

“Where Does Tomorrow Live?”  
by Matisse Rosen

**By:** Matisse Rosen

**Grade level:** Elementary (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade)

**Time frame:** 30 minutes

**Objective:** Turn kiddos into the wide-eyed poets they already are.

**Required materials:** Pencils, paper

I can't remember if I borrowed this question from a deep-cut in the Poetry Center's K-12 virtual lesson plan archive, or if I lifted it from the text that has become my default consultant for exploring poetry with young students, *Writing Poems with Children* by Elizabeth McKim and Judith Steinbergh. Maybe it emerged from my own mind as I riffed off both these sources. In any case, when I asked students where tomorrow lives, their eyes lit up, their arms shoved fingers high into the air, and they became immediately excited to participate.

**Sequence of Activities:**

**Warm-up / Step 1:** Introduce the question, “Where does tomorrow live?” to your students. You might start them off by providing a few possible answers, but pivot quickly to hearing their responses. While students share, you can transcribe their answers and riff playfully on exciting responses. I found this encouragement helped ease self-consciousness and allowed students to become more playfully spontaneous in rattling off their free associations.

**Example responses generated from my workshops:**

“Tomorrow lives in a green shell pounded by blue waves”

“Tomorrow is buried under a white snow bank”

“Tomorrow is just beyond the planets”

“Tomorrow lives inside today”

Before ending this stage, explain that magic often happens in poetry when we combine things that wouldn't normally go together. We might think about where a cat lives, or what's on tomorrow's schedule, but we don't typically think about tomorrow as having a home. When we think about tomorrow being buried under a white snow-bank, we get a mysterious, unexplainable feeling. That's poetry sneaking up on us!

**Step 2:** Pose this follow-up question to the class: “Now what else would you all like to know about tomorrow?”

At this point you can free-associate more playful questions to get students' minds going. Then ask them to contribute questions of their own. While students shared, I wrote their questions down where everyone could see them. Eventually, we had generated our very own tomorrow-themed question bank.

**Example questions generated by a third-grade class:**

What is tomorrow feeling?

What does she fear?

What does she smile about?

What does tomorrow remember?

Does tomorrow have brothers and sisters?

Why did tomorrow split off from the future?

**Step 3:**

After generating a list of questions together, it is time to let the students write. Explain that students can use any or all of the questions you've generated as a class to create their very own tomorrow-themed poems. Students should feel free to introduce new ideas and questions of their own at any time, and shouldn't feel constrained by these questions, but can use them as a starting point. This exercise can be approached as a group collaborative poem, with each student sharing a line, or as independently written poems.

Example poem written by a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student:

Tomorrow is a pink city.

Way up in the sky I see a squid.

The squid is squirting rainbow ink.

The human-headed cat is worried

Because the ink is making smoke.