



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
POETRY CENTER

Unleashed: Poems by Pets
by Glen Grunberger Elementary
School Poet-in-Residence 2010

Grade Level: 4-5

Duration: 50-60 minutes

Objective: Develop student skills in personification, writing from a created persona, dialogue, and empathy in poetry

Prior Knowledge and Skills: Designed for students who can read and write at or above 2nd grade level.

Sequence of Events:

- I. Introduction: What would our animals say if they could talk? Read short poem from *Unleashed*. (5-10 minutes)
 - a. How many of you have pets? Different kinds of pets – names.

- II. Brainstorming: What are some of the things our pets might say? 10 minutes
 - a. Do you ever imagine what they are saying?
Get examples – if a child says, for example, “My dog likes sausages. My dad always pretends he’s Fluffy saying “Give me sausages!”

- III. Read another poem from the dog’s point of view. Talk about the perspective. (5 mins)

- IV. Individual Writing: Write a poem from the first person perspective of a pet. (20 mins)
 - Try to imagine the world from their perspective, or some event from their perspective. Can be a big thing -- like maybe when your little brother or sister was born. Or something ordinary - like you going to school every day – what do they think, what do they do when you’re gone?
 - Give **at least** 7 linesRemember about poetry – doesn’t have to rhyme. And you get to use words in different sorts of ways.

V. Sharing with class (practicing performance) (15 mins)

Required Resources: *Unleashed, Poems by Writers' Dogs*, Hempel, et al. (I used the poems, "Stalker," by Jeanne Schinto and "Buddy" by Andrew Hudgins.)

Optional Resources: Can bring in your own example or some of these student examples of poems by one's pets or animals. (See below for student examples).

Samples of student work: Joey

the Dog

Please, please, now let me in! I'll be responsible. I won't run. Now please!

I won't destroy anything. I have to go in!

I want to play with you now. Please

let me in. Please oh you. I'll look inside.

See what's going on. I'll get in or my name isn't Joey!

- *Adolfo Lopez Alvarez, 4th grade, Corbett Elementary, Tucson*

Dog's Story

My name is Kiser (Ky-zer). One day, some people came in and they had boxes in their hands. I tried to bark, but Kenya, Arizona, and Ericca wouldn't listen to me. I calmed down once they gave some chicken nuggets. I like chicken nuggets. The men had words on their shirt that said, "movers." Did Ericca just move in or something? I thought she had this house for ages! I got comfortable on Arizona's leg and dug my nails in her leg. What? I need to squeeze once in a while! I heard her complain and she took me off. What kind of friend are you, Arizona?

I got back on, right after that and it happened all over again! Ha, ha, Arizona. After I did it 16 more times, she got used to it. I needed to go pee, so I barked. They wouldn't listen, so I got off of AZ's leg, and did my stuff on Kenya's leg. She gave me a chicken nugget to stop me from doing it again. I love chicken nuggets. I also love Arizona, Ericca, and Kenya. They snuggled me and laughed. I liked that day.

THE END.

- by Kiser

Arizona Rashad, 4th grade, Corbett Elem., Tucson, Reflection on "Unleashed" Lesson Plan

Notes about this Lesson Plan:

A couple of things to watch out for here. One is that so many of the kids wanted to tell stories about their pets that I got behind on leaving time for the writing. Second, I found that about half to two-thirds of the kids really got the writing objective – to write from the pet’s perspective – but a good percentage of them just really had trouble with the concept of writing in first person as if they were the animal. I think it really helps to go around and work with the kids individually with questions on this format, and to have teachers and teachers’ aides, if any, enlisted to help. I thought I emphasized this point a lot, but I think I’d write on the board, “Use ‘I’ and ‘my’ in your sentences” and write a couple of sentence starters, like: My name is Fido. I am hungry all the time. Finally, I think I had one child in each class claim that they had never had a pet, but that was pretty easily resolved when I asked if they knew a friend’s or family member’s pet.

One little girl said that her dog had recently died and she was sad. I told her I understood that sadness, that my beloved dog had died just a couple of years earlier and I still missed her. But that we could still write something imagining what our dog might say. She wrote.