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Arizona Poetry Out Loud Teacher’s Guide
Poetry Performance in the Classroom: 
Supporting Arizona’s College and Career Readiness (ACCRS) ELA Standards through the Creative use of Poetry Performance and the POL National Competition

**PROGRAMMATIC GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

This list of best practices is not a prescription for how you must conduct the program at your school. This list suggests strategies that we have found yield strong poetry performances. Each teacher and school should feel free to adapt these practices and implement the program in the manner that will work best for your students and school.

The purpose of this guide to Poetry Performance is to be a supplement to the Poetry Out Loud (POL) national teacher’s guide and to supplement the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. It will offer support in empowering you and your students to create unique, individual poetry performances that honor the original poem. It will help teachers and students enhance language arts curriculum and supporting ACCRS.

Teachers and students who actively engage in the selection and deconstruction of poems will learn to:
- Incorporate poetry performance as a learning tool in the ELA curriculum.
- Interpret and analyze poetry structure and form.
- Focus on performance preparation, memorization and recitation.
- Embody multiple details essential to learning.
- Enhance mastery of Arizona College and Career Ready Standards (ACCRS) and English Language Arts (ELA) standards.
- Understand alternative points of view.
- Develop empathy.
- Improve capacity to create an affective exchange with audiences.
- Practice critical thinking.
- Create unique poetry performances.
- Articulate how poetry performance serves as a bridge to close reading.
- Enhance English Language Arts curriculum and support Arizona College and Career Ready Standards.
- Integrate learning that cuts across ACCRS, especially in English Language Arts.
- Incorporate poetry performance as a learning project in the ELA curriculum.

Classroom Teacher and Teaching Artist Note: Throughout this guide you will notice in this sidebar, references to specific Arizona’s College and Career Ready Standards in English Language Arts (ACCRS) and the National Standards for Theatre Education (NSTE). These references are suggestions as to connections you might make with your core curriculum and the content of this teacher’s guide that will support student mastery of ELA standards. Your personal teaching style and practice will inform how you choose to use these connections and which are appropriate at any given time for your work in class. Sidebar references can be found in the Appendix.
(Teacher note: Not only do the above bullets relate to the ELA standards, but also in the judging criteria where, #6. *Overall performance* - is worth more than other categories. It includes the total success of the performance; recitation becoming more that the sum of its parts; breathing life into the poem; and capturing the language of the poem.)

The University of Arizona's Poetry Center strives to expand students’ and teachers’ understanding of poetry, while assisting teachers to facilitate and design hands-on, creative experiences with poetry for students. It enables them to approach poetry “from the inside out” by looking at a text with a writer’s perspective to understand how a text was created. It enables the understanding of a poem's structure and forms a deeper appreciation of the poem, leading to an understanding of the deeper contextual meanings illuminated by the poet’s choices. “memorizing a poem is a close as another person can get to composing one”. TOI DERRICOTTE (From the POL Judge’s Guide 2014-15)

**The Portrait of a College/Career Ready Student**

It is worth noting that working with the world of poetry performance among high school students is not only an enlightening and inspirational aesthetic experience, but also one that supports the development of a student who is college and career ready in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. A full description of this type of student’s portrait can be found in Arizona’s College and Career Ready Standards (ACCRS), English Language Arts, Page 8. However, the main descriptors are supported through poetry performance in the following ways:

- Students benefit from poetry performance in that it assists with the comprehension and evaluation of complex texts. (*This connects to Judge Criteria 4. Level of complexity - comparative complexity of the poem.*)
- It builds the student’s capacity to independently discern key points and ideas through the structure and form of a poem.
- It demonstrates command of Standard English and acquires and uses a wide-ranging vocabulary.
- Students build strong content knowledge.

In researching and making poetry performance selections, students are encouraged to recognize works of quality and substance, evolving a critical awareness through close reading of poetry.

*(Teacher’s Note: We encourage students to make connection with texts, not necessarily to determine which poem is better. The POL anthology and poem selection process supports the students’ critical discernment skills, in that they exemplify quality.)*

Students must be attentive in their close reading during the focused memory work in order to adequately prepare for performance. This encourages critical thinking in ways that build new knowledge.

Students respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline by:

- Adapting their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline. Adjusting purpose for recitation.
- Creating poem performances that captivate audiences.
- Supporting the understanding that each form requires attention to nuances, the intonation of the words and the rhythms of structure and form.
• Learning that poetry performance demands a presentation through the embodiment of the poem. Using voice and articulation are critical in performing poetry: using volume, pace, rhythm, intonation and proper pronunciation.

• Creating a dramatization that underscores the meaning of a poem in such a way that the poem is front and center, not the performer.

(Teacher note: The word "embodiment" will be used throughout the text. “Embodiment” means a physical presence created by the poem and presented by the student. All of the winners on the POL DVDs are embodying their poems. They are not acting them. The poem comes to life through the speaker. It is a kind of "channeling".)

(This connects to Judge Criteria 3. Dramatic appropriateness - be the voice of the poem itself; art of oral interpretation; powerful internalization of the poem.)

It is impossible to progress towards performing poetry without an open-minded, but discerning reading of the poems in the anthology. Students have opportunities to listen to others interpret poems. They will work diligently to understand precisely what a poet is saying and emphasize particular aspects of that meaning through performance choices. Through the evidence of structure and form, they will recognize rhythmic vocabulary and understand choices made by the poet. Students will question the nuances of performance such as meaning, message, allusions, irony, tone and mood.

(This connects to Judge Criteria 5. Evidence of understanding - students' comprehension and mastery of a poem; the poet’s words take precedence; voice in a way that helps the audience to understand; meaning of the poem powerfully and clearly conveyed; possibly even exposing the poem in a new way.)

