

Advice Poem, Using Verbs (With Adaptations for Younger Students)

This poetry-writing experience enables students to expand the power of verbs by exploring their multi-layered possibilities of meaning. In this “advice” poem, students tell people what to do in certain situations or places. They may also choose to advise an animal or non-living thing. Proceed with these steps:

1) Pass out the verb list and tell students to put their finger on any verb from any column. Then direct them to avert their eyes from the list (perhaps by looking up at the ceiling) and move their finger up and down that column until you say “stop.” Have them check or circle the verb they land on or closest to. Repeat that process about six times. If they land on the same verb when repeating the process with a column already used, just tell them to check the verb directly above or below. Engage in the process with them, writing your verbs on the board.

2) Next, tell them to create a title starting with the words “Things To Do” with the rest of the title telling where/when, etc. For example, “Things To Do While Fishing For Coho In The Skagit River.” Write this title on the board.

3) Begin showing them the “advice” technique by using your title and one of your verbs. Let’s say one of your verbs is “celebrate.” Start building a poem, starting the first line with that verb. Example: “Celebrate the thought you’ll go home with a catch for supper.” Tell them, by pointing out the tone of the sentence, that this is an advice poem, so they are speaking to the reader. Give them adequate time to write and culminate the session with a sharing.

Adaptations for Primary Grade Students:

1) Use the same process as above, but start by having them write the beginning of the title, “Things To Do,” first.

2) Ask them to think of a place where they like to be: beach, park, mountains, woods, creek, lake, pond, field, etc. The simpler title which will include only the place, rather than the extra details of “when/while,” etc. will make this exercise less complicated.

3) Next, invite them to think of making the place specific, if they wish. For example, “field” could become “tulip field.” Have them finish the title with a prepositional phrase including their place word. Demonstrate on the board with this title: “Things To Do In The Tulip Field.”

4) Demonstrate the process of landing on a verb (using the primary grade verb list). Let’s say you land on “sweep.” Sample first line: “Sweep away your worries and enjoy the rainbows of color.” Ask them how this verb works without a broom in the idea.

5) While this might be a difficult concept to explain, simply tell the students not to use the words, “I” or “me,” in their sentence. This will avoid the issue of some students telling what *they* are doing and will maintain the advice nature of the exercise.

6) Pass out the primary grade word list and direct students through the process of creating one “poetry sentence.” Remind them to start the sentence with the verb. When they have their own sentence, call on one student to help you demonstrate the “advice” nature of their sentence, by facing you and *saying* the sentence aloud.

7) You could have them write about one or two lines and carry on the activity with a line per day until they have about five lines by the end of the week. A daily “Poetry Time,” however brief, would be ideal for carrying out and building on different poetry concepts in addition to reading and hearing different kinds of poems.

Sample Poem From A Second Grade Class:

Things To Do In The Park

Find a tree with the biggest leaves.

Hunt for the tree with the tiniest leaves.

Sing your favorite song because you are happy.

Rescue a ladybug and let it climb up your finger.

Smile at the other kid on the swing next to you.

Sara, 2nd grade

Sample Poems:

Things To Do In The Woods On The Bluff Behind My House

Dive into the thoughts of an old blackbird.

Stop and watch the light seeping through new leaves.

Fling away memories of work waiting to be done.

Capture pinecones falling from great heights.

Save the memories of the place.

Grieve for fallen trees.

Carissa, 4th grade

Things To Do In Washington Park, Anacortes

Wear a hat with a wide brim
as a shield from a seagull's gift.

Relax on the grass and invite
the sounds of the day
to create a concert revising your mood.

Adjust your eyes to the autumn light
filtering through leaves of the Big-Leaf Maple.

Ask the clouds, before they drift out of sight,
to tell you their names.

Talk with the oldest Douglas-fir and learn
the wisdom of its silent presence.

Write a collaborative poem with the wind.

