

Teaching Poetry Writing Games to Grades K-6

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I've been teaching poetry to students from grades kindergarten through graduate school for over two decades. During that time, I've experimented with many different exercises and approaches. In the following pages you'll find some of the techniques and exercises that work best for students in grades K-6.

Although playing poetry games might seem to stray from curriculum goals, the changes I've witnessed in students after writing like this that enhances creativity and encourages literacy have astounded me. Countless times, I've seen students who were considered reluctant or struggling writers create poems that stunned me with their wit, honesty, and creativity. Even better, the students were proud of the writing they did, and developed a new relationship to writing.

By approaching writing as a game, encouraging students to play with words in a safe, nonjudgmental setting, and allowing students to write poetry that they like (rather than poetry to please parents or teachers), students are able to discover a way into writing that inspires them. The freedom and excitement of writing games enables students to shift from seeing writing as something that's fraught with failure to something that's full of surprise and discovery. Most importantly, activities like this help instill a life-long passion for reading and writing in students.

Three Overarching Principles:

- 1) Give students an opportunity to write for themselves and their peers — *poetry by students for students*.
- 2) Create a safe space for students to take writing risks in.
- 3) Give students a structure or framework to play with writing in. Encourage students to write to explore and discover.

General Approaches and Techniques:

- 1) **Make writing poetry a game!** Call the activities "Writing Games" rather than poetry. Put the title of the game on the board. Try to take the pressure off of writing and shift the student's perspective from seeing writing as something that's done for a grade, to seeing it as something that's fun, exciting, and surprising.
- 2) **With young students, start with a group activity.** Use the group poem as a way to get the creative juices flowing and encourage students to play with words. It will take a little while before students realize that poetry is a safe place where they can let their imaginations run wild.
- 3) **Break away from restrictive notions of poetry.** Many students believe that poetry is all about flowers or love and has to rhyme. The purpose of playing poetry writing games is to show students that writing poetry can be much more than this — it's about fresh, original uses of language. This is another reason why I usually call the activities "Writing Games." Once they've done a few activities I might tell them they've created poetry.
- 4) **After introducing an activity, read a sample poem.** Since the goal of playing poetry games is to get students to create writing that is meaningful to them (rather than meaningful to adults) try to use other student poems as models. Pick poems that are full of surprising, fresh images and uses of language, and share these with students to inspire them to take risks, and to illustrate what is possible. You might comment on what's good in the poem (or get students to respond to what they like) but do not criticize. If you criticize young writer's poems, students will internalize the voice of criticism, and either be too intimidated to write freely, or they will write to please you, rather than themselves.

- 5) Use pre-writing activities.** Depending on the activity, you might want to generate ideas on the board, such as a list of images or words students can use in their poems. Use this as an opportunity to encourage fresh, creative uses of language.
- 6) Give ways to start the first line or lines.** With younger students, getting started is the hardest part. Some of the poetry activities that work best for these students are ones where the first line is already started (you might write several ways to start lines on the board).
- 7) Give them time limits.** For each activity, tell them they will have 5, or 10, or 15 minutes (depending on age and length of activity) to write as many lines as they can without stopping. Keep careful track of time and warn students when they have only a minute or two left. This makes the writing into more of a game, and it encourages them not to censor themselves.
- 8) Don't think, just write!** Encourage students to write whatever pops into their heads. Tell them to let it be crazy, silly, weird, or strange. Tell them there are no rules, and no right or wrong answers. (When it comes to sharing, you might want to give a few rules, but let the writing be for them). The goal is to get students to surprise themselves with what they write. As many writers know, the best lines are often the ones that are discovered, rather than consciously intended.
- 9) Afterwards, encourage students to title their poems.** Try to get them to think of a title that expresses what's at the heart of the poem, rather than simple calling their poem "Poem," or "My Thoughts." After all, their parents didn't name them "Boy" or "Girl." With young writers, titling the poem can be the first step in the revision process by getting them to consider what a poem is about, or what guides the poem.
- 10) Share the poems.** For many students, getting to see the effect of their words is their reward for writing. Remember, the students are creating poetry for each other and themselves, so they need peer feedback. A few rules you might want to use with sharing: They can't use the names of anyone in school in their poems (and if they did, they can't read their poem aloud).
- 11) Assign an Official Listener.** Each student who wants to share their poem must first listen to someone else's poem, and state what image or part of the poem they liked. Once they've given good, positive feedback on someone else's poem, they can share their own (and get their own "Official Listener"). Assigning an official listener often causes the rest of the class to listen better as well and builds trust.
- 12) Only give positive comments.** With elementary and middle school students, give frequent, specific praise by mirroring back to students what lines or images are good. Only allow the other students to give praise as well. You can still influence their writing by what you praise. For instance, praising fresh, sensory imagery encourages students to use more concrete images. Ignoring potty talk discourages students from writing that way. But criticism, with young writers, crushes creativity and betrays students' sense of poetry as a way to play with writing and be honest without consequences.
- 13) Write with your students and share your work.** You'll be surprised by how much you might enjoy these activities, and students will love to hear your poems.
- 14) Vary what you do.** Use music, photos, pictures, objects (like apples, potatoes, or lemons), field trips, and so on to keep the writing games fresh and exciting. Enjoy the adventure!
- 15) Create a class book.** Collect one or two poems from students and type these up into a book that you can give to students, or have students assemble a class book. (You can also have them illustrate the book). You'll be

