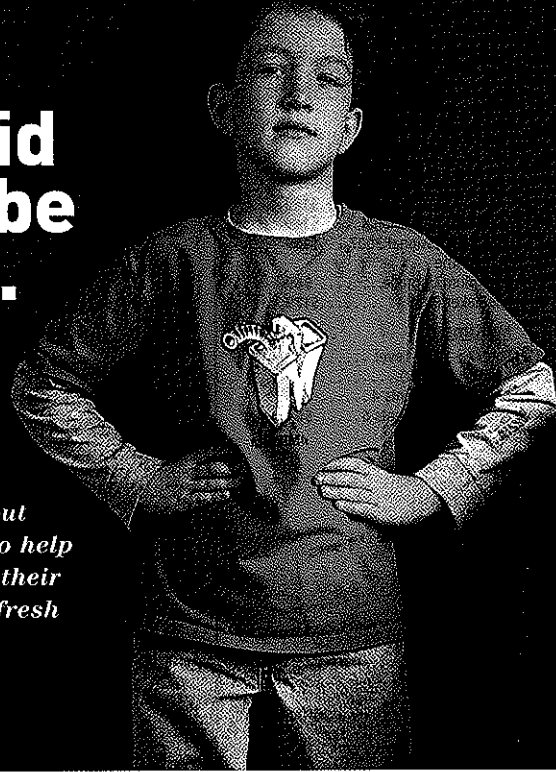


Believe It! This kid could be a poet.

April is National Poetry Month, but not all students jump up and down about writing poetry. To help all students find their voices, try these fresh activities.



1 DOORWAY POETRY

A nice way to begin a poetry unit is by asking students to draw a doorway and then write a poem in response. First, ask students to imagine that they are walking down a street and they come to a door. Does it have windows? Designs? Colors? What is the texture of the door? Is it open? Shut? How do students approach the door? Do they rush up and push it open? Are they excited? Afraid? Ask students to sketch the door. Then, ask them to imagine opening it. What do they see? Smell? Hear? Ask students to write a poem that begins, "Behind the door" Encourage kids to start each stanza of the poem with "Behind the door ..." and to describe what they see, hear, and smell and how they feel when opening the door.

2 PHOTOGRAPH POETRY

Students always enjoy talking about their own lives. Capture that

enthusiasm in poetry by asking kids to bring in a photo of themselves, their families, or a special place they like to visit. While looking at the photos, ask students to brainstorm the following: What traditions do students observe? Are there any special foods students eat at home? What are the voices students hear around them? Do the voices repeat specific phrases or words? What are these specific phrases or words? Once students have brainstormed a list, ask them to write, "I am from ..." and to use this line to begin each new stanza. Encourage kids to fill in the poem with phrases from the brainstorm list.

3 "I REMEMBER" POEMS

If students complain about not having anything to write about, ask them to imagine themselves in a favorite place. This could be a vacation spot such as the woods or a beach. It might be a bedroom or a special spot in or near their home such as a backyard

hiding spot or an attic. Ask students to picture themselves in this place. What are the smells? The sounds? The sights? Give each student a sheet of drawing paper, and ask them to draw the place in a quick sketch. Next, ask students to write down some of the sensory words about the place. Then, ask kids to create a brainstorm list with "I remember" as the prompt. Encourage them to write down whatever comes to mind about the place. Once students have completed a list, ask them to write a poem using only the words on their drawing and brainstorm list. They might begin the poem with "I remember"

4 SIDEWALK CHALK POETRY

Grab a bucket of colorful sidewalk chalk and take students on a spring art walk. The walk can easily be taken around school grounds. As students walk, encourage them to notice their surroundings. What do they see? Smell? Touch? Hear? Ask students to write down their observations. After a ten-minute walk, bring students to a place with a large empty sidewalk and ask them to write a sidewalk poem about the walk. Encourage students to use the following prompts for each stanza of the poem: "I see" "I hear" "I smell" "I feel" "I am" Invite students to draw pictures to accompany their poetry.

5 MASK POEMS

Begin by asking students if they have ever felt like wearing a mask to protect how they feel about something or someone. Do students have places in their life where they pretend to be someone so other people will like them or accept them? Next, ask students to draw a simple mask on paper. You might want to bring in pictures of masks, such as those worn at Mardi Gras, to help students when thinking about types of masks. Then, ask students to write a poem by choosing one of the following prompts: "Behind the mask I am ..." or "Outside I am ... but inside I am" —*Mindy Hardwick*