

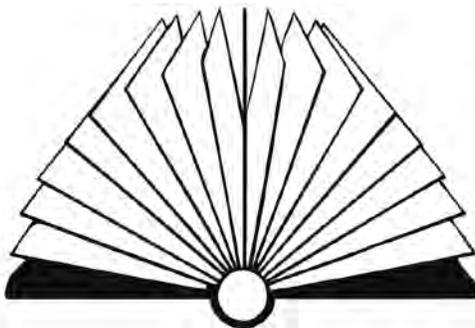
Poetry 130



Poetry for Northern Learners

English 130

Developed by



NWT Literacy Council

2011

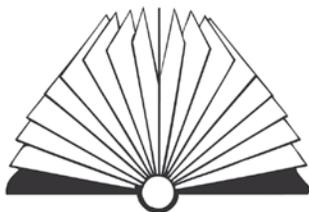
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Krystine Hogan chose the poems and developed the activities for this resource. Lisa Campbell did the layout and design.

Contact the NWT Literacy Council to get copies of this resource. You can also download it from our website.



NWT Literacy Council

NWT Literacy Council

Box 761, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N6

Phone toll free: 1-866-599-6758

Phone Yellowknife: (867) 873-9262

Fax: (867) 873-2176

Email: nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca

Website: www.nwt.literacy.ca

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Introduction

What is Poetry?

Many instructors like to have a clear and complete definition of the subject matter they are planning to teach, but poetry is not easy to define. A quick Internet search will reveal that there are almost as many definitions for poetry as there are poets, and dictionaries don't provide much help either, defining poetry, for example, as the "art or work of a poet" and a poem as "a metrical composition, usually concerned with feeling or imaginative description."¹ However, maybe not having one clear definition of poetry doesn't really matter when you're "teaching" poetry. Poetry communicates a lot of meaning on many different levels. In addition, each poet has his or her own style and perspective, and each reader may have his or her own personal response and understanding. So, what is important for instructors teaching poetry, then, is planning for learner interactions with poems rather than planning to deliver a single explanation of what poetry is or what a poem means.

Even though poetry may be hard to define, it is not that hard to recognize. Most forms of poetry share at least some of these characteristics:

- words that sound the same (rhyming)
- repetition of sounds (alliteration, assonance, and consonance)
- a beat or pulse to the words and lines (rhythm)
- vivid mind pictures, created by appeals to the senses (images)
- unusual or strange comparisons (simile, metaphor, and personification)
- words that have special or extra meaning (symbol)
- unconventional, creative placement of the text on a page
- unconventional use of grammar and writing mechanics, especially punctuation and capitalization

Why Read Poetry?

Poetry is read for enjoyment and insight. People of all cultures, throughout time, have created and valued poetry in the forms of songs, chants, prayers, legends and stories. Through poems, writers share their feelings and ideas about all aspects of life, and readers often find comfort, joy, understanding, and kinship in words that reflect aspects of their lives.

Why Did We Develop a Poetry Resource?

Poetry is one of many forms of oral and written expression by which people explore and communicate their feelings and understandings about the world. As such, it is part of the Adult Literacy and Basic Education English Curriculum. Also, by its very nature poetry can provide many opportunities for rich and meaningful activities for the development of reading, writing, speaking, listening, representing, and viewing skills; so, poetry is an especially good medium through which to teach language skills.

However, poetry can be an intimidating subject for both learners and instructors. It is not unusual for learners to be resistant to the idea of studying poetry, probably because of false assumptions that all poetry is not only hard to understand but also irrelevant to their lives. Also instructors can often be uncertain about how to approach poetry, especially if they don't consider themselves to be readers of poetry or if they don't have a background in English Literature. This poetry resource was developed to help meet these two challenges: to give instructors suggestions for ways to bridge learners' worlds with the world of poetry (which is not nearly as foreign as learners might think) and to provide instructors with activities that encourage learners to explore and interact with poetry in a meaningful and enjoyable way that will advance their English literacy skills.² We hope this resource makes teaching poetry easy and fun for you and for your students.

Please Note

This poetry study is very in-depth and provides a variety of activities for learners to participate in. Instructors can use all the questions, activities, and ideas, or they can pick and choose from each section.

² <http://garts.latech.edu/owl/literature/poetryguide.htm#whatpoetry>

Introduction

Look at these symbols to help you find what you need.



Shows the symbol for the poem or song.



Shows the symbol for learning activities. There are many different learning activities for each poem/song.



Shows the symbol for handouts. Handouts are pages you can copy for learners to use during the learning activities. Some activities have no handouts. Some activities have several handouts.

Tips for Teaching Poetry

Students in Adult Literacy and Basic Education programs may have had limited experience with poetry. Or worse, they have developed negative feelings towards poetry as a result of being subjected to formal studies of poems that held no meaning or interest for them. Hopefully, by using the poems and activities in this resource, you can help your students gain a new appreciation for poetry.

Here are some ideas for making the study of poetry meaningful and enjoyable.

1. Read poetry to and with your learners often, for the sheer pleasure of it.
2. Begin and end poetry studies with learners' personal experiences: encourage oral or written personal responses immediately after a first reading; and review those responses at the end of the study, or give opportunities for learners to express and discuss their appraisals of the poems.
3. Choose poems with content familiar to the students or content that they can easily connect to their experiences.
4. Begin with short, simple poetry, in language that is accessible to learners, and only move to more formal poetry when they are comfortable with the genre.
5. Use learners' favourite songs or poems as part of your poetry studies.
6. Be open to varied interpretations of poems and encourage discussion.
7. Provide opportunities for learners to write and publish their own poems.
8. Give lots of opportunities for personal choice in poems and activities.
9. Teach poetic techniques in short mini-lessons in the context of how they are used in poems, emphasizing their contribution to meaning rather than their definition.
10. Use a variety of activities that provide opportunities for learners to express their responses and interpretations in written, oral, and visual products.
11. Begin with enjoyment and move towards meaning. TS Eliot said "Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood."³

³ <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/t/tseliot131180.html>

Teaching Poetry 130

Several characteristics of 130 level learners make the study of poetry a valuable and productive teaching and learning experience. Generally, 130 level learners are independent readers and writers; can work in cooperative groups; are relatively accepting of varied perspectives; and are ready to develop critical thinking, reading, and viewing skills. 130 level learners, then, are able to read and interpret the ideas and feelings in poems, work in groups to share knowledge and build understanding, and discuss and evaluate different viewpoints. They are also able to respond to and interact with material that is not necessarily directly related to their own personal environment and experiences; this ability broadens the choices for the selection of poems for study, and it deepens the learning as learners compare and contrast their experiences with the experiences reflected in the poems they study.

In this section, learners read and respond to poems and engage in activities that help develop higher level language and thinking skills. They are encouraged to ask questions; interpret figurative language, imagery, and symbolism; base interpretations and judgments on evidence; compare and contrast ideas; preview a work and consider the influence of an author's background and experiences; become aware of personal beliefs, values, and biases; and explore how an author's choices help to communicate a message and achieve a purpose. Learners participate in the creation of written, oral, and visual products in which they move beyond recognition of ideas and poetic techniques to the expression and defense of personal interpretation, the acceptance of ambiguity and multiple meanings, and the recognition of not only what the author is saying but how the message is communicated.

This unit has four poetry studies. Each study is anchored by one main poem and highlights one main poetic technique. The poetic techniques focused on are metaphor (in "Mother to Son"), personification (in "Northern Sky Dancers"), repeated sounds (in "The Harbor"), and symbol (in "One Drum").

The main poems and songs in this section were chosen for their accessibility to Northern adult learners and their appropriate reading level; additional poems in the learning activities vary in their reading levels to allow for individual choice.



Mother to Son⁴

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So, boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps.
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

By Langston Hughes

⁴ From www.poemhunter.com. Copyright Harold Ober Associates Incorporated.

Mother to Son



Mother to Son Learning Activities

3 Handouts

Prereading

Activity 1: Introduction to the Poet and Poem (Handout #1)

This activity prepares learners to read, understand, and appreciate the poem.

1. Tell learners that you are going to be reading a poem that was written by Langston Hughes, an American poet whose parents were both of mixed race. Hughes was of African American, European American, and Native American descent and spent part of his childhood living with his grandmother who taught him to be proud to be an African American.⁵ Hughes wrote poems, novels, short stories, and plays about the everyday lives of the African American people in the southern United States. In his writing, Hughes recorded African Americans' struggles against poverty, racism, and injustice, and he celebrated African American spirituality, language, and culture before it was considered "cool" to do so.⁶

Additional information about Langston Hughes can be found here:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/langston-hughes>

2. Write the title of the poem on the board and discuss its meaning:
 - What do you know about the poem based on the title?
 - What do you think this poem might be about, given what you know about Langston Hughes?
 - What kinds of things do mothers usually talk to their sons about?
 - How do sons usually react to these talks?
3. Langston Hughes makes use of an extended metaphor in "Mother to Son" in which the mother compares her life to a staircase. Have learners complete the following exercise to prepare them to think metaphorically.

⁵ <http://harlemworldblog.wordpress.com/about/harlem-world-magazine/>

⁶ <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/langston-hughes>

- a) Give out Handout #1, which contains photos of different kinds of staircases taken from Google Images. Ask learners to pick the photo of the staircase that most reminds them of or represents the life of their mother, grandmother, or other female relative (Alternately, they could chose one that represents their own life.).
- b) Ask learners to sit in a circle and take turns telling which photo they have chosen and explain why or how the photo reminds them of, or represents the life of a specific person.
- c) Tell learners that the mother in “Mother to Son” compares her life to a staircase as well and that in reading the poem they will discover how and why she does that.

Reading and Responding to the Poem

Tell learners that you will be reading the poem “Mother to Son” by Langston Hughes to them twice – once with them just listening and a second time with them following along as you read aloud. After you read the poem give learners a chance to ask and answer questions they have about the poem.

Activity 2: Your Questions about the Poem (Handout #2)

1. Ask learners to sit quietly, preferably with their eyes closed, as you read the poem to them. Read the poem out loud, slowly and with expression.
2. Then, ask learners to think about what questions they have in their minds about the poem before you read it a second time. The questions can be about any aspect of the poem:
 - About the meaning of words, phrases, or images
 - About the poem’s content—the people, the situation, the topic
 - About the dialect used in the poem
 - About the poet and his choices
 - About the poem’s characters—the mother or the boy
3. Give learners a copy of the poem to follow along as you read it a second time. Tell learners that, after you finish the reading, you will be asking them to write down three questions they have.

Mother to Son

4. Read the poem out loud, and then give learners Handout #2. If they are having trouble getting started in composing questions, prompt them a bit: go over the kinds of questions they might ask, listed in #2; suggest that questions can be about words, people, places, feelings, reasons; encourage them to ask questions about what they don't understand in the poem, what seems puzzling or strange, what the poem makes them wonder about; remind them that any question is a good question.
5. Once learners have written down their three questions, ask them to form groups of three or four to complete the following two tasks:
 - a) Compare and answer each other's questions, leaving any they can't answer until later.
 - b) Choose the three "best" questions in their group and write them down at the bottom of their handouts. The "best" questions should be the ones that generate the most discussion or around which the most interesting discussions are held. (The group may or may not have answered these questions.)
6. Bring everyone together again to share their questions. Take one question at a time per group, record the questions on a flip chart until all of the questions have been read out.
7. Go through the questions on the flip chart together. There may be questions that have no answers because there is not enough information in the poem. And there may be questions whose answers are debatable. **Finding answers to all of the questions is not a priority; the purpose of the activity is to share ideas and generate discussion.**
8. Ask learners to go back to their original individual questions to see if there are any left unanswered, and discuss possible answers to these questions. Then, close the activity with some general responses to the poem and the activity:
 - Is there anything that they haven't had a chance to say or are still wondering about the poem?
 - Do they have any comments on how they feel about the activity they've just participated in?

Understanding the Poem

In these activities, learners illustrate an image from the poem, they answer questions to confirm their understanding of the poem and express their thoughts and feeling about the poem, and they express their appraisals of the poem.

Activity 3: Images in the Poem

Poets create images with words in the same way that artists who are painters create images with paint. In this short poem, Langston Hughes uses many familiar images to paint the pictures that represent the mother's life. Creating and sharing an illustration of one of the poem's images provides learners with the opportunity to identify, interpret, and discuss the images in the poem.

Ask learners to follow these steps:

1. Re-read "Mother to Son" on your own paying attention to the pictures that the words create in your mind as you are reading.
2. Choose the image that is the most meaningful to you or that is the clearest in your mind, and write the words from the poem that contain the image at the top of a piece of construction paper or cardboard. (Remember to put words taken from the poem in quotation marks.)
3. Draw or paint a picture, or cut and paste a photo from a magazine or from Google Images that represents the image in the poem.
4. Post your illustration and be prepared to explain its meaning and to tell your classmates why you made the choices you did.

Activity 4: Questions on the Poem (Handout #3)

These questions prompt learners to think about not only what is being said in the poem and how the people in the poem feel but also how the poet has used words and images to create character and to communicate ideas and feelings.

Ask learners to answer the questions on Handout #3 and to be prepared to share and discuss their answers. Here are some suggested answers:

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1. Answers will vary; however, there should be some common conclusions based on the information in the poem:

strong, determined, concerned, loving, encouraging, a role model, someone who's had a hard life, someone who cares about her children, someone who doesn't give up, someone who has survived hard times

2. Answers will vary depending on life experiences.

- a) *Concerned because she knows her boy will face challenges in life*
Optimistic that her boy will learn from her advice
- b) *Encouraged because his mother understands his life is hard*
Inspired because he knows his mother did okay, so he can too
Impatient because he doesn't think his mother understands his life
Bored because he doesn't understand the need for the advice yet

3. a) "I'se" *I have (in line 9); I am (in lines 18 and 19)*
 "a-climbin'" *climbing*
 "ain't" *has not*
 "set" *sit*
 "kinder" *kind of*

- b) *The poet wrote in the dialect because that is how the mother would really talk. We understand the mother's life better because we hear her real voice. It would sound fake if the mother spoke in standard English. The poem wouldn't be as interesting if it were written in standard English.*

4.

| From the Poem | From your Head |
|---|--|
| <p><i>"It's had tacks in it"</i> <i>Or</i> <i>"And splinters"</i> <i>Or</i> <i>"And boards torn up"</i></p> | <p><i>She had to be careful.</i> <i>It was dangerous sometimes.</i> <i>She got hurt sometimes.</i> <i>It was not easy going.</i> <i>It was not smooth.</i> <i>She couldn't depend on things being okay.</i></p> |

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| | |
|---|--|
| <i>"And places with no carpet on the floor"</i> | <i>She didn't have a lot of comfort. Things weren't "cushy" for her.</i> |
| <i>"And reaching landin's"</i> | <i>Sometimes she reached her goals. Sometimes she had some rest.</i> |
| <i>"And sometimes goin' in the dark Where there ain't been no light."</i> | <i>Sometimes she had no guidance or help. Sometimes she wasn't sure she was doing the right thing.</i> |
| <i>"And turnin' corners"</i> | <i>Things happened that changed her life. She made changes that set her life in a different direction. She was able to keep going and moved on in her life, leaving some experiences behind.</i> |
| <i>"I'se still climbin"</i> | <i>Even though she's older and a lot has happened to her, she's still working hard and moving towards success.</i> |

5. The mother is telling the son that there are many challenges in life and that he'll have to be courageous and work hard to be successful.

