INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

Playing with Words: Scaffolding Writing through Poetry

Macie Kerbs, Jessica McQueston, Lorraine Lawrance

Poetry writing is a powerful context for nurturing and scaffolding foundational literacy skills.

There's a poem in this place—
a poem in America
a poet in every American
rewrites this nation, who tells
a story worthy of being told on this minnow of an earth
to breathe hope into a palimpsest of time—
a poet in every American
who sees that our poem penned
doesn't mean our poem's end.
—Gorman (2017)

Poetry is a longstanding art form that has graced our education system for centuries. There is power in the genre of poetry, especially when students are invited to write poems. As Fletcher (2002) reminds us, "Poetry matters. At the most important moments, when everyone else is silent, poetry rises to speak" (p. 7). Poems are a deeply personal and intimate form of communication, a way of fostering a deeper sense of human connection.

Poems are also used to spark changes as a call to action, like the work of Amanda Gorman as featured above, who is the youngest inaugural poet in US history. Poems transcend time, connecting historical events and moments from our lives with just a few short words. Poems make us laugh, cry, and feel emotions we have buried deep within us. Poetry is magical.

As Vanderwater (2018) contends, "poems are teachers" (p. xii). In this article, we explore the multiple learning opportunities that exist within the genre of poetry and present structures teachers can use to offer varying levels of support to their writers. Through these instructional scaffolds, teachers can use the genre of poetry writing to provide calculated support to be responsive to student writers and reinforce foundational skills of writing.

A Case for Reading and Writing Poetry

Despite the power of the genre of poetry, it is incorporated inconsistently across elementary schools in the United States, especially amidst the pressure of standards-based and evidence-based instructional models. Additionally, Collins and Kelly (2013) explained, "early encounters with poetry, whether positive or negative, are often mediated by teachers whose disposition can create lasting impressions" (p. 20). We know that teachers do not feel confident teaching poetry, especially poetry writing (Dymoke, 2001), and a teacher's comfort and experience within the genre can be a predictor of how often the genre is incorporated and their students' affect toward the poetry. So, if a teacher is remembering feeling anxious around the genre, they most likely will communicate that same anxiety to their students.

In today's classrooms where many curricula leave little room for supplemental materials, poetry can serve as a power-packed genre because it is short, relevant, memorable, and culturally responsive (Vardell & Wong, 2013). Certo (2018) exclaimed, "Alas, in a better world, we would not need to justify poetry in schools beyond the brilliance and wonder of its language, beyond knowing that a child's life can potentially be magnified through attentiveness to the world" (p. 17). Even though the genre of poetry demonstrates the potential for positive literacy gains, we find ourselves frequently advocating for the integration of the genre in elementary schools. As teachers of poetry writing who embrace the genre confidently, we can positively impact our own students' experiences.

The genre of poetry is the most suitable genre for playing with words because it is "the most amenable to creative and playful exploitation of the potentialities of language"

Macie Kerbs is a Literacy Consultant in the Woodlands, TX, USA; email drmaciekerbs@gmail.com.
Jessica McQueston is an Assistant Professor in the Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, USA; email jam391@shsu.edu.
Lorraine Lawrance is an Doctoral Candidate in the Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland; email lorrainelawrance1@gmail.com.

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(Myhill, 2013, p. 49). As a result, the genre of poetry positively impacts multiple aspects of a child's literacy development, including foundational skills (Harper, 2011; Rasinksi et al., 2016; Zavala & Cuevas, 2019), composition and craft (Vanderwater, 2018), and comprehension (Rasinksi et al., 2016; Zavala & Cuevas, 2019). The creativity and playfulness that exists within the genre is inviting all learners. Vanderwater (2018) argues, "Poetry offers more language play per square inch than any other genre" (p. 121). By reading and writing poetry, students receive multifaceted support in their literacy development, thus it is vital that the reading and writing of the genre is occurring regularly and in reciprocity with each other.

