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A HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF POETRY
TEACHING IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM FROM 1912-2016

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A HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF POETRY
TEACHING IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM FROM 1912-2016

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
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Abstract

Poetry has been a consistent in the English classroom for well over 100 years. In the course of that time the poets, poems, methods of teaching, the teacher, and the students have all changed. *The English Journal* has been there throughout those times and changes to document them. By analyzing the articles mentioned in the journal, I was able to organize the periods into five eras: Era 1- 1912-1933, Era 2 – 1934-1955, Era 3 – 1956-1977, Era 4 1978-1999, Era 5 – 2000-2016. Every article on poetry that appeared in the journal during these time periods is deconstructed in this paper to poems, poets, suggested instructional strategies, and a theme is selected for each era. Through the 100 plus years of the teaching of poetry, the main factors include the role of the teacher as guide and the one constant is the goal of leading students to an appreciation for poetry that can be carried beyond the walls of a classroom.

Introduction

Once it was decided that I was going to write a thesis I knew I wanted it to be on poetry. My relationship with poetry began with my 10th grade English teacher, Dr. Terry Freeman (everyone called him Doc). Doc took pieces from hip hop artist and changed the words to reflect that things going on in our classroom. At 15 years' old everything I thought I knew about poetry went out the window and I was hooked. I never looked at poetry in the same way. Fast forward 7 years. The career path I thought I wanted turned out not to be in the cards for me. I was back at my mom's house looking through some of my old stuff. My mom never throws anything away. In a box there is a folder with all the writing I had done in Doc's class. It was at this moment that I realized I wanted to give to other students what Doc had given to me. I was going to go back to school and get my master's degree and teacher certification. Towards the end of my program, I was given an opportunity to be a student teacher in an urban school in Oklahoma City similar to the one that I attended. I was going to get a chance to be Doc for a group of students.

My mentor teacher was a great example and gave me the freedom to pick the unit I wanted to teach and teach it how I wanted as long as I prepared the students for their assessment exam at the end of the month. My unit started off with an activity that tested if students could tell the difference between poem lines and hip hop lyrics. The students could not, their interest had been sparked and we were off. At the end of my unit, I had multiple examples of students' written work that had come a long way in just a month. With all this material in my possession and my thesis right around the corner I knew I wanted to write about my experience teaching poetry. I began looking into the process needed to use student work in my thesis. I had heard it was best to start early on the

Instructional Review Board (IRB) process, so I did just that. Little did I know that it would lead me down a road not taken and it would make all the difference.

I collected permission slips from the parents of my students during our final parent teacher day, in the event that I wanted to use their child's work in my thesis. The move of trying to get a jump start on the IRB process would lead to my down fall. When it came time to start my thesis, I started with the IRB application and submitted all the necessary paperwork. Soon I heard back that information I had provided was being placed under review and Dr. Baines and I were being asked to meet before a board. And before I knew what happened I was told I could not use any of my student work and had to turn it all over to the board. All those great examples of student work were turned over to the IRB board and my idea of a thesis was in pieces.

Dr. Baines and I met, and I still wanted to focus in on poetry, but would have to go a different route. That's when the idea of a historical study came to light. Poetry has been present in the classroom for years and people always have a positive or negative feeling about it. I decided to take a deeper look at the role poetry played in the classroom. The search started off broadly. I was looking through any book I could find on poetry in the classroom, but that got me nowhere fast. I was on the internet searching through articles when I came across an article from *The English Journal* that was published in 2009, "The Other Tradition: Populist Perspectives on Teaching Poetry, as Published in 'English Journal,' 1912-2005." The article discussed articles that had appeared in *The English Journal* from 1912-2005. Mark Dressman and Mark Faust (2009), wanted to "make contact with their professional ancestors and were curious to know whether their sense of the history of literature and literary criticism in the twentieth century would be

reflected in the writing of past contributors to *English Journal*' (p. 114). This article gave me the idea to take it a step further. I wanted to investigate more than just poetry, but the transformation of the teaching of poetry in the English classroom.

The article that gave me the topic was a good starting point. *English Journal* is a publication that can be found on the internet all the way back to 1912, so that is where I would focus the search. A search on the University of Oklahoma (OU) library website with the terms: "poetry teaching" resulted in a large amount of results. When that search was adjusted to my full topic: "teaching of poetry in the English classroom" the findings were more manageable. At this point, I have all these articles spanning well over 100 years. I needed to classify them in a manner that would be reflective of trends and strategies in the classroom.

To do classify the articles I did simple math. 1912-2016 is 104 years. I wanted a solid number that I could study these periods so I picked five. 104 divided by 5 is 21. So each era would be a reflection of the teaching in those 21 years. Those 5 periods that I call Eras as follows: Era 1– 1912-1933, Era 2– 1934-1955, Era 3– 1956-1977, Era 4– 1978-1999, Era 5– 2000-2016. I organized the articles into the set eras and began the task of investigating all the articles.

The exploration into the articles started off very blind. I was reading inductively looking for ideas and concepts that stood out to me. Once I conquered a portion of Era 1 (1912-1933), I reviewed my notes could deductively concentrate on certain concepts that would reveal the poets, poems, and instructional practices. This analysis is what become the focus on my study.

English Journal spans over 100 years and has published countless articles about the teaching of poetry in the English classroom. Those articles have been examined and analyzed for an understanding of how poetry was taught in English Classrooms in the past. This paper divulges into the poets, poems, and many of the strategies teachers in the past used, but it also has an eye toward the future enlightening current teachers on instructional practices that can be used in the classroom today.

Era 1 (1912-1933)

Overview

Poetry as oral performance by the teacher

List of Articles

“Reading Poetry Aloud”- Horace Eaton

“The Verb and the Adjective in Poetry”- A.H.R. Fairchild

“Can We Teach Appreciation of Poetry”- Margaret Sturdevant

“Modern Poetry in the High School”- Susana T. O’Connor

“Golden Numbers: An Experiment in Teaching Love of Poetry to High School Pupils”-
Annie Flint Kellogg

“A Method of Teaching Contemporary Poetry”- Donald F. Bond

“Problems in the Teaching of Poetry”- Christabel F. Fiske

“Teaching Poetry in High School”- Clara Horine

“The Teaching of Poetry”- Edward Harlan Webster

“Can High-School Students Write Poetry?”- Elizabeth Smith Denehie

“Experiments in Presenting Poetry”- Samuel Rosenkranz

“Poetry Appreciation in High School”- Howard Hintz

“A Poetry Campaign”-Dorothy M. Watts

“Standards for the English Teacher”- Allan Abbott

“The Development of Good Taste in Reading”- Nelson Antrim Crawford

“Training in Poetry”- Ellen Fitzgerald

“Questing in Poetry”- Bert Roller

Poems Mentioned in the Articles

“The Lotus Eaters”- John Milton

“How They Brought the Good News”- Robert Browning

“The Grammarian’s Funeral”- Robert Browning

“Lines above Tintern Abbey”- William Wordsworth

“John Gilpin”- William Cowper

“Lycidas”- John Milton

“Mother Goose”

“To a Skylark”- Percy Shelley

“Our Lady of the Twilight”- Alfred Noyes

“The Courtship of Miles Standish”- Henry Longfellow

“Highwayman”- Alfred Noyes

“The River of Stars”- Alfred Noyes

“Helpmates”- Father Tabb

“Jean Desprez”- Robert Service

“Under the Greenwood Tree”- William Shakespeare

“Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind”- William Shakespeare

“The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”- Christopher Marlowe

“Winter”- William Shakespeare

“Green Things Growing”- Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

“When Banners Are Waving”- Anonymous

“In Merry Mood”- Nixon Waterman

“On His Blindness”- John Milton

“To Althea from Prison”- Richard Lovelace

“June”- James Russell Lowell

“Wishes for the Supposed Mistress”- Richard Crashaw

“Tarras Water”- Wilfred Wilson Gibson

“Song of the Chattahoochee”- Sidney Lanier

“The Cataract of Lodore!”- Robert Southey

“Trees”- Joyce Kilmer

“Shade”- Theodosia Garrison

“Eve of St. Agnes”- John Keats

“Grecian Urn”- John Keats

“Cold Pastoral”- John Keats

“Hymn to Pan”- Percy Shelley

“Cavalier Tunes”- Robert Browning

“Circus Day Parade”- James Whitcomb Riley

“The Garden of Proserpine”- Algernon Charles Swinburne

“Recessional”- Rudyard Kipling

“America, the Beautiful”- Katherine Lee Bates

“Uphill”- Christina Rossetti

“The Raven”- Edgar Allan Poe

“The Bells”- Edgar Allan Poe

“Fable for Critics”- James Russell Lowell

“Pied Pieper of Hamelin”- Robert Browning

“Ballad of Trees and the Master”- Sidney Lanier

“Triumph of Charis”- Ben Jonson

“Comus”- John Milton

“Summum Bonum”- Robert Browning

“The World’s Wanderers- Percy Shelley

“Ode to the West Wind”- Percy Shelley

“Opportunity”- Edward Rowland Sill

“Sea Fever”- John MaseField

“Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean”- Lord Bryon

“Break, Break, Break”- Lord Alfred Tennyson

“The Secret of the Sea”- Henry Longfellow

“The Revenge”- Lord Alfred Tennyson

“Last Fight of the Revenge”- Sir Walter Raleigh

“Chapter on Ears”- Charles Lamb

“Ode to Duty”- William Wordsworth

“Foresaken Merman”- Matthew Arnold

“The Spires of Oxford”- Winifred Lett

“Kubla Khan”- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“The Charge of the Light Brigade”- Lord Alfred Tennyson

“Christabel”- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“The Lost Leader”- Robert Browning

