

Genre Study:  
Free Verse Poetry

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“You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.”  
~Galileo

Begin with a discussion. Ever had a moment that bursts with such joy that you wished you could capture the feeling in a bottle and keep it for all time? Or a memory that you don't quite understand and would like to explore? Is there a person, place or thing that made such an impact on your life that you would like to express your gratitude or your resentment? Poetry is a creative forum for expressing these thoughts.

### **About Genre Study**

Most people define “genre” as a type or category of text. If we start with a broad genre such as fiction, we separate it into sub-genres of short fiction and the novel. The genre can be further narrowed down into subcategories like science fiction, fantasy or historical fiction. The purpose of genre study is “to demonstrate that if we understand the unique characteristics of these genres...then we can give more productive assignments and evaluate students writing more insightfully” (Cooper 24).

The following study will deal with the genre of Free Verse poetry. Free Verse is defined as a term loosely used to define rhymed or unrhymed verse made free of conventional and traditional limitations and restrictions in regard to metrical structure. Free Verse is a literal translation of the French *vers libre*, which originated in late 19th-century France among poets, such as Arthur Rimbaud and Jules Laforgue, who sought to free poetry from metrical regularity.

The purpose is to introduce students to the act of writing poetry as a form of expression before they are asked to mold their expression to fit a certain poetic style or form, such as a sonnet or a sestina. The study will address three out of four New York State standards for Grade 12: 2. Students will read, write, listen and speak for literary response and expression. 3. Students will read, write, listen and speak for critical analysis and evaluation, 4. Students will read, write, listen and speak for social interaction. Reading and writing poetry is a requirement specifically stated under standards two and three. This study follows the guidelines set up by experts and researchers in the teaching of English.

### **Immersion**

What is a poem? This is a good question to ask students at the beginning of a genre study on poetry. Students' answers will serve as a barometer in telling you how much experience they have had with creative writing. Write the answers on the board. Explain that we will start by studying non-rhyming free verse poetry, which has no set form. Next, ask them: Why do we write poetry? Write these reasons on the board as well. Also write the words emotion, image and music on the board. Tell the class that these are known as the three pillars of poetry (Fletcher 10). Poet Emily Dickinson explains the personal nature of poetry by famously saying, “I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off.” Ask them what they think about these definitions and how they relate to each other.

Now, read or listen to poems that will resonate with the students. The selection does not have to be kid-friendly, poems that are too childish may work against you. Choose a poem about adolescence, such as “Hanging Fire” by Audre Lorde and

something sports-related like “x pug” by Charles Bukowski (See Appendix G). These are called exemplary texts. They are meant help students understand the genre and also inspire students to write their own. Georgia Heard says, “Read poems that will act as a key to open doors to their feelings, their imaginations and their voices” (3). Pass out copies of the chosen poems so students can follow along.

Read “The Fury of Overshoes” by Anne Sexton and “Jet” by Tony Hoagland aloud (See Appendix G). Read slowly. Try to capture the mood of the poem. Pause for white spaces and be mindful of line breaks. To give the reading a natural effect, pretend you are telling the poem to a friend in an intimate setting, like a coffee shop. Divide students into groups. Pass out a handout (Appendix A) with two types of questions for each poem:

Type 1: response and interpretation (content, emotion and audience)

Type 2: writer’s craft (conventions, tools, word choice, rhythm)

Synthesize and discuss your answers. Students will probably mention or allude to imagery. Explain that imagery is an appeal to the five senses: something you can taste, feel, see, hear or smell. Images make the poem full, real and immediate. An important feature of good poetry is the use of precise or idiosyncratic words. Make sure that you or the students touch on this technique. Ask them again, what is poetry? Use your results to define the genre, and distribute a handout (Appendix B) that lists some basic features of poetry: imagery, figurative language, emotion, rhythm, precise or idiosyncratic word choice.

To really immerse your students, print out copies of your favorite poems and hang them around the room. Encourage your students to do the same. Choose poems from different sources—include poems written by you and former students. The more they are surrounded by physical poems, the more likely they are to find poetry in their everyday surroundings, which will help with inspiration. Teach them that poetry is everywhere, from songs to nature to advertising. They only have to train their senses to pick up on the signals.

