LESSON PLAN

PERSONIFICATION POEMS

Former T&W teaching artist Ted Meyer encourages young writers to extend the limits of who they can be in their writing in this poetry lesson. Students learn about personification and how this can spice up the "who, what, where, when, why, how" way of writing. Learning about new kinds of characters, students are able to practice their reading comprehension in addition to their writing skills in this direct, fun lesson plan.

Grade(s) Taught: 2nd

Genre(s) Taught: Poetry, fiction

**Common Core State Standards:**
(Refer to English Language Arts Standards > Writing > Grade 2 and English Language Arts Standards > Reading Literature > Grade 2)

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3
  Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1
  Ask and answer such questions as *who, what, where, when, why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Guiding Questions:
- What is personification?
- What does it mean to say that a poem "has a voice"?
- How do details reveal identity/voice?
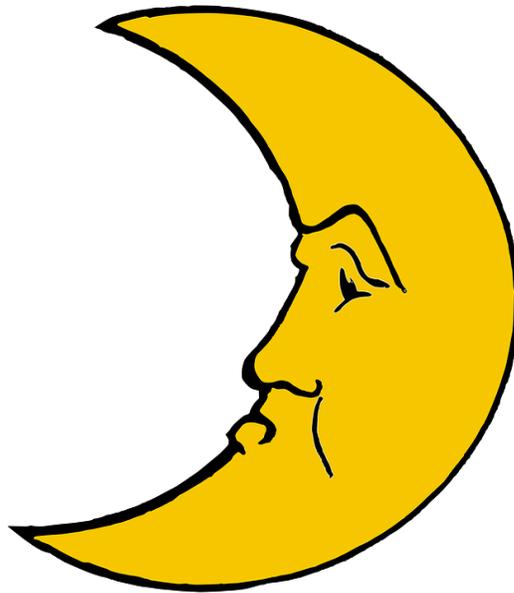
LESSON

Introduction:

Tell students that the name of this exercise is "Who, What, Why." Begin by urging students to use their imaginations. Tell them that in poetry and fiction, literally anything can happen. In their writing they don't even have to be themselves—they can be anyone or anything. They can conceive of their own identity in a new and unexpected way. Depending on the age group, read aloud Mark Strand's "Keeping Things Whole" or another example. (See my poems "The Moon," and "Pudding" that I wrote for the purpose of this exercise.)

Main Activity:

Write "Personification" and /or "Voice" on the board, and discuss the meaning of the terms in relation to the poem(s) just read. Again, depending on age level, you may want to limit the time you spend on this discussion. At minimum, ask the students who is speaking in the poem. Is it something that actually speaks in real life? Then point out that while the writing may seem complex or deep, the poem really follows a very simple sequence: the speaker says who he/she/it is, what he/she/it does, and why. How do these details create a sense of who the speaker is? How would you describe the poem's voice?

Explain that students will be writing their own "Who, What, Why" poems. Ask them to call out possible non-human identities, and make a list on the board. Encourage them to be as creative and imaginative as possible. Select one that seems inspiring, and then write a poem together as a class, taking them through each phase of the poem: announcing who the speaker is, what he or she does, and why, allowing the children to call out possibilities for each section. For example: What might the stars do? Why do they twinkle in the sky?

Once it is clear that everyone understands the goal, ask students to return to their seats and begin writing.

Closing:

Share!

Materials:

- Age-appropriate model poem(s)
- Room on board to brainstorm and write a model poem

Vocabulary:

Personification, voice, absence

Multi-Modal Approaches to Learning:

This lesson resonates with **aural** learners (hearing the poem read out loud); **logical** learners (thinking about the formulaic structure of the poems); **kinesthetic** learners (describing with sensory details the experience of a different being); **interpersonal** learners (group brainstorming, writing, and sharing); and **intrapersonal** learners (independent writing).

Tagged:
Poetry, fiction, personification, 5 w's