

# **Trash is Beautiful Too: Teaching William Carlos Williams' "Between Walls"**

Sophie Daws

**Education level:** Junior High and/or High School

**Genre:** Poetry

**Time frame:** 60 minutes

**Objective:** Discuss imagery as poetic device. Discuss economy of language. Demonstrate that poems can be about anything—even trash and the back of a hospital.

**Required materials:** Print-out or projection of poem; paper and pencil for each student.

**Literary model:** "Between Walls" by William Carlos Williams

## **Sequence of Activities:**

### **Free Write (5 minutes)**

Start the class off with a timed free write.

### **Literary Model (5 minutes)**

Ask a volunteer to read William Carlos Williams' "[Between Walls](#)" for the class. Then play [this recording](#) of Williams performing the poem.

### **Discussion (15 minutes)**

As much as possible, I encourage students to lead discussions, but here are some talking points and potential directions you might want to steer the class in:

- Where does this poem take place?
- What do you notice in this poem?
- What makes this poem different than other poems?
- What makes this poem "poemy"?
- What do you like about it?

- What do you dislike?
- What is “imagery”? What do you notice about the use of imagery here?

### **Prompt (15 minutes)**

Depending on the direction of the conversation, below are possible prompts. You can also give students the option of choosing their favorite prompt.

1. Describe what you imagine to be behind a hospital.
2. Behind a grocery store.
3. Behind a nail salon.
4. Describe a piece of trash as if it were beautiful.
5. Describe anything considered artificial or man-made you find stunning.
6. Describe something in your room no one sees.
7. Describe something in your heart no one sees.
8. Describe something you saw today in under 22 words (the length of “Between Walls”).
9. Zoom into an image and describe it in under 22 words.
10. Describe something broken.
11. Describe a piece of litter you would find discarded in the grass at the park.

Bonus: 1. Pick any prompt *and* use as few words as possible. 2. Pick any prompt *and* go into detail on one image or event.

### **Share (5 minutes)**

Ask students to share!

### **EXAMPLE:**

#### The City Lights

The lights  
of the

city, it’s so  
pretty

standing on  
the

hill looking  
from

afar, on  
the hill

there is broken glass

it fits in  
with the lights

light bounces  
off the glass

the view is  
beautiful

you have no  
words you

just stare.

- Mariah S., Imago Dei Middle School, Spring 2024