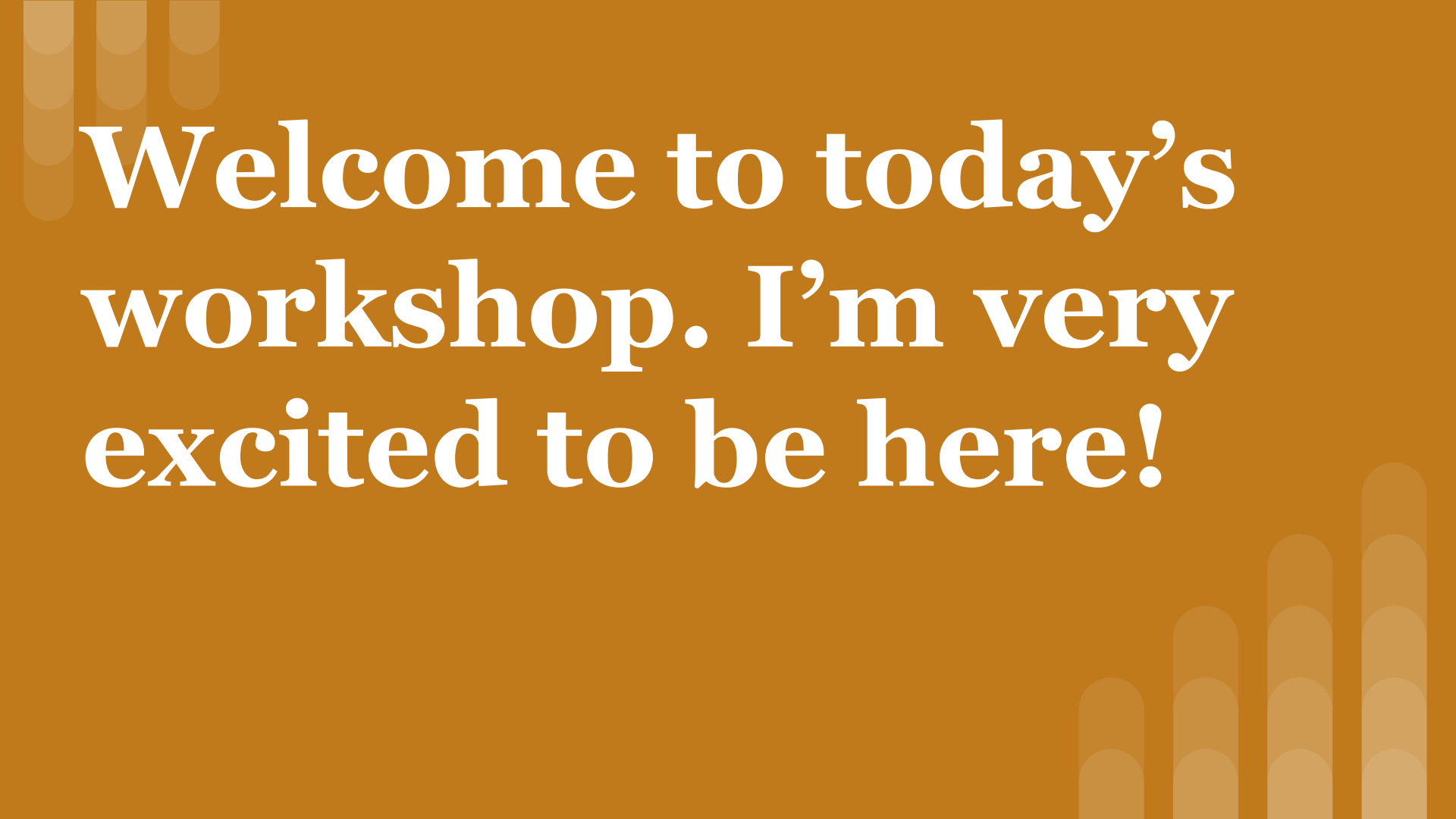


# Teaching Literacy Through Poetry in a Multilevel Adult Learner Classroom

On the Road to Literacy Conference  
April 20, 2024



**Welcome to today's  
workshop. I'm very  
excited to be here!**



**Getting to know  
YOU!**

**Introductions**



***A bit about me:***

**In education about 25 years:**

- \*Literacy program coordinator in a public school district**
- \* Elementary school classroom teacher**
- \* Student services teacher for students needing extra support**
- \*Volunteer with Literacy Chicago – teaching adult learners**
- \* Volunteer trainer with Literacy Works**



