus on your passion. This reinforces the lessons that were taught with Marque’s “Moth” poem. Find something positive in this world that you can be passionate about. It is inspirational and although Eminem speaks literally of being a rapper the lyric can also be a metaphor for focusing on one’s passion, no matter what that passion may be. This lyric shows the importance of perseverance and the tenacity that one should have in the face of adversity. Eminem reminds the listener that, “You only get one shot.” Too often youth is wasted on the young. Lounging around like the speaker in John Donne’s poem will not get them any farther in life. Eminem’s message is to get up and do something.

In addition to the lyric, the beat is passionate and relentless. It builds into a frenzy that emulates how the structure can help push the message of the song. The music also helps to emulate the tone of the rap. The message is to rage against all odds, to never give up. This is a positive message that is important to give to the students and it can be done by using their music.

Structure and rhythm are important to the message of the song and also important to the writing of a song or poem. Therefore, we must not lose the opportunity to also show that there is structure in this rap song.

In the next stanza, Eminem uses figurative language that I feel my students too often overlook. If I can show them the power of metaphor, they may be able to grasp a deeper meaning within the lyric. I want them all to become deep thinkers. For example, Eminem uses images of “lonely roads.” This conveys the feeling of isolation that all teenagers can identify with. The road is a universal metaphor that we also examined in the Frost poem as well as the Johnson song. It speaks about the human condition and the desire to always be going somewhere. It is the constant quest for knowledge. This theme of isolation continues to touch kids as Eminem says the parent “...barely knows his own daughter...” This is similar to Johnson’s song where “nobody seem to know me/ Everybody passed me by.”

In spite of these images of isolation, Eminem offers inspiration. As opposed to Marque’s moth, Eminem says, “I’ve got to formulate a plot ‘fore I end up in jail or shot/ Success the only option...failure’s not.” He continues by refusing to grow old without passion; not to end up like the cockroach in Marque’s poem who says “I wish/there was something I wanted/as badly as he wanted to fry himself”(601). Eminem keeps his hope alive as he tries to “feed and water my seed”. The seed can be a metaphor for one’s dreams and hopes. It suggests the speaker’s desire to stay focused and to keep moving forward even in the face of adversity.

Eminem refuses to grow old in “Salem’s Lot”. This is an allusion to Stephen King’s story about a town devoured by evil. A town where nothing but bad happens. It is a town that many of my inner city students can identify with. However, the message is not to give up but to aspire to greatness or at least to rise above the “God damn food stamps” and darkness and hopelessness that permeates their world. The inner city kids in my classroom live this experience that Eminem speaks of and my hope is that they gain a positive message from his lyric. It is important for my students to know that they have options and they can aspire to be somebody. To face there adversities and rage against the dying of the night.

At this point, we can go back and reexamine Robert Herrick’s “To the virgins to make much of time”. Although at first the idea of time flying may be difficult for teens to relate to because they feel they’re immortal and have all the time in the world. Herrick’s third stanza brings up the argument that “Age is best which is the first.” Some may say however, “Youth is wasted on the young”, and, “If only I knew then what I know now.” These ideas contrast the argument of Herrick’s poem. Herrick says, “Good times” are in our youth.

He also says, “Then be not coy and while ye may go marry/for having once but lost your prime/you may forever tarry.” Like “Lose Yourself”, the

message is not to be afraid to make a commitment, to take chances. To “tarry” is to forever live in “Salem’s Lot”. Rather, one must make choices and “Lose Yourself” in something passionate. To become greater than your former self. Like Eminem says “You only get one shot”. Some of my students have teenage babies, get hung up on drugs, or aspire to work in McDonalds. They need hope to aspire to greater heights. The message is, if you don’t take chances and commit to something, you may forever “Tarry” in “Salem’s Lot” and end up a bitter individual. People, who put off going to college until they’re older, may never end up getting there: “Knowing how way leads on to way...” Those who choose to take a chance and be committed, or “Go marry”, however, will be able to focus there passions on positive directions.