By reading poems aloud, performing poetry, and reciting their own original poems, students develop oral language and fluency (Certo, 2018; Rasinksi et al., 2016; Zavala & Cuevas, 2019). In fact, Rasinksi et al. (2016) found evidence supporting the genre and its ability to "improve the foundational reading outcomes (word recognition accuracy, automatic, and prosody) for students, especially for those who struggle in achieving success in reading achievement due to a lack of foundational competencies" (p. 173). Poetry is a genre that reinforces skills needed for literacy development, both in reading and writing.

By reading poems and emulating poets, students develop a deeper understanding of the author's craft and the specific genre characteristics of poetry. Poems can be used as mentor texts to study techniques that transcend genres because the genre teaches us how to be stronger writers (Vanderwater, 2018). Kittle (2008) said, "Good writing makes writers want to write" (p. 74). Using poetry as mentor texts provides engaging and professionally written texts that inspire writers. As students read more poetry, they can learn from and emulate the craft moves of various poets.

Because poetry is often brief, but the language is often beautifully crafted, the genre can serve as an accessible and flexible mentor for writers. Table 1 highlights a list of selected poetry anthologies and picture books we often use as mentor texts with elementary-age students. While this list does not capture all the poetry books we use with students, we intentionally highlighted the books that encompass different forms of poetry, are culturally responsive and relevant, and can extend into other subject areas and social–emotional skill development.

When students write their own poems, they are playing with language, which results in higher levels of student engagement. Myhill (2013) argued for "more opportunity to talk and think like poets, and to engage with poetic practice" (p. 60). By writing poems, students can slow down to pay closer attention to the relationship between letters and their phonemes, which has been shown to have a strong benefit for literacy development. The rhythm and rhyme of poetry help stimulate phonological and phonemic awareness, important skills needed for literacy development (Harper, 2011). Phonemic awareness invites students to manipulate sounds within the English language. Academic tasks such as rhyming, alliteration, blending, segmenting, deletion, and substitution provide opportunities for students to authentically play with sounds while developing critical foundational skills needed as students learn to read and write (Belvins, 2023; Brady, 2020; Reutzel, 2015; Yeh & Connell, 2008). Thus, poetry provides the ideal access point for students to develop foundational reading skills and the act of writing poems should be used in reciprocity with reading.

PAUSE AND PONDER

- How am I scaffolding writing instruction through a variety of contexts (shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing)?
- What opportunities do my students have to write poetry across the school year?
- Where can I fit poetry writing into my daily schedule?

As Certo (2018) stated, "Human beings need art. Some human beings need poetry. Children are little human beings. Some children need poetry" (p. 17). Poetry invites joy and "learners who do not engage with the joys of poetry miss out on the opportunity to discover how rewarding and enjoyable poetry can be in all aspects of literacy" (Nichols et al., 2018, p. 394). Young children need poetry to explore the emotive power of language (Elster & Hanauer, 2002) through meaningful literacy activities (Hanauer, 2012). Not only is writing poetry a place for exploration, introspection, and expression, but it can also be used to teach, reinforce, and scaffold foundational skills of written language.

Instructional Scaffolds Using Poetry Writing

This article invites teachers to look at writing poetry as a way for students to play with words in a safe and inviting space by leaning into the magic and playfulness that organically exists within the genre. Even though "all writing is a demanding process" (Myhill, 2013), teachers can support student learning through poetry writing by providing "rich modeling experiences or scaffolds to shape their metalinguistic understandings" (p. 60). Modeling and scaffolding learning is routed in the theoretical framework called The Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR), which was initially presented to capture the instruction

