

Seasons in Poetry
Language Arts Unit

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Concepts & Skills Overview

Winter

Simile
Metaphor
Alliteration



Spring

Counting Syllables ("Beats")
Haiku
Onomatopoeia



Summer

Punctuation
Font
Form



Autumn

Ending Rhyme
Rhyme Scheme
From Poem to Picture Book



Book List by Season: Winter



Snow

Cynthia Rylant

Talking Like the Rain: A Read-to-Me Book of Poems

ed. by X. J. Kennedy et al.

"Winter Morning" by Ogden Nash

"Cynthia in the Snow" by Gwendolyn Brooks

"First Snowflake" by N.M. Bodecker

Poetry of Earth

illus. by Adrienne Adams

"Velvet Shoes" by Elinor Wylie

Poetry Speaks to Children book & CD

ed. by Elise Paschen, et al.

"Skating in the Wind" by Kristine O'Connell George

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost

"Winter" by W.D. Snodgrass

Book List by Season: Spring



Basho and the Fox

Tim Myers

Basho and the River Stones

Tim Myers

How to Write Haiku and Other Short Poems

Paul Janeczko

Red Dragonfly on My Shoulder

ed. by Sylvia Cassedy

Eric Carle's Animals Animals

ed. by Laura Whipple

Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin

Lloyd Moss

Book List by Season: Summer



<u>The Hutchinson Treasury of Children's Poetry</u>	ed. by Alison Sage
<u>Pigs in the Mud in the Middle of the Rud</u>	Lynn Plourde
<u>Bear Snores On</u>	Karma Wilson
<u>Every Time I Climb a Tree</u>	David McCord
<u>The Dragons Are Singing Tonight</u>	Jack Prelutsky
<u>Handsprings</u> "Growing" - "Rain Song" - "Rain Reign"	Douglas Florian
<u>Insectlopedia</u> "The Army Ants" - "The Inchworm" - "The Praying Mantis" "The Whirligig Beetles" - "The Termites" - "The Locusts"	Douglas Florian
<u>Bow Wow Meow Meow</u> "The Poodles" - "The Dalmatian" - "The Whippet" "The Dachshund" - "The Ocelot" - "The Leopard"	Douglas Florian
<u>Creatures of Earth, Sea, and Sky</u> "Hummingbird" - "Fishes" - "Frog Serenade"	Georgia Heard

Book List by Season: Autumn



Where the Sidewalk Ends

Shel Silverstein

Here's a Little Poem

ed. by Jane Yolen, et al

Whose Garden Is It?

Mary Ann Hoberman

I Love You As Much...

Laura Krauss Melmed

Goodnight Moon

Margaret Wise Brown

Madeline

Ludwig Bemelmans

In the Land of Elves

Daniela Drescher

Child of Faerie, Child of Earth

Jane Yolen

Louella Mae, She's Run Away!

Karen Beaumont Alarcón

The Emperor's New Clothes

Marcus Sedgwick

The Sneetches and Other Stories

Dr. Seuss



Winter

- **Activity 1**

All work in this unit is done in a Language Journal, with the exception of the final copies of each poem. You can use a blank main lesson book for this; we use the golden color for Language.

Have students brainstorm the season of Winter by making a Five Senses Chart. Draw four vertical lines evenly spaced across a piece of paper and put the icon for each of the five senses at the top of each of the five columns: an eye for See, an ear for Hear, a mouth for Taste, a hand for Feel, a nose for Smell. Each child makes one, then ask students to put at least one item in each column. I gave them five minutes to brainstorm, then had students share what they wrote. Children can make more notes on their chart during the discussion. For Winter, I transcribed the Five Senses Chart on the board as students shared their ideas.

- **Activity 2**

The first Element of Poetry for this Season is Simile. Read "Skating in the Wind" from Poetry Speaks to Children. Introduce a simile (a comparison which uses "like" or "as") and have students identify the similes in the poem. Let them take notes in their Language Journal as you brainstorm more as a group. Then have students each write a simile of their own. Have them turn in their Journals for assessment.

- **Activity 3**

The second Element of Poetry for this Season is Alliteration. Read Welcome, Precious. Ask students to share what their favorite image was from the text. Introduce alliteration (repeated consonant sounds within a line of poetry, often falling at the beginning of the words: "lazy lion") and have students identify the alliteration in the book. The use of repeated sounds gives a cozy warm feeling.

- **Activity 4**

The final Element of Poetry for this Season is Metaphor. Read "Velvet Shoes" from Poetry of Earth. Introduce metaphor (a comparison which does not use "like" or "as") and have students identify the metaphors in the poem.

