

Highly Scaffolded Instruction for Brainstorming & Drafting Poems

If students are struggling to brainstorm and write poems, consider guiding them through the process using a previously explored poem as a model—the poem “kitten” is used here. Incorporate the **Suggested Dialogue** below into **Lesson 9, Step 5** and **Lesson 10, Step 3**. This will support students who are inclined to write complete sentences and to tell rather than use descriptive words and phrases to show images and evoke feelings. Take note—if you model this for the whole class, students will likely produce a poem similar to the poem chosen.

Lesson 9

STEP 5: GUIDE STUDENTS TO BRAINSTORM INDIVIDUAL POEMS

Suggested Dialogue:

Turn to **page 20** in your **A4L Student Notebook**.

We are going to use Valerie Worth’s poem “kitten” to help us brainstorm and write our own poems. Using another author’s work as a model is a helpful way to try something new in your own writing. Let’s pick another animal for our topic. (*Students suggest animals for the topic.*) I’ll choose a puppy because I have one at home and write “puppy” under topic at the top of the page. What animal do you want to choose as your topic? (*Students write in **Topic box**.*)

Before we start brainstorming words for your poems, I want you to think more deeply about this animal and ask yourself: What do you want your reader to know? Let’s look at “kitten” and see what kinds of things Valerie Worth told us about the kitten. (*Read poem aloud.*) I can see that she is describing the kitten doing something specific – pouncing on a piece of fluff. She includes words and phrases that describe what it does and what it looks like. I’m going to think of something my puppy does. I think it’s funny to watch my puppy chase a ball around my yard. I’ll write that here. What do you want to describe your animal doing? (*Students write.*)

In the chart below is space for you to brainstorm words to describe how your animal (or it’s location) looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels to the touch. Let’s look at “kitten.” Can you find a word or phrase that describes what the kitten looks like? (*Students respond “black,” “arched stiff,” “ears back,” “eye round as oranges,” etc.*) I’ll make a list of words and phrases that describe what my puppy looks like, using these as guides. I’ll write, “brown curly hair,” “crouches” and “droopy eyes” in my **Images box**. Take a few minutes and write down some words and phrases that describe your animal. (*Students write in “images” box.*)

Valeria Worth also uses words to describe how the kitten moves. Can you find any? (*Students respond “dances sidewise,” “leaps,” etc.*) Let’s make a list of words and phrases that describe the puppy’s movements. I’m imagining my puppy chasing a ball around my yard. I’ll write “leaps in the air,” “bounds,” and “wags tail.” Take a few minutes and write down some words and phrases that describe how your animal moves. (*Students write.*) Don’t forget to use our **Words in Motion** board and our **Movement Chart** for ideas.

kitten

By Valerie Worth

The black kitten,
Arched stiff,
Dances sidewise
From behind
The chair, leaps,
Tears away with
Ears back, spins,
Lands crouched
Flat on the floor,
Sighting something
At nose level,
Her eyes round
As oranges, her
Hind legs marking
Time: then she
Pounces, cactus-
Clawed, upon
A strayed
Strand of fluff:
Can anyone
Believe that she
Doesn’t ask us
To laugh?

Are there any words or phrases in the poem that describe what the kitten smells like, sounds like, tastes like, or feels like? (*Students may respond “hind legs marking time.”*) My puppy yelps and pants when he plays with the ball, so I’ll write those words in my **Sounds** box. I’m imagining my puppy in my yard, so I’ll write “grass” in the **Smells** box. I like to eat popsicles while I play outside with my puppy, so I can write, “grape popsicle” in the **Tastes** box. My puppy is very soft, especially his ears, so I’ll write the words, “silky soft ears” in my **Touch** box. Now you try. Write words or phrases to describe how things sounded, smelled, tasted, or felt. (*Students write.*)

The final box is **Emotion**. What feeling did Valerie Worth communicate in her poem? (*Students respond.*) She helped us know that this is a funny poem in her last few lines. She ended with a question to the reader: “Can anyone believe she doesn’t ask us to laugh?” Let’s make a list of words and phrases you might want to use to create feelings. Think about your animal. Does watching it make you feel happy, angry, scared, silly, or something else? Watching my puppy chase a ball around my yard makes me feel happy and makes me laugh. I’ll write that down. (*Students write.*)

Lesson 10

STEP 3: STUDENTS DRAFT POEMS

Suggested Dialogue:

Let’s use “kitten” to help us write our poems. We’ll go line by line and make our poems look like Worth’s poem. Notice that in her poem, each line is just a few words long and describes what the kitten looks like or is doing. We’ll try to break up our lines in the same way.

She starts with “The black kitten.” I’m looking at my brainstorm list and see “brown curly hair.” I’ll start my poem with “The brown curly-haired puppy.” Look over your brainstorms and find a word or phrase to describe what your animal looks like. Use it to write your first line. (*Students write.*) The next 2 lines in Worth’s poem are “Arched stiff,/ dances sidewise.” I’m going to look at my brainstorm list and see if I can find words or phrases that describe the puppy getting ready to chase the ball. I think “Crouched,/ tail wagging” works for these lines. You might think of new words or phrases while you are writing. Go ahead and try the next two lines of your poem. (*Students write.*)

Let’s look at the next few lines in the poem: “From behind/ the chair, leaps.” Where is your animal? My puppy is outside in the grass. I’m thinking for good words to describe my puppy I can write “From hiding/ in the grass, jumps.” You try. (*Students write.*)

Continue modeling moving line by line in “kitten.” Guide students to end their poems with a question to the reader.