Teaching Poetry through Genre Study

1. Why would I teach genre study?

Have your students been given the freedom to read and write about literature in which they find truly fascinating? It is sadly common in today’s secondary classrooms to see teachers forcing literature that they, or perhaps the district, consider to be valuable on their students. What is the outcome of this? Many students exit the classroom despising English Language Arts. In many cases, this is because they were forced to read novels to which they can’t relate, written by dead White authors, and were given no choice with modes of self-expression. How can we change this?

Expert Randy Bomer overcame this struggle as an English teacher through genre study. As readers, we learn to distinguish genre from a young age, whether it be a story, a thank-you note, or a recipe. Genre is socially learned. As Bomer mentions, “Genres are conventions, and that means they are social—socially defined and socially learned” (119). Children are able to differentiate between a cartoon and a recipe, and understand the order in which both are developed. In a recipe, for example, ingredients are listed first, followed by brief instruction. Adolescents understand the necessity of each component, and are able to pick it apart from other genres. Genre studies allow readers and writers to dig deeper into their lives and the lives of others. They enable teachers to provide a very rich cultural experience, while creating a diverse learning community in the classroom.

2. Teaching Genre for Reading and Writing:

Genre is one of the first moves we make in identifying texts. As Bomer claims, genre lays down our track for reading; we know what to expect when we pick up a novel written by James Patterson, or see words uniquely scattered across the page of a poem. These textual regularities, styles, structures, and tones allow us to recognize how each component contributes to the genre’s effectiveness. As Charles Bazerman says in The Life of Genre, the Life of the Classroom, “Genres are the familiar places we go to create communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar” (19).

What does all of this have to do with teaching? One of the most important sentiments we can give our students is the sense of ownership. Rather than assigning a single literary theme or a single writing topic to the entire class, teaching through genre allows students to explore topics that grab their interest. Bomer recognizes the significance of ownership while teaching genre: “I discovered that my students and I could share an investigation of genre while they maintained ownership of their topic choice and their decisions about which elements of craft to attend to and when, and ultimate control over what went into their articles” (120). Students are much more likely to become engaged in the reading, as well as the assignment, if they are given the freedom to choose.
Think back to your days in high school. Were you ever given a writing assignment, such as the dreaded research paper, even though you had never read a research paper or learned its features? How can we expect our students to write something they don’t know how to craft? Through a genre study, we are able to tread carefully through the learning process, picking out every effective trait in a genre. Without being guided through this procedure, students are more likely to submit a piece of writing that does not match the qualities of the genre selected.

According to Lucy McCormick Calkins, author of The Art of Teaching Writing, “in a genre study, our students read and evaluate, muse over and analyze, learn from and model themselves after the texts that are like those they will write” (365). These models are called mentor texts. Genre study allows students to truly engage in the genre, and most importantly, use mentor texts as models when the time comes to developing their own. By pinpointing each quality trait in the genre, students are then able to use those same traits in their own writing. Without a model, how can students be expected to write well, especially if they have not yet been immersed in the genre? The touchstone texts, provided by the teacher and the class, enable to begin gaining the required knowledge of how to do it on their own.

3. Required New York State Learning Standards:
A poetry genre study fulfills the following New York State English Language Arts standard for students at the high school (intermediate) level:

✓ Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Within the poetry genre study, students listen to, read, write, and recite poetry. They understand, identify, and distinguish the traits that characterize poetry apart from other genres. They produce a list of readings for their peers, grouping the works in accordance to common elements of poetry. They learn and identify series of literary elements for meaning. They constantly reference touchstone texts, and eventually write poems for their peers.

4. Why Poetry?
“I don’t teach poetry so that kids will remember all about writing poems and be able to do it forever. I want them to develop habits of mind related to learning in a genre, so that they can learn in whatever genres they need.” (Bomer, 119)

Bomer stresses that we ought to choose a genre for whole-class study that is present in everyday life. It is important that students have seen this kind of writing in the real world and are able to find examples of it quite easily. They need access to models and mentor text, and we should never assign them something we wouldn’t read or write ourselves.

