**Poetry from Daily Life: Laura Robb explains how to develop a poetry habit, all year long**

By Laura Robb

*This week’s guest is Laura Robb, who lives in Winchester, Virginia. A longtime teacher and author, Laura’s first book was published in 1994. She is widely known for her educational books about reading and writing. Two that she especially liked working on were "Teaching Reading in Middle School" (Scholastic, 2010) and "Promote Reading Gains With Differentiated Instruction" (Shell Education, 2023). A unique fact about Laura Robb is that she’s always at work on a 1,000 piece jigsaw puzzle. ~ David L. Harrison*

**Poetry all year long**

Early in my teaching career, I discovered that my students developed a love of poetry because poetry is part of my reading/writing curriculum throughout the year. Our poetry journey starts when I visit the school library and stack about seventy-five anthologies, collections, and picture books onto a cart that I wheel into our classroom. I invite students to browse through several books and then choose two to four to read and savor. The only sounds are students whisper-reading and spontaneously sharing a poem with a classmate. This is the opening scene of a yearlong exploration of poetry. The suggestions that follow can help you integrate poetry into your curriculum all year, so that poetry becomes an important part of children’s literary lives!

1. Read-aloud poetry and introduce students to the language of imagery and feeling, to diverse poets, figurative language, rhythms-and-rhymes, and narrative and lyric poetry. Start your day reading-aloud a poem, read–aloud a poem to transition to different subjects and when students return from recess. At the end of the day, send students home with a poem you have choral read with them singing in their hearts and minds.

2. Engage students in poet studies where they read several books by a poet they choose and use the internet to learn about their lives. Invite students to develop a plan for sharing with the class favorite poems and what they know about their poet.

3. Plant a poetry garden. Each spring, my students would print a favorite poem on paper, decorate it, staple the poem to a wooden stick and plant it. Invite other classes to explore the poetry garden and add their “poetry plants.”

4. Keep a poetry notebook. In addition to writing original poems in their notebooks, students can copy beloved poems to reread again and again, create illustrated anthologies of favorites, note lines and stanzas of a poem that touched them deeply. Every four to six weeks, students can share a notebook entry with a small group and/or the class, explaining why the poem or excerpt is important to them.

5. Design bookmarks and write a favorite poem on the bookmark. Students can give these to family members and friends as gifts and use them to mark their place while reading.

6. Connect poetry to content subjects. Read-aloud poems about math, science, history, and geography. Invite students to find poems for these subjects and share them with you and the class.

7. Practice reading and performing poems increases fluency and expressive reading. Have students choose a poem, practice reading it aloud to a partner, and them volunteer to perform it after several days of practice. While students develop fluent reading, they also improve their comprehension of the poem and enlarge their vocabulary.

Poet Beatrice Schenk de Regniers encouraged children and adults to keep a poem in their pocket, and the poem will sing to them, paint pictures in their imagination, and become a friend that’s always in their hearts and minds. That can happen when students experience poetry all year long!

*Laura Robb has taught and coached teachers for more than forty-five years! She continues to teach and coach, present webinars, and is presently learning with a seventh grade English teacher. Author of more than forty books on literacy, Robb received NCTE's Richard Halle Award for excellence in middle school education, Scholastic’s Hero Award for outstanding support of teachers, and the Literacy Leader award from Nassau County Reading Council. Her most recent book, co-authored with David L. Harrison and Dr. Timothy Rasinski is "Promote Reading Gains with Differentiated Instruction" (Shell 2023).*