“Sohrab and Rustum”- Matthew Arnold

“The Problem”- Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Threnody”- Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Snow-Bound”- John Greenleaf Whittier

“The First Snowfall”- James Russell Lowell

“Last Walk in Autumn”- John Greenleaf Whittier

“The Baggage Coach Ahead”- Vernon Dalhart

“Crossing the Bar”- Lord Alfred Tennyson

“General Booth Enters Heaven”- Nicholas Vachel Lindsay

“Rape of the Lock”- Alexander Pope

“Laodamia”-William Wordsworth

“Joy in Life”- Norman Purvis

“On the World of Nature”- Unknown

“Courtship and Love”- Unknown

“Bereavement and Death”- Unknown

“It Was a Lover and His Lass”- William Shakespeare

“Elegy in a Country Churchyard”- Thomas Gray

“The Chambered Nautilus”- Oliver Wendell Holmes

“Counsel to Girls”- Robert Herrick

“Corinna’s Going a Maying”- Robert Herrick

“The Last Leaf of Holmes”- Oliver Wendell Holmes

Analysis of Mentioned Poets

Total Poets: 74

Male: 43

Female: 4

White: 74

Nonwhite: 0

Died over 100 years ago: 34

Most Mentioned Poets

1. Robert Browning
2. William Shakespeare
3. Lord Alfred Tennyson

Distinctive Themes

1. Expressive elocution
2. Students not interested in poetry
3. Contemporary vs. traditional poems
4. Student choice vs. teacher selected

Discussion of the Themes

The most mentioned poets in Era 1 (1912-1933) exemplify the idea that students have in their mind of what a poet should be. All three are white men (with beards) that have died over a 100 years ago; in fact, a majority of the poets mentioned in this Era fall into those categories. All this things being so similar limits the amount of variety available to students and adds magnitude to that first interaction.

Poetry is too powerful and too shaky of a topic to be messed up with the first experience. Things are judged and remembered based on that first experience. Horine (1926) touches on that when he says, “The pupils first impression should be through the ear. The poem should be read aloud by the teacher or some member of class who reads well...The pupils should be asked to listen to this first reading as if they were listening to music, for the sound alone” (p. 25). Horine wants the first reading to have power and be given great attention which is why he suggests that the first reading should be listened to as intently as music. He also believes that the reading should come from a teacher or well versed member of the class. Rosenkranz (1927) would disagree with this point. “Many poems are ruined at the outset by the wretched reading of some member of the class, for that reason the teacher must be the one to read aloud to the class” (p. 533). Rosenkranz wants the reading of the poem to come from the teacher, so that it is not ruined from the start. He is not the only one who feels this way. Sturdevant (1917) points to the overall enjoyment of poetry when she says “The pupils love to listen to good reading, and then read to themselves. An intelligent and sympathetic reading by the teacher is important factor in the pupils’ enjoyment of poetry” (p. 442). Poetry is to be enjoyed, and for that to happen, these authors believe that poetry should be read aloud by the teacher. The consensus appears to be that poetry, especially on the first reading, should come from a teacher in the hopes that the teacher has read and rehearsed the poem and can deliver it in a manner that will shake the class and have them longing for more.

Expressive Elocution

“Poetry, like religion, to be understood, and to be experienced, it must be rightly heard” (Eaton, 1913, p. 152). Eaton makes a strong point in comparing poetry to religion. Poetry and religious scriptures are things that when heard require a great deal of listening. If a few words are missed or misspoken, the whole meaning of the verse or poem can be lost. Poetry, like religion, carries power in every word. That same idea is shared by Horine, who mentioned that the teacher should deliver of the poetry reading. Another fundamental fact that Teachers have forgotten is that sound is the basic medium in poetry, that poems are addressed primarily to the ear, not the eye. “The silent-reading enthusiasts of recent years, aiming to speed up the reading process, teach the child to omit the imagined sound of the word and the concrete image evokes, and pass straight from the printed symbol to the abstract idea” (Horine, 1926, p. 24). Teachers reading the poem is not where it stops. Poems should always be heard. Horine points towards silent reading as a means of speeding up reading, but is poetry something that needs to be sped up? “Poetry should usually, even in the most impassioned moments, be read more slowly than prose. The reasons why are clear. Poetry appeals, not only to the mind, but to the senses and to the imagination” (Eaton, 1913, p.155). Eaton points to slowing down poetry when being read as a means of allowing it to flow through the senses and into the imagination. It has been established that poems should be read by the teacher in an expressive elocution to allow for understanding and for it to be felt in a spiritual manner similar to religion.

Students Not Interested in Poetry

Students being read poetry does not mean that a fire within them will come to light; issues still arise. Rosenkranz (1927) believes, “The chief reason that instructors find the teaching of poetry, which they themselves enjoy, such an uphill and often futile task would seem to be that the student does not enjoy the poems because of the manner in which he has been forced to study them, maul them, and destroy them forever as sources of esthetic enjoyment for himself” (p. 533). Poetry being read to the students could be enjoyable, but the things that follow often were not. Students having to dissect the poetry they hear could be a means of taking away that joy they first felt from the reading. A lack of understanding of words may be another issue. “A great stumbling-block in the way of their adequate reading of poetry is the initial one of insufficient knowledge of words” (Fiske, 1923, p. 540). A lack of knowledge of certain words or background knowledge could be the switch that turns students off to poetry. Another element is the effect of factors that happen outside of the classroom. For example, when the U.S. was in World War I for 4 years, some students did not want to sit in a classroom or talk about poetic terminology. Fiske (1923) says that students did not want to sit and read, but they wanted to be moving or doing something all the time (p. 55). Fiske’s article is the only mention of the war in this group of writings, but war seemed a major road block on the journey to poetry enjoyment. Poetry required time to sit, listen and understand. With a war going on, I’m not sure that many students would be able to give poetry the attention it needed.

Contemporary vs. Traditional Poems and Practices

Poetry must be read by the teacher in a clear manner in order to spark interest especially in times such as these. But what poems are to be used in the classroom to spark interest and keep students' attention? "Too many of our procedures and teaching are associated with the old custom recurring pupils to pass examinations on prosody which were set merely to test their knowledge of facts" (Webster, 1926, p. 597). In the past students were not given poetry as a means of enjoyment, but as standard to be tested or quizzed on. Many times quizzing comes right after the first reading. Teachers would be instructing a class or starting a new poem. "Students who have not been participating are called on sometimes to terribly read a poem. Then since her instructor in pedagogy once told her everyone must take part, a teacher might start quizzing about parts of the poem" (Webster, 1926, p. 592). These traditional methods rarely spark the appreciation for poetry that teachers are looking to instill. "We are so hedged in by our rules of pedagogy that we seldom feel we can interpret a poem to our pupils in the classroom as we naturally read it to our own about the family fireside" (Webster, 1926, p. 589). Webster believes that too many times teachers rely on their pedagogy built on traditional practices. He wants teachers to consider taking an approach to poetry that allows it to be a little more casual and create more meaning for those experiencing it.

For poetry to be felt in a more "fireside" type of manner, the poetry being used most come from a place different than traditional pedagogy has led teachers to believe. "Anthologies may be profitably used, however, a richer field is to be found in the pages of newspapers and current magazines of more contemporary poetry" (Bond, 1923, p. 682). Bond suggest taking up magazines and newspapers for a dose of contemporary

poetry that could spark some life into the classroom. He goes on further to say that “working with poetry that is being produced in the daily newspaper and magazines removes it from the dusty realms of the past into the fresh light of the present day, from the dry bed of the textbook or anthology into the flowing stream of current activity...literature did not end in 1832 or 1892 or 1900 it is being produced today just as in the past” (Bond, 1923, p. 685). Bond points out that poetry did not stop being produced in 1900 so students should not read just poems created in 1900 but ones that are being produced daily and weekly. He is not saying that traditional poetry should be put on the shelf completely, but that a good mix of traditional and contemporary poetry is what students need. “With the poems found in an anthology or two as a start, the pupils will be eager to investigate the wide magazine and newspaper field open to all of them. Here will be found a source of poetry at once varied in its material, unceasing in its output, and easily accessible to the high school boy and girl. The implications which this kind of activity bears to the factors of socializing the recitation and using the collecting “instinct” need no elaboration” (Bond, 1923, p. 682). Poems coming from a newspaper or magazine are new for students and teachers as well, which can pull the overall teaching of poetry from the dark and place it around the campfire.

Student Choice vs. Teacher Selection

The final characteristic to be covered in this era is the selection of poetry. Should poetry be selected by the teacher or students? Obviously, there is power in both having the power of selection. Students will select what interest them and the teacher will select pieces that will give students the best experience. For this reason, the selection process is tougher on the teacher. “The teacher must find a point of contact between the life of the

pupil and the content of the poem” (Sturdevant, 1917, p. 440). Teachers have to make selections based off the experiences of the students in their classroom if they want poetry to stick. Poems selected by the teacher alone could result in issues mentioned above with students becoming disinterested and seeking other things. It takes a special teacher to find pieces that can move a classroom. “The teacher who possesses imagination puts himself in the pupil’s place, looks at the poem –be a narrative or lyric–with the child’s eyes, and–most important of all–feels the way that he hopes to make his pupils feel.” (Sturdevant, 1917, p. 441). Sturdevant voices the belief that, if a teacher is to be the person selecting the poems, then he or she should look at the poem through the eyes of the students and try to feel as they would feel.

Another option is for the teacher to just allow the students to be in charge of selecting the pieces. “A free range among a large number of poems of all types, with no indexing other than the kind a student may arrive at for himself, is the best introduction to poetry” (Fitzgerald, 1912, p. 127). Students being given freedom in poetry allows for a creation of something of their own that they could hold onto.

