

Color Poems

by Chalese Potts

Grade level: Facilitated with 6th graders, but can be used with all age groups

Time frame: 1 hour, but can be condensed to 30 minutes

Objective: Utilize imagination to spark creativity

Prior knowledge and skills: None

Required materials: Large sticky note pad, paint/crayons/markers (prefer paint), paint brushes, construction paper, lined paper, pencils

Literary model: “Songalou” or poem created by the instructor

Sequence of Activities

Discussion (10 minutes)

I start the discussion by asking:

- What is your favorite color?
- What would the color mean if you could give it a definition?

After a bit of discussion, I tell students in order to write this poem their imaginations will need to be on and ready to be creative! I then go around the room and give a few of the quieter students a chance to answer the question, “If you were to combine all of the colors you love to create a totally new name, what would you call this color?”

Depending on grade level and creative juices flowing in the space, students may say something that already exists like Gold, Orange, Marigold. Challenge students to create their own names. I run through examples:

- Rayna
- Sunflow
- Gretree
- Tealace

Poem Reading & Instructions (5 minutes)

After going through the different examples of names, I further the example by reading the poem I created using the same writing prompt (see prompt below):

Songalou (son-gah-lue)

Songalou

A pink that vibrates into a wave of fuchsia
The trailing off of softness to a heat of passion.
The cradling of love, a back and forth motion of a rocking chair.
It soothes, like a field of tulips singing in a sunset-kissed wind.
Songalou
Speaks to me an old Miles Davis
Sunday morning clean kind of tune.
Songalou my grandmothers hand a soft caress on my forehead.
An embrace of safety.
Songalou
Smells pass like a sweep of the wind.
A memory triggered.
Songalou me
Home
Again.

After reading the example poem, run through all the instructions:

1. Describe what your color looks like.
2. How does it move?
3. How does it make you and others feel when they see it?
4. What does it mean to you?

I find it helpful to call on students to give you feedback and reinforce each step. Ask clarifying questions like “What did you hear me say?” “Who can explain to the rest of the class what this step means again?”

Color Name Creation (5 minutes)

Allow the students to have five minutes to create solely the name of the poem.

Individual Poem Writing (15-20 minutes)

Tell students to begin working on the writing prompt. Again, restate the questions.

1. Describe what your color looks like.
2. How does it move?
3. How does it make you and others feel when they see it?
4. What does it mean to you?

The difficulty of these questions can change depending on age group/skills.

Give students 15 minutes to write their poems

Revision (10 minutes)

After the students have written their poems give them 10 minutes to revise their poems.

Have them ask themselves

- Does it make sense to me?
- Does this poem say all that I want to say?
- Can I use a metaphor for some of the things I'm saying?

Read what you've written (5 minutes)

Open to everyone who wants to share a poem.

Extension Activity

Have them use the construction paper and paint to illustrate their ideas and share out if time allows