The interpretive cycle required to create a poem performance goes from reading poetry to understanding and comprehending the importance of its form and structure. Through memorizing and making performance choices, students elevate their delivery to represent not the performer’s voice, but the voice of the poem; requiring the embodiment of comprehension and critical discernment.

Students will come to understand other perspectives and cultures by:

• Appreciating that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures must learn and work together.

• Revealing “other” as not so different than “self”, through reading and listening to a wide range of poems and poetry performances.

• Vicariously inhabiting worlds and experiences much different than their own through reading the rich anthology of poems on the POL website.

• Listening to performances of poetry, which is representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews.

• Experiencing the empathic opportunity to be “in” the poem’s worldview.

The use of poetry performance in the classroom fosters support of reading skills by:

• Approaching language as craft, informed by choices among alternatives as expressed in ACCRS.

• Understanding the impact of using poetry in the classroom upon the stu-
students’ mastery of ACCRS’s anchor standards for reading: especially key ideas and details, craft and structure, and range of reading and level of text complexity (ACCRS, English Language Arts, Pages 9 - 12)

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES — BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING POETRY**

- We encourage teachers and students to encounter poems in a variety of contexts and to use poems for a variety of purposes, avoiding using poetry strictly for teaching close reading/analysis, grammar, and mechanics. In this way, the POL program can be an asset to Language Arts classrooms in that it provides a different entry point into a poem while still requiring students to make use of their analytical skill.

- The primary goal the Poetry Center’s POL residencies are to make poetry accessible to general audiences and to cultivate “poetic literacy” in our community. Research shows that by engaging people with poetry and literature, we encourage a lifelong habit of reading and writing as well as a general involvement in the arts. (National Endowment for the Arts)

- Poetry’s unique gift is that it fosters an ability to see the world with fresh eyes and to reinforce our sense of humanity—traits which help to build a highly engaged, productive, and imaginative citizenry. (As discussed in Gordon Pradl’s *Literature as Democracy: Reading as a Social Act*, 1996.)

- Many students develop negative attitudes towards the art form. Providing students with active, creative engagement strategies, like POL, can help shape students’ experiences with the genre. If students’ only exposure to poetry is through being taught skills that primarily involve either complex analysis or rote memorization, the art form quickly loses its luster and appeal. (As discussed in Louise Rosenblatt’s *Literature as Exploration*, 1995.)

**POETRY OUT LOUD BEST PRACTICES**

**Poem Selection**

- In order for students to differentiate their performances, they need to pick wildly different poems from their peers. Students who recite the same poems as a peer in a competition are often at a disadvantage. (Asking students to survey, read, and carefully select their poems allows them to become more familiar with the genre of poetry, its variety of forms, perspectives, and voices. Student’s early research can inform and provide them with additional background knowledge to bring to a focused and studied performance of their selected poem.)

- Give students class time to read broadly. Schedule visits with your school library to accomplish this. Or, if your school has the resources, consider visiting the Poetry Center for a field trip built around poem selection.

- Showcase a real range of poems by reading a poem from the anthology at the start of every class, or on the school PA system, or incorporate into bell work, journals, or other daily tasks you already ask students to engage in.

- Ask students to articulate their reasons for choosing a particular poem by asking them to make connections with their own lives, their own studies and interests.

**Memorization**

- Use some class time for poem memorization and require that it be accomplished within a one to three week timeframe. Highly focused, quick paced memory work retains student interest in the program and student performances are often of higher quality. (*Teacher note: there is more on memorization later in the Guide.*)
• Talk about memorization techniques with your students. Share a range of techniques so they can pick what works best for them.

**Performance Practice**
- Participate in the performance workshops and the dialogue that develops.
- Memorize and perform a poem alongside your students. Understanding what you are asking them to do on an internal level will make you a better coach.
- Watch performers at all different skill levels. TYPS You Tube Channel, the Poetry Center’s performance primer, are good places to find models of interesting performances that aren’t necessarily at the master level. Showing only national performances from the POL website can be intimidating for some students.

**Student Engagement**
- Make as many entry points for as many students at your school to learn about and participate in the program as possible. (Some students may not know that they’re interested until they see poets performing in an introductory assembly, or until they’re accountable for results.)
- Raise the stakes on student participation in the classroom competitions by assigning a letter grade to performances.
- Select students who will attend workshops with teaching artists and coaches with a lottery or other chance method. In this way, you are increasing the chances of reaching students who have yet to discover for themselves that they have talent for or interested in the endeavor.

**Competition**
- Create an event that will help prepare students to compete at the semi-finals. The semi-finals typically feature a large audience, use of a microphone, and music. (Consider trying to partner with music or a drama teacher to include a jazz band that plays between student performances or between rounds, or a one-act play performed at intermission, a DJ, or other elements can make the competition more rewarding and highlight student accomplishments.)
- Create stakeholders. Encourage your entire departments to participate, invite your entire school to attend the school competition, as well as to the semi-finals competition. Keep your school updated on the progress of the regional, state, and national results.
- School-wide competitions work best when there are 30 students or less participating in the competition.

**Standards Connection:**
The use of poetry performance in the classroom fosters support of reading skills, the writing-reading connection, speaking and listening skills, and approaching language as craft and informed choice among alternatives as expressed in ACCRS. Espe-
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

BUILDING BLOCKS: BREATH, ENERGY, ACCEPTANCE, AND SPONTANEITY

There are many connections to public speaking that the POL classroom will support:
• Utilizing the whole, physical being through physical presence, the senses, and personal expression.
• Understanding that breath (and an understanding of how it works) is the foundation of successful performance and public speaking.
• Giving life to poetry through the instrument of the performer: body and voice.
• Rehearsal techniques that guide the pathway to fully inhabiting a poem in performance.