It is important to look not only at the themes in these poems and songs, but also their structure. In Helen Vendler’s book *Poems, Poets, Poetry*, she says, “One of the hardest things to do in poetry is to write hundreds of lines obeying the same scheme...” (72). She goes on to note, however, that being aware of rhyme scheme and structure is important not only to writers of poetry but also writers of song. Vendler mentions that “...composers do the same” (72). Therefore, although it may be hard to do, it is important to understand that writers and musicians are often working within a specific structure. Although students may not be cognizant of the structured rhyme and rhythm schemes in the songs they listen to, they sure enough are intrinsically familiar with these rhythms by osmosis. The question remains as to whether or not one should break the spell or magic that the music has upon the student and risk the possibility of ruining the fun of the song by breaking it down into teacher talk. If teachers are to teach and shed light on the elements of poetry (and I believe that we should) then we as teachers have a responsibility to point out the rhythm and rhyme patterns that might otherwise be taken for granted. Students must have an understanding of the fact that writers are working within a specific structure. “In order to play the game, in order to understand poetry, one must first learn the rules” (Pickering 629).

Although students sometimes resist the concept that poetry needs to be analyzed, the fact is that some things require structure whether the students realize it or not. Therefore, by breaking down the lyric and examining the structure or rhyme and rhythm scheme of the piece, the student will be able to see how writers can create within a certain framework. One of the best ways of showing structure and rules is to examine the components of a Shakespearean sonnet. Any sonnet will work but I often refer to the prologue in *Romeo and Juliet* as well as the sonnet co-composed when Romeo and Juliet first meet. Once students are familiar with these rules, they can attempt to create their own sonnets. This is an enjoyable assignment because everyone is playing by the rules. Therefore, it can also become a challenge to see who can write the best sonnet. Many times students

just want to say what they feel and keep their audience limited to themselves or a selected few friends who they claim can understand what they are trying to say in their writing. Although it is okay to express one's feelings in a piece of writing it is also crucial to understand that all writers follow certain rules. All poetry "should attempt to communicate the author's emotional and intellectual responses to his or her own existence and to the surrounding world" (Pickering 628). These rules are designed so that order can be made of chaos. Students should realize that rules must be understood before they can be broken. By having a set of rules and following them, students may be able to create poetry that can be shared with a wider audience because of its universal uniformity to a specific structure or rhyme and rhythm scheme.

Furthermore, if one is to begin to write or to consider oneself a budding poet (or rapper for that matter), one must first emulate the masters. As Vendler points out, "Each major artist creates in a distinctive way." Though a writer may begin by imitation and evaluating one's heroes "...in their maturity they end up sounding different from the predecessors whom they imitated in youth" (87). This is to say that one must first understand the structures and imitate the masters before evolving into a voice of their own. Even if a student is not interested in the art of writing poetry, I believe it is important to study and understand structure of poetry so that one can feel somewhat more comfortable when attempting to examine a piece of text. Some students may only need an understanding of these concepts for the sake of scoring well on the English AP exams that students take. But perhaps the student has no interest in poetry and will never take the English AP exams. Why then does the teacher need to show structure of the poem and not just allow it to be read for satisfaction? Because "...this relationship between form and content is one of the key characteristics of poetry" (Pickering). Furthermore, I believe ignorance of these concepts is part of the reason for the frustration that exists in students whenever the word poetry is uttered in a classroom environment. Therefore, by equipping the students with the proper tools, they will have a more comfortable time going into the study of poetry as they continue with their studies. A student who is equipped with somewhat of an understanding of the basic structures of poetry will be a student who does not groan as loudly when the word poetry is mentioned in the classroom because his familiarity will have bred contentment within this student's soul. Having a set of tools in his belt will enable the student to go into a study of poetry with less frustration than he might have otherwise. It is like sending a roofer up the ladder with an empty tool belt and expecting him to be able to tear off and replace shingles without the proper tools. I wouldn't want an ill equipped roofer on my roof anymore than I would want an ill-equipped student to take on the explication of poetry without the proper tools. A nice way to examine this concept is to begin with a sentence in prose: "So much depends upon a red wheel barrow, glazed with rain water, beside the white chickens." Ask the students to consider the

