

Making a Poem Quilt

Objective: Students will demonstrate their ability to use descriptive language by writing a line for a poem. Students will demonstrate their ability to make connections between art and literature by creating an artwork to go with their line of poetry.

State Core: Standard 3: The students will choose, evaluate, and express artistic subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, meanings, and purposes. Standard 4, Objective 2: The students will recognize the connections of visual arts to all learning (to literature).

Materials

- “My Cat Jeffry” by Christopher Smart, included here
- a real dog or other animal, if possible
- inexpensive paper and pencils for planning
- good drawing paper
- colored media such as colored pencils, pastels, or paints
- a large sheet of sturdy paper such as the paper that comes on big rolls
- glue
- If making collages, images of dogs. Line drawings are especially good because students can color them easily. A few are included at the end of the lesson.



Lesson Overview: Students will listen to selected lines from the poem “My Cat Jeffry,” by Christopher Smart. Students will observe a real animal such as a dog. Students then will write a line of a poem about the dog and will make an artwork to go with the line of poetry. The drawings will be displayed as a poem quilt.

Process: Read selected lines from “For My Cat Jeffry,” by Christopher Smart. A shortened version is included here. The complete text can be found at:

<http://people.zeelandnet.nl/henklensen/smart.htm>

Lead the students in a discussion about the kinds of words Smart uses to describe the cat. Discuss what kinds of words make good descriptions. For example: verbs that portray an image, such as leaps, scampers, purrs, rubs, kicks. (We often forget that verbs are at least as descriptive as adjectives.)

Then bring another kind of animal that children are familiar with, such as a dog, to class. Have the children observe the dog, think about their experiences with dogs, and jot down words the dog makes them think of. Talk to the students about how carefully poets choose words and phrases; they use only a few to create the whole ideas in a poem, so the words have to be the best words for their ideas. Poets may change words or phrases over and over again, just so they get the best word. Have the students look again and see if they can think of any better words. You may want to do this part of the activity as a class or in small groups. Discussions often produce good ideas. The class will then make up a poem about a dog, with each child contributing a line. Use a formula based on Christopher Smart’s poem.

FOR MY CAT JEOFFRY

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.
For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving him.
For first he looks upon his fore-paws to see if they are clean.
For secondly he kicks up behind to clear away there.
For thirdly he works it upon stretch with the fore-paws extended.
For fourthly he sharpens his paws by wood.
For fifthly he washes himself.
For Sixthly he rolls upon wash.
For Seventhly he fleas himself, that he may not be interrupted upon the beat.
For Eighthly he rubs himself against a post.
For Ninthly he looks up for his instructions.
For Tenthly he goes in quest of food.
For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.
For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it chance.
For one mouse in seven escapes by his dallying.
For he purrs in thankfulness, when God tells him he's a good Cat.
For he is the cleanest in the use of his fore-paws of any quadrupede.
For he is the quickest to his mark of any creature.
For he is tenacious of his point.
For he is a mixture of gravity and waggery.
For there is nothing sweeter than his peace when at rest.
For there is nothing brisker than his life when in motion.
For he is docile and can learn certain things.
For he can set up with gravity which is patience upon approbation.
For he can fetch and carry, which is patience in employment.
For he can jump over a stick which is patience upon proof positive.
For he can spraggle upon waggle at the word of command.
For he can jump from an eminence into his master's bosom.
For he can catch the cork and toss it again.
For he camels his back to bear the first notion of business.
For he is good to think on, if a man would express himself neatly,
For he made a great figure in Egypt for his signal services.
For he killed the Ichneumon-rat very pernicious by land.
For his ears are so acute that they sting again.
For from this proceeds the passing quickness of his attention.
For by stroaking of him I have found out electricity.
For God has blessed him in the variety of his movements.
For, though he cannot fly, he is an excellent clamberer.
For his motions upon the face of the earth are more than any other quadrupede.
For he can tread to all the measures upon the musick.
For he can swim for life.
For he can creep.

(Christopher Smart; 1722-1771)



Lower elementary students may need someone to write their line for them. Or you can write the lines on the board, and students will draw their pictures to go with the lines. (See directions, below) Write the poem on a sheet of paper and make it part of the quilt.

For I will consider my Dog (Choose a name for the dog)

For he (or she) . . .

Then pass out cheap paper for planning. Have each student fold the paper in four and make a sketch in each area. Each sketch needs to be slightly different from the last one. Students can use a line to represent where the text will go. Then give the students good paper and a choice of media. They will make a drawing that

represents their line of the poem and will also write the line on the drawing, having chosen carefully where the line will go. They may color the drawing, if they wish.

(See two examples on page ***)

When students are finished, have the children help decide what order the lines should go in. Arrange the drawings as a quilt. Read the poem aloud, each child speaking his or her line as you get to it. Since poetry is meant to be shared, practice as a class and then show other classes the poem quilt and recite the poem for the class.