## In this workshop, we will

**Explore** why poetry can be a great genre for emerging readers & writers

**Define** the concept of differentiated instruction in a multi-level classroom

**Illustrate** an approach to differentiated instruction in a poetry-centered class

**Share** activities and poems you can try out with Adult Learners

# Poetry

can be a great tool to help  
**provide for differentiated  
instruction in a multilevel  
classroom and build literacy  
skills!**



# First: What is “Differentiated Instruction”?

- Differentiated instruction is the process of tailoring lessons to meet each student's individual interests, needs, and strengths
- Can differentiate the content, process or product  
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/di/cwrap/#:~:text=Differentiated%20instruction%20is%2>
- This does not mean using a different lesson plan for all students. It does mean providing various *access points* for your students within the material you are sharing.



## **Next: What is a multilevel classroom?**

- **Students have a variety of academic skills levels...sometimes a wide range.**
- **Adult students come to the classroom with a variety of past experiences in life and in educational settings that may affect their learning.**



**Thinking about this  
group today, based on  
our introductions,  
how might we be a  
group of diverse  
learners?**

**So.... let's look at some ways poetry can work well for adult learners in a diverse classroom and then, read a poem that I enjoy sharing with students...**



# Poetry...

- **Can provide something “*new and different*”**
- **Poetic elements such as rhyme, rhythm, repetition and alliteration support decoding and fluency.**
- **There are no “right” answers**

# And...

- **Structure** of many poems (shorter lines or stanzas, white space) make text accessible
- **Imagery** created while listening helps prepare learners to read the text
- **Universal themes:** nature, love, family, friendship




*How I would teach....*  
***January** by Lucille Clifton*

1. “Walk tall in the world,”
2. says Mama
3. to Everett Anderson.
4. The year is new
5. and so are the days.
6. “Walk tall in the world,”
7. she says.



# Questions and Activities for “January”



1. How does the poem make you feel? Who are the “characters?” What pictures or images came to you as you listened to the poem?

2. What do you think “walk tall” means?  
And, why do you think Mama tells Everett to  
“walk tall” when the “year is new?”

\*\*\*\*

4. Circle and list important sight words (*says, world, walk, tall, days, new*). *Note: Punctuation*

5. Read and re-read !!!!



## Why this poem?

- 1 Universal themes, beautiful message**
- 2. Repetition of words and phrases**
- 3. Length of poem**
- 4. Good sight word practice**

**What questions or thoughts do you have after reading this first poem together?**



# **“Power of Poetry”**



**In the classroom.....**



**Sample Lesson**

**#1**

**All Poetry**



So let's take a look at a lesson based on the book:

## **“Brown Girl Dreaming” by Jacqueline Woodson**

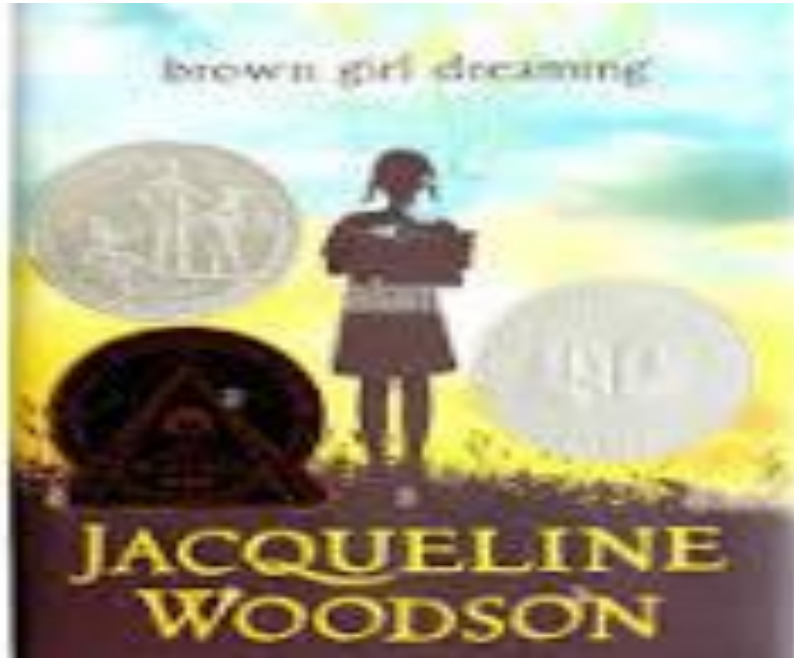
### **Objective:**

**Students will read and respond to poetry, practice fluency and comprehension strategies and will write poetry**

### **Activities:**

- 1. Warm up game**
- 2. Review last week's lesson**
- 3. Introduce and read and discuss four new poems.**  
**(teacher read, echo read, read independently )**
- 4. Write poetry and read aloud to class**

# “Brown Girl Dreaming” by Jacqueline Woodson: A memoir in verse





# WORD GAME FOR “WARM UP”

“STICKMAN”

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Why Stickman?? Light hearted, everyone can participate, practice spelling, previews the theme for the lesson ahead

# Review

- 
1. Last week, we read poems by Jacqueline Woodson and Langston Hughes. Both poets use the word *dreams* in their poems.

Another word for “*dreams*” is \_\_\_\_\_

2. Langston Hughes was Jacqueline Woodson’s

cousin

mentor

boss

3. They both wrote a poem about a friend.

True

or

False



## **How to Listen #9 by Jacqueline Woodson**

**Under the back porch  
There's an alone place I go  
Writing all I've heard.**

# Questions and Activities for this poem

**1. How does the poem make you feel: what images or pictures came to your mind? Who is the speaker? Describe what you see**

**2. Why do you think the author goes under the porch to write? Why does she want to be alone?**

\*\*\*\*

**3. Let's count the syllables in the lines: circle and list sight words**





# Why this poem?

- 1. Haiku form**
- 2. Universal theme ( a special place)**
- 3. Good imagery**
- 4. Length**
- 5. Repetition of sight words**



**And, another  
Jacqueline  
Woodson  
Poem...**



# When I Tell My Family

1. When I tell my family
2. I want to be a writer, they smile and say
- 3 *We see you in the backyard with your writing.*
- 4 They say,
- 5 *We hear you making up all those stories.*
- 6 And,
- 7 *We used to write poems*
- 8 And,
- 9 *It's a good hobby, we see how quiet it keeps you*
- 10 They say,
- 11 *But maybe you should be a teacher,*
- 12 *a lawyer,*
- 13 *do hair...*
- 14 And maybe all of us know
- 15 this is just another one of my
- 16 stories



## Why this poem?

1. tells a poet's story
2. great imagery (**under the porch!**)
3. level is higher and is a good challenge for some readers
4. works for:
  - a. basic sight word practice (*we, they, you, and said*)
  - b. vocabulary practice including **“WRITER”**



# How to write a class Haiku

- 1. Choose a topic**
- 2. Brainstorm words**
- 3. Categorize words by syllable**
- 4. Provide Haiku form**
- 5. Students write**



## Poetry Class Haiku

- 5 Monday afternoons.
- 7 We study poems together,
- 5 Talk, write, share ideas.



*What thoughts do you have about this lesson?*

*What do you notice?*

*What would you change??*

**Poetry can be used on its own as a lesson or to support/ add to other literacy activities such as nonfiction reading skills and comprehension.**



# Sample Lesson Plan

#2

Non fiction topics

+

Poetry



# Lesson Plan: Earth Day

## Objective:

Read and respond to nonfiction reading passage and poetry for phonics, fluency and comprehension practice. Write poetry.