concept of line breaks. How, for example, does a poet know when to break a line? Their assignment is to rewrite this sentence as a poem, breaking the lines wherever they see fit. After a discussion about their choices, show them “The Red Wheelbarrow” by William Carlos Williams. Each stanza looks like a mini-wheelbarrow. In addition, the first line of the poem stands alone because “The rest of the poem quite literally depends on that line...” (Pickering 622). There is a very specific structure to this poem. By doing this exercise, students can get a feel for one of the differences between prose and poetry. “Throughout the poem in fact, the first line of each stanza depends upon the second to expand, complement, or even alter the meaning. Thus the form of the poem helps to communicate its message that all things in life are interdependent” (Pickering 622). This poem is short and sweet and therefore, it is an ideal way to focus on the concept of structure within a poem. In addition, this can illustrate one major difference between writing poetry and prose.

It cannot be stressed enough that experience is the key to good writing and understanding. “The more poems you have read, the more pleasure you will get from reading a new poem...” (Vendler 106). This is a lesson not only in poetry but also in life. Take the roofer for example. The more roofs one has worked on, the easier it becomes to handle the art of tearing off and replacing shingles. A beginning roofer just tears the old shingles from the roof but the experienced roofer can place flashing along chimneys, hang gutters and add cooling vents to a rooftop. Similarly, the inexperienced student can read through a poem, tearing through the words and maybe grasping some of the meaning, but an experienced student can break it down enough to understand the subtleties that exist in the structure, rhythms, and rhymes of the poem. By having a clear understanding of these basic concepts, the experienced student can begin to look deeper into the metaphorical meanings and other literary elements that exist in good writing. Although a teacher can guide students through any number of poems in the classroom, it is the student’s own desire to read and think deeply that will help with the understanding of the poetry. Intrinsic motivation is a task that cannot be taught; however, a teacher can with the right amount of passion and understanding, attempt to ignite the desire within the student and cause him or her to want to seek more knowledge about poetry. Just like the master roofer can inspire the young apprentice to want to learn how to go beyond simply tearing off old shingles and replacing new ones, a motivating and passionate teacher can attempt to inspire the student to have a thirst for more knowledge. To think more deeply and to be able to embrace the notion that “...nearly all great literature tries to recreate human experiences that involve the reader emotionally and intellectually” (Pickering 621). If the student attempts to read more and become exposed to poetry at least half as often as he or she is exposed to music, then perhaps one can begin through osmosis the understanding and appreciation of this art form.

“[Rhythm] lays down a beat that appeals to us not only in poetry, but also in the sonatas of Beethoven and the songs of the Beach Boys” (Pickering 724). Rhythm is what many students refer to when explaining their like for certain genres of music, particularly rap. When I ask students why they like an artist like Eminem, they will often refer to the “beat”, which in essence is their way of saying that there is good rhythm in the piece. Therefore, rhythm and its overwhelming power cannot be denied when studying the art of poetry and song. As Dame Edith Sitwell argues in Pickering’s *Literature* text, “...Rhythm is to the world of sound, what light is to the world of sight” (725). Although we often take rhythm and structure for granted, it is essential in understanding and ultimately appreciating the poetry and songs that we listen to or have forced upon us in the English classroom.

Is structure really that important to poetry and song? Oftentimes students will be turned off by the attempt to have structure of a piece revealed to them. They just want to read it and move on. “Just tell us what it’s about” is a paraphrased comment that often is uttered in the classroom when students are asked to examine or explicate a poem. It has been my experience that students sometimes want to accept a piece of poetry or even prose for that matter at its face value. Students resist the fact that many pieces of writing they are exposed to contain elements that are worth a deeper examination. Elements such as metaphor are sometimes overlooked and must be highlighted for the student reader. Because poetry and literature is not like the study of mathematics, students can sometimes get discouraged. The teacher has a responsibility to acknowledge the ambiguity of a piece of text and embrace the realization that this causes one to be forced to think on their own. One must look at poetry as one looks at life. Oftentimes a response to a poem is a reflection of how one feels at a particular time in his life. Structure, however, is an essential concept to examine and understand. It should be emphasized, and the student should be made aware, that writers often write with the knowledge of structure in mind. One solid example was looking at the elements of structure within a Shakespearean sonnet. Why must a sonnet have just 14 lines? Why must there be iambic pentameter and a specific rhyme scheme? The answers to these questions are that there are certain rules that are followed. These rules become “...a game played between the poet and the form. Rules of the game help to provide a structure within which we can measure our skills and the skills of others. A poet is challenged by the verse form to write as well as possible within certain restrictions” (Pickering 738). By learning the elements of a sonnet and then attempting to write one, a student will gain a greater appreciation of the skills needed to create such a piece of writing. I believe it is important to know, for example, that Shakespeare was writing sonnets with a very specific structure in mind. By having an understanding of this structure, students will be able to come to their own conclusions about the skill of Shakespeare’s

