

Teacher Notes on the Text-based Resources

The following notes have been compiled to make the work of the teacher more efficient and effective in this lesson. These notes provide: **a.** explanation of how the text-based resources used in Lesson #1 were selected, **b.** insights about the significance of these resources in relation to the concept of poetry and its critical attributes, and **c.** a few notes about the contents of these resources and how one might interpret them.

The teacher will notice that a total of 10 text-based resources have been compiled in a document called **Lesson #1 Instructional Resources**. They include:

Resource #1: “*The Charge of the Light Brigade*,” by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Resource #2: *What is love? Science kinda has the answer: A neuroscientist and a biological anthropologist tackle an age old question*, by Bonnie Christian

Resource #3: “*I felt a Funeral in my Brain*,” by Emily Dickinson

Resource #4: *The Civil Rights Movement*, Legal Dictionary

Resource #5: “*I Love You*,” by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Resource #6: *Tree*, Simple Wikipedia

Resource #7: “*I, Too*,” by Langston Hughes

Resource #8: “*Trees*,” by Joyce Kilmer

Resource #9: *Panic Attacks and Panic Disorder*, Mayo Clinic

Resource #10: *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, Wikipedia

Resources #1, #3, #5 #7, and #8 are poems or “examples” of the concept being studied, poetry. Resources #2, #4, #6, #9 and #10 are non-fiction writing, non-poems, and “non-examples” of the concept of poetry.

Upon review the teacher should notice that:

- a.** Care has been taken to select resources that are quick to read and relatively easy to understand. However, some interpretation of the poems may be required by students. There are brief explanations provided for the teacher here to read when students experience these resources.

Resource #1: “The Charge of the Light Brigade” by Alfred Lord Tennyson narrates the story of British soldiers and their honor in the face of near-certain death.

Resource #3: It may help students to know that critics often interpret Emily Dickinson’s poem, “I felt a Funeral in My Brain,” as the author’s description of a panic attack.

Resource #5: Ella Wheeler Wilcox’s, “I Love You,” vividly describes the experience of romantic love.

Resource #7: The poem “I, Too,” was written in 1926 by Langston Hughes who was an important figure in the Harlem Renaissance. His poem describes the struggle of black Americans to claim their place in a segregated America. The poem references eating in the kitchen. This references the practice common at the time of segregated eating areas in public and private homes based on race.

Resource #8: Joyce Kilmer’s poem, “Trees,” is written in iambic pentameter. In this deceptively simple, pastoral poem he eulogizes the beauty of a single tree.

These explanations have been crafted to help the students understand the context of the poems and emphasize how they represent the attributes of poetry. In-depth explanation of these poems should be avoided in Lesson #1 as the detailed analysis of poetry will be the emphasis of lessons which occur later in the unit.

- b.** The resources contain examples of poetry and non-fiction writing students might encounter in common text-based environments (*Wikipedia, health websites, science magazines, etc.*). In Lesson #1, the poems are considered “examples” of the concept being studied and the other resources are considered “non-examples” of the concept of poetry. It will help to use these terms in the context of Lesson #1 when discussing these resources.
- c.** The resources provided include canonical poetry that is typically taught in high school settings. It represents the work of important poets. The students may have read poems by these individuals (*perhaps even some included in the resources*) previously. If so, it will aid the students if the teacher can help them activate prior knowledge of these poems and poets during their reading. For example, the teacher may say to the students, “Emily Dickinson is a poet whose work you may have read before. Some of her other popular poems include, “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” and “Hope is the thing with feathers.””
- d.** Each example of poetry includes all of the critical attributes of poetry:
(1) concentrative imaginative awareness of experience (2) in carefully chosen language (3) that is arranged to create a specific emotional response (4) through meaning, sound and rhythm.¹ They also contain some of the variable attributes of poetry (optional and not required in all examples of poetry more broadly), including, but not limited to: a) the use of rhyme, b) use of lines and stanzas, c) the capitalization of the first letter of each line.
- The main focus of Lesson #1 is to help students attain the concept of poetry as a distinct genre and comprehend its critical attributes.
- e.** The teacher will notice that the resources include 5 poems and 5 non-poems that address five different topics. These include a military campaign, love, a panic attack, civil rights, and trees. The teacher will notice that poetic/non-poetic pairs in the handout are not sequentially adjacent to one another. Inclusion of these pairs in the resources is intended to illustrate by contrast how poetic treatment of a topic allows a different exploration of emotion and experience. For example, the Wilcox poem “I Love You” enables the exploration of love in a personal and individual way as expressed through choices of words and phrases that are unique to a particular voice expressed in the poem. This contrasts with the non-fiction writing on the topic which looks at general biological explanations for feelings attributed to love. Recognition of these differences between examples and non-examples is important for appreciating the unique contributions of poetry. It is anticipated that students will pick up on connection of topic between examples and non-examples at some point in Lesson #1. The teacher should guide students to identify how poetry allows different aspects of a topic to be explored, and explored in a different way. If not, this can be explored later in the unit.

¹ “Poetry.” *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1995. 893.