amazed by how proud students are of their work, and how this builds a sense of classroom community and accomplishment. It also gives you a book of poems you can use as poetry samples in the future.

Note: With very young students who aren't writing yet, or who can't write proficiently, it's best to have the student dictate their poems to a writing partner. The goal is to get the students to experience the thrill of writing, so even if the student can write a little, they might get frustrated by their inability to put their thoughts on paper. The writing partner can be a parent volunteer, or students from an older class who can write more quickly. Usually, one writing partner is needed for every 4 or 5 non-writing students. Once the students have a few lines transcribed, they can begin working on a picture to accompany their poem.

Some Poetry Games:

A few of these activities are borrowed and modified from Kenneth Koch's book, Wishes, Lies, and Dreams. Others are my own invention, or the invention of other teachers I've worked with. Once you get a sense of what sort of activities work best for your students and how to structure the activities, start making up your own. Try out every activity yourself before you give it to your students. See "Sample Poems" for examples of work created from these exercises.

Group Poems (to get younger students started): With group poems try to get everyone in the class to contribute something and write lines on the board. Once everyone has contributed, read the whole poem aloud to the class. Most of these exercises can also be done individually (especially with older students).

Alien Artifact —Bring in an unfamiliar vegetable (bok choy, ginger root...). Keep it in a paper bag. Tell students it's an alien artifact and they've been asked by NASA to examine it. Pass the bag around and have them smell and feel it (you might have them do this with their eyes closed). Then have them describe what it smells like. What it feels like. What it looks like. And finally, what it might have been used for by aliens. You could also have them use their imaginations to describe what's inside the object.

What If —Get each student to ask one crazy, goofy "What if" question, such as "What if an ant had super powers?" You can also have them think up answers to these questions.

Our Super Hero —Have the class answer a series of questions about an invented super hero. Start with his/her name (you might get several responses here that you can combine into one long name). What are his/her powers? Who does he/she fight against? What is he/she afraid of? What's his/her weakness? A variation on this is "**Our Monster.**"

In the Future —Have students imagine a series of lines about what the future will be like. Each line can start with, "In the future...." Encourage ridiculous responses.

The Rules Game —Have students contribute rules for a common activity, such as "How to Eat Dinner," "How to Dress Yourself," or "How to Write a Poem." The one rule is that each rule must be ridiculous.

What's in the box? —Pass around a closed box, and ask students to imagine what's inside. Encourage them to think of things that aren't objects or couldn't possibly be in the box, such as "There's the speed of a thousand zebras in the box, itching to get out."

