

LESSON 13:**MAKING YOUR MARK: FREE VERSE POETRY****Objectives**

Students will use poetry to express feelings, emotion, and state of being. They will publish a Free Verse poem expressing their thoughts on what it may have felt like to be an immigrant interned at Angel Island Immigration Station.

Focus Question

How would/did it feel to be confined as an immigrant at Angel Island Immigration Station?

Key Themes

Immigration experience. Exclusion. Marginalization. Imprisonment. Expression of experience through poetry.

Grades

6-8

Time

One to two, fifty minute periods, or one period and homework.

Materials

Grade level appropriate explanation/description of Free Verse poetry for students. Grade level appropriate explanation of writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing). Paper, pen or pencil. Color pens, crayons, yellow or grey poster board (to match the wall paint color at Angel Island Immigration Station barracks).

Optional Art variation—Resist Watercolor: watercolor paper, crayons, watercolors, brushes, paper towels, cups of water.

Optional Art variation #2—Styrofoam Printing: Styrofoam plates, tracing paper, paper, printing ink, brayers, pencils, and ball point pens.

Standards

California History Social Science Standards, Language Arts Standards, Visual Arts Standards

Procedure

1. Anticipatory Set/Hook: As a pre-writing activity, teacher asks students to respond to the following prompt in writing: Based on your trip to Angel Island Immigration Station or study of Angel Island, how do you think it felt for the immigrants who stayed there? What are some emotions they may have felt? How would they describe their environment in the Station? Give students five to ten minutes to complete this task.

2. Ask students to share responses with a partner, a cooperative group, or at least the whole class. The sharing of responses will help students generate ideas for their poetry later.
3. Introduction: Tell students that they will now imagine themselves in the place of immigrants at Angel Island Immigration Station and “carve” their own poetry in to the walls of the classroom, using pens and color paper. Remind students that the poetry at the island was carefully conceived and written to publish the immigrants’ deepest thoughts and feelings for posterity, and that students will try to write with the same care and effort.
4. Give students guidelines for Free Verse poetry (no rules, anything goes, can rhyme or not, words on the page can form visual patterns, can use any language, expresses thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc.)
5. Guided Practice: Give students quiet time to draft poetry in class. Depending on age or skill level of students, teacher can give loose parameters for drafting, such as a specific number of lines or stanzas, a set number of “figures of speech,” or other poetic devices. Students can think about the following question as they write: Based on the poetry you have seen at Angel Island Immigration Station, what would you have written if you had been there during the time period of the Immigration Station?
6. After a given amount of time to write in class or for homework, students should then share work with other students in class, in partners, groups or as a whole class. Depending on age or skill level of the class, have classmates respond to others poetry using written peer response/editing or oral feedback.
7. Independent Practice: Students complete at least one revision of their poetry. Remind students that the immigrants who carved in the walls of the Station had time to think about exactly what they wanted to say, and wanted their writing to be free of mistakes. Encourage students to be creative not only in language, but in the arrangement of words upon the page, handwriting, or any other technique that will make their poetry unique.
8. Students will publish poetry by “carving in to the wall,” using color pens or crayons and yellow wall-colored poster board or paper. Explain that to publish means to make a piece of writing public for display, and that they should “carve” their poetry to make it beautiful and close to perfection.
9. Optional art variation: Have students publish their poetry by creating a resist watercolor. Have students “carve their poetry” on a sheet of watercolor paper using crayons. Light colors will provide more contrast when the students apply paint over the crayon design. Have students paint with the watercolors covering the whole paper. Students don’t need to worry about staying in the lines because the crayon lines will keep popping out as they resist the watercolors. Let the painting dry completely.

10. Optional art variation #2: Have students publish their poetry by carving a print block. Cut off the edges of a Styrofoam plate to create a flat surface. Have students “carve their poetry” into the plate lightly using a dull pencil or a ballpoint pen. Since their print will be reverse of what they carve they will need to flip their writing. Students can trace a pattern by writing their image on tracing paper. Then flip the page over and secure the page on the Styrofoam. Then students can incise the image onto the Styrofoam using a pencil or a ball point pen to go over their words. Then squeeze out printing ink on a flat flat surface, like plexiglass or a cafeteria tray. Roll the ink flat with a brayer. Then place the Styrofoam over the ink to cover the image. Then take off and press onto a clean sheet of paper. Lastly, lay flat or string up on a clothesline to dry. Student may want to mount the image on a contrasting color paper.

Adaptations

- Teacher can be as specific or as general as needed for parameters/requirements of Free Verse poetry.
- Students without experience writing poetry may require advance lessons in the “art of writing” poetry such as how to write figures of speech, rhyming and non-rhyming poetry, etc.
- Writing activities in the lesson can be given as homework or class work.

Extensions

- Students read final draft of poetry to class.
- Teacher displays poetry together on a wall in class or at the school site to recreate walls of Immigration Station.
- Students, in groups, act out individual poems for the class.

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