

## Lesson 3 Poem Palette

### Aim:

How can we develop poetic imagery that is both vivid and true to the heart?

### Do Now:

Prewriting: (preferably in journals!)

Describe a place using at least two of your senses. Your feelings about this place should be clear from your description.

1. Students respond to the Do-Now, writing for three to five minutes. As students write, you can write the image categories on the board.

The categories are

- Color
- Place
- Emotion
- Person's First Name
- Type of Weather

2. Have a few students share their responses. You can take notes on the board; you might try taking notes that show something about the techniques they are using — e.g., harsh dark colors show anger towards this place.

3. Use your notes as a segue into the activity, explaining that images can help reveal feelings and points of view — a happy person might see a house in a totally different way if he became sad. Two different people will notice very different things about the same house. The key to good writing is to get close to the heart by showing exactly what you see, differently from everyone else.

4. Ask students to use the list of categories on the board; for each category, they should pick an example about which they feel strongly, something that really resonates for them. (You can also use the handout.) You might give an example, such as, “For ‘Person’s First Name,’ I’d pick the name Clyde, because that’s the name of my grandfather, and I’d love to talk about what that name means to me, and what my grandfather means to me.” Or “For ‘Color,’ I’d pick yellow, because I always hated the color yellow, which was the color of my room growing up.”

5. The students should write their five examples on the top of their page; you might want to ask them to jot down some notes for each one.

6. Ask some students to share the elements they chose. They may explain why they chose these specific elements — or not. (It’s important that they feel they can share without having to get too personal; this will ensure that they pick things that will be truly meaningful for them.) You can jot down some of their ideas on the board.

7. Ask students to begin a first draft of a poem of any length; this poem should include the five elements they have chosen. (If you haven’t already done so, you might want to discuss what makes a poem a poem.) They may use each element once, more than once — they may even choose to omit one if they like. Encourage at least ten lines and remind them that rhyme is not required in this exercise. (We, in fact, encourage students not to rhyme; this helps guide them into writing poems that are real and honest, instead of those that simply rhyme.)

8. Close class by asking some students to share either their finished work or their poems in progress. Ask other students to respond by discussing how the readers used the various elements.

### Extensions

- Students complete their first drafts and then workshop their pieces in small groups or pairs. After receiving comments, they complete second drafts that reflect the workshop discussion. Celebrate students’ poems by hanging them in the classroom and/or publishing them in a class poem booklet.
- Investigate how published poets have used some of these elements — for example, look at how Wallace Stevens uses color, weather and place in “Fourteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.”

Your Name:

# Poem Palette - Handout

Use this sheet to brainstorm images and ideas for your next writing piece.

First, write one example for each of the categories listed below. Then jot down notes for each example. Write images you associate with the color or place or weather; offer a thought about a person or an emotion. There are no rules and no right or wrong answer — just make sure you speak honestly and from the heart.

Category	Your Example	Notes on Your Example
Color		
Place		
Emotion		
Person's First Name		
Type of Weather		

Now you can use the images and ideas from your palette to “paint” your poem. You can really think of it as a painting in words — put what is in your mind on the page. You can use your examples once, more than once or not at all, but try to write a poem of at least ten lines. And, remember, a poem does not have to rhyme! Start your first draft on the back of this sheet.