SUNDERLAND CULTURE

Emotion Poems

A classroom resource inspired by creativity

Lesson plan created by Maxwell Golden on behalf of Sunderland Culture.

Arts Centre Washington

National Glass Centre

Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art

SUNDERLAND MUSEUM & WINTER GARDENS

Culture START

Who's it aimed at? (Age): 8+

Aims:

To explore our emotional selves. To creatively link our emotions to our senses. To realise the commonality and universality of emotions, and how the sharing of these can create connection between people. To foster greater empathy in one another. To build confidence in poetry.

You Will Need:

Paper and pen (a pad is good so the quantity of work can be seen building up over time). Encouragement and an interest to explore and discover.

Instructions:

Step 1: Make three columns and in the middle column write "Emotions" at the top and a list of all the emotions you can think of as a group.
Step 2: Get everyone to pick the emotion they want to explore today (this exercise can be done many times to create many different emotion poems relating to different emotions) and keep it secret!
Step 3: Go through the five senses, and as they are mentioned write them as follows: "It smells like... It sounds like... It looks like... It tastes like... It feels like..." The order is not important
Step 4: Give them 10-15 minutes to write a five line poem that start with the lines in step 3. They are not allowed to use the emotion they have picked as a word in the poem. If
Step 5: Get them to share their poems (if they want to) and see if the rest of the class can guess the emotion. Encourage children to edit their poems by removing repeated sentence starters (e.g. It tastes like..., It sounds like...). This helps make their writing more concise and impactful. Children can then read their poems aloud while others guess the subject, celebrating both clear descriptions and the different interpretations poetry can inspire.

Example:

It tastes like the familiarity of home cooking, a mother's love funnelled into sausage and mash
It smells like summer rain soaked concrete under foot, a honey sweet nostalgia
It sounds like the calm and consistent breath of your new born child sleeping peacefully
It looks like the backpack I thought I'd left on the train, casually leaning into the corner of my kitchen
It feels like a soothing wave caressing the shoreline of my skin, a dry mouth kissed by mountain stream

Can you guess what emotion it is?

Level 2: The Poetry D.E.N.

D.E.N. stands for Descriptions, Emotions, Nouns

1. With the other two columns, write “Descriptions” (on the left) and “Nouns” (on the right)
2. As a group write a list of descriptive words in the left hand column (e.g. Deep, Shiny, Green, Sharp etc.). Make it a similar number to the emotions you have in the middle column.
3. As a group write a list of nouns in the right hand column (e.g. Table, Brick, Car, City etc.) Again make it a similar number
4. Link a word from left hand column of “Descriptions” with central column of “Emotions” and right hand column of “Nouns” to model the exercise (e.g. Sharp frustrated city)
5. Get them to do 8 each (allow 5-10 minutes for this) and then share (if they want to)

This is a great exercise to help show the link between poetry and the concentrated power of words. It also opens up more possibilities in writing by giving emotional qualities to inanimate objects. It can be expanded beyond the simple 1,2,3, of it (e.g. Shiny, sharp frustrated city) and then applied back into a new emotion poem or used as a tool in their ongoing creative writing.

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sunderlandculture.org.uk/learn-create/schools

Stay in touch

Want to know more about the artist that designed this resource? Contact us and we'll happily introduce you!

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