

Power Point Poems

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Program Overview

PowerPoint Poems bring together poetry, design, and technology. They offer students new ways to respond to poetry, to interact with it, and, best of all, to play with it.

In this program, students select a favorite published poem or a poem of their own, and they present it, line by line, as a multi-media slide show. They use images, colors, sounds, and creatively positioned and choreographed text to create their displays. In doing this, they study a poem in depth, determine its meaning, and work towards conveying and enhancing that meaning with their design choices.

Target Grade Level

Grades 7 and 8, though it would be appropriate, with modifications, for students from grades 6-12.

Major Goals

This project assumes no familiarity with PowerPoint, and little familiarity with computers beyond basic word processing. For students with more experience, the learning goals should be modified.

Upon completing this project, students will be able to:

- Use the design features of the PowerPoint program to create slide shows. Specifically, they will be able to perform the following tasks, which translate to other design and word processing software:
 - Draw shapes
 - Insert clip art and other images
 - Move and resize shapes and images
 - Change background colors and textures
 - Change fonts, font sizes, and colors
 - Send objects backward and forward
 - Use the animation tool
 - Use the slide transition tool
 - Set timings for the slide show
- Discuss the meaning of their chosen poem, and explain how their design decisions relate to the poem's meaning (and sound/rhythm).
- Constructively critique the design decisions of others.

Timeline:

Six one-hour sessions in a computer lab. These could happen once per week, as I have done, or more often.

Types of Assessment Used

- **Peer Evaluation:** Each student shares his or her project with the class periodically, and constructive critiques are given.
- **Self Evaluation:** Students assess their own process and product at the end of the unit.
- **Teacher Evaluation:** Students receive a grade on their projects, both for their process (use of computer lab time, and use of feedback) and for the final product.

Lesson Plans

The six lessons that follow are one hour each, and take place, ideally, in a computer lab. They are structured in the "writing workshop" format:

1. Mini-lesson introducing new skills
2. Work time
3. Sharing

Depending on the ability of your students, you may choose to introduce fewer skills per day, or more skills.

The first lesson requires a lot of advance preparation, but much less is required in the lessons that follow, as students become more and more independent.

Lesson 1 (1 hour)

Objectives:

- To introduce the assignment
- To teach basic PowerPoint skills, including how to:
 - Start a new slide show
 - Create a text object and choose fonts and font colors
 - Move and resize the text object
 - Format a "custom background" (choosing color, texture, pattern, etc)
 - Create a new slide
 - Present a slide show

Advance Preparation:

- Create a sample PowerPoint poem (or have a student example from a previous semester/year available).
- Create a short slide show that introduces the project, with the words "Welcome to PowerPoint Poems" and "You are going to take a simple poem and make it sing, dance, run, and fly on a screen. You'll choose colors and pictures to work your poem. You'll show off the poem's best features, and you'll add new features that the poet never imagined. Good luck."
- Make copies of the poem used in the example (in its original print form)
- Create a single sheet of suggested poems for this project. They can be short and rhymed (as I often use), or related to the language arts curriculum.

Materials required:

- A computer (with Microsoft PowerPoint) for each student involved (or, you may choose to have the students work in pairs).
- Copies of the example poem and the suggested poem sheet.

The above are all you really need. In an ideal world, you would also have the following:

- *Internet access for each computer, so students can search for clip art and sounds.*
- *A demo computer for the teacher. Ideally this would be equipped with a large television screen monitor, but if this is not available, you can make do (very easily with a small group) by having students gather around one computer.*

- *An area away from the computers where students can sit for discussions. My computer lab has a large meeting table in the middle. With a small-enough group, though, this is not necessary.*

Vocabulary:

- **enhance:** "How does this presentation enhance the meaning of the poem?"
- **text object:** A name for a block containing words, which can be moved around the screen.

