

Making a Lesson Plan to Teach an Emily Dickinson Poem to 4th Graders

Time: 45 minutes of class time plus homework assignments

Note: Teachers designed this lesson for Emily Dickinson: Person, Poetry and Place, a cross-grade poetry collaboration in which high school and elementary school students met several times to read Dickinson's poems and letters, visit her homestead and write nature poems outdoors in a town park.

This lesson is designed for high school students who have completed two other Emily Dickinson activities: Emily Dickinson Close Reading and Round Robin Poetry Interpretation. This activity may be done as an assignment without actually planning to meet up with elementary school students.

BEFORE ACTIVITY

Step 1. Teacher introduces the activity of making a lesson plan. *10 minutes.*

- *Teacher's note: I tell them to try to remember what it was like to be in 4th grade and we talk about ideas for how to make a lesson plan.*
- Students recall lessons on Close Reading and Round Robin Poetry Interpretation to brainstorm ideas for teaching poem to children.

ACTIVITY

Step 2. Students work on making a lesson plan during part of several class periods and also for homework. Scheduling is flexible. Students need to meet once with their small group for *30 minutes.*

Things to consider:

1. How will you organize your time? You have 20-30 minutes with your buddy.
2. Attention span of 4th graders. Think about methods that would be fun for an 8 or 9 year old. You want to encourage them to DO things, like circle words, underline, speak chorally, do call and response, etc.
3. Provide a glossary for words you didn't know or think your buddy might not know.
4. What will you need to provide your buddy? Copies of poem, paper, etc.

Questions you and your buddies should be able to answer through your teaching:

1. What do you notice when you see and hear the poem? What poetic devices and figurative language and imagery does she use? Why might she have chosen these?
2. What do you think ED's purpose was for writing? How do you know (textual evidence)? What is she thinking about? How do you know?
3. What does this poem make you think about?
4. What is the feeling ED wants to convey in this poem? How do you know?

Teacher's note: This takes some time - they have to work on it in school and for homework as well. They each write a lesson plan and then come together as a group and decide how to flex and manipulate all of them into one that they think will work with younger children.

FOLLOW-UP/CONCLUSION TO ACTIVITY

Step 3. High school students meet with 4th graders and teach the lesson they planned. *

Time frame:

1. "Unpack" the poem (20 minutes)
2. Brainstorm a creative presentation (20 minutes)
3. Present to the large group (30 minutes)

High school students use teaching methods and questions including:

- Write poem on chart paper in colored markers (some with illustrations).
- Read poem aloud together.
- Make a list of "words we know" and "words we don't know."
- Would you like to draw something from the poem?
- What did you like in the poem?
- What do you think the poem is about?

- Point to a word you think is important.

Formats for small group presentation may include:

- Holding up pictures drawn by students
- Acting out poem with gestures
- Speaking in parts and choral speaking

** If high school students do not have a chance to meet with elementary school students, they may present lessons or creative interpretations to the class instead.*