Preparing to Read

A word is dead / The Word/La palabra

Literary Focus

Figures of Speech Important elements of poetry, **figures of speech** are comparisons that are not literally true.

- A **simile** compares two things using a word such as *like, as,* or *than. The moon looked like a golden coin high in the sky.*
- A **metaphor** directly compares two very different things. *The moon was a golden coin high in the sky.*
- **Personification** describes a nonhuman thing as if it were human. *The moon smiled down from high in the sky.*

TechFocus As you read, think about sounds and images to use for a multimedia presentation of a similar poem of your own.

Reading Focus

Re-reading Almost no one can read a poem once and understand it fully. Read poems several times to understand and appreciate the artistry that went into writing them.

Into Action As you read each poem, use a chart like the one below to track what you discover on each reading.

	A word is dead
1st reading (for pleasure)	This is a simple poem about words.
2nd reading (study word choices)	
3rd reading (my analysis)	

Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

Find It in Your Reading As you read the poems, note in your *Reader/Writer Notebook* the figures of speech the poets use.

Reader/Writer Notebook

Use your **RWN** to complete the activities for these selections.

Language Coach

Language Conventions When reading poetry, be aware that poets often leave out punctuation marks from their poems. Look at the following stanza from "A word is dead."

> A word is dead
> When it is said,
> Some say.

When you read the stanza, think of it as if it had the following punctuation:

> "A word is dead
> when it is said,"
> some say.

As you read the poems that follow, try re-punctuating them to help you understand their meaning. Also look for any words the poets may have deliberately left out of their poems, and mentally fill them in.

Learn It Online

Listen to these poems at:

go.hrw.com L8-697 Go

SKILLS FOCUS pp. 671–701

Literary Skills
- Understand and analyze figures of speech.
- Analyze imagery.

Reading Skills
- Re-read to understand and analyze a poem.

Writing Skills
- Write to express.

Preteach

Language Coach

Model reading aloud "A word is dead." Tell students that it is natural to pause after a complete thought, even when there is no punctuation. Explain that noting these pauses can help students re-punctuate poems as they read.

Literary Focus

As they read the poems, have students note examples of figures of speech.

Reading Focus

Give students a copy of the Reading Focus graphic organizer (**Collection 7 Resources**). Have them use their responses to answer the questions on the Applying Your Skills page.

Writing Focus

As they read, have students note figures of speech in their **Reader/Writer Notebooks**.

Learn It Online

The online version of these selections includes audio support to engage all students and to help readers gaining proficiency with reading comprehension and vocabulary. Preview at **go.hrw.com**.

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Selection Introduction

More About the Writers

- After **Emily Dickinson's** death in 1886, the poems in her poetry booklets were rearranged in the order chosen by the publishers. Some of the editors re-punctuated her lines to eliminate her trademark dashes. In 1981, however, the original pages were studied closely for markings such as smudges or needle marks from where Dickinson had sewn them together. At last, the poems were presented in the order Dickinson had intended.
- **Manuel Ulacia**, in addition to being a poet and professor, was a critic, editor, and translator.

Think About the Writers

Have students make generalizations about characteristics that many poets share (for example, they share a love of the written word). Ask students whether these generalizations might apply to Dickinson and Ulacia.

For Independent Reading

- If students are interested in reading more about Emily Dickinson, suggest *Emily Dickinson: A Biography (American Literary Greats)* by Milton Meltzer.
- For students interested in reading and analyzing more of Emily Dickinson's poetry, suggest *A Student's Guide to Emily Dickinson* by Audrey Borus.

Learn It Online

Additional high-interest information about Dickinson, including maps, timelines, and activities is available online. Preview at **go.hrw.com**.

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MEET THE WRITERS

Learn It Online

Examine Dickinson's life at:

go.hrw.com L8-698 Go



Emily Dickinson

(1830–1886)

"Letter to the World"

Although today Emily Dickinson is one of the most respected poets in the world, her work was almost completely unknown during her lifetime. Dickinson led an extremely private life in her family home in Amherst, Massachusetts. After she died, her sister Lavinia discovered the poems—almost eighteen hundred of them—that Dickinson had gathered into handmade booklets. Dickinson said that her poems were her "letter to the world" that never wrote to her.

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Manuel Ulacia

(1954–2001)

Professor and Poet

Manuel Ulacia studied both architecture and literature. He went on to become a professor at Yale University and also taught at Mexico City's Universidad Autónoma. In addition to his own poetry, Ulacia studied and wrote about the work of his mentor, Octavio Paz, a Nobel Prize–winning Latin American poet and essayist.

Think About the Writers Dickinson led a private life; Ulacia taught at universities. What did they have in common?

Preview the Selections

In a "A word is dead" the speaker contrasts her beliefs about language with what other people think.

In "The Word" the speaker uses comparisons to tell readers what a word is like.

Selection Readability	
Easily Accessible **Accessible** Challenging	These poems are short and have a singular focus and concise images.
Lexile	**N/A**

Selection Summaries

In "A word is dead," the speaker expresses faith in the power of words, contradicting the popular view that words are gone once spoken. "The Word/La palabra" describes the writing process as mysterious and surprising.