Or

The mother is telling the son not to give up trying to be successful in life even though it is hard sometimes. He must be strong and determined and not give up when he faces life's many challenges.

6. They were poor.

They had very hard lives.

They worked hard to get where they were in life.

They were strong and didn't give up easily.

They were courageous and determined to succeed in life.

Gather everyone together and go through the questions and answers. Encourage volunteers to share their answers, taking time to compare and discuss them. When

Mother to Son

discussing the images used in the poem, point out how much meaning is communicated in so few words: Langston Hughes has described a person's character, helped us understand her life, and given us a glimpse of her relationship with her son by using only the real language of his people and a few powerful images.

Activity 5: Appraisal of the Poem

Close with a short discussion of the learners' appraisal of the poem:

- Did they enjoy the poem; why or why not?
- Would they be interested in reading other poems by Langston Hughes?
- Would they recommend this poem to anyone they know – if yes, to whom and why?



Mother to Son
Prereading (Activity 1)
Handout #1

Introduction to the Poem and Poet



Mother to Son





Mother to Son

Reading and Responding to the Poem (Activity 2)
Handout #2

Your Questions about the Poem

My Three Questions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Our Group's Three Questions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Mother to Son

Understanding the Poem (Activity 4)

Handout #3

Questions on the Poem

Answer the questions below completely and clearly, and be ready to share and discuss your answers:

1. Does the speaker in the poem (the mother) remind you of anyone? If yes, describe the ways these two people are alike. If no, describe what kind of person the mother is.

2. The mother doesn't directly talk about how she feels in the poem, and we do not hear the boy speak, but we can probably guess how they feel based on what the mother is saying and on our own life experiences.

a) How do you think the mother feels? Why do you think this?

b) How do you think the boy might feel? Why do you think this?

3. The mother in the poem speaks in a dialect used by some African Americans from the southern United States. Dialects of English sound different from standard English, the formal English that is used in school books and in business.

a) Six examples of the mother's dialect are listed in the column on the left. Write the word or expression as it would be said in standard English in the column on the right. The first one has been done as an example.

| Dialect | Standard |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| "ain't been no" | <i>has not been a</i> |
| "I'se" | |
| "a-climbin'" | |
| "ain't" | |
| "set" | |
| "kinder" | |

b) Try saying some of the lines using the standard English words instead of the ones used in the poem. Why do you think the poet wrote in the dialect?

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4. The mother in the poem compares her life to a staircase. On the chart below, write words from the poem that describe the staircase in the column on the left. Don't forget to use quotation marks. Then, using your own words, write what the words from the poem tell us about the mother's life in the column on the right.

"life for me ain't been no crystal stair"

| From the Poem words that describe the staircase | From Your Head what the words from the poem tell us about the mother's life |
|---|--|
| | |

5. What lessons about life does the mother want to pass on to her son?

6. Langston Hughes wrote poems about the lives of his people, the African American people of the United States. What does this poem tell us about some of those people and their lives?

Mother to Son

Northern Sky Dancers⁷



They dance in their spectacular frocks
waving and weaving like dazzling ribbons
streaming in the northern sky.

They frolic gaily
with merry and reckless abandon
as they swoop and crackle playfully
in undulating waves.

They shimmy lavishly with a quiet
boldness and confidence as they
sashay and sway seductively
in shimmering green skirts
dripping with glittering pink tassels.

They are a magical and mysterious
tapestry woven and weaved and revered
in our Native myths and legends
that have been passed on
through the generations.

By Mary Caesar

⁷ From *Gatherings Vol. XII, The En'okwin Journal of First North American Peoples: Transformations*. Fall 2001. Belmore F. & Ostrowidzki. E. (Eds.) Theytus Books: Penticton, BC. P. 194. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Northern Sky Dancers



Northern Sky Dancers Learning Activities

6 Handouts

Prereading

Activity 1: Introduction to the Poet

Tell learners that you are going to be reading a poem that was written by Mary Caesar, a painter and writer from Watson Lake, Yukon Territory. A member of the Kaska First Nation, Mary Caesar grew up in nearby Upper Liard, attended residential school in Lower Post BC, and has studied Fine Arts at Malaspina University College in Nanaimo, BC. Her paintings are of the landscape of her land and, most often, about her experiences at residential school and as a First Nation woman. Of her work as an artist, Mary Caesar has said, “My work is my personal response to my past and present environment. It’s really important for me to paint my personal struggles. I feel painting is part of my healing journey.”⁸

Activity 2: What We Know about the Northern Lights (Handout #1)

1. Write the title of the poem on the board and tell learners that they are going to be participating in small group discussions to share their knowledge about the poem’s topic before reading the poem.
 - a) Divide the class into small groups of three or four learners to share their knowledge about northern lights. Ask each group to share their knowledge with the whole class.
 - b) Introduce or review the roles and responsibilities of group members, depending on how much experience learners have with group work.
 - Choose one recorder, one reporter, and one person to keep the group on task.
 - Everyone should contribute to the conversation and speak loudly and clearly enough for others to hear. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak.

- Everyone should listen attentively to others, be accepting of different opinions, and ask questions respectfully when they need clarification.
- c) Give out the handout.
 - d) Read through the directions on Handout #1, and help learners get set up in their groups. Encourage learners to share all kinds of knowledge from all sources, anything they know about the northern lights.
 - e) Circulate as learners are sharing what they know, helping them with group process and answering any questions they may have.
 - f) Ask each group to share two pieces of information at a time until everyone has shared their whole list. Record this information on flipchart paper.
 - g) Bring the activity to a close:
 - Thank the learners for sharing their knowledge.
 - Summarize the information shared or comment on something that stands out or is particularly noteworthy.
 - Ask for volunteers to share what insights or new perspectives they have gained from the activity.

Reading and Responding to the Poem

Activity 3: Responding to the Poem (Handout #2)

1. Distribute copies of the poem and ask learners to sit quietly as you read the poem to them. They may choose to sit with their eyes closed or to follow along with you as you read.
2. Read the poem out loud, slowly and with expression, emphasizing the dancing movement in the sounds and the rhythm of the poem.
3. Distribute Handout #2 and read the directions with learners. Tell learners they will be sharing their responses in small groups.

Northern Sky Dancers

4. After learners have completed the handout, ask them to form small groups of four or five learners to share their responses. Instruct them to read and talk about one of the items at a time.
5. Ask for some samples of things that were discussed from each group, and comment on commonalities and differences in responses.
6. Bring the activity to a close by:
 - a) Asking if perspectives on the poem have changed as a result of the activity.
 - b) Comparing the focus of the poem with the kinds of knowledge shared in the pre-reading activity.

Understanding the Poem

In this activity, learners answer questions to confirm their understanding of the poem, to examine the poem's language and imagery and consider their contributions to the poem, to express their thoughts and feelings about the poem, and to practice explaining or justifying their opinions.

Activity 4: Questions about the Poem (Handout #3)

Distribute Handout #3, and go over it with learners. A few terms that may need to be explained as you are going over the questions are "synonym," "image," "attitude," and "purpose." Ask learners to answer the questions completely and clearly, and to be prepared to share and explain their answers. Handouts could be handed in at the end of the sharing and discussion for assessment and comments, or learners could be given the opportunity to revise their work before handing it in based on what they learned in the discussions.

Here are some suggestions for facilitating the sharing of answers:

1. Ask for volunteers to share some of the sentences they have written. Try reading lines from the poem using some of the synonyms instead of the original words and ask questions like these:
 - Which word works best? Why?
 - Why do you think the poet chose to use the original word?

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(Some reasons for preference and the poet's word choice might be *alliteration, matching structures, matching sounds, rhythm-suggested movement, vividness, it just sounds right*)

2. Ask learners to turn to the person next to them to share their answers.
3. Again, ask learners to share with the person next to them. Follow up by checking in to compare favourite lines and images chosen, to see if there was cross-over of lines and images chosen, and to ask what some of the reasons for the choices were. Possible reasons for choices could be *vivid imagery, pleasing sounds, images and ideas that resonate or are familiar*.
4. Take sample answers from learners, and comment on how the poet has used word choice and images (aural and visual) to "paint" her picture. This would be a good time to speculate on how the poet's work as a painter is evident in her writing.
 - a) *The poet is talking about the northern lights.*
 - b) Answers will vary: for example, learners may choose specific words that are clues ("*northern sky*"), or they may choose images that describe the sounds ("*crackle*"), sights ("*shimmering green,*"), or movements ("*waving and weaving*") of the lights.

Learners may recognize the extended metaphor in the poem. If not, remind them of the definition of a metaphor, and explain that this metaphor is a special kind of metaphor called personification—a metaphor that talks about a thing as if it were a person: the northern lights are talked about as if they were dancing people.

5. Take sample answers from learners, and list them on the board. Answers will vary, but generally they should be words that denote a positive attitude: *values, respects, loves, appreciates, treasures, honours, admires*. Probe to help learners identify or express how they came to their conclusions as to the poet's attitude. Justification for answers might be based on the *beauty of the colours* ("*glittering pink*") and movements ("*sashay and sway*"), the *positive words describing the lights* ("*boldness and confidence*"..."*magical and mysterious*"), the *good time the lights are having, how important the lights are to the poet's people* ("*weaved and revered*").
6. Take sample answers from learners. Some responses may be to *describe the beauty and strength of the northern lights, to express her respect for the northern lights, to tell*

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how much she admires the northern lights, to tell how important the northern lights are to her people.

7. Lead a short discussion on the title of the poem. Ask learners to share their ideas.
8. Again, lead a short discussion on the effectiveness of the poem. Is this a good poem? Why or why not?

Personification

Personification is used by writers to enliven their writing and to capture and hold readers' interest. A specialized form of metaphor, *personification gives human traits to ideas and things; it talks about ideas and things as if they were people.* Because people are interested in and relate to the human traits used in personification, they relate to ideas expressed in this way and find them very appealing. Like simile and metaphor (and sometimes even more so) personification makes strange comparisons and paints vivid images, expressing a lot of meaning in a few words.

Personification is created by giving ideas or things human qualities.⁹ Some of the ways that writers personify ideas and things is to give them human emotions, attitudes, senses, needs, actions, and body parts. In the examples below, the ideas or things being personified are underlined and the human traits are in bold.

- a) *We had three guys pushing, but the car **refused** to budge.*
The car is given the human attitude of stubbornness.
- b) *The angry storm **destroyed** everything in its sight.*
The storm is given the human emotion of anger, and it is implied to have willfully destroyed things.
- c) *Jealousy **crept** into their relationship and **ruined** it.*
Jealousy is personified as creeping in and ruining the relationship, actions that ideas can't do.

Northern Sky Dancers

d) *My black CORDS pick up lint like crazy.*

The corduroy pants are personified as picking up lint, an action that pants can't do.

e) *The long arm of the law finally hauled her to justice.*

The law, an idea, is given a body part that is performing an action—hauling someone.

Personification can be found in everyday speech, in poetry and other genres of literature, in the media (especially in headlines), and in advertising.

Activity 5: Personification Yes or No? (Handout #4)

In this activity, learners are introduced to the term “personification” by revisiting the personification of northern lights in “Northern Sky Dancers,” and by working with examples of personification.

1. As a review, ask learners who the dancers are in “Northern Sky Dancers.” Then, write the metaphor “The northern lights are dancers.” on the board. Review the definition of metaphor and the special characteristic of this metaphor that talks about things (the northern lights) as if they were people (dancers).

The northern lights are dancers.

↓ ↓
things people

Explain that this metaphor is an example of a special kind of metaphor called personification, and point out that **personification** has the word person in it because it means talking about a thing or idea as if it were a person. Write a definition of personification on the board:

Personification gives human traits to ideas and things.

2. Write short examples of personification on the board, and talk about the kinds of human traits that can be given to ideas and things.

For example:

The sun smiled down on me. The sun can't smile, and it can't feel happy. Those are things people can do and feel.

Time sneaks up on you. Time is an idea; it can't creep up on somebody like a person can.

Northern Sky Dancers

3. Distribute Handout #4 and ask learners to work on their own to identify the examples of personification.

Once learners have completed the handout, ask them to compare their answers with their neighbours and come to agreement if there are differences. Bring everyone together and go over each example, identifying the thing or idea being personified and asking learners to identify the human traits given to the things or ideas:

- How do they know it is personification?
- What words make the things or ideas human?

Answers to Handout #4: Personification – Yes or No?

The ideas or things being personified are underlined, and the human traits given to them are in bold.

1. yes The burnt toast **jumped** right out of the toaster.
 2. yes Every time I really need it, my computer **throws a fit**.
 3. yes That **sad** old room **needs** a new paint job.
 4. no He lay awake listening to the wind all night long.
 5. yes My snowmobile **keeps wanting to go** to the left.
 6. yes Gambling **has caught** my sister-in-law in **its grip**.
 7. no Mom was happy to see the bright sunshine again.
 8. yes The new leaves **shivered** in the cold spring weather.
 9. no I never seem to have enough time to do what I like.
 10. yes That fresh raspberry pie **is tempting me** to eat it.
4. Close the activity with a quick review of the definition of personification, and point out to learners that personification is used in speech and print all around them. Encourage them to watch for and bring to class examples of personification that they find in places like the radio, newspapers, cereal boxes, and television commercials.

