

Pre-Activity

Poetry makes language come alive. Poets often use a small number of words to convey a large idea or feeling. They choose their words carefully.

Think of six words or phrases to describe this emotion:

anger

Now narrow your list down to the three words that best express how you feel about the word *anger*.

Activity

A. The writer Barbara Juster Esbensen used her poem “Hippopotamus” to bring a specific word to life.

Here is a word
HIPPO POTAMUS. It sinks
if you look at it sinks
into mud at the bottom
of warm rivers

At the front end
only the eyes bulge up
The back of this word
drowns in rivertide Waters curl
around swirl over
POTAMUS the part
that looks like a city bus
submerged

This word heaves itself
onto riverbanks waddles
down the shore squelches
the mud with its ten-ton
feet When it yawns
all twelve letters
can fit in hip
to hip to hip . . .



Writing Tip

Reading all types of writing is not only enjoyable, it makes us better readers and writers.

1. What do you think the author wanted you to “picture” about a hippopotamus?

2. In what ways do you think the word *hippopotamus* resembles the actual animal?



3. Can you think of another word that “resembles” its object in real life? Explain why. _____

B. Think about one of your favorite activities. Close your eyes and just let images swirl around. Make a list of five things you like about that activity.

C. Now create a poem about your favorite activity. Include your list words in the poem.

Extra

Poets often give readings of their writing. Hearing poems read aloud by the author can offer insight into the author’s ideas. Choose one of the poems you wrote, or create a new one. Read it out loud to a family member.

Post-Activity

Work with a partner. Each of you should write the first five words that come to mind. Exchange papers. Now write a poem that includes all five of your partner’s words.

Pre-Activity

Do you like history? Or are you more interested in what present-day life is like in another culture? Authors usually write about something they like. And they usually have to learn more about the topic first. Think of at least three topics you might like to write about.

Activity

A. Read the “story starter” below.

The Pilgrims arrived in the New World in 1620. Their ship, the *Mayflower*, landed on the shores of what would later be named Plymouth, Massachusetts. Imagine you were a passenger on that ship with your parents. You have just spent your first winter in this new land. Thanks to the generosity of the Native Americans, you survived. Now, the rocky earth must be prepared for farming if you are to survive the next winter.

Write a story about what you think that time in your life would have been like. Answering the questions below is like making an outline. You will be better prepared to write your story. You may want to look in reference books.

1. Why do you think farming was difficult for the Pilgrims in New England?

2. What crops do you think you and your family will grow? Where will you get seeds, since you can't buy them in stores?

3. What sort of house do you think you live in?

4. Even though there is much work to be done, your parents want you to play sometimes, too. What toys do you think you would play with? With whom would you play?



Writing Tip

Authors do research before they write. This helps them to tell an accurate story. Also, many authors like to make an outline of their story before they begin to write.