### **Writer’s Notebook**

The next step is to pass out a writer’s notebooks that the students may decorate themselves. The writer’s notebook is a place to record ideas that get the creative juices flowing. Encourage them to jot down personal memories, observations or quotes that they would like to explore. They can use this book to examine their “writing territories,” a term Nancie Atwell uses to describe a list of interests, concerns and areas of expertise. Teachers should keep a writing notebook too. When teachers write alongside their students it helps to build confidence and enthusiasm. Share some of your own writing territories with your students to model the concept. Here are a few of Atwell’s writing territories from book *In the Middle*:

- My dog, Books, who died this year at age sixteen
- Songs that speak to me and for me in pop music
- Roman Catholic childhood—fainting at the Communion rail; picking a confirmation name; scapular medals; rosaries as jewelry. (121)

### **Modeling**

Pull one of your entries from your notebook that focuses on an image or a feeling. Tell the story behind it. Why did you write it down? Show how you might turn it into a

poem and ask for the students' input. List words and feelings that you associate with the topic. Describe an object or create an image to describe a feeling. Play with the structure.

For example, an entry in my writer's notebook reads: "dying jade plant, soggy roots." I would write this on the board and tell the class why this plant matters to me, including my memory of the day I purchased it and how it survived for 3 years despite my neglect. I might mention that Jade plants thrive on underwatering. I would explain why I think it died and how I feel responsible for its demise. These feelings are examples of emotion in poetry.

Then I would ask the class, what are other things that are soggy? Can you think of some colorful, thought-provoking words or phrases about plants? Once there are some words, phrases and comparisons on the board, ask students for suggestions about organizing ideas. The resulting poem does not have to be about the original idea. Use this lesson to demonstrate where ideas come from and how they evolve.

### **Mini-lesson on simile and metaphor**

Present a poem with vivid imagery such as "Polliwogs" by Kristine O'Connell George (See Appendix G). Pass out copies and read the poem to the class. Ask the students to identify comparisons that are unexpected or unpredictable. This is most often achieved through literary elements such as simile or metaphor. Explanations of simile or metaphor should have organic origin. They should be used as tools of expression—to convey feelings through an image. Figurative language is used to "transform the banal into the poetic" (Heard, 67). Don't just assign students to write a poem using "like" or "as". Ask them to describe an object as though they are seeing it for the first time.

Read "A Dog Has Died" by Pablo Neruda (See Appendix G). Ask them to write an in class reader response in their notebooks. A Reader Response is a personal reaction to a text. Students should focus on exploring thoughts or memories that come to mind. If they were to write a poem inspired by Neruda's, what would they write about?

Students can break into groups to and complete the following tasks (you will need to supply colored pencils): 1. Underline unexpected comparisons. 2. Underline similes in green and metaphors in blue. 3. Describe the mood of the poem. How does it make you feel? 4. Encourage them to share their personal connections to the poem, using their reader responses as a starting point for discussion. As a class, discuss the use of figurative language in the poem. How does it contribute to the description of the dog?

Slowly let the students take the reigns. Ask the students to bring in a poem or song lyrics that speak to them and read it to the class. They can search poetry websites like poets.org by topic, if they don't know where to look. Make *Poetry Magazine* and anthologies such as *The Invisible Ladder: An Anthology of Contemporary American Poems for Young Readers* available in the classroom. Before the readings, practice vocal exercises like reciting "The lips the tip of the tongue the teeth" for diction. Then, ask them why they chose the selection. The student should read the poem or song slowly and pay close attention to pronunciation. This may be difficult for some shy students. It makes them feel good if everyone claps after their reading.

### **Mini-lesson on personification**

As students prepare their first drafts for peer review, pass out a copy of Emily Dickinson's poem about a train (See Appendix G) without the heading. Read the poem

while the class follows along. Students will form groups and talk about the features of the poem. Let them guess what the poem is about. Students will use their definitions handout (Appendix B) to identify which element is most prominent in the poem (personification). Ask them “how do we know it is about a train? How do you think the poem would look without personification?” Read teen writer Nelle Crewkerne’s “Personification be Dead,” (Appendix G). Explain that some poems, like Dickinson’s and Crewkerne’s, hinge on an extended literary element, such as personification, and some poems only use it in one line (ex. “My skin has betrayed me,” Lorde).

### **Riddle Game**

As a class, make a list of active or precise verbs on the board (juggle, spit, creak...). Break the class into groups for an activity. Write ten nouns on slips of paper, fold them and put them in a bowl (for example, beach, plane, cloud, fire, lightning, mountain, mud, snow, soap...). Each group will choose one. Provide these directions: As a group, write a poem describing your noun using personification and metaphor or simile. Use the verbs on the board for ideas. Your classmates will have to guess your noun based on your poem, so present clues but don’t give away the answer. Provide an example: If the inanimate object is the sun and a verb from the list is “scribble,” put them together to say “I scribble my name across the sky.” On the overhead, display a model poem describing the word “star.”