Deciding which genre to choose depends on your students’ work thus far. Focus on what they are having trouble with, as well as what they have a good grasp on, in order to pick a genre that will improve their writing and the common glitches you see amongst the group in general. Poetry, as Bomer suggests, would be the genre you pick if your students need to enhance and develop their skills with using imagery, structure, and sound of language. It is also beneficial to use the poetry study when working toward the required speaking requirement for the New York State ELA learning standards by reading aloud and performing certain pieces.
Poetry is a unique form of expression and creativity. It opens us up to new ways of thinking, and allows its readers and writers to grow internally. As Nancie Atwell claims, “Poetry expresses our feelings, dreams, and needs: no other genre does it so well” (427). Because poetry is such a broad category and can be classified into many subgenres, a genre study in poetry gives students flexibility, leeway, and choice.

5. Getting Started:
Nancie Atwell’s one requirement for those intending to teach poetry is to read poetry:

Read it and be amazed at what contemporary poetry does: this is the poetry we never got to in high school and college. Read it and understand how contemporary poetry means, how it reflects and resonates our lives and feelings. Read it for yourself first, to fall in love with it. Then begin to collect the poems you love to share with your students. (422)

It is imperative that you are able to acknowledge that you are a passenger, along with your students, on the genre study voyage. Though you may have more experience with the genre, you are learning with your students. You are the model from which they learn, so it is best that they can see you go through this new learning process together with them. It is also important that you read and collect examples of contemporary poetry, as Atwell suggests. Students are better able to connect to poets who are currently living, and with topics that currently take place. Once they learn and grasp this poetry, they are better able to branch out and read more.

Bomer also suggests using poems written by poets who are living today, and which refer to topics relevant today—“I need to help my students become aware of the wide options available to them as they work with their own life material in this form” (126). It’s important that we illustrate to our students that poetry is alive, and not just something of a past to which they cannot relate. In order to achieve student engagement, we must learn to appeal to their everyday interests.

Choose two or three poems that will, as Calkins puts it, “knock their socks off.” You know your students by now, so you want to pick poems that will draw them into the genre of poetry. It is best to find poems written by professionals, students, and even yourself. These will serve as exemplary mentor texts, so be sure each poem is effective, well written and unique, and is something to which your students will relate. For a recommended list of contemporary young adult poetry, see Appendix A. Try focusing on poems that deal specifically with identity; this is a concept with which many adolescents struggle and connect. For my genre study, I selected Jacob Miller’s Where I’m From.

6. Introducing Poetry to the Classroom:
Take each of them together on the Smartboard or overhead projector. Also distribute copies and have each student paste them in their writer’s notebooks. Then read the poem aloud to your class. Encourage students to use a highlighter or colored pencil to mark areas of the poem they find particularly interesting or
effective while you read. As Penny Kittle, author of *Write Beside Them* claims, “Read aloud is the single most important tool we have in the teaching of writing. If students of any age don’t know what good writing sounds like—how it is different from speech—they will have trouble revising for sound” (131). This is especially important when teaching poetry.

When you have finished reading one of the three touchstone poems, give the students a few minutes to do a quick write in the following page of their writer’s notebooks. “Quick writes allow us to discuss the issue and our own thinking in response before breaking down the piece into an analysis of its structure and tone” (Kittle 133). Some sentence openers you could use to begin the quick writes may include, “This poem reminded me of...” or “I can relate to the character in the poem because...” It can also be effective to create a class list, *What Makes a Poem Resonate for Me?*, to post in the room as a resource. Begin with your own example, such as “cool use of rhyme” or “reminded me of my childhood”. Atwell does so with her students, illustrating the characteristics of poetry that appeal to us as young readers of poetry, without having to consider formal literary classifications. (See Appendix B for Atwell’s list.) This will help students find more poems that match qualities on this list.

Next, keeping in mind that you are a colearner with your students, follow Bomber’s strategy:

Study [the poems] alongside [your] students, individually, in small groups, and in the whole group, to try to figure out how these texts do what they do. I, like they, can pick out the parts where I think the poet has written particularly well, the bits that please me, and can try to find the words to describe what he seems to be doing there.

(123)

It’s important to let the students find their own examples of why they believe the piece to be a model of good writing, rather than giving them a formal list of a good poem’s qualities: “I want the kids on the journey of inquiry with me, collaboratively creating shared knowledge about the genre” (Bomer 124). Utilize your class list of what makes certain poems truly resonate with your students.