Crystal Ball —If you have a crystal ball, pass it around, and ask students to describe what they see. Encourage them to imagine what could be in the crystal ball. Another variation on this is "**I've seen.**"

Translation —Put a series of unfamiliar symbols on the board. Tell students that it's an ancient text from a lost civilization, and they're the only ones in the world who can read it. Ask them to translate what it says (older students might do this as an individual activity). Try and create the most basic, elemental symbols. The goal is to give the students a template through which they can express their subconscious.

Alphabet History —Have students contribute lines starting with different letters of the alphabet. Encourage them to make each line about something in the past. Let it be silly and strange. (Ex: "Ants once ruled the world./ Beavers ate them all.")

Lost and Found —Start by generating a list of things that have been lost. Encourage students to think of things that aren't objects, or things that couldn't possibly be lost, like "I lost the birds that soared inside my head." Then have students think of things that could be found, like "I found horses in my dirty tennis shoes."

Passing Poem —This works best with older students, done at the end of a poetry unit. Have each student write a line about something they did that morning (or what they want to be, or what they wish could happen). Then have them pass their paper to their right. The next student reads only the last word of the line before and writes a new line that uses that word in some way. Let this continue until every student gets their paper back (if you have a large class, you might divide it into two hemispheres). Once students have their own paper, encourage them to read all the lines that have been written, and add a last line that brings the whole poem together. One rule to mention: no names can be used in this activity!

Individual Poetry Games:

Poetry Language Test —To get students in a creative mindset, tell them you're going to give them a multiple choice intelligence test. Only, instead of picking the logically correct answer, they must choose the answer that they wish was true. If they like, they can also make up an answer. Once the test is done, they can pick one of their answers and expand it into a poem about what would happen if that were true. For instance: "What's can you eat? Live frogs. Tornadoes. Pickles. The sun. Clouds?" The student could then write a poem about eating Tornadoes. This is a great exercise to introduce the concept of psychological truth —things can make sense in the language of poetry that might not make sense in normal language.

What's Inside Me —Ask students to imagine all the crazy animals or other things that could be inside them. Try to get them to describe the animals in as much detail as possible. On the board, I put possible opening lines: "Inside me there are..." or "Inside me live..." or "Inside me grow..." to get them started. An accompanying activity you can do is to have students bring in a cardboard box. Once they've written their "Inside Me" poem, they can glue their poem to the box, and decorate the interior of the box with images that relate to the poem.

Where I'm From —Ask students to write as many lines as they can about where they're from. However, rather than telling us where they're from, their challenge is to *show* us where they're from using all their senses, specific memories, and specific events (invented or real). What is the smell of where they're from? The taste? The feel? The sound? Etc... Encourage students to let their minds go wild and write whatever pops into their heads to show where they're from. (See sample poems for an example).

I Wish —(from Kenneth Koch's Wishes Lies and Dreams). Tell students they can start each line with "I wish." Encourage them to come up with as many I wish lines as they can in the time limit, and to let it be silly, strange or crazy. This also works as a group activity.

Lies —(from Kenneth Koch’s *Wishes Lies and Dreams*) Encourage students to write a poem in which every line is an outrageous lie (i.e.: “I lived in the stomach of a black bear.”).

My Opposite —Use some discussion to get students to think about the concept of opposites. For instance you might ask them what the opposite of chocolate is (Vanilla? Broccoli? The moon?). Students younger than 3rd grade might have trouble with this. Once they start thinking creatively about opposites, have them write about the life of a person who is the opposite of them. The goal of this exercise is to give students a way to say something intriguing about who they are.

I used to be... But now I’m... —This is another one from Kenneth Koch’s book. Again, it helps to put some ways to start the lines on the board, such as “I once was..., But now I’m...” or “I was..., But now...” or “Yesterday I was..., Today I’m...” etc....

I Remember —This is a classic that’s been used by many poets. Tell students they can start each line with “I remember...” and encourage students, if they can’t remember anything, to make up memories. Emphasize using specific, sensory details.

I Don’t Remember —This variation on the previous exercise can be done as a second stanza to the above poem. Again, encourage students to use a mixture of real and ridiculous non-memories.

