

THE POETIC VOICE

with STEVEN HERRICK

Education Resources: Grade 10 - 12

The following resources have been developed to take your Word Play experience from festival to classroom. Written and compiled by qualified teacher, Ella Peile, UPLIT's Children & Young Adult Coordinator, the suggested classroom exercises and activities below are designed to reflect key learning areas outlined in the ACARA Australian Curriculum and QCAA English Syllabus.

For more information contact UPLIT.

T +61 7 3255 0254

E info@uplit.com.au

UPLIT.COM.AU

Curriculum Links

The following activities are designed to complement the QCAA Senior English Syllabus and the ACARA National Australian Curriculum for English. Specific curriculum links have been noted at the end of each activity.

About the Author

Steven Herrick is the author of twenty-three books for children and young adults. He is widely regarded as a pioneer of the verse-novel genre. His books have been shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year awards on eight occasions and he has twice won the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. He also writes travel books and loves cycling (the transport used around the world), football (the game played around the world), and food (the stuff eaten around the world!).

Pre-reading Discussion

Verse and Poetic Conventions

Ask students to write a definition of poetry – what are the essential features for a piece of text to be considered a poem? Use think-pair-share to come up with a group definition.

Present an example of free-verse poetry such as *After the Sea-Ship* by Walt Whitman. Do students agree that this is a poem, even though it doesn't rhyme? What features does it have that separate it from prose? Consider:

- Structure: rhythmic/metric feel, line length
- Repetition
- Sound devices: alliteration, onomatopoeia
- Figurative language: personification, metaphor
- Imagery

Check if the free-verse poem presented matches the group definition. If not, discuss how the definition could be changed and what features students consider essential conventions of poetry.

Present students with additional pieces of writing including different kinds of poems and other kinds of texts. The website Australian Poetry Library (<https://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/>) provides many examples. Have students check the features against their definition.

Analyse text structures and language features of literary texts, and make relevant comparisons with other texts (ACELT1772)

Class Discussion

The Poetic Voice: Text Features

Discuss the benefits of using verse to tell a story, considering how the text features of a verse-novel differ from prose.

Steven Herrick's verse-novels, including *Love, Ghosts and Nose Hair* often use multiple narrators. What does the reader gain from the use of this convention?

Discuss how verse can be an insight into character. What are the benefits of using poetry to explore characters' thoughts and feelings?

Analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of a wide range of sentence and clause structures as authors design and craft texts (ACELA1569)

Compare and evaluate how 'voice' as a literary device can be used in a range of different types of texts such as poetry to evoke particular emotional responses (ACELT1643)

Group Activity Poetic Devices

Provide students with a definition of figurative language: language which evokes an idea or meaning beyond its literal words. Discuss figurative language as a common characteristic of verse, and simile and metaphor as being particularly evident in Steven Herrick's work. Brainstorm types of figurative language and examples for each.

Brainstorm poetic sound devices such as rhythm and structure, repetition of words, repetition of sounds (alliteration, consonance, rhyme), and onomatopoeia.

Discuss how language can spark our physical senses, and find or create examples for each sense.

Break the class into groups and provide each group with a sheet, labelled with a poetic device. E.g. Simile, Metaphor, Imagery, Word Repetition, Sound Repetition. Have each group find as many examples of the device as they can in five minutes. Rotate the sheets between the groups and repeat, this time giving the groups four minutes. Continue until students have one minute to try to find examples not yet listed. Rotate the sheets a final time and ask each group to choose their favourite examples. Present to the class and explain why these examples were considered the strongest or most interesting.

Explain how authors creatively use the structures of sentences and clauses for particular effects (ACELA1557)

Identify how vocabulary choices contribute to specificity, abstraction and stylistic effectiveness (ACELA1561)

Compare and evaluate how 'voice' as a literary device can be used in a range of different types of texts such as poetry to evoke particular emotional responses (ACELT1643)

Writing Exercise Character Poetry

Ask students to choose a favourite character from a book, TV show, or film.