Glittering specks  
illuminate the darkness;  
Each one shines like a tiny diamond.  
Some huddle together in clusters;  
others stand alone.  
Still others shoot through the sky  
like arrows.

In the example, “huddle” is the active verb that personifies the noun.

### **Assignment**

By now, students should be ready to write their own poems. Distribute assignment and accompanying rubric (Appendices C and D). The rubric is derived from the definition handout (Appendix B) from the beginning of the unit. The poem must include one image and at least one of metaphor or simile and one example of personification. Your poem should be no less than 10 lines. Refer to Appendices C and D for the formal assignment and rubric.

Give the class helpful directions: Avoid pitfalls to creativity like beginning with a title. Begin with a feeling or an image. Look through your writer’s notebooks for ideas. Imitate the style of one of your favorite poems. Write about something that concerns you, something that confuses you or something that happened to you. If we are lucky, the poem writes itself. Let it. Be honest. Do not censor yourself. Poetry is a process. Remember, there will be plenty of time to revise. Refer to the rubric throughout the writing process.

## **Revision**

The next day, pass out questions for peer review (See Appendix E) that refer to the definition handout (Appendix B) on the features and form of Free Verse poetry. It can be difficult to notice areas of improvement in your own work. Ask the students to read each other's poems out loud to each other for a different perspective. They should listen for places where the poem "clanks," and the rhythm is off balance (Heard 74).

Revision is a time to experiment with different words and sounds. Instruct your students to pick out clanks, clichés, and overused or boring words in their own poems and brainstorm replacement words together. On the peer review sheet, don't forget to include directions to pick out words in each other's poems that sing, or contribute to the energy of the poem. They should concentrate on strong, interesting words. If a poem is too wordy it takes away from those key words that really "make" the poem. Poetry is "condensed prose."

Schedule a conference with each student to talk about his or her poem. This is a chance for you to help them achieve their own vision of their poem, not to re-write their poem according to your vision. Start by inquiring about the impetus of the poem: What inspired you write it? Why the topic important you? Then read the poem aloud. Ask two or more of the following questions:

Does it feel complete?

How does it sound?

Do you have a favorite part?

Least favorite?

Could you try addressing the poem to a parent or friend to add authenticity?

If the poem seems unfocused, you may advise them to go back to their original thought and explain it in more detail.

The revision process I have laid out is very intense and must be treated delicately. Kristin O'Connell George warns not to over-edit and "dampen or extinguish the thought that originally sparked the poem"(Fletcher 45). Students may tire of poetry in general if you spend too much time picking apart each individual line of one poem. Or they may be satisfied with their poem the way it is. If you sense frustration, allow them to move on and begin another poem. They should think of each poem as a "try."

## **Mini-lesson on line breaks and white space**

Pass out copies of "Poem" by William Carlos Williams written in prose form to illustrate the impact of line breaks and white space. Ignore the pauses and read straight through without stopping:" As the cat climbed over the empty jam closet first the right forefoot carefully then the hind stepped into the pit of the empty flowerpot." Ask students to rewrite it capturing a cat's stealthy movement in the line breaks. Give them a chance to explain their editing choices. Then present the poem in its original form:

## **Poem**

As the cat  
climbed over

the empty  
jam closet

first the right  
forefoot  
carefully  
then the hind

stepped into  
the pit  
of the empty  
flowerpot.

Read the poem using the appropriate pauses. Explain how the words capture the cat's movement, creeping around the room and into the flowerpot. Discuss the difference between the two readings.

Every line break has a purpose. Write these two functions of line breaks on the board. They can be used to create a pause and affect the rhythm of the poem. Rhythm is one of the terms discussed in Appendix B. Allow students to play with line breaks and white space in their own poems. One helpful editing technique is to read the poem aloud and listen for the natural pauses.

Students may assume that the format of the poem is what makes it a poem. For example, a poem is not a story. Both poems and stories use the same literary elements; what separates them is the focus. Stories are chronological while poems are concerned with specifics. Here is a story that I wrote, disguised as a poem:

On Sunday  
I went to the farmer's market  
The flowers and  
Broccoli were displayed in  
Bunches next to the  
"Apples! Get your apples!  
5 for a dollar!"  
I bought some  
And they were so good  
I know because  
I ate one in the car  
In a jar  
on the way  
To grandma's house  
And then she ate a mouse  
An apple too  
I love the farmer's market

There are two problems with this poem. It is more a story than a poem because it follows a narrative: first, I went to the market, then, I ate an apple, and then, I went to

grandma's house. The other problem is that the rhymes do not fit. Poetry does not have to rhyme to be poetry. If the rhymes do not make sense, they can actually detract from the poem.