List Poems —The possibilities here are endless. For example, you could ask students to write about “Things that are spicy.” Rather than simply listing salsas, challenge them to come up with memories, experiences, and images that evoke spiciness (“The way hydrogen peroxide felt when my mom poured it on my skinned knee/ the color of the sun at noon / the taste of needles / the time Suzie dared me to jump on glass...”). You can invent other versions of list poems, or have students come up with list poem ideas (i.e.: Things that are soft, Things that they wish were different, Things that are scary...). As an alternative, use colors. Students can list things that are red, or green, or yellow (as a collaboration, a class can put together a poem that has all the colors of the rainbow).

Animal Sounds —For this exercise, I use William Carlos Williams’s “Poem” as an example. Ask students to write a poem about an animal using words that sound the way the animal does something (like the way an elephant walks, or a snake slithers). You might want to do some pre-writing activities to get students thinking about this. The goal is to show students how the words in poems can be chosen as much for their sound as their meaning.

Questions —In the first stanza of the poem, have students ask a series of ridiculous questions. In the second stanza, have them attempt to answer them seriously. (Ex: “What lives inside the sun? / A thousand fish, swimming in the dark.”) Or, have students ask a series of serious questions in the first stanza, and give ridiculous answers in the second. (Ex: “Why do wars lead to more wars? / Because the meat in the fridge went bad, and the dogs were hungry.”) See Nancy Willard’s “Questions My Son Asked: Answers I Never Gave Him” for an example.

Games for more advanced writers (5th and 6th grade students):

Poetry Leaps —Bring in an organic object for students to describe (apples, lemons, potatoes, etc...). Have students start in the first stanza by describing the object using their senses — what does it look like, smell like, feel like, and sound like? (Avoid taste for now). Encourage them to compare the object to other things (ex:

rather than writing, “the apple weighs about six ounces,” write, “The apple weighs as much in my hand as the dead bird I found frozen on my window ledge...”). Try to get the students to be as specific as possible, and not to worry about making sense. In the second stanza, have them imagine the object throughout time (Where did the apple come from? Where is it going? What will happen to it?). In the third stanza, have them imagine what’s inside the object (ex: “Inside are a hundred geese carrying seeds across a white winter sky”). And in the fourth stanza, have them address the object directly, and try asking it some questions (ex: “Apple, you kept your sweetness hidden beneath red, leathery skin. You wrapped your black seeds in white, empty rooms. What do you dream of now that the winter winds blow?”) Reveal this poem step by step (so they don’t know what’s coming), and give students several minutes to work on each step.

Five Objects and an Old Saying Changed —This activity is a modified version of one given in The Practice of Poetry. Have students start by writing five objects that could be found in a kitchen on five slips of paper. Put all the slips of paper in a hat and pass it around. Students should choose five slips from the hat that are not their own. For the second requirement, have students think of common sayings (these must be recognizable), and then warp them in some way. For instance, rather than “The early bird gets the worm,” you could have, “The early worm gets eaten.” Or, as one fifth grader used in her poem, rather than “A needle in a haystack,” she wrote, “A haystack full of needles.” Once students have five kitchen objects, and the idea of how to change an old saying, give them this challenge: Write a poem about your family using all five kitchen objects, and at least one old saying changed. Encourage them to let it be strange.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Bagel —This activity comes from Wallace Stevens’ poem, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.” It’s a good idea to use that poem as a model. Bring in some other object for the students to focus on (bagel, orange, turnip...) and have them come up with thirteen stanzas describing that object, similar to how Stevens does in his poem. This can be done as an individual or a group activity.

Student Samples:

(For many more student sample poems, look in Kenneth Koch's Wishes, Lies, and Dreams.)

Group Poems

How to Write a Poem

(by Ms. Henkes' Third Grade Class)

Whenever you use the word "a" you have to make the poem green.

Step 1: When I write "g" write in pink.

Step 2: Don't spike the paper.

Step 3: Don't slobber and drool on the paper.

Step 4: Don't go into the paper.

Step 5: Don't make the paper green.

Don't go far around while reading.