Poetry becomes something that they have found and can have as their own. It also frees up the teacher to allow the students to find individual pieces that speak to them instead of one piece that is supposed to move the whole class. “If the children are permitted to venture into poetry to find poems they love for themselves, to bring to the meetings their own discoveries, to feel complete freedom in choice, they will receive in the net result far more variety than found in the one or two textbooks used in a year’s study” (Roller, 1928, p. 116). Students being allowed to have their way with poetry allows

them to find what really interest them or pieces that move them beyond what a teacher could have even imagined, and is that not the ultimate goal of the teaching of poetry?

Highlights of Era 1

The teaching of poetry in the classroom from 1912-1933 focused heavily on the teacher being the first reader of the poem because they could deliver the poem with a clear speech that would allow for full understanding. The poems being read aloud could also come from sources such as a magazine or newspaper. Picking pieces that are more contemporary focused in poems that the students can relate to. Whether from magazine, newspaper or even a dusty anthology, if the poem is something that the students can relate to and it is delivered clearly, then hope is that the student will carry it through the unit and outside of the classroom. “We teachers must remember that poetry is essentially an art to be appreciated, not a body of information to be imparted, and so we must never intrude our mere learning between the poet and the young readers. We can only guide them into this ‘undiscovered country’ of beauty, hoping that they may come to realize as we do what the poet can do for us” (Horine, 1926, p. 35).

The overarching belief in this era that poetry should be performed by the teacher is something that teachers in classrooms in 2017 should consider. The teacher needs to be the one to give students their first experience with poetry as long as the teacher is prepared. During my time in the classroom, I insured that I practiced reading a poem and could pronounce and understand everyone because I did not want to ruin that first experience with that poem for my students. The importance of a good reading is even more important when consideration is given to the poems being taught. One bad reading

of William Shakespeare can completely turn off a class and make the road to poetry appreciation an unlikely journey.

Era 2 (1934-1955)

Overview

Poetry needs to be experienced

List of Articles

- “The Back Door to Poetry”- James H. McGoldrick
- “Ventures into Enjoyment of Poetry”- Linda Bernhart
- “Student Poetry Has Value”- Robert Freier
- “Teaching Poetry by Contagion”- Sara S. Bashefkin (list of poems on 22)
- “Reviving Appreciation of Poetry”- Ester M. Weinstock
- “A Poetry Unit in Action”- Martin R. Katz
- “Pipe to the Spirit”- Leah Jonas
- “Poetry and Philosophy in the English Classroom”- Charles I. Glicksberg
- “Poetry: ‘A Springboard Approach’”- Evan Lodge
- “Paste for Pearls”- Byrnina M. Garrity
- “Poetry without Tears”- Sarah Thorwald Stieglitz
- “Overcoming the Phobia of Poetry”- Katharine Dresden
- “Less Lyric Poetry”- Marjorie G. Rule
- “An Approach to Poetry Appreciation”- Lucy Kangley
- “The Effects of Extensive Teacher-Reading of Poetry”- Rose Manicoff
- “An Approach to Poetry”- Frank P. DeLay
- “Do High-School Students Like Modern Poetry?”- Rachel L. Dithridge
- “Open Letter to Teachers of Poetry”- Earl Daniels
- “The Writing of Poetry”- Lawrence Garrett

Poems Mentioned in the Articles

“How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix”- Robert Browning

“The Pied Piper”- Robert Browning

“The Babes in the Wood”- Old Ballad

“Lucy Gray”- William Wordsworth

“Solitude”- William Wordsworth

“Boy and the Snake”- Charles and the Mary Lamb

“The Comical Girl”- Anonymous

“The Conceited Piggies”- Old Rhyme

“A Tragic Story”- W.M. Thackeray

“The Little Doll’s House in Arcady”- William Brighty Rands

“Unless”- Fred E. Weatherby

“The Mock Turtle’s Song”- Lewis Carroll

“An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog”- Oliver Goldsmith

“The Highwayman”- Alfred Noyes

“Bonnie Dundee”- Rudyard Kipling

“Trees”- Joyce Kilmer

“The Mississippi River”- Henry Longfellow

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever”- John Keats

“Lost”- Carl Sandburg

“Deep Wet Moss”- Lew Sarett

“Dignity”- Adelaide Love

“A friend is one who takes your hand”- Edgar Guest

“Enslaved”- John Masefield

“Holy Sonnet X”- John Donne

“Epitaph Intended for His Wife”- John Dryden

“The Purists”- Ogden Nash

“Sea-Fever”- John Masefield

“There Was a Faith-Healer of Deal”- Anonymous

“Gold”- Don Blanding

“Measure Me, Sky!”- Leonora Speyer

“The Winged Horse”- Joseph Hilaire Pierre Belloc

“The Fool’s Prayer”- Edward Rowland Sill

“Recessional”- Rudyard Kipling

“Crossing the Bar”- Lord Alfred Tennyson

“Requiem”- Robert Louis Stevenson

“The Jolly Company”- Rupert Brooke

“Good Hours”- Robert Frost

“In Memoriam”- Lord Alfred Tennyson

“Ode to the West Wind”- Percy Shelley

“Ode to a Skylark”- Percy Shelley

“Little Willies”- Unknown

“Let Me Live Out My Years”- John Neihardt

“Age in Prospect”- Robinson Jeffers

“Rabbi Ben Ezra”- Robert Browning

“American Songbag”- Carl Sandburg

“I Hear America Singing”- Ruth Barnes

“The Highwayman” Alfred Noyes

“Off to Arcady”- Max Herzberg

“Leisure”- W.H. Davies

“Gunga Din”- Rudyard Kipling

“Portrait of an Old Woman”- Arthur Davison Ficke

“Boots”- Rudyard Kipling

“Mandalay”- Rudyard Kipling

“November”- Adelaide Crapsey

“Forty Singing Seamen”- Alfred Noyes

“The Raven”- Edgar Allan Poe

“In Flanders’ Fields”- John McCrae

“If”- Rudyard Kipling

“O Captain! My Captain”- Walt Whitman

“The Walrus and the Carpenter”- Lewis Carroll

“I Meant to do My Work Today”- Richard le Gallienne

Analysis of Mentioned Poets

Total Poets: 42

Male: 37

Female: 5

White: 42

Nonwhite: 0

Died over a 100 years ago: 18

Most Mentioned Poets

1. Rudyard Kipling

2. Robert Browning

3. Alfred Noyes

Distinctive Themes

1. Poems read aloud
2. Students choose poems of interest
3. Creativity coming from the class

Discussion of the Themes

The overall analysis of the poets mentioned in this era do not differ much from Era 1 (1912-1933) in regard to race. However, the slight presence of female poets in Era 2 (1934-1956) is a major discrepancy from the zero female poets that were mentioned in Era 1. Also the number of poets covered that have died over 100 years ago went down greatly in Era 2. This shift in poets being used in the classroom is a reflection of the students taking on a bigger role in finding poets and poems that interest him/her.

“Poetry is appreciated if the student is not compelled by an instructor to read, dissect, and memorize it” (Weinstock, 1937, p. 564). If poetry is given to the student or there for the student to find it has a better chance of striking a cord within that makes the student want me. For that to happen poetry should be heard, found and created. The articles in *The English Journal* from 1934-1955 discuss the importance of those characteristics with the goal of poetry being experienced in the hopes of creating appreciation.

Poems Read Aloud

As touched on in Era 1 (1912-1933), the teacher reading the poetry aloud allows for a clear expression of the piece. The same is mentioned here when Dithridge (1934) points out that “the method of reading poetry aloud used by the teacher was a great help toward understanding and appreciation of the poems” (p. 665). There is power in hearing

poetry and when it is read by the teacher, who is usually someone that is practiced in the delivery of poetry, it adds that much more to the piece. In poetry each word, no matter how short or long, is important and must be spoken correctly so that it might be heard and understood. Poetry cannot be read like other pieces of literature. “There is one thing that is fundamental in this process of learning to read poetry. Because of the emphasis on rapid silent reading that has been vogue in recent years, high school students seem to have the idea that one should read poetry as he does a novel. They complain, in fact, that a poet takes a whole verse to say what a novelist can express in a line. Therefore, we must insist that poetry be read aloud—and read well” (DeLay, 1938, p. 587). Poetry is not like other pieces and cannot be treated as such. Poetry is not meant to be muffled or read in the head. Its words should fill the classroom walls and attempt to enter the student’s hearts. But in order for there to be an experience, poetry must be felt. “We begin with the reading of poetry. If the selections are carefully chosen for interest, color, and liveliness, children begin to realize that poetry, at least some of it, can be fun” (Garrett, 1950, p. 20). Poetry, when chosen with the students in mind, can be fun. If that is the case, why then should students not be able to search out the poems that they find fun so that they can further experience poetry?

Students Seeking Poems of Interest

“My first assignment was simple. The class members were simply to bring in a poem or two that they liked, of whatever kind, with a view toward the eventual assembling of a scrapbook” (Lodge, 1954, p. 358). Evan Lodge made things simple for his class. Every student has a poem that they like or can at least find one to bring to class. This assignment allows students to go out and find the type of poetry that they like without

a teacher putting restrictions on them or telling them what they should like. This experience is similar to the one the students in Linda Bernhart's classroom had. "The pupils were invited to browse through the world of poetry before them, definitely looking for poems they found vital – such as they would like to have within easy reach day after day. The ultimate result, they were told, was to be an individually selected anthology" (Bernhart, 1934, p. 385). Students in this classroom again are given the freedom to go from book to book and find poems that they would like to see on a regular basis. The goal in each classroom was to take this involvement of finding poetry and create a class anthology filled with poems that they were interested in. These students were given the experience to study a book of poems that they as a class had created.

