

**Assignment 2**  
**Lorraine Minosky**  
**LLED 445 Teaching Poetry**  
**Dr. Kedrick James**  
**August 3, 2017**

**Grades 4-7**

**Big Ideas:** We can find poetry in small places, small things, small creatures and in small moments in time. Poetry can bring us joy. We can develop our understanding of how language works in order to have an effect on others or to be affected by others 'writing.

**Questions:** What is poetry? Where can we find poetry? How can poetry be crafted in order to have an effect on the reader?

**Focus poems:**

*The Summer Day* by Mary Oliver

*Christmas Sparrow* by Billy Collins

*mantis* by Valerie Worth from all the small poems and fourteen more

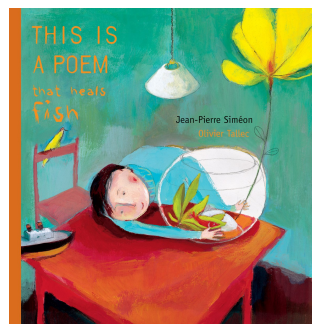
**Supporting anchor text:**

*This is a Poem that Heals Fish* by Jean-Pierre Simeon and Olivier Tallec where Leon embarks on a quest to discover what a poem is so he can use it to cure his beloved fish's boredom. Following a series of interactions with his neighbours, Leon eventually discovers that:

A poem  
is when you have the sky in your mouth.  
It is hot like fresh bread,  
when you eat it,  
a little is always left over.

A poem  
is when you hear  
the heartbeat of a stone,  
when words beat their wings.  
It is a song sung in a cage.

A poem  
is words turned upside down  
and suddenly!  
the world is new.



Following reading this book, focus on the second stanza. Can you actually hear the heartbeat of a stone? How would you need to listen? Can words beat their wings? What image comes to mind when we hear that a poem is a song sung in a cage?

We're going to read some poetry and so we can pursue the questions:  
What is poetry?  
Where can poetry be found?  
How can poetry be crafted so it can have an effect on the reader?

The first poem we are going to read is called *The Summer Day* by Mary Oliver. It's a poem that really appealed to me. We'll listen to Mary read it herself, and then I'll read it. I'm going to model what goes on in my head as I read this poem to give you an example of how we can approach reading poetry.

The poem focuses on a grasshopper. How many of you have seen a grasshopper? Let's take a look so we know what Mary is talking about in her poem.

Bring in grasshoppers to look at closely or share photos and short video clips of grasshoppers on iPads.  
<https://youtu.be/7J0sMemdkcs>

Listen to Mary read her poem  
LINK:  
<https://youtu.be/16CL6bKVbJQ?list=PLgYpN0E5KkYPkaCPCUWal1sSvmykBKAHn>

Reread poem out loud.

### **The Summer Day** by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?  
Who made the swan and the black bear?  
Who made the grasshopper?  
This grasshopper, I mean...  
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down...  
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.  
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.  
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.  
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.  
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,  
which is what I have been doing all day.  
Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
With your one wild and precious life

from *New and Selected Poems*,  
1992  
Beacon Press, Boston, MA

Copyright 1992 by Mary Oliver.

## Model responding to the poem using a Think Aloud

Focus on traits of writing:

Meaning, Organization Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, Conventions

Use the thinking organizer: **See-Think-Wonder** (one I use frequently to help students look really closely at text or visuals. Observe closely and name what you see, (like a scientist) before arriving at inferences and judgments. I added “hear” in this case, because it is poetry!)

I’ll record my observations and thinking on a chart as I go.

<b>What Do I See/Hear?</b>	<b>What Do I Think?</b>	<b>What Do I Wonder?</b>
<p><i>world, swan, black bear, grasshopper</i></p> <p>Word choice, sentence fluency <i>Many words are repeated:</i> <i>Who who who</i> <i>The one, the one</i> <i>Now, now</i></p> <p>Sentences/Conventions: Opens with questions: <i>who made the world?</i></p> <p><i>This grasshopper</i></p>	<p>Why these specific words? She uses big examples and small examples: grasshopper though small has the same significance as the world</p> <p>It helps the poem flow, become song-like</p> <p>Maybe Mary is using questions to invite the reader into a conversation. She’s also showing us how she is curious about the world around her.</p> <p>Shifts to the present and focuses on this grasshopper. Mary is bringing the reader into the moment</p>	<p>Would Mary write about a bear? Or does she just focus on small things...?</p> <p>Who is she talking to? Us? What else does Mary think about? What is she curious about?</p> <p>How would the poem be different if Mary just said, “grasshoppers” rather than “this grasshopper”? Would we feel as connected?</p>

