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| <b>INTRODUCING POETRY</b>  |  | <b>Student/Class Goal</b><br>Since poetry is part of the reading and language arts section of the GED test, students will want to practice reading and understanding various types of poetry. |
| <b>Outcome</b> <i>(lesson objective)</i><br>Students will recognize that poetry is all around them, will gain a better understanding of poetry, and will begin to read and write a variety of poetry.  |  | <b>Time Frame</b><br>1-2 hours  |
| <b>Standard</b> <i>Convey Ideas in Writing</i>   |  | <b>NRS EFL 1-6</b>  |
| <b>COPS</b><br>Determine the purpose for communicating.  | <b>Activity Addresses Components of Performance</b><br>Writing poetry will help students understand poetry and prepare them for the language arts reading section of the GED test. |   |
| Organize and present the information to serve the purpose, context, and audience.  | Students use the Copy Change strategy to help them construct poems. This scaffolding strategy will help them gain confidence to write original poetry.                             |   |
| Pay attention to the conventions of the English language usage, including grammar, spelling, and sentence structure to minimize barriers to readers' comprehension.  | Since students use the Copy Change strategy, their conventions of English language usage should reflect those of the original poem.  |   |
| Seek feedback and revise to enhance the effectiveness of communication.  | Since students use the Copy Change strategy, their conventions of English language usage should reflect those of the original poem.  |   |
| <b>Materials</b><br>Songs and Song Lyrics, Poems   |  |   |
| <b>Learner Prior Knowledge</b><br>Most students have heard poems in one form or another, most frequently as song lyrics. Discussing students' familiarity with different kinds of poetry might be a good way to start this lesson.   |  |   |
| <b>Instructional Activities</b><br>Step 1 - Play some songs that are familiar and unfamiliar to students drawing attention to the lyrics. Teacher can give students handouts of the printed lyrics or have students write them from the songs. Teacher could read some of the lyrics aloud and then ask for student volunteers to read others.<br><br>Discuss some of the elements of the lyric, for example: rhyming words, repeated words or phrases, feelings or images the lyric evokes, and rhythm. Ask students if there are differences between the lyrics with the music and the lyrics without the music. Students can work in pairs or small groups if they want to work with the same lyric and can be given time to write their responses before sharing them with the class.<br><br>Step 2 - Read poems aloud to the class. Read each poem twice, once so the students can just listen, the second time so the students can think about, discuss, and write about the elements they discussed with the lyrics. Choose a variety of poems: humorous, serious, romantic, rhyming, and non-rhyming.<br><br>Step 3 - Demonstrate the Copy-Change teaching strategy to students by leading the class through the strategy to rewrite a lyric or poem. A good poem for this is "If I Were in Charge of the World" (Judith Viorst, <i>If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries</i> . 1981. New York: Atheneum)<br><br>Students can then work alone, in pairs, or in triads with lyrics or poems of their own choosing. Students should approach this writing task as they do all others, keeping in mind the components of the writing standard. Students at levels 1 and 2 may need the help of a more experienced writer to record their poems. After students finish writing, ask for volunteers to read the lyrics or poems aloud.<br><br>Step 4 - A culminating activity for poetry writing is to make a class poetry book after students have revised and edited their poetry. The class could produce a series of these poetry books. |  |   |

**TEACHER NOTE** The OLRC [Trade Books](#) collection contains many books of poetry. For more ideas on teaching poetry, see the OLRC publication [Poetry in the Adult Literacy Classroom](#). Another resource is Kazemec's & Rigg's book *Enriching Our Lives: Poetry Lessons for Adult Literacy Teachers and Tutors*. Original student poetry can be found in the [Beginnings](#) series. Poems that work well with Copy-Change can be found in Alan Katz. (2001). *Take Me Out of the Bathtub and Other Silly Dilly Songs*. New York: Margaret K. Elderry.

**Assessment/Evidence** *(based on outcome)*  
Poems from the copy change activity

**Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation**  
*Not yet completed.*

**Next Steps**  
Reading and writing more poetry.

**Technology Integration**  
Copy Change Teaching Strategy [http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/copy\\_change.pdf](http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/copy_change.pdf)  
Poetry 180 <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>  
A Poem a Day <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>  
Poetry Slam lesson plan <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan-june00/poetryboxlessonplanone.html>

**Purposeful/Transparent**  
Since poetry is part of the reading and language arts section of the GED test, students will need to practice reading and understanding various types of poetry.

**Contextual**  
Students will listen to familiar songs and discuss their lyrics.

**Building Expertise**  
Students will use the Copy Change strategy to begin the process of writing original poetry.

## **Introduction to Poetry**

*Billy Collins*

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to water-ski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means.

## **Driving to Town Late to Mail a Letter**

*Robert Bly*

It is a cold and snowy night. The main street is deserted.  
The only things moving are swirls of snow.  
As I lift the mailbox door, I feel its cold iron.  
There is a privacy I love in this snowy night.  
Driving around, I will waste more time.

## **Sentimental Moment or Why Did the Baguette Cross the Road?**

*Robert Hershon*

Don't fill up on bread  
I say absent-mindedly  
The servings here are huge

My son, whose hair may be  
receding a bit, says  
Did you really just  
say that to me?

What he doesn't know  
is that when we're walking  
together, when we get  
to the curb  
I sometimes start to reach  
for his hand

## **Alley Cat Love Song**

*Dana Gioia*

Come into the garden, Fred,  
For the neighborhood tabby is gone.  
Come into the garden, Fred.  
I have nothing but my flea collar on,  
And the scent of catnip has gone to my head.  
I'll wait by the screen door till dawn.

The fireflies court in the sweet gum tree.  
The nightjar calls from the pine,  
And she seems to say in her rhapsody,  
"Oh, mustard-brown Fred, be mine!"  
The full moon lights my whiskers afire,  
And the fur goes erect on my spine.

I hear the frogs in the muddy lake  
Croaking from shore to shore.  
They've one swift season to soothe their ache.  
In autumn they sing no more.  
So ignore me now, and you'll hear my meow  
As I scratch all night at the door.