Creativity Coming from the Class

Students hear poems and create class anthologies of found poems, so the next step would be for them to create their own poems. Robert Freier (1953) mentions his way of introducing writing in the classroom. "After we spent a few days on the easiest textbook poems, I spend a class period reading to the class from the student poetry in my file. This period spent on student material usually turns out to be one of the most interesting and entertaining days of the semester. The change in attitude toward poetry in general is remarkable" (p. 89). Freier likes to use the work of his past students to show his current students what they are capable of creating. For students hearing from those who sat in the seats before them can be quite helpful, but they may need to ease into the creative waters with a little more assistance. The use of whole class writing is a technique that is helpful in getting students to start writing their own pieces. Lodge (1954) touches on his experience with that very technique. "We tried a cooperative class limerick with fair

success. You know the method; everyone writes a tentative first line, and the most popular is placed on the board. Then everyone writes a tentative second line, and the same selecting and placing-on-board procedure is followed” (p. 358). In a back and forth manner, the class as a whole creates a poem. This technique is helpful for those students that are still unsure of themselves creatively, but once it is done, the class as a whole can look on what they have created.

The next step would be for all students to work in a similar fashion in small groups with the hopes of being able to move them on to working as individuals that are willing to share their work to the class. “It is our custom, from time to time, to have some of the better poems that are being produced read aloud to the class. Sometimes the writer is pleased to read his own poem and can interpret it well orally. In other cases, the composer can by no means convey to the class the true thought and beauty of his poem. In such cases it seems best for the teacher to read the poem” (Garrett, 1950, p. 23). The experience of poem then comes full circle when a student is able to stand before the class and read aloud a poem that they have created themselves.

Highlights of Era 2

“The teaching of poetry in the secondary schools, as far as the majority of students are concerned, is largely a failure. And there is no solution, at present, for this difficult, vexing problem. Poetry can stimulate feeling, but it is no substitute for experience” (Glicksberg, 1939, p. 642). In order for poetry not to fail with students it must be an experience. That experience can be created through the reading aloud by the teacher, the time spent searching through material for pieces, the struggle of working with classmates,

then solo, to create a poem that a student can then share as his/her own. If poetry is experienced in all of these ways, then it will not fail.

The primary theme from 1934-1955 was that poetry needs to be experienced. I the chance to experience poetry in the manner in which it is discussed in this era. In high school, Doc Freeman gave the class the opinion to pick a poem from a list that we were going to perform for the class. I picked a poem that also appeared in this era of poem mentioned, "Holy Sonnet X." I spent weeks learning every word and punctuation of the poem that I could say it in my sleep. In fact, I even listened to it as I slept. On the day that my day came to perform I spoke those words as if I had written them myself, at least that is what Doc. Freeman said. And although that performance was many years ago I had such an experience with "Holy Sonnet X" that it is still with me today. In front of my own class I too tried to give them an experience with poetry.

The notion of whole class writing is mentioned in this era in regard to creativity coming from the classroom. While student-teaching I had my students do an activity that would allow them to write a poem, but as a whole class. The semester before student teaching I had just completed a Multimedia in the Classroom course. For the final project, I expanded on a trend created by Damian Lillard called "4 Bar Friday." Damian Lillard is the starting point for the Portland Trail Blazers and every Friday on his Instagram account he would post a video of himself, another athlete, or a regular person reciting 4 bars of a rap, which is the equivalent to 8 lines in poetry. For my project, I recorded different 4 Bar videos about the different things we covered in class and pieced them together. I realized this would be a great thing to take into the classroom.

On the first Friday of our poetry unit, I created a PowerPoint on 4 Bar Friday and showed the class. The PowerPoint included a video of Damian Lillard on the Late Night Show discussing what 4 Bar Friday was and how it worked. I also included LeBron James performing a 4 Bar as well as the video of my finally project. I explain all this activity to my class then instruct them that we are going to try it but do so together. I stand at the board and we brainstorm topics. Once a topic is chosen, each student writes a line in their poetry journal and shares it with their partners that are sitting around them. Each small group picks the best line to share and the class decides what should go on the board. We do this until we have completed all eight lines or four bars. After each class, I leave the poem on the board so that the next class can see and want to create something better. By the end of the day the boards in the room will be full of the creations from the students and students from earlier classes wanting to come in and see what classes since they have done or take pictures to show their friends. This activity was an experience for my students that helped them along the path of poetry appreciation.

Era 3 (1956-1977)

Overview

Combatting the misconceptions of poetry

List of Articles

“Teaching Poetry in Junior High School”- Elizabeth Rose

“The Challenge of Poetry”- Ann Ess Morrow

“Poetry for Ninth Graders”- August Franza

“Poetry Should Be Heard”- Harlen Adams

“On Teaching the Writing of Poetry” Dolores T. Kendrick

“Who Killed Poetry?”- Mark Neville

“Poetry: Take a Chance”- Milan Kralik

“Why Poetry”- Stephen Dunning

“A Psychedelic Poetry Unit...Why Not?”- Rita Jean Childs

“Poetry: A Creative Experience”- Norma Courtney

“Poetry and the Anti-Poetic: Recovering and Renewing American Writing”- Frederick
Buell

“Poetry and the Hoodlums”- John Weston

“Evaluating the Reading and Study of Poetry”- Richard Corbin

“Notes on the Teaching of Poetry”- Janet Harrison

“Basic Competencies for Teaching Poetry”- Tory Westermark & Bryan N.S. Gooch

“Modern Poetry and the Classroom”- M. Bernetta Quinn

“Linguistics and Poetry”- Yakira H. Frank

“The Gateless Gate to Poetry”- Henry Christ

“Countering Misconceptions about the Nature of Poetry”- Agness Stein

“Rock Poetry, Relevance, and Revelation”- Helen English

“Poetry Readings in the Classroom”- Rex Lambert

“A Photographic Approach to Poetry”- Jack Cameron and Emma Plattor

“Introduction to Poetry through Haiku”- Mildred Fredriksen

“Contemporary Poetry: When Is Now?”- William Fisher

“A Teaching Approach to Poetry”- Gerhard Friedrich

“Poetry is for People”- Robert Pooley

Poems Mentioned in the Articles

“Beowulf”- Anonymous

“A Freedom Song”- Majorie Oludhe

“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”- T.S. Eliot

“Dover Beach”- Matthew Arnold

“The Solitary Reaper”- William Wordsworth

“Stopping by the Woods”- Robert Frost

“Hunger”- Robert Laurence Binyon

“Prospice”- Robert Browning

“Some Little Bug”- Roy Atwell

“The Pessimist”- Ben King

“Mandalay”- Rudyard Kipling

“Gunga Din”- Rudyard Kipling

“Fog”- Carl Sandburg

“Auto Wreck”- Karl Shapiro

“Preludes”- T.S. Eliot

“Caliban in the Coal Mine”- Louis Untermeyer

“The Man He Killed”- Thomas Hardy

“Richard Cory”- E.A. Robinson

“The Battle of Blenheim”- Robert Southey

“Grass”- Carl Sandburg

“Florida Road Workers”- Langston Hughes

“Salutation”- Ezra Pound

“Kubla Khan”- Samuel Coleridge

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”- Samuel Coleridge

“Batter My Heart”- John Donne

“Ode to Autumn”- John Keats

“Composed upon Westminster Bridge”- William Wordsworth

“Travel”- Edna St. Vincent Millay

“The Peak”- Mary Carolyn

“April Showers”- James Stephens

“The Pony Express”- Daniel Henderson

“The Air Mail Arrives”- Ethel Romig Fuller

“A Winter Lyric”- Louis Untermeyer

“Boots”- Rudyard Kipling

“Sea-Fever”- John Masfield

“The Highwayman”- Alfred Noyes

“How They Brought the Good News”- Robert Browning

“The Charge of the Light Brigade”- Lord Alfred Tennyson

“The Daffodils”- William Wordsworth

“Break, Break, Break”- Lord Alfred Tennyson

“The Raven”- Edgar Allan Poe

“The Song of the Shirt”- Thomas Hood

“Sonnet on His Blindness”- John Milton

“Crossing the Bar”- Lord Alfred Tennyson

“To a Skylark”- Percy Shelley

“Birches”- Robert Frost

“Cool Tombs”- Carl Sandburg

“The Runaway”- Robert Frost

“Horses of the Sea”- Christina Rossetti

“Child of the Wind”- Carl Sandburg

“The Term”- William Carlos Williams

“To My Small, Son, in Church”- Sara Henderson Hay

“The Indian Woman”- Walt Whitman

“The Adventure of Isabel”- Ogden Nash

“Skyscraper”- Carl Sandburg

“Infant Joy”- William Blake

“The Little Black Boy”- William Blake

“The Skaters”- John Gould Fletcher

“Four Little Foxes”- Lew Sarett

“I Hear America Singing”- Walt Whitman

Analysis of Mentioned Poets

Total Poets: 41

Male: 35

Female: 6

White: 40

Nonwhite: 1

Died over 100 years ago: 17

Most Mentioned Poets

1. Carl Sandberg
2. Robert Frost
3. William Wordsworth

Distinctive Themes

1. The lives of poets
2. Poetry written for all
3. The teacher's role

Discussion of the Characteristics

The poets mentioned in Era 3 (1956-1977) differ just slightly from the poets mentioned in Eras 1 and 2. This difference is a reflection of the changing of times. Era 3 is the first era to have the mention of a poet that is not white and also has a raise in female poets. The inclusion of more women and an African American poet indication that teachers are beginning to try and show students that poetry may not be what so many have assumed it is.

