

Make a table
tent with your
name and role.
Thank you!



NativeLit



Poetry in the Elementary Native Lit Classroom: Accessing the Joy of Language through Play

January 5, 2026

Presenter:

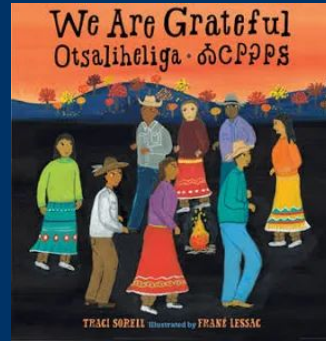
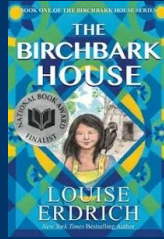
Sarah Caldwell, Teacher Designer, APS Zia Elementary School



Agenda Flow

- **Welcome and Setting the Stage** (5 minutes)
- **Part 1: What is Poetry?** (10 minutes)
- **Part 2: Joyful Close Readings** (20 minutes)
- **Part 3 Introducing Ourselves through Poetry** (15 minutes)
- **Part 4: Playing in Poetry Centers** (30 minutes)
- **Closing** (5 minutes)

Why Native Lit for Sarah?



Developing and localizing Native Literature units allows educators to create a vibrant, living curriculum for and with students. As teachers and designers, we can connect with new (and old!) literature by indigenous authors in a way that fosters our own creativity and inspires students to see the world and academic goals in new ways. Students who are “drivers” rather than “passengers” in their educational experience have better academic and mental health outcomes, and we have the power to make this happen in classrooms that center Native Literature and student voice.

Imagine what our children will do because of Native Lit.

New Grade 4 Curriculum

NATIVE LITERATURE & HISTORY PROGRAM DESIGN **4th GRADE YEARLONG**

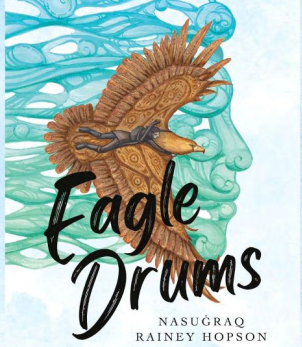


4th GRADE
Native Literature Scholar

**IDENTITY
EMPOWERMENT
EQUITY AND
JUSTICE**

BIG IDEAS

NATIVE LITERATURE PROGRAM DESIGN **4TH GRADE**



UNIT 1 Apprenticeship

NATIVE LITERATURE PROGRAM DESIGN **4TH GRADE**

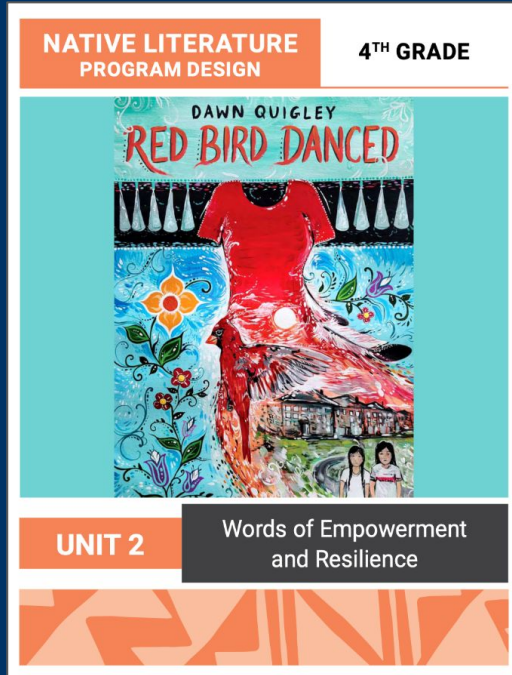


UNIT 2 Words of Empowerment and Resilience

Grade 4

- New units and texts!
- Increased teacher and student materials, extension activities and options.