Northern Sky Dancers

Activity #6: Personification in Poetry (Handout #5)

As a poetic device, personification works in a number of different ways:

- It brings the writing to life and makes it appealing.
 - It compares the known to the unknown, helping to communicate complex ideas.
 - It makes the abstract concrete and adds familiarity and relevance to the work, making it more accessible.
 - It communicates on different levels at once, helping the poet to communicate a lot of meaning very efficiently and effectively.
1. Distribute Handout #5 and go over the directions with learners, giving some context where needed, for example—“The Red” is a major river in Manitoba, very important in the history and lives of the Cree.
 2. Review different ways that poets can personify ideas and things, and ask learners to try to find at least two ways that a thing is personified in each of the short poems and excerpts. Encourage learners to work together if they are having a hard time doing the exercise on their own.

Suggested Answers:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| “There is fear” | <i><u>moon</u> follows its footprints has feet (implied)</i> |
| “Road Allowance” | <i><u>bulldozers</u> have voices are angry came and shouted at the bones</i> |
| “nite” | <i>sinks turns has a face</i> |
| “The Red in Winter” | <i>blushes speaks (but doesn't speak Cree)</i> |

Northern Sky Dancers

wears rouge sometimes
wears a mask

“Hold Up”

are surprised
scrape the sky
have arms

Activity #7: Personification in Advertising (Handout #6)

Personification is a very effective advertising technique. It gets and keeps the attention of its audience by entertaining people with vivid sights, sounds, and actions. More importantly, people identify with the human characteristics that are given to products and transfer the familiarity and comfort that comes with that identity to the products. As a result, audiences find the products both appealing and trustworthy.

In preparation for this activity, ask learners for examples of personification they have seen on TV recently such as a talking car or a cleaning solution with eyes and smiles. Discuss the effects of the technique, and encourage learners to speculate on why marketers are using it.

1. Tell learners that they will be working in pairs or small groups to create a poster that shows how a personified character is used to sell a product.
2. Ask learners to work with a partner, and distribute Handout #6.
3. Facilitate the selection of characters from the list of ten on the handout, or allow learners to select their own example if it works for the activity.
4. Show a model that you have prepared, and model presenting your poster.

Northern Sky Dancers

Model of Personification in the Media¹⁰

Cartoon Bugs



Raid



- The insects killed by Raid are personified.
- Bug killer is being sold.
- The cartoon bugs show us how scary Raid is to bugs and that Raid works. Also, the bugs are funny, so people enjoy seeing them. Then people feel positive about the product and remember it better.

As learners post and present their projects, encourage them to explain how the product is personified – to identify which human traits (body parts, actions, abilities, emotions) are given to the character. Encourage the audience to ask questions and make comments on the ads.

In closing,

- Thank learners for their participation.
- Summarize the effects of personification in the ads.
- Ask if there are any closing comments.
- Encourage learners to pay attention to how they, and especially their children, are affected by personification in advertising

¹⁰ Images from Google Images



Northern Sky Dancers
Prereading (Activity 2)
Handout #1

What We Know about the Northern Lights

In your small group share what you know about the northern lights, and then present your findings to the class.

1. First, decide who will have what role in your group:

Recorder: _____

Reporter: _____

Task master: _____

2. Then, take turns sharing everything you know about the northern lights.
 - a) Include all kinds of knowledge:
 - b) What you've been told by elders, family members, or friends
 - c) What you've read in books or learned at school
 - d) What you've learned from TV, movies, or the Internet
 - e) What you've figured out on your own
3. Take notes on what your group knows about the northern lights. Your recorder doesn't have to write everything down – just the main ideas. See if your group can think of ten different pieces of information.
4. Share what your group knows about the northern lights with the whole class.



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Reading and Responding to the Poem (Activity 3)

Handout #2

Responding to the Poem

Respond to **at least five** of the prompts below. There are no right or wrong answers—just write what comes to your mind.

1. Something the poem reminded you of:

2. How you felt while reading the poem:

3. Something you'd like to hear or know more about:

4. Something surprising or strange about the poem:

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5. Something that struck you as very true or real in the poem:

6. A change you think would make the poem better:

7. What you like best about the poem:

8. Anything else you'd like to say about the poem:



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Understanding the Poem (Activity 4)

Handout #3

Questions about the Poem

Answer the questions below completely and clearly, and be ready to share and explain your answers.

1. Choose three words from the poem that you don't know or that you aren't too sure of the meaning. For each word,
 - a) Look up the word and write down the dictionary meaning.
 - b) Give a synonym for the word (from your head or the dictionary).
 - c) Write a complete sentence with the word.

Word #1: _____

a) dictionary meaning: _____

b) synonym: _____

c) sentence: _____

Word #2: _____

a) dictionary meaning: _____

b) synonym: _____

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c) sentence: _____

Word #3: _____

a) dictionary meaning: _____

b) synonym: _____

c) sentence: _____

2. Pick your favourite line from the poem, and tell why it's your favourite.

Favourite line: _____

Why it's your favourite: _____

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3. Describe the image that has created the clearest picture in your mind.

4. a) What is the poet really talking about when she talks about sky dancers?

b) What words in the poem tell you this?

5. What is the poet's attitude towards her topic? (How does she feel about it?) How do you know?

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6. What is the poem's purpose? (Why did the poet write this poem?)

7. Is "Northern Sky Dancers" a good title for this poem? Why or why not?

8. Is this a good poem? Why or why not?



Northern Sky Dancers
Personification (Activity 5)
Handout #4

Personification Yes or No?

Work on your own to complete the exercise below. You will be comparing your answers with the person next to you when you are done.

Write **“no”** next to the **three sentences** below that do not have personification.

Write **“yes”** next to the **seven sentences** that do have examples of personification, and underline the thing or idea being personified.

1. _____ The burnt toast jumped right out of the toaster.
2. _____ Every time I really need it, my computer throws a fit.
3. _____ That sad old room needs a new paint job.
4. _____ He lay awake listening to the wind all night long.
5. _____ My snowmobile keeps wanting to go left.
6. _____ Gambling has caught my sister-in-law in its grip.
7. _____ Mom was happy to see the bright sunshine again.
8. _____ The new leaves shivered in the cold spring weather.
9. _____ I never seem to have enough time to do what I like.
10. _____ That fresh raspberry pie is tempting me to eat it.

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Northern Sky Dancers Personification (Activity 6) Handout #5

Personification in Poetry¹¹

Each of the poems and poem excerpts below contains at least one thing that is personified. Choose one thing that is personified in each poem. Then, identify what is being personified, and tell what it is about the thing that makes it like a person. (Look for human actions, feelings, and body parts given to things.)

| | |
|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Inuit Chant¹²</p> <p>There is fear in Feeling the cold Come to the great world And seeing the moon — Now new moon, now full moon — Follow its old footprints In the winter night.</p> | <p>The _____ in this poem is like a person because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">••• |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Road Allowance¹³</p> <p>The bulldozers came with angry voices shouting for old bones to lay silent absolutely still. By this time the living had been relocated toe tapping and fiddle music replaced by the crunch of gravel beneath steel-toed workboots.</p> | <p>The _____ in this poem are like people because they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">••• |
|--|---|

¹¹ Exercise modified from one at <http://ebookbrowse.com/search/poems-easy-pdf>

¹² “Inuit Chant” from *The New Wind Has Wings: Poems from Canada*. Knud Rasmussen (trans.). Oxford University Press. Toronto. 1984. p. 64.

¹³ “Road Allowance” by Randy Lundy. From *Gatherings VI Metamorphosis*. Theytus Books: Penticton BC.1995. p. 50. Reprinted with permission.

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| | |
|--|--|
| <p>nite¹⁴</p> <p>nite sinks down upon the earth</p> <p>turning its face from the sun</p> <p>people singing applauding and crying</p> <p>as all the stars co-operate and come out shining</p> | <p>The _____ in this poem is like a person because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">••• |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>The Red in Winter¹⁵</p> <p>The blushing river the Cree called her She wears no rouge today She speaks no Cree I ask about her other lifetimes beneath her white mask.</p> | <p>The _____ in this poem is like a person because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">••• |
|--|--|

¹⁴ “nite” by Wayne Keon from *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology*. Armstrong, Jeanette C. and Grauer, Lally (Eds.). Peterborough, ON. 2001. p. 86. Reprinted with permission.

¹⁵ “The Red in Winter” by Emma Larocque from *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology*. Armstrong, Jeanette C. and Grauer, Lally (Eds.). Peterborough, ON. 2001. p. 152. Reprinted with permission.

Northern Sky Dancers

The Hold Up¹⁶

Stripped of leaves,
surprised —
the trees
scrape the grey winter sky
with veined brittle arms.

The _____ in this poem are
like people because they:

-
-
-



Northern Sky Dancers
Personification (Activity 7)
Handout #6

Personification in Advertising

Working on your own or with a partner, create a poster about one of the characters below.

Chore Boy

Mr. Peanut

Goldfish Crackers

Pillsbury Doughboy

Jolly Green Giant

Pop Tarts

Michelin Man

Smooth Joe Camel

Mr. Clean

Snap Crackle & Pop

Choose one of the characters above to research, and create a poster about the character that contains the following:

1. The name and an illustration of the character.
2. The name and an illustration of the product represented by the character.
3. What is being personified by this character.
4. What is being sold in the advertisement.
5. How the character helps to sell the product.

Present your poster to your classmates.

Northern Sky Dancers



The Harbor¹⁷

Passing through huddled and ugly walls,
By doorways when women haggard
Looked from their hunger-deep eyes,
Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands,
Out from the huddled and ugly walls,
I came sudden, at the city's edge,
On a blue burst of lake—
Long lake waves breaking under the sun
On a spray-flung curve of shore;
And a fluttering storm of gulls,
Masses of great gray wings
And flying white bellies
Veering and wheeling free in the open.

By Carl Sandburg

¹⁷ From <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/2045> In the public domain.



The Harbor Learning Activities

5 Handouts

Prereading

Activity 1: Introduction to the Poet and the Poem

This activity prepares learners to read, understand, and appreciate the poem.

1. Tell learners that you are going to be reading a poem written by Carl Sandburg, an American poet who was the second of seven children born to poor Swedish immigrants. Sandburg left school after grade eight to work to help support his family. Before settling down to become a journalist and writer, Sandburg worked as a brick layer, painter, delivery man, and farm labourer; and he travelled extensively as a hobo learning the songs and stories of the poor and low-income workers, eventually becoming an activist for workers' rights. One of Sandburg's favorite stories about his past was that he was rejected by West Point, a famous American military college, because he failed the entrance test in math and grammar. In spite of this rejection, Sandburg went on to become a famous American author and poet who was able to make a living from his writing and storytelling. More information on Sandburg can be found at these sites: <http://carl-sandburg.com/biography.htm>
<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/sandburg.htm>

Sandburg used easy-to-understand, everyday language in his poems. That shocked the people of his day who thought that poems should be written in hard-to-understand, formal language and should be about “deep” issues rather than about the everyday lives of ordinary people.

2. Write the title of the poem “The Harbor” on the board and discuss its meaning:
 - What is a harbor?
 - What do learners know about harbors?
 - Where are some of the natural harbors in the NWT?
 - What sights and sounds might a person find at a harbor?

Reading and Responding to the Poem

Tell learners that they will be hearing and then reading the poem “The Harbor” by Carl Sandburg. After the readings, they will be expressing and sharing their ideas about the poem.

Activity 2: Personal Response to “The Harbor” (Handout #1)

1. Ask learners to sit quietly, preferably with their eyes closed, as you read the poem aloud.
2. Read the poem slowly and with expression, emphasizing the way sound mirrors meaning in the poem, especially the speaker’s surprise when he comes to the harbor and the contrast between the dark, ugly city and the bright, beautiful harbor.
3. Distribute copies of the poem and Handout #1. Go over the directions, and answer any questions learners may have about the handout.
4. Once everyone has had a chance to complete Handout #1, ask learners to form small groups of three or four to discuss their reactions to the poem. Suggest that they compare and contrast their initial markings of the poem and then share one written prompt at a time, making sure that each person in their group gets a chance to read their responses and express their ideas.
5. Bring everyone together and ask for volunteers to give a summary of the ideas discussed in their groups, commenting on similarities and differences in the responses.
6. Close by asking for comments on the activity:
 - What did learners realize or discover about the poem as a result of the activity?
 - Did their perceptions or understandings about the poem change as a result of the activity?
 - Are there any new or remaining questions?
 - Is there anything else anyone would like to say about the activity or about the poem?

Understanding the Poem

In this activity, learners read the poem closely and answer questions to confirm their understanding of its meaning. The questions prompt learners to think about not only what people, places, actions, and feelings are described in the poem but also how the poet has used words to communicate those ideas.

Activity 3: Questions about the Poem (Handout #2)

1. Ask learners to answer the questions on Handout #2 and to be prepared to share and explain their answers.
2. Once learners have answered the questions as best they can as individuals, ask them to form groups of three or four to share and compare their answers and to attempt to reach consensus in their understandings and interpretations.
3. Go through the handout with learners, soliciting volunteers to give answers the groups have reached consensus on and encouraging discussion on any differences of interpretations or opinions that may arise.
4. Close the activity by giving learners the opportunity to express their appraisals of the poem, if they have not already done so.

Suggested Answers to Questions on Handout #2:

1. a) *"huddled"*: crouched down low and close together
"haggard": very tired and skinny
"fluttering": birds' wings waving softly as they fly
"masses": lots and lots (of birds)
"veering": swerving and turning in curves
"wheeling": going around in circles

b) *"hunger-deep eyes"*: The women's eyes have sunk into their skulls, probably from lack of sleep and starvation.
"hunger-hands": The women (or other people) are reaching out with their hands, begging for food or money.
"spray-flung curve": The spray from the breaking waves is flying up into the air, all along the long curve of the shoreline.

