



# PhotoPoem

A Unit Plan for CorelDRAW Suite (PhotoPaint) and Corel WordPerfect®

**Subject:** Language Arts, Art

**Grade Level Range:** 5-12

## Summary Description of the Lesson/Activity:

Students use a photo or artwork of their own design to stimulate writing of a poem. Ideally, this activity is part of a unit on poetry, and simply provides another motivational device for involving students in writing poetry.

## Activities:

Create and illustrate a poem using a photo or design, created or altered by students

## Goal/Overview:

Explore poetry by creating a “muse” and then drafting poetry to match.

## Objective/ Expected Outcomes:

- Write and illustrate a poem related to a specific object/topic.
- Identify ways that a poem can convey information about things you can't see.

## Duration:

3 days

## Preparation and Materials:

- An appropriate set of images that have meaning to the students: family photos, or images collected from other sources.
- Scanner or digital camera to import images.
- This activity assumes that students are used to doing writing in groups

## Materials Required:

- Computer access
- Scanner or digital camera
- Images

## Assessment:

As appropriate to this activity.

## **Instructional Steps:**

Preparation (Prior to starting activity)

- 1) Have students bring their images or create one of their own using Corel Painter or CorelDRAW.

Introduce the topic (Day 1)

- 2) Talk about how photographs sometimes tell us more about people by what they don't show than what they show.
- 3) Have students get out their pictures, and pass a number of photographs around the room in the cooperative tables.
- 4) Have partners, or tables, look at the photos and comment on what they see as well as what they don't see. (Example: A photo of a family gathering where everyone pictured is a good distance from one another, and unsmiling.) Students brainstorm, with the teacher writing responses on the overhead. (Record things seen as well as unseen.)

Provide a model

- 5) Display and read the following poem. After reading, have students brainstorm what is being directly shown in the poem and what is not.

Photograph 1969 by Katy Barber

This is my mother  
lifting her hair long  
like a low whistle  
off her neck  
These are her fingers  
caught in the tangles  
of brown and gold caught in  
silver earrings  
This is my father  
reaching through the lens  
to touch the edge  
of a new family  
to touch her opening belly  
under her full dress

This is existing  
before I exist

This is me growing up  
against their lives  
him watching for a sharp  
breath from her looking out  
onto the border of birth  
this is bumping us into three

### **Instructional Steps (continued)**

(Generally, students point out that the mother is about to have a baby, her hair is long and streaked, she has silver earrings, and the father is taking a picture of her. What can't be seen is the new life, the girl and all her hopes, the family about to be created, the love that is present.)

7) Write a poem yourself on the overhead. (It is not important how well you write in front of the students. What is important is that you are honest about yourself and that you write from your heart.) If appropriate, again have students discuss what is seen and what is unseen.

Students write a poem (Day 2)

8) Taking the photo or artwork, students write their own poem, share it with their group, and do any desired revising.

9) Students scan or take a digital photo of their image and import it into WordPerfect, then type their poem.

Sharing/Evaluation (Day 3)

10) This activity can be concluded in two ways: students can print their photo and poem and they can be collected into a book, or each student can read their poem while projecting or displaying the accompanying image.

### **Student Materials/Worksheets:**

WordPerfect template, if appropriate

*Credits: This lesson is based on a Columbia Education Center ([www.col-ed.org/](http://www.col-ed.org/)) idea.*