Recommendations
We recommend that foundational breath work happen at the very beginning of the rehearsal process, before students work with text (although breath work should ideally continue throughout the process). We also recommend warm-up exercises that emphasize energy and core, body control (see below) at the beginning of practice sessions.

Objectives
• Students will develop a basic understanding of breath support.
• Learn relaxation techniques.
• Improve physical awareness, and become familiar with the concept of “acceptance” in performance.
• (Teacher Note: Relaxation and physical awareness are foundational environmental precursors to strong focus and mindful presence to task. It is extremely helpful to use some of these activities and exercises as a quick means to focus the student for writing and reading work.)

Key terms
• Breath support: the means by which vocalists produce sustained volume without throat damage
• Physical/vocal energy: essential components of dynamic performances. (Note: physical energy does not necessarily connote excessive movement. It may be helpful to think of energy as a heightened state of alertness or as a sense of “centeredness” in the body.)
• Spontaneity: in performance terms, the ability and willingness of the performer to think fluidly on stage, adapting to the needs of the moment.
Just as the paint brush, the saxophone or the pen are considered to be instruments of creativity for the painter, the musician or the writer, respectively, so the body is the instrument for theatre and the spoken word. You are born with all you will ever need.

All instruments need attention: tuning, cleaning etc. The body needs the same. Doing a group physical and vocal warm-up, regularly, has many benefits. Not only do you begin any activity with the giving and following of directions, but you also focus attention on the body and the voice, unify the students, work on posture and enunciation, and reduce self-consciousness.

We recommend that a physical and vocal warm up precede any presentation activity.

**Physical Warm Ups**

*(Teacher note: this is a detailed physical and vocal warm up. Feel free to edit and adapt.)*

In all standing exercises, keep the feet about 12 inches apart and concentrate on keeping the knees bent.

1. Slowly bend down from the waist.
2. Lead with the relaxed head.
3. Let your arms and hands dangle.
4. Keep the knees bent and let the fingertips hang.
5. Come up slowly.
6. Let your head, arms and hands dangle until your shoulders are up. Lift up your head last.
7. Raise both arms above your head.
8. Stretch your arms and hands towards the ceiling.
10. Keep stretched.
11. Relax the hands.
12. Relax the elbows.
13. Relax the shoulders.
14. Relax the head and neck.
15. Rest your head on your right shoulder. Rest your head on your left shoulder.
16. Stretch the head: forwards; let it come back to center. Tilt your head upwards and look at the ceiling; let it drop back to center. Keeping your chin parallel to the floor turn it to the left and to the right and let it relax.
17. Roll the shoulders all the way around in one direction: back in the other.
18. Stretch the shoulders: up, back, forwards and down and let them relax
19. Push the chest: forwards and backwards, twice.
20. Roll the hips all the way around in one direction, back in the other.
21. Push the hips: out to one side and then the other and relax them.
22. Stand on one leg and shake out the hanging leg: reverse and repeat.
23. Shake out the hands - make them as floppy as possible as you are shaking.
24. Bend the left arm at the elbow. Hold the forearm and the hand straight and parallel to the floor, at about chest level. The fingers should be pointing to the right. Put the right hand on top of the left hand, squeeze the fingers together, tense the hand and make the right hand "crawl like a caterpillar" from the fingers to the elbow. Try to make all of the knuckles and the joints undulate. Think of a horse rearing. Curl your fingers in, then raise them up like a horse rearing. Stretch them out so that your hand is flat on your forearm. Curl your fingers in and begin again.
25. Bend the right arm at the elbow. (Follow the same instructions as #24) - use right hand.
31. Make a claw with both hands. Hold the fingers apart from each other and create as much tension in the hand as possible. Hold for at least five seconds.
32. Shake out the whole body and freeze. Then relax.
33. Stand straight and still, with your arms by your sides. Without moving your head, look up as far as you can with your eyes. Look down. Look to one side. Look to the other side. Try not to move your head. Roll your eyes around one way, then back the other way. Blink a few times. Relax.

Vocal Warm up

Lip Muscles
Stretch your lips forward (kiss shape) and say "oooooooooo"
Stretch your lips towards your ears (demented smile) and say, “eeeeeeeeeeeee”
Open your mouth as wide as you can (for the dentist) and say, “aaaaaaaaaa”
Stretching your mouth and lips around the extended sounds. Breathe deeply and extend the words for as long as possible. Say:

“Wow”
“La La”
“rrr” (rolling the ‘r’s)
Stretch your lips forward and hold the fish face.
Keeping your lips stretched, count to 10 trying to enunciate each number as clearly as possible. Vary this by skip counting in other multiples.
Loosen your face and lip muscles and shake your head, while breathing out a gentle “aaaaaa”

Consonantal Sounds
With both the voiced and unvoiced consonantal sounds, try to explode the sound using your breath and your lip muscles.
Don’t say the consonant use your lips, tongue, mouth and breath to make its sound.
1. Voiced
   b - d - g - ch - dj - v - m - n - z - and so on
2. Unvoiced
   p - k - t - f - s - sh - and so on
Try this call and response:
   b - d - g - ch - dj - f - v - th - m - n - ng - p - k - t - s - z - sh.
[NOTE: a ‘voiced’ consonant is produced by engaging the vocal chords and an ‘unvoiced’ consonant is produced by breathing out only and creating sound using the lips and the shape of the mouth. For example “b” is voiced but “p” is unvoiced.]