Read further examples: "Winter Morning" from Talking Like the Rain and "Winter" from Poetry Speaks to Children (read by the poet). Before playing the recording of W.D. Snodgrass reading his poem, play the previous track which is his introduction. Here, the poet talks about the feeling of snuggling up in a warm overstuffed cozy chair and watching the wintery weather blow outside. He likens this to a bear hibernating. Then play his reading of his poem. Talk about the "poetry moment" – how a poem tries to capture just one little moment in time and expand upon it so that the reader feels it just as the poet does. Using rich, descriptive language (like similes and metaphors) helps this to happen.

- **Activity 5**

Read three final examples of Winter poems: "First Snowflake" and "Cynthia in the Snow" from Talking Like the Rain and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" from Poetry Speaks to Children (read by the poet). Discuss the rich descriptive language in each. What is the "poetry moment" in each example?

Allow students to revisit their Five Seasons Chart for Winter and choose a topic for their rough draft of a Winter poem. Some students need to circle their topic once they choose it, in order to keep their thoughts organized. Some prefer to write their topic on another page and make a web, brainstorming everything they want to say about the theme before they begin a rough draft. This poetry is free verse and there is no length requirement. The only requirement is that students must use alliteration AND either simile or metaphor in their poem.

- **Activity 6**

Meet with students to provide an edit of their rough draft, correcting spelling, punctuation, and handwriting (letter formation) as necessary. Ask students to write a final draft and then to illustrate their poem. Make a class poem book.



Spring

- **Activity 1**
Have students brainstorm the season of Spring by making a Five Senses Chart. I found Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" to be most useful for Summer but you can integrate it into any season; find teacher background and a listening guide here: http://www.artsvivants.ca/pdf/mus/tour2004/vivaldi2004_en.pdf. My students had a hard time hearing the barking dog for Spring.
- **Activity 2**
Read Basho and the Fox. The first Element of Poetry for this Season is counting syllables, which we called "beats." Have student clap and count the number of beats in their names. Have them come up with sentences and clap and count the number of beats. In their Language Journals, ask students to write a sentence and then write below each word how many beats they think are in it. Have them turn in their Journals for assessment.
- **Activity 3**
Read Basho and the River Stones. The second Element of Poetry for this Season is the haiku. Introduce the form of the haiku; a Japanese form of poetry with a specific number of syllables in each line, 5 – 7 – 5. Read Red Dragonfly on My Shoulder for further examples of haiku.
- **Activity 4**
The third Element of Poetry for this Season is Onomatopoeia (where the word itself has the same sound as the thing it stands for – buzz, moan, whisper). Introduce the concept of Onomatopoeia and have students brainstorm examples. Read Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin. Let students know that they will be writing a haiku about Spring which includes Onomatopoeia.
- **Activity 5**
Before asking students to attempt a rough draft, provide them with further instruction in how to write a haiku. I used Paul Janeczko's excellent book How to Write Haiku and Other Short Poems. Share with students his list of the elements of a haiku.

One characteristic of a haiku is that, not only is it about nature, but there is always a seasonal reference. Read the haiku on page 6 of Eric Carle's Animals Animals and ask students what season it portrays. Then check the illustration!

Lay out a variety of silks in a rainbow. I used the Elements Silk Canopies from Nova Natural (dyed by Faerie Cove Silks) and arranged them in a circle so that each color flowed into the next: yellow, green, blue, violet, red, orange. Then read the four examples given by Janeczko (pp.27-28) one at a time, and ask the children to listen carefully and then silently point to the silk which they feel best represents the mood of the poem. What season does that correspond to?

- **Activity 6**

One of the suggestions made by Paul Janeczko in his book is that it is easier to write a haiku from a painting or a photograph than it is from a scene in real life. The writing of a haiku takes time, as you perfect the wording, and real life never holds still! But you can come back to a painting or a photograph time and time again and it will still show the same scene. What's more, you may notice details in the scene that you didn't see the first time. Provide students with a books or prints of famous paintings, examples of nature photography, or a variety of National Geographic magazines. We used paintings. Have each student choose a nature scene that appeals to him/her.