2. *The people in the poem are a person walking through a city and some hungry beggar women. The women are described as "haggard" and have "hunger-deep eyes." The description of their "hunger-hands" suggests that they are begging.*
3. *The speaker is walking through a city. He says that he is "Passing through" and going "By doorways." He seems to be repulsed (disgusted or frightened) by what he is seeing because he describes the city walls as "huddled and ugly," and he says that he is "Haunted with shadows" of begging hands. He seems to be a visitor to the city because he is surprised when he suddenly comes to the "city's edge" and sees the lake. When he gets to the harbor, he feels relieved: he describes himself as being "Out" of the ugly city and into a beautiful place.*
4. *The two places in the poem are the city and the harbor. The lines that tell us that the speaker is going from the city to the harbor are "I came sudden, at the city's edge,/ On a blue burst of lake."*
5. *Suggested interpretations of the lines included in the chart:*

| The City and the Harbor | |
|---|---|
| Lines or Words about the City | What They Tell Us about the City |
| <i>"huddled and ugly walls"</i> | <i>The city has short, closed-in ugly walls.</i> |
| <i>"women haggard" and "hunger-deep eyes"</i> | <i>The women in the city are very thin and look exhausted. Their eyes are sunk into their heads by hunger. It sounds as if they are starving.</i> |
| <i>"Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands"</i> | <i>It sounds as if people are hiding in the shadows with only their hands sticking out to beg for food or money.</i> |

The Harbor

| Lines or Words about the Harbor | What They Tell Us about the Harbor |
|--|---|
| <i>"blue burst of lake"</i> | <i>The lake is bright blue.</i> |
| <i>"lake waves breaking"</i> | <i>Big waves are cresting white, and are crashing onto the shore.</i> |
| <i>"On a spray-flung curve of shore"</i> | <i>The breaking waves are sending sparkling or white spray into the air.</i> |
| <i>"under the sun"</i> | <i>The sun is shining.</i> |
| <i>"fluttering storm of gulls...masses"</i> | <i>The sky is full of flying gulls.</i> |
| <i>"great grey wings and flying white bellies"</i> | <i>The flying seagulls fill the sky with grey and white movements against the blue sky.</i> |
| <i>"Veering and wheeling free in the open"</i> | <i>The seagulls are swooping and circling in graceful movement in the blue, open skies.</i> |

6. *The poet is saying that the harbor is a better place to be than the city. The city is a dark and scary place, with ugly things and sad, starving people. It is dark and depressing. The harbor is a beautiful, open, and free place filled with light, bright sights and sounds.*

Extended Learning Opportunity

If appropriate, take learners to the next level of interpretation. Make two columns on the white board like the ones below. Ask learners to brainstorm words associated with each of the places as they are described in the poem. Encourage them to think about the images and what those images communicate or what emotional responses they evoke. Write the learners' responses under the appropriate title. Some possible responses are provided here:

Natural World (the harbor)

bright
open
free
colourful
carefree
uplifting
cheerful
noisy

Man-made World (the city)

dark
depressing
closed in
desperate
sad
scary
shadowy
soundless

Lead a discussion about what learners think the poet is saying about the natural world versus the man-made one. Encourage them to make comparisons with similar messages they may have come across in movies (such as “Avatar”), on television (commercials against development), in speeches (local, territorial, and national campaigns to stop or control development), and in everyday conversations (the opinions of people they know about life on the land versus life in communities, or the opinions about life in small communities connected to the land versus life in big cities).

Images in the Poem

Activity 4: Visual Depiction of Images in “The Harbor” (Handout #3)

Ask learners to work with one or two other people to create and present a collage that reflects the main idea in “The Harbor.” A collage is a picture made by sticking various materials such as pieces of cloth or paper, photographs, and other small objects onto a surface. The purpose of a collage is to communicate a unified idea or emotion in a creative way.

1. Take a few minutes to talk about experiences with collages—creating collages at school, at work, or at home (many people as teenagers have created collages to decorate their bedrooms)—and show some examples of collages found on the Internet.
2. Read through Handout #3 with learners:

The Harbor

- a) Tell them they may use whatever materials they find appropriate to recreate the images the poem has communicated to them, and brainstorm examples and sources of materials.
 - b) Suggest that learners begin by rereading “The Harbor,” both silently and out loud with their partners, sharing and comparing images that stand out for them and discussing the impressions they aim to create with their collage.
 - c) Remind learners that the images and impressions of their collage should be consistent with sights, sounds, and emotions expressed in the poem.
 - d) Explain that the arrangement of materials in a collage contributes to its overall impression, and encourage learners to choose the arrangement that best fits with the impression they hope to create with their collage.
 - e) Encourage learners to be creative and have some fun with the project.
3. Help learners prepare for the presentation of their project:
- a) Advise learners to pay attention to the process of creating the collage so that they can share their experiences with others in their presentations.
 - b) Suggest that learners review and discuss the suggested topics to address (on Handout #3) prior to their presentations.
4. Facilitate the presentations of the collages:
- a) Ask pairs to post their collages in advance of presentations and give learners time to circulate and view the projects.
 - b) Determine and post the order of presentations.
 - c) Remind learners that viewers play an active role in presentations. They need to take the time to examine their classmates’ collages, listen carefully and respectfully to the presenters, and compose thoughtful questions about the process and end products of the projects being presented.
 - d) As presentations are being made, comment on similarities and differences in interpretations, and encourage learners to speculate on reasons for the similarities or differences.
 - e) The contrast in images in the two halves of “The Harbor” (between the descriptions of the city versus those of the harbor) is so stark that the collages will likely reflect the main idea of the poem. Point out to learners that their interpretations show how the poet has used images to communicate his

message about the dark, miserable ugliness of the city as compared to the bright, open beauty of the harbor.

5. Close the activity by

- Thanking learners for their participation as both presenters and viewers.
- Giving learners an opportunity to express their appraisals of the poem or to comment on how their perspectives on the poem may have changed as a result of their participation in the activity.
- Asking for final questions or comments on either the poem or the activity.

Sound and Meaning

Repetition is a fundamental writing technique, and the repetition of sound is instrumental in poetical and persuasive writing. Writers use the sounds of letters, syllables, and words to reinforce their messages and to make their writing more effective. Sound in poetic and persuasive writing works like music in movies: it intensifies feelings; creates mood; facilitates the flow of ideas, feelings, and actions; and foreshadows shifts, contrasts, and resolutions.

The activities below aim at raising learner awareness of the impact of word choice and the effectiveness of sound in helping writers achieve their purposes. This awareness will help learners to become not only more critical readers but also more effective writers.

Activity 5: Word Choice: Sound, Meaning, and Effect

1. Remind learners that writers are artists like painters, except that they use words and sounds to create images and evoke emotional responses, instead of lines and colours. In the same way that painters choose their paints very carefully, writers choose their words with care. Paying attention to both the meanings and the sounds of words, writers pick those that fit best with the ideas and feelings they want to express.
2. To illustrate the impact of word choice, use the example of the different responses to “Shut Up,” “Be Quiet,” and “Shush.” All mean essentially the same thing, but each has quite different connotations and elicits quite different emotional responses.

- a) Write the three alternatives on the board, and encourage learners to brainstorm words for the feelings or tone that each generates. Lead a short discussion on when each of the alternatives might be used and how people might respond in different circumstances.
 - b) Point out that in everyday life most people instinctively choose the most appropriate words, depending on their audience and their purpose. For example, you would never tell your grannie to “Shut up!”, but you might “Shush” her respectfully if you were listening to some very important news, and she started talking loudly, obscuring the news.
3. Using “Shut Up,” “Be Quiet,” and “Shush,” illustrates how sounds in words contribute to their meaning.
- a) Explain that poets and persuasive writers, like those who write advertisements, are especially picky about the words they use. They want to achieve their purposes using as few words as possible, so each word they choose has to communicate a lot of meaning. The sounds of words add extra meaning and contribute to the differences in feeling and tone that the words convey, so sounds are an important consideration when poets are choosing words.
 - b) Refer to the brainstormed ideas and the learners’ discussion of the different connotations of “Shut Up,” “Be Quiet,” and “Shush,” and show how the sounds in the words fit with their connotative meanings:
 - “**Shut up**”: the final consonants, t and p, are closed and abrupt, and the repeated short ŭ is guttural and gruff. They help make “Shut Up” sound blunt and rude.
 - “**Be Quiet**”: the long ē and ī are cheerful, bright sounds. They help make “Be Quiet” sound open and pleasing, especially in comparison to the harsher “Shut Up”
 - “**Shush**”: the repeated sh and barely audible short ŭ are velvety and muffled. They help make “Shush” sound soft and gentle.
4. Close by commenting that writers—poets and advertisement writers in particular—spend a lot of time choosing just the right words that best fit the meaning they want to communicate and that best evoke the emotional response they are aiming for. Learners can make their own writing more effective by paying close attention to the words they choose to use.

Activity 6: Matching Sounds to Meaning in “The Harbor” (Handout #4)

1. Tell learners that they will be looking closely at how Carl Sandburg has used repeated words and sounds in “The Harbor” to help communicate his message about the contrast between the city and the harbor.
2. Ask learners to form pairs, and distribute Handout #4.
 - a) Go through Handout #4 and answer any questions learners may have. If necessary, define “phrase” and review or give a mini lesson on short and long vowel sounds.
 - b) Stress that learners will have to read the poem out loud to each other to identify sounds. Because vowel sounds can be spelled in different ways, you cannot “see” repeated sounds in words by reading them silently. For example, *sea*, *tree*, *key*, *piece*, and *receive* all have the same long ē sound. Hearing individual sounds can be challenging and takes a little practice; learners will probably have to break words up into syllables while pronouncing them out loud to identify the sounds.
3. Once all pairs have completed Handout #4, bring everyone together to compare and discuss answers. Suggested answers:
 - a) *“huddled and ugly walls”*
 - b) *“hungry”*
 - c) Answers will vary. The poet repeated this word and phrase because -
there were lots of hungry people; all the speaker saw was closed in walls all around him; the speaker thought the city was very ugly, so he repeated it twice.
 - d) *the consonants h and g; the short ŭ vowel sound*
 - e) Answers will vary. *The sounds are dark, throaty, and gruff. They are unhappy sounds – sounds that we make when we are frustrated, “grrr” or when we sigh in discouragement, “huuuuh.” The sounds match the dark ugliness of the walls and the shadowy misery of the beggars. They fit with the closed in, gloomy feelings the speaker has as he walks through the city.*
 - f) *“lake,” “lake,” “ waves,” “ breaking,” “ spray,” “ great,” “ gray”*
 - g) *“bellies,” “ Veering,” “ wheeling” “ free”*

- h) Answers will vary. *The sounds are open, bright, and cheerful. They are happy sounds — sounds that we make when we are celebrating, “Yippee!” or when things go our way, “Yay!” The sounds match the sparkly images of the bright sun, blue sky, and ocean spray and the carefree, dancing movements of the soaring birds. They fit the feelings of relief and happiness as the speaker moves out of the city into the refreshing, open space of the harbor.*
4. Close the activity by drawing attention to the matching images and sounds in the poem.
- Stress that Sandburg has created this contrast in sounds between the two halves of the poem on purpose to mirror his message about the contrast between the city and the harbor.
 - Refer to the collages created by the learners (in Activity #4) to illustrate how the images in the two halves of the poem match up with the sounds to make readers feel the way Sandburg wants them to feel about the city and the harbor, to get across the message that the harbor is a better place to be than the city.

Activity 7: Repeated Sounds in Advertising Slogans (Handout #5)

Slogans are one of the main tools used by marketers to sell products, and one of the key characteristics of an effective slogan is how memorable it is. Provocative images, engaging stories, pleasing jingles, plays on words, and sound devices are some of the ways advertisers make slogans memorable.¹⁸

People enjoy hearing repeated sounds, as is evident in the pleasure we get from songs and rhymes. Marketers capitalize on this positive response by using repeated words and sound devices that repeat vowel and consonant sounds in their slogans. Repetition in slogans, then, makes them both more appealing and more memorable.

Getting people to buy products is advertising’s main purpose. In the exercises below, learners examine how writers use sound to achieve that purpose by making

¹⁸ The Art and Science of the Advertising Slogan by Timothy R. V. Foster
<http://www.adslogans.co.uk/ans/creslo01.html>

it easy for people to remember and to have positive responses to the slogans and the products that are associated with them.

Exercise 1: Name the Product

This exercise asks learners to identify the products associated with some common slogans. Its purpose is to illustrate how memorable slogans are and how they bring their associated products to mind whenever we hear them.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. "Crave the wave." | <i>Ocean Spray fruit drinks</i> |
| 2. "Crisp and clean. No caffeine." | <i>Seven - Up</i> |
| 3. "Save money. Live Better." | <i>WalMart</i> |
| 4. "Nothing fits like a Ritz." | <i>Ritz Crackers</i> |
| 5. "You deserve a break today." | <i>McDonald's</i> |
| 6. "Simply made. Simply good." | <i>Lay's Chips</i> |
| 7. "It's the real thing." | <i>Coca Cola</i> |
| 8. "Finger lickin' good" | <i>Kentucky Fried Chicken</i> |
| 9. "Good to chew and fights cavities too" | <i>Trident gum</i> |
| 10. "Melts in your mouth, not in your hand" | <i>M&M candy</i> |
| 11. "It keeps on going, and going, and going..." | <i>Energizer batteries</i> |

Exercise 2: Recognizing Repeated Sounds in Slogans

Advertisement writers use a number of different sound devices—such as consonance, alliteration, assonance, and rhyme—to give slogans appeal and to make them memorable. Here are some examples:

- "Because the Citi never sleeps" Citi Bank: consonance, the repetition of consonant sounds anywhere in neighbouring words
- "Don't dream it. Drive it." Jaguar: alliteration, the repetition of beginning consonant sounds in two or more neighbouring words.
- "The sweet you can eat between meals" Milky Way: assonance, the repetition of vowel sounds in neighbouring words
- "Don't get mad. Get Glad" Glad: rhyme, the repetition (echoing) of the final accented vowels and consonants in two or more words, usually at the end of lines

Learners may be familiar with the terms rhyme and alliteration, but **it is not important that learners know the names or be able to identify all of these devices**. In fact, it would be confusing and unnecessary for them to try to learn these terms all at once.

This exercise, and the following one, simply asks learners to identify repeated sounds in neighbouring words in slogans, so that learners will be aware of how they are responding to advertising techniques whose aim it is to get them to become familiar with and to buy products.

Suggested Answers for Exercise 2

Some examples have multiple repeated sounds; the most obvious repetitions have been highlighted in each.

