

## The Junior Memory Championship

### Curriculum Lesson Plan 1: English A

#### Analysing poetry / developing memory skills

##### Context

This is an hour-long English Literacy lesson, exploring some of the skills necessary to read and discuss poetry, and showing the children how useful it is to be able to memorise a list of key ideas. As well as learning more about analysing poetry, this lesson develops creative memory skills to help remember lists of any kind.

##### Learning Objectives

- To know a range of poetic techniques to look for when reading a poem.
- To be able to remember a list of useful ideas – as prompts for doing something well.

##### Resources (below)

- Three poems (or select your own to suit your class)
- *Ideas Grid*

**0-5 mins:** Ask the question: What is a poem? Discuss the children's ideas. Focus on the idea that a poem is a clever way of using words, and explain that they are going to learn the skills required to explore and describe these

'clever ways'. Say that they'll be using memory techniques to remember their best ideas so that they can use them whenever they want to get the most out of a poem.

**5-20 mins:** Read a poem aloud – for example, Poem 1, below – then display the text. What feelings does it evoke about ... (for example, the weather?) Write up a list of the children's ideas.

So, *why* does the reader have these reactions? Re-read the poem, labelling all the poetic techniques the children can find (eg rhyme, rhythm, imagery, metaphor ...)

Introduce a second, contrasting poem: eg Poem 2, below. How does it make its readers feel about the subject this time? Look for some of the same techniques being used to create different effects. Are there new techniques to add to the list?

Summarise all these ideas about techniques by creating a 'Poetry Detective' list on the board: the key things to look for when analysing any poem (no more than ten).

**20-40 mins:** The children try analysing a third poem by themselves – eg Poem 3, below – using the *Ideas Grid* and the 'Poetry Detective' list to help them. The Ideas Grid is designed to be differentiated for individual children. The teacher can fill in areas of the grid as appropriate: for example, some children can have the first column filled in completely, showing them exactly what to look for, while others might benefit from being given all the examples in column 2 to work from.

**40-45 mins:** Share some of the children's best ideas. Have they found examples of all the things on the main list?

**45-60 mins:** Tell the children that they are now going to memorise the list of poetic techniques. Doing this will help them to explore any poem they read, and improve their memory skills in general.

To remember the list, they're going to create a memorable picture to represent each item. Then they'll place these pictures around a journey to help fix them in their minds.

Ask for the children's suggestions about images for each idea on the list. For example, 'rhythm' could be represented by a drum-kit; 'rhyme' could be a nursery-rhyme character; 'imagery' could be a priceless painting.

Explain that familiar rooms and buildings are great for holding images like these. Use the classroom as an example. Start at the door, then move in a clear path around the room, stopping in different areas, at pieces of furniture etc, and discussing ways of 'fixing' each image in place.

For example ...

... the route starts in the doorway. If the first word in the list was 'rhythm', and the image chosen was a drum-kit, you could ask the children to imagine there was a drum-kit blocking the entrance to the classroom. Can they imagine beating the drums? How loud would the noise be? Encourage them to activate all their senses, and to create unusual, exaggerated, memorable images.

If the next image was a nursery-rhyme character to represent 'rhyme', and the next location in the route was a cupboard, the children could imagine Humpty Dumpty falling out through the cupboard doors, or another familiar character from a rhyme sitting on top of the cupboard. Encourage them to create their own striking images to remind them of each idea on the list. If

time and space allow, the children can physically walk around the route with you.

Continue to work your way around the room until all the images have been given locations.

Can the whole class now use the images and the route to call out each word on the list in turn? Can they look around the classroom to 'find' the images they fixed in place, then work out what each one represents? Does anyone think they can say the whole list from memory – backwards as well as forwards?

Finally, from memory, can each child write out the list to stick into their book?

Poem 1:

**'Rain Before Dawn'**

**By F. Scott Fitzgerald**

The dull, faint patter in the drooping hours  
Drifts in upon my sleep and fills my hair  
With damp; the burden of the heavy air  
Is strewn upon me where my tired soul cowers,  
Shrinking like some lone queen in empty towers Dying.

Blind with unrest I grow aware:

The pounding of broad wings drifts down the stair And  
sates me like the heavy scent of flowers.

I lie upon my heart. My eyes like hands  
Grip at the soggy pillow. Now the dawn  
Tears from her wetted breast the splattered blouse  
Of night; lead-eyed and moist she straggles o'er the lawn,  
Between the curtains brooding stares and stands  
Like some drenched swimmer -- Death's within the house!

Poem 2:

**'Rain in Summer'**

**By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

How beautiful the rain!  
After the dust and heat,  
In the broad and fiery street,  
In the narrow lane,  
How beautiful is the rain! How  
it clatters along the roofs, Like  
the tramp of hoofs!

How it gushes and struggles out  
From the throat of the overflowing spout!  
Across the window pane  
It pours and pours;  
And swift and wide,  
With a muddy tide,

Like a river down the gutter it roars The  
rain, the welcome rain!

Poem 3:

**'From a Railway Carriage'**  
**By Robert Louis Stevenson**

Faster than faeries, faster than witches,  
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches; And  
charging along like troops in a battle,  
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:  
All of the sights of the hill and the plain  
Fly as thick as driving rain;  
And ever again, in the wink of an eye, Painted  
stations whistle by.

Here is a child who clambers and scrambles,  
All by himself and gathering brambles;  
Here is a tramp who stands and grazes;




<b>Things to look out for when reading a poem</b>