“The teaching of poetry, like the teaching of grammar, seems to present a multitude of problems for the English teacher. The majority of high school students are simply ‘turned off’ by poetry” (Lambert, 1972, p. 677). Students are turned off by who they think the writers of poetry are, who poems are written for and a lack of comprehension of poems. All these assumptions are misconceptions, and it is the teacher’s role to turn misconceptions into understanding. If the teacher cannot direct the students to understanding, then they may never be turned on to poetry at all.

The Lives of Poets

Most students enter into the English classroom with the idea that “Poetry is a record of man’s best and noblest thoughts, far removed from the reality of the present” (Stein, 1975, p. 53). “Perhaps you believe poets are a special breed who sit in ivory towers waiting for lightning bolts of inspiration to bludgeon their brains, but I disagree” (Kralik, 1975, p. 52). Poets are not these amazing men sitting way up looking down upon us, and they are not recording the noblest of thoughts. So then how do you attack the misconception of who students think poets are? Janet Harrison (1962) has an idea. She writes, “To dispel illusions that poetry is ‘sissy’ and flowery, written by longhaired dreamers, it is useful to confront the class with, not only the correct choice of poetry, but some facts about the poets themselves” (p. 253). Allowing the students to know the poet as a person could work in combating their misconceptions and creating understanding. Also “the children can be asked to search out biographical details for themselves” (Harrison, 1962, p. 254). This search allows students to create knowledge for themselves and gain a real understanding of who the poet is. Students can have a misconception of

who they think poets are, but after some research to create knowledge for themselves, they will see that poets are just regular people.

Poetry Written for All

Students also struggle with the misconception of who poetry is written for. They think that “poetry is a private experience which in some mysterious way is communicated to a select few” (Stein, 1975, p. 54). Students do not look at poetry as something that is open for everyone to experience. “The teen-ager finds it difficult to relate poetry to himself or his experience of life. It is this distance between poetry and the small, humdrum, individual world of each adolescent that must be bridged” (Harrison, 1962, p. 253). That bridge must be built on experience. Students need to feel like the poetry they are hearing and reading was written for them.

M. Bernetta Quinn (1961) points towards this idea when she writes, “the poetry that interests the young, that they will remember, will be that which they somehow feel is related to themselves, to their loving, suffering, happy, or desolate selves as they recall these in the moments of awareness that poetry can awaken” (p. 595). The misconceptions of who poetry is written for creates a gap for students and poetry appreciation. For that gap to be bridged students must experience poetry that relates to who they are or where they are at in their life. Without this bridge, poetry will continue to be something students feel is not for them. “Our classroom activities should transfer focus away from the poems as material to be mastered, and center focus upon the awakening of responses to experience, especially those experiences that bore deeply into our emotional lives” (Pooley, 1936, p. 166).

The Teacher's Role

Some students enter the English classroom with a mistaken idea of what poetry is. Ultimately the greatest tool for attacking the misconceptions of poetry is the teacher. "A study of poetry with any junior high group it is wise for the teacher to talk through with young people their earlier experiences with poetry, what they have read, what they have liked, what they have disliked. In this way, the teacher discovers personal and group interest and levels of understanding." (Rose, 1957, p. 540). The teacher taking the time to talk through past experiences can allow students to get a better feeling for the pulse of their class and what types of poems will spark an interest for poetry.

Stephen Dunning (1966) suggests, "if you'll choose a poem with a particular class in mind and get ready to go as far with that poem as student response and interest will allow you to go, some learning will occur" (p. 161). If a teacher takes what they have learned about their classes' interests and pick poems that interest that class, then the discussion could lead them down a road of learning. That places a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of the teacher.

Can the teacher enlarge the pupil's experience so that more and more poems 'turn him on?' I think the teacher's job is to broaden experience, to help students find more and more materials they can read with excitement, to lead the students on to even more complex experiences so that their responses may become more varied...in short, to find more poems that turn students on! (Christ, 1968, p. 995)

Students may come to class with thoughts and most of them might be poor thoughts about poetry. It is the teacher's job to see where the students are coming from, what they have experienced, and what their interests are. Once that information is collected, teachers

reach into their file of poetry and pull out the poems that will spark interest in each class and turn them on to an appreciation of poetry.

Highlights of Era 3

How misconceptions are attacked matters a great deal. Poetry carries with it misconceptions that can fill a school. Those misconceptions can be confronted by humanizing the author and making the topics of poems relatable. However, the tallest order is placed on the teacher. The teacher plays the biggest role in challenging the misconceptions of students' head on and bringing them to an appreciation of poetry. "At the impressionable years of school we must awaken the sensibilities of young people to poetry and the poetic so that they realize fully that poetry is for them, of them, and by them. Then they can go forward in life knowing that poetry is for people" (Pooley, 1963, p. 171).

The misconceptions of 1956-1977 are still present in today's classroom. The idea that poets are the noblest of the noble is still a struggle that teaches today face. However, in this era the first mention of a nonwhite poet in Langston Hughes is a sign that teachers were trying to combat misconceptions. I try a similar route in my classroom using an activity called "Rap or Poetry." The idea is that when students are not given the name of the author they cannot tell the difference between lines from poems or music. I read and show on the board a couple examples and have them write down "Rap" or "Poetry." At the conclusion, we discuss how many they got correct and why they answered in the manner that they did. This activity should be done in the very beginning of discussing poetry as a way of combatting misconceptions and giving poetry a clean slate for students going forward.

Era 4 (1978-1999)

Overview

Poetry teaches lessons beyond the classroom

List of Articles

“Poets on Teaching Poetry”- Diane Lockward

“Not Teaching Poetry”- Joyce Greenberg Lott

“Click: Poets at Work in the Middle School”- Marjorie E. Connell

“Young Adult Literature: Did Patty Bergen Write This Poem up?: Connecting Poetry and Young Adult Literature up”- Connie Zitlow

“Teaching Poetry: Dehydrated Food for the Soul”- Mary Carmen Cruz & Ogle Burks Duff

“Teaching the Terrain of Poetry”- David Burk

“At Home with Poetry: Constructing Poetry Anthologies in the High School Classroom”- Anthony Scimone

“Teaching Poetry: Many Teachers Don’t”- Michael True

“The Poets in the Schools Program: Bringing Poetry to Life in the Classroom” Gail Taylor

“Booksearch: What Poetry Anthology Do You Keep on Your Desk for Oral Reading”- Alexander Frazier, Mary Kollar, Paul Salerni, Kathaleen Mooney

“Poetry: Reinventing the Past, Rehearsing the Future”- Linda Christensen

“Middle Ground: Poetry Browsing: You Can’t Explicate ‘Em All”- David Burk

“So Much Depends...on How You Begin: A Poetry Lesson”- Lezlie Couch

Poems Mentioned in the Articles

- “The Subverted Flower”- Robert Frost
- “Kubla Khan”- Samuel Coleridge
- “I Go Back to May”- Sharon Olds
- “Shame is the shawl of Pink/ In which we wrap the Soul”- Emily Dickinson
- “Psyche with the Candle”- Archibald MacLeish
- “Patterns”- Amy Lowell
- “Birches”- Robert Frost
- “Incident”- Countee Cullen
- “Chicago”- Carl Sandburg
- “Alone”- Jonathan Holden
- “The Jump Shooter”- Dennis Trudell
- “Trilingual”- Arnold Adoff
- “One Mother”- George Cooper
- “The Secret”- Myra Cohn Livingston
- “The Road Not Taken”- Robert Frost
- “In the Middle”- Myra Cohn Livingston
- “Dreams”- Langston Hughes
- “Hope”- Langston Hughes

“Tornado!”- Arnold Adoff

“Some People”- Rachel Field

“The Rescue”- Cynthia Rylant

“Listen to the Mustn’ts”- Shel Silverstein

“Mirror”- Sylvia Plath

“One Time One”- e.e. cummings

“No Difference”- Shel Silverstein

“The Foul Shot”- Edwin Hoey

“The Base Stealer”- Robert Francis

“Ex-Basketball Player”- John Updike

“Friend”- Lilian Moore

“Mother to Son”- Langston Hughes

“The Raven”- Edgar Allan Poe

“Freedom’s Plow”- Langston Hughes

“Casey at the Bat”- Ernest Lawrence Thayer

“The Bells”- Edgar Allan Poe

“Dark Testament”- Paule Marshall

“America”- Langston Hughes

“General William Booth Enters Into Heaven”- Vachel Lindsay

“I Didn’t Sign A Treaty with the U.S. Government”- Chrystos

“Barbie Doll”- Marge Piercy

“Ashes of Soldiers”- Walt Whitman

“Ode to the Confederate Dead”- Allen Tate

“Strategy for a Marathon”- Marnie Mueller

“It’s All Over Now Baby Blue”- Bob Dylan

“Knock, Knock”- Hyman Sobeloff

“Jabberwocky”- Lewis Carroll

“The Dong With the Luminous Nose”- Edward Lear

“Congo”- Vachel Lindsay

“Animals”- Walt Whitman

“Death and Company”- Sylvia Path

“Do Not Go Gentle”- Dylan Thomas

“The Death of Marilyn Monroe”- Sharon Olds

“The One Girl at the Boys’ Party”- Sharon Olds

“True”- Lilian Moore

“The Woods at Night”- May Swenson

“How Everything Happens”- May Swenson

“Gone Forever”- Barriss Mills

“She Sweep with Many Colored Brooms”- Emily Dickinson

“Nantucket”- William Carlos Williams

“Iris”- William Carlos Williams

“Between Walls”- William Carlos Williams

“The Red Wheelbarrow”- William Carlos Williams

Analysis of Mentioned Poets

Total Poets: 39

Musicians: 1

Male: 27

Female: 13

White: 37

Nonwhite: 3

Died over 100 years ago: 6

Still alive: 10

Most Mentioned Poets

1. Langston Hughes

2. William Carlos Williams

3. Robert Frost

Distinctive Themes

1. Pairing poetry with other works
2. Invited guests
3. Self-exploration for experience

Discussion of the Themes

The poets in this era are the most diverse mentioned poets compared to Eras 1, 2, and 3. The two factors that stick out the most is the first mention of a musician in Bobby Dylan, and also the most mentioned poet is an African American, Langston Hughes. This era also is the first to mention poets that are still living. Those factors mixed with the influx of more contemporary poets appears that Era 4 is looking to do something more than just teach poetry to a classroom.