Don't write diagonal!

Let your brain write for you meaning cut open your head take out your brain and put your brain on the paper and let it write for you.

No writing upside down. You have to write with the eraser side of your paper. No running on the paper. You have to tie your shoe before you write "Hi!"

First, write your words on the paper. Don't sniff stuff like your feet and arms while you're writing.

Don't smell your feet when you're writing. Don't tell your mom you're writing when you have to write backwards.

Don't erase or that means you're weird!

Don't rip the poetry books!

Don't eat it!

In the Future (by kindergarten students)

In the future porcupines will rule the world

In the future a fish will be an igloo

In the future monkeys will jump on houses

In the future owls will eat bamboo

In the future a gorilla will be an arachnid

In the future milk will only be chocolate milk

In the future zippers will be on the sides of pants

In the future eggs will be in rivers

In the future pie will be chocolate ice-cream pie

In the future koalas will only climb bushes
In the future swans will hula-hoop every Saturday
In the future we'll plug our walls into toasters
In the future aliens will be in coffee
And swans will be turned into ducks.

Our Super Hero (by 3rd graders)

Super Stupid Man Fat Pete Baby Big
can go through walls, can write without looking,
he can take his brain out, he can take his eyeballs out
he can walk upside down and fall on his head
he can be in Brazil and America at the same time
he can read with his eyes shut, he can lift up his hands
without his brain, he can be everywhere at the same
time
and do handstands in the air for an hour.

He fights against Snow White, letters, Captain Hook's
ship,
teeth, flies, chalkboards, our hearts, us baby heads,
stinky old shoes, and his self.
His weakness is flower dresses, he can't go to the
bathroom
and he likes candy. If he smells pine cones he'll die,
and if he flies, he'll die
and if he moves, he'll die. He can't even breathe.

What If (by kindergarten students)

What if dinosaurs were still alive?

They would kill all the people.

What if a person would never die?

He would be sad when everyone else died and he
missed his friends.

What if we killed all the animals except the cows?

They would be sad because all the animals were their
friends.

What if cows could fly?

Would they fall down because they're too heavy or
too fat when no one milks them?

What if a cat got born and died right then?

Then the mother and dad would be sad.

What If (by second graders)

What if our heads were bats? Would our heads pop off and fly away?
What if there was a half spider half monkey? Would it destroy everything?
What if flying pigs ruled the world? Would they make eating bacon illegal?
What if pigs could fly? Would birds go extinct and people shoot pigs?
What if my mom was a boy? Would I be dead?
What if koala bears were evil? Would they take over the world by force?
What if the teacher grew lots of hair? Would he cut off all his hair and burn it, or join Big Foot?
What if chickens spoke Spanish? Would they move to Mexico?
What if spiders ate walruses? Would there be no more walruses?

Lost and Found (by second graders)

I lost the mountains in my mind. I lost my eye when I poked it out.
I lost the flying pigs in my ear. I lost my pet porcupine in my sewer.
I lost my yak in the yarn, then I found it in the yard. I lost my hippo in an igloo.
I lost my flamingo in a bingo game. I lost my tissue in my nose.
I lost my pizza in my nose. I lost my dingo and found it at bingo.

I found my cat in a mouse's esophagus. I found my sock in the fridge.
I found my hair in my milk. I found my cat in a kangaroo's pouch.
I found the beach in a taxi cab. I found my puppy alive in an owl pellet.
I found my cheese in cow's milk. I found a rabbit in a haystack.
I found Russia in Rhode Island. I found a turtle in a quail's nest.
I found an anteater in Antarctica.

