



TEACHING HUMAN DIGNITY SERIES:

Women's Hidden Experiences: Poetry about Motherhood, Abortion, and Loss

Central Questions:

What makes poetry a unique literary genre?

How does poetry allow us to step into the experience of another person?

Why is poetry an important literary art form?

How does poetry give us new insight into the experience of motherhood, abortion, and loss?

Unit-at-a-Glance

Setting/Subject: Upper level English Class addressing poetry; including American Literature, Poetry, Women's Literature, or Twentieth Century Literature.

Curriculum Area: Secondary English/Integrated Language Arts;

Time Requirement: This unit contains 5 lessons; Lessons 1 and 5 are 90 minutes each; lessons 2-4 are 50 minutes each

Descriptors: Critical Attributes of Poetry, Anne Sexton, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sylvia Plath, Confessional Poetry, Dramatic Poetry, Literary Analysis

Unit Objectives

Students will be able to:

- ◆ list and accurately describe the critical attributes of poetry as a literary form.
- ◆ determine the themes and central ideas of poems and analyze how they develop over the course of text.
- ◆ analyze and evaluate poetic conventions used to express experience, insights, and emotions in poetry including figurative language, word relationships, diction and syntax.
- ◆ practice critical thinking while observing, describing, and analyzing literary patterns.
- ◆ articulate the unique value of poetry as a genre for writers and readers.

Rationale

Participation in this unit will facilitate the students' ability to work with the critical attributes of poetry, to comprehend, analyze and evaluate individual poems, and to articulate the distinct and unique way poetry aids human beings in making sense of reality and relating to others.

Unit Summary

<i>Lesson Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Learning Goals</i>
Pre-assessment	Before the lesson starts, the teacher will ask students to complete a survey and a pre-assessment. This information will be used to establish a safe classroom environment and modify instructional experiences for greater efficacy.	The students will be able to clearly and anonymously articulate their prior experiences and knowledge in relation to poetry and abortion, so that they can share it with their teacher and contribute to productive unit planning and more successful learning.
Lesson #1: The Critical Attributes of Poetry <i>Two 50 minute class periods</i>	The students will read and consider a selection of text-based resources (examples and non-examples of poetry). They will also develop the ability to distinguish the critical attributes illustrated in examples of poetry and use them to make generalizations about the critical attributes of poetry.	Students will be able to correctly distinguish between examples of poetry and non-examples of poetry. Students will be able to accurately list and explain the critical attributes of poetry. Students will be able to point out the attributes of poetry as demonstrated in several poems.
Lesson #2: A Poet's Purpose: "the mother" by Gwendolyn Brooks <i>50 minute class period</i>	In this three part lesson, the students will listen to and read the dramatic poem, "the mother" by Gwendolyn Brooks, identify the key metaphors and word patterns that will facilitate analysis of the poem, and understand the power poetry has to express complex experiences and emotions in ways that invite the reader's development of compassion and understanding.	Students will be able to identify poetic voice, audience, and style. Students will be able to discuss the impact of reading versus hearing poetry and the effect it has on the reader/listener. Students will be able to articulate the emotions the poem evokes and analyze how Brooks employs literary techniques, such as word choice, juxtaposition, etc. to convey her message. Students will be able to identify, explain, and analyze the claims Brooks makes about our humanity and morals.

Unit Summary cont.

<i>Lesson Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Learning Goals</i>
<p>Lessons #3: A Poet's Purpose: "The Abortion" by Anne Sexton</p> <p>Lesson #4: A Poet's Purpose: "Parliament Hill Fields" by Sylvia Plath</p> <p><i>Two 50 minute class periods</i></p>	<p>After reading examples of Confessional Poetry written by Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath, the students will understand how writing poetry can promote an author's inner healing.</p>	<p>Students will be able to describe that writing Confessional Poetry has potentially therapeutic effects for a poet.</p> <p>Students will be able to recognize common themes across different poems dealing with the topic of abortion.</p> <p>Students will come to a deeper understanding about the impact of abortion on individuals and groups.</p> <p>Students will be able to communicate the many and varied effects abortion has on those who experience it.</p>
<p>Lesson #5: The Unique Contributions of Poetry</p> <p><i>Two 50 minute class periods</i></p>	<p>The students will revisit the text-based resources used in Lesson #1 and practice their critical thinking skills as they consider the contributions of poetry in expressing and understanding the human experience.</p>	<p>Students will be able to explain that the genre of poetry enables a different treatment of experiences and emotions than other written forms of expression.</p> <p>Students will be able to formulate and communicate generalizations about the contributions of poetry.</p>