Unit 2 incorporates a deep dive into reading and writing poetry



This unit features:

- *Red Bird Danced*, a novel in verse by Dawn Quigley, Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe
- Routines that engage students in close readings of poetry
- Poetry rotations that allow students to “play” with language in a low-stakes environment

Transfer Statement

I want my students to create art and writing inspired by their identities so that in the long run, on their own, they can benefit from the experience of self-reflection and self-expression in ways that support their resilience.

In this unit, students will create a portfolio of art and writing and share a selected work(s) at an open mic event.



NATIVE LITERATURE PROGRAM DESIGN

4th GRADE - **UNIT 2**

STAGE 2



Performance Assessment

[Use GRASPS](#)

Guidance document: [UbD Long term Transfer Goals](#) (McTigue)

Goal:

You will create an identity portfolio containing several different text structures and artistic pieces that relate to your identity. Required elements in the identity portfolio will include: 1) a poem, 2) an autobiographical profile (two paragraphs), 3) a personal narrative, and 4) a student created artwork (photograph, painting, drawing, digital or multimedia artwork, a traditional art such as beading or pottery, a song, a dance, etc.). You will read the genres of poetry, biographical writing, and personal narrative and consider how all of these structures of writing allow authors to express themselves and perspectives in different ways.

Role:

You are a creator - an artist and writer. You will play with language and a variety of text structures as you express your experiences, identity, and perspectives in different ways. What do you value? What are you passionate about? What do you think is beautiful, funny, or interesting?

Table Talk:

**How do you feel
about teaching
poetry reading
and writing?**

(Share your name,
organization, and
community affiliation
along with your
response.)



Jot Thoughts

1. **Prompt:** What are possible characteristics of poetry?
2. Think time!
3. **Jot Thoughts:** The person nearest to the east side of the room starts and states/writes a characteristic of poetry on a scrap of paper, then lays this in the center of the table. Rotate around the group.
4. **No repeats!** Every group member should jot at least one thought but may pass on subsequent turns if needed.
5. **No judgment!** This is a brainstorming activity.



