

## Poetry-in-the-Bag – Ideas for Your Classroom

ED 4352 – Poetry K-12

- encouraging students to select and build their own texts -

As teachers we often present students with textual choices made by publishing companies far removed from our schools and communities. Teachers and students are given little or no choice in what they read. This doesn't have to be the case. Sometimes it is fun to let our students build their own anthologies – and share readings they find enjoyment in. Such anthologies can become the 'stuff' of organized instruction and/or impromptu class discussions. In other words – the kids build their own textbooks. Here is one idea that can lead to building a classroom poetry anthology.

- Ask students to bring in a favourite poem. It can be anything. They need, however, to be able to discuss why this poem is especially important to them.
- The day students bring in their poems distribute paper bags. These bags can be of any size, however, lunch bags are especially good.
- Allow students the period to design their Poetry Bags. On the front they should sketch and colour a key image, symbol, or moment from the poem. They may either print out the poem or glue a typed copy to the front.
- Once complete all poems are thumb tacked to the Poetry Wall. Over the period of a week students, when they have free time, wander back to the Poetry Wall – read – think – and respond to the various poems on display. Beneath the wall is a desk with Poetic Ponderings Cards they are to fill in and drop in the bag of those poems that especially speak to them.
- At the end of the week the teacher (whose poem should also be displayed) removes the contents from the bags and records them as a part of an introduction to each poetic selection in the anthology. If a teacher teaches more than 2 classes he or she might consider choosing the most 'visited poems', but in smaller classes including everyone's poem is recommended.

Here are some sample questions for a Poetic Ponderings Card:

1. This poem spoke to me because.
2. This is my favourite image, symbol, or moment.
3. I really didn't get this part.
4. My favourite line or phrase of this poem is . . .
5. My personal rating of this poem is . . .

After collecting the Poetic Pondering Cards the teacher needs to use this information to compile a general introduction to the poem. This can be in either paragraph or point-form. The following is an example in point-form from the Haiku "I Scooped Up The Moon" by Ryūho.

***I Scooped Up the Moon***  
**In-the-Bag Responses**

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- Dylan really liked the image of moonlight spilled on grass. He saw something like this on his grandmother's lawn last summer. It was beautiful.
  - Kathy liked the idea of spilling something that you really can't spill. Even though you can't do it – it looks like you did.
  - Jennifer said that moonlight changes things like colour and mood. That's what made this poem speak to her.
  - Scott didn't get it at first but the picture on the bag made him rethink it again. It's OK.
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- Once the teacher has compiled the responses he or she should return the poetry bags – with the responses in them – back to the student. They can also be left on the Poetry Wall and additional responses may be added.
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**An Anthology of Childhood Poetry from ED 4352 – The Top Ten**

You are to create your own Bag-A-Poem response. Using the poem you have identified as your childhood favourite – illustrate it in a manner that best represents its literal or figurative meaning. Be inspired by your text – what do you see? Sketch it, colour it, find a picture, clip it and/or glue it, collage it – whatever it takes 'just be inspired'. When it is complete, put your name on the back and return it to me. I will take your Bag-A-Poems to local schools for some genuine responses. Students will react to your poem, your interpretation, and decide whether or not it makes the ED 4352 Childhood Top Ten. Results will be published and distributed to everyone.

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**Childhood Top Ten Poetry Card**

Thank you for taking the time to read this poem. Your response will help shape our class poetry anthology. You will determine the Top Ten Childhood Poems in our classroom. Please read the poem carefully and respond to the following questions. When you're done please drop it in the poetry bag. If you need more room write on the back!

1. My first thought about the poem was: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. This was my favourite phrase, line, or word: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I really didn't like this poem because: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What do you think of the visual interpretation of this poem? What would you have drawn? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Can you name a poem that you would like to see in the Top Ten? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Would you include this poem in the class anthology? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_