How can we use poetry in the classroom?

Panel discussion handout

Idea 1: Writing *pattern poems* with beginners

by Samantha Alfaro Prospero

Here is the procedure of writing a pattern poem with beginner students. The pattern of The Colour Metaphor Poem shown here was adapted from Holmes & Moulton (2001: 71).

You're as _____**COLOUR**_____ as ____**NOUN**____

You're as _____**COLOUR**_____ as ____**NOUN**____

You're simply my _____**NOUN**_____

Stage	Description
Warm-up and brainstorming	Tell students they will listen to an instrumental song and ask them to picture an imaginary scenario while listening to it focusing mainly on the colours and the landscape they picture. After setting instructions, ask students to close their eyes and have them listen to the song. When the song has finished, ask students to open their eyes and then, brainstorm the scenarios they pictured.
Modelling and writing the poem	Show the pattern they are going to follow to write their poem. First, model an example eliciting again the answers from the brainstorming stage. After modelling, ask them to write their own poem and support them constantly.
Follow-up activity	Have students volunteer to recite their poem in front of the class. They could also team up with a partner and recite their poems to each other.

Reference: Holmes, V. L., & Moulton, M. R. (2001) *Writing Simple Poems: Pattern Poetry for Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.

Idea 2: The power of *blackout poetry*

by Sabrina Herceg

Why do blackout poetry?

Blackout poetry is a type of physical play with language. It encourages students to experiment with language, and to cater language according to their own needs. Students can create poems, free verse, limericks, acrostic poetry, and check their knowledge of target vocabulary.

Using blackout poetry in the language classroom has five main advantages:

1. **Creativity:** it encourages creative expression by repurposing existing text in a unique way.

2. **Accessibility:** this requires minimal materials and can be done by anyone with access to a printed page and a marker.

3. **Therapeutic benefits**: it can serve as a form of self-expression and relaxation, similar to other art forms like painting or journaling.

4. **Exploration of language:** it provides an opportunity to explore language and meaning in unexpected ways, fostering a deeper understanding of text.

5. **Versatility:** it can be adapted to various themes, styles, and levels of complexity, making it suitable for different skill levels and interests.

How do I do blackout poetry?

1. Identify the text you want to blackout.

2. Draw boxes over meaningful words, images, phrases, and ideas.

3. Draw an image outline or arrows for reading the text, if necessary.

4. Colour it in!

Here are some links for further reading and inspiration:

See examples: https://newspaperblackout.com/

Find out how teachers use it: https://www.twinkl.es/teaching-wiki/blackout-poetry

Watch a video tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4fnkl6sSl0

Idea 3: Preparing a poetry slam

by Lucy Amelia Durance

Background and benefits of poetry slams

The term poetry slam originates from Marc Kelly Smith's recitals in Jazz clubs in Chicago in the early 1980s. In the classroom, a poetry slam is a performance event where the learners recite poetry for an audience. Audience interaction is encouraged at a poetry slam event! Poetry Slams encourage the use of personal and artistic expression, offer opportunities for growth and empowerment, and can lead to relationship building. These events provide meaningful engagement with poetry for any level.

How to set up a poetry slam

Plan: the general logistics for you your event: theme, venue, date, rules.

Engage: generate interest promoting the event through social media, word of mouth, flyers, etc

Recruit participants: from students, staff and family members to professional poets.

Facilitate: establish clear rules and guidelines for participants and the audience.

Organize: logistics, sound equipment, seating, refreshments, etc.

Roles: assign roles for timekeeping, scorekeeping, ushers, etc.

Motivate: incorporate motivational messages to energize the participants.

Fun ideas for a poetry slam

Themed slams using topics like nature, identity or social justice; **costume slams** with participants dressing up; **cooperative slams** by teaming up; **flash slams** asking participants to improvise by offering a set time scale to write and perform; **multilingual slams** to celebrate linguistic diversity, **interactive slams** including poets Q & As; **stylistic slams** working on different poetic styles such as haiku or free verse ; and **STEAM slams** including activities related to different subjects such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics.

A recording of the panel discussion can be watched here:
https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/stories-classroom-mini-event