CONDENSED LANGUAGE

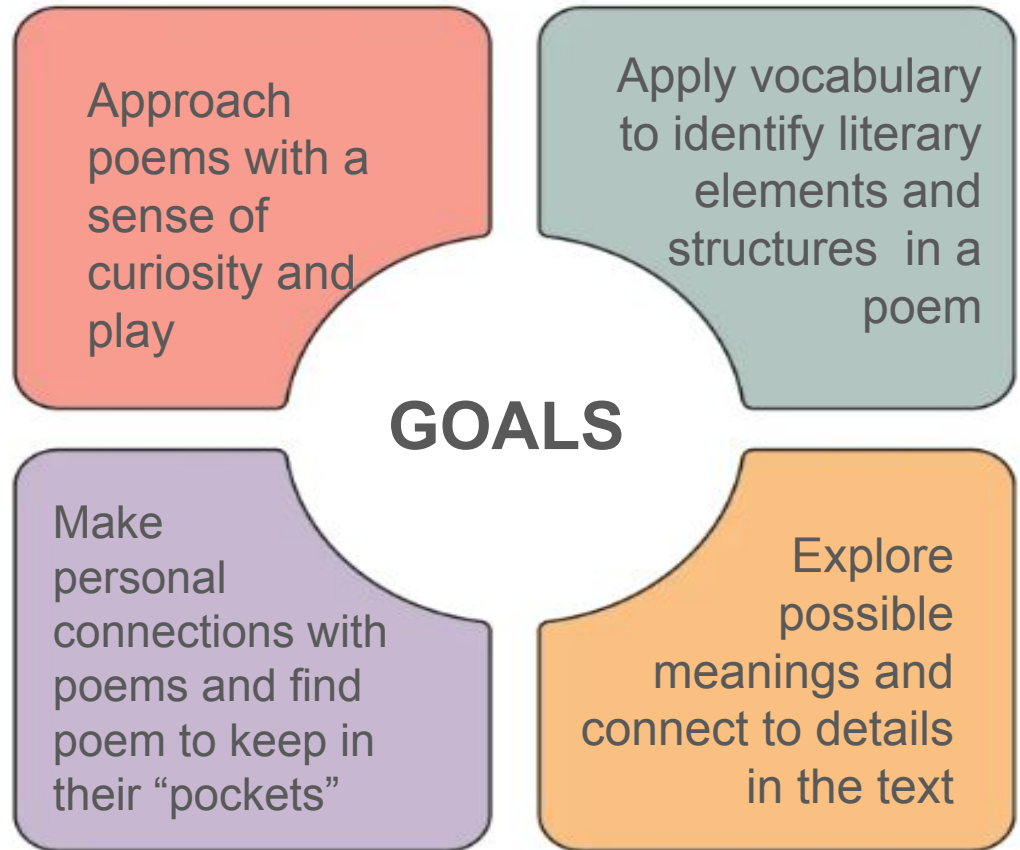
**DIFFERENT/ FLEXIBLE
RULES**

Which Grade 4 Standards Address Poetry?

RL.4.3: Determine the theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

RL.4.5: Explain the major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g. verse, rhythm, meter) and dramas when speaking or writing about a text.

Using the Standards as a starting point for poetry unit goals, I want my students to



How is poetry is interconnected with other art forms?

Rainy Ortiz

- Acoma Pueblo and Mvskoke/ Creek Nation
- Born in Albuquerque in 1973
- Beadwork artist



Let's take a closer look at this poem.

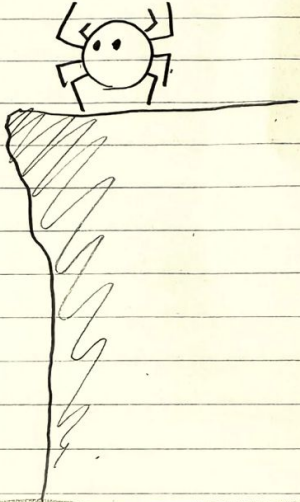
1. Circle rhyming words
2. Underline repeating words
3. Box descriptive language (imagery, figurative language, interesting words, sensory details)
4. Number the lines
5. Bracket the stanzas (groups of lines)
6. Annotate your thinking about the poem - what do you notice?
7. Below the poem, respond to the following questions.
 - a. What is the subject of the poem?
 - b. What is the author trying to say about the subject?
 - c. What does the poem mean?

