

Poetography Unit (student handout)

Overview: Photography means “writing with light.” A photographer uses light to create a mood, texture, and rhythm- all qualities shared with poetry. The up-and-coming art form, Poetography, combines the visual image with poems. In this unit, I will send you on photographic assignments, and then we will explore how the elements of your photos translate to poetry. How can you capture the desolate mood of a photo in a poem? How does the rough texture of a photo translate to the words in a poem? We will experiment with imagery, tone, figurative language, pattern, and musicality. The unit will culminate in your producing several pieces of original Poetography.

You Will Need:

1. Something to take pictures with (camera, cell phone, iPhone)
2. A digital space in the cyber world to store your pictures, one that can be accessed from any computer (Flicker, Shutterfly, Facebook, etc.)

Keeping a Writer’s Photobook: Poet Walt Whitman kept a writer's notebook in which he wrote down specific 1-2 sentences notes about things he saw: “Where burial coaches enter the arched gates of a cemetery” and “Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and icicled trees.” During this unit, instead of a writer's notebook, jot down “pictures” in a Writer's Photobook. Instead of writing down brief descriptions of anything that catches your eye, view the world with a photographer’s eye, and capture various objects and creatures around your home, yard, street, and neighborhood. Try not to be too judgmental in your choice of subjects: a tiny bug well observed, an object you've had for years, an old pair of shoes that should have been thrown out long ago, the bit of dying shrubbery outside your window, dust particles suspended in a ray of light, etc.

Assignments and Assessments:

1. photography assignments (ie, taking 5 photographs of special forms of light—shadows, reflections, etc.)
2. vocabulary and metaphor quizzes (being able to recognize and describe metaphors)
3. your own original Poetography

EVALUATION RUBRIC <i>Criteria for Poetography</i>	Possible Points
The student thoughtfully creates an indirect connection (an implied metaphor) between the image and the poem.	10
The student experimented with sound devices (ie, alliteration), and therefore, the language of the poem exhibits musicality.	10
The student intentionally creates a mood through lighting and/or color in the image, and as a result, evokes an emotion.	10
The student uses different kinds of imagery in the poem to evoke the senses.	10
TOTAL	40

Workshop Exercises & Activities

American Beauty Plastic Bag Scene

<p>1. Watch the plastic bag scene from <i>American Beauty</i> without dialogue. Brainstorm qualities of the bag. (what it would sound like, feel like, taste like, smell like)</p>	<p>2. Generate other things/people/moments that share these qualities.</p>	<p>3. Write similes, expressing some of these qualities, starting with, "This bag was..."</p>	<p>4. Take off "This bag was..." and create a new simile from the second halves of the similes you have already written.</p>
crinkly	leaves on a forest floor	This bag was like leaves on a forest floor.	Leaves on the forest floor are like an old man's bones.

Model Metaphors

1. Metaphors are about transferring qualities from one thing to another, to help you understand that other thing in a more complete way.
2. Look at the metaphor bank and isolate the texture quality being transferred.
3. Vocabulary Enrichment: Study for a quiz on some of the new adjectives which are generated in this activity.

Metaphor Bank

“Just then, the first light of day split the darkness like a knife prying the sky from earth. The white gumdrop sun broke the horizon and the birds began to gossip from the trees.”

-The Wild Things by Dave Eggers

“shivering like a pinned butterfly”

- Charles Simic's "Watch Repair"

“dogwood, / Spring's sap-crippled, arthritic, winter-weathered, myth limb, whose roots are my mother's hair”

-Charles Wright

“dogwood insidious in its constellations of part-charred cross points”

-Charles Wright

“How like the past the clouds are, / Building and disappearing along the horizon, / Inflecting the mountains, laying their shadows under our feet / For us to cross over on.”

-Charles Wright

A loose knot in a short rope, / My life keeps sliding out from under me, intact but / Diminishing, its pattern becoming patternless”

-Charles Wright

“We look down, dead leaves and dead grass like a starry sky from inside out.”

-Charles Wright

“The scented rose-orange moons, / Quarter moons, of fruit fell to the cutting board / So neatly it was as if two people lived in separate cities / And walked to their respective bakeries in the rain.”

-Robert Hass

“There was a little fog / off the bay at sundown in which the waning moon swam laps.”

-Robert Hass

“Wind in the pines like the faint rocking of a crucifix dangling from a rearview mirror at a stopsign.”

