

Image Grammar  
Chapter 4—Teaching Voice  
Strategy #4 “Imitate Poetic Sentences”

**Intro/Overview:**

Students can learn some very important grammar lessons and/or writing skills via the imitation of published works. (However, there is a fine line between imitation and plagiarism, so all students should be made acutely aware of these differences.) When used correctly, imitation can help guide a student through a process of writing they might otherwise find difficult, e.g. writing poetry. The overall goal is to take the student from a point of imitation to a point of creation.

**Procedure:**

1. Give some background of poem: **(teacher)**

Gregory Orr was twelve years old when he shot and killed his younger brother Peter. It was a hunting accident (he didn't know that Peter was right behind him) but it stained his life—to the point that eight years later he contemplated taking his own life.

2. Read poem “Litany” by Gregory Orr aloud **(student or teacher)**
3. Talk about syllable count, rhyme scheme and number of lines **(teacher & students)**
  - A. comment on tricks to obtain a correct syllable count
  - B. have students do this in pairs
4. Talk about plagiarism and how to avoid it **(teacher)**
5. Give 5 minutes for class to write their own first stanza **(students)**
6. Go around the room and share first stanzas **(students)**
7. Talk about descriptive words, not necessarily adjectives, and have students add these to stanza **(teacher)**

**Modifications:**

1. Go more in depth with poetic terms
  - a. Foot, simile, metaphor, etc.
  - b. Iambic pentameter
2. Pick a more structured poem **(see back of handout for poems)**
  - a. “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” by Dylan Thomas
    - i. Villanelle (strict format)
    - ii. Repeating Refrains
    - iii. Set syllable count/rhyme scheme
  - b. “Metaphors” by Sylvia Plath
    - i. Line count (9 lines)
    - ii. Syllable count (9 syllables)
    - iii. Title (has 9 letters)
    - iv. Riddle (can also reinforce deductive reasoning)
3. Have students finish the poem
  - a. Peer editing
  - b. Large group response
  - c. Model 5 step Writing Process
4. May want to use a shorter, simpler poem depending on the age level
  - a. Mother Goose rhymes are great!
  - b. Have students write a new ending to the “story” (e.g. “The Queen of Hearts”)

**Grammar Skills Reinforced:**

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. Word choice         | 4. Poetic terms and applying them to writing |
| 2. Word order/syntax   | 5.   |
| 3. The Writing Process | 6.   |

**Do Not Go Gentle Into that Good Night—1951**  
**Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)**

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught, and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me know with your fierce tears, I pray  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

---

**Metaphors**  
by Sylvia Plath

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,  
An elephant, a ponderous house,  
A melon strolling on two tendrils.  
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!  
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.  
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.  
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.  
I've eaten a bag of green apples,  
Boarded the train there's no getting off.