



# WRITING POETRY

*Educator Tool*



DIGITAL

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# WHY POETRY?

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Poetry holds infinite possibilities for a writer: the possibilities to play with language and sound, to express yourself, to stretch rules and break patterns, to capture something meaningful using only a few words and lines on the page.

And yet, mention the word poetry to students, and you may elicit any number of responses, from hesitation to sheer panic to occasional excitement. While all reactions are welcome, we've found that when students are reluctant to engage with poetry, it is often because they've practiced the genre in a way that focuses on its limitations rather than its inherent possibilities.

At 826, we view poetry as an incredible tool to explore the infinite power and possibility of writing. Poetry is woven through nearly all our content and curricula, as it is an ideal tool for building a culture of creativity.

**This Educator Tool is designed to support and inspire you and your students wherever you are in your poetry journey.** You'll find strategies to help students learn certain poetic forms, as well as strategies that ask them to have fun with poetry. You'll find lessons that use poetry as a way to reflect on one's identity, as well as lessons that tap into poetry's power to help us visualize and realize societal change.

However you use this tool, we hope it shows your students a new side of poetry, one that they can use to further develop and share their voices with the world.

# HOW TO BEGIN

**The resources provided in this Educator Tool are organized into five sections:**

- Poetry to Reflect
- Poetry for Social Justice
- Poetry of a Specific Form
- Poetry for Fun
- The Writing Process

Whether you are teaching a unit focused on poetry or weaving poetry throughout the year, 826 Digital provides resources to support you and your students. You can select which resources are the best fit for your students based on the time you have available:

	Sparks	Lessons	Projects	Videos
Description	Quick, adaptable writing prompts and activities. They help hone a specific skill or inspire big ideas.	Engage students deeply in the writing process, with a focus on writing skill development and drafting. They're built around a writing genre, topic, and writing standard(s)	Multisession units on a topic or theme. They help teach process and revision while students produce a polished piece.	Feature critically acclaimed authors and educators providing their own twist on Sparks and other writing activities.
Average recommended time	30 minutes	2 hours or 2 sessions	3 or more sessions	30 minutes - 1 hour or 1 session

# HOW TO BEGIN

In addition to the resources provided in this Educator Tool, you can search on 826 Digital for resources that focus on a particular literary device that you would like your students to incorporate into their poems.

Each resource is tagged with an intended grade span, but many are easily adapted for other grades. Each section also includes Mentor Texts: pieces from 826 students that connect to the section theme and showcase the power and brilliance that comes when young people discover the joy of writing.

- These pieces of student writing (and more!) are also available on 826 Digital's Writing Gallery.
- Some pieces are inspired directly by the section resources, and others showcase writing for change in a myriad of other ways.

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Poetry is the only thing  
that will keep society together.  
Even though they're little  
and short,  
they will  
keep us together

**GEM G., 826LA**

# POETRY TO REFLECT

Poems can be a vehicle for the writer to connect with their memories and process their innermost thoughts. Here are some of our favorite Sparks, Lessons, Projects, and Videos to support students along that journey.

- **Feeling Words & Healing Words: A Poetry Journey.** (Spark, Grades 1–3) With this collection of 826 Digital poetry activities, young writers explore a range of feelings and strengthen their emotional vocabulary.
- **Writing to Process (Elementary).** (Spark, Grades 1–3) With this collection of 826 Digital poetry activities, young writers explore a range of feelings and strengthen their emotional vocabulary.
- **Writing to Process (Secondary).** (Spark, Grades 1–3) With this collection of 826 Digital poetry activities, young writers explore a range of feelings and strengthen their emotional vocabulary.
- **Rare Air / Aire Raro.** (Project, Grades 4–5) Students explore poetry as a way of explaining and defining the world around them via the people, places, and events that make up their lives.
- **Where I’m From Poems.** (Lesson, Grades 7–12) Inspired by George Ella Lyon’s poem, this lesson guides students through naming the people, places, and things that have shaped them.
- **I Remember . . . with Natalie Moore.** (Video, Grades 11–12) In this Lesson, students use journal entries as inspiration for a dynamic narrative poem.