To fix the poem, I would cut the last 10 lines to focus only on the scene at the farmer's market. After that, the imagery of vegetables falls apart and we are left with only a narrative and nonsensical rhymes. Unless the students are writing an epic or a ballad, linear storytelling is a hindrance to other poetic elements. If this seems to be the case, ask them to focus on one image instead of a series.

### **Publish**

Put together class poetry anthology with illustrations by the students. Make one for each student to keep and refer to for future inspiration. Keep one in the classroom so you have student examples for next year.

### **Transition**

Now that your students have a firm grasp on poetry, you can use it in your next assignment, the Literary Analysis essay (See Appendix F). For the sake of simplification, present three definitions of irony:

1. the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning: *the irony of her reply, "How nice!" when I said I had to work all weekend.*
2. an outcome of events contrary to what was, or might have been, expected.
3. an objectively or humorously sardonic or sarcastic utterance, disposition, quality, etc.

Read the poem "Art Class" by Elizabeth Bartlett (See Appendix G). Ask, what does the author say? What does she really mean? The poem is ironic because the conveyed meaning is opposite of the literal meaning.

To further drive home the point, read "Problems with Hurricanes" by Victor Hernandez Cruz. Definitions 2 and 3 apply to this poem (See Appendix G). We *expect* the campesino (or farmer) to say that hurricanes themselves are deadly, not flying mangoes and other "beautiful sweet things." One would also expect a poem about hurricanes to be serious and not funny, but there is a humorous quality to the poem.

### **Reflect**

Take some time to let students step back on writing process and what they have learned. Compare first drafts with final drafts so they can revisit the transformations that occurred during the genre study. Ask students to write a short paragraph on whether they think the genre study was useful and what might be done differently. Make note yourself of what went well and what you would like to change. Finally, congratulate yourself for encouraging student expression and interaction.



**Appendix A**  
**Group Discussion Questions**

1. “Jet” by Tony Hoagland

**Response and Interpretation**

How does the poem make you feel? Why?

Who is the speaker

Who is the audience

What is the poem about

**Writer’s Craft**

What are some conventions or tools the author uses?

What types of words do they choose?

Does the poem have rhythm? Why or why not?

2. “The Fury of Overshoes” by Anne Sexton

**Response and Interpretation**

How does the poem make you feel? Why?

Who is the speaker

Who is the audience

What is the poem about

**Writer’s Craft**

What are some conventions or tools the author uses?

What types of words do they choose?

Does the poem have rhythm? Why or why not?

## **Appendix B**

### **Features of Free Verse Handout**

Some basic features of poetry are:

**Imagery**-An appeal to one or more of the five senses (sight, touch, hearing, taste, smell)

Ex. "Under your bed  
sat the wolf  
and he made a shadow  
when cars passed by  
at night."

#### **Figurative language**

Whenever you describe something by comparing it with something else, you are using figurative language. There are many forms of figurative language, we will be concentrating on three:

##### **Simile**

A simile uses the words "like" or "as" to compare one object or idea with another to suggest they are alike.  
Example: "tadpoles are *like* chubby commas"

##### **Metaphor**

The metaphor states a fact or draws a verbal picture by the use of comparison.  
Example: "tadpoles *are* chubby commas"

##### **Personification**

A figure of speech in which human characteristics are given to an animal or an object. Example: "The crickets plug in their appliances"

**Emotion**-An appeal to the reader's feelings

**Rhythm**- Gives the poem a musical quality without necessarily rhyming. Line breaks are a good tool for creating rhythm.

Ex. "As the cat  
climbed over  
the empty  
jam closet"

**Word Choice**- poetic language is precise or idiosyncratic. Ex. "I like to see it lap the miles." "Lap" is a more precise verb than "go around" or even "circle."

## **Appendix C**

### **Poetry Assignment**

Write a poem about a topic of your choice. Your poem should:

- Be atleast 10 lines
- Include atleast one image
- Include an example of metaphor or simile
- Include an example of personification
- Use rhythm and line breaks to ensure it sounds and looks like a poem

Day 1: Begin writing poem in class

Day 2: Draft One Due, Peer Review

Day 3: Revise, Draft Two Due

Day 4: Conference, Revise

Day 5: Submit Final Copy and Publish

Breakdown of Credit:

First Draft: 20 points

Review of Peer's poem: 10 points

Second Draft: 20 points

Final Draft: 50 points

For each deadline you miss, you will lose 10 points off of your total.