**We can make close reading
more play through or Poetry
Comics or Visible Thinking
Routines.**

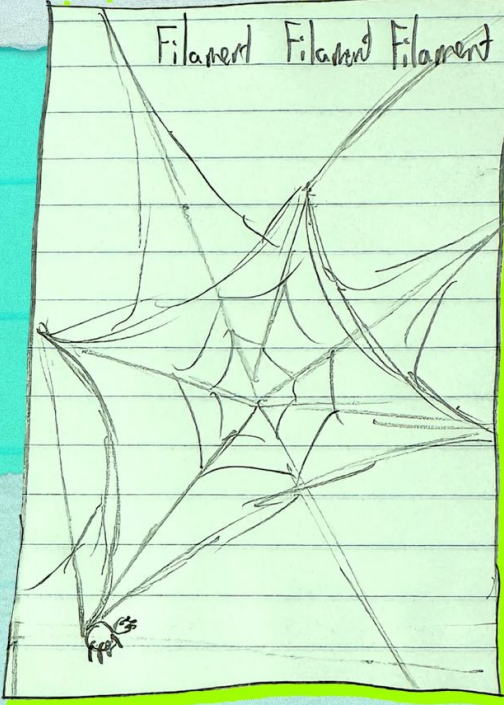
A Noiseless Patient Spider

By - Walt Whitman

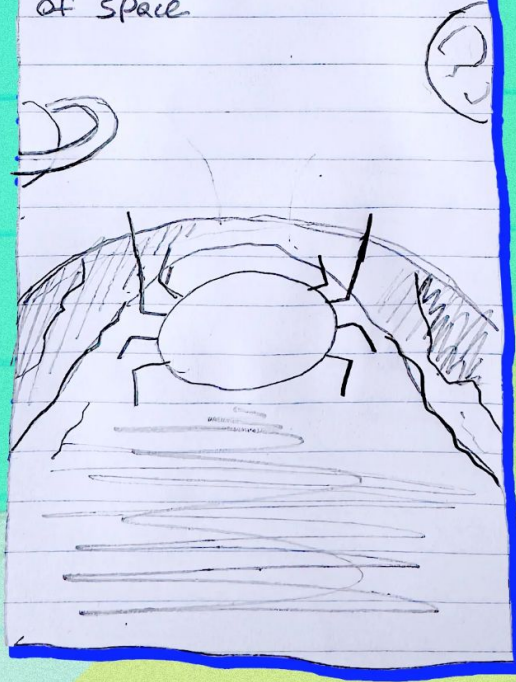
little promontory it stood
isolated



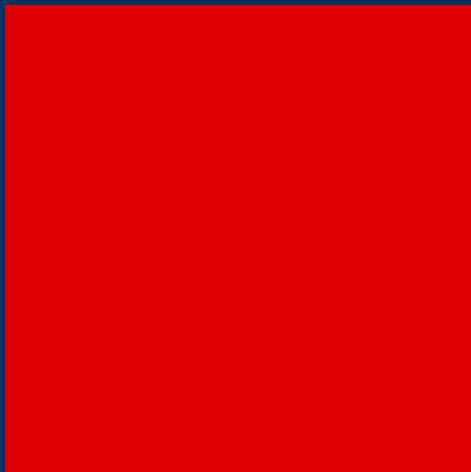
Filament Filament Filament



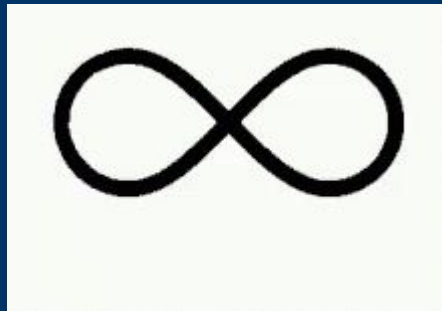
In measureless oceans
of space



Color



Symbol



Image



“Everyday It Is Always There” by Rainy Ortiz

Everyday it is always there

Whether in mind or body

Whether I want it to be or not -

Sometimes it's like being haunted

By a constant presence

Of sometimes happiness

Sometimes anger -

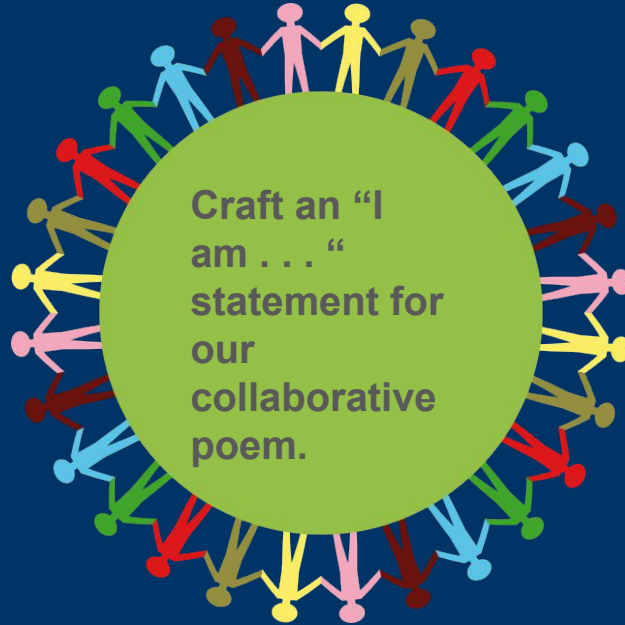
But it is always filled with love.

