

How Far Have We Come In a Century of Teaching Poetry?

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A Remarkable Discovery

Helping teachers understand and embrace the use of poetry in the classroom has been one of my biggest challenges as a teacher educator and staff developer. While preparing to lead students in my methods of literacy instruction course in a discussion of poetry teaching techniques, I headed to the university library to see what it had to offer on the subject. While browsing through the shelves, I came across a tiny brown book that looked like it could be part of the archived titles. Imagine my surprise, when I discovered that the copyright date was 1911 – over 100 years ago! Written by Margaret Haliburton and Agnes Smith, this 168-page book titled *Teaching Poetry in the Grades* was published by Houghton Mifflin as an “educational monograph” and contains several complete lessons for first through seventh grade teachers.

As a former elementary school teacher and reading specialist, I was quickly drawn into the timelessness of Haliburton and Smith’s (1911) words. Although written 100 years ago, the authors sound as though they could be writing about teachers today. To illustrate, consider the following passages from the book:

- “Why do so many pupils enter the high school with a decided aversion to either the reading or study of poetry?...The reason, we believe, lies in the fact that in the grades poetry is, as a rule, poorly taught” (p. 1).
- “Many teachers have never learned to love good poetry themselves” (p. 1).
- “Many teachers have no true notion of how poetry should be taught, and lacking, in addition, any love of poetry for its own sake, they succeed in implanting in their pupils such a hearty dislike for poetry as perhaps a thorough course in high school literature and even university training itself may never fully eradicate” (p. 2).

- “The remedy, of course, is obvious: We must have teachers who appreciate good poetry and who know how to teach good poetry” (p. 3).

These statements resonated with me as a contemporary teacher, reading specialist, and teacher educator. I was struck by how applicable these comments from the early 20th century were to the teaching practices of the 21st century. Haliburton and Smith (1911) were clearly remarking on the practices of their time, yet in my experience they could have been talking about poetry instruction in the classrooms of today.

Haliburton and Smith (1911) then go on to suggest a teaching framework that embodies a whole-part-whole approach in which teachers read an entire poem, then analyze the poem and discuss the poet’s intents, and finally go back to what they term as the “new whole” in which the reader is able to independently read or recite from memory the poem with an increased level of appreciation. The bulk of the monograph is dedicated to “model lessons” for each grade level. Three poems are recommended for each grade along with teaching recommendations for each poem following the whole-part-whole sequence. For example, the suggested poems for first grade are: *Little Boy Blue* (Mother Goose), *Sleep, Baby, Sleep* (From the Germfan), and *Where Go the Boats* (Robert Louis Stevenson). Recommended poems for sixth grade are: *The Years at the Spring* (Robert Browning), *Song of Marion’s Men* (William Cullen Bryant), and *The Mercy Speech* (William Shakespeare). A list of further recommendations for additional poems is listed in the Appendix of the book (p. 167).

Historical Significance

In terms of instruction, literary experts have long cautioned against the “one size fits all” model of poetry interpretation. In their century-old monograph, Haliburton and Smith (1911) offer specific recommendations for the analysis of each poem. However, the authors also warn against the over-analysis of the poem when they remind the reader that, “The child’s appreciation of the beauty of the thought and of the melody of the language must never be sacrificed to a mere intellectual understanding of the poem” (p. 9).

Almost 60 years after this monograph, Rosenblatt’s (1965; 1969) seminal works on the transactional theory of reading introduced the field of literature appreciation to the idea that readers bring their own unique responses to light by connecting with the text in aesthetic and efferent ways. More recently, Heard (1989) and Perfect (1999) have encouraged teachers to move away from teacher-

directed interpretations of poetry to more student-led discussions. Perfect implored teachers to use the process of “collective meaning-making” (p. 724) when discussing the many possible nuances within a poem. According to Elster (2010), this kind of open-ended response tends to occur more often with teachers of young children. As students get older, discussions seem to move toward a more teacher-directed fashion.

