

A Lesson Plan Incorporating Audio Support

Joyful Noise by Paul Fleischman

Lesson Plans by Hillary Wolfe

Lesson Plan: Part 4

Objective: Students will identify different meters and rhythms in poetry and determine the effect of tempo on mood and theme. (This lesson is derived from the “Listening to Poetry: Sounds of the Sonnet” lesson on <http://edsitement.neh.gov>)

Pre-teaching:

1. Introduce students to different rhythms that are encountered when reading poetry—also called meters (iamb, dactyl, anapest, trochee, etc.). Pass out the **Scansion Handout** so students have examples of each different kind of meter.
2. Working in pairs or small groups, students use percussion instruments or clap to demonstrate their understanding of the different rhythms created by meter. Students should clap on stressed syllables and pat the desk on unstressed syllables.
3. Introduce students to meanings of meter in poetry. Explain to students that a good poet will always vary the meter, because these variations contribute to meaning.

Activity 1: How does meter affect tone and meaning?

1. Groups should choose a poem from *Joyful Noise*, then choose an emotion card from the **Emotion Cards Worksheet**.
2. The group will then determine which rhythm, and therefore which meter, best portrays the feeling on their emotion card when reading their chosen poem. They should refer back to the **Scansion Handout** for the different types of meter.
3. Each group then reads their poem aloud using the chosen meter, while the rest of the class identifies the meter (referring to their handout) and tries to guess the emotion being portrayed.
4. After each group, the class should discuss whether the meter was a good representation of the emotion, and why. You may want to work as a class to establish the true meter of the poem, as well (not necessarily the meter from the Emotion Card, but how the poem would naturally be read).
5. Things to think about and bring up during class discussion:
 - What meter is used?
 - Why does this meter remind me of this emotion?
 - Does the way the poem is read affect its meaning? How and why?
 - Does the way the poem is read affect its tone?
 - Is the emotion used appropriate for the meaning of the words of the poem?
 - Is the meter this group used different then the “natural” way the poem would be read?
 - How does changing the natural meter of the poem affect your understanding of the poem?

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Activity 2: Identifying meter on your own—our minds are wired for poetry!

1. Students listen to *Book Lice* while reading the poem at the same time. While listening a second time, they should note the poem’s scansion on the *Book Lice Scansion Worksheet*. They should now be able to identify meter on their own.
2. Working in pairs, students write a short original poem, marking out the meter, then perform the poem using the appropriate meter (for this activity, they may want to only use one meter). They may also mark scansion for another poem from *Joyful Noise*, or poems from another handout you’ve provided. This would be a great way to connect students to Shakespeare’s sonnets or other classic poetry. Students should exaggerate the meter and beat to illustrate that our minds are wired for poetry, trying to create patterns.

Activity 3: Complex meter, tempo, and mood in poetry

1. Introduce students to the term “polyrhythm,” the simultaneous sounding of two or more independent rhythms. Practice polyrhythms with “Row Row Row Your Boat” (a round). Listen to *Whirligig Beetles*. Is this a polyrhythmic poem? Why is it written this way, and how does this affect the meaning of the poem when it is on paper? When it is read aloud?
2. Separate the class into two groups. Each group will be assigned to read one part of *Whirligig Beetles*. A few students in each group should be assigned provide the percussion by clapping or stomping the beat.
3. The class should mark the poem’s scansion and decide the poem’s natural meter. After reciting the poem in its natural meter, ask the percussion group to change the beat (let them decide as a group which meter and tempo to select). The other groups must now recite the poem again, in the new tempo. Have a class discussion. What did this do to the meaning of the poem? Did it change the mood? Rotate groups so everyone gets a chance to pick a tempo.

Reflection & Essay Questions: What associations do we make between tempo and mood? Why is the music from *Jaws* scary, while the music from *Indiana Jones* is heroic? Use examples from class lessons, plus more of your own.

This is part of a series of lesson guides from Recorded Books and Hillary Wolfe on *Joyful Noise*.

For WORKSHEETS to accompany the projects in this lesson, as well as FREE audio, see <http://recordedbooks.wordpress.com>.

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