That love is my protector.

That protector is my mother.



Creating a Collaborative Poem inspired by *The Delight Song of Tsoai-Talee* by N. Scott Momaday





How can we open up a
space for student
exploration and play
with poetry rotations?

Magnetic Poetry

Nova

Angelo

Alex

Wolf



Poetry Analysis

Mason

Zain

Jace

Simon



Haiku

Rebecca

Caroline

Nhien



Acrostic Poems

Charlie

Barrett

Jesus

Evan



Blackout Poetry

Jayla

Aianna

Genesis

Ben

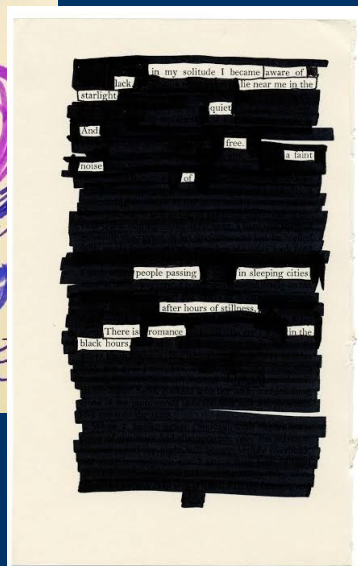
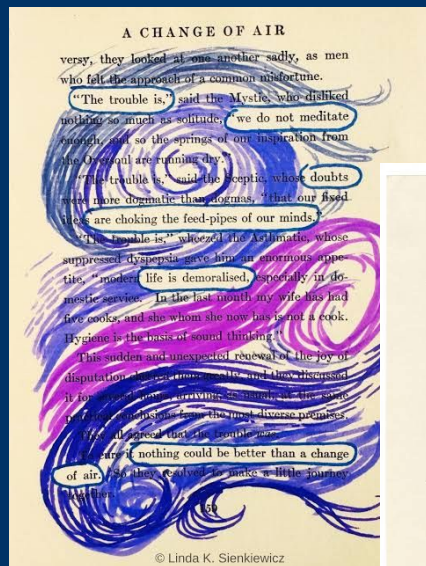
Lucius



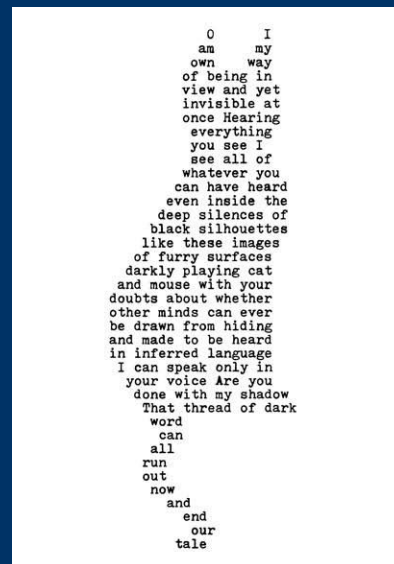
Try It Out!

- 1) **Pick one of the poetry rotations to try:**
 - a) **Acrostic poem**
 - b) **Blackout poem**
 - c) **Concrete poem**
- 2) **Create multiple poems for that rotation option, or switch to a new rotation when you feel “done”**
- 3) **Prepare to share 1-2 poems with partners during a final mix-pair-share activity**

Blackout poems



Concrete poems





Connect back to Grade 4 Unit 2

How would these activities prepare students to read and enjoy a novel written in verse?

Part 4: Uplifting Insights: Sharing from



Share an **AHA**,
A **wondering**,
or a **next step**

with incorporating poetry in the Native
Lit classroom.

Many thanks!

To access Grade 4 Unit 2: Words of Empowerment visit [NISN Resource Hub](#)

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