Variation: Instead of creating a drawing, have students create a collage. Pass out xeroxed pictures of dogs and have the students manipulate the images to make a collage that goes with their line. (See collage directions that follow) The collage can include the child's line of the poem, or you can write it separately.

Extension: When discussing the phrase they want to use, introduce students to the idea of images, if you haven't already. Read some examples of effective imagery that suit your students' grade level. Ask the students what they see in their minds when you read the imagery. Let several students answer for each image. Then ask the students why each student saw something a little bit different.

Have the students spend time working on their line, which should produce an image in the reader's mind. You may want them to share their written image with several students to see if what the others envision is close to what the writer intended. Students should be allowed time to rework and perfect their images. Then make the poem quilt, choosing either to make a collage or a drawing quilt.



Slyvia Davis, *Guest*

Exhibition: Assemble the poem quilt by gluing the drawings to a large sheet of sturdy paper. Place the quilt where other classes can see it.

Evaluation: Have students complete a self-assessment rubric such as the following:

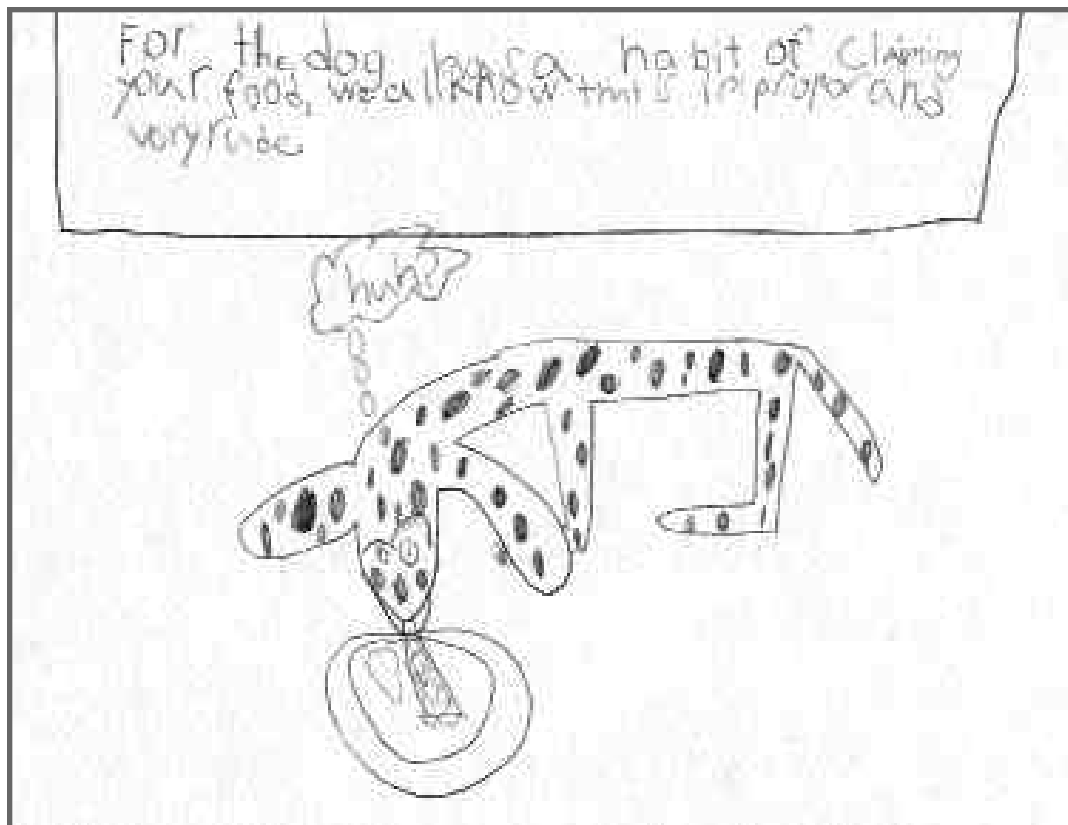
Student Self-assessment				
I think my drawing (collage)	needs work		is pretty good	is great!
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The line of poetry I wrote is	not great	okay	really good	funny
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I didn't put away the things I used		I cleaned up most of my mess.		I cleaned up every-
thing	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I followed directions	mostly	exactly		not at all
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
I liked or did not like this lesson because				

For older students, you can use whatever specific criteria fits your class' expected performance levels.

Note: You will notice the rubric does not have the poor, satisfactory, and excellent descriptors in the same order for each category. This structure is an attempt to keep students from just checking off one set of boxes without thinking about their performance. Also, I have included an additional descriptor in the assessment of their line of poetry—it's funny—you may be able to think of other descriptors that will work that will provoke students to think about the experience of writing and drawing.



For the dog stands by his master with loyal respect, by Lisa, age 11



For the dog has a habit of claiming your food, we all know that is improper and very rude, by Marie, age 8



sources: <http://www.caledoniamission.org/home.html>
http://www.deafdogs.org/dog_breeds
<http://www.aces.edu/departement/extcomm/publications/urban/unp-8/unp-8.html>
<http://nmaa-ryder.si.edu/1001/2000/07/070600.html>



