



English: Faith and Poetry

What if a poem about ducks connected with God's creativity?

Allison wanted to change the way she did her show-and-tell on creativity. She was exploring poetry in English, so she decided to connect the two in such a way as to help students appreciate creativity as a gift from God and part of being made in the image of God.

"We had our usual show-and-tell session, but for this particular day I had asked the children to bring along something they had created, such as art and craft work or a writing sample. I brought in something I had made. We talked about the different things we had made and created a display. I commended all the children for their creativity.

"At the time, we were doing a theme on poetry in English (literacy), and I wanted them to see poetry as a way of expressing creativity. I read the poem 'Ducks' Ditty' from *The Wind in the Willows* and asked the children to close their eyes and imagine the scene. When they opened their eyes, I asked them to return to their desks to draw and color what they could see in their imaginations. When they came back together as a group, they shared their pictures and talked about them. No two were the same.

"We looked at what made 'Duck's Ditty' such a good poem and how Kenneth Grahame had done a good job of writing it because it lets us see pictures in our heads of what's going on in the duck pond. My school is a Christian school, so I explained that the Bible says God is brilliant at creating things, which we can see all around us. God's creativity has given us a beautiful world. I referred to their creativity and the display and explained that people were made a little like God and he is very creative. Our creativity can enhance our world and make it more fun for ourselves and others."

What's going on here?

Allison saw that connecting show-and-tell with English provided an appropriate context for looking at creativity from a Christian perspective and demonstrating that issues of faith were relevant outside of Bible or religion class. She saw her students holistically, connecting faith, creativity, and delight.

She **engaged** students in making connections, harnessing their own creativity and experiencing moments of delight and personal investment (linking show-and-tell and English; bringing in their creative pieces to show).

She **reshaped her practice** by using objects and display choices as well as a particular poem and closed eyes to shape the atmosphere she created, by choosing particular questions, and by modeling creativity herself.

What does this have to do with faith, hope, and love?

Out of his **love**, God has blessed people with creativity. People are made in his image, called to carry out God's work on earth, though our creativity is a pale reflection of his. God's creativity is all around us, but we need to be conscious of it and take time to revel in it, while acknowledging its source. **Faith** in God-given creativity means that human beings need to use that creativity responsibly to reflect its source. People can use their creativity to bring **hope** to those around them, creating beauty out of desolation and glory out of the ordinary.

What difference does it make?

Alison says, "I wanted students to enjoy the poet's God-given creativity in an atmosphere of fun and appreciation created by the show-and-tell. I wanted to move them toward delighting in poems, and I wanted to shift from seeing creativity as just personal achievement to seeing its source in God."

Where could we go from here?

Explore other examples of creativity in poems, these can be poems for fun such as "Jabberwocky" (Lewis Carroll), "The Tale of Custard the Dragon" (Ogden Nash), or serious poems. All reflect different aspects of creativity. The responsibility that goes along with creativity can be followed up in many subject areas, from design and food technology to art and music. For schools that do not have a Christian foundation, putting up the

question “I wonder where creativity comes from?” could be an alternative. See where the discussion goes.

Digging deeper

Appreciation is expressing our thanks, respect, and praise. For Christians, thankfulness and appreciation are a response to life as a gift from God and for all that God gives and what others do. Thanks can find expression in connection with appreciation of poetry and art, music and science. Expressing appreciation and thanks raises our awareness of the ways in which we benefit from the creative work of others.

In the Bible, appreciation and thankfulness are expressed toward God (Psalm 92:1) and others (1 Timothy 2:1). Appreciation is part of building each other up and encouraging each other (Hebrews 3:13).

There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread. Mother Teresa

Martin Luther saw gratitude as the basic attitude: it is like a mold that shapes life. When someone does something for you, there is a sense of thanks that are due; hence Luther's saying, “Unthankfulness is theft.”

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was “thank you,” that would suffice. Meister Eckhart

The Bible talks of the entire world as God's (Psalm 24:1). Creation can reveal him, and all of life can be lived to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Both the poet and the engineer can reflect God in what they do. Scholars differ in how they understand what being made in the image of God means; it could be our creativity, our reasoning, our role in bringing order in the world, our ability to make moral decisions, and our social relationships. It is a complex idea; the image of God cannot be reduced to one thing. The image of God is marred in humanity; we do not reflect God well (like a cracked mirror). Only Jesus perfectly reflects God.



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