Provide a list of topics (e.g. dating, parents, hobbies, growing up) for students to select.

Students brainstorm how their character would feel about their selected topic, and possible events that the character could be involved in. They then select one event and decide on the overall emotional tone (from the perspective of their character) from which to write a free-verse poem. The poems should include similes and/or metaphors.

Compare and evaluate how 'voice' as a literary device can be used in a range of different types of texts such as poetry to evoke particular emotional responses (ACELT1643)

Create literary texts with a sustained 'voice', selecting and adapting appropriate text structures, literary devices, language, auditory and visual structures and features for a specific purpose and intended audience (ACELT1815)

Create imaginative texts that make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts (ACELT1644)

Independent Activity Writing Blackout Poems

Writing blackout poems are a great way to engage students who are intimidated by an empty page.

1. Provide students with a selection of pages of text (not verse). These could be based on a theme, from a novel they are studying, or totally random.
2. Students are to select ONE page only from which to work.
3. Using a light pencil, circle words and phrases that you may wish to use.
4. Decide on the central idea for your poem based on your circles words/phrases.
5. Finalise your choices of what to include, remembering that your poem will generally be read top to bottom and left to right (unless you give a visual signal to do otherwise).
6. Cover the rest of the text. You can simply cross it out with a thick pen or you can get creative and cover it with a drawing, collage, or pattern that relates to the theme of your poem.

Create literary texts that reflect an emerging sense of personal style and evaluate the effectiveness of these texts (ACELT1814)

Group Activity Character Analysis

Students are to select a character from *Love, Ghosts and Nose Hair* or another of Herrick's novels. Ask students to draw a silhouette of their character, taking up most of the page space. Encourage them to keep the shape simple and include one or two characteristic physical features or items of clothing as part of the outline. E.g. hairstyle, silhouette of clothing, signature possession.

Students are to fill the sheet with the following:

- Physical descriptions or drawing/colour - along the silhouette outline.
- The character's outward persona, i.e. the personality they show to most of the world. Include other characters' descriptions of them. – Outside the silhouette to the edge of the page.
- The character's inner world, i.e. their private thoughts, feelings, values and beliefs. Include quotes. – Inside the silhouette.

Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse texts, comparing and evaluating representations of an event, issue, situation or character in different texts (ACELY1744)

Explore and explain the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspectives in different texts (ACELY1745)

Identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences (ACELY1752)

Class Activity

Building Physical Character

This activity helps students respond to characters in the book. It ideally follows the character analysis handout activity.

Ask students to select one character and refer to their analysis of this character. Select five aspects of the character to work with, including physical (e.g. quick, heavy, old), personal qualities (e.g. honest, mean, generous) and temperament (e.g. loud, direct, shy).

Students find their own space, standing arms-distance away from other students or objects.

Talk students through the following, allowing time for experimenting and asking them to settle on their choice before moving on.

- Feet: Held together - shy? Standing solidly - confident?
- Walking: Pacing - nervous or energetic? Straight lines - confident and direct? Meandering - vague and daydreaming?
- Stance: Upright - confident or formal? Slouched - relaxed or careless? Hunched - stiff and sore? Swaying hips - feminine?
- Arms: Locked straight - serious? Arms crossed - shy or bored? Big gestures - dramatic or excited?
- Face: What facial expressions and gestures will best communicate your character? What is their dominant emotion?

Ask students to sit in their chairs or an audience area and let them know they will greet the class in character. Ask students to think about how fast their character would enter, whether they would stand at the front or the back, make eye contact or not, etc. They then enter the front of the room, greet the class, (e.g. Hello my name is Harriet.) and exit.

Refer back to students' character analysis and discuss how physicalising the characters confirmed, heightened, or contrasted with their analysis. E.g. *Whose character walked straight? What aspect of their character made you decide this? Is there a quote from the book that supports that analysis?*