Procedure:

1. Introduce new assignment, "PowerPoint Poems." Show brief teaser slide show on teacher's demo computer, or have students gather around one of the student's computers.
2. Read example poem aloud (in my case it was "Dream Deferred" by Langston Hughes, is studied as part of our seventh grade curriculum). Ask for student volunteers to define difficult words like "deferred" and "fester" from context.
3. Show demo PowerPoint poem twice. On the second time through, ask students to look for ways that the presentation "helps" or "enhances" the poem, or makes the meaning of the poem clearer.
4. Discuss the ways the poem is enhanced by the presentation. Comments for mine usually included:
 - The line 'And then run' actually runs;
 - "Maybe it sags like a heavy load" actually sags;
 - "Or does it explode" explodes;
 - The first slide is a different color than the others because it asks the question, and the others are possible answers;
 - "Or does it explode" is the exciting part, and it is the only part with sound in the presentation, to give it more emphasis.
5. Tell students that today they will do a "practice slide show" so they can learn the PowerPoint program, and, starting next session, they will begin work on their poems. Students then go to their computers and are shown where to find the PowerPoint program.
6. They start the program, and, when prompted, select "New Presentation." From the array of templates, they choose the one with a single line of text (no graphs or bullet lists for this project! Maybe explain to students the typical uses of this program at this point.) Students then type their full names into the **text object**.
7. Show students how to change fonts, font sizes and font colors (using toolbar buttons

and/or through **Format** menu). Make sure students realize that they must "highlight" (make black) the letters for these changes to take effect.

8. Show students how to move the text object around the screen, and how to change its size.

9. Show students the variety of "**Custom Backgrounds**" available. (Select these from the **Format** menu). Make sure students realize that they have to choose background colors that do not obscure their text (i.e., a black background and dark blue text doesn't work).

10. Now, have students click the "**New Slide**" button in the lower right hand corner, and create a new slide using the same "single line of text" template that they used before. (Note: Steps 11-13 serve as a review).

11. On this new slide, they should type in a single piece of information about themselves, such as: "likes the color red"; "was born on December 5"; "likes chocolate ice cream" (or, inevitably, "loves the Backstreet Boyz")

12. Again, walk them through font, font size, and font color, and positioning the text on the screen.

13. Have them choose an appropriate background.

14. Have students save their slide shows.

15. Press the slide show button in the lower-left-hand corner and watch their slide shows. (They will have to manually advance the slides by clicking their mouse buttons)

16. Have the students share their results with their neighbors.

17. Give **homework assignment**: Give students a sheet with some suggested poems. Tell them to read these, and consider using one of them. They may also bring their own favorite poem, or a poem that they have written, for next session. Remind students of this assignment at least once before the next session.

Lesson 2 (1 hour)

Objectives:

- To teach more PowerPoint skills, including how to:
 - Open an existing presentation
 - Use the "slide sorter" view to look at the entire presentation
 - Animate text
 - Adjust direction of animation
 - Adjust sounds associated with animation
- Plan PowerPoint poems using a planning sheet.

Advance Preparation:

- Make additional copies of the suggested poems in case kids have lost them.
- Copy presentation planning sheet.

Materials required:

- Computer lab as previously described
- PowerPoint presentation planning sheet
- Suggested poem sheet

Vocabulary:

- **animate:** To "bring to life" (to make text or objects move)

Procedure:

1. Students go immediately to their computers and start PowerPoint. They then open their presentations from last session.
2. Students are now in the "Slide Sorter" view. Show students how to navigate between views using the buttons in the lower-left-hand corner.
3. Returning to slide sorter view, they double-click on their second slide.
4. They click on the animation **star** button to reveal the **animation toolbar**.
5. They click on the text, then choose an **animation effect**.
6. They then press the "**slide show**" button in the lower left corner.
7. They watch their newly animated slide show.
8. Returning to the second slide, they choose other animation effects.

9. Once they have arrived at the effect they like, they are shown how to adjust the direction of the animation. (The **directions/timing/sounds button** on the animation tool bar).
10. Once they have chosen their direction, they are shown how to adjust sounds.
11. Students save and share presentations with their neighbors. (Or, if there is time, you may choose to have a full-class sharing session).
12. Students take out "suggested poems" sheet and come to center table (or remain at their computers, depending on lab set up). Going around the table, we read aloud the poems the students have selected.
13. Students are given **presentation planning sheets**. They are shown the teacher's planning sheet for the example ("Dream Deferred") presentation. They spend the rest of the period planning their presentations. They are told the requirements for their first slide (poem title and author) and last slide ("presented by"). If there is time, some may start on the computers.