## Appendix D Poetry Assignment Rubric

Categories	4 Exceptional	3 Strong	2 Capable	1 Developing
Imagery	The imagery is so vivid that it paints a picture with words, thus indicating a clear understanding of imagery.	The imagery is applied to standard words or phrases, but it is not very vivid. Creative word choices are lacking.	There is evidence of imagery, but it is randomly applied, thus indicating lack of clear understanding	There is no evidence of imagery in the poem; no evidence of the understanding of imagery
Rhythm (to what extent does the poem "sing"?)	The rhythm of the poem is easily recognized and clearly consistent with the content	The rhythm of the poem is easily recognized, but does not make sense with the content	There appears to be rhythm to the poem, but it is somewhat inconsistent	There is no recognizable rhythm to the poem
Figurative Language	Full understanding and application of metaphorical language is evident.	Metaphors are present, but there is obvious confusion between metaphors and similes.	Some language appears as if it was intended to be a metaphor, thus indicating understanding of definition. However, the metaphors are either not fully developed, or appear as similes.	There are no metaphors in the poem, thus indicating a lack of understanding about metaphors
Line breaks	The poem's line and word spacing is creative, purposeful, and enhances the meaning of the poem	Some spacing seems purposeful and creative, other spacing seems accidental or random	The text is formatted in poem "form", but the spacing does not seem purposeful	The poem looks like prose; no clear sense of the significance of spacing
Personification	Full understanding and application of personification is evident	Personification is present but does not make sense	Some language appears as if it was intended to be personification, thus indicating understanding of definition.	There are no attempts at personification, thus indicating a lack of understanding about personification.

**Appendix E**  
**Peer Review Questions**

1. Describe the use of imagery in the poem. How could the image/s be more vivid or sharp?
2. Does the poem have rhythm, does it sound like poetry?
3. Does the poem include a simile or a metaphor? If so, how could the comparison become more clear? If not, suggest one.
4. Read the poem aloud. Do the line breaks fit? Where would you add or take out line breaks?
5. Does the poem include an example of personification? If not, suggest one.
6. Point out examples of poetic language (colorful or though provoking words or phrases), where could more poetic language be inserted?

## Appendix F

### Literature Analysis Essay

**Manifest Destiny:** The belief or doctrine, held chiefly in the middle and latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that it was the destiny of the U.S. to expand its territory over the whole of North America and to extend and enhance its political, social and economic influence. For more background, read John O’Sullivan’s essay on *Manifest Destiny*.

**Irony:** The use of words to convey meaning that is the opposite of the literal meaning; to say one thing and mean another.

Read “Pioneers, O’Pioneers” by Walt Whitman  
Watch the Levi’s “Go Forth” ad from 2009 (in class)

1. Do you think Whitman agrees with the idea of Manifest Destiny or could this poem be interpreted as verbal irony? Do you think Whitman meant what he said? Why or why not? Use quotes from the poem to support your stance.

2. Based on your response to the first question, do you think the Levi’s ad is an accurate portrayal of the poem? Why or why not?

Guidelines for essay...

- minimum 3-4 pages, double spaced, 12 pt font, 1” margins
- must demonstrate understanding of verbal irony
- must include atleast two quotes from the poem

Day 1: Read, watch and discuss the three texts. Review “verbal irony.”

Day 2: Begin writing First Draft

Day 3: Continue

Day 4: Continue

Day 5: First Draft Due, Peer Review in class

Day 6: Revise

Day 7: Revised Draft Due

Day 8: Revise for grammar and mechanics

Day 9: Final Draft Due

Day 10: Reflection

Day 11: Publish to National Gallery of Writing

Breakdown of Credit:

First Draft: 20 points

Review of Peer’s poem: 10 points

Second Draft: 20 points

Final Draft: 50 points

For each deadline you miss, you will lose 10 points off of your total.

## Appendix G

### Hanging Fire

AUDRE LORDE

I am fourteen  
and my skin has betrayed me  
the boy I cannot live without  
still sucks his tumb  
in secret  
how come my knees are  
always so ashy  
what if I die  
before the morning comes  
and momma's in the bedroom  
with the door closed.

I have to learn how to dance  
in time for the next party  
my room is too small for me  
suppose I de before graduation  
they will sing sad melodies  
but finally  
tell the truth aout me  
There is nothing I want to do  
and too much  
that has to be done  
and momma's in the bedroom  
with the door closed.