**English Tongue Twisters**

Repeat them about three times each. Try for maximum speed, and clarity at the beginnings and endings of each word. Choose one; perfect it; move on.

- Toy Boat (listen for the t at the end of boat)
- Soap Shop (pop the ‘p’s at the end of each word)
- Greek grape
- Warm Worm
- Erased Waste (emphasize the ‘d’ and the ‘te’)
- Red Leather Yellow Leather (hit the ‘d’)
- Aluminum Linoleum
- Specific Pacific
- Cricket Critic
- Unique New York (emphasize the ‘k’ sounds)
- Lemon Liniment
- Nine nice night nurses nursing nicely
- Good blood. Bad blood.
- Bats’ black backs
- Selfish shellfish.
- Soldiers’ shoulders.
- Show sea shells
- Sore shoulder
- Shy sly Sheila
- Cinnamon synonym
- A growing gleam glowing green
- A fat free fruit float. (listen for every ‘t’)
- Fresh fruit float
- Ruth’s wet red roofs.
- Swiss wrist watch.
- Sixty-six sneaky snakes
- Six sharp smart sharks
- She slams a serve that Shirley swerves
- Much mashed mushrooms
- Kitchen chicken scratch.
- Fanny fried five flat fish
- Eight apes ate eight apples
- A box of mixed biscuits in a biscuit mixer
- A big, black bug bit a big, brown bear and the big, brown bear bled blood
- The black back brake broke.
- Six sick sticks
- Six thick thistle sticks
- The sixth sick sheik’s sixth sheep’s sick
- Warming warning
- Listen to the local yokel yodel
- Witch thrush whistles
**Spanish Tongue Twisters**
- Pablito clavo un clavito. Un clavito clavo Pablito (Little Paul nailed a little nail. A little nail nailed little Paul.)
- Tío Tomás tiene tantas tortugas. (Uncle Tomas has many turtles)
- Llorando, la llama llegó en la lluvia. (Crying, the llama arrived in the rain)

**Breath Work**
Take students through the following:
- Breathe normally. What part of the body is expanding and contracting?
- With feet shoulder-width apart, stretch upwards and breathe in. Then, holding feet in the same position, breathe out and flop the torso downward. Hands and head should hang, completely relaxed.
- Roll upwards very slowly, “vertebra by vertebra,” until you reach a standing position. How did the positioning of the breath change as you did these exercises? (Breath should have shifted deeper, coming from the diaphragm instead of the chest.)
- Practice breathing from the diaphragm: place one hand on your stomach. Breathe deeply. Try to move your hand visibly in and out with each breath. Note: only the stomach muscles should move. Do not move shoulders.
- Lie on the floor. Place one hand on your stomach and repeat the exercise. Breathe deeply and memorize where your body engages the breath.
- Stand. With one hand still on your stomach, say “ha” by using the diaphragm to push air out. Then speak a sentence. Note the sound and feel of the voice when it’s deeply supported by the breath.

**Say it Like You’re...**
This is another emphasis related exercise that will support poetry performance.

**Space Requirements**
No cleared area is necessary. Just enough room for a group of 4 or 5 students to stand in a line at the front of the class.

**Goals**
1] To encourage self-expression.
2] To discuss how emotions and feelings influence tone.
3] To practice following instructions.
4] To learn how to exhibit and control a feeling or emotion.
6] To exercise enunciation, volume and rate of speech.
7] To stimulate the constructive process of evaluation.

**Teacher Guidelines**
As students are going to be calling out in this game, establish how you want them to indicate that they have a suggestion.

Explain that participants will be expressing the way they feel, one at a time, with the same feeling expressed differently. Let each of the speakers field 3 or 4 suggestions and
then replace them with other speakers. Emphasize clarity and volume of speaking.

Once the participants are comfortable, be sure to reinforce how the whole body should embody the nuances. The voice is not separate from the body. Don’t allow static bodies - show and tell at the same time.

**Process**

1] Decide on a simple phrase, such as, My name is ...(student’s name).
2] Make the whole class stand and perform the exercise.
3] Choose three or four extrovert students to stand in front of the class.
4] Ask the class to make their suggestions in the exact format of, “Say it like you’re ....”, such as, “Say it like you’re happy”, and so on.
5] Start using the “Tone List” from the Teacher’s Guide.
6] Ask each student to “say it” in turn.
7] Point out the variations of expression from student to student.
8] Replace the speakers regularly.

**Sidetrack**

Once the class is comfortable with the activity, ask students to stand up individually and participate alone. Also extend the context of “Say it like you’re...” to include WHERE AM I? ideas, such as “Say it like you’re in a library.” and so on. Also include ideas from WHAT HAVE I BECOME? and add a category of famous characters who we all know, for example “Say it like you’re Adam Sandler, President Obama, a news-caster, Jim Carey, Bob the Builder or Bugs Bunny.”

(Teacher Note: Generating energy is an asset to creating strong focus in the moment. To orient this toward curriculum connections, use movement while learning new vocabulary, working with parts of speech, to emphasize punctuation in a sentence. Look for connections in the work you are about to do for the day. Dale’s Cone of Experience shows how learners can recall 10 -20% of what they read or hear, but 90% of what they do or simulate. See: (https://www.etsu.edu/uged/etsu1000/documents/Dales_Cone_of_Experience.pdf)

**POEM SELECTION**

We recommend devoting 1-2 class periods to poem selection, since students are most likely to succeed when they are emotionally or intellectually invested in the poems they perform.

**Objectives**

Students will identify a poem that contains themes that interest or resonate with them personally.