I've Seen (by third graders)

I've seen a tornado pick up a herd of cows.
I've seen a pencil break and nobody was holding it.
I've seen horses do ballet.
I've seen the ghost in Dance Summer.
I've seen tomatoes talk.
I've seen a bar pick up a cat and move it to protect it.
I've seen ice burn.
I've seen an octopus scream.
I've seen a flag do a belly dance.
I've seen a cat bark.
I've seen peanut butter do a tap dance.
I've seen the phone ring when no one was there.
I've seen peanut butter run.
I've seen an elephant standing on a cat

Individual Poems

Where I'm From

I'm from ground as flat as the floor
For as far as you can see. I'm from,
Summer carnivals, Tang and soft pretzels with yellow mustard, flying ears of corn, pumpkin parades, and midnight humidity.
I'm from dogs that pull skateboards,
And Bloody Murder in the cemetery.
I'm from five tornadoes touching down,
And one taking my spirit tree.
I'm from the smell of cut grass, and pancakes on Sunday.
Storms ripped up where I'm from,
And left the remains in a Walmart parking lot.
I'm the squeak of shopping cart wheels rolling over the rubble of where I'm from.
—T. Mitchell

I Wish Poems

I wish I was a flag so
People would respect me.
I wish I was a millionaire
so I can get everything.
I wish I was an only child
so my sister would never
bother me. I wish I wish
—Katie Ebers (3rd grade)

Lie Poems

I Am Now a Liar

It wasn't me I
promise, it wasn't me
because I'm a butterfly
and I do not Lie...
OK OK I do lie
every day I didn't eat a bug
now I'm a dragon
in Wales I didn't burn the
house down. Now I'm a
dolphin in Hawaii. I didn't
push the shark. Now I'm a
monkey in Africa. I didn't
eat all the bananas. Now
I'm a human in America.
I didn't squash the bug.
Now I'm a spider climbing
on a wall. I didn't scare
the lady. Now I'm a kid at the dinner table. I didn't
throw the liver and spinach away.
Now I'm in school as a kid.
I didn't cheat, I promise. Now
I'm a boy. I didn't lie
goodbye.

—Katie Hufnagel (3rd grade)

I've Never Lied

One time I said I've never
lied and they believed me
and I lied never not even a little who cares
I talked to a cow or flew around
the world who cares that I was
a fairy who cares I was a
mouse who knew that I went
to China who knew I went
to France who cares that I've
died two times who cares
that I was a Queen on my
first life who cares I can
die 1,000 times who would know
I had a genie who knew
that I've never lied.

—Elise McCoy (3rd grade)

My Opposite Poems

It's Not Me

I am a princess. I live on
the dirty streets in New Mexico.
I am eating blue banana peels.
My mom is a baby and my
dad is an animal and I'm left
here eating a blue banana peel
with a baby crying and a leopard
at my feet. My brother is an
adult and my four sisters all are
flying elephants and I think
I got a disease so I am turning
into a baby, leopard, adult and four
flying elephants, what am I to
do? I know! I fly to France and
climb a tree. I'll cry all day,
and drink coffee. It will be fun
I think!

—Shelby Hampton (3rd grade)

Opposite Me

I was a hat,
I was a blue frilled hat,
My owner's name was Maria,
She wore me every where she went,
even in the lunchroom,
So when Maria had spinach I would smell
the smell, and when I was 1,000 years old I got
thrown away in the dark dumpster,
and then I got thrown in a big
truck but I found my favorite food,
spinach, and then I died because I
didn't know I was allergic.

—Ciara Hindman (3rd grade)

My Opposite

I was the fattest girl in the world.
I weighed 10,000 pounds. Got sick. Died.
They buried me in a crater.
When I went to heaven,
Heaven caved in and fell to earth
And earth was filled with Heaven,
And no one was ever mean again.

—Martin (4th grade)

I Used to Be... But Now I'm... Poems

I was an idiot in first grade, now I'm top reader in my class.
I used to hate reading, but now I love it!!!
I was a leprechaun, but now I'm a dopey sea serpent.
But now I'm a nuclear bomb being dropped on my human self.
I'm my school being blown up like a balloon by my friends Malcolm and Connor.
I was George Washington, but now I'm George washing machine.
—Alston Fagerburg (3rd grade)

I used to be a baby but now I'm a Tower. I used to be a cow but now I'm a tree. I used to be underwear but now I'm a swing. I used to be a dollar bill but now I'm a phone. I used to be a book but now I'm a dictionary. I used to be a mouse but now I'm a Lion!
—Chris McCoy (3rd grade)