1. "Bridge the gap with Cadbury Snack": Cadbury Snack Bar
2. "Enjoy a mini moment": Coca Cola mini can
3. "Lathering into lavishing for less": Olay body wash
4. "The right vehicle for the right price": Hertz rental vehicles
5. "Spread a little love": Philadelphia Cream Cheese
6. "Hate that grey? Wash it away!" Clairol hair colouring
7. "Beanz Meanz Heinz": Heinz baked beans
8. "Sleeping on a Sealy is like sleeping on a cloud." Sealy mattresses
9. "Everything's better with Blue Bonnet on it.": Blue Bonnet margarine
10. "Nothin' says lovin' like something from the oven.": Pillsbury dough

Exercise 3: Finding Your Own Examples

1. This exercise asks learners to find examples of slogans that use repeated sounds in advertisements they hear and see in their daily lives. If learners need additional practice identifying repeated sounds, go through the examples in Exercise 1, looking for repeated sounds together. Only #3 and #7 do not have some form of repetition.
2. Ask learners to work alone or in small groups to find examples in the media around them. If necessary, provide magazines and find a few examples together or brainstorm some examples from television ads to get them going. Here are some examples from “Up Here” magazine:
 - “Bulk is our business”: FedNav
 - “What you need to read”: Arctic Books
 - “Calm, Cool and Connected”: Canadian North and Calm Air
 - “Fueling for the Future”: Ventures West
3. Once everyone has had a chance to complete the exercise, share the examples they’ve found. Ask learners to read out their examples, identifying the repeated sounds, or to post them on a poster that you have prepared, highlighting the repeated sounds.

Close with a short discussion about learners’ thoughts on Activity 7.

- What did they learn or what surprised them about advertising techniques?
- What was confirmed for them about advertising techniques?
- How will they use what they’ve learned about advertising?
- What else would they be interested in learning about advertising?



The Harbor

Reading and Responding to the Poem (Activity 2)
Handout #1

Personal Response to "The Harbor"

Read Carl Sandburg's poem "The Harbor," and use these symbols to mark your first responses to the poem:

- ✓ Place a check mark next to parts that you feel you really understand.
- ! Place an exclamation mark next to parts that surprise you.
- ? Place a question mark next to parts (words, lines, sections) that you don't understand.
- ♥ Draw a heart next to parts that you really like.

After reading and marking the poem, explain two of your markings by completing **at least two of the prompts** below:

1. One part of the poem that I really understood is...

2. I think that I understand this part so well because...

3. One part of the poem that surprised me was...

I think it surprised me because...

4. Something that I didn't understand in the poem was...

I would probably understand this better if...

5. One part of the poem that I really liked was...

I like this part so much because...

The Harbor



The Harbor

Understanding the Poem (Activity 3)

Handout #2

Questions about "The Harbor"

Answer the following questions as completely as you can, and be ready to share and explain your answers.

1. Carl Sandburg uses some strong words, and even makes up some of his own adjectives, to describe the people and places in "The Harbor."
 - a) For each of the six words below, write a **meaning in your own words** that fits the way the word is used in the poem.

"huddled" _____

"haggard" _____

"fluttering" _____

"masses" _____

"veering" _____

“wheeling” _____

b) What do you think the made-up adjectives below mean in the poem?

“hunger-deep eyes” _____

“hunger-hands” _____

“spray-flung curve” _____

2. Who are the people in the poem?

The Harbor

3. What information about the speaker do you get from reading the poem? (What is the person doing and how is the person feeling? Be ready to tell which words or lines in the poem give you this information.)

4. What two places are described, and what lines tell us that the speaker is going from one of those places to the next?

5. The two places described in the poem are very different. In the chart below, the column on the left contains words and lines from the poem that describe the two places. Opposite each of the words and lines on the left, write down, in the column on the right, what they tell you about the places. The first of each section has been done for you as examples.

| Lines or Words about the City | What They Tell Us about the City |
|--|---|
| "huddled and ugly walls" | The city has short, ugly closed-in walls. |
| "women haggard" and "hunger-deep eyes" | |
| "Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands" | |

| Lines or Words about the Harbor | What They Tell Us about the Harbor |
|---|--|
| "blue burst of lake" | There is a bright blue lake at the edge of the city. |
| "lake waves breaking" | |
| "On a spray-flung curve of shore" | |
| "under the sun" | |
| "fluttering storm of gulls...masses" | |
| "great grey wings and flying white bellies" | |
| "Veering and wheeling free in the open" | |

6. What is the main message or opinion communicated by the poet in this poem?



The Harbor

Images in the Poem (Activity 4)
Handout #3

Visual Depiction of Images in “The Harbor”

Carl Sandburg has used some clear and effective images in “The Harbor.” Work with a partner to create a collage that depicts the images that reflect the main idea of the poem.

Your collage can be made up of pictures (hand drawn and/or cut and pasted), pieces of construction paper or coloured paper, pieces of fabric, small objects, and/or any combination of these materials, or any others, that you feel best reflects the ideas and emotions in the poem.

Your collage should have the following characteristics:

- Images and impressions that are true to the poem’s ideas and emotions
- An arrangement of materials that reflects the main idea in the poem
- Materials and organization that attract and hold the interest of viewers

You will be presenting your collage to the class, so be prepared to answer questions on topics like these:

- The choices you made (what materials to include and how to arrange them)
- The challenges you faced making the collage
- What worked out well for you
- What you hoped to achieve in creating your collage



The Harbor

Sound and Meaning (Activity 6)
Handout #4

Matching Sounds to Meaning in the “The Harbor”

Work with a partner to look closely at how Carl Sandburg has used sounds in “The Harbor” and to think about how those sounds help to communicate ideas and feelings in the poem.

Read the poem out loud, paying attention to the sounds of the words. Then, follow the directions and answer the questions on the following page.

The Harbor

- 1 Passing through huddled and ugly walls,
- 2 By doorways when women haggard
- 3 Looked from their hunger-deep eyes,
- 4 Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands,
- 5 Out from the huddled and ugly walls,
- 6 I came sudden, at the city’s edge,
- 7 On a blue burst of lake—
- 8 Long lake waves breaking under the sun
- 9 On a spray-flung curve of shore;
- 10 And a fluttering storm of gulls,
- 11 Masses of great gray wings
- 12 And flying white bellies
- 13 Veering and wheeling free in the open.

by Carl Sandburg

Questions

1. Highlight the phrase that is repeated twice in the first six lines of the poem, and write it here: _____

2. Highlight the word that is not part of this phrase but is also repeated twice in the first six lines, and write it here: _____

3. Why do you think the poet repeated this phrase and word?

4. What vowel and consonant sounds are repeated in this phrase and word?

5. How do these sounds fit with the ideas and feelings in the first half of the poem?

6. Using a different coloured highlighter, highlight all of the words in lines 7 to 11 of the poem that have the long ā vowel sound (as in **day**, **make**, and **great**), and write the words here:

7. Highlight all of the words in lines 12 and 13 that have the long ē vowel sound (as in *be*, *freeze*, and *chief*), and write the words here:

8. How do these sounds fit with the ideas and feelings in the second half of the poem?



The Harbor

Sound and Meaning (Activity 7)
Handout #5

Repeated Sounds in Advertising Slogans

Exercise 1: Name the Product

Advertising slogans are sayings that companies use to convince people to remember and to buy their products. The slogans are used over and over again in ads so that lots of people come to know them by heart. To test how well companies have done in getting you to remember their products when you hear their slogans, identify the company and/or the product for the slogans below.

| Slogan | Company/product |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. "Crave the wave." | <u>Ocean Spray fruit drinks</u> |
| 2. "Crisp and clean. No caffeine." | _____ |
| 3. "Save money. Live Better." | _____ |
| 4. "Nothing fits like a Ritz." | _____ |
| 5. "You deserve a break today." | _____ |
| 6. "Simply made. Simply good." | _____ |
| 7. "It's the real thing." | _____ |
| 8. "Finger lickin' good" | _____ |
| 9. "Good to chew and fights cavities too" | _____ |
| 10. "Melts in your mouth, not in your hand" | _____ |
| 11. "It keeps on going, and going, and going..." | _____ |

Exercise 2: Recognizing Repeated Sounds in Slogans

Slogan writers choose words that repeat sounds in their slogans because repetition makes the slogans easier to remember. Highlight the repeated sounds in the slogans below. Here are some examples:

“Ladies, please don’t squeeze the Charmin’’: Charmin toilet paper

“Probably the best beer in the world’’: Carlsberg beer

1. “Bridge the gap with Cadbury Snack’’: Cadbury Snack Bar
2. “Enjoy a mini moment’’: Coca Cola mini can
3. “Lathering into lavishing for less’’: Olay body wash
4. “The right vehicle for the right price’’: Hertz rental vehicles
5. “Spread a little love’’: Philadelphia Cream Cheese
6. “Hate that grey? Wash it away!’’ Clairol hair colouring
7. “Beanz Meanz Heinz’’: Heinz baked beans
8. “Sleeping on a Sealy is like sleeping on a cloud.’’ Sealy mattresses
9. “Everything’s better with Blue Bonnet on it.’’: Blue Bonnet margarine
10. “Nothin’ says lovin’ like something from the oven.’’: Pillsbury dough

Exercise 3: Finding Your Own Examples

Find five examples of slogans with repeated sounds that make them catchy in magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and Internet advertisements.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



One Drum¹⁹

Life unfolds around me
 I can choose which path I take
 Will it be darkness again?
 Or a brilliant life I make

Chorus:
 We are standing on the shoulders of
 giants
 We are standing in the shelter of
 ancients
 We are speaking the truth of the
 people
 We are marching to the beat
 Of One drum, One drum
 Wey heya-a hey, Wey heya-a hey
 Wey heya-a heya, Wey heya-a hey
 Wey heya-a hey, Wey heya-a heya

Come here in many forms
 Embrace the sounds you make
 We'll speak here in many tongues
 Join the circle with your mask down
 (You will see the plans you make)

Chorus

Time and circumstance
 Bring me down
 Bring me down
 But there's a time for recompense
 And a time to break new ground
 New ground

Chorus

Music and Lyrics by Leela Gilday

¹⁹ "One Drum." From the album *Sedze*, by Leela Gilday. 2005, 2006. Diva Sound Records, Yellowknife, NT. Lyrics reprinted by permission of Leela Gilday.



One Drum

Learning Activities

8 Handouts

Reviewing the Music Video

These activities set the context for the song and prepare learners to watch and listen to the music video and, later, to read the lyrics of the song.

Activity 1: Introduction to the Singer-Songwriter (Handout #1)

1. Write Leela Gilday's name on the white board and ask learners who she is and encourage them to share what knowledge they have about Leela's background and career.
2. Distribute the songwriter's autobiography from the "Native Drums" website²⁰, reprinted on Handout #1, and read it to learners using the think-aloud strategy as they follow along. In the think-aloud strategy "the teacher verbalizes his/her own thoughts while reading a passage orally, so that the students will realize how and when to do the same."²¹ As you are verbalizing your thoughts, pause to give learners a chance to add information, ask questions, or make comments. An excerpt from the autobiography is printed here with some sample "think-alouds":

"Leela Gilday was born and raised in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. She is a singer/songwriter from the Dene Nation. [*Leela is Sahtugotine – of the Great Bear Lake People on the mother's side.*] Gilday started singing at an early age, and her performing career began at the Folk on the Rocks Music Festival stage when she was eight years old. [*Wow, that's young to be performing – she has a lot of experience on stage then.*] She earned a bachelor of music degree in vocal performance at the University of Alberta. Leela now performs across Canada and abroad with her band. Her songwriting reflects her northern roots, explores her identity as a modern Urban Indian [*an Indian who lives in a city*], and gives voice to her perspective on love and life. [*What love songs did she write? I wonder if I know any.*]"²²

²⁰ native-drums.ca

²¹ Campbell, P. (2003). *Teaching reading to adults: A balanced approach*. p. 95. Edmonton, AB: Grass Roots Press.

²² http://www.native-drums.ca/index.php/Showcase/Leela_Gilday?tp=a&bg=1&ln=e

3. Allow learners the opportunity to talk about any experiences they have listening to Gilday's music, watching any of her music videos, or attending any of her performances.

Activity 2: Introduction to the Song "One Drum"

1. Tell learners that you are going to be watching and listening to Leela Gilday's award winning video "One Drum" and then reading the lyrics to the song.
2. If learners have not already talked about the "One Drum" music video, ask if any have seen the video and would like to share their impressions.
3. Write the title on the white board and discuss its possible meanings:
 - What kind of drum do you think about when you hear the title?
 - Considering the songwriter's background and her hopes for her work as a musician, what drum might she be talking about?
 - Why would there be only one drum?
 - What do you think this song might be about?

Activity 3: My Response to "One Drum" (Handout #2)

Tell learners that you will be watching and listening to the music video "One Drum" by singer-songwriter Leela Gilday. After the video, they will have a chance to share their ideas about the song and its video production.

1. Position the screen and speakers, and ask learners to sit so that they can see and hear the video comfortably.
2. Play the "One Drum" music video available on this site: (<http://watch.muchmusic.com/artists-a-z/l/leela-gilday/clip81937#clip81937>), or on YouTube.
3. Distribute and go over the instructions on Handout #2. Encourage learners to complete the prompts fairly quickly, writing the first thing that comes to mind and not over thinking the prompts. Make sure learners understand that they will be sharing their answers orally, so they should only write things they are comfortable sharing.
4. Once everyone has had a chance to complete the prompts, ask learners to sit in a circle so that they can easily pass papers to people on either side of them.

Then, explain how you are going to share the responses so that they are anonymous:

- a) When you say “pass,” everyone is to pass the paper they have in their hands to the person on their left and continue until you say “stop.”
 - b) Once everyone has stopped and each person has a paper, ask learners to check to make sure that they don’t have their own paper. (If anyone does have his or her own paper, continue to pass papers for a minute or so until no one has their own.) Then, begin reading the prompts one at a time going around the circle.
 - c) After the responses to the first two prompts have been read out, re-circulate the papers, going to the left or to the right and read the next two prompts. Finally, re-circulate the papers and read the final two prompts.
5. Follow the reading of the prompts with a facilitated discussion about the music video and the responses to it. Encourage discussion by asking questions like these:
- What did you notice about the responses?
 - What response would you like more information on or would you like to be made clearer?
 - What response did you find to be the most surprising and why?
 - How has your impression or opinion of the video changed after hearing all of the different responses?
 - What did you learn from the responses?
 - Does anyone have any questions about the responses or about the music video?
 - Does anyone have anything further they’d like to say about the responses or about the music video?

