Reading Focus

Objectives

Students will

- understand, analyze, and paraphrase a poem
- use a poem's form to understand its meaning

Preteach

Build Background Ask students to think about a time they heard a new song and liked it immediately. Point out that they were most likely first attracted to the song's rhyme or rhythm. Upon further listening, they might have gained an appreciation of the lyrics and details such as chord changes. Tell students that they will use a similar process to enjoy and understand poetry.

Direct Teach

Guided Practice

Reading a Poem

- Read aloud the lines from "Barbara Frietchie." Point out elements that you enjoy, such as the rhythm created by the rhymed couplets.
- Point out that phrases such as "meadows rich with corn" and "peach tree fruited deep" help the reader visualize the landscape.
- Ask students what they find appealing about these lines.

SKILLS FOCUS pp. 676–677

Reading Skills

- Use strategies to read and analyze a poem.
- Re-read to understand and analyze a poem.
- Paraphrase a poem.
- Use a poem's form to find its meaning.

Reading Focus

by **Kylene Beers**

Which Reading Skills Help You Understand Poetry?

Robert Frost said that a poem "begins in delight and ends in wisdom." As we read a poem, we delight in its rhythms, rhymes, images, and comparisons and in the story or experience it shares. Yet by the end we often find wisdom that touches us.

Reading a Poem

Poems are meant to be enjoyed as well as analyzed. Here are some tips for reading poems.

Read the poem for pleasure. Then, ask yourself why you liked it. Perhaps you liked the story or the feelings expressed. If you enjoyed the sounds, you've probably picked up on **rhyme.** If you liked the beat of the lines, you responded to the **rhythm.** If you liked the poet's unusual comparisons, you've noticed **figures of speech.** These elements of the poem help you enjoy the poem.

Notice the rhymes, rhythm, and rich **imagery**—language that appeals to the senses—in these opening lines from "Barbara Frietchie."

> Up from the meadows rich with corn,
> Clear in the cool September morn,
>
> The clustered spires of Frederick stand
> Green-walled by the hills of Maryland.
>
> Round about them orchards sweep,
> Apple and peach tree fruited deep,
>
> from "Barbara Frietchie"
> by John Greenleaf Whittier

Read the poem aloud. After you've read the poem silently a few times, read it aloud. Each poem has its own sound, which you can hear more distinctly by reading it aloud. Pay special attention to punctuation. Don't stop just because you've come to the end of a line. Stop only when there is a punctuation mark. Pause briefly at commas and dashes, and a little longer at periods.

Pay attention to each word. Poets often use few words, so each word is important. Look up any unfamiliar words. The shorter the poem, the more important each word is likely to be—like in this short poem by Alberto Forcada:

> Grandmother,
> I'm cold;
> can you knit me
> some wrinkles?
>
> "Sweater" by Alberto Forcada

Pay attention to the title. Did you notice how important the title "Sweater" is to understanding that poem? Sometimes the meaning of the poem is stated or hinted at in the title.

Resources

Collection 7 Resources, Reading Focus Skill Builder, p. 5

PowerNotes, interactive lesson presentations with activities go.hrw.com

Teacher One Stop™, on-level lesson plans and all print resources

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners/ Readers Gaining Proficiency

Help students learn the academic terms in the Reading Focus by breaking them down into their word parts.

- Write on the board the words *re-read* and *inversion*.
- Underline the prefix *re–*. Tell students that *re–* means "again." To re-read means to read again. Remind students that, often, they must re-read a poem several times to fully understand it.
- Tell students that the word *inversion* contains the root word *invert*, which means "to turn upside down." When a poet uses

Re-reading

One of the most important strategies for understanding—and enjoying—a poem is **re-reading.** You will understand some poems right away, but you will want to re-read them to enjoy their music. You will probably have no trouble following the story of "Paul Revere's Ride," but reading it over a few times, especially out loud, will help you enjoy its rhymes and rollicking rhythm.

When you re-read a poem that confuses you, think about each word and the feelings it brings up. Those feelings will be important clues to the poem's meaning.

Paraphrasing

Another useful strategy for understanding a poem is paraphrasing. You restate a line, sentence, or stanza in your own words. You also explain the figures of speech. Poets sometimes use **inversion**—that is, they put parts of their sentences in reverse order from what you are used to. When you paraphrase, you put the sentence into a familiar order. For instance, in "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket," John Keats writes

> The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
>
> from "On the Cricket and the Grasshopper" by John Keats

You might paraphrase the line as "The earth's poetry never ends." But you'll have to read the poem to understand what "the poetry of earth" is.

Using Form to Find Meaning

A poem's form can help you understand its meaning. A sonnet, like "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket," has a strict form. When you have learned the rules (as you will see on page 737), you will have a clue to figuring out the sonnet's meaning.

Other aspects of form can also help you understand a poem's meaning. In free-verse poems, such as "Ode to Thanks," the poet may use long lines as well as lines of only one word. Ask yourself why. It could be for the rhythm or the meaning—or, most likely, for both.

Your Turn Apply Reading Skills

Read this opening stanza from "Ode to Thanks":

> Thanks to the word
> that says *thanks!*
> Thanks to *thanks,*
> word
> that melts
> iron and snow!
>
> from "Ode to Thanks"
> by Pablo Neruda

1. Read the stanza aloud several times. Then, paraphrase it.
2. What does the figure of speech "word that melts iron and snow" mean?
3. Why do you think the poet puts the word *word* on its own line?

Now go to the Skills in Action: Reading Model

Learn It Online
Try the *PowerNotes* version of this lesson:
go.hrw.com L8-677 Go

Guided Practice

Reading a Poem

Model analyzing the title of "Sweater." Read the poem aloud. Tell students that without reading the title, the reader cannot be sure what the speaker wants the grandmother to knit. The title tells the reader that the speaker uses the word *wrinkles* to mean "a knitted sweater."

Paraphrasing

- Model paraphrasing the excerpt from "Barbara Frietchie." Read the lines aloud. Then, provide students with a paraphrase such as the following: "Frederick, which borders Maryland, is surrounded by farmland filled with corn and apple and peach trees."
- Tell students that paraphrasing this stanza helps the reader understand that its subject is a place called Frederick.

Assess

Independent Practice

Your Turn

Possible responses:

1. *We should appreciate the word* thanks *because its use can solve many problems.*
2. *The figure of speech means that expressing thanks can repair negative feelings.*
3. *The word* word *is on its own line to make the reader pause and reflect that* thanks *is only a word, but it has great power.*

inversion, he or she places the emphasis on certain words or phrases or makes the poem's rhythm work in a certain way.

- Write on the board the following sentences, and have students rewrite them using traditional word order:

1. Up the tree ran the cat. [*The cat ran up the tree.*]
2. The students at their desks were waiting. [*The students were waiting at their desks.*]
3. My favorite foods for dinner I requested. [*I requested my favorite foods for dinner.*]

Advanced Learners

Acceleration Have students choose a line from a poem that uses inversion. Ask students to read aloud the line and then explain the effect of the inversion. What might the poet have been hoping to achieve by the word order? Would another word order have been more effective? Ask other students to share their opinions in a class discussion.

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