Nobody even stops to think  
about my side of it  
I should have been on Math Team  
my marks were better than his  
why do I have to be  
the one  
wearing braces  
I have nothing to wear tomorrow  
will I live long enough  
to grow up  
and momma's in the bedroom  
with the door closed.

## Jet

TONY HOAGLAND

Sometimes I wish I were still out  
on the back porch, drinking jet fuel  
with the boys, getting louder and louder  
as the empty cans drop out of our paws  
like booster rockets falling back to Earth

and we soar up into the summer stars.  
Summer. The big sky river rushes overhead,  
bearing asteroids and mist, blind fish  
and old space suits with skeletons inside.  
On Earth, men celebrate their hairiness,

and it is good, a way of letting life  
out of the box, uncapping the bottle  
to let the effervescence gush  
through the narrow, usually constricted neck.

And now the crickets plug in their appliances  
in unison, and then the fireflies flash  
dots and dashes in the grass, like punctuation  
for the labyrinthine, untrue tales of sex  
someone is telling in the dark, though

no one really hears. We gaze into the night  
as if remembering the bright unbroken planet  
we once came from,  
to which we will never  
be permitted to return.

We are amazed how hurt we are.  
We would give anything for what we have.



The Fury of Overshoes  
ANNE SEXTON

They sit in a row  
outside the kindergarten,  
black, red, brown, all  
with those brass buckles.  
Remember when you couldn't  
buckle your own  
overshoe  
or tie your own  
overshoe  
or tie your own shoe  
or cut your own meat  
and the tears  
running down like mud  
because you fell off your  
tricycle?  
Remember, big fish,  
when you couldn't swim  
and simply slipped under  
like a stone frog?  
The world wasn't  
yours.  
It belonged to  
the big people.  
Under your bed  
sat the wolf  
and he made a shadow  
when cars passed by  
at night.  
They made you give up  
your nightlight  
and your teddy  
and your thumb.

Oh overshoes,  
don't you  
remember me,  
pushing you up and down  
in the winter snow?  
Oh thumb,  
I want a drink,  
it is dark,  
where are the big people,  
when will I get there,  
taking giant steps  
all day,  
each day  
and thinking  
nothing of it?

### **Polliwogs**

BY KRISTINE O'CONNELL GEORGE

Come see  
What I found!  
Chubby commas,  
Mouths Round  
Plump babies,  
Stubby as toes.  
Polliwogs!  
Tadpoles!  
Come see  
What I found!  
Frogs-in-waiting –  
Huddled in puddles,  
Snuggled in mud.

### **A Dog Has Died**

PABLO NERUDA

My dog has died.  
I buried him in the garden  
next to a rusted old machine.

Some day I'll join him right there,

but now he's gone with his shaggy coat,  
his bad manners and his cold nose,  
and I, the materialist, who never believed  
in any promised heaven in the sky  
for any human being,  
I believe in a heaven I'll never enter.  
Yes, I believe in a heaven for all dogdom  
where my dog waits for my arrival  
waving his fan-like tail in friendship.

Ai, I'll not speak of sadness here on earth,  
of having lost a companion  
who was never servile.  
His friendship for me, like that of a porcupine  
withholding its authority,  
was the friendship of a star, aloof,  
with no more intimacy than was called for,  
with no exaggerations:  
he never climbed all over my clothes  
filling me full of his hair or his mange,  
he never rubbed up against my knee  
like other dogs obsessed with sex.

No, my dog used to gaze at me,  
paying me the attention I need,  
the attention required  
to make a vain person like me understand  
that, being a dog, he was wasting time,  
but, with those eyes so much purer than mine,  
he'd keep on gazing at me  
with a look that reserved for me alone  
all his sweet and shaggy life,  
always near me, never troubling me,  
and asking nothing.

Ai, how many times have I envied his tail  
as we walked together on the shores of the sea  
in the lonely winter of Isla Negra  
where the wintering birds filled the sky  
and my hairy dog was jumping about  
full of the voltage of the sea's movement:  
my wandering dog, sniffing away  
with his golden tail held high,  
face to face with the ocean's spray.

Joyful, joyful, joyful,

as only dogs know how to be happy  
with only the autonomy  
of their shameless spirit.

There are no good-byes for my dog who has died,  
and we don't now and never did lie to each other.

So now he's gone and I buried him,  
and that's all there is to it.