The Bird in My Dream

Once I was in a bird.
Then I was on the top of an airplane eating peanut butter and chewing lead too.
Then I was walking through our eyes.
I thought I just saw Tyrannosaurus Rex. I followed him through times I never knew. Then I froze like ice. I was in a time of ice.
I saw a bird move its wings, but then it froze. It was ice but then a hot steam feeling came to me. It unfroze the ice. The bird came alive. It was a golden bird. I grabbed onto its tail. It took me into a world of spinning colors, then a big burst happened, and I was in my bed in New York.
—Mika Mumme (3rd grade)

Inside Me Poems

I Don't Just Stay Me

A few weeks ago I noticed that I had a big glop of love and peace inside of me a big blue bird singing inside me.
When I'm mad I have a big tiger about to eat all of the mean people. I also could have a big dungeon inside where all the mean and really mean people go.
When I'm sad I have a big ocean getting rained on.
—Elizabeth Morales (3rd grade)

There are things inside

Inside me there are things that hurt there are things that feel good.
There are bugs
There are elephants
There is goosh that hurts my tummy
there is water flowing in my bloodstream
There are bugs that hurt my Ears. There are feelings that are badly hurt
There are hippopotamuses jumping on my muscles like a trampoline to make them hurt.
There are drawbridges that make me yawn, and chomp
there are waterfalls that make me cry.
—Katie Hufnagel (3rd grade)

Oozey Goozey Woozey
Today I have
a Dead Pig inside me
and some rotten
bones and some slimy
gooze and a slimy
eye Ball and a gooey
shirt and a rotten
rooster. I have a gooey
ooey pooey crowd of
sloppy gooze. It's an icky
goozey oozey crowd
of oozey goozey stuff.
—Tremor Witt (3rd grade)

I Remember Poems

I remember my grandpa teased me.
I remember the first time I watched a cartoon.
I remember my first plane ride.
I remember my niece's first night alive.
I remember when my brother-in-law had a collapsed lung.
I remember my first dollar bill.
I remember getting tickets to Florida.
I remember my first friend.
I will remember my best friend moving forever.
—Jamie Donjon (3rd grade)

I remember being born.
I remember almost dying twice.
I remember my step dad.
I remember seeing my real dad.
I remember all my teachers.
I remember my friends.
I remember my sisters.
I remember Idaho.
I remember Utah.
I remember Wyoming.
—Katie Ebers (3rd grade)

I remember the hot sun beating down on my pale skin
I remember my grandmother's soft sweet voice
I remember my cousin holding me like I was a feather
I remember the cold crisp nights by the fire
I remember how my dad used to sing me a lullaby
I remember when I was too small my parents thought
they would drop me I remember the soft
touch of soap when it hit my body I remember

the first time I held my rattle I remember
the first time I went swimming I remember the first
time I took a step I remember when I fell and almost
had to go to the doctor's office and
almost had to get stitches I remember
the time I found my bike but it was
a training wheel bike I remember the
first time I went to a concert
I remember the rainbow shining
brightly and shining I remember when
I cut my hand and could see a deep cut and
I remember my mom saying
I will be there with you I
remember taking a trip to
Taiwan and riding a roller coaster
I remember saying my first word,
mom, I remember my baby sitter,
Melissa, I remember being with my
whole family.

—Mika Mumme (3rd grade)

Five Objects and An Old Saying Changed

Pets

My father licked our first dog.
“What doesn't kill you makes you
hungrier,” he said. When I was six, we got
a microwave. I tried to cook a fork
and the plastic inside melted and dripped
like intestines. After that, we had no more
pets. My sister was allergic, and besides,
my mother like to keep a clean house. We
sneeze often around each other. In spring,
when I started to shed, I was sent out.
My father said he was hungry for pets.
“To eat or not to eat,” he said. He taught me
cruelty was injuring an animal and not eating it.
On a night in July, I limped
across the cornfield to sing my screams.
The dog was buried in our garden
beneath the cucumbers.
—T. Mitchell (acts like a 3rd grader)