When we begin to speak in the language that is ours and tell our own stories and truths, we are surprised that this too is poetry.

- Georgia Heard
Suggested Resources:

Mentor Texts for Expository Poetry (Suggested):
[Many of these can be borrowed from other campus libraries through interlibrary loans... if you’ve never heard of this, check with your librarian. ]

*Spectacular Science* by Lee Bennett Hopkins
*Face Bug* by Patrick J. Lewis
*National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry: 200 Poems that Squeak, Soar, and Roar* by Patrick J. Lewis
*Step Gently Out* by Helen Frost
*Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature* by Joyce Sidman
*The Great Migration: Journey to the North* by Eloise Greenfield
*In the Wild* by David Elliott
*Dark Emperor & Other Poems of the Night* by Joyce Sidman
*Amazing Faces* by Bennett Lee Hopkins

Search through your own school library to find many more collections of expository poems on topics of animals, nature, weather, geographical places, historical events, etc.

Professional Resources:

*Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3-6*, by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell (Ch. 24)
*Explore Poetry* by Donald Graves

*Found Poems/ Parallel Poems* ([ReadWriteThink](https://wwwReadWriteThink.org)) while this lesson is “written for” middle school, it can easily be adjusted for 4th and 5th graders.

*Poets.org* This site has lots of poetry as well as lesson plans to explore.

*No-Nonsense Guide to Teaching Writing* by Judy Davis and Sharon Hill

*Nonfiction Craft Lessons: Teaching Information Writing K-8*, by Joann Portalupi and Ralph Fletcher

*Treasures Phonics/ Spelling Practice Book* (Resource CD), Macmillan/McGraw-Hill

*Texas Write Source*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing (for general writing process support)
Appreciating Expository Poetry:

Children must spend time exploring and reading poetry in order to understand it, analyze it, and become inspired to write it. This unit begins with a few days of reading expository poetry to help students realize that poetry is often found in our physical environments and in real events of the past or present. As students begin to draft poetry, they proceed through all stages of the writing process. Because many poems are short, students may move through the process more quickly, sometimes completing more than one poem in one writing period. In any case, you should continue to model each stage of the writing process to show that poetry, like all other writing, is revised or rewritten several times in an attempt to create just the right pictures or feelings in the reader’s mind.

Because this is not their first exposure to poetry this year, you probably have a good idea of how familiar your students are with the unique structures of poetry. Introduction to this unit should focus on the idea that not all poetry is simply to entertain. It is sometimes written to explain or to influence by sharing factual information about a topic. As you share these poems with students, direct their focus on how the writer uses poetic techniques to help convey their message.

This unit will support students’ ability to encapsulate their thinking about an expository topic, thus building their capacity for success on the STAAR expository essay. Because of the nature of poetry- precise, carefully chosen language along with working to draw the reader in emotionally- it brings new skills to the writing of expository essays that grab the reader.

Knowledge and Skills (TEKS):

The “Student Expectation” for writing poetry says that students should be writing poems that ‘convey sensory details’ and include:

- Rhyme
- Patterns of Verse
- Meter
- Alliteration
- Onomatopoeia
- Similes
- Metaphors
- Graphic Elements

Within this unit it is also important to address the Student Expectation for reading poetry, specifically the characteristics of poetic techniques that help a reader to better understand the topic(s) of the poetry.

Check the 5th Grade Conventions Checklist, (Spanish) 4th Grade Conventions Checklist (Spanish) to ensure that you address the parts of speech, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling SEs for this grading period.
Purpose and Audience:
Read poetry aloud without analyzing it or introducing vocabulary. (Of course, if someone asks about the meaning of a word, I’ll respond.) Too much poetry has been ruined for children by lengthy introductions and careful directions on what they should “learn.” Poets write with the intention that their poems stand alone, without extensive introductions. The only real difference with expository poetry is that it is written to inform as it entertains.

“Poetry brings together sounds and words in unique, intriguing ways that may evoke intense imagery and profound meaning. The best poetry frequently contains an element of surprise. You encounter language that you want to read over and over, and when you do, you experience the poem anew each time. Your thoughts and emotions may be aroused by a single word.” (Fountas & Pinnell)

This does not mean that you should not discuss poems after they have been read aloud. The discussion can follow broad guidelines: “What struck you about the poem? Did any particular words create interesting pictures? Were there any words you especially liked? What did you wonder about?” Occasionally I might ask, “What do you suppose the poet was thinking when he or she wrote the poem?” I hope there will be a broad range of interpretation and taste. I encourage differences of opinion and urge children to state specifically why they have other tastes. ~Explore Poetry, by Donald H. Graves

TEKS:
In this unit, students will read a variety of poems written about expository topics, topics that are real and true. The poems provide accurate information about the topic, based on facts and observations, but may veer off into wonderings and opinions, as is natural during the study of any intriguing topic. Students use the analysis of these expository poems to write their own expository poems that: 18(B) convey sensory details using the conventions of poetry (rhyme, meter, patterns of verse) as well as (i) poetic techniques (alliteration, onomatopoeia); (ii) figurative language (similes, metaphors); and (iii) graphic elements (capital letters, line length).
The Writing Process:
(Brown text in the remainder of this STAAR unit indicates documents within these Expository Poetry Writing Unit folders. English / Spanish)

**Prewriting:**
Immerse your students in the sound and imagery of poetry, teaching the appreciation of poetry, before asking them to begin writing poetry. (See: *Reading Poetry Aloud [for Teachers]*, *Respond to Poetry*, and *Students Read Poems Aloud*)

Provide lots of opportunities for the students to play with words (outside of the conventions that surround narrative and expository texts.) Physical manipulatives like Scrabble ® letter tiles, magnetic poetry, Wikki Stix, as well as digital tools like Storybird, ABCya Word Clouds for Kids, and ReadWriteThink interactives like Theme Poems help make word play fun for even the most reluctant writer!