The Survey Process

Reading Haliburton and Smith’s (1911) monograph caused me to wonder what – if anything - has really changed in the teaching of poetry since 100 years ago? Judging from my own teaching practice and the observations of dozens of other teachers, I suspected that teaching attitudes and practices concerning poetry had not progressed very far since 1911. To find out, I created a 10-item survey to be conducted among practicing teachers. The first goal of the survey was to find out if modern-day teacher attitudes toward poetry are different from what Haliburton and Smith reported. The second goal of the survey was to discover how teachers in 2011 are using poetry in their classrooms.

In the summer of 2011, a small sample of Pennsylvania teachers in grades K-7 were polled to mimic the grade range found in Haliburton and Smith’s (1911) text. Using a convenience sampling method, 100 teachers were invited to participate via an email in which they were directed to a link at SurveyMonkey.com where they completed the online questionnaire that I designed (see Appendix A). Participants were encouraged to answer honestly and no information was taken that could link the survey participants to their real identities.

Fifty-five educators representing rural, sub-urban, and urban schools within one geographical region of southeastern Pennsylvania responded to the survey. According to the self-identification data included as part of the survey, all grade levels from Kindergarten through seventh grade were represented. In addition to classroom teachers, re-spondents included five special education teachers and four participants who identified their subject area as “other” and categorized themselves as reading specialists. At the time of the survey, the majority (51%) of the respondents indicated that they have been teaching for 1-5 years; 29% responded as being in the profession for 6-10 years; 13% have been teaching for 11-15 years; and 7% of the survey participants indicated that they have been teaching for 15+ years.

Summary of Findings

Although this study was limited in regards to the sample size and scope, the survey revealed interesting patterns of response that may warrant using a similar survey with a more comprehensive group of participants. Following is a discussion of the various survey items and observed response patterns.

Two questions asking about the frequency of poetry instruction within the classroom setting showed that the participants do not spend much instructional time on poetry. First, participants were asked to indicate how many times during the week they used poetry in their reading lessons. Almost three-quarters (73%) of the survey participants responded that they spent 0-2 hours per week teaching poetry, the lowest time allotment on the survey (see Appendix B, Table B1). A second question asked how many times during the school year students write their own poems. The largest percentage (46%) of participants selected “sometimes” as their answer while 40% choose “rarely” and 7% opted for “never.” Another 7% selected “regularly” and 0 participants chose “frequently” as the response to this question (see Appendix B, Table B2).

An open-ended response option encouraged participants to elaborate on their chosen descriptor for the question on writing. The most frequently occurring comment indicated that teachers encourage and teach students to write poetry during a poetry unit. Several participants indicated that they teach this unit in April (National Poetry Month). Only one person’s response indicated that poetry writing occurs on a regular basis and stated, “It is always an option when we are completing writing workshop. Some students choose poetry every time.” One respondent admitted that poetry writing is not something that happens in his or her classroom because, “Honestly, the question ‘Who is responsible?’ is a controversy between the reading department and the English department. Unfortunately we don't do a great job with this in 7th grade; we can't get past the debate.”

Questions related to instructional practices focused on the vocabulary of poetry that teachers directly taught, specific poems or poets studied, and reasons for using poetry in the classroom. Two questions about the vocabulary of poetry allowed participants to select the particular types of poetry and/or poetic devices they teach. Most frequently taught vocabulary included *alliteration*, *rhyme*, and *simile*. Less frequently taught vocabulary included *line breaks* and *meter*. Tables B3 and B4 (see Appendix B) show the full range of responses ranked highest to lowest. It should be noted that this data represents the entire grade levels surveyed and makes no

attempt to identify which poetic devices or types of poetry are taught in individual grade levels.

A component of the survey asked participants to rank the following statements according to how they best match their own curricular practices, with a ranking of 1 being the most important reason to 10 being the least important reason:

- I use poetry to help students improve their fluency
- I use poetry to help students improve their phonics or decoding skills.
- I use poetry to teach students poetic terminology.
- I use poetry to teach students different forms of poetry.
- I use poetry to increase awareness of poetry as a writing format.
- I use poetry to teach comprehension skills.
- I use poetry to teach interpretive skills.
- I use poetry to increase student appreciation of poetry.
- I use poetry because it is included in the anthology or core program for my grade level.
- I use poetry as a read-aloud format.