sonnet writing. They will also be able to measure their own writing with each other in this specific structured genre. It is like understanding the rules of a baseball game and then appreciating the skill of a homerun hitter like a Barry Bonds or a Babe Ruth. Both batters are from different time periods, yet each one is batting within the same structure of a baseball game that has rules that dictate how many strikes one is allowed at bat. Every batter steps up to the plate with the same opportunity to hit the ball out of the park, yet not every batter has the skill to consistently crack one over the fence time and time again. Similarly, anyone can attempt to write a sonnet by following the rules of the game. Yet we cannot all be as skillful in our writing as a Shakespeare but this should not deter us from trying or from appreciating what measures up as the standard of excellence in a particular genre. Just because one cannot always hit a homerun like Bonds or Ruth; or just because one cannot always write a sonnet like Shakespeare or Keats, one should still not be discouraged to try to understand and embrace the art form. Simply being able to understand the rules will make one's life more meaningful.

A blues song written by Robert Johnson can clearly illustrate how structure, rhyme and rhythm are elements that need to be understood so that one can either write a blue's lyric or at least gain a deeper appreciation of the excellence of a writer such as Johnson. Because the twelve-bar blues structure is simplistic in its scheme, it is a good place to start when teaching these elements that also exist in poetry. One need only play a few selected tunes from Robert Johnson's brief yet prolific body of work to feel the rhythm and hear as well as visualize the rhyme scheme that makes up the rules of a twelve bar blues. Because the structure is simple enough to follow, it makes a good model for the students to emulate. Every stanza of this blues genre has a verse that is repeated. This structure starts with a line that responds to the first verse and then ends with a specific rhyme that follows this verse. It should be noted that the blues is not just about feeling low down. The blues can also be very uplifting in its rhythms and lyrics. The teacher can examine these recordings that are all contained on a two-compact disc package titled *The Complete Recordings of Robert Johnson*. Johnson is also a good starting point because of the myth or legend that surround his short life. Students will get hooked on to the story of Johnson selling his soul to the devil at the crossroads late at night.

Another aspect worth examining is the sound or playful language that is found in poetry and song lyrics. Although I have always used alliteration and assonance when having students write poetry, Vendler states that "This makes the words sound as if they belong together by natural affinity" (145). This was a new discovery for me. I would often tell students that the sound of the words could illustrate the sense by telling them for example that the alliterative tongue twister of "Sally sells sea shells down by the sea shore" is an attempt to mimic the sound of the ocean that laps upon the seashore with its continuous repetitious rhythm.

Alliteration, therefore, is a technique that poets are aware of when writing poetry. Vendler allowed me to look even deeper into the reason for using alliteration in one's writing. "Every word in a poem enters into relation with the other words in that poem" (147). Vendler argues that one's reflection on why the poet arranged words in a particular order "will bring you into the heart of the poem, will give you increasing pleasure, and will make the poem an increasingly satisfying whole to you" (151). I agree that it is important to examine the choice of words within a poem and notice how they effect one another and the whole poem in general. Simply by pointing out and focusing on examples of alliteration and assonance to the students, the teacher will be adding to their tools of understanding and they will read the poetry in a new way. Once again, I believe it is through understanding that one can gain a greater appreciation of things in life. We, as teachers of poetry, must fill up our students' tool belts with enough of the basic tools that will enable them to go through their lives with the intrinsic inspiration to collect more tools along the way.