TABLE 1
Poetry Mentor Texts

Poetry anthologies	Poetry picture books
Alexander, K., Colderley, C., & Wentworth, M. (2021). *Out of wonder: Celebrating poets and poetry.* Candelwick	Alexander, K. (2017). *Animal ark: Celebrating our world in poetry and pictures*. National Geographic Kids
Elliot, D. (2008). *On the farm*. Candlewick Press	Alexander, K. & Nikaido, D. (2023). *How to write a poem.* Quill Tree Books
Florian, D. (2001). *Lizards, frogs, and polliwogs*. Voyager Books	Archer, M. (2016). *Daniel finds a poem*. Nancy Paulson Books
Grimes, N. (2001). *Pocketful of poems*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	Caswell, D. & Shea, B. (2016). *Guess who, Haiku*. Abrams Appleseed
Harrison, D. L. (2018). *Crawly school for bugs: Poems to drive you buggy*. WordSong	Elliott, D. (2004). *And here's to you!* Candlewick
Lalli, J. (2016). *I like being be: Poems about kindness, friendship, and making good choices*. Free Spirit Publishing	Gorman, A. (2021). *Change sings: A children's anthem.* Penguin Random House
Lewis, J. P. (2002). *Doodle dandies: Poems that take shape.* Aladdin Paperbacks	Martin, B. & Sampson, M. (2009). *I love our Earth.* Charlesbridge
Lewis, J. P. (2015). *A book of nature poetry.* National Geographic	Muth, J. J. (2014). *Hi, Koo! A year of seasons*. Scholastic
Martin, B. (2008) *The Bill Martin Jr big book of poetry.* Simon & Schuster	Nikola-Lisa, W. (1994). *Bein' with you this way.* Lee & Low Books
Mora, P. (1996). *Confetti: Poems for children*. Lee & Low Books	Shang, W. W. (2021). *The rice in the poet goes round and round*. Scholastic
Singer, M. (2017). *Feel the beat: Dance poems that zing from salsa to swing*. Dial Books	Sherman, C. W. (2020). *Brown sugar babe*. Astra Young Readers
VanDerwater, A.L. (2018). *With my hands: Poems about making things*. Clarion Books	Sidman, J. (2011). *Swirl by swirl: Spirals in nature*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
Yolen, J., Peters, A. F. (2007). *Here's a little poem: A very first book of poetry.* Candlewick Press	Stockdale, S. (2011). *Bring on the birds*. Peachtree

of reading comprehension over 40 years ago (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), but has since been applied across instructional contexts, including writing.

The seminal framework of GRR illuminated the connection between explicit instruction and independent practice and the level of teacher support and student responsibility needed to accelerate student progress (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). This model captured three phases: teacher modeling, guided practice, and student application. In the initial phase, teacher modeling, the teacher explicitly demonstrates the strategy, providing the heaviest amount of support as students are actively engaged in the learning, but not responsibility for independent application, yet. This phase begins the process of scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976), where an expert provides support to a more novice learner.

In the next phase, students are offered moderate level of support in the application of the strategy through guided practice. This phase draws on what Vygotsky's (1978) termed as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). When working within a student's ZPD, the teacher considers the right level of support to offer so students can do more of the work that is a little out of their reach independently (Webb et al., 2019). In the final phase, students can transfer what was learned to their independent practice with minimal support from the teacher.

While initially GRR applied to reading comprehension, it has since been extended to other components of learning, but far less within writing instruction (Ortlieb & Schatz, 2019). The benefits of embracing a GRR model in writing instruction are inherently linked to the recursive nature of the framework itself. Because GRR is not intended to be linear, this framework allows an expert teacher to meaningfully design lessons and units with appropriate writing support over time. When this scaffolded support is appropriately calibrated to student learning, the

teacher and students engage in a rich feedback cycle that impacts a student both socially and academically (Ortlieb & Schatz, 2019).

This same GRR model can be applied when teaching poetry writing, too. After explicit instruction and teacher modeling, the teacher can intentionally relinquish control and scaffold support over time to the student. When considering application into the classroom and appropriate calibration (Ortlieb & Schatz, 2019), we must first consider the amount of support that is needed for the individual student and context. Thus, we present instructional practices that move from heavy teacher support, like shared writing, to light teacher support, such as independent writing. While these structures are commonly used in writing classrooms, we argue that the use of these practices can be transformational through the genre of poetry because it naturally lends itself to reinforcing the foundations of written language (Figure 1).

