

Lesson Plan: Similes and Standing Fish

by Saraiya Kanning

Grade Level: 1st

Time Frame: 60 minutes

Objective: Teaching artist and students will get to know each other through a name game, collaborative writing, and movement exercise.

Prior Knowledge and Skills: None

Required Materials: Whiteboard and dry erase markers, lined paper, pencils, blank paper, crayons, “The Standing Fish” poem (below)

Sequence of Activities:

Introductions (15 min)

While seated in a circle, welcome all to the poetry session. Bring something to share: a butterfly wing, a unique stone, a piece of art, or any object from somewhere else in the world – near or far. Go around in the circle and invite each person to share their name and a place they’d like to travel. This place could be near or far, international or local.

Read a Poem (5 minutes)

Introduce “The Standing Fish” by You Ruoxin. Before reading the poem, tell them about the author: You Roxin was born in 2006 in Ningde (China). As an elementary school student, her poems were published in magazines in China. Read the poem (it’s quite short).

Introduce similes by explaining that similes are comparisons between two unlike objects. You can find similes by looking for the word “like.” Where is the simile in “The Standing Fish”? Read the poem again or write it out on a sticky note paper so they can see it. Ask them to find the simile.

Creating Similes (10 minutes)

Read aloud some other similes:

She cried like a baby.

He sings like an angel.

The pie exploded like a volcano.

I eat like a pig.

He has eyes like a hawk.

Come up with a few together on the giant pad:

He walks like a _____.

The trumpet-player sounds like a _____.

My mother is friendly like a _____.
The lake is clear like _____.
You are sweet like _____.
The night is dark like _____.

Break (3 minutes)

Lead students through a series of motion activities and stretches. Invite them to find a new seat in the circle.

Write Collaborative Poems (15 min)

Use “The Standing Fish” as a template for a series of poems written as a class. Lead them with a series of questions.

When doing my homework,
I see a _____
What is that animal/person/object doing?
like a _____
End with a question

You can also make the first sentence into a blank for them to fill in:

When doing _____,
I see a _____
What is the animal/person/object doing?
like a _____
End with a question

Illustrations (15 minutes)

Invite children to illustrate one of the collaborative poems. Give a bit of guidance for composition. For example, if they illustrated “The Standing Fish”, how big would the fish be in the aquarium? Would it include the girl doing her homework? Would you draw as if you were in the aquarium, or outside looking in at the fish? Will the fish be in the center, or off to the side? Remind them that when we draw, we don’t always have to put things in the center. If we want, our main subject can be up, down, or at the side. Subjects can even disappear off the side of the page.

Poem:

The Standing Fish by You Ruoxin

When doing my homework,
I see a goldfish
standing
in the aquarium
like a child.
Is it trying

to escape from the aquarium?

A Chinese translation of the poem can be found in [Zero Distance: New Poetry From China](#), pg. 54

Samples of student work inspired by this lesson:

Whale Shark

When swimming
I see a whale-shark
Flipping like a gymnast,
Like a pancake, like a dead fish on land
Losing a tooth, and he's so happy
Is he at home cooking dinner?
Is he carving a pumpkin?
Is he getting ready for Halloween?
Is he trick-or-treating?

Lion

When doing my homework
I see a lion,
Playing basketball like Michael Jordan
In a forest wilderness.
Is the lion going to make a 3-pointer?