“Poetry is a means for seeing the world in new ways, for gaining new insights on old problems. Learning to read poetry can also help people learn to read the world better. It can teach them to look beyond assumptions and prejudices, to look beneath the appearance of people or situations, to look past temporary unhappiness or failure” (Lockward, 1994, p. 70). Poetry starts as a lesson in a classroom, but can result in students learning lessons that endure beyond those school halls. In Era 3 (1956-1977), many writers suggest that poetry should be paired with other genres with similar themes. In addition, poetry should be an experienced that is guided by the teacher, yet persons beside the teacher should share poetry with the class, and the students should experience as much poetry as possible on their own. Once all these pieces come together, poetry can step outside of the classroom and have an influence on students that carries into the world.

Pairing Poetry with Other Works

The question of whether poetry should be a standalone unit is one that authors in Era 3 often raise. Mary Carmen Cruz and Ogle Burks Duff (1996) expressed not using units to teach poetry (p. 72). Lezlie Couch (1987) states, “I might point out the folly of having a ‘poetry unit’ at all which relies heavily on biography of the poets and new critical analysis of the texts. I would certainly question the efficacy of spending hours of class time cataloging and describing the characteristics of poetry to the exclusion of reading, hearing and responding to poetry” (p. 30). Cruz, Duff, and Couch all lean towards not spending large amounts of class time having students study strictly poetry and all its pieces. Cruz and Duff (1996) suggest connecting poetry to students’ lives through journal topics. By “making students aware that poetry tells brief stories of real life experiences enables them to make a connection to the real world” (p. 72). Students looking at poetry through experiences in their own lives let them see how real it is. However, what about the students that have not experienced much in life?

Linda Christensen (1991) recommends that students write poetry from the point of view of a literary character. This exercise can allow students to make entries into the concerns of people from different cultural and/or socioeconomic backgrounds (p. 27). She goes on to further say:

getting students to write poetry is obviously not enough, nor is it the only strategy we use to discuss the novels, stories, and autobiographies read in class. But it is a valuable method that can help students develop empathy for the ‘others’ in our society whose stories don’t find their way into the novels stored in our textbook

rooms, and in the process, students discover poetry as a tool of communication.
(Christensen, 1991, p. 29)

Christensen believes that by pairing poetry with other novels or stories being read in class it can allow students to experience life from a point of view that they would not normally get to experience. When students learn about someone else's world it can allow them to better communication with others outside of their given circle. Students being able to see life from someone else's point of view and write about it allows them to grow as people; something that they will carry with them even after the poetry lesson is over.

Invited Guests

Articles, in Eras 1 (1912-1933) and 2 (1934-1955), in particular have touched on the importance of the teacher being the voice that students hear reading a piece of poetry. What if the students could hear the poem be read by the poet? "Hearing a poet read the work in his or her own voice, on video or audio tape, on records or on film, is obviously a special bonus" (True, 1980, p. 42). What if the poet could visit the classroom and lead the class discussion? That idea is specifically what the "Poets in Schools" program aims to do.

The aims of the programs are to establish an audience for good poetry, especially contemporary American poetry; to enable students to see 'real live' poets at work and hear them read and talk about their poetry; to provide a stimulating environment in which students can write their poetry; and to make the poet available as a resource person, supporting or complementing existing language arts programs. (Taylor, 1980, p. 83)

Though “Poets in Schools” sounds amazing, it was still met with some resistance. “Teachers who had set up rigid and controlled classroom atmospheres resented the open, casual style of the writers’ teaching. They point to a lack of adequate planning and orientation sessions as a cause of some of the friction between writers and teachers” (Taylor, 1980, p. 84). Teachers being willing to allow guests into the classroom and to mess up the normal flow is not easy. However, when teachers did open up their classroom as well as their minds the students were not the only ones to gain something from the program. “The professional writers inspired students to write in new ways, that the writings of students indicated that all children have an intense inner life that they can write about, and that many teachers were open to learning new ways of teaching as a result of participating in the programs” (Taylor, 1980, p. 84). Students learned to write in new ways and teachers learned new ways to teach poetry reflecting the positive that could come from opening the classroom up to poets.

Self-Exploration for Experience

Most people do not learn unless they internalize an experience. The same can be said for students in a classroom. In order for students to learn, they must explore or digest something to better understand. For students to get a better understanding of what poetry is, they must experience it on their own. “My first task, as I saw it, was to introduce students to poems that communicated to them, to which they could connect. My second task was not to ‘teach’ poetry” (Lott, 1989, p. 66). David Burk discusses a similar approach in his article on his lesson of “Poetry Browsing.” He explains, “My breakthrough came when I changed my focus in teaching poetry from explication to exposure, moving to a workshop approach where students experience as much as possible

of the wide terrain of poetry” (Burk, 1996, p. 82). Lott and Burk put students in the ballpark of poetry, but it is the students job to find out everything they want to know about the park and all it has to offer. Lott (1989) believes that poems are self-selective (p. 66). Students will know when they have found a good poem because it stops them right where they are and moves them like nothing before has moved them.

Every child is a potential poetry lover, but the practical fact remains that for the most readers poetry is an acquired taste. Good experiences with poetry accumulate...we reach a threshold – a certain number of good experiences, different for each reader – and love blossoms. Those for whom love hasn’t blossomed simply may not have seen enough poems. (Burk, 1996, p. 83)

Highlights of Era 4

Poetry can teach beyond the classroom when the classroom becomes a place that is open both to others and to sharing. A teacher can alone do so much for students at times it is refreshing to have someone else stand and teach. The “Poets in Schools” program mentioned in this era is something that I was able to give to my students due to my connection to OU. Poets were coming to speak and Dr. Crag Hill thought it would be great if they could come speak to the students in my class and the class of the teacher across from me, who was also taking graduate classes at OU. The poets came from the final two hours of the day and did two different activities with the students to get them writing creatively. They each had a sheet of paper and they would write a line, fold it over to cover it and pass to the person next to them. The continued for about 9-10 passes then the paper went back to the original owner to share. Most poems were funny, but a few were very serious. The owners of the serious poem shared with no reservations. That

sharing opened my eyes that students are willing to share parts of their lives to others that could be something that all need to hear and know. Students, today, deal with issues that when given the correct outlet could benefit themselves and their classrooms. That outlet can be poetry.

Era 5 (2000-2016)

Overview

Poetry- Just Do It

List of Articles

“Digital Texts and the New Literacies”- Allen Webb

“Young Adult Literature: Silverstein and Seuss to Shakespeare: What Is in Between?

Discoveries: A Whole Lot of YA Poetry”- Margie Brown & Kristana Miskin

“From John Donne to the Last Poets; An Eclectic Approach to Poetry”- Joel Kammer

“Feeling the Rhythm of the Critically Conscious Mind”- AnJeanette Alexander-Smith

“Electronic Poetry: Student-Constructed Hypermedia”- Peter Dreher

“When the Words Get in the Way: Teaching the Craft of Poetry”- Wilbur Sowder Jr.

“A Passion for Poetry: Breaking Rules and Boundaries with Online Relationships”-

Tamara Van Wyhe

“Rediscovering the Joy of Poetry”- Katherine Keil

“Teacher to Teacher: What is Your Favorite Activity for Teaching Poetry”- Sean

Murray

“Practicing Poetry: Teaching to Learn and Learning to Teach”- John Noell Moore

“Saying It More Intensely: Using Sensory Experience to Teach Poetry Writing”- Nicole

Baart

“Out Loud: The Common Language of Poetry”- Lindsay Ellis, Anne Gere and L. Jill

Lamberton

“Taking Time: Teaching Poetry from the Inside Out”- Tonya Perry

“Student-Led Poetry Workshops”- James Mayer

“Off the Shelves: Poetry and Verse Novels for Young Adults”- Mark Letcher

Poems Mentioned in the Articles

“Slam, Dunk and Hook”- Yusef Komunyakaa

“The Speardrower”- Lillian Morrison

“A Poet’s Advice to Students”- e.e. cummings

“A Noseless Patient Spider”- Walt Whitman

“A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”- John Donne

“To His Coy Mistress”- Andrew Marvell

“In a Supermarket in California”- Allen Ginsberg

“Phenomenal Woman”- Maya Angelou

“Caged Bird”- Maya Angelou

“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”- Gil Scott Heron and The Last Poets