Nearly one-third (30%) of participants ranked “I use poetry to help students improve their fluency” as the *most important* reason they use poetry in their teaching practices. The next highest ranking (13%) was “I use poetry to increase student appreciation of poetry,” while 11% selected “I use poetry as a read-aloud format.” The remainder of the response choices all yielded a number one ranking from less than 10% of survey participants. Conversely, 30% of participants selected “I use poetry because it is included in the anthology or core program for my grade level” as their *least important* reason for using poetry. A separate open-ended item invited participants to record the titles of any specific poems or names of poets that are used as part of their regular curriculum (see Appendix B, Table B5).

One question required participants to rate their own comfort level with teaching poetry. The majority of teachers (95%) indicated that they feel their poetry knowledge is about average and selected either “good” or “fair” from the following categories:

Excellent! I love poetry and want to share this love with my students. We read or write poetry almost every day. (5%)

Good. I use poetry on a fairly regular basis – at least once a week. I know enough about poetry to teach the level of students I work with. (40%)

Fair. I use poetry a few times a month. I’m not totally comfortable with poetry, but I try to at least introduce students to the genre. (45%)

Poor. I never really liked poetry as a student, and I’m not sure how to use it effectively in my classroom. I might use a few poems that are in the anthology since I have the teacher’s manual to help me! (10%)

The final item in the survey invited teachers to add any additional comments about poetry. These qualitative findings were analyzed using a constant comparison method. Iterative passes through the data identified key words and phrases that were commonly shared among participants. Repeated analysis of the responses revealed a number of common themes. There was a definite reoccurrence of the theme that many teachers believe that they *should* be allotting more time to teaching poetry but feel constrained by the curricular commands as well as a focus on high-stakes testing. A less prevalent, yet still noteworthy theme revealed the positive attributes of teaching poetry. The following represents a sample of the participants’ anonymous responses categorized by theme.

Theme: “*I wish I had more time to teach poetry.*”

- “I would like to use and teach poetry more but with our curriculum and focus on testing there isn’t much time.”
- “I think I need to set more time aside for poetry instruction.”
- “I wish I had more time. In this world of push, push, push it is one of the first things that gets dropped out of our schedule.”
- “When I taught first grade, I used poetry and songs all the time. Now that I teach third grade, I hardly ever read poetry with the students - only if it’s in our anthology.”

Theme: *The impact of high-stakes testing on curricular decision-making.*

- “Poetry-to-literature connections are an important topic to cover, especially in middle to upper grades. On the state test, questions often ask students to note text to text connections between a story and a poem.”

- “I struggle to find engaging poems that can be paired up with fiction and nonfiction texts for comparing/contrasting lessons. It's always on the state test!”
- “I really only teach the vocabulary they need to know on the state test.”

Theme: *The positive effects of teaching poetry*

- “Many students are not thrilled with the idea of writing poetry, but given good models and some freedom, they rise to the occasion. I also enjoy watching as a couple of leading questions help students uncover meaning in seemingly complex poems.”
- “I use poetry with my students with the lowest fluency scores. They are in a special group that meets once a week and they LOVE it! The poems are silly; to keep them interested, but it showed to be successful this year as I had students increasing by at least 10 or more words per minute, and their decoding skills which then helped most of them comprehend the stories better.”
- “I love using poetry as a way to teach content material. I've found or made up at least one poem and/or song for each of my science and social studies units. I use poetry across the curriculum. I really enjoy incorporating poetry into my instruction, but I don't feel as though we have enough time to teach the writing of poetry.”

Contextualizing the Survey Results

So what has changed in 100 years of teaching poetry in grades K-7? While it seems that things are perhaps not quite as bleak as Haliburton and Smith thought they were in 1911, there are still apparent gaps between current scholarly recommendations and classroom teaching practices. In this section, the results of the survey described in this study are presented alongside the recent scholarly writings on the topic.

