

# Unit 5

## Poetry and Song Writing

### Overview

In this unit, students will be able to craft a formatted poem and a free verse poem using previous learned literary devices. Students may also write internal rhymes and hooks and choruses. Students will be able to understand and create figurative language.



# Essential Questions

- How can universal themes be expressed through poetry or song?
- How may sound devices be employed to create tone and meaning?
- How does rhyme, verse and literary devices help the overall feel and quality of written work?
- How may figurative language be employed to create tone and meaning?

## Essential Learning Outcomes

- Students will identify unique characteristics of the poetry genre
- Students will practice writing skills such as rhythm, rhyming, and descriptive vocabulary
- Students will follow the writing process to create original poetry or song lyrics

## Unit Resources

["I Am From" Reading and Activity](#)

[Practice Poems Activity](#)

[Poetry Scavenger Hunt Activity](#)

[Texting Coupletss Activity](#)

## Videos

[Poetry and Lyrics Video Playlist](#)



## Reading Poetry

*Illustrate a visual poem to explore identity and self image*

Students read the poem "I am From" by George Ella Lyon. or watch the poet perform their work on video.

Then, they draft a poem about their own identity in the same format Lyon used. Finally, students create a video to publish their poems. This is great because the mentor text gives a clear structure and example that students can follow but the end result is truly unique, just like their story.

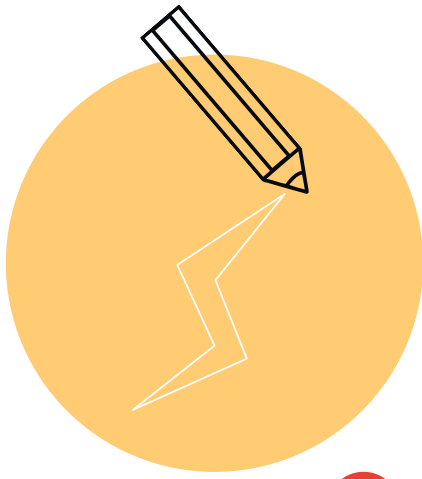
**Where I'm From**  
**By George Ella Lyon**

I am from clothespins,  
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.  
I am from the dirt under the back porch.  
(Black, glistening  
it tasted like beets.)  
I am from the forsythia bush,  
the Dutch elm  
whose long gone limbs I remember  
as if they were my own.

I am from fudge and eyeglasses,  
from Imogene and Alafair.  
I'm from the know-it-alls  
and the pass-it-ons,  
from perk up and pipe down.  
I'm from He restoreth my soul  
with cottonball lamb  
and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,  
fried corn and strong coffee.  
From the finger my grandfather lost  
to the auger  
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.  
Under my bed was a dress box  
spilling old pictures.  
a sift of lost faces  
to drift beneath my dreams.  
I am from those moments --  
snapped before I budded --  
leaf-fall from the family tree.





## Practice Poems

*Students read a poem and then select two lines from it.*

Students start their own writing with one of those lines. Anytime that they get stuck, they repeat their jump-off line again. This is a standalone activity or a daily writing warm-up, and it works with any poem. We love how it lowers the stakes. Can't think of anything to write? Repeat the jump-off line and start again. Here are some of our favorite jump-off lines:

- The truth is...
- Some people say...
- Here's what I forgot to tell you...
- Some questions have no answers...
- Here's what I'm afraid to write about...



# Poetry Scavenger Hunt

**The Purpose:** This activity encourages students to see the poetry in the everyday language around them, while helpfully reinforcing their understanding of some of the conventions of the genre.

**The Process:** Encourage students to 'scavenge' their school, home, and outside community for snippets of language they can compile into a piece of poetry, song or a poetic collage. They may copy down or photograph words, phrases, and sentences from signs, magazines, leaflets or even snippets of conversations they overhear while out and about.

Examples of language they collect may range from the Keep Out sign on private property to the destination on the front of a local bus.

Once students have gathered their language together, they can work to build a poem or lyric out of the scraps, usually choosing a central theme to give the piece cohesion. They can even include corresponding artwork to enhance the visual appeal of their work too, if they wish.

This activity challenges our students to read new meaning into familiar things and to put their own spin on the language they encounter in the world around them, all while reinforcing the student's grasp on poetic conventions.

# Texting Couplets

"Double, double, toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble."

These famous lines are an epic example of a rhyming couplet. As you may have surmised from the name, rhyming couplets are two lines that rhyme, but they also often have the same meter, or rhythmic structure in a verse or line.

Just to get students thinking about rhythm and rhyme, I ask them to write texting couplets. This assignment appeals to teens because - as we all know - text messaging is a language with which they are very comfortable. Asking students to write poetry? Meh. Ask them to write text messages in the form of poetry? Now we're talking.

With this task, students are writing text messages back and forth in the form of poetic couplets. I encourage them to make it sound like a conversation between friends. It's fun both to model and to watch. Ask students to highlight a specific language element, like figurative language, grammar concepts, or vocabulary / word choice.