

## Bee Lunes

**Grade Level:** 3rd

**Time Frame:** 60-75 minutes, easily extended over two sessions

**Objective:** Students will hear the poem “Intimate Detail” by Heid Erdrich, make their own observations of bees while walking outdoors, and view pictures of native bee species. Students will use their bee observations as inspiration to write lunes.

**Prior Knowledge and Skills:** None

**Required Materials:** “Intimate Detail” by Heid Erdrich (see below), pencil, paper, clipboards, bee coloring page (see below)

**Sequence of Activities:**

### *Warm-up (10 min)*

Ask children to quietly sit in a circle. Go around the circle and ask each student about a time they met or saw a bee. Have you ever been stung? Have you ever seen a bee hive? What colors and sizes of bees have you seen?

Share pictures of common Sonoran Desert bees. These can include carpenter bees, sweat bees, and cactus bees. As they pass each image around the circle, share the following facts:

\*There are over 1,000 bee species in the Sonoran Desert region.

\*Tucson, Arizona is thought to host more bee species than anywhere else in the world.

\* Many of our native bees burrow and nest in the ground.

\*Many of our native bees live a solitary life.

Ask students to share their observations of the native bees in the pictures. What textures do they notice? What do they notice about body shapes and color patterns? Which bee do they think is the most interesting?

Read the poem “Intimate Detail.” Before reading, explain a few of the more difficult or unfamiliar words:

***Intimate:*** private, secret, close

***Detail:*** a small part

***Cosmos, nicotianna, hollyhock:*** types of plants with colorful flowers.

After reading, ask the children about any words or images that stood out to them. You might read a second time, pausing after each stanza to ask students what they remember. What is happening in the poem? What do they imagine? It’s not necessary that students “understand” a poem to its fullest, but that they come away with a few details, images, and an example for how one poet has used close observation in her writing.

### ***Bee Observations (15 min)***

Take the children on a short outdoor adventure! Use the school garden, playground, or even a small patch nearby with just a few plants. Each student should have paper, pencil, and clipboard for writing. Remind them about the words “intimate” and “detail.” In order to notice intimate details, we have to slow down and see even the smallest things around us. Ask them to look for bees as they walk around. They will have to practice seeing things that live on a much smaller scale than humans. They should write down 3 to 5 notes about what they observe. These observations can include bees and other aspects of the world around them that they find interesting. These notes can include color, sound, shape, texture, smell (especially of a plant or of soil), and more. Walk around and help each student, encouraging specific language. For example, many students will want to write that they saw a “black and yellow striped bee.” Invite them to look closer. Was the bee just black and yellow? What kind of yellow? If they touched the bee, what would it feel like? How did it move? What kind of flower did it visit?

### ***Practice Specific Language (5 min)***

Return indoors and wait for students to be seated at their tables. Write these nouns on the board: dog, flower, fruit. Tell students that when we write today, we want to practice using nouns that are *really* specific. Do a few examples with them. How can we make the following nouns more specific? Remind them that the purpose is to change the noun, not add adjectives to the noun.

1. Dog: poodle, German shepherd, terrier, etc.
2. Flower: hollyhock, broccoli flower, nasturtium, marigold
3. Fruit: peach, apple, plum, orange

### ***Writing Lunes (15 minutes)***

Lunes are poems with only three lines!

Introduce the following structure:

5 words

7 words

5 words

Write one lune as a class, using student observations from the field in each line. Students will raise their hands when they want to contribute an idea or observation. Ask occasional questions to elicit more nuanced and detailed language. You can also prompt them for a simile, using variations of the structure: \_\_\_\_\_ is like a \_\_\_\_\_.

Finally, invite the children to write their own lunes using their prior observations of bees and nature *and* imagination. If they need more ideas, the teacher can encourage children in the following directions:

\*Tell the story of a single bee

\*Tell the story of a single moment in the life of a flower

\* Write a series of words describing your observations, but make sure they are specific words. Find words that are unusual, interesting, and precise. Instead of “red”, for example, you can use “scarlet” or “crimson”.

\*If the observations alone are not enough to work with, invite students to use their

imagination: write as if you are a bee, write a conversation between a flower and a bee, write a lune where the second line is only onomatopoeia (sound words). The variations on this exercise are endless!

Because lunes are so short, some children may want to write several lunes. Some of the best lunes come after many iterations, each lune a warm-up for the next.

### ***Art (15 minutes)***

Pass out the bee coloring sheet (courtesy of Addie Provenzano). Using crayons or markers, the children can color and decorate the bee. Instead of coloring in typical yellow and black stripes, remind them of the native bees. Carpenter bees are huge, metallic, and black. Sweat bees are lime green and banana yellow. Cactus bees are gold-yellow and brown with velvety fuzz. They can also draw designs and garden images inside the bee, like a mosaic. For example, maybe a tomato plant grows inside the abdomen and red fruits hang off the curling vines. Maybe marigolds sprout up from the veins inside the wings. They should also find a place inside the bee to write their lune. Rather than straight lines, the words can curve along the bee's body.

### ***Sharing (5 minutes)***

At the end of the lesson, or at the beginning of the next, the children can share their bee pages, read their lunes, and point out the details they chose to include in their coloring pages.

### ***Literary Model:***

#### **Intimate Detail**

BY HEID E. ERDRICH

Late summer, late afternoon, my work  
interrupted by bees who claim my tea,  
even my pen looks flower-good to them.  
I warn a delivery man that my bees,  
who all summer have been tame as cows,  
now grow frantic, aggressive, difficult to shoo  
from the house. I blame the second blooms  
come out in hot colors, defiant vibrancy—  
unexpected from cottage **cosmos, nicotianna,**  
and bean vine. But those bees know, I'm told  
by the interested delivery man, they have only  
so many days to go. He sighs at sweetness untasted.

Still warm in the day, we inspect the bees.  
This kind stranger knows them in intimate detail.  
He can name the ones I think of as shopping ladies.  
Their fur coats ruffed up, yellow packages tucked  
beneath their wings, so weighted with their finds

they ascend in slow circles, sometimes drop, while  
other bees whirl madly, dance the blossoms, ravish  
broadly so the whole bed bends and bounces alive.

He asks if I have kids, I say not yet. He has five,  
all boys. He calls the honeybees his girls although  
he tells me they're ungendered workers  
who never produce offspring. Some hour drops,  
the bees shut off. In the long, cool slant of sun,  
spent flowers fold into cups. He asks me if I've ever  
seen a Solitary Bee where it sleeps. I say I've not.  
The nearest bud's a long-throated peach **hollyhock**.  
He cradles it in his palm, holds it up so I spy  
the intimacy of the sleeping bee. Little life safe in a petal,  
little girl, your few furious buzzings as you stir  
stay with me all winter, remind me of my work undone.

***Samples of Student Work:***

**The Bee, Camouflaged  
Class Collaboration**

Watermelon seed flying, wings long  
Avocado eyes watching for predators and roses  
Blackberry body like protective armor

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**The Story of a Bee**

Ericka M.

Up down up down stinger  
The bee is eating red velvet cupcakes  
Stretching legs on broccoli flowers

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**Black Ball Bee**

Oscar L.

Black ball bee is flying  
Bouncing in my Tata's house  
Its spiny wings got broken

