

**Creative Writing Lesson Plan for 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades  
(can also be adapted for 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grades)**

Three local Pennsylvania poets participated in this creative writing project with three 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Indian Valley Middle School in Harleysville, PA, in December, 2010: Joanne Leva, Cleveland Wall, and Elizabeth Rivers.

Guide: *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* by Kenneth Koch. The book must be available in order to utilize this plan.

Using Koch's innovative ideas, this lesson plan is based on reading good poetry to children and suggesting an assignment based on those poems. The poem chosen, "The Tyger" by William Blake, is presented in Koch's book with many helpful suggestions which are easy for the teacher to follow( pp. 5-6).

**Day 1**

5 minutes:

Introduce yourself. Briefly explain you'll be meeting with the class for three one-hour sessions; what will happen each session (read a poem and write your own, revise and illustrate; read and celebrate.)

20 minutes

Hand out *The Tyger* (copied on a handout you've made) read it out loud yourself, a volunteer the second time. Ask for questions. Briefly explain new vocabulary, usage, (thee and thou), spelling (tyger); explain a bit about Blake writing 200 years ago.

Go over each verse. Use Koch's ideas. Explain what a blacksmith is, etc. You will return to the poem in class 2 so it's not necessary to say everything about it now.

10 minutes

A second handout prepared by you should be given out with the assignment written on it (for students to keep and refer to in the next weeks) and student poems of your choice from Koch's book as models.

Explain the assignment. This is:

Write a poem that asks a mysterious, amazing animal or other interesting object of your choice anything you want. You can do this because you speak its secret language.

The student poems you choose should include the author's name, of course, and grade. "Dog, where did you get that bark?" provided the title to Koch's book, "Giraffe! Giraffe! " is an interesting choice, (going from "sticky" to "stick" means a little leap into another mind."

Have volunteers read the poems and briefly discuss them. Which poems are most interesting? Notice rhyme is NOT necessary. What repetitions are often used to make word patterns?(questions, etc.)

20 minutes

Use this time for them to write their own poem. If they finish one they can do another. Tell them to raise hands for help or have them come to you- you can be seated at a desk- to show you their work

Handouts should be saved for week 2!

Day 2.

This hour, for revision and illustration, begins with

20 -30 minutes

the poet/ teacher explaining ways to revise and add to the poem written last week.

Various ideas might include:

reversing a beginning and end of a verse, easily done with the first verse of "The Tyger" and asking the students which way works better, both opinions accepted

looking for interesting sounds, such as circling all the "r" letters in the first verse to hear the tyger roar, or hearing the blacksmith hammer on his anvil in verse 4. What percussion instrument would work? One poet brought in a different percussion instrument for each verse to play with each verse as it was read again!

metaphors: "when the stars threw down their spears/And water'd heaven with their tears"; see Koch's take on this.

and asking the students to try reversals, add interesting sounds or other sensory experiences to their poems (colors, shapes, touch, smell, etc.) fresh ideas such as metaphors, similes, and words from other languages, especially if these are ESL students.

Koch also suggests asking students to write more about a certain part of their poem as part of the revision process.

You may wish to prepare a handout with examples of any or all of these ideas, using either student work or other poems as models.

30 minutes:

revision and illustration

If you can find examples of Blake's own illustration of "The Tyger" this is a natural addition.

### Day 3

An hour for reading student work and celebrating. The poets may wish to read one or two of their own poems or other poems they think appropriate. Children 's work can be read by the teacher if a child prefers. Snacks such as cider and pretzels and picture taking help make this an occasion to remember. Inviting parents and/or staff to hear the children's work, or to share with other classes if space permits, are good possibilities.

Please remind the children that poetrywits would like to print their work on line.