7. Their turn:

Now that the class recognizes the qualities of three exemplary poems, it is your students’ turn to find examples of their own. Bomber stresses the value for students to be included in the process of finding examples because it gives them ownership, freedom, and a new learning experience through identifying characteristics of writing that fit into the poetry genre study. Having students choose poems of their own also emphasizes the fact that “this isn’t just a school thing; this is a real thing. You can find this in your world” (Bomer 124). Encourage your students to search for works written by famous poets as well as students by giving them credible sources, such as anthologies and books listed in Appendix A, websites such as [http://teenink.com](http://teenink.com) and [http://www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org) and magazines such as *Poetry*. As they search for this fresh new genre, they will become better able to recognize poetry among other kinds of text.

Allowing students to find poems on their own not only gives them freedom and authenticity, but illustrates a picture for you, as the teacher, of where they stand in the learning process. What kinds of trends do you see in their findings? Are they
bringing in examples that embody the features of poetry, already discussed and written about?

Along with their single poem of choice, ask your students to write—in their writer’s notebooks—how and where they found their poem, as well as any difficulties, questions, or points of interest that may have taken place along the way. For example, perhaps the students enjoy the structure of a poem, but do not understand the meaning or metaphor. Continue this process, so that students can start creating a sort of portfolio in their notebooks to which they can refer back.

Once they bring in their examples, arrange them into small groups for discussion. Each student should read his or her poem aloud to the group, and share what they wrote in their writer’s notebooks about finding the piece. Then, they are to discuss how the poem fits the definition of “good” poetry. Someone in the group will take notes, and another student can share the group’s discoveries, questions, and conclusions with the class. Bomer follows this routine, explaining the result of this method: “Therefore, our whole-class discussions about the nature of the genre rise out of questions the kids have developed through their reading” (125).

Together, we create a chart (similar to the What Makes a Poem Resonate with Me? chart) to display in the classroom of qualities that allowed the poems to fit into the poetry genre. Students can, and should, also note these questions and concerns in their writer’s notebooks.

8. Create Touchstone Texts Together:

After a couple days of discussing the poems you have collected as a class, you will be able to weed out two to four poems, brought in by students and yourself, to use as touchstone texts throughout the remainder of the genre study. Your selection should be diverse in topics, have different lengths of lines, use a range of sounds, and have different uses of metaphor and image. For this particular study, since you are working on the memoir genre next, try to focus on poems that target identity. Not only is this an effective transition into the next unit, but this topic is also something adolescents can relate to and from which they can grow. For the purposes of this study, I have selected Jacob Miller’s Where I’m From, Ken Nesbitt’s December Substitute, and KathleenE.’s Just Like You (from TeenInk).

Do not dispose of the class’s collection of poems, however. Bomer suggests making several copies of a class anthology, filled with everything you and the students have brought in, for something to refer back to during conferences with students and helping them improve.

9. Analyzing Meaning (Before Craft):

Now that you have gathered the touchstone texts, repeat the process above by reading the poems (perhaps one per day or two) aloud, as well as having a student do so. While listening, students should be marking up parts of the poem (in their writer’s notebook) that resonate with them, followed by a quick write on the next page. Bomer emphasizes the importance of letting our students respond as readers first: “Before I engage my students too much in analyzing elements of craft or qualities of ‘good’ writing in the texts we share, it is important that I open up space for them to respond to those texts as readers, as human beings able to be
affected by literature” (126). The quick writes should be focused on how the poem made them feel, what it reminded them of, and how it affects them.

After the quick write, discuss responses as a class. Share your response, modeling your thought process to the students, while demonstrating the colearning environment. Once the class has focused on how the literature makes them feel, discuss parts of the writing itself that stood out to the group. What part did they really like? Was that style of writing difficult to read? As Bomer stresses, it is important to focus on meaning before craft. Writer’s journals play a major role in this step.