The sections that follow describe each instructional context and how we, as educators, have used these contexts with learners through the genre of poetry writing.

Shared Writing

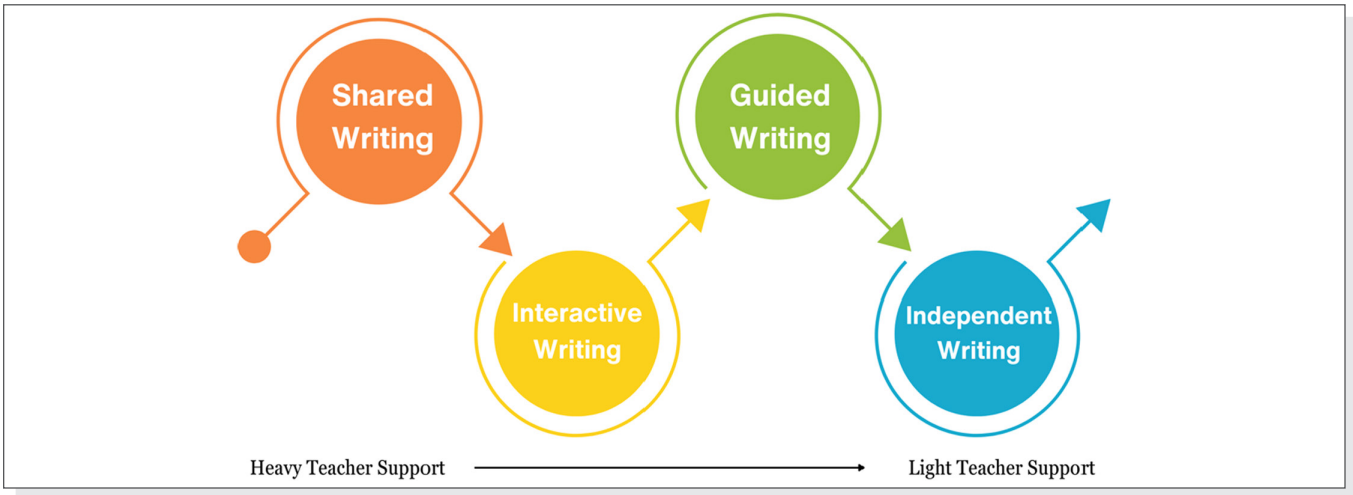
Shared writing is an instructional context in which the teacher provides the heaviest amount of support, serving as an active participant in the composition of a text (McKenzie, 1985). In shared writing, the students help orally compose the text, but it is the teacher who does all the scribing (Bates, 2020; Routman, 2005; Serravallo, 2021). Bates (2020) explained that shared writing allows the teacher to guide the writing in a "way to extend their language and make it more closely resemble a text they could read independently" (p. 21). Because the teacher is actively scaffolding the construction of the text, shared writing guides students in crafting a text that attends to the conventions of written language.

In shared writing, students contribute orally by generating ideas for the writing, but it is the teacher who carefully crafts a message that illuminates grade-appropriate literacy skills. By doing so, the written product reflects writing that is more sophisticated, conventional, and readable. Thus, teachers need to intentionally plan for possible teaching points during the shared writing lesson. Routman (2005) urged teachers to "raise the standard of what's possible" in the way we choose to model and demonstrate throughout the shared writing lesson (p. 84). That is, during shared writing, teachers consider all the information from the students but compose a message that will not only reinforce specific foundations of written language but also expose them to better alternatives to enhance the complexity of their writing.