-Robert Hass

Texture in Photos and Haiku

texture: the basic structure/composition; the appearance/feel of a surface; distinctive/identifying characteristics

Words to Describe Texture:

brittle	crumbly	spongy
rubbery	fluffy	springy
gritty	dry	runny
clammy	lumpy	jagged
bubbly	mushy	fine
sandy	sticky	smooth
waxy	fibrous	rough
tacky	chalky	coarse
flaky	grainy	uneven
soft	furry	
firm	feathery	

Part One: Texture Photograph

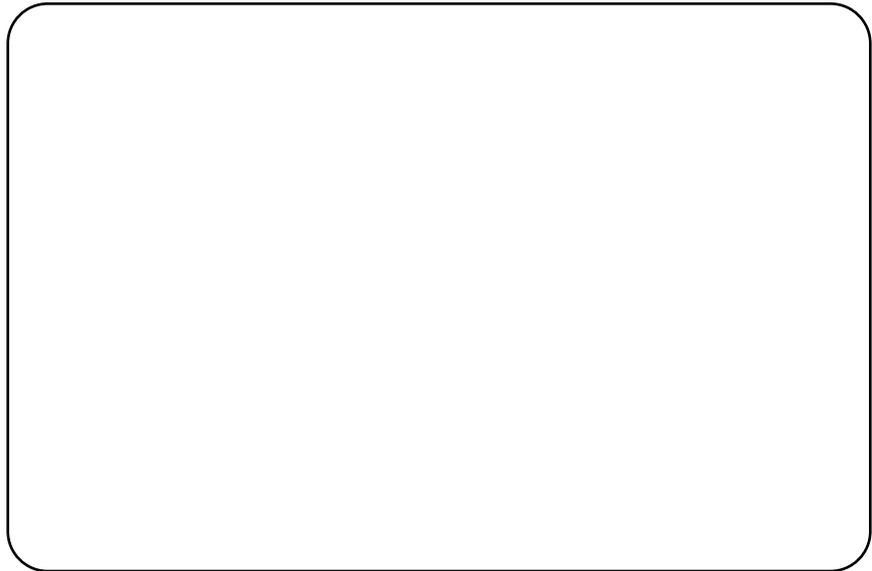
1. Think about how it would feel if you rubbed your finger across the object in your photograph. What would it feel like? Brainstorm and write down words to describe texture. Use the Word Bank above to help you.
2. Pick the best word from your list to describe the texture in your photo. If you use smooth or rough, you must supply an additional, more specific adjective as well.

Part Two: Haiku

1. What is the concrete object in your poem? _____
 2. Think of adjectives to describe its texture in terms of touch, smell, sound, sight.
-
3. Walk over to the photos and with your eyes only identify a photo that shares that same texture.
 4. Switch poems with a partner. Share with your partner which concrete object you focused on, and then each of you silently pick a photo that matches the texture you “feel” from the poem. Discuss.

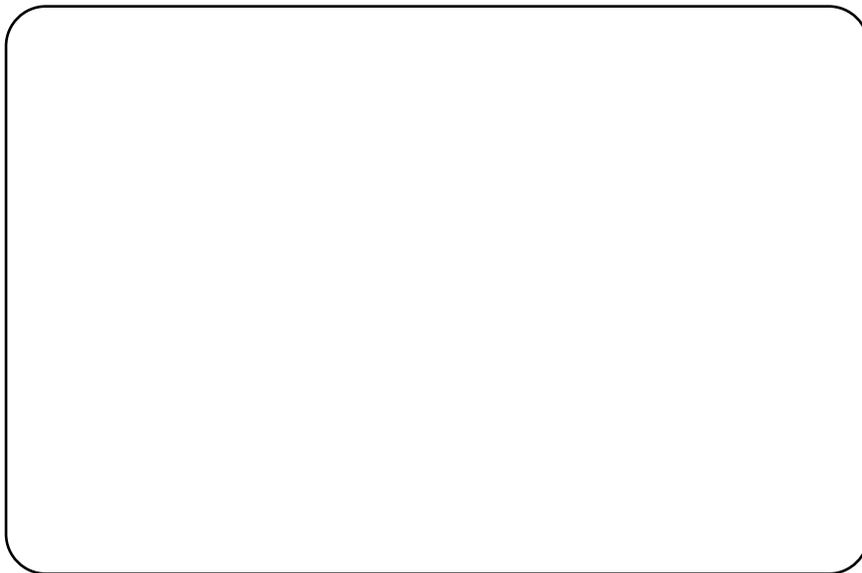
Literally Illustrating Metaphors

Directions: Draw a literal picture of each example of figurative language. If it were possible, what would it actually look like? The first one has been done for you as an example.

