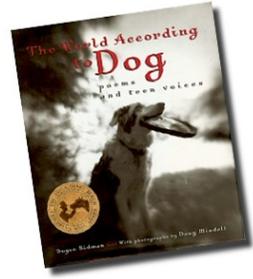


## The World According to Dog: poems and teen voices

By Joyce Sidman



### Reader's Guide

*These teaching suggestions are for grades 6-9*

### WRITING ACTIVITIES

#### Personal Essay

*Use one of the teen essays as a model for prose-writing.*

1. Have students read several and choose their favorite, then explain (either in writing or aloud):

Why did they choose it?

What are their favorite parts?

What language/images does the author use most effectively?

*[You might want to model this by first looking at an essay as a class and answering the above questions together.]*

2. Write similarly about a pet (or friend or family member), answering any one of these questions:

What has he/she taught me?

How does he/she express love?

What unique/bizarre things does he/she do to make me smile?

For more prose-writing tips, see the exercise "Thinking Out Loud" on the Writers page.

#### Diamante (*art & poetry*)

*A diamante ("diamond" in Spanish) is an easy poem form that can start anyone writing. It is seven lines long with varying numbers of words on each line, in this order: 1,2,3,5,3,2,1. Start and end with a noun. There are many variations of this form, some specifying adjectives, adverbs, etc., some moving from one noun to its opposite. The following is an open-ended version.*

1. Read the haiku, "Happiness." on p. 55 as a class. Ask your students:

How are the poem and the photo linked?

Which words best describe the photo?

What might be an alternate title for the poem?

This photo was taken to illustrate the poem. Tell your students they will be doing the opposite: *writing a poem to "illustrate" a photo.*

2. Show them the photo on p. 57. Discuss what's happening in the poem, its mood, and the emotions it conveys. Together, as a class, create a diamante to "illustrate" it. Here's one about my dog as an example (note the diamond-shaped form):

Merlin,  
gentle friend;  
wagging, licking, leaning,  
his eyes warm as chocolate.  
Can dogs smile?  
Merlin can.  
Happiness!

3. Ask students to write their own diamante, illustrating another photo from the book--or illustrating a photo of their own pet.

4. Share!

### **Memory Poem**

*This works for any age, since we all have important memories that deserve to be captured in poetry.*

1. Some memories stay with us more than others. Which sorts of experiences stick in the mind? Brainstorm a list on the board (birthdays, vacations, first-time experiences, losses, embarrassments, etc.).

2. Pass out copies of "Hornet's Nest," p. 29, and read aloud.

3. Discuss what happens in the poem.

Who is the speaker? Who is he/she speaking to?

What sensory details help create an image in the reader's mind?

What metaphors/similes are used?

What is the emotional tone of the poem?

What is the speaker trying to convey in the last stanza?

4. Look back at your brainstormed list of memorable types of experiences. Remind your students that as they grow older, some of the vividness of these experiences may slip away. Poetry is one way to capture them forever. Ask them to think back over their lives and pick one moment that they want to capture:

a) Jot down sensory details from the moment: sights, smells, sounds

b) Who else was there? What did they do, say?

c) What were the emotions of the moment--before, during, after?

5. Ask them to write their poem addressing someone/something who was involved in this memory, almost like a letter: "Grandpa, do you remember the day we . . . ?" Include those sensory details to put the reader right there.

6. Write! Then share! (This exercise is most effective if you, the teacher, also participate and share your writing. Low-key background music helps, too.)