(Train)

EMILY DICKINSON

I like to see it lap the miles,  
And lick the valleys up,  
And stop to feed itself at tanks;  
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,  
And, supercilious, peer  
In shanties by the sides of roads;  
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,

Complaining all the while  
In horrid, hooting stanza;  
Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;  
Then, punctual as a start its own,  
Stop-docile and omnipotent-  
A stable door.

## **Personification be Dead**

NELLE CREWKERNE

Personification be dead.

“Win!” Expectation screams loud,  
“Climb high, Fight.”  
“Don't stop until failure is dead!”

“Think,” Intelligence announces,  
“Study the outcome, be wise.”  
“Ignore conscience's ramblings!”

“Hold on tight,” Love chants.  
“Never give up, I am always here.”  
“Hatred is a liar.”

“Hide!” Fear trembles.  
“Never trust, never look back.”  
“Bravery is dangerous!”

“STOP!” Authority yells.  
“Personification be dead.”

## **Art Class**

ELIZABETH BARTLETT

There is much that should be altered here.  
The cloud in the left-hand corner  
Is not really necessary.  
The two people who stand by the door  
Of the farm look far too homely,  
I would transfer them to the fields  
With bent and aching backs,  
Hoing turnips, but not picking strawberries,

I think. Strawberries smack of decadence,  
Bringing marquees, or debutantes,  
Or even fetes to mind.  
The tree which stands behind the house  
Is too stark, so why not make it two.  
And remove the birds.  
Yes, cut out the ornithology.  
People see too much of them anyway;  
Two wings, a beak, legs like an undercarriage.  
Give me your brush,  
And I will paint them out, so that it will be  
As if they had never dotted your canvas.  
The light's not bad, not bad at all,  
But it isn't the kind of light we like to see  
In paintings nowadays. Rather somber,  
I thought, as if the two lonely figures  
In the field might soon pack up  
And go home for tea.  
This is the trouble with your work, you see:  
It seems to have a life of its own.  
For myself, I would have them drinking wine,  
And lift the whole lot from Wales to Brittany.

### **Problems with Hurricanes**

VICTOR HERNANDEZ CRUZ

A campesino\* looked at the air  
And told me:  
With hurricanes it's not the wind  
or the noise or the water.  
I'll tell you he said:  
it's the mangoes, avocados  
Green plantains and bananas  
flying into town like projectiles.  
How would your family  
feel if they had to tell  
The generations that you  
got killed by a flying  
Banana.  
Death by drowning has honor  
If the wind picked you up  
and slammed you  
Against a mountain boulder  
This would not carry shame  
But

to suffer a mango smashing  
Your skull  
or a plantain hitting your  
Temple at 70 miles per hour  
is the ultimate disgrace.  
The campesino takes off his hat—  
As a sign of respect  
toward the fury of the wind  
And says:  
Don't worry about the noise  
Don't worry about the water  
Don't worry about the wind—  
If you are going out  
beware of mangoes  
And all such beautiful  
sweet things.

Others...

Maya Angelou- "Still I Rise"  
Margaret Atwood- "Bored"  
Charles Bukowski- "These Things", "Defining The Magic"  
Billy Collins- "Introduction to poetry"  
Victor Hernandez Cruz- "Problems with Hurricanes"  
e.e. cummings- "in just"  
Nikki Giovanni- "My First Memory (of Librarians)"  
Theodore Roethke- "My Papa's Waltz"  
Joy Harjo- "Insomnia and the Seven Steps to Grace"  
Thomas James- "Dragging the Lake"  
Leslie Marmon Silko- "Prayer to the Pacific"  
Pablo Neruda- "Ode to the Artichoke"  
Margaret J. Reston- "What I Could Never Tell My Mother" (Teen Writer)  
Wallace Stevens- "13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "The Snowman," "Two Pears"  
Marina Tsvetayeva- "The Mountain Was Mourning"

## Appendix H

Supplementary text and “Pioneers O’ Pioneers”

Title: Manifest Destiny

Author: John O'Sullivan

Year Published: 1839

### John L. O'Sullivan on *Manifest Destiny*, 1839

The American people having derived their origin from many other nations, and the Declaration of National Independence being entirely based on the great principle of human equality, these facts demonstrate at once our disconnected position as regards any other nation; that we have, in reality, but little connection with the past history of any of them, and still less with all antiquity, its glories, or its crimes. On the contrary, our national birth was the beginning of a new history, the formation and progress of an untried political system, which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only; and so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity.

