

5W Poems

Overview

A 5W poem draws from the conventions of a news story by asking who, what, where, when, and why. This format can produce short poems, as well as help students develop their comprehension and summarization skills.

Langston Hughes wrote the “Negro Speaks of Rivers” on a train to Mexico when he was 18 years old to celebrate the strength of the black community.

Lesson

1. Read different 5W poems and ask students to describe the characteristics. Record the observations on a chart.
2. Show the students the format of a 5W poem and explain that the 5Ws are used in journalism to highlight and summarize the key points of a news story. This format also can be used to generate non-rhyming poems.

Line 1: Who	
Line 2: What	
Line 3: Where	
Line 4: When	
Line 5: Why	

3. Using a website such as **biography.com**, **poetryfoundation.org**, or **poets.org**, write a shared poem about a famous writer. Record notes that answer the questions who, what, where, when, and why.
4. Once the shared poem is completed, ask students to pick topics and write their own 5W poems. Students can write about famous figures, but they may also look through newspaper stories and use the details to craft poems.
5. Ask the students to polish their poems and share them with the class.