In a Kindergarten class, we used the structure of shared writing to construct poems about nature. After reading aloud poems about nature, such as *Baby Chick* by Aileen L. Fisher (Fisher, 2008) and *April Rain Song* by Langston Hughes (Hughes, 2015), we lead the students in the construction of our own nature poem. This lesson not only used the mentor text for inspiration but also a shared experience of a thunderstorm occurring the night before.

After reading nature poems, we activated student senses to recall what they heard, saw, and felt during the storm the previous night. We chose to use sentence strips to construct a free-verse poem because this structure abides by no rules, making it a great introductory structure for beginning poets. We invited the writers to plan

FIGURE 1
Gradual Release of Responsibility for Writing Instruction

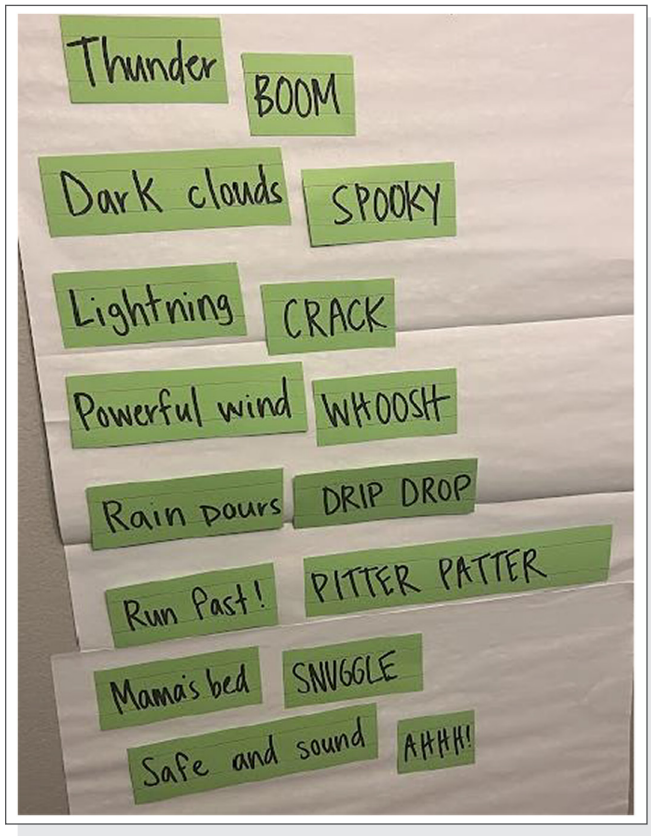


and rehearse the message with us, drawing on the shared experience, which allowed all children to provide insight into the topic and contribute to the construction of the message. Using a shared experience allowed for everyone to participate meaningfully and invited rich discussion.

Routman (2005) encourages teachers to be the "expert for your group of apprentices" in shared writing (p. 84). In this example, we became the experts in the organizational structure of a free-verse poem while the students used their experience from the storm to contribute sensory details to enhance the poem. For example, when the teacher asked students to close their eyes and think about what they heard or saw, some students responded with "thunder" or "lightening." Considering the poetic device of onomatopoeia, the teacher prompted, "and what word could capture that sound?" Students then turned and talked about sound words that they could use, coming up with possible options for the poem.

The poem below (Figure 2) shows the final version constructed by the Kindergarten class. By writing the poem on sentence strips, we were able to manipulate line breaks or change word order easily. The use of sentence strips also allowed us to come back to using shared writing to teach additional strategies for revising or editing our poems.

FIGURE 2
Shared Writing (Kindergarten)



Many students find it difficult to write because the task of writing asks them to encode phonological information (Hebert et al., 2018; Mather & Lachowicz, 1992). Shared writing can serve as a scaffold to assist students in the composition of a shared message, taking the pressure off the encoding process. In this lesson, we used the scaffold of thinking aloud to reinforce letter-sound relationships as we wrote the words. Because many of the students needed support in hearing beginning consonant sounds, we slowed down to provide a chance for them to hear the sound, consider the letter representation, and then watch the formation of the letter on the sentence strip.