Thinking about the Song's Meaning

Activity #4: Questions about the Song (Handout #3)

In this activity, learners answer questions to explore the meaning of the song and to express their ideas about it. There is no one right answer for most of the questions on Handout #3. The objective is to give learners an opportunity to broaden and validate their interpretations of the song by talking collectively about the thoughts and feelings generated by the song. It is important, then, to be accepting of a variety of interpretations and to focus on reasons for the interpretations rather than on correctness of the responses.

1. Distribute Handout #3 and ask learners to answer the questions and to be prepared to share, discuss, and defend their answers.
2. Once all have had time to answer the questions, put learners in small groups of three or four. Ask learners to share their answers, making sure everyone in their group gets equal time to speak. Explain that there can be different answers for each question and that people should be able to defend their answers. Their job as group members is to listen respectfully to each other's answers and to ask questions about things they don't understand or ideas they don't agree with.
3. Circulate as learners share and discuss their answers to facilitate the process and to mitigate any disagreements that may arise.
4. When group members have finished sharing their answers, bring everyone together to go over the answers as a whole class.

Suggested Answers:

1. Answers may vary, but generally they should be about a person's ability and freedom to make decisions in life, for example:

I can make my own decisions in life.

How my life turns out is up to me.

It's up to me to choose how to live my life.

One Drum

2. Answers will vary. Interpretations could be on a personal level (What is a life of darkness for an individual?) or on a community level (What is a life of darkness for a people?). Generally, darkness in life could refer to being *lost and not knowing what to do in your life, being confused and uncertain about what is important in life or being controlled or oppressed by others.*
3. a) *The “giants” are the strong people, the leaders who carry others and help them to be able to see the future and find their way.*
b) *The “ancients” are the people from long ago, the long-gone relations who continue to protect their people.*
c) *“The people” are the Dene, a group of First Nations people.*
4. Dealing with one line at a time, compare and contrast interpretations and explanations. Once you have heard from everyone, encourage an open discussion on any line that has not been chosen. Answers will vary. Some **possible** interpretations of the lines are provided here:

“Come here in many forms”

There is no one right way to be; individuals are accepted for who they are in the place she is describing – the “here,” a safe and accepting place.

“Embrace the sounds you make”

Be proud of yourself, love yourself, love how you sound (how you talk? what you have to say?)

“We’ll speak here in many tongues”

There is no one way or one right language to speak; many different languages will be spoken and accepted in the place she is describing – the “here.”

“Join the circle with your mask down”

Take your place in the circle, in the community of other people – the safe, accepting place where you don’t need to be afraid to be yourself.

“(You will see the plans you make)”

When you are in the safe place, connected to other people and not afraid to be your true self, you will be able to find your way, to make plans for the future.

5. Answers will vary:

“circumstance” the things that happen to and around you that affect how your life turns out

“recompense” payment or compensation to someone who has been hurt

6. Answers will vary.

The mood of the song is positive, and the words chosen should fit with the mood of the song as a whole. For example, the line “time and circumstance bring me down” can be interpreted to be sad, but the overall mood of the song is definitely not sad. Words like empowered, hopeful, or optimistic are a much better fit for the overall mood of the song.

Ask learners to share the mood they picked and why they picked it.

Learners should be able to explain their choice and defend it by making specific reference to the song. Watching the music video and comparing words chosen to describe the mood against the “feel” of the video would be another way to test the appropriateness of the words.

7. Answers will vary. Some **possible** answers are provided here:

- You don't need to live under the control of other people. You can make your own decisions in life.*
- You can take charge of your life and make it be all of the good things you want it to be.*
- You are not alone in life; you have the guidance and support of the people who came before you and the people who are around you now.*
- Don't be afraid to be proud of who you are; it will help you to move forward in your life.*
- Even though there have been dark times, there will also be times for compensation for the hurt and loss, and a time to move forward in life.*
- Be proud of who you are and join with your people, past and present, to create a new and better life for yourself and others.*
- We are all one people and we are stronger when we stand together, accepting and supporting each other for who we are.*

8. Answers will vary. Emphasis should be on support for opinions rather than on correctness. Some **possible** answers are provided here:

- It's a good title because the song says that we should all be one people and the drum stands for the people.*

One Drum

- *A better title would be “One People” because it’s about all people being together supporting each other.*

Close the activity with a short discussion, prompted with questions like these:

- What new realization or understanding do you have of the song as a result of sharing your ideas?
- How has your opinion of the song changed as a result of our discussions?
- How will the work that we have done today affect how you read or listen to the lyrics of other songs?
- Does anyone have a question that hasn’t been answered yet or one last comment they’d like to make?

Symbols

Song writers and poets use symbolism in their writing to add meaning and depth to their work and to communicate complex ideas and feelings by appealing to shared experiences and understandings with their audiences. In creative works, *a symbol is most often a person, place, thing, or action that represents an idea or emotion beyond itself*. The symbols may be conventional ones that are used in everyday life and would be understood by most people, such as springtime symbolizing new beginnings, hope, or the end of adversity; or they may be symbols whose symbolic meaning occurs only in the work, such as the pictures of elders or relatives falling like leaves in the “One Drum” music video symbolizing the connections among people—past and present, young and old—and the connections of the people to nature or Mother Earth.

Discussing the meaning of symbols in songs, poems, and music videos helps learners to understand the deeper meaning of the works. It also gives them the opportunity to practice thinking and talking about abstract ideas since symbols are often concrete things that represent clusters of complex abstract ideas and feelings. Here are some examples of common concrete symbols and the abstract ideas and feelings that they may symbolize:

- the sun.....happiness, warmth, salvation, a realization
- the dark.....evil, fear, ignorance, being lost or confused

- an eagle.....courage, nobility, freedom, confidence
- a mountain.....challenge, majesty, permanence
- the colour yellow.....cowardliness, caution, generosity

Activity #5: What is a Symbol? (Handout #4)

This activity asks learners to define what the nine, fairly common visual symbols on Handout #4 mean to them and to think about how those meanings came about. The purpose of the activity is to demonstrate to learners that a symbol is something that has meaning beyond (or in addition to) its literal meaning and that a symbol gets its meaning from its connotative meanings:

- The extra meaning people have agreed upon (That a red octagon means “stop” and a white circle outlined in red with a red diagonal through it means “no” are agreed-upon meanings.)
 - The meaning it gets by association (Golden rings are associated with weddings, and black cats are associated with witches.)
 - The meaning it gets from its context or how it is used (The skull and crossbones on poisonous substance containers has a related but somewhat different meaning from the skull and crossbones on a pirate’s flag.)
1. Distribute Handout #4 and ask learners to use their own words to tell what each of the images means to them.
 2. Post or project a large copy of the visual images on Handout #4, and record the meanings given by learners next to each of the images.
 3. Once all learners have had a chance to share their meanings, go over the meanings together.
 - a) Comment on similarities and differences in answers. Most of the images have commonly understood symbolic meanings, and the answers should be fairly consistent; however, there may be some different interpretations such as *pirates* rather than *poison* for the skull and crossbones or *health* rather than *love* for the heart.
 - b) Using learner responses and referring to specific images on the handout, encourage learners to talk about how they know what the images mean and to speculate on where the meanings could have come from.

4. If the term has not already been introduced, explain that the images on the handout are all symbols and that the meanings you have been sharing are symbolic meanings. Write the term “symbol” on the white board and, with input from learners, come to a simple definition similar to this one: *A symbol is something that stands for something else.*

Activity #6: Personal Coat of Arms (Handout #5)

In this activity, learners examine the symbols on the Northwest Territories Coat of Arms and then choose or create symbols to design a personal coat of arms. In discussing the meaning of the symbols on the territorial coat of arms and in designing and discussing the symbols on their own coats of arms, learners get practice thinking symbolically and talking about abstract ideas.

1. Ask what learners know about coats of arms. They may have been introduced to coats of arms in school (social studies classes), at work (an institution’s coats of arms), or in their personal lives (an organization’s coat of arms or coats of arms as seen in movies like “First Knight,” “Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves,” and the Harry Potter series).
 - Coats of arms are symbols, usually on a shield, that represent the identity of individuals, families, institutions, or organizations.
 - The symbols on a coat of arms stand for the preferences, values, and beliefs of its owner.
 - Coats of arms were first used in medieval Europe by soldiers to help them tell their enemies from their allies. Over time, coats of arms came to be used to represent families, institutions, and individuals. If learners are interested, information on the history and traditional features and symbols of coats of arms can be found at these websites:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms
<http://www.thetreemaker.com/design-coat-of-arms-symbol.html>
 - Coats of arms are used in modern times by many families, institutions, and organizations to represent their identities.
2. Distribute Handout #5

- a) Tell learners that they will be creating their own personal coat of arms, but first they are going to look at how symbols have been used on the Northwest Territories Coat of Arms to represent its identity.
- b) Ask learners to turn to the person next to them and take a few minutes to discuss the meanings of the symbols on the Northwest Territories Coat of Arms on Handout #5. Encourage them to guess any meanings they are not sure of based on what they know about their territory – what its geographic features are, what is important to it, and what distinguishes it from other provinces and territories.
- c) Post or project a large copy of the Northwest Territories Coat of Arms as it appears on Handout #5. Go through the symbols on the coat of arms giving learners the opportunity to present their meanings, and compare the meanings offered to the official interpretation below:

“The white upper third of the crest represents the polar ice pack and is crossed by a wavy blue line symbolizing the Northwest Passage. The diagonal line separating the red and green segments of the lower portion of the shield reflects the treeline. The green symbolizes the forested areas south of the treeline, while the red represents the tundra to the north. Minerals and fur, the important bases of the northern wealth, are represented by gold billets in the green portion and the mask of the white fox in the red.”²³

- d) A couple of points about how symbols work can be made following this exercise:
 - Personal familiarity helps in guessing the meaning of the symbols and in understanding their significance.
 - In symbols, one thing (for example, the gold billets) or even part of a thing (for example, the colour green) can represent many things, a whole thing, or a much bigger idea.
- e) Direct learners’ attention to the second exercise on Handout #5, “Creating Your Personal Coat of Arms,”²⁴ and read through the directions with them.

²³ The Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories; Official Symbols of the Northwest Territories. http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/_live/pages/wpPages/visitorofficialsymbols.aspx

²⁴ Exercise modified from <http://www.storyboardtoys.com/gallery/coat-of-arms-lesson-plan.htm>

- f) To help learners choose six symbols that represent who they are, explain that they can choose a person, place, thing, action, and/or event that has special meaning for them and that represents who they are and what is important in their lives.
- g) Show learners how they can choose symbols by modeling the process yourself. For example,
- **A fiddle** represents my father, who was a fiddler, and my family's love of music.
 - **Cranberries** represent my love of country food and berry picking, one of my favourite pastimes.
 - **A book** represents my teaching, my love of reading, and my education.
 - **A yoga posture** represents something that I'm learning and aiming to accomplish.
 - **A smiley face** represents my generally positive and optimistic nature.
 - **A little black spruce** represents my enjoyment of being out in the bush, camping or at our cabin.
- h) The banner at the bottom of the coat of arms template is usually for a motto, but learners may choose to use it for their name or nickname.
- i) Ask learners to post and present their completed coats of arms, explaining the symbolism in their choices when they are presenting, and commenting and asking questions when they are viewing and listening to the presentations of others.
- j) Close the activity with a review of what a symbol is and how it works by making specific references to examples in the learners' coats of arms (or asking learners to point out examples) of symbols that stand for something deeper or bigger than themselves, that stand for more than one thing at a time, or that stand for emotions as well as ideas.

Activity #7: Symbolism in "One Drum" (Handout #6)

In this activity, learners read an excerpt from an interview in which Derrick Bressette explains the symbolism of the drum; identify ideas associated with the

drum in the reading; and, then, look for symbols in Leela Gilday's music video "One Drum" that represent similar ideas.

1. Tell learners that they are going to be working in small groups to read about the symbolism of the drum in an excerpt of an interview in which a traditional drum dancer and singer talks about what the drum means to his people and to compare those ideas to some of the symbols in Leela Gilday's "One Drum" music video.
2. Ask learners to form small groups of three or four and distribute Handout #6.
3. Read through the directions with learners, ensuring they are clear on what is expected of them. If the activity seems too challenging for learners to engage in without support, do the reading and word web exercises as a whole group and then break into small groups for the second part when learners search for symbols in the music video.

Suggested Answers:

Step One

Answers will vary as learners will highlight the words that seem most important to them. Do encourage learners to highlight words and short phrases rather than whole sentences and, if you think it will make the exercise more manageable, suggest a specific number of words or phrases for learners to highlight.

Step Two and Three:

Answers will vary. Ask learners to share their ideas.

Step Four:

Depending on the level and experience of the learners, encourage learners to find a minimum of three symbols in the video. Remember that the ideas from Bressette's interview may be represented a number of times in different ways and that each symbol in the music video may stand for more than one idea.

Here are some suggested answers in addition to the two examples provided on the handout.

One Drum

| Ideas from Bressette's Interview | Symbols in "One Drum" |
|---|--|
| <i>connection</i> | <i>The picture of an elder (relative, ancestor?) falling from the sky into Leela Gilday's hands</i> |
| <i>friends</i> | <i>The groups of smiling people standing together</i> |
| <i>family</i> | <i>The young couple with a baby The elderly lady</i> |
| <i>Mother Earth's heartbeat</i> | <i>The people tapping their chests over their hearts</i> |
| <i>relatives</i> | <i>The different pictures of elders on the performers' T-shirts The groups of people</i> |
| <i>circles</i> | <i>The shape of the structures they are performing under and on The way the performers are standing together</i> |

Close the activity with a short discussion to give learners time to share their response to the ideas in the reading. Prompt with questions like these:

- What did you think of this piece?
- What ideas or knowledge were you already familiar with?
- What ideas in the piece are new to you?
- What ideas are different from what you believe?