“The Raven”- Edgar Allan Poe

“Jabberwocky”- Lewis Carroll

“Ars Poetica”- Archibald MacLeish

“I Miss You”- DMX

“Good Morning Heartache”- Billie Holiday

“Strange Fruit”- Billie Holiday

“I Can”- Nas

“I Get Out”- Lauryn Hill

“Come Close”- Common

“Unpretty”- TLC

“Hold On”- Lil’ Kim

“Stole”- Kelly Rowland

“Angels Get No Map”- Suheir Hammad

“Black Statue of Liberty”- Jessica Care Moore

“Domino Effect”- Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie

“Doreen”- Janice Mirikitani

“Snake Hunt”- David Wagoner

“The Meadow Mouse”- Theodore Roethke

“At Woodward’s Gardens”- Robert Frost

“Der Panther”- R.M. Rilke

“A Woman at the Washington Zoo”- Randall Jarvell

“Ode on a Grecian Urn”- John Keats

“The Odyssey”- Homer

“The War Prayer”- Mark Twain

“War Has Been Given a Bad Name”- Bertolt Brecht

“Janet Walking”-John Crow Ransom

“For Whom the Bell Tolls”- Metallica

“Oh, the Places You’ll Go”- Dr. Seuss

“Enter Sandman”- Metallica

“Thief”- Our Lady Peace

“American Psycho”- Treble Charger

“Wonderful”- Everclear

“I Want to Know You”- Sonic Flood

“Angel”- Sarah McLachlan

“Dive”- Steven Curtis Chapman

“Symphony No. 5”- Beethoven

“Jazz Fantasia”- Carl Sandburg

“Shooting Rats at the Bibb County Dump”- David Bottom

“Under the Boathouse”- David Bottom

“Invitation”- Shel Silverstein

“What is Our Life”- Sir Walter Raleigh

“The Conqueror Worm”- Edgar Allan Poe

“Out, Out”- Robert Frost

“The End of the World”- Archibald MacLeish

“This is my letter to the world”- Emily Dickinson

“Nikki Rosa”- Nikki Giovanni

“Design”- Robert Frost

“Patterns”- Paul Simon

“Picture Puzzle Piece”- Shel Silverstein

“The Hollow Men”- T.S. Eliot

“Fern Hill”- Dylan Thomas

“Nothing Gold Can Stay”- Robert Frost

“Between Worlds”- Carl Sandburg

“What is Our Life”- Ralph Waldo Emerson

“We Real Cool”- Gwendolyn Brooks

“Meditation 17”- John Donne

“What were They Like”- Denise Levertov

“American Pie”- Don McLean

“Imagine”- John Lennon

“Theme for English B”- Langston Hughes

“There was a Child went Forth”- Walt Whitman

“Mushrooms”- Sylvia Plath

“Red Slippers”- Amy Lowell

“Winter”- Standly Kunitz

“Reluctance”- Robert Frost

“Museum Pieces”- Richard Wilbur

“On the Pulse of Morning”- Maya Angelou

“Days”- Ralph Waldo Emerson

“To Autumn”- John Keats

“In a Station of the Metro”- Ezra Pound

“Gathering Leaves”- Robert Frost

“Annabel Lee”- Edgar Allan Poe

“Aunt Leaf”- Mary Oliver

“Fog”- Carl Sandburg

“The Thrush’s Nest”- John Clare

“If We Must Die”- Claude McKay

“Gray Room”- Wallace Stevens

“Come and Be My Baby”- Maya Angelou

“Buick”- Karl Shapiro

“Elizabeth”- Edgar Allan Poe

Analysis of Mentioned Poets

Total Poets: 49

Musicians: 18

Male: 49

Female:18

White: 49

Nonwhite: 18

Died over 100 years ago:10

Still alive: 25

Most Mentioned Poets

1. Robert Frost
2. Maya Angelou
3. Edgar Allan Poe

Distinctive Themes

1. Music invites poetry into the classroom
2. Power in performance poetry
3. Technology upgrades tradition
4. Students becoming writers

Discussion of the Themes

The mentioned poets in this era stand out because there is an African American women mixed in with two poets known for their specific style of work. The mentioned poets in the past four eras are not as recognizable as the three in Era 5. There is also a

massive presence of music especially hip hop being mentioned in the articles of this era. Considering all those elements poetry and poets are no longer old dudes in a dusty book on the shelf, but real people that can impact a student right now.

“Many of us [English teachers] avoid poetry entirely or teach it without enjoying it or modeling love of it. We may use the excuse that there is no time to spend on poetry in these mad, frantic days of adhering to district and state mandates. We have to get students ready for ‘the test’ and cover other, more important skills and topics” (Keil, 2005, p. 97). These feelings on poetry are shared by many teachers especially those teaching today. There has been such a shift in teaching that teachers are focusing everything on test preparation and in the process forgetting to allow students to have an experience with the language arts especially poetry. Era 5 focuses on using music, performing poetry, technology, and creation to make poetry a real experience.

Music Invites Poetry into the Classroom

Students have an interest in music that is built long before they step foot into a classroom. Teachers should take that interest and bring it into the classroom. In an article discussing different teachers’ favorite activity to teach poetry. Sean Murray (2002) states:

to spark student enthusiasm for poetry, I ask students to lead discussions on the lyrics of some of their favorite recording artists. The preparatory phase of this learning experience begins with students downloading the lyrics to a particular song they have chosen. Once they have completed this step, they create a set of questions or a graphic organizer that will stimulate discussion and interpretation among their peers (p. 26).

Murray takes student interest in music and uses it to not only spark interest in poetry, but have student led discussions on the ins and outs of the lyrics. John Moore (2002) reiterates that thought when he writes, “Popular song lyrics as poetry almost always excite students, especially when they bring in their own favorites to be studied by the class” (p. 47). Students getting excited about poetry is a struggle touched on in other eras of this paper. Music seems to be a vehicle to assist in that struggle that has not been touched on in the past four eras. “The effect of using music as a way into poetry was to provide a familiar hook, an entry point for students to begin to understand how poetry, or at least certain poems and poets, directly connected to their lives” (Kammer, 2002, p. 66). Music excites students about poetry and opens a door that usually is locked with a dead bolt.

Power in Performance Poetry

Poetry should be read aloud is a belief that has been expressed in the teaching of poetry since 1912. So then why stop at just reading a poem out loud? “If one thinks of poetry as inherently oral – and we do – then it follows that this orality ought to shape the ways we teach. Rather than training students to dig up symbols or trace thematic patterns of poetry, we should help them see, hear, and feel what Scholes calls its ‘public powers’ and experience its ‘private pleasures’ for themselves” (Ellis, Gere, & Lamberton, 2003, p. 44). Students can get just as much if not more out of poetry by performing it. “The very task of having perform a poem requires students to confront the many concepts that scholars have given formal names to” (Ellis et al., 2003, p. 46). All those elements that test seek in students being able to identify leap off the page and become alive through a performance. “Performing a poem, using the whole body with limbs, facial expression, and voice, requires students to go farther in understanding a poem than does strip-mining

poems for technical terms” (Ellis et al., 2003, p. 46). Students going further in poetry is the ultimate goal.

Teachers can read a poem to students and they can pick up obvious aspects of a poem, but for it to spark something that will last beyond that reading poetry needs to be performed. “Performance is the mode of communication that moves poetry from a quiet experience between a reader and a page to an interactive experience between a poet and audience. Performance poetry can, ultimately, lead students back to the page, though when they return to the page they return with a way of reading that allows them to hear and see and feel and do the poem differently” (Ellis et al., 2003, p. 49). For students to truly read poetry they must enact it, and performance poetry allows for that. For a piece to be performed, it takes a true understanding of every word on every line. The poem has to be something that is inside of a performer. Once it is performed, the performer has given the audience everything within them and both performer and audience have an appreciation and understanding of the piece that an oral reading could not give. “We see the oral language of poetry performance as a route teachers can take to introduce their students to the poems of published contemporary and canonical poets. Those teachers who want their students to engage poetry written by others can develop units that focus on student performance in lieu of teacher-led explication” (Ellis et al., 2003, p. 47).

Technology Upgrades Tradition

Technology is a game changer in the classroom. Students having the internet at their fingertips allows teachers to move away from more traditional methods of instruction. One of those moves is getting rid of a physical textbook. Allen Webb (2007) discusses this idea in his article, “Digital Texts and the New Literacies,” when he

mentions cancelling a textbook order and having students explore for poetry on the internet for the beginning weeks of class (p. 83). Webb moving away from tradition to technology allows students to find poems that are of interest to them. They also came across sites that “featured not only the poetic texts but also recordings of poems read aloud, often by the poet” (Webb, 2007, p. 84). Students being able to hear the poetry read and, at times, from the poet themselves is a privilege that regular textbooks do not allow. Using technology instead of textbooks or magazines open up a world of poetry that students in the past could not experience. In this way, poetry was not something dead in a book. “The freedom to move from site to site, richly exploring the resources available, was empowering. As students created links to their favorite poems and published these on their blog sites, they were creating anthologies, inviting other students in the class to read their favorite poems and comment” (Webb, 2007, p. 84). Students can create their own digital textbooks and share them with classmates. Technology replacing the textbook reveals a new way for students to read poetry, but it also created a new way to interact.

Most teachers teach more than one class; thus they teach the same lesson many times and have students doing the same thing. What if there were a way for students from different classes or even different teachers to interact together? Technology makes it possible. Joel Kammar examines a group of English teachers coming together to allow more students to interact in his article on a wide ranging approach to teaching poetry. Kammer (2002) writes:

We wanted to break through the limitations of single classrooms, or even all the classes taught by a given teacher, to widen the pool of available readers and responders. So we created an online conversation on *myclass.net*, registered students with passwords

and access to the public areas, and required students to post at least two original poems and respond to at least five poems by other students. (p. 67)

The teachers created an online forum and required students to post and reply on the work of their classmates. The postings at first were very generic, warm and supportive. However, as time passed and students got more comfortable, the feedback become more critical, causing the revising and overall work to improve (Kammer, 2002, p. 68). In a classroom setting, sometimes it is not easy for students to give or receive feedback. Placing that forum online allowed for students to feel more comfortable and open up so that more students contributed to the conversation. These types of forms are now a staple for online classes in college.