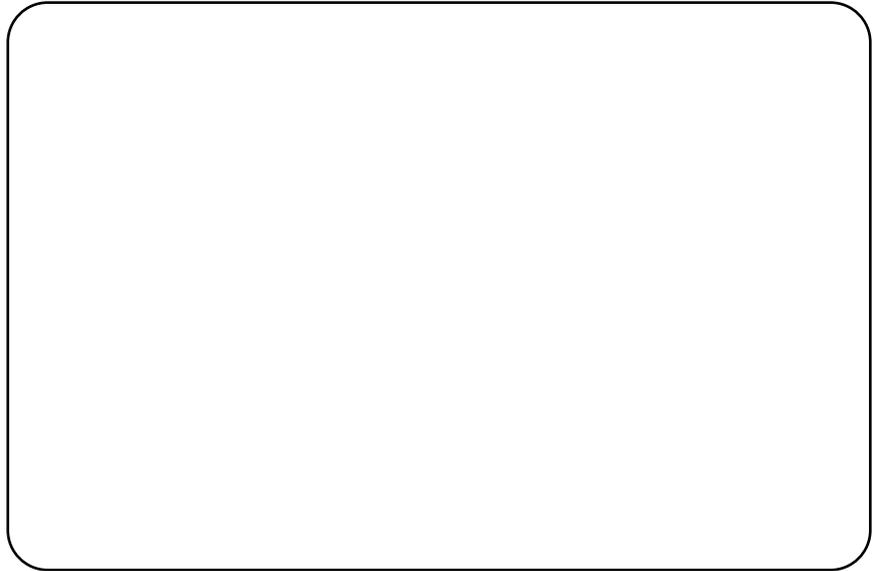


“The white gumdrop sun broke the horizon.”

-Dave Eggers



“...the first light of day split the darkness like a knife prying the sky from earth.” - Dave Eggers



“dogwood...whose roots are my mother's hair.” -Charles Wright



“dead leaves and dead grass like a starry sky from inside out.” - Charles Wright

Creating A Poetograph

1. What is the concrete object in the photo?
2. What do you think is happening in this picture? Freewrite.

3. Underline then golden lines/phrases in your freewrite.

4. Brainstorm adjectives that describe the object in terms of sense imagery.	5. For each sensory adjectives, brainstorm a concrete object that quality.	6. Write a metaphor/simile comparing the object in the photo and the object that shares the same quality.
sight:		
touch/feeling:		

4. Brainstorm adjectives that describe the object in terms of sense imagery.	5. For each sensory adjectives, brainstorm a concrete object that quality.	6. Write a metaphor/simile comparing the object in the photo and the object that shares the same quality.
smell:		
sound:		
taste:		

7. Combine one-two golden phrases/lines you underlined in your freewrite with two similes to create a short poem.

8. Come up with title for poem.

Photographic Assignments

Silhouettes: A silhouette is an item placed in darkness in front of a brighter background. Silhouettes can have a great impact placed in front of a moody sky, lovely sunset or just a normal background. You can also make silhouettes out of the most usual subjects and still create a great photography effect.

Light: Let your eye be drawn by special forms of light - shadows, reflections, through translucent materials, doubling, hazy, etc.

Angles: Walk around an object that is interesting from several angles. Take pictures from six to eight angles. Look up and take a picture of something above your head. Look down and take a picture of something below your knees. Tilt the camera and take a picture of something from underneath. Tilt the camera and take a picture of something from above.

Smell: Take a walk by yourself, and focus your mind on smells. Seek out a variety of smells. And when you come across a smell, take a photo that will remind you of that smell (either the thing that is emitting the smell or the spot that smells).

Texture: Take photographs of objects with interesting textures. Get your camera as close as possible. It's okay if you can't tell what the object is in your photos. The closer the better! Try to capture every little bump and edge.

Shadows: Capture different shadows. You'll need a sunny day for this assignment!

Reflections: Seek out water! A river, the sea, your bathtub, puddles, water collected in a mug. Take pictures of the reflections on the surface.

Metaphors: Photograph something as metaphor, a thing standing for something else, such as a tree for the tree of life, or the moon as the mother of creation, or wrinkled skin as aging, or clouds for emotions. The image is the equivalent of something that might not be photographable.

Metaphors QUIZ (30 pts.)