10. Analyzing Craft (After Meaning):

When it comes to teaching craft, encourage students to form what Bomer calls a metalanguage, or language about language, within your classroom environment:

Communities always make up their own metalanguage for what they are studying and making. Maintaining the words they originally used to describe what they saw when they saw it helps also to ensure that their knowledge of technique holds closer to their existential experience as readers, remaining dynamic and usable rather than becoming abstracted and inert. (127)

If students are given a list of literary elements, they are much less likely to remember them and be affected by what they do. Rather, as Bomer states, learners need to find them, point to them, discuss them, and name them. It is very effective to create a class lists using your metalanguage; for example, writing “comparison” on a Qualities of an Effective Poem chart instead of “metaphor.” When students use their own unique terms for standardized terms, it’s a true sign that they are really engaging while learning. Throughout the study, when students become more familiar and comfortable with the metalanguage, you might do a minilesson, which connects our classroom terms with standard ones.

11. Time to Start Writing:

Now that you have looked deeply at and discussed the touchstone texts, all of which are pasted in each student’s writer’s notebook with quick writes and mark-up’s, it’s time to start writing you and the class to start writing your own. Poetry can be very difficult to write for the first time for many students. Because of this, I find it most effective to have them follow a mentor text (see Appendix C for detailed minilesson).

Step one of the writing process entails using a model text to imitate form and utilize metaphor. The mentor text I chose for the first lesson is Jacob Miller’s Where I’m From:

Where I’m From

I am from kettle chips.
from the rock I used to keep under my bed,
and from the Beatles, especially Paul.
I am from the catnip plant in the garden
whose triangular leaves I remember
as if they were my own.

I am from Pay Days and Nik-L-Nips,
from Clyde Dexter and Larry Bird,
from “Take a chill pill” and the Boston Red Sox.

I am from the Brady Bunch
and the scar on my finger.
I am from rec league soccer,
from Antoine Walker and Paul Pierce.

In the closet are ancient scrolls,
mementoes of my lost ages.
I am from those memories.
Scribed down before this age,
they waited for our family tree
to grow for me.

Following Miller’s form and use of metaphor, I write my own poem on the
Smartboard, explaining each line I plug in to Miller’s format and why. This provokes
thought, and students are then able to use the remainder of class time to begin their
own Where I’m From poem independently, with the original poem and myself as
their resource. Pasting Miller’s poem into their writer’s notebooks (be sure it’s on
the left side), students will use the following page to write their own. See Appendix
D for a detailed lesson and rationale.

Depending on whether or not you have block scheduling, give the students a
night or two to finish the poem for homework. When they return to class, have them
exchange their poem with someone else in the class to conduct a peer review. It is
crucial that students become familiarized with peer reviewing in the ELA classroom.
See Appendix E for a peer review checklist for this assignment.

12. Minilesson Between Drafts:

While circling the room and conferencing with your students before or after
they begin their first assignment, you may notice an opportunity for a minilesson on
a specific craft of the genre. One lesson that is always useful in poetry is figurative
language, or more specifically, metaphor. This minilesson offers valuable instruction
on how to improve craft before your students submit their final draft. See Appendix
F for a detailed minilesson on metaphor. Because I use Miller’s Where I’m From as
the touchstone text for the first assignment, I find it most useful to use a minilesson
on metaphor before analyzing and personalizing this poem.

After students submit their second draft to you, you are able to recognize
commonalities which students may need further instruction and help with. At this
point, depending on what those idiosyncrasies may be, it is best to conduct a
minilesson confronting an area that is in need of improvement among the class.
Author Constance Weaver suggests that a minilesson should be about five to
twenty-five minutes, and focus on a specific grammar-related skill, with the
emphasis on writing, not grammar. “The key is to find an issue or skill that all students, no matter what they are currently writing, can then apply (with the understanding that the skill may be familiar to some but new to many)” (Weaver 66).

Since you are working with poetry, your minilesson might sway more toward teaching writing techniques having to do with figurative language rather than grammar. For instance, say a majority of your students is having trouble effectively using imagery: create a short minilesson focusing all attention on imagery, its definition (both standard in metalanguage), and its use. You can do so by giving several quality examples, and making a class chart on what makes the imagery so valuable. Do not shy away from using poor examples of imagery; this will offer several ways of recognizing and writing good from bad.

13. Submitting the Final Draft for Preliminary Assignment:

When steps one and two of the peer review are complete, as well as the minilesson, the writer has two days to revise the poem and submit the final draft for a grade. Because this is an exercise to help the teacher gauge where students are at in terms of writing, it is not assessed as heavily as the following assignment, and only one draft is necessary. For the next assignment, however, it is important that the teacher conference with the student between drafts to offer advice for revision.