Technology has given an alternative to the textbook, class discussion, and also the research paper. In his article, “Electronic Poetry: Student-Constructed Hypermedia,” Peter Dreher brings up his want for students to be the creator of technology. For that reason, he had his students produce a multimedia project at the end of their poetry unit. “These multimedia projects were very worthwhile, and it is clear that authoring programs has become the blank pages, pencils, and brushes of our times. But, in the final analysis, what fills those pages—those screens—is not electronically driven; it comes from the students’ imaginations” (Dreher, 2002, p. 72). Dreher understands the transition of the classroom to technology and has his students completing multimedia projects. The use of technology in the classroom is endless. From textbooks, to discussion to projects the ability for students to do poetry through technology is numerous and every changing.

Students Becoming Writers

“The real dilemma of teaching poetry is not deciphering which poems to teach and how to teach them, but unraveling how we can best teach students to write their own poetry. How can I make writing poetry relevant, interesting, and possible?” (Baart, 2002, p. 98). The question Nicole Baart is posing is something that has not been covered much in any era. The writing of poetry is just as much if not more of a struggle with students than reading poetry. So, how can a teacher go about teaching poetry writing? Baart (2002) suggests using senses of smell, taste, hearing and sight to teach students to “look past the ordinary, be aware of the world around them, and find inspiration in perfectly normal, uninspiring places” (p. 99). Baart suggests a workshop type of experience. Tonya Perry recommends that teachers show students how they write. She says, “we need to model our poetry writing process for students and let them observe and examine our thinking as we write. We can use those models, write with students, and employ collaborative group writes” (Perry, 2006, p. 111). Perry believes that writing poetry should be done in a “I Do, We Do, You Do” manner. This approach allows students to see the writing process, try it with assistance then write on their own. “Bringing students to poetry through writing lets them experience the success and satisfaction of writing poetry and helps them gain confidence as they listen to and understand the poems of their peers” (Keil, 2005, p. 99).

Highlights of Era 5

“Poetry is a powerful teaching tool. Let’s not be guilty of dissecting it so that there is nothing left but the poem’s skeleton” (Perry, 2006, p. 113). For “it is our task as English teachers to continue the quest for lessons that will bring out the poetry in our students” (Baart, 2002, p. 103). The start is with music. Teachers should allow the music

that students enjoy to come into the classroom and bring with it poetry. Music also leads the way for performance poetry which takes the words from the pages of the textbooks and brings them to life always for greater knowledge of the piece. Those poems do not need to come from textbooks in fact, textbooks, discussions and papers can be substituted with technology and all it has to offer the classroom. Google Docs is an amazing program that allows students to share and work together. That sharing could occur in one class, one teacher or a whole grade. A resource that was not available to teachers in the past, but current teachers have due to the advancement in technology. Writing is the final piece. Students watching the teacher, working with the teacher and then doing on their own is how poetry writing is best taught in the classroom.

Performance poetry is an example of just doing poetry that can be helpful especially in the work of standardized testing that teachers are teaching in today. For students to perform a poem they must learn the ins and outs of it all. That type of understanding is what standardized test are trying to test for. Many times teachers turn poetry into a test prep type of lesson that only focuses in on what the students need to know for the test. That type of instruction is tough on the students and teacher. Using performance poetry to allow students to gain knowledge of a poem as well as the confidence to perform it in front of their classmates is preparing the student for the test in a way that taking notes on definitions cannot. Students doing poetry can be a tool in preparing students for a standardized test and leading them down the path to poetry appreciation.

Conclusion

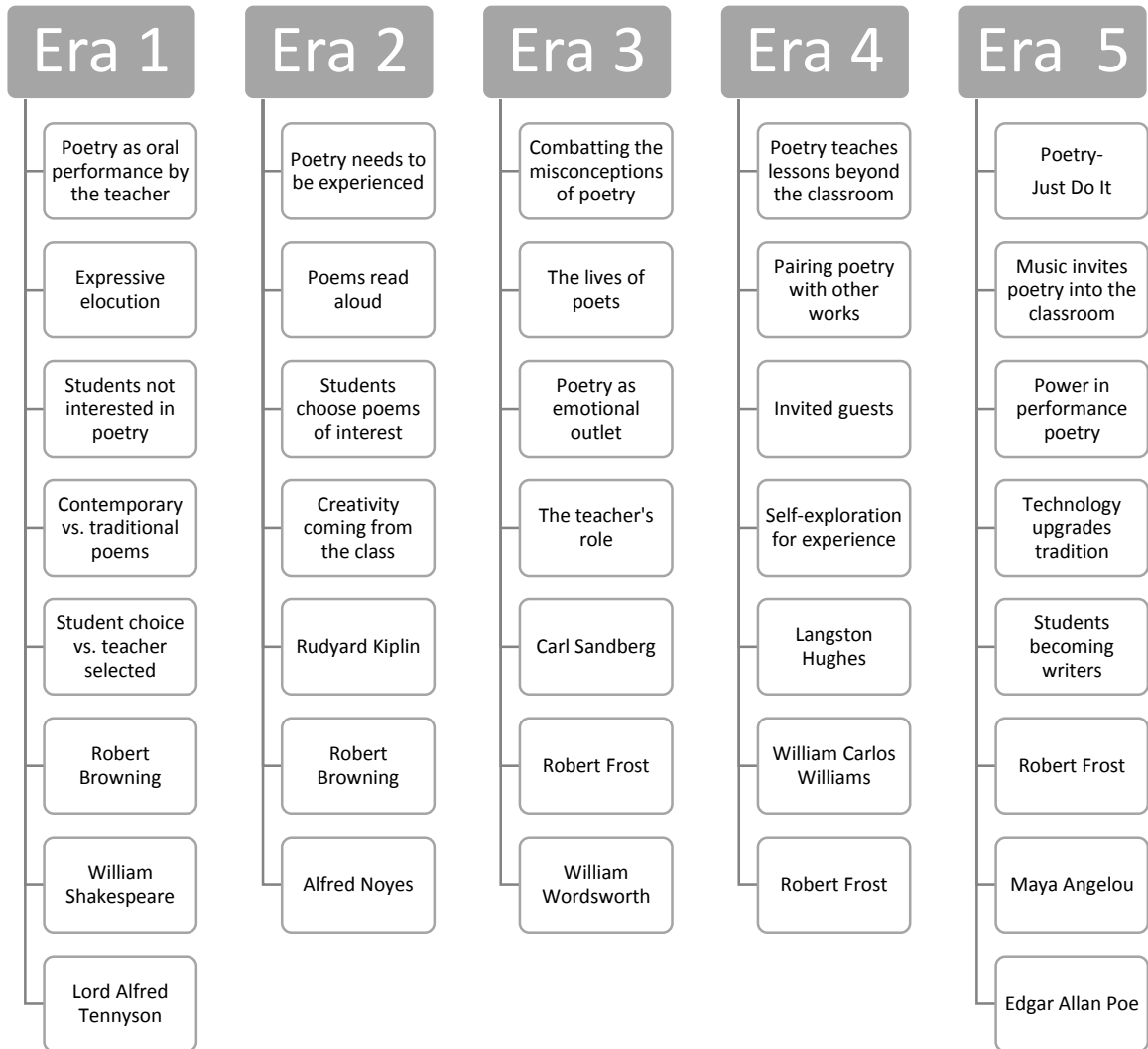


Table 1. Summary of Each Era

After reading over 150 articles spanning 100 plus years on the teaching of poetry I come away with a few thoughts and some personal reflection. The table above is a summary of each era. When the eras are placed next to each other the transition becomes a lot more apparent. Although each era has their own overviews and themes they could all be placed together and going forward for poetry teaching in the classroom it is important that each plays a role in the classroom.

Teachers in the classroom today can take a look at the strategies of the teachers in the past and use some of them in their current classroom. I have found new approaches such as not having just a poetry unit, letting students find poetry that they enjoy, and allowing students to make their own way down the road to poetry appreciation. These are all methods that I plan to use in my future classes when teaching poetry.

To start off my teaching, I will do an activity similar to the “Rap or Poetry” one I mentioned in Era 3, but it would just be the lines on the board. Every few days I would change the lines until multiple students wanted to know what was the meaning behind the words. I would wait until the interest is there from the students, so that poetry can be something that they seek out.

In trying to continue with my students seeking poetry, following the “Rap or Poetry” activity I would make use of technology (if available) and have each student find the lyrics to their favorite song and two poems that interest them. Music has made an entrance into the classroom with the first activity and as shown through Era 5 it is important once it is in the classroom that it has a consistent presence there. These lessons are just a couple of the things that I would do to allow my students to find their way down

the road of poetry appreciation. But above all the strategies mentioned and experiences covered throughout this paper the most important person is the teacher.

In my approach to the teaching of poetry I thought I needed to be the leader of the class. To stand in front of them and show them how to get down the road to achieve an appreciation for poetry, and I did so fashion that I would not repeat. Reading all the material that I have read has allowed me to see that the teacher in the English classroom cannot be the stand in front leader, but a guide. By teaching on a student centered approach to the teaching of poetry it allows students to find their own way down the path. Some may run, others walk. A few will get lost or take a wrong turn. A couple may just need a break, but through it all if the teacher wants their students to find an appreciation for poetry then that teacher must allow students to get there on their own. It is only in that manner that students can come to a true appreciation of poetry.

Changes happen: years, students, curriculum, material, and methods; they have for over 100 years and they will continue to change. However, if that teacher that stands before a classroom of students has a fire burning inside of them for poetry, then when the bell rings to end that class and the months turn on that calendar, and the time comes for those students to leave that teacher, they will do so with at least a little bit of that fire for poetry burning inside of them. For as long as there are teachers that possess an appreciation for poetry there too will be students carrying with them an appreciation. For me it was Dr. Freeman and hopefully one day a student from my classes can say that they appreciate poetry because of Mr. Chambliss.

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