One interesting finding from the survey is that many respondents indicated that they felt that they were not teaching *enough* poetry and that time was a significant factor in this deficit. Writers on the topic acknowledge that poetry often takes a back seat to the other demands of the school day. Gill (2007) refers to poetry as “the forgotten genre” and Denman (1988) declared poetry as “the most neglected component in the language arts curriculum” (p. 57). The teachers who participated in the

current study would seem to agree through their qualitative comments as well as the low rating they gave to the frequency of poetry teaching in their classroom. A review of the literature on poetry instruction indicates that other authors have encouraged teachers and school personnel to make poetry an integral component of the school day rather than try to make it a separate curricular component (Atwell, 1987; Gill, 2007; Kell, 2005; Perfect, 1999; Singer, 2010). Indeed, poets themselves ask teachers to use poetry on a daily basis and connect it to students' lives (Hopkins, 1998; Singer, 2010).

In terms of their own feelings or attitudes toward poetry, the survey results indicate that the teachers in this study generally rated their own comfort level with teaching poetry as “good” or “fair” with the majority of the participants avoiding the extreme categories on either end. This is an encouraging find, as previous writers on the subject have remarked on the negative attitudes that teachers have toward poetry (Denman, 1988; Holbrook, 2005; Painter, 1970; Perfect, 1999). Kell (2005) remarked that, “teachers and students have grown alienated from and frightened of poetry” (p. 97). As an English teacher herself, Kell also shared that view, so she made it a personal professional goal to overcome her dislike of poetry and make it a pervasive part of her classroom. Poet Marilyn Singer (2010) hypothesizes that teachers and librarians tend to shy away from poetry because they are afraid of it or they do not understand it. The teachers in this study did not indicate that they were afraid of poetry or that they actively disliked it – just that they did not have the time to devote to it.

However, while teachers may feel that they understand enough about poetry to get by, the results of this survey call into question the depth of poetry knowledge. The question that asked if there are any specific poets or poems they use in their curriculum indicates a meager range of awareness. The most frequently mentioned poet was Shel Silverstein and the next most frequent comment was “none.” When asked what forms or types of poetry they commonly teach, almost 70% of the teachers selected the acrostic poem, and rhyming poems came in a close second at 65%. After that, the types of poems that were named as commonly used drops significantly; only about 50% of teachers reported using free verse or haiku, and any other type of poem received only sporadic mention. These findings would seem to indicate that even if teachers feel *comfortable* teaching poetry, they are not necessarily doing it, and even if they are teaching poetry, students' exposure to individual poets and varying styles of poetry is quite limited.

Finally, the survey question that asked participants how poetry is used in the classroom showed that almost one-third of the participants chose “I use poetry to help students improve their fluency” as the top reason for using poetry. This response would seem to reflect the curricular climate in which this study was conducted. The National Reading Panel’s (NRP, 2000) identification of fluency and phonics as two of the critical building blocks of beginning reading instruction has influenced classroom instruction in many ways. The influence of the NRP on curriculum choices in the opening years of the current century saw a push for poetry as a type of “short text” that teachers could use for intervention purposes. As a result, poetry became popular for its use during repeated readings as a way to build fluency (Moyer, 1982; Rasinski & Padak, 2001; Staudt, 2009; Wilfong, 2008), while other teachers used poetry to teach word families and decoding skills (Heide, 2005; Rasinski, Rupley, & Dee Nichols, 2008; Staudt, 2009).

Implications for 21st Century Teachers

One hundred years ago. Haliburton and Smith (1911) advocated for the explicit and structured teaching of poetry throughout the grades. One hundred years later, poetry continues to be a vital text form that students need to be able to read, analyze, and comprehend. This survey indicates that 21st century teachers need to be equipped with the tools needed to teach the genre of poetry in a more systematic way.