# MENTOR TEXTS

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- **Why Green Crayon is Cool.** (Grades 3–5) This poem describes all the reasons why green is the best color.
- **Self-Portrait.** (Grades 3–5) This celebratory poem uses similes to list all the things the writer loves about themselves.
- **Memories Through the Ages.** (Grades 3–5) This celebratory poem uses similes to list all the things the writer loves about themselves.
- **Before I Knew How to Shine.** (Grades 6–8) A poem about facing fear—and learning how to shine.
- **School Blues.** (Grades 7–8) A metaphorical poem about frustrations, from homework to homelessness.
- **My Language.** (Grades 7–9) A poem about the strength and limitations of language and shared culture.
- **Confused.** (Grade 8–9) In this poem, a student reflects on identity.
- **Stupid Blue Screen.** (Grades 9–12) Living in the digital world can create unwanted attachments, as one student laments.
- **Generations.** (Grades 10–12) The stunning and vulnerable poem processes feelings of loss, grief, and hope for the future.
- **Where I Am From.** (Grade 11) This poem uses analogies to describe all of the pieces of the writer's personal history.

# POETRY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Poetry has always been a powerful tool for creating social change, because of the deep connections that are made between writer and topic. These Sparks and Lessons that help create space for students to write about issues they deeply care about.

- **Endangered Perspectives.** (Lesson, Grades 3–5) Students will learn about endangered species, how animals become endangered, and then write either a poem or a story about a day-in-the-life about an endangered animal of their choosing.
- **Poets in Revolt!** (Lesson, Grades 6–9) The pen is mightier than the sword. In this Lesson, students learn there’s no better evidence of this idea than the poetry behind social movements.
- **Write with Pride.** (Spark, Grades 7–12) Students consider the influence that labels hold and write poetry in which they use their power to describe themselves however they want.
- **Social Justice Poetry: Listening to the Trees.** (Spark, Grades 7–12) Students consider the influence that labels hold and write poetry in which they use their power to describe themselves however they want.

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I want to know that my voice counts  
that people are listening.

**YERIKA R., 826CHI**





# MENTOR TEXTS

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- **Breathe.** (Grades 4–6) A poem about taking the world in—and letting go.
- **Why Do Borders Exist?.** (Grades 7–8) A poem that muses on the purpose of borders in question-and-answer format.
- **What walking the red road means to me is.** (Grades 8–9) This poet uses her voice to speak up for those who have been silenced in the Indigenous
- **Matricide: Addressing Climate Change.** (Grades 9–10) This poem personifies Earth as a mother coping with the brutalities of climate change.
- **Glitch in the System.** (Grades 9–12) This student’s powerful piece reveals the essence of racial injustice.
- **Woman.** (Grades 10–12) In this rousing poem, a student asserts her strength and worth as a woman.
- **She, He, Them.** (Grades 10–12) Using dialogue and detailed description, this poet investigates whose voices are heard and whose voices are left behind when injustice occurs.
- **Wrong Black Boy.** (Grades 11–12) In this poem, an echoing question strikes a chord and reveals the tragic losses held within systemic injustice.

# POETRY OF A SPECIFIC FORM

While poetry can be free-form, with the writer letting the ideas and words shape the poem, poems can also follow a specific structure, such as that of an ode or haiku. As your students engage with poetry, we suggest you provide them with opportunities to both read and write the genre. For some writers, a specific form can make writing poetry less daunting.

- **Poems of Praise: Writing Odes.** (Lesson, Grades 1–2) In this workshop, young poets write odes to praise people, places, or things they love.
- **My Name Is.** (Spark, Grades 1–5) In this Spark, students write an acrostic poem that can be used as a tool to introduce themselves to their classmates.
- **Odes to Ordinary Objects.** (Lesson, Grades 3–6) Students find gratitude all around as they thank ordinary objects in their lives in the form of an ode.
- **Ekphrastic Poetry.** (Lesson, Grades 5–8) Students write ekphrastic poems, exploring and creating connections between text and image.
- **Power to the People Haikus.** (Spark, Grades 6–9) Students draw inspiration from powerful people they admire to write haiku poetry.
- **Emulation Poetry.** (Spark, Grades 6–12) To jumpstart their own poems, students take inspiration from other poets.

# MENTOR TEXTS

- [Oh Kitty.](#) (Grades 2–3) An ode to an animal friend.
- [An Ode to Cookies.](#) (Grades 3–4) You guessed it—an ode to cookies.
- [Sushi Plates and Crisp, Clean Paper.](#) (Grades 4–5) This student gives thanks to ordinary objects in an ode.
- [Haikus.](#) (Grades 5–6) A collection of haikus spanning books and cosmology.
- [BLM.](#) (Grades 7–8) An acrostic poem about the Black Lives Matter movement.
- [Ode to My Grandfather.](#) (Grades 8–9) An ode celebrating an important figure in this student’s life.
- [Excerpt From “My Street”.](#) (Grades 10–11) A neighborhood ode filled with sights and sounds of the poet’s street.