In shared writing, the teacher has a heavy hand in the support offered to writers. While the students are invited to orally compose the message, it is the teacher who controls the pen and encoding of the words. The teacher invites the students to contribute to the construction of the message, but students are free from having to do the encoding work independently. Because poetry is rhythmic in nature, it is an ideal genre to support the development of phonological skills. In shared writing, students can focus on hearing the sounds in words while the teacher guides the correspondence with letters.

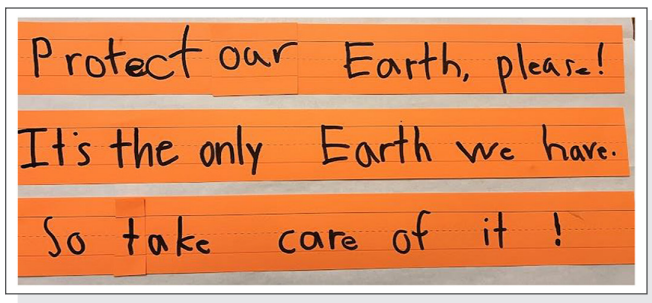
In another classroom, we used shared writing to construct a poem with first graders. The students in the first-grade classroom composed the following text together as they described the playground and recess experience from that day (see Figure 3). Again, we used a shared experience where all students could contribute. Students helped us come up with ideas while we modeled the structure and genre of poetry writing. We paused intentionally to guide students to apply their phonics and spelling knowledge to words with inflectional endings, like *running, laughing*, *screaming*, *hiding*, and *climbing*. Shared writing provides the scaffold needed to focus on just hearing the sounds while seeing the conventions encoded by the teacher.

Interactive Writing

Similar to shared writing, interactive writing invites the students to assist the teacher in orally composing the message, but in interactive writing, the teacher shares the pen at intentionally designated moments during the composition process. Serravallo (2021) cleverly explains these two structures are "sort of like cousins" (p. 93). That is, while the teacher is scaffolding the construction of the message, she is also releasing some support to hand over the pen to students at the right moment within their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

FIGURE 3
Shared Writing (First Grade)

FIGURE 4
Interactive Writing (Second Grade)



The brevity and familiarity in the genre of poetry create an ideal space for teachers to relinquish control to students to practice applying knowledge of phonics and spelling patterns as they encode specific words or parts of words in the poem. By slowing down to hand the pen over at designated places, the student is less overwhelmed by the complex task of writing and is practicing a specific skill with the support of a teacher in line with what they need at that time.

When considering how to use poetry in an interactive writing lesson, we have found it helpful to work within poetic structures, like haiku. Because the structure of a haiku asks students to count syllables for each line, it reinforces syllabication and provides a brief structure to really pay close attention to the written conventions.