**Connection**

Take students through the following:

- Have the students write down 3 memorable passages from the poems. Then have them explain to the class why these passages touched them.
- Students then choose 1 from their list and consider how to communicate that concept without words.
- Demonstrate: communicate “politeness” for students without words.
- Volunteer a few students to demonstrate for class. Discuss.
Try to persuade reluctant students to take the leap; reminding that this is “POETRY OUT LOUD”

Call on students to demonstrate.

**Search**

Take students through the following:

- Search the POL site, accompanying poem list, and vocabulary for keywords.
- Find poems that match with their chosen concepts.
- Discuss vocal inflections or body movements/presence that convey concept.

**WORKING WITH TEXT: LINE BY LINE EMPHASIS**

We recommend approaching performance poems one line at a time at the beginning of the process. This encourages:

- Close reading (which contributes to understanding and applies to Judge Criteria 5. Evidence of understanding.)
- More nuanced interpretations overall makes memorization much easier, and creates small, manageable tasks for students.

**Objective**

Students will explore different interpretive possibilities through exercises in close reading and emphasis.

**Key Terms**

**Emphasis:** giving more weight (usually, emphasis) to one vocalized sound within a group

**Accent/stress:** the systemic language phenomenon by which each word has 1 syllable which receives more emphasis than the others

**Meter/rhyme:** a regulated pattern of stresses/a repetition of sounds, usually vowels

**Preposition:** a part of speech used to indicate placement and/or relationships between one noun and another

**Coordinating conjunction:** a part of speech used to connect (usually independent but also subordinate) clauses

**EMPHASIS**

Emphasis is one of the major foci for performing poetry. Several of the classroom activities that follow support emphasis. It is a major element of public speaking.

**Stress the Best**

Take students through the following:

- Lecture on stress, accents, and meter
- Have students mark stressed syllables in 1-, 2-, and 3- consecutive lines. Lines should be similar lengths, and have a preposition or coordinating conjunction at the beginning of the 2nd or 3rd line
- Students then practice shifting the MOST accented syllable to another in the line
- Recite/discuss
- Students experiment with shifting the pause from the end of a line to the middle of the next line (based on prep/conj)
Recite/discuss
Students experiment with various forms of emphasis
  - loud/soft
  - fast/slow
  - long/short

**Circle Listening and Emphasis**
Show students a written version of a very familiar line (“To be or not to be, that is the question” works well). Ask students: how do you think this line “should” be said? Solicit responses from volunteers.

Alternatively, use the word “sit”. How many different ways can you say “sit” in order to give the word different meanings or make the word address different people/animals.

Preparation for performance will involve careful reading. Tell students that the following exercises will help them to listen to the text as they speak it, so that they’re open to making discoveries about the text.

- Students work in pairs. Student A says a line from her chosen poem. Student B repeats it back to her with the same inflections. Student B repeats the line again with a different inflection (ideally emphasizing different words). Student A repeats the line, mirroring Student B’s new inflections. Switch (so that Student B leads off with a line from his poem) and repeat. Have the pairs share with the whole class.
- Ask students: what happened to the lines of poetry as they were repeated with different inflections/emphases? Did you hear anything surprising?
- Extend this exercise to the full circle. Begin with a line from a volunteer’s poem. Continue around the circle: each person repeats the line, mirroring the previous speaker, then speaks the line with different inflection/emphasis to the next person in the circle. Repeat with lines from other students’ poems as time allows.

**Conclusion**
These kinds of discoveries happen most easily when the performer is listening to the text as s/he speaks it—and when the performer makes a discovery, so does the audience.

**Integration**
Focusing on current areas of study, initiate the activity using memorable phrases from the poems that they have chosen. (Teacher note: You could focus on a specific word in a poem and create a phrase in response to the word.)

**Extensions**

**Lists**
Ask the class to give suggestions for lists of ideas, emotions, opinions expressed in their poems. For example, “the loss of someone close” or “a unique point of view” or “particular combination of words.” The students then line up as in “Say it like you’re...” and present their suggestions one at a time. (Teacher note: Tell the students making the suggestions to refer to “Tone List” from the Teacher’s Guide.)

**Blah-blah**
Choose two students to stand and face each other. Tell them to pretend to have a

**Standards Connection:**
ACCRS: Reading Standards for Literature - Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (9-10.RL.5) (11-12.RL.5)
conversation using the words blah-blah. Make sure they don’t speak at the same
time but exchange their blah-blahs as they would in a real conversation. Ask them
to stop. Now tell the rest of the class to think about emotions, feelings and/or gen-
res and the “Tone List” from the Teacher’s Guide.

Now ask the blah-blah’ers to begin and ask the class to put up their hands to make
suggestions. The blah-blahers should respond in tone and body language to the
suggestions being made. Keep each suggestion going for a few seconds before
choosing the next one.

Finally, ask the class to give suggestions based on elements from previous discus-
sions about the selected poems. Ask them to include actual characters, actions and
locations, so that the two performers can start to use words rather than the “blah-
blah”.

**Close Reading I**

Choose a line that has 6-10 syllables from the poem you’ve selected.

Quietly say the words to yourself to figure out which syllables should be stressed.

Place an accent mark over the first vowel of the syllable receiving more sound.

Share, discuss, enjoy.

**Quick Focus Exercise**

Say the line to yourself, and choose ONE syllable and give it more emphasis than
even the other accented syllables.

**Quick Focus Question**

Do you see the line in a new way and why, OR how does this ‘stress pattern’ confirm
what you understand?” Write an explanation on the paper with the poem.