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Cold quiet sunrise.  
Suspended eternity.  
Sunshine into snow.  
**SHEILA M., 826CHI**

# POETRY FOR FUN

At 826, we take fun seriously—very seriously—and writing poetry is one way we achieve that. Try out any of these Sparks, Lessons, and Videos with your students to invite the giggles into your classroom!

- **Birds in Flight: I’m Like a Lion.** (Video, Grades 3–5) Have you ever thought about what you have in common with an animal? In this Lesson, students write a comparison poem that explores these similarities and differences.
- **Personification Poetry.** (Lesson, Grades 3–5) Students practice identifying personification and then use sensory detail and figurative language to use personification in their writing.
- **Rules, Rules, Rules.** (Lesson, Grades 5–6) Students learn how poetry can “break the rules” and then practice breaking the rules in their own poems.
- **No Lab Coats Required: The Writing Laboratory.** (Spark, Grades 6–12) Students enter a Writing Laboratory, no lab coats required, and use methods of observation to embark on their writing process.
- **A Poem Mix Tape for Road Trips.** (Lesson, Grades 7–8) Students use freewrites, writing games, cheesy pop lyrics, and revision strategies to learn how to make connections between all of the points along their poem-writing journey.
- **How to Write an Anti-Ode.** (Spark, Grades 7–12) Usually, an ode is written in celebration, but this Spark asks students to write an anti-ode—a poem about something they can’t stand!
- **Remix Your Writing.** (Video, Grades 9–12) 826CHI Teaching Artist Robin Reid Drake shares an original writing prompt that encourages students to borrow lines from their favorite pieces of writing and then remix them into something new.

# MENTOR TEXTS

- **Sky Pie.** (Grades 2–3) In this shape poem, a student walks the reader through a typical day in her neighborhood.
- **Animal Poem.** (Grades 3–5) This poem uses descriptive language to leave the reader clues about the animal it is depicting.
- **Tree Poem.** (Grades 5–6) A poem about appreciating trees and why we should study them.
- **Cinnamon the Corgi.** (Grade 6–7) A poem about the writer's favorite animal—corgis!
- **A Willow Tree.** (Grades 6–7) A poem that explores all that a tree can stand for.
- **SO SPRINGY!** (Grades 6–8) A poem about spring!
- **Dang, Crawfish.** (Grades 11–12) Crawfish, crayfish, or mudbugs. Whatever you call them, the writer of this poem doesn't like them.



The realization that the universe is one giant banana did not come lightly.

**YLAN, 826DC**

# THE WRITING PROCESS

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## Generating Ideas

Ideas for writing are all around us. Here are a few of our favorite Sparks to use when writers need help getting started. At 826, we encourage our students to look for inspiration in many ways: drawing on their own experiences, from the world around them, and the writing of others. With these lessons, students generate ideas to use in the piece they are ready to start now or to tuck away for future writing.

- **[Sensory Heart Mapping](#)**. (Spark, Grades 1–5) Students identify their favorite sensory memories and transfer them to a visual heart map.
- **[Book Scavenger Hunt Poetry with Amanda Gorman](#)**. (Video, Grades 3–12) Amanda Gorman, Inaugural U.S. Youth Poet Laureate, shares her favorite way to inspire a new poem or get past writer’s block.
- **[One Good Line Deserves Another](#)**. (Spark, Grades 6–8) In this activity, students draw inspiration from existing text and the world around them to launch stories of their own.
- **[Memory Line](#)**. (Spark, Grades 6–12) Students plot significant memories on a timeline in this reflective writing activity.
- **[A List of Golden Details](#)**. (Spark, Grades 7–9) Students collectively create a running list of golden details—details and descriptions that are singular, completely original, and make one’s subject unforgettable.
- **[Playing with Words with Aracelis Girmay](#)**. (Spark, Grades 7–12) What lives inside a word? Find out how to trace connections between two dissimilar words with this playful Spark from award-winning poet Aracelis Girmay.

# THE WRITING PROCESS

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## Revision

As your students take their poetry from start to finish, use these resources to support their revision. For more ideas, you can check out the [Educator Tool: Guide to Revision](#).

- [Revision Bingo for Poetry](#). (Spark, Grades 6–8) In this Spark, students play a game of bingo to improve their poems!
- [Polishing a Poem](#). (Lesson, Grades 6–8) In this Lesson, students use mentor texts to hone their revision skills before turning to their own poetry drafts.

## Publishing

Publishing can take many forms, so have a conversation with your class about how they'd like to showcase their work and share their writing with others. Below are a couple ideas we love. For additional ideas about publishing and celebrating your students' voices, check out the [Educator Tool: Publishing Student Writing](#).

- Host an open mic event after school and invite students' friends and family
- Print a classroom anthology
- Organize a gallery walk for the school community to view