

## Snapshot Poems: Focusing on the Visual Elements in Poetry

**Grades:** 1st through 6<sup>th</sup>

**Description:** A “snapshot” poem is a succinct four-lined poem that captures three different photo-like images of a subject such as an animal, season, person, landscape, etc. and ends with a one-word line encapsulating a general feeling about the subject. Due to the nature of this poem’s brevity, students will learn how to focus on careful word choice.

**Activity:** (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers please note adaptations at the end of instructions.)

1) Ask students to name different species of wild animals. Suggest that they name some animals in their own area, or animals they have read about or studied. List their responses on the board. Contribute to the list, especially if students are not familiar with wild inhabitants in their area. Often they are surprised to find out that some of their neighbors are animals such as foxes or cougars, as well as bald eagles or otters. Choose one of these for a collaborative poem written spontaneously on the board. Let’s say you choose to write about a hawk.

2) Write “Hawk” on the board. Tell students that together you will create a four-lined poem in which the first three lines are like three photographs of a hawk in action. Each of these lines must begin with a gerund (they probably do not know that term, so it would be best to direct them to start with an action word ending with “ing”) and each line can be no less than four words nor more than six. The last line will be one adjective which summarizes the general feeling of the subject. The collaborative poem might look like this:

Hawk

opening its wings like a plane  
diving to the grassy meadow  
seizing a defenseless mouse  
skillful

3) Hand out the attached verb list and adjective list. Tell them they are not required to use any of those words, but they might find perhaps one word that would be just right for the poem.

4) Point out that writing this kind of poem gives them good practice in saying a lot about their subject in few words. Tell them that starting those lines with “ing” words enables

them to keep building on the subject without starting each line with a word like “it,” and that the one word at the end brings the poem to a satisfying closure.

Teachers of younger students might present this writing experience as a two-line poem, the first line being the poetry snapshot (they might be more familiar with the term, “photograph”) and the last, one-word line.

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Supporting Documents:** “Snapshots” Samples  
“Snapshots” Word List of Verbs ending with “ing”