In the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2010a), poetry plays a prominent role in the Reading/Literature Standards, especially when considering students’ range of reading and using varied text types at all grade levels. In fact, the words *poem* or *poetry* are found within five of the ten identified Reading Standards for Literature: Standards 2, 4, 5, 7, and 10. Standard 10 of the Reading Standards for Literature clearly states the role of poetry within every grade level beginning with grade 2: “By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the [grade level] text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range” (CCSS, 2010a, pp. 11-12, 36).

In order to expand, enrich, and embrace poetry, teachers might consider implementing one or more of the following suggestions that are linked to the Common Core State Standards.

Expand your Poetry Repertoire!

Poet of the Month -- Many teachers highlight or feature an “author of the month” – why not feature a poet? This approach could help students hone in on different techniques that various poets use as well as increase the opportunity for daily poetry read-alouds. Highlighting a different poet each month will also help students (and teachers) broaden their favorite poet repertoire and maybe even discover a totally new writer!

CCSS Connection: Consult the poetry suggestions for each grade level band in the Text Exemplars section, located in Appendix B of the CCSS.

Don’t Shy Away from Hard Poems -- While students do tend to enjoy the silly and humorous styles of many contemporary children’s poets, a steady diet of Silverstein does not yield a well-rounded appreciation of poetry. Teachers should choose a few challenging poems even if they don’t fully understand the poem. This is the beauty of a poem – it is open to the interpretation of the reader. Use this opportunity to engage in think-alouds or rich discussions using a shared-analysis method by discussing, “What do you think the poet meant by that? Why do you think so?”

CCSS Connection: Haliburton and Smith (1911) might be bemused to note that some of the poems they recommended teachers use in certain grade levels are also listed in the Common Core State Standards list of Text Exemplars (CCSS, 2010b), including “The Owl and the Pussycat” by Edward Lear, “Paul Revere’s Ride” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and “O Captain! My Captain” by Walt Whitman. The CCSS also require students to analyze varied text types. Consider how these two sample standards relate specifically to the genre of poetry

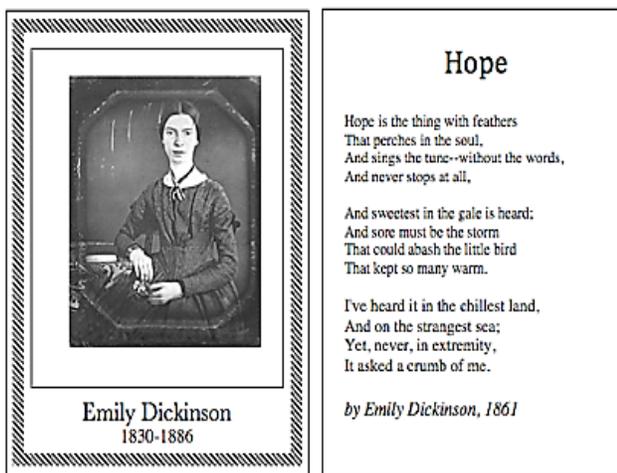
- CC.4.R.L.2 Key Ideas and Details: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
- CC.5.R.L.5 Craft and Structure: Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

Collect Poems -- Have students collect poems and create their own personal poetry anthology throughout the school year. Visit the vastly underused poetry section of the school library and encourage students to discover new poets. Another way to collect poems is to have students create poetry trading cards to swap and trade.

CCSS Connection: Use collections of poetry in meaningful ways such as comparing and contrasting poems or connecting to other types of text.

- CC.4.R.L.5 Craft and Structure: Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, setting descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.

Sample Poetry Trading Card



Enrich Students' Poetry Experiences Through Songs, Connecting to Content, and Incorporating Technology!

Songs are poems too! -- Songs are simply poems set to music. Select some current popular songs and print out the lyrics for students to read and analyze. The lyrics to almost any song can be found on the Internet. Invite students to bring in the printed lyrics to a favorite song and then use those lyrics to complement your poetry lessons.