In the third edition of *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, Jon Stallworthy of Cornell University has an essay on versification that says "A poem is a composition written for performance by the human voice" (1403). He likens the versification of poetry to that of a musical composition. "The more one understands of musical notation and the principles of musical composition, the more one will understand and appreciate a composer's score.... Similarly, the more one understands of versification (the principles and practice of writing verse), the more one is likely to understand and appreciate poetry..."(1403). Therefore, my narrative curriculum unit is designed to use music to connect with poetry. The overall objectives are to have students' gain a greater appreciation for canonized poetry as well as have a better understand of the components of poetry. Even if one feels that "...the poem itself is not profound, it may nonetheless cause us to think about life a bit more deeply" (Pickering 623). I believe it is a teacher's responsibility to continuously attempt to inspire and motivate students to think more deeply. By using music, I hope to be able to make connections that will allow the students to be more open to the idea of reading and studying poetry.

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Poetics Today. Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv
University, 2000.
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/poetics_today/v021/21.1alkalay-gut.html>

This essay argues that many rock song lyrics have similar themes and literary devices that are found in poetry. The essay makes connections with rock songs and poetry of the nineteenth century.

Perrine, Laurence. *Sound and Sense*. Fourth edition. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973.

This text has a variety of poems as well as follow-up questions that force deeper thinking. In addition, it has a fine explanation of poetic terms that will help further the understanding of poetry and help aid the student in preparation for the English AP exams.

Peterson, R. Stanley. *Designs in Poetry*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974.

This is a nice collection of poetry with thought provoking questions following each poem. The poems are presented in four sections. The sections are as follows: Narratives, Lyrics, Images and Imagination, Form and Structure in Poetry. The text also includes a mini-biography on each poet.

Pickering, James H. and Jeffrey D. Hooper. *Literature*. Third edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990. p. 621-1028.

This anthology contains an in depth section on the study of poetry. Poems are separated in a variety of categories. Some of these include “Repetition and Ambiguity”, “Irony”, “Imagery”, “Comparisons”, “Personification”, “Rhythm and Meter”, and many more.

Many of the poems contain follow-up questions as well as a thorough analysis of the aforementioned terms.

Stallworthy, Jon. “Versification”. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. Third edition.

Ed. Alexander W. Allison et al. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983. p.1403-1422.

Stallworthy writes about rhythm, meter, rhymes, forms, and other areas of versification found within poetry. This is a scholarly essay that breaks down the various components of poetry and gives many good examples of explanation.

Vendler, Helen. *Poems, Poets, Poetry*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1997.

Vendler’s anthology of poetry gives many examples of various poems, poets, and poetry in general. This text has many poems and Vendler explicates some with the intent to prove “how the poet manages to avoid cliché...” This anthology also has valuable sections on imagery, structure, rhyme, and rhythm as found in poetry.

Student Reading List

- Cummings, E. E. “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r”. *Poems, Poets, Poetry*.
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Ed. R. Stanley Peterson. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.,
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Allen Poe*. Ed. Sara Sheldon. New York: Scholastic Book Services,
1969. p. 235-242.

Williams, William Carlos. "The Red Wheelbarrow". *Literature*. Third edition.
Eds. Pickering, James H. and Jeffrey D. Hooper. New York: Macmillan
Publishing Company, 1990. p. 621-22.

Appendix – Content Standards

Communication Standards:

- C1. Students use effective research and information management skills.
- C2. Students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
- C3. Students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
- C4. Students write for a variety of purposes, including narrating, informing and persuading.
- C5. Students analyze and make critical judgements about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
- C6. Students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
- C7. Students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.
- C8. Students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform or describe.

Arts and Humanities Standards:

- AH1. Students describe the meanings they find in various works from the visual and performing arts and literature on the basis of aesthetic understanding of the art form.
- AH2. Students evaluate and respond critically to works from the visual and performing arts and literature of various individuals and cultures, showing that they understand important features of the works.
- AH3. Students relate various works from the visual and performing arts and literature to the historical and cultural context with which they were created.
- AH4. Students produce, perform or exhibit their work in the visual arts, music, dance or theater, and describe the meanings their work has for them.