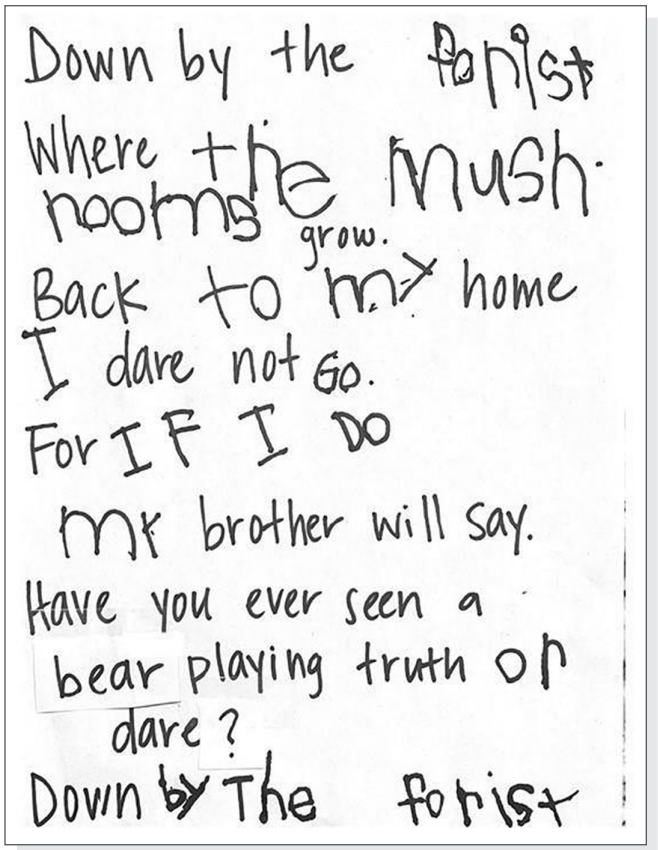
In the example below (see Figure 4), we worked with a small group of second graders, by presenting the structure of a haiku poem to students and reading several examples before using interactive writing with the small group. The students enjoyed hearing texts read aloud like *Hi, Koo!* (Muth, 2014) and *Guess Who, Haiku!* (Caswell, 2016), that playfully introduced the structure of haiku through storytelling and riddles. Because of the upcoming holiday and a connection to a current science unit, we asked students to brainstorm ideas about Earth Day. Specifically, we asked, "What is so important about Earth Day?" and "What do people need to know about taking care of our planet?" to spark discussion in small groups.

After students had a minute to talk through ideas, we reminded them of the structure of haiku poem. Then, we collaboratively constructed each line. As teachers, we identified students who we would hand the pen over for specific moments during the construction of the message based on previously gathered phonics and spelling assessment data. For example, one student needed more practice with long vowels, especially with CVCe patterns, so we made sure we handed the pen over when we encountered that pattern so we could guide the encoding process with heavy support. We also chose students who needed support with letter formation, high-frequency words, and vowel digraphs. At times, we controlled the pen when it was necessary to speed up the pacing or the words were either too easy or too challenging for the group of students we were working with.

Because we used sentence strips, we were able to easily help the student fix mistakes, like when one student confused the homophones *are* and *our* or when another student formed a letter backwards. The figure below captures the interactive writing of haiku poems with a small group of second-grade writers. Because this structure was short, we found it allowed us to really slow down to pay attention to the conventions of writing, while also reinforcing elements of poetry and content from the science unit.

Another way that teachers can use poems for interactive writing is by adapting familiar songs. For example, in the figure below (see Figure 5), we used the familiar children's song, *Down by the Bay* (Raffi, 1976), with a young writer in Kindergarten. First, we demonstrated how to use a familiar tune by changing some of the words. Then, we invited the student to do the same with his favorite song.

FIGURE 5
Interactive Writing (Kindergarten)



As they orally composed the song, the student assisted in substituting words, hearing the rhymes, and matching the rhythm of the tune.

Next, we began writing the song, handing over pen at moments when the child could apply his knowledge of the written language to encode. In the example below, we intentionally handed the pen to the student for words he knew, such as *I*, *my*, and *the*, and words he could apply his knowledge of letter-sound correspondence, like *forest* and *mushroom*. It is important to note that the student might apply their letter-sound knowledge and still have some misspellings; however, the focus is on correctly mapping out the sounds for unknown words and spelling patterns. As teachers, we used this sample to collect formative information to guide future writing lessons to target specific foundations of the written language, such as the ending *-est*.

Guided Writing

As students gain more experience and comfort in writing, the teacher can relinquish even more control to the student. Guided writing puts the pen in the hands of the student while the teacher serves as a guide on the side, asking the student to apply specific skills or strategies through a shared message together.

When using guided writing with a small group of students, the students may come together with individual topics or a shared topic. The teacher provides prompts throughout to keep the momentum for writing going. While a teacher might have a specific goal in mind, like the structure of a poem, the guided writing format allows the teacher to prompt and coach multiple areas of writing, including conventions. While the teacher is facilitating the composition of the message, the student is the one doing the writing. Serravallo (2021) explains that guided writing is very much like a parent holding onto the back of the bike as their child learns how to ride without training wheels. The parent needs to be there for stability but too much holding on might create a dependence on that level of support. So, in guided writing, teachers must be mindful of the amount of support they are offering and have a plan for releasing even more to the student.