- **Vocabulary List** - As you introduce different types of poetry, gradually introduce the vocabulary of poetry. Model for students how you use your own Writer’s Notebook to find topics for your next poems.
- **Getting Started with Poetry Workshop** (In addition to the baskets of printed poetry anthologies, provide bookmarked online sites for students to explore. There are many of good ones, which include Poetry 4 Kids.com, Giggle Poetry.com, Shel Silverstein.com
- **Where We Find Topics for Expository Poetry**
- **Found Poetry**

**Organizing and Drafting:**
These are often interchangeable processes, but especially during the writing of poetry. Even more so than with other types of text, your students will work at different paces. Their own writing processes will even vary from poem to poem, some topics and poetic forms coming more naturally to them than others. (NOTE: This writing genre is often more freeing to struggling writers and more challenging to those students who work well with the structure and conventions of more narrative types of texts.)

The following documents will help you plan your Poetry Unit:

- **Four Elements to Make a Successful Poem** helps student writers think about the theme of their poem, their audience and purpose, the mood of their poem, and the form that best fits their message.

  *Poetry Minilessons from Fountas and Pinnell* is a list of possible minilesson topics for teaching the writing of poetry.
Revising and Editing:

Revising-

Poetry, like all other writing, is revised, and sometimes rewritten, several times in an attempt to create just the right picture or feeling in the reader’s mind. Poets make many decisions as they create their poetry. Revising their poem involves making choices that they feel helps their poem best communicate their message. *Strategies for Revising a Poem*

- Use your own poem to model strategies for revising poetry. As you model, be sure to think out loud as you consider ways to revise your choices of words and phrases in order to most effectively create sensory images for the reader. Along with this, we need to look closely at the details we state directly and which we imply for the reader. *Work with Details*

- Show students how to revise to add repetition, onomatopoeia, similes or metaphors in their poems. *Work with Sound and Repetition*

- Model the process of rearranging words and phrases to more clearly communicate mood in the poem. Paired with this is the act of closely considering word choice- *Work for More Precise Language* - By eliminating nonessential words, a poet gives emphasis to the remaining words. Poets then ask themselves, “Is this really the best word to express this idea?” They consider alternatives, think about the tone, try different words and listen to the way it sounds. They let the poem rest and come back to it later to see if it creates the right feeling in the poem. Model this process for your students!

- Poets freely use line breaks, line length, stanzas, and the placement of words on the page to create a visual effect within their poem. *Understanding Line Breaks*

Editing-

Poets also make conscious decisions about whether to follow standard capitalization and punctuation rules. Students should edit their own poems, explaining their reasons for choosing not to follow capitalization and punctuation rules, and explaining their choices for line length and word placement.

- Check the 5th Grade Conventions Checklist, (Spanish), to ensure that you address the parts of speech, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling SEs for this grading period.

- 4th Grade Conventions Checklist (Spanish)
Final Draft/Publishing:
Because poetry is short, there are many ways to publish it (share it with others publicly). This may be in a classroom anthology, on a class website, campus-wide sharing, or sharing publicly online (including contests.)

Other ideas:
- Designate one wall in a centrally located corridor as your school “poetry gallery.” Change the theme every month to feature nature poems, poems from different cultures, poems by a particular poet, and so forth. Invite students to add poems they have selected, copied, and illustrated, or poems they have written and illustrated themselves. (Fountas and Pinnell, p. 418)
- Send illustrated poems (written around a theme, such as Lady Bird Lake, Zilker Park, Austin Symphony Orchestra, etc.) to the appropriate managing office. You could do this for one of your school’s adopters.
- Send illustrated poems to local retirement homes/communities.
- World Poetry Day is March 21, and April is National Poetry Month. Ask your local library if they will display your students’ poems in celebration of these events. Have students begin thinking about poems they’d like to share in the spring.

Writing Conferences:
While conferencing with your students, help them reflect on their poems and learn to revise them. Invite your students to read their poem aloud to you. If it feels cluttered or disjointed or has less interesting parts, you can help the student identify words that do not contribute, and that may actually detract from the language and meaning of the poem. This especially includes words that don’t convey content to the reader. It is amazing what a difference eliminating nonessential words can make. (NOTE: Be sure to let the student make these choices… it is their poem.)

You can also ask students to highlight words or language they really like in their own poems as well as words or language that is not interesting or may be overused. They can then look for more interesting words that do a better job of informing the reader about the topic while maintaining their own poet’s voice.
Assessment:

- Students will not be asked to write poetry for the STAAR Writing test at any grade level. However, the STAAR Reading tests at all grade levels will include comprehension, analysis, and some mechanical knowledge of the form and structures used in poetry.

- It can be argued that a person does not truly understand the intricacies of poetry until he has written it. And because there are so many different forms of poetry, children will not gain an overall knowledge of the many different kinds of poetry until they have spent a considerable amount of time reading a variety of poetry, analyzing it, talking about it, listening to different perspectives on it, and ultimately trying to write many different kinds of poetry. Students continue to work on refining word choice by choosing precise wording for the poems they write.

- It is worth our time to ask children to try writing poetry, even if we are not completely comfortable with writing it ourselves. Most children enjoy the challenge and, at the very least, they will not be afraid of it when they see it on their reading test.

- Assessing students’ work with poetry should be limited to the actual process they go through. The following questions might help you in assessing their work during this unit.
  - Are they applying the strategies modeled and discussed?
  - Have they worked to improve their choice of words and phrases to better communicate their message?
  - Have they applied conventions such as spelling and capitalization expected according the TEKS?
  - Do their responses to poetry include explanations of their thoughts?
  - Have they completed tasks assigned?