## Activities;

1. Warm ups (syllable/phonics game and “mind map”)
2. Visual Image Study
3. Non-fiction passage and comprehension questions
4. Read and discuss related poetry: TWO Poems
5. Poetry writing using templates/ read aloud



# **“Warm Up” Activities for All:**

## **A. “Mind Map”**

**1. Put a key vocabulary word for your lesson on the board and circle it**

**3. ask students to brainstorm words they associate with the key word**

**4. Record their words and attach the words to the circled key word with lines**

## B. “Visual Image Study”

Ask: what do you “see, think, wonder?”





# Nonfiction comprehension questions

1. In what year did the first Earth Day in the U.S. take place? \_\_\_\_\_

2. The purpose of Earth Day was to raise awareness about the environment.

True or false

3. Today Earth Day is the observed by more than one \_\_\_\_\_  
people around the world

4. Do you think it's important to take care of the earth?

# Poems connected to the nonfiction reading...

1.

2.



**Lyrics can be used  
as poems!**

# “What a Wonderful World”

by George David Weiss and Robert Thiele

## A song as poem:

**1 I see trees of green  
2 Red roses too  
3 I see them bloom  
4 For me and you  
5 And I think to myself  
6 What a wonderful world**

**7 I see skies of blue  
8 And clouds of white  
9 The bright blessed day  
10 The dark sacred night  
11 And I think to myself  
12 What a wonderful world**





## Why this Song?

- **Rhyming and Repetition**
- **Theme (appreciating the natural world)**
- **Familiar lyrics helps readers**

## Activities for Literacy Practice

- **Locate nature words, color words**
- 
- **Find and circle rhymes**



**One more nature poem related to topic...**

## **Alone Looking at a Mountain by Li Po**

All the birds have flown up and gone;

A lonely cloud floats leisurely by.

We never tire of looking at each other -

Only the mountain and I.



# Writing Activity #1 Demo

(short poem with “starter” line)

**Brainstorm words used in class readings to complete three line poem:**

**The earth is our home**

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# Writing Activity #2 Demo

## ACROSTIC POEM

--

**E**

**A**

**R**


**T**

**H**



**So, to recap.....**

**What skills do you think can be  
practiced when using poetry in  
our lessons???????**



**YES!**





## **Poetry can help learners practice and develop literacy skills:**

- **Reading, listening and speaking**
- **Spelling and phonics**
- **Sharing background information**
- **Making connections to self and text**
- **Writing in structured format**
- **Reading aloud**

So I hope I've given you a few ideas about how poetry can be **a part of your teaching toolbox** as you create curriculum for Adult Learners. I'd love to hear your thoughts...



**If you are comfortable, please, take a minute to reflect.**

- a. Something new you learned**
- b. Something you might use in your own class**
- c. Anything else you'd like to share**

**Thank you again to you all for being here! I really have enjoyed our time**

**Or, paper eval sheet?**



# More poems to try....

1. ***Alone Looking at a Mountain*** by Li Po  
(*rhyming and imagery*)
2. ***Life Doesn't Frighten Me*** by Maya Angelou  
(*message, imagery, repetition*)
3. ***We Shall Overcome***, Lyrics by Charles Albert  
Tindley (*message, imagery, repetition*)
4. ***Dreams*** by Langston Hughes (*rhyming,  
imagery*)



## More poems....

5. ***The Old Pond*** by Matsuo Basho ( *Haiku, sight words, repetition*)

6. ***Poem*** by Eloise Greenfield ( *rhyming, nature, poem about poetry*)

7. ***The Fullness of Migration*** by Langston Hughes ( *free verse, realistic, nature, life*)

8. ***This Is Just To Say*** by William Carlos Williams ( *Free verse, realistic, relationships*)



# Resources

**Poetry anthologies and collections**

**Poetry books by style, topic or author**  
(eg: Haiku poems, humorous poems,  
rhyming poems, nature poems)

**Websites:** [poetrysoup.org](http://poetrysoup.org).  
[poemhunter.org](http://poemhunter.org)

**Internet search by topic... e.g. “poems  
about space”**

**Thank you and  
have a  
wonderful day**