In high school, fans of the television show *Glee* will enjoy creating poetry mash-ups to pair song lyrics with classic poems! Here are a few pairs I've come up with: "Fireflies" by Owl City paired with "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" by Robert Herrick; "You'll Never Walk Alone" from *Carousel* by Rogers and Hammerstein paired with "Hope" by Emily Dickinson; "It's the End of the World as We Know It" by R.E.M. paired with "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost.

CCSS Connection: The CCSS address the idea of comparing themes across text types.

- CC.6.R.L.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

Link poetry with content area subjects – There are literally poems on every subject! Use poems to introduce a new content area unit, to enrich lessons within a unit, or to conclude a unit. Lee Bennet Hopkins has created a variety of poetry anthologies, many of which are great for content area teaching like, *My America: A Poetry Atlas of the United States* (2000) or *Marvelous Math* (2001). Also be sure to check out 2011 Newbery Honor Award winner *Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night* by Joyce Kilmer as a connection to a unit on habitats or nocturnal animals.

Writing poetry can be a great way for students to show their understanding of content area topics. Take a look at these two state haikus written as samples for part of a social studies project where students researched individual states:

*Colorado is
Rocky Mountain majesties -
Birthplace of a song.*

*Florida has the
Everglades and Mickey Mouse.
Summer all year round!*

Incorporate technology! -- Do you use iPods or iPads in the classroom? Consider some of the free or low-cost apps for poetry. Apps for elementary grades: Rhymes Plus, Poetry Creator, Rhyming Words, and If Poems. Apps for secondary grades: Poem Flow, Instant Poetry HD, The Complete Edgar Allan Poe, Shakespeare, Poetry Magnets, Poetry Notes, and iFound Poetry. Have students create podcasts of themselves reading poetry to create a class poetry recording. If there are e-readers in your classroom, download some of the free collections of classic poetry that are in the public domain – Frost, Dickinson, Joyce, and more!

CCSS Connection: The CCSS support the use of technology and multimedia.

- CC.3.SL.5 Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.
- CC.5.R.L.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel; multi-media presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).
- CC.7.R.L.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Compare and contrast a story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).

Embrace Poetry Within Your Whole School or District!

Make a school-wide Poetry Plan – Move beyond having students write an acrostic poem of their name every year and/or teaching poetry only during National Poetry Month in April. Instead, get together as a school or district and create a poetry plan that represents a balance throughout the grades.

CCSS Connection: Explore the Core and the eligible content with teachers in each grade level to determine a logical district-wide plan. Sample standards from varying grade level bands:

- Primary - CC.1.R.L.4 Craft and Structure: Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.
- Intermediate - CC.5.R.L.4 Craft and Structure: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.
- Middle School - CC.7.R.L.5 Craft and Structure: Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.
- High School - CC.11-12.R.L.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded

novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

Parting Thoughts

In closing, poetry continues to be a vital genre that needs to play a prominent role in 21st century K-12 classrooms. Using a variety of poetry in authentic reading and writing experiences will add a rich layer to complement your fiction and informational text lessons. As we look toward the next century of teaching, I leave you with the words of Halliburton and Smith (1911) written 100 years ago:

We must have teachers who appreciate good poetry and who know how to teach good poetry. To meet the latter need is, in a measure, to meet both; since it has been frequently proved that in learning the correct method of teaching a poem, the student learns also to appreciate the poem to an extent undreamed of before. And this merely proves that in poetry, as in everything else, lack of appreciation comes most of all from lack of understanding. (p. 3)

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Selected Poetry Books for Students