Homework assignment: Complete planning sheets.

Lesson 3 (1 hour)

Objectives:

- To begin designing PowerPoint poems.
- To review PowerPoint skills learned in lessons 1 and 2, and to add the following skills:
 - How to create a new text object/text box
 - How to add a graphic
 - How to draw a shape

Advance Preparation: None

Materials Required: Just the lab, maybe some spare planning and suggested poem sheets.

Procedure:

1. Students start PowerPoint, and begin a **new presentation**.
2. Everyone begins the first slide by choosing the template with the single line of text, filling in the poem's title, and adjusting fonts and backgrounds.

3. To add the author's name, they are shown how to create a new text object, by clicking and dragging the mouse to form a box, then typing the poet's name. They adjust font colors, sizes, etc.
4. Show students how to add a graphic by choosing a clip art file (from the **"Insert"** menu)
5. Show students how to draw shapes, using the **"Drawing"** Tool Bar. (Show them how to display the Drawing Tool Bar by using the **"View"** menu).
6. Students then have the rest of the period to create slides. The teacher moves around, offering assistance and feedback.
7. At the end of the session, the teacher asks for volunteers to share. Teacher models how to give constructive feedback, then asks students for comments.

Lesson 4 (1 hour):

Objectives:

- To continue designing poems
- To review PowerPoint skills learned in lessons 1-3, and to add the following:
 - How to create transitions between slides.

1. Students start PowerPoint and open their presentations.
2. They each choose their second slides, then, from the **"Tools"** menu, they choose **"Slide Transition"**
3. They each choose a transition effect.
4. Selecting their first slide, they press the **slide show** button in the lower left corner and watch their slide show with the new transitions.
5. Students then have the rest of the period to work on their presentations. The teacher moves around, offering assistance and feedback.
6. At the end of the session, the teacher asks for volunteers to share. Teacher models how to give constructive feedback, then asks students for comments.
7. Students are told that they have only another half of a period to complete their projects. If they need more time, they are to come in during lunch or after school.

Homework: Work on project, if needed.

Lesson 5 (1 hour):

Objectives:

- To finish designing poems
- To constructively critique peers' projects

Advance Preparation:

- Make copies of peer response sheet

Materials Required:

- Peer response sheet

Vocabulary:

- **Constructive Feedback:** Comments that are positive, intended to help the designer make improvements, not insult the work or hurt feelings.

Procedure:

1. Students immediately get to work. They have 30 minutes to complete their presentations.
2. Convene group; show students the feedback form. Give example of how to fill it out, using one student's project.
3. Students are given partners; they switch computers and fill out forms.
4. Students then meet with partners and share feedback. At the end of class, tell students they will have 15 minutes at the start of the next class to make any last minute changes.

Homework Assignment: Come in after school or during lunch to make changes, if more time is desired.

Lesson 6 (1 hour):

Objectives:

- To make any last-minute revisions
- To set slide timings
- To share and celebrate the completed projects

Advance Preparation:

- Make copies of self-evaluation form

Materials Required:

- Self-evaluation form

Procedure:

1. Students immediately get to work. They have 15 minutes to complete their presentations. Those who are finished can spend their time creating or embellishing their final slide, the "presented by" slide.
2. After this, students move to the slide sorter view. They click the stopwatch **"Set Slide Timings"** button, and move through their slide shows at the rate they want it to go.
3. They then choose **"Slide Show"** from the **"View"** menu and choose "Use slide timings"
4. The whole class then takes turns sharing and offering positive feedback. Celebrate! You may choose to do this in full writing workshop style, with food, drink, invitations...

Homework Assignment: Students fill out self-evaluation form.

Evaluation/Assessment:

Students are graded on both their **process** and their **product**. See forms in the next section.

