

# Healing Is...

by Eva Sierra

**Education level:** Any

**Genre:** Poetry

**Time frame:** 1 hour

**Objective:** Demonstrate understanding of various forms of healing by writing a poem about ways of coping and healing.

**Prior knowledge and skills:** Spend some time discussing the axolotl's ability to heal and regenerate.

**Required materials:** Pen and paper.

**Literary model:** "axolotl" by Irene Lara Silvia

## Sequence of activities:

### Introduction (10 minutes):

The poem used for this lesson can be found at the bottom of this lesson plan. Before reading the poem, spend some time asking the class what they might already know about axolotls.

This lesson is contingent on understanding the healing and regenerative capability of the axolotl. Spend some time teaching students about this, as well as mentioning that the animal is endangered. There are many scientific clips on this topic that are great for the classroom. Take a moment to review what might be best for the group you are working with. I like to use the video below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0PHHLgpdNs>

### Poetry Reading and Discussion (15 minutes):

Read the poem "axolotl" by Irene Lara Silvia. Since it is a shorter poem, read the poem out loud twice, and maybe again as a class for younger groups.

Invite the class to share any thoughts or impressions and discuss. Also ask students what specific parts of the poem stood out to them.

Ask the following questions one by one. First ask students to silently ponder their response, then invite students to share their thoughts. Take time to discuss each question as a class.

- Why is healing so powerful?
- What if we could heal like axolotls? What things would we be more willing to do?
- What if we didn't get sick, and people didn't get diseases?
- What if people lived without emotional and invisible illnesses?

At the end of the discussion, remind students of the following:

*Since we are humans; pain and illness are inevitable.*

*This is what makes healing special.*

*For older groups pose this quote from the NY Times: “Here, in her invocation for the endangered axolotl... she praises the intrinsic\* healing power of beings, a power greater than all governments or public pronouncements. It’s the gentle force of organic, elemental restoration; the song that keeps people singing even when the news grabs them by the throat.” - Naomi Shihab Nye*

*Ask students to share any impressions, thoughts, or questions they may have about the quote. For younger groups, you may skip this portion.*

Take some time to revisit the end of the poem by Ire’ne Lara Silvia:

“how is it the healing / has already begun / even before the wound”

Ask students to ponder what this means. Then ask: “How could one begin to heal before the wound?” Invite students to share their thoughts.

Next, ask students to think of ways they like to heal. More specifically, what are some things they know will help them feel better in a difficult situation? Is it a specific video game? Is it playing soccer? Is it writing in your journal? Is it eating tamales?

**Writing Exercise (15+ minutes):**

Students will write a poem using the refrain “Healing is...”

Each line will contain some sort of “way of healing,” be it an activity, a person, a certain food, a place to visit, or other thoughts that suit their poem.

*Examples: Healing is a quesadilla eaten with my mom’s salsa / Healing is writing in my journal / Healing is time spent with my dog Güero*

(There is also a full example at the end of this lesson plan.)

Ask students to try to write without stopping. Remind them that this is a draft, and that it is best to let their ideas out and worry about tidying the piece up later. Remind students to give the poem a title (in this case it might be “Healing Is...”). Ask students to be honest about their feelings and experiences.

Let them know they will be writing for ten minutes. If at ten minutes the class is still writing, silently extend the time by 3-5 minutes.

**Sharing (5 minutes):**

If there is time, call upon students who volunteer to share their work.

Set a **class guideline of confidence** to not repeat any personal or sensitive topics after this lesson or outside of the classroom. Before sharing, ask performers to be loud and confident and ask the class to be attentive and respectful.

Sometimes there may not be many volunteers to share. In this case, ask if there is anyone who would allow you to read their poem out loud on their behalf. This usually invites more students to share.

**Student Example:**

*Healing Is...*

*Healing looks like a breath of fresh air*

*Healing looks like a quiet room*

*Healing looks like a warm welcome hug*

*Healing looks like a blanket*

*Healing looks like tamales*

*Healing looks like pizza*

*Healing looks like snuggling with my dog*

*Healing looks like rice*

*Healing looks like my favorite pillow*

*Healing looks like me being with my friends*

*Healing looks like chocolate vanilla swirl ice cream*

*Healing looks like a hamburger*

*Healing looks like forgiveness*

*Healing looks like happiness*

*Healing looks like a crusty scab finally falling off*

*Healing looks like your favorite toy*

*Healing looks like a bouquet of flowers*

*Healing looks like donuts*

*Healing looks like the sun, beautifully displayed*

*Healing looks like music*

*Healing sounds like a good conversation with friends*

*Healing sounds like the intro to my favorite show*

*Healing sounds like laughter*

*Healing sounds like childhood*

*Healing sounds like Christmas music*

*Healing is learning to let go*

*- Group poem from Kareina Lee's 2nd-7th grade class at ASDB*

***Axolotl***

**Ire'ne Lara Silvia**

                  little warrior  
almost imperceptibly  
                  scarred  
from so much healing  
                  how many regrow limbs  
                  how many repaired organs  
even precious  
                  brain tissue  
                  created anew  
teach me this  
                  little warrior  
how you remain  
                  tender and  
infinite  
                  soft and eternal  
                  in the face of struggle  
how it is the healing  
                  has already begun  
                  even before the wound