Drum Poems

Activity 8: Compare and Contrast (Handout #7 & #8)

In this activity, learners work with a partner to compare and contrast the ideas in two poems on the topic of drums or drum dancing and then share their ideas and opinions on the poems with the whole class. The activity asks learners to examine poems on a similar topic, looking for similarities and differences in the treatment of that topic and looking for similarities and differences in the messages about the topic that the poems communicate. In doing so, learners gain experience interpreting an author's purpose and message, expressing and explaining their personal opinions, and listening to and understanding the perspectives of others.

1. Explain to learners that they will be working in pairs to choose two poems to compare and contrast and to come to some conclusions about what messages about drum, drumming, and/or drum dancing is communicated by the poems.
2. Ask learners to find a partner. Give out Handouts #7 and #8.
3. Read through the directions with learners, answering any questions they have about the directions or the form on the handout.
4. Once learners have completed the work on the handout, explain that they will be first sharing their answers to Questions #2, #3, and #4 as they apply to each poem, one at a time, and then reporting on the comparison and contrast they did of two poems in responding to Questions #5, #6, and #7.
5. Take up Questions #2, #3, and #4 on each poem, that has been chosen by at least one pair, one at a time.
6. Read each poem out loud, beginning with the title and the author's name.
7. Read the questions, one at a time, and ask pairs who have worked on this poem to share their answers. Compare and contrast answers, noting especially differences, and encourage learners to speculate on the reasons for the differences and to come to some agreement on or acceptance of the answers.
8. Repeat the process for each of the other four poems that have been chosen by at least one pair.
9. Take up Questions #5, #6, and #7 by asking pairs to report on their findings in their comparison and contrast of two of the poems.

One Drum

10. Ask that each group name the two poems they worked with and then share their answers to #5, #6, and #7. If more than one pair has chosen to compare and contrast the same poems, it would be best to have them report next before moving on to a different set of poems.
11. After each report, encourage those listening to ask questions or make comments on the ideas shared in the reports (anything they find puzzling, interesting, or familiar).
12. Repeat the process until all pairs have reported on their work.
13. At the conclusion of the reports and discussions,
 - Summarize the similarities and differences in the poems discovered by learners.
 - Point out, with input from learners, examples of how similar ideas and messages can be communicated by different poems.
 - Draw attention to, with input from learners, how poems on the same topic can communicate different messages or themes about that topic.
 - Thank everyone for sharing their ideas and for being open to the ideas of others.

**One Drum**

Review the Music Video (Activity 1)
Handout #1

Introduction to the Singer-Songwriter

Follow along as your instructor reads this biography of Leela Gilday and get ready to share your thoughts and knowledge about the singer-songwriter's background and her work as a musician.

Leela Gilday was born and raised in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. She is a singer/songwriter from the Dene Nation. Gilday started singing at an early age, and her performing career began at the Folk on the Rocks Music Festival stage when she was eight years old. She earned a bachelor of music degree in vocal performance at the University of Alberta. Leela now performs across Canada and abroad with her band. Her songwriting reflects her northern roots, explores her identity as a modern Urban Indian, and gives voice to her perspective on love and life.

Her classically trained voice has been described as "soulful and torchy" but at times sounds clear and high, evoking the feel of summers in the land of the midnight sun. Her music has been warmly received by audiences across Canada and the world.

Her album, *Spirit World, Solid Wood* garnered much recognition, earning her a Juno nomination and three Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards in 2002 for Best Female Artist, Best Songwriter, and Best Folk Album. Gilday's albums and her constant touring have placed her front and centre in the Native music scene: she has appeared on the cover of the nationally-distributed SOCAN magazine, *Music and Words*, earned a place in Maclean's Magazine "Top 50 under 30" and been featured in numerous national CBC television and radio broadcasts.

She won the 2007 Juno for Aboriginal Recording of the Year for *Sedzé*, her second album. **One Drum (2008)**, a Leela Gilday music video directed by Helen Haig-Brown, won Honorable Mention at the 2009 Fargo Film Festival.

Most recently, Leela Gilday's alma mater honoured her with a University of Alberta Horizon Award for individuals with significant early career achievements. She lives in and works from Yellowknife.

In Her Own Words

“Music is the most definitive tool for expression in my life. It is a gift from the Creator. It has always been a part of our lives and has always occupied a sacred and powerful place in society. Music enables me to define myself—my identity and my stories, and so what defines my music (to my ears) is that reflection of my identity and all the parts thereof. I believe that my music is Aboriginal, though I make use of contemporary and popular forms of expression, because I am Aboriginal—my identity as a Dene woman is a central part of my life. Through music I am able to share my stories—the stories of the Dene, the stories of the north, in hopes that people gain something from those stories. It is through the arts that humanity is most easily uplifted and will find reasons to address the social and environmental issues we face. It is my hope that I will be a most positive part of this movement, and that I will be able to continue singing and creating for the rest of my time here.”²⁵

²⁵ http://www.native-drums.ca/index.php/Showcase/Leela_Gilday?tp=a&bg=1&ln=e



One Drum

Reviewing the Music Video (Activity 3)
Handout #2

My Response to “One Drum”

Now that you have had the opportunity to watch and listen to the music video “One Drum,” please express your ideas about the video by completing the prompts below. **Try to write something in response to all of the prompts.**

When you are finished writing, **we will be sharing the answers out loud** in a way that no one will know whose answers are being read.

1. While I was watching this music video, I felt ...
2. While I was watching this music video, I was thinking ...
3. One question I have about this music video is ...
4. My favourite visual (image or action) in the music video is ...
5. One change I would make to this music video is ...
6. The thing that I like the best about this music video is ...

One Drum



One Drum

Thinking about the Song's Meaning (Activity 4)
Handout #3

Questions about the Song

Answer the questions below completely and clearly, and be ready to share and defend your answers:

1. What does the songwriter mean when she says, "I can choose which path I take"?

2. What could the songwriter be referring to when she talks about "darkness" in life?

3. Who is the songwriter talking about when she refers to the

a) "giants" _____

b) "ancients" _____

c) "people" _____

4. The songwriter in “One Drum” uses special language that adds extra meaning and feeling to the song. Some of the lines may have many levels of meaning and may mean different things to different people, depending on their experiences. Choose two lines from the second verse (reprinted below) and explain what those lines mean to you.

“Come here in many forms
Embrace the sounds you make
We’ll speak here in many tongues
Join the circle with your mask down
(You will see the plans you make)”

5. Look up the two words below in the dictionary and then write a meaning in your own words that fits the way the word is used in the song.

“circumstance”

“recompense”

One Drum

6. How would you describe the mood of the song? First, decide if the mood is positive or negative. Then, choose the word that best describes the mood from the lists below. Write down below why you chose the mood you did. Be ready to explain your choice and to defend it by referring to the song.

Some words to describe mood:

Negative

confident
ecstatic
empowered
hopeful
joyful
light-hearted
optimistic
playful
tender
warm

Positive

cold
desolate
gloomy
hopeless
hostile
painful
pessimistic
sad
tense
threatening

Mood: _____

Explanation:

7. In one or two sentences, tell what you believe is the most important message communicated by this song.

8. Do you think "One Drum" is a good title for this song? Why or why not?



One Drum
Symbols (Activity 5)
Handout #4

What is a Symbol?

In the space below each of these visual symbols, write a couple of words to describe what each means to you.







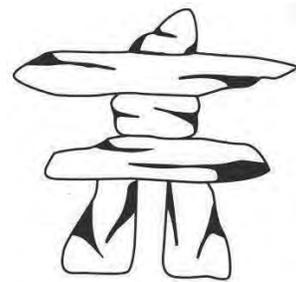












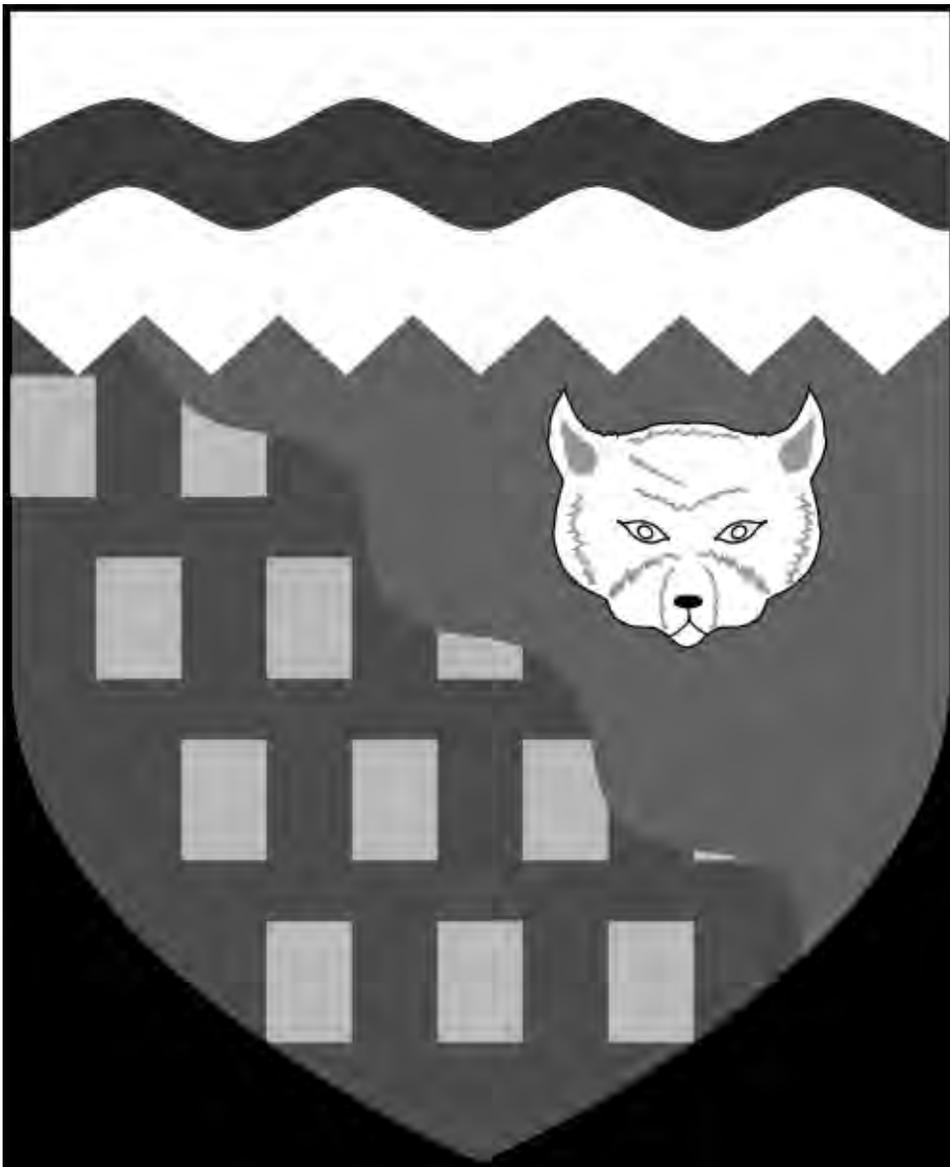


One Drum
Symbols (Activity 6)
Handout #5

Personal Coat of Arms

The Northwest Territories Coat of Arms

What does each of the symbols on the Northwest Territories Coat of Arms stand for or represent?



Create Your Personal Coat of Arms²⁶

Create your own personal coat of arms on the shield²⁷ on the next page by inserting six images of things that represent who you are.

You can draw the images yourself, copy and paste images from Google Images or Clip Art, cut and paste images from magazines, or use any combination to get the images you want. Also, feel free to redesign the shape of the shield to fit your purposes.

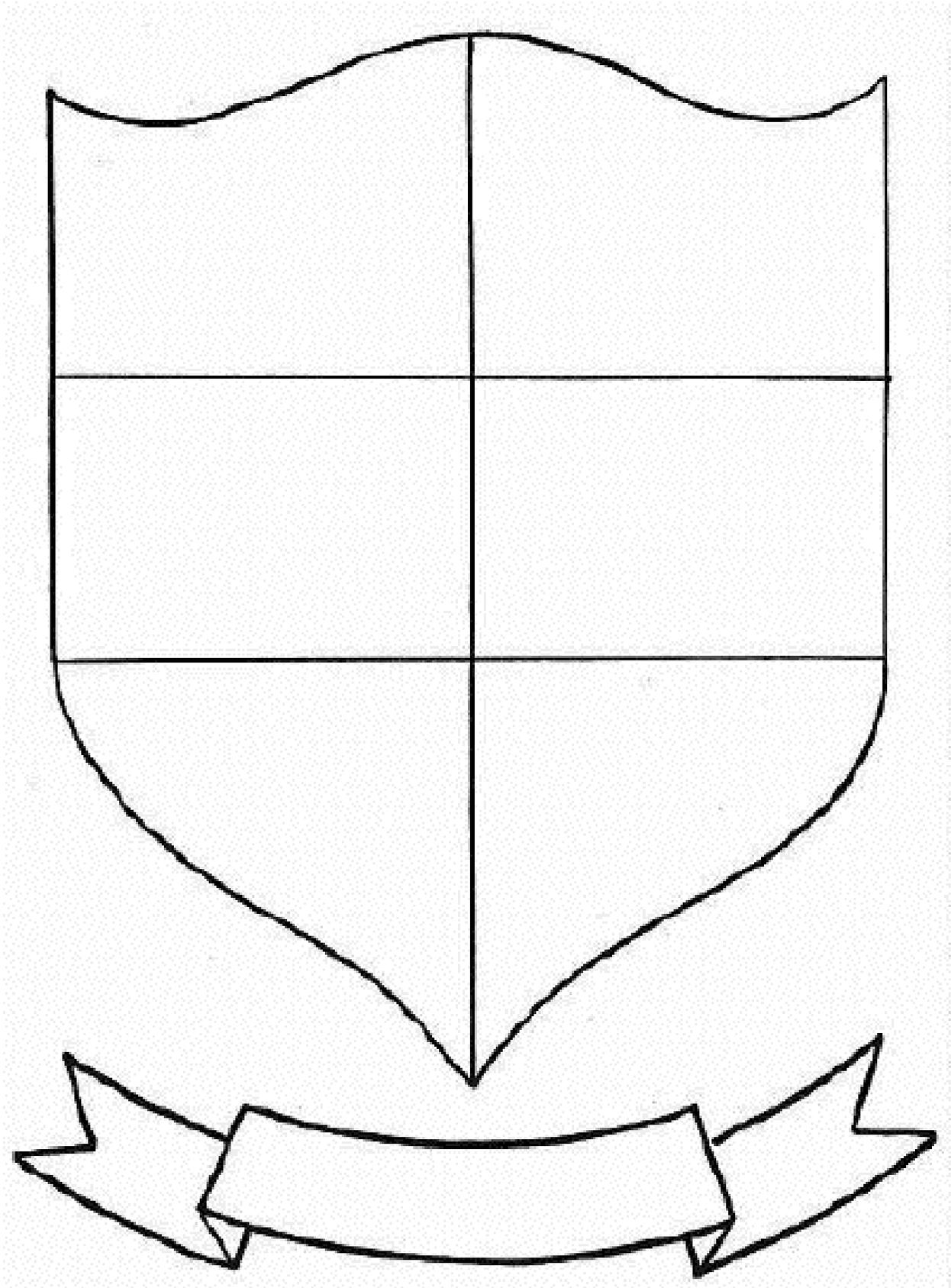
The images that you use can stand for such things as your favourite pastimes and/or sports, personal achievements, religious beliefs, cultural background, family, goals, and significant people or places.