14. Next Step—Developing Their Own Poetry:

While you review and revise their Where I’m From poems, introduce the second step in becoming better poets by giving your students more freedom in their writing. Using one of the other two touchstone texts as a mentor, which are much more diverse in structure and content, students are to begin their final writing assignment by illustrating ideas, leads, outlines, and drafts in their writer’s notebooks during class. They are to draw from what they have learned about the poetry genre, metaphor, and class-developed charts in order to design a poem of their own. See Appendix G for this assignment.

Thus far, students have written very personal responses to poetry we’ve read, so they are able to refer back to their initial reactions to our touchstone texts using their writer’s notebooks. “They reread everything in their notebooks, but differently this time, because they read with poet’s eyes” (Bomer 128). They continue to revise and edit their drafts within their writer’s notebooks as you circle the class and conference with them individually, now more aware of their writing skills since you’ve read their first poem.

As with the first assignment, students give their first draft to a peer for review (see Appendix H for peer review checklist), but submit two drafts to me after revision—the first which I edit, revise, and return. The weight is heavier on this assignment than it was on the first. See Appendix I for a detailed rubric.

15. Listening to Each Other’s Final Works:

Listening is an extremely important component of the ELA classroom, particularly concerning poetry. The last step in the poetry genre study is reading what we have created with one another. Students have the option to do this aloud to
the class, through Podcast, or digital story. These means of creativity allow students who might feel uncomfortable reading something personal in front of the class to do so in an alternative manner. Reading and listening to a poem creates an entirely different effect than it would on paper.

16. Publishing:
Create an anthology of students’ polished poems for the class. Stress the importance of audience; this will bring out the most colorful work from your students. Make the anthology more personal by including artwork created by the students, pictures, and a page of your metalanguage.

Encourage your students to take publishing a step further by presenting several different writing opportunities or contests they could enter, by means of magazines, newspapers, or websites. Students may want to consider submitting their poems for publication to www.poetryforge.org, www.teenink.com, www.scholastic.com, or www.giggleoetry.com/poetrycontest/contests/html. Make it known that their work will go much further than the teacher’s hands.

17. Reflection of the Poetry Genre Study:
After completing the final assignment and publications, ask your students to free write for five to seven minutes about the genre study itself. Write the following questions on the Smartboard for them to address:

- How did you feel about poetry when we first started? (Feel free to refer to earlier quick writes.)
- What kinds of poetry resonated with you most? Has that changed?
- How did you feel about your “Where I’m From” poem?
- How did you begin writing your first original poem?
- What was the hardest part about writing poetry?
- What are you most pleased about in your writing journal for the poetry genre section?
- What surprised you about the poetry genre study?
- What did you dislike about this genre study?
- What would you continue to work on if you had more time?

Students are, of course, permitted to write about whatever else they wish to include in their reflection, and do not need to cover each and every bullet. This is simply a means of evaluation for you as the teacher, in order to tweak the genre study for future classes.

18. Literary Analysis Essay
Now that your students have completed the genre study, they will be able to produce a literary analysis essay on poetry. By analyzing the main components of the poetry that has been collected, read, written, and spoken, students can successfully recognize the elements that classify poetry as a genre. This genre study looks closely at structure, metaphor, and imagery. Because students have written and learned how to write an essay in your class, they will be able to use these three
components of poetry to discuss how a certain poet uses one or more of these elements to produce a quality poem. The New York State Regents Exam will most likely ask students to identify or use one or two literary elements in their critical lens essay, so it is therefore important that the teacher uses the poetry genre and literary analysis essay to examine these fundamentals.

19. Additional Sources for Educators:

-See Works Cited (page 11)


Lipsett, Laura R. (2001) "No Need to "Duck, Run and Hide": Young Adult Poetry that Taps into You" The ALAN Review, Volume 28, Number 3, p. 58.