*Directions: Please choose **five** of the following quotations to respond to on a separate sheet of paper. For each, find one main metaphor and:*

- (1) identify the **type of metaphor** (choose from the Word Bank below) (1 pt.),*
- (2) explicitly **name the two things** being compared (2 pts.),*
- (3) use 2-3 precise adjectives to describe the **qualities being transferred** from one thing to the other (2 pts.), and*
- (4) determine which of the two things being compared is the **principle thing** in the metaphor (that is, the secondary thing merely helps us understand the principal thing in a more complete way) (1 pt.).*

You may use a dictionary. Each question is worth 6 points.

WORD BANK:

(named) metaphor

implied metaphor

simile

dead metaphor

mixed metaphor

1. "Her voice like golden water, the sound like dancing fireflies
Whose wings keep darkness at bay."
-Hunter Tremayne
2. "Sir, I smell a rat; I see him forming in the air and darkening the sky; but I'll nip him in the bud."
-Sir Boyle Roche
3. "She shrugged, her hands fell akimbo to her hips
And unconsciously was she Venus reborn: the evening light reverentially
Revealed her sensuality, and she was every woman
That had ever been or would ever be: incarnate: standing next to me."
-Hunter Tremayne
4. "John swelled and ruffled his plumage."
-Anonymous
5. "'Obviously, it's been a very difficult two days for us,' Nelson said. 'We kind of saw the writing on the wall Friday night. It's just apples versus oranges, and it's not a level playing field by any means.'"
("Seabury's Football Team Done for the Season." *Lawrence Journal-World*, 22/09/2002)
6. "She fell head-over-heels in love."

-Anonymous

7. "He ploughed through traffic."

-Anonymous

8. "Joy and Temperance and Repose
Slam the door on the doctor's nose."

-Anonymous

9. "Mind in its purest play is like some bat
That beats about in caverns all alone,
Contriving by a kind of senseless wit
Not to conclude against a wall of stone."

-Richard Wilbur

10. "I knew enough to realize that the alligators were in the swamp and that it
was time to circle the wagons."

- Rush Limbaugh

11. "I felt a funeral in my brain
And mourners to and fro
Kept treading – treading – till it seemed
That sense was breaking through."

-Emily Dickinson

EXTRA CREDIT: In the following poem, there are six metaphors. Of the six, five are similes. Which is the metaphor (1 pt.)? Comment on its position and effectiveness (2 pts.).

"What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

Like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore-

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over-

Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?"

-Langston Hughes

HAIKU Samples

A mountain temple:
The sound of the misstruck bell
dissolves in the mist.
-Buson

Summer's green mountains
and valleys, now simply white
snow- empty... silent.
-Joso

Not in the least moved
by such beautiful flowers,
the foxes cry out.
-Issa

Six feet above Hell
I walk through this world gazing
at lovely flowers.
-Issa

Made of dust,
I am as light
As the mosquito net
Made of paper.
-Issa

In my medicine cabinet,
the winter fly
has died of old age.
-Jack Kerouac

Pulling tissues
from a box,
the baby builds
an igloo on her head.
-Nina Garin

The phone,
coiled like an ancient serpent,
whispers vague threats and promises.
-Terry Hertzler

At their raucous meeting
the pacifists start fighting
among themselves.
-Malika Fusco

Vocabulary
for
Poetography
Unit

**Words to Describe
the Texture of
Touch**

brittle
rubbery
gritty
clammy
bubbly
sandy
waxy
tacky
flaky
soft
firm
crumbly
fluffy
dry
lumpy
mushy
sticky
fibrous
chalky
grainy
furry
feathery
spongy
springy
runny
jagged
fine
smooth
rough
coarse
uneven

**Words to Describe
the Texture of
Sound**

dark
bright
brilliant
broad
rich
ringing
cheeping
gasping
smashing
piercing
peeping
whooping
tinkling
raucous
chattering
crooning
bellowing
sobbing
bumping
snarling
growling
pitch
crying
thumping
burping
croaking
clattering
yapping
keening
splashing
yelping
rustling
volume
squealing
howling
barking
sniveling
moaning

pealing
tone
rattling
grunting
clanging
coughing
quacking
whining
gagging
fizzing
wheezing
honking
hissing
bawling
trumpeting
swishing
sneezing
rumbling
bubbling
ripping
cooing
chirping
shouting
shuffling
tearing
popping
roaring
thunderous
scratching
snorting
crashing
crunching
cackling
tolling
clucking
silent
tapping
soothing
crowing
tranquil
melodious
cacophonous
singing

quiet
tune
loud
tinkling
noisy
rhythmic
mumbling
twittering
din
beat
blaring
cawing
racket
chattering
murmuring
whistling
clapping
booming
whispering
mewing
snapping
snoring
yelling
mooing
crackling
sighing

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