Be prepared to present and explain your coat of arms to your classmates.

²⁶ Activity modified from <http://www.storyboardtoys.com/gallery/coat-of-arms-lesson-plan.htm>

²⁷ Template and directions (modified) from:

100 http://nhsfreshmenlink.wikispaces.com/file/detail/Personal_Coat_of_Arms_Template.doc





One Drum

Symbols (Activity 7)

Handout #6

Symbolism in “One Drum”

Work with your group members to compare the symbols in the “One Drum” music video to what Derrick Bressette, an Ojibwe Nation traditional singer, dancer, and drummer, says the drum means.

Step One: Highlight Words

Choose a reader or take turns reading the excerpt from an interview with Bressette below. As you are reading, highlight the most important words that tell you what the drum stands for and what drumming, dancing, and singing make people think about.

Derrick Bressette on the Symbolism of the Drum²⁸

The drum is circular; Mother Earth is circular and that’s what that drum represents. It represents Mother Earth. When the singers sound the drum that is the heartbeat of Mother Earth and we give thanks for everything that she gives us. She has been taking care of us from the beginning of time, taking care of us with food, water, medicine, everything. She has never turned her back on us. So when the singers are sounding that drum and the dancers are coming around that drum, they are dancing in time with that drum to show that connection to her. While they are dancing they are thinking about those things that Mother Earth provides for us, but as well they are thinking about all their friends and family that have helped them along the way in their life. Every one of us has been through trying times and we needed our relatives for support. We need our friends for support and they’ve been there for us no matter how down we have been; they have been there for us. So we need to acknowledge and remember all those people because that drum there represents life, represents all of the seasons, represents all of those things....”

Step Two: Answer Questions

Answer these questions on what Bressette says the drum and the drumming, dancing, and singing that go with the drum mean:

1. What is the drum like?

2. What does the drum represent?

3. What is the sound of the drum like?

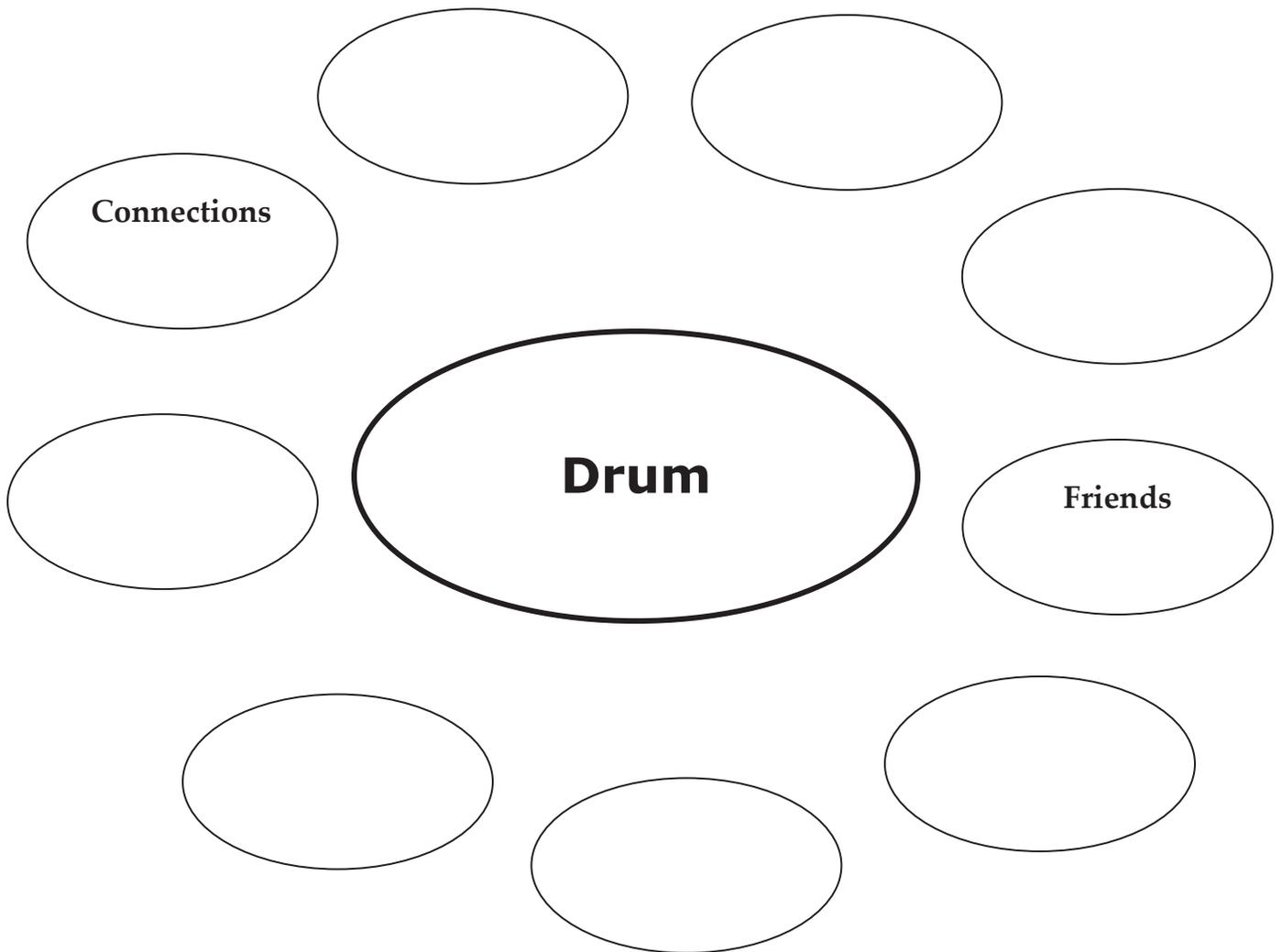
4. What does singing and dancing around the drum show?

5. What does the dancing make the people think of?

One Drum

Step Three: Word Web

Then, using the words you and your group members have highlighted while reading and the answers to the questions above, make a word map in the space below that shows ideas that Bressette says are related to the drum, drumming, dancing, and singing.



Step Four: View Music Video

View Gilday's "One Drum" music video, found on the Much Music Website <http://watch.muchmusic.com/artists-a-z/l/leela-gilday/clip81937> and look for symbols that stand for some of the ideas in Bressette's interview that you have included in your word web.

Two examples have been done, to get you started. **Hint:** Remember that symbols can be people, places, actions, and things (including shapes and colours).

| Idea from Bressette's Interview | Symbols in "One Drum" |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Connection | The picture of an elder (relative, ancestor?) falling from the sky into Leela Gilday's hands |
| friends | The groups of smiling people, singing together |



One Drum
Symbols (Activity 8)
Handout #7

Compare and Contrast

In this activity you will be working with a partner to

- Choose two of the five poems that are attached to this handout.
- Carefully read the poems you choose and compare and contrast them by answering the questions on the form.
- Prepare to share and defend your feelings ideas about the poems.

Instructions

1. Read through all of the five poems, and with your partner, choose the two poems you will be working with.
2. Reread the two poems you've chosen out loud with your partner. Look up any words you don't understand. Try to answer questions either of you may have about the poems. (Remember that you can still appreciate a poem even though there may be parts of it that you are not sure about or that you don't understand.)
3. Work with your partner to discuss your feelings and ideas about the poems and to answer the questions on the form given.

Compare and Contrast Two Poems about Drums

| Poem One | Poem Two |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. What is the poem's title and who is its author? | |
| | |
| 2. Who are the people in the poem? | |
| | |
| 3. What are the people doing in the poem or what is going on in the poem? | |
| | |
| 4. What does the poem have to say about drums, drumming, and/or drum dancing? | |
| | |

5. List two or three ways that the two poems are the same.

6. List two or three ways that the two poems are different.

7. Of the two poems, which is your favourite and why?



One Drum

Symbols (Activity 8)

Handout #8

Compare and Contrast (Drum Poems)

The Power of the Drum

vacant eyes, shuffling feet
downcast faces, reflect defeat
weighty worries, sagging shoulders
so much sadness, makes us older
the drummers come lined in a row
heads come up spirits grow
eyes light up, the beat begins
the soul responds to let the healing in
slowly one by one the dance begins
the steady beat resounds within
connects us to Mother Earth
the ancient rhythm does its work
it's the heartbeat of the universe
our souls and God converse
it is the beat that has stood the test of
time
to the soul it is the ultimate wine
every atom does proclaim
to the greatness of His Name
the darkness leaves, the pain subsides
the drugs, the alcohol, these are alive
but powerless to touch our souls
as the beat continues to grow
the drummers drum in a row
their healing message freely flows
this is the power of the drum.

by Lyda Greer

THE CIRCLE OF THANKS

As I play my drum
I look around me
and I see the trees.
The trees are dancing
in a circle about me
and they are beautiful.

As I play my drum
I look around me
and I see the sun and moon.
The sun and moon are dancing
in a circle about me
and they are beautiful.

As I play my drum
I look around me
and I see the stars.
The stars are dancing
in a circle about me
and they are beautiful.

As I play my drum
I look around me
and I see my people.
All my people are dancing
in a circle about me
and my people, they are beautiful.

By Joseph Bruchac based on a
traditional Micmac song

"The Power of the Drum" by Lyda Greer from *Northern Writes* 7. Babicki, Charlotte (ed.). N.W.T. Literacy Council: Yellowknife, NT. p. 39. Reprinted with permission.

"The Circle of Thanks," by Joseph Bruchac, based on a traditional Micmac song from *The Circle of Thanks: Native American Poems and Songs of Thanksgiving*. Bruchac, Joseph. Bridgewater Books, New York, N.Y. 1996. pg. 4. Reprinted with permission.

Great Spirits of the Land

The arbour by the south shores
of Great Slave Lake is filled with people
of all ages ranging from
youngest to the oldest.
The water is beautiful and blue
as the sun reflects,
like little shining stars that are floating
on top of it and just drifting along.
On the shore you can see the green grasses
and all the green trees,
with their shadows touching the ground;
and near by them are a bunch
of little flower beds here and there.
The sun also shines through the openings
that are around the arbour,
giving them warmth and kindness
among the people.
As the drummers gather around the fireplace
for their preparation for the traditional event,
the incense burns and we smudge ourselves.
As the beat of the drums goes on,
we are in harmony as one.

Drumming, beating, and dancing,
for we are as proud people of our land,
singing to the beat of the drums
that gives us power and strength,
sounding better and more beautiful
as each minute goes by,
with the beat echoing in our hearts.
Strong voices touching across every direction
with feelings and happiness
transcend into the spirit
of respect and caring
for all living things on this Mother Earth,

Drumdancer

Holding the big drum
by its handle,
he beats a slow rhythm
and begins to dance,
body shaking up and down
and sideways.

He beats the drum louder and faster,
his body jerking and leaping
around the circle of people.
He beckons the Spirits of the Land
to come, come join with him
in a Hunting song.

As he sings,
he dances himself into a frenzied trance,
and becomes lost in a dream world.
He summons
the innermost secrets
of his soul.

Finding impending death
on a hunting trip,
he beats the drum
one last time,
and sweating and groaning
with near exhaustion,
he hands the drum
to the nearest person.

In silence,
he opens his heart
to embrace the coming dawn.

“Great Spirits of the Land” by Henry Mandeville from *Writing Well*, Miron, Barbara (ed.). Aurora College Community Learning Centre: Fort Resolution, NT. 2003. Reprinted by permission.

“Drumdancer” by Elaine Woodward from *Grandmother: Poems and Short Stories*. Wordcrafting Publications: Yellowknife, N.T. 1996. p. 16. Reprinted by permission. Contact: elainew@lifeworks.cc

Poem

The first drumbeat sang me back to sleep.
 In dreams I danced to a harmonious pulse.
 Familiar voices tickled my skin.
 "Wan'ska" they whispered.

I awoke with a sigh
 surrounded by reflecting light
 and cried.
 Mother held me tight
 the drumbeat still there.
 I closed my eyes without a care.

Nohkom gently smiled,
 "A-how nitanis nimihito!"
 "dance my girl!"
 I danced.
 I flew.
 There was nothing I couldn't do.
 In an instant it was gone.
 Not knowing where, how, or why it went
 wrong.
 I lived in silence,
 waiting, restless and unaware.

Then one day from an eagle's eye view
 meandering confused in a concrete web.
 Stuck in a crevice of books, words and
 menace
 I wept.
 I yelled
 and prayed.
 Then there was silence.

In the unspoken chaos I heard the drum,
 familiar voices and tender tones.
 I shuffled between doubt and happiness.
 Each song I danced.
 Drained and exhausted
 the beat grew louder.
 Slowly I felt sinew coiling me,
 inside and out,
 then tighter.
 A final yank,
 a pull from my heart
 bonded to a circle of love, kindness,
 wisdom and laughter.

Ay-ay.

"Wanska" – wake up; "Nohkom" – my
 grandmother; "A-how" – expression to get
 attention; "Nitanis" – my daughter;
 "Nimihito" – dance; "ay-ay" – thank you
 with greatest respect

"Poem" by Lana Whiskeyjack . 2004 from *Native Drums*: <http://ebookbrowse.com/01-a-poem-about-the-drum-lana-whiskeyjack-doc-d11496289> . Reprinted by permission.