

Lesson Plan: Writing Question Poems for Grades 2–5

Objective

The student will be able to write a question poem and draw an illustration of the subject of the poem. (ELA Standards 2, 3, 4; MST 4)

Build Background

Give students hands-on objects from the ocean shoreline—one per student if possible—and discuss the students’ experiences at the beach, including freshwater lakes or ponds or the ocean. Ask students questions: What kinds of objects do you find at the beach or near large bodies of water? Where do they come from? How did you find them? Were they near anything else on the beach?

Add tidbits of information to spark more curiosity or to encourage positive behaviors. For instance, you can explain that shells are houses for small animals, called mollusks, which have soft bodies. You can then say, “I picked up all the shells you see here on a beach, but the animals inside were not alive when I found them. Some people try to collect perfect-looking shells, but they have to kill the animal inside the shell to do that. Why might that not be such a good thing to do?”

If video clips are available, show videos of live ocean animals feeding or swimming. Have students list words to describe the animals’ motion and the colors, textures, sizes, and shapes they see.

Teacher Modeling

Pick a shell, show it to the class, and say, “I’ve chosen this pen shell. I wonder where the animal used to live inside of it and why it needed to live by the ocean. Why is the shell so fragile? I like its color and how rough it feels.” Use interesting vocabulary to describe the objects. Model how to write notes on the student worksheet and how to then build questions based on those notes.

Next, write the questions down the length of the page. Put the questions in the order you want, but save the question you like best for the last line. Read the list of questions aloud when you're done. (See "Questions to Pen Shell.") Read other examples aloud, such as "Questions to a Shell" and "Questions to a Sea Turtle." Let the students know that the style is up to them. The poem can rhyme, or not; it's their choice. Tell them, "Are you starting to think of what you want to know about your object or animal? Now it's your turn to write!" Distribute and explain the student worksheet.

Student-Guided Practice

Circulate around the room to assist students who may be stuck with writer's block. Ask questions individually: "What do you like about this object?" "What's really cool about it?" "If it were alive, what would you ask it? "

Independent Work: Students Complete Student Worksheet

Have students edit and revise their poem, first on their own, then with a buddy, and finally with you. Students will make a final copy, illustrate it, and mount it for display.

Closure

Finish the lesson with students reading their own work in front of the class.