The student's self-evaluation is a narrative form. This is to help the teacher decide if the student was designing thoughtfully and purposefully to "enhance" the poem's message (or some may use the design to "contrast" also).

Teachers may also want to give students an exact copy of the score form and have them score themselves.

Follow-up Activities:

1. If possible, at the end of the last session, or during another session, students from other classes can be invited into the lab to have a look at the slide shows.
2. Students can be allowed to use PowerPoint to present their next research project.
3. Students can use PowerPoint to publish their own poems in Writing Workshop.

Sample Worksheets and Evaluation Materials

The following pages include:

- 1) Suggested poems
- 2) Presentation planning sheet
- 3) Peer response sheet
- 4) Self-evaluation sheet
- 5) Final evaluation sheet

Suggested Poems

Animal Poems by Ogden Nash:

The Hippopotamus

Behold the hippopotamus
We laugh at how he looks to us
And yet in moments dank and grim
I wonder how we look to him.
Peace, peace, thou hippopotamus!
We really look all right to us,
As you no doubt delight the eye
Of other hippopotami.

The Panther

The panther is like a leopard,
Except it hasn't been peppered.
Should you behold a panther crouch,
Prepare to say Ouch.
Better yet, if called by a panther,
Don't anther.

The Rhinoceros

The rhino is a homely beast,
For human eyes he's not a feast.
Farewell, farewell, you old rhinoceros,
I'll stare at something less prepoceros.

The Lion

Oh, weep for Mr. and Mrs. Bryan!
He was eaten by a lion;
Following which, the lion's lioness
Up and swallowed Bryan's Bryanness.

By Gwendolyn Brooks:

We Real Cool

The Pool Players.
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die Soon.

By Langston Hughes:
(1902-1967)

Island (1959)

Wave of sorrow,
Do not drown me now;

I see the island
Still ahead somehow.

I see the island
And its sands are fair:

Wave of sorrow,
Take me there.

Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore--
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over--
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

By Stephen Crane:
(1871-1900)

The Heart (1895)

In the desert
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,
Who, squatting upon the ground,
Held his heart in his hands,
And ate of it.

I said, "Is it good, friend?"
"It is bitter -- bitter," he answered;
"But I like it
Because it is bitter,
And because it is my heart."

**Choose one of these-- or bring
in a copy of your own favorite
published poem, or a poem
that you have written.**

Presentation Planning Sheet

Name _____

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Peer Response Sheet

Name _____

Name of Designer _____

1. What do you like about this presentation? List specific aspects that you like.

2. In what ways does the presentation "enhance" the poem?

3. What could the designer add to this presentation to make it better?

4. What could the designer remove from the presentation to make it better?

Self-Evaluation Sheet

Name _____

1. How does your presentation enhance the poem? Explain some of your design decisions and how they relate to the poem's meaning, or its sound and rhythm.

2. List some ways that you used feedback from your peers and the teacher. Give specific examples!

3. Did you have any trouble meeting deadlines? Why?

4. What are your presentation's strengths?

PowerPoint Poem Evaluation

Name _____

Process:

Use of computer lab time /10
(Did you stay focused on the task?)

Use of feedback /10
(Does the presentation incorporate feedback?)

Homework assignments complete /10

Project completed on time /10

Total /40

Product:

First and last slides meet requirements /10

Design makes it easy to read text /10
(Text is not too small or hidden by colors or graphics)

Slide show is paced appropriately /10
(Timings are not too quick or too slow)

Design "enhances" poem in creative ways /30

Total /40

Bonus: Student added own graphic +
or sound files, or scanned in own pictures...

TOTAL /100

Resources

I. Software

A. One copy of Microsoft Office (which includes PowerPoint) costs roughly \$400 for an individual computer. To outfit an entire lab, see if your school or school district has (or can get) the appropriate license.