**Practice**

Individual students stand before the class and represent their choices; always choosing
from their selected poems. A mixture of volunteering and teacher selection is best.
Ask the most gregarious students to offer their choices first. Control the mixture of
free verse and meter to explore introductory discussion.

**Goals**

Close reading / analysis / interpretation / acquisition / demonstration

**Potential**

Expand the time frame by laterally increasing participation in practice, especially with
advanced performers.
Close Reading II
Choose 3 consecutive lines from the poem you’ve selected.
- Free Verse: at least 1 line should begin with a preposition or conjunction.
- Rhymed/Metered: a line with end-stop rhyme should be the 2nd line.

Quietly say the words to yourself to figure out which syllables should be stressed.

Place an accent mark over the first vowel of the syllable receiving more sound.

Share, discuss, enjoy.

Quick Focus Exercise
Say the 3 lines to yourself, and choose ONE line to eliminate the pause at the end of the line, instead shifting the vocal pause to the next line immediately after the word with the 1st stress.

Quick Focus Question
“Do you see the poet’s thinking in a new way and why, OR how does this ‘shifting pause’ confirm what you understand?” Write an explanation on the paper with the poem.

Practice
Individual students stand before the class and represent their choices. A mixture of volunteering and teacher selection is best. Ask the most gregarious students to offer their choices first. Control the mixture of free verse and metered to explore introductory discussion.

Goals
Close reading / analysis / interpretation / acquisition / demonstration

MEMORIZATION
We recommend moving to focused memory work after students begin working with their performance poems line by line. The line by line exercises above will give students a head start on memory work and will also create opportunities for rigorous close reading: in other words, working line by line forces students to slow down the analytical process and consider multiple interpretations.

As students begin working on memorization of whole poems, we recommend “stacking” the process. Encourage embodiment of the poem into the process. (How does the poem make you feel? What kind of character might be speaking? What is the poem’s point of view? Remember movement can be a useful tool at the memorization stage). (Teacher Note: When addressing memorization of poems, we are speaking of a type of critical reading process - very slow reading that involves carefully examining each word of the poem. As a result, a student’s “analysis” (which is actually the poem performance) becomes sharper and more sophisticated because such attention was paid early on.)

10 Benefits of memorization
1. Memorization Trains Your Brain To Remember.
2. Memorization Challenges Your Brain.
3. Rote Learning Improves Neural Plasticity.
4. Nursery Rhymes Teach Rhythmic Patterns.
5. Memorization Offers A Mental Gymnastics Exercise.
7. Memory Exercises Help Students Practice Focus.
8. Memory Skills Are Essential To Learning New Concepts.
9. Working Memory Is Important For Creativity.
(See: http://www.bestcollegesonline.com/blog/2012/07/23/in-praise-of-memorization-10-proven-brain-benefits/)

**Objectives**

Students will create embodiment of their texts that help them to memorize it; they will memorize at least one complete poem.

**Key Terms**

**Stacking:** a specific memorization technique in which the performer memorizes the text by first memorizing 1 line, then memorizing 2 consecutive lines as a “stack”, then adding a 3rd consecutive line and memorizing those 3 lines as a slightly larger “stack” etc.

**Stacking**

Take students through the following:
- Students memorize the 1st line of their chosen poem(s)
- Recite (without paper)
- Students then memorize the 1st and 2nd line together, as a “stack”
- Recite (without paper)
- Continue until poem is one complete “stack”

**“Popping and Locking”**

Take students through the following:
- Students connect embodiment to each line (or stanza).
- Students then construct a “movement map” of the whole poem
- Practice
- Students should be able to “dance” their poem (with and without text)

*(Teacher note: Along with all of the memorization techniques included in this Guide, it is recommended that students, trying to memorize, read the poem as the last thing they do before turning off the light and going to sleep.)*

**WORKING WITH TEXT: THE WHOLE POEM**

**Objectives**

Students will explore techniques for communicating turning points, challenging audience expectations, and varying the delivery of their chosen poems to create specific, compelling performances.

**Key Terms**

**Specificity:** the idea that text is best communicated when the speaker performs a close
reading for the audience, highlighting individual words and turning points in the
text of the poem.

**Storytelling:** The identification of turning points, moments of conflict, and “Big
News” moments in a text. Storytelling in poem recitation does not mean that we
need to create a “character” who speaks the poem; instead, we’re looking for an
analysis of “what happens” in the poem, what changes occur, and how ideas
progress.

**Exercises:**

**Speed Storytelling**
Ask students to draw a timeline that represents their lives up until this moment. Have students
mark an event on that timeline that changed their world in some way. Then give students three
minutes to exchange these stories with a partner. Change partners and have students exchange
stories again in only two minutes. Repeat with different partners and give students one minute to
exchange stories. This exercise helps students identify the key turning points in the stories they
tell. Then move to:

**Speed Poem Summaries**
Ask students to spend some time identifying “what’s happening” in their competition poems.
The “plot” of each poem may include actual narrative events, emotional shifts, an initial argu-
ment and its complications, etc. What stages does the speaker of the poem move through? Then
have students exchange “summaries” of their poems with partners as above, shortening the time
limit with each successive partner. This exercise may be helpful early in the POL preparation
process, as it helps students to identify the “big news” moments in their chosen poems.

**Turning Points and Specificity**
Briefly introduce the idea of specificity in performance (see above). Note: a demonstration of two
performances of a short text (one “general,” one “specific”) can be useful here. We have used Jane
Hirshfield’s translation of the Izumi Shikibu poem “Although the wind…” for this purpose, recit-
ing it once “hopefully,” and then reciting it again with attention to the turning points that we
hear in the poem.

