

Poetry Workshops & the California State Standards

The *California Poets in the Schools* program has been leading workshops in schools throughout California for more than 40 years. With increased nationwide emphasis on standards assessment and outcomes, it may be useful to explore the ways that poetry writing workshops build student literacy skills while also building self-esteem, classroom climate, emotional health, and healthy community. The latter four outcomes are not easy to quantify through testing; but we witness such outcomes every day in the poetry classroom and in our communities when students engage with the poetry writing and recitation process.

With the California Poets in the Schools program, students discover the power of words and their imaginations. Poet teachers demonstrate and encourage a variety of creative problem-solving strategies. Students in poetry workshop learn ways to express themselves that will serve them well for a lifetime. As Carl Sagan the astronomer once said, “Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it we go nowhere.”

Poetry writing workshops tie into a variety of other curriculum areas: life and earth sciences, math, local history, watershed, political science, philosophy, Inglés/Español, peer counseling, drama, art, music.

How do creative writing workshops for grades K-12 meet/exceed California State English Language Arts (ELA) Standards? General examples:

- **Students will apply a range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and appreciate poetry from a range of cultures and styles.**

Identify form of poem. Learn how different writers explore the same theme using a variety of poetic forms.

Identify: (stages based on grade level) metaphor, simile, sensory imagery, alliteration, theme, rhyme, patterns, line, stanza, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, invented language, idiom, personification.

Place poem in historic and/or cultural context.

Discuss poet’s point of view, intent and significance to humanity.

Discover emotional connections with written and performed poetry.

- **Students will employ a range of writing strategies to compose original written work.**

Experiment with varieties of poetic form: free verse, chant, ode, persuasive poem, narrative poetry, myth, pantoum, sonnet, haiku, rap, calligrame, dramatic monologue.

Use metaphor, simile, alliteration, juxtaposition, personification and other strategies to create original images for their poems.

Use a variety of line, stanza and meter formats while writing poetry.

Craft effective openings and closings for their poems.

Use alternative punctuation and capitalization strategies while composing poems.

Become skilled at editing and revision: find active verbs, pay attention to sensory detail and well-defined imagery. Learn the power of a single word choice. Use dictionary and thesaurus.

How do creative poetry writing workshops for grades K-12 meet/enhance California State Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Standards? General examples:

Music

- Students will compose poems then perform their poems, while visiting artist provides individual coaching on articulation, tone quality, and technical accuracy, to explore the full range of their voices.
- Identify the use of similar elements in music and other art forms (form, pattern, rhythm.)

Theatre

- Demonstrate how voice may be used to explore multiple possibilities for a live reading.
- Students will recite poems with multiple voices.
- Students (high school) create and perform poetry for poetry slams, electronic audio recording, radio broadcast.

Visual Art

- Communicate values, opinions, or personal insight through original works of [poetic] art.
- Write a poem or story inspired by a work of visual art.

[Updated Winter 2011 by Karen Lewis, Mendocino County Poet-Teacher. Please contact Tina@cpits.org for a more complete and specific list of particular standards and grade-level specific examples. New: Sample lesson plans with curriculum tie-ins may be available upon request.]