It is so destined, because the principle upon which a nation is organized fixes its destiny, and that of equality is perfect, is universal. It presides in all the operations of the physical world, and it is also the conscious law of the soul -- the self-evident dictates of morality, which accurately defines the duty of man to man, and consequently man's rights as man. Besides, the truthful annals of any nation furnish abundant evidence, that its happiness, its greatness, its duration, were always proportionate to the democratic equality in its system of government. . . .

What friend of human liberty, civilization, and refinement, can cast his view over the past history of the monarchies and aristocracies of antiquity, and not deplore that they ever existed? What philanthropist can contemplate the oppressions, the cruelties, and injustice inflicted by them on the masses of mankind, and not turn with moral horror from the retrospect?

America is destined for better deeds. It is our unparalleled glory that we have no reminiscences of battle fields, but in defence of humanity, of the oppressed of all nations, of the rights of conscience, the rights of personal enfranchisement. Our annals describe no scenes of horrid carnage, where men were led on by hundreds of thousands to slay one another, dupes and victims to emperors, kings, nobles, demons in the human form called heroes. We have had patriots to defend our homes, our liberties, but no aspirants to crowns or thrones; nor have the American people ever suffered themselves to be led on by wicked ambition to depopulate the land, to spread desolation far and wide, that a human being might be placed on a seat of supremacy.



We have no interest in the scenes of antiquity, only as lessons of avoidance of nearly all their examples. The expansive future is our arena, and for our history. We are entering on its untrodden space, with the truths of God in our minds, beneficent objects in our hearts, and with a clear conscience unsullied by the past. We are the nation of human progress, and who will, what can, set limits to our onward march? Providence is with us, and no earthly power can. We point to the everlasting truth on the first page of our national declaration, and we proclaim to the millions of other lands, that "the gates of hell" -- the powers of aristocracy and monarchy -- "shall not prevail against it."

The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High -- the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere -- its roof the firmament of the star-studded heavens, and its congregation an Union of many Republics, comprising hundreds of happy millions, calling, owning no man master, but governed by God's natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood -- of "peace and good will amongst men." . . .

Yes, we are the nation of progress, of individual freedom, of universal enfranchisement. Equality of rights is the cynosure of our union of States, the grand exemplar of the correlative equality of individuals; and while truth sheds its effulgence, we cannot retrograde, without dissolving the one and subverting the other. We must onward to the fulfilment of our mission -- to the entire development of the principle of our organization -- freedom of conscience, freedom of person, freedom of trade and business pursuits, universality of freedom and equality. This is our high destiny, and in nature's eternal, inevitable decree of cause and effect we must accomplish it. All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man -- the immutable truth and beneficence of God. For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen; and her high example shall smite unto death the tyranny of kings, hierarchs, and oligarchs, and carry the glad tidings of peace and good will where myriads now endure an existence scarcely more enviable than that of beasts of the field. Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be *the great nation* of futurity?

**Pioneers! O Pioneers!**

**BY WALT WHITMAN**

**1819-1892**

Come my tan-faced children,  
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,  
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,

We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,  
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,  
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,  
Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?  
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond the seas?  
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,  
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,  
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We detachments steady throwing,  
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,  
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,  
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the mines within,  
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,  
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the high plateaus,  
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail we come,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,  
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the continental  
blood intervein'd,  
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all the Northern,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless restless race!  
O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender love for all!  
O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Raise the mighty mother mistress,

Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mistress,  
(bend your heads all,)  
Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive, weapon'd mistress,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children, resolute children,  
By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or falter,  
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us urging,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks,  
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead quickly fill'd,  
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!  
Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?  
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is fill'd.  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the world,  
Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement beat,  
Holding single or together, steady moving to the front, all for us,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,  
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,  
All the seamen and the landsmen, all the masters with their slaves,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent lovers,  
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the wicked,  
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and body,  
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,  
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions pressing,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Lo, the darting bowling orb!  
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns and planets,  
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

These are of us, they are with us,

All for primal needed work, while the followers there in embryo wait behind,  
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel clearing,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you daughters of the West!  
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives!  
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Minstrels latent on the prairies!  
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have done your work,)  
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp amid us,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Not for delectations sweet,  
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,  
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?  
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd and bolted doors?  
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Has the night descended?  
Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged nodding  
on our way?  
Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause oblivious,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Till with sound of trumpet,  
Far, far off the daybreak call--hark! how loud and clear I hear it wind,  
Swift! to the head of the army!--swift! spring to your places,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

## Appendix I

### Resources For Educators

100 Best Teen Poems #1." *100 Poems - The BEST Love Poems, Friendship Poems, Sad Poems, and Best of the Best Poems.*

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