B. If students want to show their friends and parents their displays, but don't have PowerPoint at home, they can download a free **PowerPoint Viewer** from Microsoft at the following URL:

<http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/2000/downloadDetails/Ppview97.htm>

C. Another software option, for those who do not have PowerPoint:

ClarisWorks Poems: Many schools in New York City have ClarisWorks (on Project Smart computers). This software has a slideshow option. You can even use it to create your own animations, frame by frame. This may be a good alternative for schools without the MS Office bundle.

II. On-line

A. Free clip art and sounds

Chances are, your kids will have graphic and sound needs beyond the MS Office gallery. To accommodate these, if your computers have Internet access (or even if just one of them does), show the kids how to search for clip art and sounds on-line. Good spots:

1. The Microsoft gallery is regularly updated, and includes all sorts of sounds, from "throaty quacks" to "a long cow moo"....

<http://cgl.microsoft.com/clipgallerylive/default.asp?nEULA=1&nInterface=0>

2. For a menu of many clip art galleries:

www.clipart.com

Or, search AskJeeves (www.ask.com) for "clip art"

3. Other good clip art galleries:

www.Clip-art.com
www.barrysclipart.com
www.free-clip-art.net

4. I show this to kids as part of another project, but you may want to add to this project a lesson on copying images from the internet, using the right mouse button.

B. PowerPoint tutorial

There are a couple of free PowerPoint tutorials on-line. The following is from a course given at the University of Rhode Island (using PowerPoint for Mac). It may be of use if you don't already know PowerPoint.

<http://einstein.cs.uri.edu/tutorials/csc101/powerpoint/ppt.html>

C. Collecting Suggested Poems

I love "Ask.com." Search under "poems" or for your poet of choice there (or on any search engine). Here are some results, for Countee Cullen, Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson:

<http://www.nku.edu/~diesmanj/cullen.html>
<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/rp/authors/dickn.html>
<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/rp/authors/frost.html>

Note: two of the above sites are from the University of Toronto's "Representative Poetry On-line" which contains 2,200 English poems by over 340 poets. It is searchable by poet & poem, and it contains other interesting resources, like a timeline of poets and a glossary of poetic terms. It can be found at:

<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/rp/intro.html>

III. Books

A. For PowerPoint (there are **many**, including some on CD. Search Amazon.com)

PowerPoint for Dummies (for '97 or 2000) by Doug Lowe
Microsoft® PowerPoint® 2000 Bible by Faithe Wempen, Don Roche
10 Minute Guide to Powerpoint 97 by Faithe Wempen
Advantage Series: Microsoft PowerPoint 2000 by Sarah E. Hutchinson

B. Poems

I like short, rhyming poems for this project. Ogden Nash is one of my favorites. Here is a good edition of his works:

Selected Poetry of Ogden Nash: 650 Rhymes, Verses, Lyrics and Poems.
New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 1995.

You may also choose to use short forms like limericks or haiku. A good haiku collection is:

Haiku, This Other World by Richard Wright. New York: Little, Brown, 1988.

I also like some of the poems in this anthology:

An Introduction to Poetry by X.J. Kennedy. New York, Harper Collins, 1990.

Examples of Student Work

I chose the following examples because they exemplify the variety of results. They are all the work of 8th graders.

A. This is Lauren's project. She chose to use her own poem, as was a common choice among the eighth graders. The seventh graders stuck to the poems I provided, with only one exception (and that was someone who brought in a favorite published poem). Most of the eighth graders' poems were identity declarations like this one.

B. Quintin chose to use the Langston Hughes poem on the "Suggested Poems" sheet. He used lots of graphics and animation, and he divided up the lines in interesting ways. It is important to stress to students that they can spread a single line across several screens if they feel emphasis is needed on certain words.

C. Ronald and Jeremiah also chose one of my "Suggested Poems." The beauty of this project is, unfortunately, lost on paper. They used the animation to bring in words with a rhythm that perfectly matched the poem.

D. Glenny used "We Real Cool." Her use of graphics was outstanding.

E. This is the example I used as a model at the start of the project.

Appendix

For those who do not know PowerPoint, you may find that these screenshots are useful visuals as you read through the lesson plans.

They correspond to lessons 1, 2, and 4.