



Poetry Circle

(Target Audience: 9-12)

Long ago, many people who lived in what is now known as the British Isles used large stones to create huge monuments. Many of these megalithic creations, such as England's famous Stonehenge, were built in the shape of a circle.

People still argue over what these structures were originally used for but in places like Wales, where people have made recreations of these "standing stones", these special circles are often used as a place for people to gather and sometimes to share stories and poetry. In fact, the Welsh people have a special poetry competition called an *Eisteddfod*, which takes place annually in different parts of the country, often within the confines of one of these stone circles.

1. Have a display of non-fiction books on Stonehenge, Wales, Celtic facts and fiction, and creating poetry (and the like) on hand.
2. Create a "stone" circle with the children in one of the following ways:
 - a. If you have access to real rocks and stones, and the children are old enough, use them to set up a real stone circle in your meeting area.
 - b. If you have enough time (or wish to make this a two or more session program) have the children create their own faux stones by putting strips of newspaper, dipped in a papier mâché mixture (water, flour, glue) over a barely inflated balloon. The "stones" must have time to dry and can be painted to appear more stone like. Use the faux stones to create your poetry circle.
 - c. "Stones" can also be made by covering old food boxes (cereal, crackers, etc.) in brown or grey construction paper. The advantage to these "stones" is that they will stack easily and make your circle creation easier to build.
 - d. If you do not have time or are dealing with younger children, create the stones earlier (using either the method outlined in b or c above) and have the children use the pre-made stones to create their poetry circle.
3. Share some of your favourite poems with the children.
(These can be silly or serious poems and do not have to be in ancient languages or old-world styles. The idea is to use the ancient concept of stone circles as a place to go to share poetry.)
4. Ask the children if they have any poems to share.
Poems can be ones that they have written or memorized from a favourite poet or indeed, be ones that they have found while looking through the poetry books you have on display.

You can also set up a “Poet’s/Reader’s Theatre” by pre-selecting some poems that can be read aloud and/or broken into parts to be read aloud and assigning these parts and poems to the children.

5. Create poems with the children (as a group activity) by using your own ideas or one of the following:
 - a. Play Mad-Libs with famous nursery rhymes...asking for different words that can be put in place of the ones in the rhyme.
(For example, “Hey Diddle Diddle-The Cat and the Fiddle” might become Hey Diddle Diddle-The *Flamingo* and the *Guitar*).
 - b. Write a simple poem, preferably in couplets, leaving the last word of each group blank, and have the children call out words to finish the poem. Try to end the first sentence in the couplet with a word that has a lot of rhyming words to make it easier for the children to think of a way to fill in the blank.
(For example, My suitcase is full and I’m going far away//Lots to pack-no time to _____. (*play, sway, stay, etc.*))
 - c. Add descriptive words to a simple sentence until you’ve created a poem.
(For example, “The bird sings.” might become “Listen...the beautiful, blue bird, that sits high in the maple tree, sings sweetly in the morning sun.”)
6. Let the children create their own poems (as individual activities) by using your own ideas or some of the following:
 - a. Write an “acrostic poem” (a verse made up by using the letters in a particular word as the first letter for each line of the poem) by using their own names or the name of their best friend and writing a description of that person.

For example:

Karen –

Kind
Animal lover
Reads
Exciting
Nice

- b. Hand out a variety of words that have been printed out on individual pieces of paper (nouns as well as descriptive & action words will work best) and let the children have fun arranging and rearranging them into poems.
- c. Explain different types of poetry (like haiku or limerick) and have the children try creating their own poems. Suggest they describe something in the story room, highlight their favourite lost world, or tell about the stone circle!

More ideas can be found in books about writing poetry and websites such as:
www.gigglepoetry.com or www.lorislesynski.com