Poetry Foundation <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

Teen Ink <http://teenink.com/>
Works Cited


Appendix A

Recommended List of Young Adult Poetry


Letcher, Mark, Ed. *Off the Shelves: Poetry and Verse Novels for Young Adults*. English Journal, v99 n3 p87-90 Jan 2010. (ERIC # EJ872816)


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### Appendix B

**Example List for Class Development:**

**“What Makes Poetry Resonate for Me?”**

* It describes a situation or experience similar to something from my own life or past

* It describes feelings like I have sometimes

* It describes feelings I’ve never had but that I could try on when I read the poem
* The language is simple and direct
* It’s the poet’s personal experience of something
* It’s funny
* The format is interesting or unusual or fits what the poem is about
* It has a good ending
* It’s honest
* It uses metaphors and other figurative language
* It puts images in my mind
* I can feel it, hear it, taste it, or smell it
* There’s a strong message, moral, or theme
* It uses repetition
* It uses rhyme in a cool way
* It uses (or doesn’t use) punctuation in a cool way
* It has mysterious language and deep meanings
* It tells a good story
* It makes me think, really *think*


**Appendix C**

(Class-developed chart)

**What Makes a Poem a Poem?**

Rhyme
You can see it
Appendix D

Using Mentor Text for Writing Poetry

_Where I’m From_ by Jacob Miller

**Rationale:**
Identity is a major issue adolescents face each day. Using _Where I’m From_ as a mentor text, students are to develop their own poem by sharing factors that shape their identity, such as experiences, hopes, and interests. Sharing these poems will help build classroom community and understanding, while exercising writing and reciting skills.

**Step One: Produce your own**
As the teacher, produce your own “Where I’m From” poem, ready to post on a Smartboard or overhead projector next to the original text.

**Step Two: Read original poem aloud**
Distribute copies of Miller’s poem to each student, and ask them to paste a copy of the original poem on a (left) page of their writer’s notebooks. Read the poem aloud, or ask a student to do so.

**Step Three: Quick write on meaning**
Students perform a quick write immediately following the poem being read aloud. They are to focus on how the poem made them feel, and what it reminded them of.

**Step Four: Discussion on craft**
Together, discuss the writing craft of the poem. What kind of lead does the author use? How does she progress through to the end? What kinds of elements or figurative language does she use?

**Step Five: Share your model poem**
Post your poem next to the original on the Smartboard. Read aloud, and explain the reasoning behind each line. This provokes student thinking. Encourage them to take notes on what they might write in that line, or mark up areas they liked most. Depending on the class, you might ask them to perform another quick write based on your poem (on the next left page).

**Step Six: Students write their own**
Students produce their own “Where I’m From” poem on the right side of their journal, next to the original, using techniques you and the original author modeled. Their poems should relate closely to the structure of the original poem, but do not need to follow it exactly. Each poem, however, should begin the same way.

**Step Seven: Share, discuss, and publish**
Students have one night to finish their poem, if they haven’t already done so in class. The next day, sit in a circle and share and discuss your poems. Students are encouraged to create Podcasts if they prefer not to read aloud (this is personal). Students are to post their poems on the class Wiki.

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**Appendix E**

**Peer Review Checklist:**

**Poetry**

“Where I’m From”

There are three parts to performing the poetry peer review: independent review, conference, and revision. Be sure to check and focus on each part of all three sections in order to receive full credit.
**Step One: Independent Review**

1.) Read the poem aloud to yourself twice, checking for fluency and reading for meaning.

2.) If any words seem out of place or interrupt the poem's flow, circle them.

3.) Does the poem follow the structure of the original? Circle areas that may not.

4.) Does the poem open you up to a deep sense of identity about your author? How could they improve?

5.) Give at least four comments, questions, or methods of constructive criticism.

**Step Two: Conference Workshop**

1.) Poet reads the poem aloud, allowing for reviewer to see where he or she uses emphasis on words, inflection, and volume. Reviewer marks these areas while listening.

2.) Discuss areas reviewer marked during his or her reading and the poet’s reading. Does the author use inflection and volume?

3.) Discuss whether the structure follows the original, and any improvements that could be made.

4.) Could the author go deeper in illustrating his or her identity? How so? Discuss.

5.) Discuss each comment, question, or method of constructive criticism reviewer listed.