Janeczko also recommends using a small paper frame to help you narrow in on just one part of your scene. Using a 3x5 index card, show students how to cut out a square from the center of the card to make a frame. (Fold the card and crease the fold line, then – starting at the folded edge – cut down, stop before the end of the card, turn 90 degrees and cut across, stop before the end of the card, turn 90 degrees and cut up to the end. A square has been formed. Unfold the card.) I had students place their frames over different details in their paintings until they found a "haiku moment" that appealed to them. I then had them lay their frame on a blank piece of paper on a clipboard and clip it down. They used their box of colored pencils to draw the "haiku moment" on their paper using the painting as their guide. Removing the frame, they wrote a rough draft of their haiku under the drawing. Have students turn in their drafts.

- **Activity 7**

Meet with students to review their rough drafts. Help students eliminate unnecessary words. You only get 17 syllables so make them count! Also, help students think of rich, descriptive vocabulary to replace bland terms. This is a good time for individual lessons on synonyms or how to use a thesaurus.

The line break activity on pages 38-39 of Janeczko's book (answer on page 131) is also a good activity for students who are ready for more of a challenge.

- **Activity 8**

Ask students to write a second draft. Meet with them for an edit, correcting spelling, punctuation, and handwriting (letter formation) as necessary, and then have them write a final draft and illustrate their poem. Make a class poem book.



Summer

- **Activity 1**

Have students brainstorm the season of Summer by making a Five Senses Chart. I found Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" most useful for the lessons on Summer. Listen to the third movement: the thunderstorm. For best results, ask students to listen with their eyes closed and do not tell them in advance what the music will portray. Then ask them to open their eyes and say what it is about Summer they thought the musician was trying to express. In writing this piece, Vivaldi also had a "poetry moment" he wanted to convey. Then ask them to close their eyes again and now play the first movement of Summer: the lazy hot day. This music nearly made my students fall asleep! Remind the children that a season can contain opposites within it.

- **Activity 2**

The first Element of Poetry for this Season is Punctuation. Read "Private? No" from The Hutchinson Treasury of Children's Poetry. Write the poem on the board so that students can see the joke. Review the two pieces of music about Summer that Vivaldi wrote. He was able to use musical instruments to convey the feeling of each "poetry moment" but we as writers do not have those instruments. Instead, we have to find ways to use words to convey our feelings. Punctuation is one of our tools to do this. What piece of punctuation would help convey the fast exciting feeling of Vivaldi's thunderstorm? Exclamation points.

Read "(Brackets)" from The Hutchinson Treasury of Children's Poetry. Introduce a new piece of punctuation: the parentheses. I told my students that these stood for "hidden thought" and had them hold their hands up on either side of their heads, curved like parentheses. What goes in the parentheses is what is in your head, what you are thinking secretly in your mind. The "hidden thought" can be an element that they choose to add to their Summer poem.

- **Activity 3**

The second Element of Poetry for this Season is Font. Read Pigs in the Mud in the Middle of the Rud. After reading the book, hold up one of the pages where Grandma's words are in red print, and ask students what they notice about the words. The red print shows that she is getting angry.

Turn to the page where she yells, TIME FOR SUP! The capital letters help me, as the reader, know that Grandma is yelling and I am able to convey with my voice what the author had in mind. Writing words in a different color or different size is called Font.

Now read Bear Snores On. Before reading it, remind students that we are looking at Font. Most of my students were familiar with this book from kindergarten so I asked them to look, not at the pictures, but at the Font and see how it matches what I do with my voice when I read it. Read the book, showing it to the class after you read each page. Ask them, what do you notice?

If there's a student or two who needs another example, there's a poem in Jack Prelutsky's book The Dragons Are Singing Tonight which uses font. Look through the book and see if the student(s) can identify which one it is. Read it.

- **Activity 4**

The third Element of Poetry for this Season is Form. This is where the words of the poem take the shape of the thing they are talking about. Douglas Florian specializes in this type of poetry. Read (without showing the page) "The Poodles" from Bow Wow Meow Meow to the class, then show the page. Ask students what they notice about the poem. Explain that this is what we mean by Form. Share additional examples (listed in the Booklist by Season: Summer) from this and other volumes. Leave the suggested books of poetry on the table for students to discover other poems which employ the element of Form.

Ask students to write a rough draft of a Summer poem, using their Five Senses Chart to help them choose a topic. Invite them to use Punctuation, Font, or Form to give their poem some pizzazz!

(optional)

If your class would like an additional challenge, two of the poems in Creatures of Earth, Sea, and Sky are written for two voices. The way they are laid out on the page shows this and it is another example of Form (more subtle). If students are interested in trying this type of poetry, allow them to work in pairs to write a joint poem and have them perform it before the class.

- **Activity 5**

Meet with students to provide an edit of their rough draft, correcting spelling, punctuation, and handwriting (letter formation) as necessary. Ask students to write a final draft and then to illustrate their poem. Make a class poem book.