- Ask students to write down at least two turning points in the poems they have chosen to per-
  form.
- Ask students to practice by themselves: read the poem aloud quietly at least 3 times. How
  many ways can you communicate these turning points? Experiment with different word em-
  phases, pauses, etc.
- As time permits, students might also practice communicating the turning points in their cho-
  sen texts by reading in small groups.
- Ask students: did any new turning points occur to you as you practiced?
The students should present their poems using their discoveries from “specificity” and
"storytelling”.

**TEXT COMPLEXITY FOR POETRY OUT LOUD PROGRAM (AND THE
GENRE OF POETRY)**

Information in this section is quoted directly from ACCRS English Language Arts Appen-
dix A. For more information, see this document, which can be found online at: www.com-
moncorestandards.org

- The POL anthology features a wide range of poems that illustrate complexity, qual-
  ity, and range of student reading that the ELA ACCRS request.
• A few of the poems included in the POL anthology are also listed as text exemplars in the 9-12 ELA ACCRS.
• Generally speaking, poetry addresses the text complexity and range required by Common Core in the manner outlined below. There are, most likely, exceptions to these general statements. You should determine text complexity for an individual poem by whatever means is preferred by your school.

**QUALITATIVE MEASURES OF TEXT COMPLEXITY**

• **Levels of Meaning**
  Poems typically contain “multiple levels of meaning.”

• **Structure**
  Poems often feature “complex, implicit, and unconventional structures,” and sometimes “make use of manipulations of time and sequence.”

• **Language Conventionality and Clarity**
  Poems often contain language that is “figurative, ironic, ambiguous, purposefully misleading, archaic or otherwise unfamiliar.” This may be especially true of poems in the “Pre-20th Century” category of the POL anthology.

• **Knowledge Demands**
  Poems typically make many assumptions about “the extent of readers’ life experiences, depth of their cultural/literary content/discipline knowledge.”

**READER AND TASK CONSIDERATIONS**

For the POL program, the reader’s task may rate high in complexity if that participant’s purpose includes “studying (reading the text with the intent of retaining the information for a period of time)” (as opposed to skimming) as well as an intended outcome of “increasing knowledge and engagement with the text.” Complexity may be further increased/decreased based on teacher’s assessment of a particular reader’s “motivation, knowledge, and experiences.”
APPENDIX

Arizona’s College and Career Readiness ELA Standards and National Standards for Theater Education Referenced in this Guide (http://www.aate.com/?page=NationalStandards)

ACCRS: Reading Standards for Literature - Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry); evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.) (11-12.RL.7)

ACCRS: Reading Standards for Literature - Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

5. Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. (9-10.RL.5)

5. Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. (11-12.RL.5)

ACCRS: Speaking and Listening - Comprehension and Collaboration

3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence. (9-10.SL.3)

3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used. (11-12.SL.3)

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task. (9-10.SL.4)

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks. (11-12.SL.4)
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 9–10 Language standards 1 and 3 for specific expectations.) (9-10.SL.6)

ACCRS: Language Anchor Statements

Knowledge of Language #3.
Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use #5.
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

ACCRS: Language - Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text. b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations. (9-12.L.5)

ACCRS: Reading Standards for Literature - Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). (9-10.RL.4)

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–12 text complexity band independently and proficiently. (9-12.RL.10)

ACCRS: Reading Standards for Literature - Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). (9-10.RL.4)
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.) (11-12.RL.4)

**ACCRS: Reading Standards for Literature - Craft and Structure**

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). (9-10.RL.4)

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.) (11-12.RL.4)

5. Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. (9-10.RL.5)

5. Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. (11-12.RL.5)

**ACCRS: Reading Standards for Literature - Key Ideas and Details**

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (9-10.RL.1)

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. (11-12.RL.1)

2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. (9-10.RL.2)

2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. (11-12.RL.2)
**ACCRS: Reading Standards for Literature - Key Ideas and Details**

3. Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme. (9-10.RL.3)

**Writing**

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, wellchosen details, and well structured event sequences. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters. (9-12.W.3)

**What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in Theatre**

**Standards in Theatre, Grades 9-12**

The standards in this section describe the cumulative skills and knowledge expected of all students upon graduating from high school. They presume that the students have achieved the standards specified for grades 5-8; they assume that the students will demonstrate higher levels of the expected skills and knowledge, will deal with increasingly complex art works, and will provide more sophisticated responses to works of art. Determining curriculum and the specific instructional activities necessary to achieve the standards is the responsibility of states, local school districts, and individual teachers.

The standards establish "proficient" and "advanced" achievement levels for grades 9-12. The proficient level is intended for students who have completed courses of study involving relevant skills and knowledge in theatre for one to two years beyond grade 8. The advanced level is intended for students who have completed courses of study involving relevant skills and knowledge in theatre for three to four years beyond grade 8. Students at the advanced level are expected to achieve standards established for the proficient as well as the advanced levels.

**THEATRE (9-12)**

In grades 9-12, students view and construct dramatic works as metaphorical visions of life that embrace connotative meanings, juxtaposition, ambiguity, and varied interpretations. By creating, performing, analyzing, and critiquing dramatic performances, they develop a deeper understanding of personal issues and a broader worldview that includes global issues. Since theatre in all its forms reflects and affects life, students should learn about representative dramatic texts and performances and the place of that work and those events in history. Classroom work becomes more formalized with the advanced students participating in theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions.

Content Standard #1: Script writing through improvising, writing, and refining scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
Achievement Standard, Proficient:
a) Students construct imaginative scripts and collaborate with actors to refine scripts so that story and meaning are conveyed to an audience

Achievement Standard, Advanced:
b) Students write theatre, film, television, or electronic media scripts in a variety of traditional and new forms that include original characters with unique dialogue that motivates action.

