



Standards and Benchmarks: 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 3D, 3E, 3F, 3J

Definition Poem

Background for the Teacher

Definition: A definition poem is a free verse which uses metaphors to describe the topic.

Skills Needed: familiarity with metaphors

Materials: reproductions of Definition Poem Web worksheet (page 84) and Definition Response and Assessment Sheet (page 86) for each student or for groups of students (see Prewriting #6, below) several old dictionaries or copies of dictionary pages

Preparation: Reproduce the Definition Poem Web worksheet and the Definition Response and Assessment Sheet. Gather old dictionaries.

Lesson Plan

Prewriting

1. Tell students that a definition poem uses a conceptual topic—something that is not an object, person, or place, but is instead an emotion, feeling, or way of being.
2. On a chart, chalkboard, or overhead projector, help students brainstorm possible conceptual topics. Possible concepts include freedom, jealousy, love, friendship, hope, anger, sadness, independence, time, fear, death, life, etc.
3. Share the student sample, “Hope is . . .” (page 83). Read the poem once for students to gain an idea of the form of the poem, which is free verse.
4. Read the poem a second time, asking students to list each item that the author compares to hope.
5. Review the term *metaphor* with students. Ask students why the author compared hope to each of the items. For example, after reading, “Hope is a tissue, wiping away your problems and fears,” ask students, “Why does the author think hope is like a tissue?”
6. Have students select a topic for their poems from the list the class brainstormed during prewriting. (*Note:* Depending on the skill level of your students, you may wish to have students work in groups to write this challenging poem.)
7. Using the Definition Poem Web worksheet, have students make comparisons between their topic and other objects. The web is designed in two tiers: the first offshoot from the topic is for students to write the objects to be compared; the second offshoot is for elaborating on the comparison.

Definition Poem *(cont.)*

Drafting

Once students have generated several comparisons and elaborations, instruct them to begin drafting their definition poem. Review student sample, “Hope is . . .” to show students a possible format for their poem.

Since a definition poem is free verse, students could take liberties with the structure of the poem as long as the metaphors are included and complete.

Revising/Editing

1. When the poem is drafted, students should share their definition poems with peer responders. Provide the Definition Poem Response and Assessment Sheet for this purpose. Peer responders should check to make sure that the topic is compared to several items without using *like* or *as*, that each comparison is elaborated for explanation, and that each comparison makes sense.
2. Following peer response, students should make any necessary revisions before writing a final copy of the poem.

Publishing

Obtain several old dictionaries that can be torn apart or photocopy pages from a dictionary. Have the students use the dictionary pages as backgrounds for their poems since they are writing a type of definition. They should each mount the final copy of their poem on the dictionary page background.

Student Samples of Definition Poems

Sadness is...

Sadness is a black cloud
on the day of your
baseball game.

Sadness is your fish
floating belly up in the
water.

Sadness is losing electricity
when your favorite show is
on TV.

Sadness is a tear
that falls from your face.

Hope is...

Hope is a tissue,
wiping away your problems and fears.

Hope is a bright sun ray,
warming your heart and soul.

Hope is a tattered teddy bear,
hugging your tears, making them
tears of joy.

Hope is a cozy, warm blanket,
protecting you from the problems of
the world.

Hope is a striving flower
in a dried and silty ground.

Hope is a butterfly,
fluttering around a garden of weeds.

Hope is a twinkling star
in a sky of black clouds.

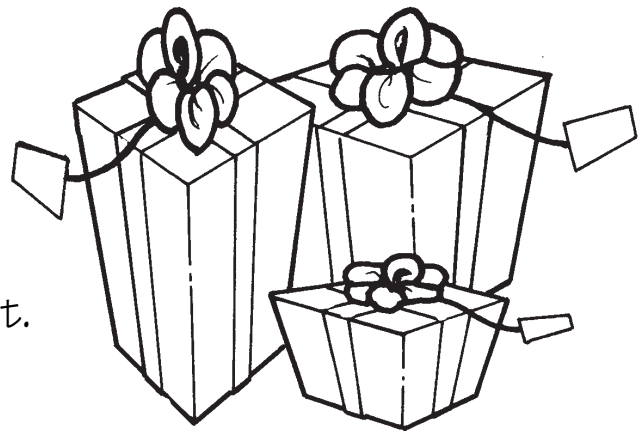
Friends are...

Friends are flowers
brightening your day.

Friends are a gift
picked only for you.

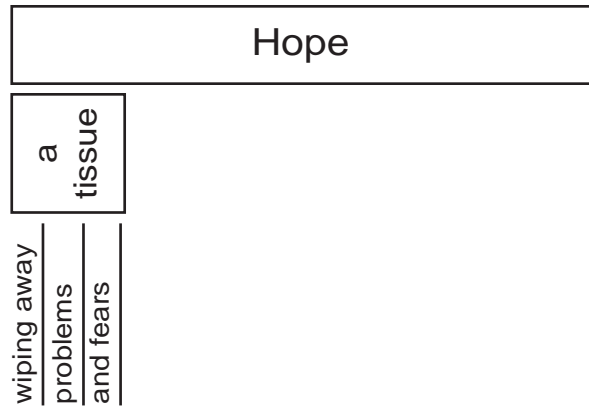
Friends are an energy source
keeping you going all day and night.

Friends are diamonds
you treasure forever.



Definition Poem Web

This web can help you to organize your thoughts and your poem. Here is an example showing how the web was used to help write the poem, "Hope is . . .":



```
graph TD; A[ ] --- B1[ ]; A --- B2[ ]; A --- B3[ ]; A --- B4[ ]; B1 --- C1[ ]; B1 --- D1[ ]; B2 --- C2[ ]; B2 --- D2[ ]; B3 --- C3[ ]; B3 --- D3[ ]; B4 --- C4[ ]; B4 --- D4[ ];
```

Content Connections for Definition Poems

Math

Suppose your math teacher has asked you to define a math concept such as time or money. Your teacher would like you to write a definition poem defining the math concept. Think about the meaning of the assigned word. Think about comparisons you could make to the concept. Think about what the concept means to people. Write a poem that defines the math concept using comparisons to other objects.

Language Arts

Suppose your language arts teacher has asked you to define an abstract vocabulary word, such as enthusiasm, excitement, or sympathy. Your teacher would like you to write a poem defining the assigned word. Think about the meaning of the assigned word. Think about comparisons you could make to the concept. Think about what the concept means to people. Write a poem that defines the assigned vocabulary word using comparisons to other objects.

Definition Poem Response and Assessment Sheet

Author's Name _____

Poem Title _____

Responder's Name(s) _____ Date _____

Responder:

Did the author . . .

- compare several items to the topic?
- elaborate to explain each comparison?
- choose comparisons that make sense?
- use the best possible word choice?

Revision suggestions: _____

Author:

Before writing your final copy, have you . . .

- made any necessary revisions from your peer response session?
- checked for proper spelling?
- checked for proper capitalization?
- checked for proper punctuation?

Complete the following statements to provide some information about your writing:

I had a hard time _____.

My favorite part of the poem is _____.

I would like to write another definition poem sometime. (Circle one.)

Yes No

Teacher:

_____ correct format of poem
_____ appropriate word choice
_____ neatness
_____ correct spelling and mechanics

Score: _____