

Assignment example: Perspectives-based poetry assignment

Poetry: Who cares?

Who cares about poetry? I'll tell you who cares... Choose a role that interests you from the list below. Complete the assignment for that role as you think like that person about poetry.

- **Artist:** Read "Jabberwocky," from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. Draw or paint a picture, or make a sculpture, of the Jabberwocky. Use evidence from the poem to support its appearance.
- **President of the U.S. (or presidential candidate):** Choose a specific president or pretend that you are a presidential candidate. Read at least 10 poems by well-known poets. (Examples include Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Carl Sandburg, etc. See the list of websites below to find more poems and poets.) Which poem would you choose for your inaugural address? Rank order the poems from best choice to worst, and write at least a paragraph explaining why the best choice is your pick. **OR** write a poem to be read at your inauguration that represents what you believe after reading the 10 poems by famous poets.
- **Counselor:** You are counseling someone who is dealing with disappointment about not being chosen for a sports team. Read at least 10 poems by well-known poets. (Examples include Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Carl Sandburg, etc. See the list of websites below to find more poems and poets.) Which poem would you select to help this person deal with their problem? Write at least 3 paragraphs explaining why you chose this poem, why you did not choose the other poems, and how you think this poem will help. **OR** write a poem to help someone deal with disappointment after reading at least 10 poems by famous poets.
- **Songwriter:** Ask your parent or an adult to help you find lyrics of rap music or songs that you like. Be sure that the language and ideas are appropriate. Find examples in the lyrics of the following literary devices: personification, author's tone, similes, metaphors, onomatopoeia. List these examples, and write at least

Assignment example: Perspectives-based poetry assignment

two paragraphs about how effectively you think the writer of the lyrics used these literary devices.

- **Member of the North Carolina General Assembly:** Research the poet laureates for North Carolina. What is their role? Who serves now? Who has served in the past? Read the poetry of at least 3 poet laureates of North Carolina. Rank order them in terms of which you think most deserved the job. Write a letter to your top choice explaining why you chose that individual.
- **Greeting card writer for Hallmark:** Create poems to be used for cards that express sympathy or celebration for at least three different occasions (death, divorce, loss of job, birthday, anniversary, graduation, etc.). If you wish, you may illustrate the cards with your own drawings or paintings, or with a collage of pictures from magazines or other sources.
- **Advertising executive:** Create a poem to be used to sell a specific product that already exists or that you create. Your poem must incorporate at least 3 of the following literary devices: personification, author's tone, similes, metaphors, onomatopoeia. Develop another poem that would discourage people from buying this product, such as might be written by a competitor or a government agency that thinks this product could be dangerous.
- **Member of the selection committee for the Pulitzer Prize for poetry:** Why should a particular poet receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and the \$10,000 award with it? Go to the website of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry – <http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/Poetry> – and look at the list of people who have received the prize. Choose a year and click on "more details" for that year. Read about the poet who won and the poets who were finalists. Write a list of criteria, or describing words, for deciding which poet should receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Rank order the top 5 criteria that you think are most important, and write at least 2 paragraphs explaining your choices.
- **Historian:** Examine narrative poems, such as "Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" and "Casey at the Bat." These poems tell a story. Choose a historical event, either from your own life or from the

Assignment example: Perspectives-based poetry assignment

history you have studied, and write a narrative poem about that event.

- **Mathematician:** Look at poetry from a mathematical viewpoint. There are many mathematical concepts involved in poetry. For example, below is an explanation of “metrical feet” in poetry:

As an example of how a line of meter is defined, in English-language iambic pentameter, each line has five metrical feet, and each foot is an iamb, or an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. The generally accepted names for some of the most commonly used kinds of feet include:

- iamb – one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable
- trochee – one stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable
- dactyl – one stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables
- anapest – two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed syllable
- spondee – two stressed syllables together
- pyrrhic – two unstressed syllables together (rare, usually used to end dactylic hexameter)

The number of metrical feet in a line are described in Greek terminology as follows:

- dimeter – two feet
- trimeter – three feet
- tetrameter – four feet
- pentameter – five feet
- hexameter – six feet
- heptameter – seven feet
- octameter – eight feet

See if you can create a list of names of people in your class and/or words that fit each of the types of feet. For example, "Megan" would be an example of trochee.

Assignment example: Perspectives-based poetry assignment

Can you write a verse in iambic pentameter? It was the poet and playwright William Shakespeare's favorite! Here's an example: "If music be the food of love, play on."

Try to write 4 sentences in iambic pentameter!!

Websites

- "Jabberwocky":
<http://www.jabberwocky.com/carroll/jabber/jabberwocky.html>
- Classical poets and poems:
<http://poetry.about.com/od/poems/u/readpoems.htm#s3>
- Examples of different types of poems and poems on different themes: <http://www.poetry-archive.com/collections/index.html>
- Historical poems:
 - "Casey at the Bat":
<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15500>
 - "Paul Revere's Ride" -
<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15640>
- North Carolina poets and poetry:
<http://www.poets.org/state.php/varState/NC>
- Meter:
<http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/meter.html>
- Bad or funny metaphors or similes:
<http://www.z9design.com/humor/similes.html>
- Tutorial: Writing lyrics for songs:
<http://www.musiclyricsfyi.com/lyric-writing-basics.html>
- Poet Laureates:
http://www.loc.gov/poetry/laureate_current.html