

The Characteristics of Memorable Poems

One of the first steps towards creating powerful poems is to examine poems created by others. In this activity, students are asked to evaluate two separate poems sparked by the image below.



photo credit: [Seattle Miles](#)

The Characteristics of Memorable Poems

Poem One

No one's here
 but me and these chickens,
 plus a few sheep and, of course,
 the pigs, and I suppose you could count
 the carpenter ants, if you catch them resting,
 but please don't bother with the flies,
 or so says the lazy horse in the corner,
 and — wait, don't go — I forgot all about
 the herd of goats up on the hill, up near where the
 cows parade about,
 so don't forget to mark them down, too,
 in your official United States census.

By Kevin Hodgson

View the original poem here: <http://snipurl.com/vcxeo>

Listen to the author read the poem aloud here: <http://snipurl.com/vdh6d>

Poem Two

Maybe you've forgotten
 the cool grass tickling
 your bare feet early
 on a summer's
 morn.

Maybe you've forgotten
 goose bumps, gifts to
 skinny-dippers
 from the cow's pond
 down in the pasture.

Maybe you've forgotten
 to dream and to play...

To swing on tires and
 to chase frogs.
 To watch tadpoles
 and catch crayfish
 in the creek.

Maybe you've forgotten
 listening to the crickets' call
 while fireflies dance
 you to sleep.

Sad, ain't it?
 Forgetting to live.

By Bill Ferriter

View the original poem here: <http://snipurl.com/vcxil>

Listen to the author read the poem aloud here: <http://snipurl.com/vdhan>

<i>Questions for Consideration</i>	<i>Your Responses</i>
<p>Like any content, both of these poems have strengths and weaknesses. Begin by listing everything that you like about poem one. What is most impressive to you? Least impressive? What are your initial reactions to each poem? If you were to change anything about poem one, what would it be? What about poem two?</p>	
<p>Many of the best poems are concrete. Instead of sharing complicated language, they appeal to the basic senses of their audiences. Which of these two poems does a better job appealing to your senses? What senses—touch, taste, sound, sight—does the author tap in to in their poem? How? Does this change the way you feel about the message they are trying to share? How?</p>	
<p>Many of the best poems are unexpected, either communicating with audiences in a nontraditional way or sharing ideas that are startling. Is there anything surprising about either of these poems? What impact does that have on you as a reader?</p>	
<p>Many of the best poems are emotional, making viewers feel instead of simply think. Influential people know that when they can tap into powerful emotions like joy, anger, hilarity, shame, fear or pain, their ideas are more likely to be remembered. Which of these poems does a better job of making you feel instead of just think? What emotions does it evoke? Why?</p> <p>Better yet, how does the poet communicate those emotions?</p>	
<p>Many of the best poets use interesting words and phrases—or combinations of interesting words and phrases—to catch the attention of their readers. What words and phrases do you like the best in poem one? Why? What impact do those words and phrases have on you as a reader?</p> <p>How about poem two? Are there any interesting words and phrases there?</p>	
<p>Many of the best poets pay careful attention to how their poems sound when read out loud. They use rhythm and rhyme or word combinations that are interesting to the ear.</p> <p>Listen to the authors read their poems aloud. How have the authors made their poems sound interesting? What words and phrases have a musical quality to them when you hear them read to you?</p>	