Content Standard #2: Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions
Achievement Standard, Proficient:
a) Students analyze the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters found in dramatic texts from various genres and media
b) Students compare and demonstrate various classical and contemporary acting techniques and methods
c) Students in an ensemble, create and sustain characters that communicate with audiences
Achievement Standard, Advanced:
d) Students demonstrate artistic discipline to achieve an ensemble in rehearsal and performance
e) Students create consistent characters from classical, contemporary, realistic, and nonrealistic dramatic texts in informal and formal theatre, film, television, or electronic media productions.

Content Standard #3: Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions
Achievement Standard, Proficient:
a) Students explain the basic physical and chemical properties of the technical aspects of theatre (such as light, color, electricity, paint, and makeup)
b) Students analyze a variety of dramatic texts from cultural and historical perspectives to determine production requirements
c) Students develop designs that use visual and aural elements to convey environments that clearly support the text
d) Students apply technical knowledge and skills to collaboratively and safely create functional scenery, properties, lighting, sound, costumes, and makeup
e) Students design coherent stage management, promotional, and business plans
Achievement Standard, Advanced:
f) Students explain how scientific and technological advances have impacted set, light, sound, and costume design and implementation for theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
g) Students collaborate with directors to develop unified production concepts that convey the metaphorical nature of the drama for informal and formal theatre, film, television, or electronic media productions
h) Students safely construct and efficiently operate technical aspects of theatre, film, television, or electronic media productions
i) Students create and reliably implement production schedules, stage management plans, promotional ideas, and business and front of house procedures for informal and formal theatre, film, television, or electronic media productions.
Content Standard #4: Directing by interpreting dramatic texts and organizing and conducting rehearsals for informal or formal productions
Achievement Standard, Proficient:
a) Students develop multiple interpretations and visual and aural production choices for scripts and production ideas and choose those that are most interesting
b) Students justify selections of text, interpretation, and visual and aural artistic choices
c) Students effectively communicate directorial choices to a small ensemble for improvised or scripted scenes
Achievement Standard, Advanced:
d) Students explain and compare the roles and interrelated responsibilities of the various personnel involved in theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
e) Students collaborate with designers and actors to develop aesthetically unified production concepts for informal and formal theatre, film, television, or electronic media productions
f) Students conduct auditions, cast actors, direct scenes, and conduct production meetings to achieve production goals.

Content Standard #5: Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices
Achievement Standard, Proficient:
a) Students identify and research cultural, historical, and symbolic clues in dramatic texts, and evaluate the validity and practicality of the information to assist in making artistic choices for informal and formal productions
Achievement Standard, Advanced:
b) Students research and describe appropriate historical production designs, techniques, and performances from various cultures to assist in making artistic choices for informal and formal theatre, film, television, or electronic media productions.

Content Standard #6: Comparing and integrating art forms by analyzing traditional theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and new art forms
Achievement Standard, Proficient:
a) Students describe and compare the basic nature, materials, elements, and means of communicating in theatre, dramatic media, musical theatre, dance, music, and the visual arts
b) Students determine how the non-dramatic art forms are modified to enhance the expression of ideas and emotions in theatre
c) Students illustrate the integration of several arts media in informal presentations
Achievement Standard, Advanced:
a) Students compare the interpretive and expressive natures of several art forms in a specific culture or historical period
b) Students compare the unique interpretive and expressive natures and aesthetic qualities of traditional arts from various cultures and historical periods with contemporary new art forms (such as performance art)
c) Students integrate several arts and/or media in theatre, film, television, or electronic media productions.
Content Standard #7: Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
Achievement Standard, Proficient:
a) Students construct social meanings from informal and formal productions and from dramatic performances from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and relate these to current personal, national, and international issues
b) Students articulate and justify personal aesthetic criteria for critiquing dramatic texts and events that compare perceived artistic intent with the final aesthetic achievement
c) Students analyze and critique the whole and the parts of dramatic performances, taking into account the context, and constructively suggest alternative artistic choices
d) Students constructively evaluate their own and others' collaborative efforts and artistic choices in informal and formal productions
Achievement Standard, Advanced:
e) Students construct personal meanings from nontraditional dramatic performances
f) Students analyze, compare, and evaluate differing critiques of the same dramatic texts and performances
g) Students critique several dramatic works in terms of other aesthetic philosophies (such as the underlying ethos of Greek drama, French classicism with its unities of time and place, Shakespeare and romantic forms, India classical drama, Japanese kabuki, and others)
h) Students analyze and evaluate critical comments about personal dramatic work explaining which points are most appropriate to inform further development of the work.

Content Standard #8: Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present
Achievement Standard, Proficient:
a) Students compare how similar themes are treated in drama from various cultures and historical periods, illustrate with informal performances, and discuss how theatre can reveal universal concepts
b) Students identify and compare the lives, works, and influence of representative theatre artists in various cultures and historical periods
c) Students identify cultural and historical sources of American theatre and musical theatre
d) Students analyze the effect of their own cultural experiences on their dramatic work
Achievement Standard, Advanced:
e) Students analyze the social and aesthetic impact of underrepresented theatre and film artists
f) Students analyze the relationships among cultural values, freedom of artistic expression, ethics, and artistic choices in various cultures and historical periods
g) Students analyze the development of dramatic forms, production practices, and theatrical traditions across cultures and historical periods and explain influences on contemporary theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions.

*The National Standards for Theatre Education were developed by the American Alliance for Theatre and Education in cooperation with the Educational Theatre Association and as part of the National Standards for Arts Education, a product of the Consortium of National Arts Education Association.