**Step Three: Revision**

After discussing revisions and suggestions from your peer reviewer, consider any changes you want to make to your poem. What did you take away from the conference? Jot down notes in your writer’s journal, and begin developing a second (and final) draft to submit. You may want to meet again with your peer reviewer, or get a second opinion, after completing your second draft.
Appendix F

Minilesson:
Figurative Language using Metaphor

Rationale:
After circling the room and conferencing with students as they work on the “Where I’m From” poems, you notice they could use a little spark of figurative language to improve their craft. Since the original poem exhibits extensive use of metaphor, you may decide to do a minilesson on metaphor before students submit their second draft to you.

Step One:
Offer a standard definition of metaphor on the Smartboard, and then, in front of the class, put it into your own words. Ask the students to copy this into their writer’s notebooks, and ask them to put it into their own words and share with the class. On the Smartboard, continue to develop a class chart of our metalanguage for metaphor.

Step Two:
Give three to five examples of two sentences; one with metaphor and one without. Some examples may be listed as so:
- The air is stuffy.
  *The air is a thick, slow moving syrup.*
- The moon lights up the sky.
  *The moon is a silver disc in the night sky.*
- She has light eyes.
  *Her eyes are glistening pools of blue.*

Relating to “Where I’m From”:
- I like spaghetti.
  *I am Grandma’s homemade pasta sauce.*
- The New York Yankees are my favorite baseball team.
- *I am Derek Jeter, I am the legendary New York Yankees.*

Step Three:
Allow students to come up with their own list of 5-7 examples for the remainder of the period. At least two examples should relate to “Where I’m From.” Those who do not come up with at least five may do so for homework.
Appendix G

Producing a Profound, Powerful, Prominent Poem

ASSIGNMENT

Your Task: After reading several poems of all shapes and sizes, you have developed an outstanding sense of the poetry genre itself. Now it’s your turn to create your own work of art.

Using our touchstone texts and what we have learned about figurative language, capture your readers with a personal poem that will be published in our class anthology, the Wiki, and will be entered into writing contests for a magazine, newspaper, or website of your choice.

Objective: Writing this poem will allow you the opportunity to create your own personalized prose, taking risks and venturing off the path we learned while writing “Where I’m From.” This is your chance to truly express yourself your own style. Your poem should reflect your understanding of the poetry genre, and specifically, the use of metaphor.

Guidelines Checklist:
• No less than five lines, no more than 50
• Fits into the class definition of poetry as a genre (in terms of structure, language, voice, sound, etc.)
• Uses techniques from class chart, “What Makes Poetry Resonate with Me?”
• Exhibits qualities found on our class “Metalanguage” chart
• Typed

Feel free to spice your poem up a bit with a creative illustration or photo!

Deadlines:
Draft 1 (15 points): ________________
Peer Review (10 points): ____________
Draft 2 (25 points): ________________
Draft 3 (50 points): ________________
**Assessment:** See rubric and peer review checklist for this assignment (separate handouts).

**Appendix H**

**Producing a Profound, Powerful, Prominent Poem**

**PEER REVIEW CHECKLIST**

There are three parts to performing the poetry peer review: independent review, conference, and revision. Be sure to check and focus on each part of all three sections in order to receive full credit.

**Step One:**

**Independent Review**

1. Read the poem aloud to yourself twice, checking for fluency and reading for meaning.

2. Is the poem in the first person? Does the poet exhibit unique voice? How could they improve?

3. Does the poem use at least three effective metaphors? Circle.

4. Does the poem open you up to a deeper sense of identity about your author? How could he or she improve?


6. Give at least four comments, questions, or methods of constructive criticism.

**Step Two:**

**Conference Workshop**

1. Poet reads the poem aloud, allowing for reviewer to see where he or she uses emphasis on words, inflection, and volume. Reviewer marks these areas while listening. Discuss.

2. Discuss the author’s use of techniques and qualities from class charts.

3. Discuss the reviewer’s suggestions for improvements.

4. Could the author go deeper in illustrating his or her identity? How so? Discuss.

5. Discuss each comment, question, or method of constructive criticism reviewer listed.

**Step Three:**

**Revision**

After discussing revisions and suggestions from your peer reviewer, consider any changes you want to make to your poem. What did you take away from the
conference? Jot down notes in your writer's journal, and begin developing an improved second draft to submit to Miss Atkins for final revision.