Autumn

- **Activity 1**
Have students brainstorm the season of Autumn by making a Five Senses Chart.
- **Activity 2**
The first Element of Poetry for this Season is ending rhyme. Here are some examples which I read to my class, but there are many so choose your favorites!

Where the Sidewalk Ends

"Peanut-Butter Sandwich"	page 84
"The Googies are Coming"	page 50
"With His Mouth Full of Food"	page 128

I read these examples and then asked my class what all those poems had in common (besides being funny). What did they think was going to be the new Element of Poetry? They guessed correctly that it was ending rhyme.

Here are some more examples from

The Dragons are Singing Tonight:

"I Have a Dozen Dragons"	page 28
"I Have a Secret Dragon"	page 35

Then we discussed how an author can use ending rhyme to help the reader guess what's coming and I read Louella Mae, She's Run Away!, pausing and allowing students to predict where Louella Mae might be hiding on each page.

- **Activity 3**
The second Element of Poetry for this Season is rhyme scheme. First, I reminded my students of the Pattern work we did in Mathematics at the beginning of the year.

In August, I taught my students how to write pattern notation in terms of a for the first element, b for the second, c for the third and so on. I first had them use crayons and graph paper to draw a pattern of their choice using blocks of colors.

Then I taught them how to assign a letter to each color they used and to write down their pattern as *abcd abcd abcd* or whatever it was...

A Pattern has a Rule and it Repeats.

Next, I asked them to create a pattern of their own and write it down in notation *abab cdcd efef abab cdcd efef...* and then to use different pasta types (organized by shape) and yarn to string the pattern they created.

If you haven't done a Pattern unit this year, you may want to explore some of these activities now and integrate them into your Poetry unit.

Then we looked at how the same rules for notation are used to record the rhyme scheme of a poem. The ending sound of line 1 is always *a*. First example was "August Ice Cream Cone" from [Here's a Little Poem](#) (the poems in this anthology are very short so they are easy to do). The rhyme scheme for this poem is *aa*. We did a few more examples together on the board (I would write down the ending sound of line 1, "ack," and give it a letter *a* and then write the ending sound of line 2, "oo," and give it a letter *b*, then we'd continue on with the poem and I would show them that the rhyme scheme ends up being *abab*). I modeled this on the board for several poems and then read one aloud and asked the children to write down in their Language Journals what they thought the rhyme scheme was. Have students turn in their Journals for assessment.

- **Activity 4**

The third Element of Poetry for this Season was poetry to picture book. I shared with students that picture books for young children are often written in rhyme. This gives them a rhythm and beat when you read them aloud. Infants in the womb can hear their mother's heartbeat and so when they are born, any kind of sound that reminds them of that beat is soothing to them. I had my students place their hands on their hearts and sit quietly to feel it beating. I read [Good Night Moon](#), [I Love You As Much](#), and [Madeline](#). Then I read an example of a traditional story that was rewritten to rhyme, [The Emperor's New Clothes](#). Finally, I shared a writer who enjoys writing in rhyme so much that he even uses made-up words in order to have rhymes, Dr. Seuss! And I read [The Sneetches](#).

Leaving the other rhyming picture books available to students who wanted to look at them for more examples, I asked students to look at their Five Senses Chart for Autumn and choose a topic for their poem. Their assignment was to write a rough draft of a poem with at least two ending rhymes and turn it in.

- **Activity 5**

Meet with students to provide an edit of their rough draft, correcting spelling, punctuation, and handwriting (letter formation) as necessary. Help students decide how to turn their poem into a picture book: a front cover, and then a page of the book for each line of the poem. Ask students to write a final draft and illustrate and assemble their picture books!

Storybook Art

The cumulative project for this unit was for each student to create a picture book. Surprisingly, my students had no trouble writing their rhyming text and assembling the book, but many of them drew a blank when it came to an illustration style for their work. I decided to follow this unit with an Art unit, using MaryAnn Kohl's Storybook Art: Hands-On Art for Children in the Style of 100 Great Picture Book Illustrators.

I've added a Storybook Art page to the waldorfcriculum.com website:
<http://waldorfcriculum.com/Curric/storybookart.html>.

And there you will find live links to all 100 of the picture books she includes and the title of the art activity which accompanies it (25 for Paint, 25 for Draw, 25 for Cut/Collage, 25 for Craft/Construct); also a spreadsheet which I made listing all 100 titles & authors, plus columns for "Own?" "Library?" "Buy?" to help you organize your book collection.