- Giovanni, N. (Ed.). (2008). *Hip hop speaks to children: A celebration of poetry with a beat*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Jabberwocky.
- Hopkins, L. B. (Ed.). (2000). *My America: A poetry atlas of the United States*. NY: Simon & Schuster.
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- Sidman, J. (2010). *Dark emperor and other poems of the night*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Harcourt.
- Singer, M. (2010). *Mirror, mirror: A book of reversible verse*. NY: Dutton Children's Books.
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Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. What grade and/or subject area do you teach?
2. How many years have you been in your current position?
 - 1-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-15 years
 - 15+ years
3. How many times during the week do you use poetry in your reading lessons?
 - 0-2
 - 2-4
 - 4-6
 - 6+
4. Which of the following poetic terms and/or devices do you teach? (Choose all that apply)
 - Alliteration
 - Line Breaks
 - Onomatopoeia
 - Metaphor
 - Meter
 - Personification
 - Rhyme
 - Rhythm
 - Simile
 - Stanza
 - Other
5. Which of the following forms of poetry do you teach? (Choose all that apply)
 - Acrostic
 - Cinquain
 - Elegy
 - Epic
 - Free Verse
 - Haiku
 - Limerick
 - Narrative
 - Pastoral
 - Rhyming
 - Rhyming Couplet
 - Sonnet
 - Other:
6. How many times during the school year do your students write their own poems?
 - Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Regularly
 - Frequently

Please feel free to quantify or elaborate.

7. Please rank the following statements according to how they best match your own curricular practices (1 being the most important reason, 10 being the least important reason):

- I use poetry to help students improve their fluency.
- I use poetry to help students improve their phonics or decoding skills.
- I use poetry to teach students poetic terminology.
- I use poetry to teach students different forms of poetry.
- I use poetry to increase awareness of poetry as a writing format.
- I use poetry to teach comprehension skills.
- I use poetry to teach interpretive skills.
- I use poetry to increase student appreciation of poetry.
- I use poetry because it is included in the anthology or core program for my grade level.
- I use poetry as a read-aloud format.

8. Are there any specific poems or poets that you use as part of your regular curriculum? If so, please record the title of the poem or name of the poet:

9. How would you rate your own comfort level with teaching poetry:

Excellent! I love poetry and want to share this love with my students. We read or write poetry almost every day.

Good. I use poetry on a fairly regular basis – at least once a week. I know enough about poetry to teach the level of students I work with.

Fair. I use poetry a few times a month. I'm not totally comfortable with poetry, but I try to at least introduce students to the genre.

Poor. I never really liked poetry as a student, and I'm not sure how to use it effectively in my classroom. I might use a few poems that are in the anthology since I have the teacher's manual to help me!

10. If there is anything else you would like to add about teaching poetry, please feel free to comment here.

AppendixB: Data Charts for Each Question

Table B1

How many times per week do you use poetry in your reading lesson?

Times per week	Percentage of Responses
0-2	73%
2-4	24%
4-6	1.5%
6+	1.5%

Table B2

How often do your students write poetry?

Category	Percentage of responses
Never	7%
Rarely	40%
Sometimes	46%
Regularly	7%
Frequently	0%

Table B3

Which of the following poetic terms and/or devices do you teach? (Choose all that apply)

Term	Percent of responses
Alliteration	84%
Rhyme	80%
Simile	75%
Personification	73%
Onomatopoeia	71%
Metaphor	69%
Rhythm	47%
Stanza	44%
Line Breaks	22%
Meter	20%
Other	One participant listed “synonym and antonym;” one responded that they use poetry to teach comprehension skills

Table B4

Which of the following forms or types of poetry do you teach? (Choose all that apply)

Type of poetry	Percent of responses
Acrostic	69%
Rhyming	65%
Free Verse	55%
Haiku	49%
Cinquain	40%
Narrative	40%
Limerick	33%
Rhyming Couplet	24%
Sonnet	20%
Diamante, Elegy, Epic, Pastoral	less than 5%
Other	One respondent listed “dada”; one listed “concrete”

Table B5

Are there any specific poets you use as part of your regular curriculum?

Name of poet	Number of recorded responses
Shel Silverstein	18
None	15
Jack Prelutsky	6
Robert Frost	5
Emily Dickinson	3
Single mentions: Edgar Allan Poe, Douglas Florian, Langston Hughes, Walt Whitman, E.E. Cummings, David Elliot, Bruce Lansky, Jeff Foxworthy, Carl Sandberg, Maya Angelou, Dr. Seuss, Robert Lear, Jon J. Muth	