<p>Word Choice/Sentence fluency Vivid verbs: <b>Gazing, flung, snaps, floats</b></p>	<p>Really captures the movement of the grasshopper. I can see it in my mind.</p>	<p>How is <b>gazing</b> different than <b>seeing</b>? <b>Flung</b> different than <b>jumped</b>. <b>Snaps</b> rather than just opens. <b>Floats</b> rather than <b>flies</b>. How powerful are these verbs in creating an image of a grasshopper? What would happen if we substituted with different verbs?</p>
<p>Sentence fluency <b>who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down</b></p>	<p>This compares us to the grasshopper, similar but different. We can see her chewing. This prepositional phrase tells us how.</p>	<p>How did Mary get the grasshopper to sit for so long?</p>
<p><b>who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes</b></p>	<p>Mary captures the image of the large insect eyes. They have those compound eyes. (Look at close up photos of grasshopper eyes on iPads).</p>	<p>Is Mary suggesting that insects are more complex than we give them credit for? Do they think about more than we know? How do insects see differently than us?</p>
<p><b>out of the grass out of my hand</b></p>	<p>Prepositional phrases tell us where. Contribute to bringing us readers to a place. We can see where.</p>	<p>I wonder how long the grasshopper stayed in her hand? What other insects can be enticed to sit in our hands?</p>
<p><b>lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face</b></p>	<p>Makes us connect to the human-like qualities of the grasshopper movement</p>	<p>Do grasshoppers actually “wash” their face? Is that what she was really doing? Why the adjective “pale”? does it suggest fragility?</p>

<p><b><i>I don't know what a prayer is ...</i></b></p>	<p>This line kind of “snaps” us to attention. We’re no longer contemplating the grasshopper and now we’re talking with Mary. I envision watching the grasshopper floating away then turning my attention suddenly back to Mary as she starts talking to herself or me?</p>	<p>Why is she talking about praying now?</p>
<p><b><i>Pay attention Fall down into the grass Kneel in the grass Be idle and blessed</i></b></p>	<p>Sounds like falling to your knees and praying but outside in the grass. Has a religious feel to the verbs and verb phrases.</p>	<p>Why is she talking about religious rituals now?</p> <p>Is she suggesting that taking the time to get down close and spend time with nature is her way of connecting to god? Did she ever go to church?</p>
<p><b><i>Stroll through the fields which is what I have been doing all day</i></b></p>	<p>Vivid verb: <i>stroll</i> suggests slowness, contemplative</p>	<p>What would happen if we replaced “stroll” with another verb? How would it change the mood, meaning of the poem?</p> <p>How does she make the time to do this?</p>
<p><b><i>Tell me, what else should I have done?</i></b></p>	<p>Mary is talking to me, the reader. Suggesting that I may be questioning her choosing to just walk around slowly all day. (which is actually what I just did).</p>	<p>Do other people challenge Mary about her just roaming around all day? Does she feel defensive?</p>

<p><b><i>Doesn't everything die at last and too soon?</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Tell me, what is it you plan to do With your one wild and precious life?</i></b></p>	<p>She's suggesting that we will be missing out if we don't take the time to slow down and interact and observe our natural world.</p> <p>Wow! This line really challenged me. She has a gentle tone, but there is an underlying strength to it. I feel she's kind of putting me on the spot. The command (imperative) <b><i>Tell me</i></b> jolts me to attention.</p> <p><i>Wild and precious</i> are interesting adjectives to describe my life. She makes me see myself as more a part of the natural world. I don't think she means "wild" like I'm some sort of party animal.</p> <p>The word "one" really emphasizes that I've got this one shot at life and I better take it all in and notice and appreciate, even the small moments and creatures.</p> <p>What's interesting is although Mary is talking about a summer day's experience with a grasshopper, she was saying so much more to me.</p>	<p>I wonder if Mary has experienced personal loss prior to writing this poem? Did some life event propel her into this view on life?</p> <p>I'm wondering if Mary would be able to live in the city? Is she reaching out to us city dwellers who are moving in such a sterile and fast paced world? Or is she talking to someone in particular in her life? Is there someone in her life who doesn't value what Mary does?</p> <p>How is Mary's poem like "a song sung in a cage"?</p> <p>How did Mary's words "beat their wings?"</p>
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## Next steps:

Explore the poem: *Christmas Sparrow* by *Billy Collins*, using the same See/Hear-Think-Wonder and this time have the students chime in with observations. Respond together. Record on a chart.

## Christmas sparrow by Billy Collins

The first thing I heard this morning  
was a soft, insistent rustle,  
the rapid flapping of wings  
against glass as it turned out,

a small bird rioting  
in the frame of a high window,  
trying to hurl itself through  
the enigma of transparency into the spacious light.

A noise in the throat of the cat  
hunkered on the rug  
told me how the bird had gotten inside,  
carried in the cold night  
through the flap in a basement door,  
and later released from the soft clench of teeth.

Up on a chair, I trapped its pulsations  
in a small towel and carried it to the door,  
so weightless it seemed  
to have vanished into the nest of cloth.

But outside, it burst  
from my uncupped hands into its element,  
dipping over the dormant garden  
in a spasm of wingbeats  
and disappearing over a tall row of hemlocks.

Still, for the rest of the day,  
I could feel its wild thrumming  
against my palms whenever I thought  
about the hours the bird must have spent  
pent in the shadows of that room,  
hidden in the spiky branches  
of our decorated tree, breathing there  
among metallic angels, ceramic apples, stars of yarn,

its eyes open, like mine as I lie here tonight  
picturing this rare, lucky sparrow  
tucked into a holly bush now,  
a light snow tumbling through the windless dark.

With the poem *mantis* by Valerie Worth, have the students, using the same thinking routine, read and respond to the poem in small groups. Share out thinking, and post the charts.

## ***mantis***

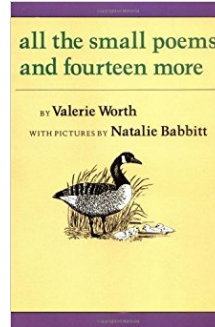
*Bowing  
Such lean  
And monklike  
Shoulders,*

*Robed in  
Such leafily  
Meek  
Array,*

*Folding  
The wrists,  
And treading  
So slowly,*

*Can it  
Really be  
Wholly  
Holy,*

*Pretending  
To pray,  
While intending  
To prey?*

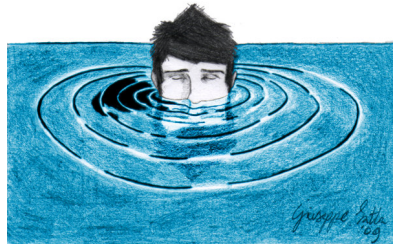


Consider, what all three poems are saying.  
Connect with the big ideas and further consider the initial questions.

Go on a few walks armed with writer's notebooks: sketch and write observations, or use iPads to capture and gather images.

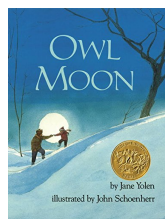


**Marinate** in many more poems of similar nature.

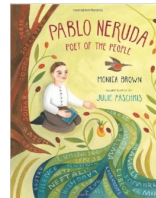
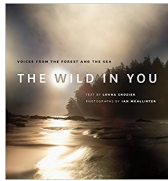


Such as:

Jane Yolen's *Bird Watch* and her beautifully illustrated prose/poem: *Owl Moon*



For local perspective, read some selections from Lorna Crozier's *The Wild in You*



Continue focusing on poetry that focuses on small mundane objects;

Lorna Crozier's musings in *The Book of Marvels: A Compendium of Everyday Things*

Perhaps venture into Pablo Neruda: lead in with his illustrated biography: *Pablo Neruda Poet of the People* by Monica Brown and Julie Paschke

To be continued...