
CELEBRATING THE SEA

FOR THE TEACHER

Discipline

Language Arts

Synopsis

Students write poems expressing aesthetic and emotional aspects of the sandy beach as well as their knowledge of this ocean habitat.

Key Concept

Poetry offers a way for people to communicate their thoughts and feelings about the special qualities and values of the ocean.

MATERIALS

- photos or magazine images of ocean scenes or animals
- writing paper, pencils

INTRODUCTION

Science is not the only way to discover and communicate new insights about this ocean planet. Social studies, language arts and creative dramatics can also help us express what we know and value about the ocean environment. Poetry can be very effective in capturing the essential quality of an ocean habitat such as the sandy beach. Many people have written poems about the sea, some of which are quite famous. Some poets say the sea has a special fascination and power which attracts them. It is a place of awe and wonder as well as human activity. It is a place of many stories, waiting to be told by young poets.

INTO THE ACTIVITIES

Relay Talk

Give each small group of students a picture of the ocean, sandy beach or other ocean habitat. Have one student in the group act as the recorder and write at least ten words that come to mind as they look at and discuss the picture.

Have each group share their words as the teacher records them on a class brainstorming poster.

Hold up pictures of the ocean, animals, beaches and etc. one by one and have pairs of students brainstorm as many words as they can think of to describe each picture.

Read aloud to the students some of the famous poems about the sea by ancient and modern poets such as Robinson Jeffers, Pablo Neruda, Anne Morrow Lindberg, Gerard Manley Hopkins, or others. Try to memorize a stanza or verse of a sea poem and practice reciting it out loud or read the longer poems to the students during a quiet period. Have students reflect on the feelings expressed in the poem in a short letter or drawing to the author.

List some of the words from the famous sea poems and help the students to discover if any of their brainstormed words were used by the famous poets.

THROUGH THE ACTIVITIES

Cinquain

Explain that a cinquain is a five line poem of uneven line length, the lines not necessarily rhyming. Ask students to think of something in the marine environment you're studying -- an organism, a sand grain, a piece of kelp -- **one** thing. Then have them write each line as you give instructions for the poem.

Line 1: **One** word: the name of the thing you see in your mind.

Line 2: **Two** action words (--ing words): what is the thing doing?

Line 3: **Three** describing words: What shape or size is it? What color, texture? What does it smell or feel like?

Line 4: **Four** words that express a feeling: How does your plant or animal feel? Or how do you feel about your plant or animal or sand grain?

Line 5: **One** word: a synonym or another word for the subject of the poem.

Example: Ocean!
Roaring, crashing
Huge, enormous, frothy
Raging in a storm
Awesome!

Have students write their poems in their native language and read them aloud. Can anyone else understand any of the words? How would the poem be translated? Does it sound as nice in English? If writing skills are undeveloped, have students dictate their poems to a parent or teacher assistant. Then the assistant can help the student memorize their poems so they can say them out loud for the class.

Haiku

Explain that a haiku is a traditional Japanese short poem developed over 500 years ago. They appear to be simple, but yet they can evoke strong images and feelings. Writing a haiku helps the writer look more carefully at the environment. Haikus are three lines long, with a total of 15-20 syllables (traditionally 17 in Japanese style). The poem should capture a sense of the season or a moment in nature in a minimum number of words.

Have students sit quietly with pictures or photo images of ocean environments and follow your instructions for writing the three lines:

Line 1: Your first impression of the scene in 4-5 words

Line 3: Look more closely for some detail in the scene and describe it in 4-5 words.

Line 2: Now look at the two lines and see how they are connected and write 4-7 words describing that connection.

Examples: The sea in the dusk
is green, and the sky is green
as a field of rice.
-- Basho

We rowed into fog
and out through fog -- oh how blue,
how bright the wide sea!
--Shiki

Whale!
down and down it plunges,
its huge tail soaring higher and higher
--Buson

Limerick

Explain that limericks are silly poems of five lines that follow a specific formula of rhythm and rhyming. They often begin, "There once was a ..." and tell a story about something funny that happened.

Have students choose a subject for their poem -- a person or an animal is the easiest. Lines 1, 2, and 5 have three accented syllables; lines 3 and 4 have two

accented syllables in a triplet meter. This is best explained by example, having the students tap out the rhythm with their fingers or hands, or say it out loud with la-la-las.

Example: There once was a crab from the sea
Who climbed to the shore on his knee
He wobbled and crawled
Got sad and then bawled
For he'd left his sweetheart for a flea.

BEYOND THE ACTIVITIES

Investigate other forms of short poems. Ask students to write in other forms and compare these with the poems they have already written. Which form do they like best? How do different forms of poetry express different feelings? Which poems are easier to write? Why?

Make one long poem about the Sandy Beach by stringing the poems together in a logical order. Have students help decide which poems naturally follow each other. Then have the class read the whole poem out loud together. Have the students discuss how it feels for them to read their poems out loud? Does it seem to bring the ocean alive or closer?

Display the haiku and cinquain poems by hanging them on wooden dowels to make them look like Japanese scrolls.

Host a poetry reading in your class of each student's favorite poem. Invite other classes to attend. Create a class poetry book and have all the authors autograph copies at a "booksigning" party.