

## Poetry Lesson: “Getting Ready for Class”

**Grade Level:** 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

**Subject:** English / Composition

**Length of Time:** 50-60 minutes

**Objectives and Outcomes:** Students will be able to identify a poem’s theme. **NOTE: This lesson should serve as a reinforcing lesson. That is, students should already be familiar with the concept of theme.**

**Assessment and Evaluation:** Students will craft tableaux. Students will then write a letter to the poem’s speaker. Their letters will illustrate the poem’s theme in action.

### Materials Needed:

- Copy of Poem, “Getting Ready for Class” (See attachment)
- Paper
- Pencils

**Warm-Up:** Opposite Game

### Procedure:

1. After completing the warmup, students will remain standing. The teacher will read a poem to students as students simultaneously perform specific movements. Students performing movements during a poem’s reading will automatically make students more comfortable with the material and allow students to easily unpack the poem’s theme at the lesson’s end. Suggested teacher script: “I am going to teach you several movements/sounds. Your job is to watch and listen carefully. I’m going to shout something and then you are going to do a certain move. When I shout...” (Teacher will model word and movement – do one at a time – see below for suggested modeling/scaffolding).

- “Store away” – *gesture as if throwing something away*
- “lid” – *twist hands like putting lid on a can*
- “Safe” – *crouch, wrap arms around body*
- “mask” – *put hands over eyes*
- “parade” – *march in place*
- “start” – *make the “Shh” sound while putting finger to lips*

**SUGGESTED MODELING/SCAFFOLDING:** Practice “store away.” Practice “lid.” Practice “store away” and “lid.” Practice “safe.” Practice “store away,” “lid,” “safe.” Practice “mask.” Practice “store away,” “lid,” “safe,” and “mask.” Practice “parade.” Practice “store away,” “lid,” “safe,” “mask,” and “parade.” Practice “start.” PRACTICE ALL!

2. Once students have learned and practiced movements, the teacher will continue: “Now, I am going to read a text aloud. When you hear any familiar words, I want to see you do the movement/sounds that we practiced with those words.” The teacher will then read the poem aloud as students perform the movements/sound. Read the poem twice – allow students to perform the movements twice. Be sure to use good energy and feeling in voice while reading poem. Once completed, ask students to return to their seats.
3. The teacher will then read the poem again. Suggested script: “What did I just read? (a poem) I am going to read it again. But, first, I want you to get into what I like to call “poetry positions.” Sit up straight and tall, feet on the floor, hands flat on your desk. Take a deep breath in. Take a deep breath out. Close your eyes.” Then, read the poem. The teacher will then lead a discussion.
  - a. Who is reading this poem? How do you know? Provide an example. (We do not know. It could be a boy or girl. Perhaps it is a girl. Let’s choose a name for this person.)
  - b. How would you describe how this speaker is feeling? What words would you use? (sad, ashamed, unsure, hurting, uncomfortable) Why would you use those words?
  - c. Why does this person feel this way? Do we know why? (No – it does not say.)
  - d. What kind of person do you imagine to have been before she adopted this attitude? (answers may vary)
  - e. What could have happened to her to make her express this attitude? (answers may vary – encourage answers about friends or family to build her universe.)
  - f. Now that we know a bit more, could I have a volunteer to read this poem for us? I want you to read it like this girl – think about her context to influence your reading.
4. The teacher will then transition into an activity. Students will be constructing “Tableaus” within small groups. This will help them to imagine the poem’s speaker and her context more clearly. Suggested script: “I really want to be able to picture what our friend is like a little bit more clearly. To do this, we are going to make tableaus. Raise your hand if you know what a tableau is? I am going to give you an example of a tableau. (Use teaching assistant for help.) We are going to pretend that a dinosaur is chasing us. Ready – one, two three. FREEZE.
  - a. Are we moving? NO.
  - b. Are we talking? NO.
  - c. Are we both involved? YES.
  - d. We are also on the same plane. YES.

Script continued: “In short, a tableau is a frozen picture. Your task: I am going to break you up into groups and you and your group members need to create two tableaus. The first tableau needs to show our poem friend in a situation where she is comfortable with her feelings – where she can be herself. The second tableau then needs to do the opposite. I want you to put her in a situation where she is mirroring the feelings she expresses in this poem here – where she wants to put a lid on her feelings, join the parade. Our friend needs to be in the tableaus, but who OR what else could be in these tableaus? (friends, family) You could also be an object, or an animal, or a piece of nature – but, it needs to be clear and part of the image you create.” The teacher will then break students into groups into four or five separate groups. Give three minutes. As students are rehearsing, teacher can prepare a presentation space.

5. The groups will then present their tableaus. Students will sit in a circle and each group will perform both tableaus – separated by three seconds. Suggested script: “*Get into a circle. Sit with your group. When you perform your two tableaus, I will count from “3, 2, 1” and then you will freeze.*” Go through each group. Ask student what seems to be happening in each situation.
6. Teacher will then facilitate a brainstorm to help students imagine how the speaker’s attitude will impact her life in the future. Suggested script: “It is interesting to think about how a person’s attitude will impact who they are in the future. Specifically, when you think about the speaker’s attitude in this poem, what do you think her life is like now?” (Answers will vary.)
7. Students will have the opportunity to write a letter to the poem’s speaker as a way to encourage her. Suggested script: “I want you to imagine that you have the opportunity to talk to her. The poem tells you what she believes. I want you to imagine your response. Do you agree with her? That is, do you think you should put a lid on your feelings? Put on a mask? Join the parade? No! Your job is to create a direct response to this poem’s speaker. You will be writing a letter to her. I want you to write a letter that will encourage her to be herself – your letter must **address three separate lines in the poem**. For instance, if I wrote a letter to our poem friend, I would encourage her to not “keep a lid on [her] feelings.” Instead, I would encourage her to express her feelings, be authentic and honest!” Letter requirements:
  - a. Salutation
  - b. Address three lines from poem
  - c. Off encouragement
  - d. Closing
  - e. Signed Name
8. Give students the rest of class to complete writing letters. As students complete their letters, the teacher can read finished letters out loud to the class. The teacher will collect letters at the class’s end.

**Closing:** After completing your letter, what do you think is the poem's theme or lesson? (*HINT: The student's letters should demonstrate the poem's theme in action.*)

**Assessment and Evaluation:** Through guided questions, observation, and review, the teacher will be able to assess student's knowledge of the poem's theme. Letter will provide teacher with individual assessment.

**Modification and Differentiation:** Teacher can prepare "mixed-level" groups for tableaux. Teacher can act as a scribe to write letters.

**“Getting Ready for Class”**

Store away your ideas.<sup>1</sup>

Keep a lid on your feelings.<sup>2</sup>

So that no one guesses who you really are.<sup>3</sup>

And you're safe from their judging eyes.<sup>4</sup>

Be who they want you to be<sup>5</sup>

Even if it hurts<sup>6</sup>

Think like them<sup>7</sup>

Dress like them<sup>8</sup>

Be like them<sup>9</sup>

Put on a mask and join the parade.<sup>10</sup>

Class is about to start.<sup>11</sup>

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