

Exploring Poetic Elements

About this activity

This lesson uses a poem about chips to help learners identify and analyze key elements of poetry, enhancing their understanding of literary devices and fostering appreciation for creative expression

Stage 1: Introduction

Begin with a brief discussion about the importance of poetry and how it differs from other forms of writing. Ask the learners if they read poems, why and why not.
Introduce the key poetic elements: rhyme, rhythm, metaphor, simile, imagery, and personification. Give the learners definitions on a worksheet and ask them to match them to the element.

Stage 2: Reading

Discuss the following questions before the learners read the poem: Do you like Chips? How does their smell make you feel?

NB The main focus here is on comprehension so that learners have a clear picture of what the poem is all about. An alternative way to start is to use a picture of a pack of chips and a lady seasoning them with salt and vinegar. Elicit what the picture shows and then move on to the questions above.

Have learners read the poem silently and then discuss in pairs how it makes them feel. Facilitate a class discussion on the overall theme and emotional impact of the poem.

Text: Chips by Stanley Cook

Out of the paper bag

Comes the hot breath of the chips

And I shall blow on them

To stop them burning my lips

Before I leave the counter

The woman shakes

Raindrops of vinegar on them

And salty snowflakes

Outside the frosty pavements

Are slippery as a slide

But the chips and I

Are warm inside

Stage 3: Analysis

Break down the poem into stanzas and discuss the meaning of each stanza with the learners. Use the board to highlight examples of the poetic elements from Stage 1 found in the first stanza. Then get the learners to find the elements in the remaining stanzas. In feedback, ask the learners to justify their answers.

QUESTIONS FOR WORKSHEET

1. Who wrote the poem you have read?
2. How many stanzas does the poem have?
3. What is the weather like in the poem? Which line tells you the weather is like this?
4. Write down words that rhyme with the following from the poem:
Chips - _____
Shakes - _____
Slide - _____
5. Write down the figure of speech used in the following lines
Stanza 1, line 2 - _____
Stanza 2, line 3 - _____
6. Find the line that includes alliteration and write it down.

Stage 4: Post-reading Task

Divide the class into small groups. Assign each group a specific poetic element from the poem (e.g., one group focuses on personification, another on metaphor). Have each group create a visual representation of their assigned element using markers and papers. For example, the group that deals with comparison could make use of pictures to show two things that have been compared i.e. (rain drops and drops of vinegar; snow flakes and salt) For alliteration learners can make use of coloured pencils to highlight the repeated sounds. Let learners decide how they will do this and offer support. The groups then present their visuals to the class, explaining how their chosen element contributes to the overall meaning of the poem

Stage 5: Reflection

Ask learners to reflect on what they've learned about poetic elements and their role in conveying meaning. Discuss how the elements contribute to the emotional impact of the poem. Conclude with a brief summary of the lesson and encourage students to apply their understanding of poetic elements in the future readings.

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