Writing poetry provides ample opportunities to listen and apply phonological awareness skills. When modifying familiar tunes to create their own song, students must listen and incorporate rhymes. For instance, this second grader (see Figure 6) worked on a piece that adapted a familiar tune, *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* (Taylor, 1806), into their own poem about the beach (see Figure 3). They orally composed the text with the help of the teacher but wrote the poem independently. As the student encountered a complex spelling pattern, like the inflectional ending in the multisyllabic word, *crashing*, the teacher used the opportunity to teach a new skill. When the student encountered a line that required a rhyme, like *waves* and *play* or *toes* and *slow*, the teacher leaned in to help them hear the sounds and apply the knowledge of words to their piece, accepting approximation.

In another classroom, we worked with a group of first-grade writers who were really excited about riddles. After reading a few riddles from books like National Geographic Just Joking (2012) and *500 Riddles for Clever Kids* (Peter Pauper Press, 2022), they asked to compose one themselves. We worked with each individual student to compose their own riddle and then allowed them to share their riddles with the group to guess the answer.

The figure below (Figure 7) shows a riddle that was composed by a first-grade student about the school bus. We encouraged students to choose topics familiar to their classmates. The students used what they knew about riddles to come up with a topic. As teachers, we helped them construct a poem that not only structurally resembled a riddle, but also was conventionally appropriate for their grade level. In this case, the student decided to explore figurative language like onomatopoeia by embedding the sound words of the school bus.

FIGURE 6
Guided Writing (Second Grade)

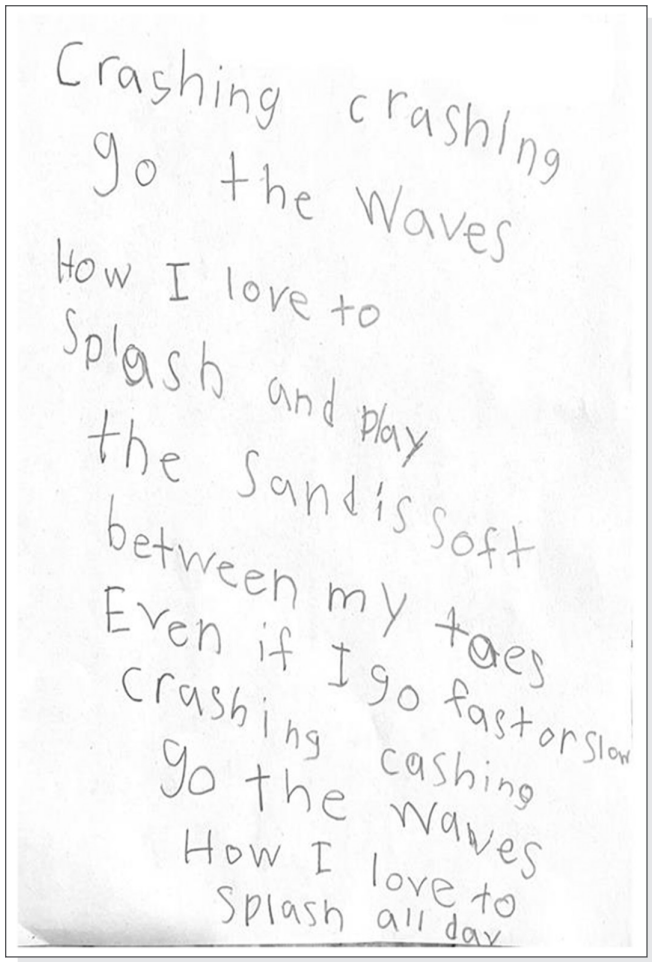
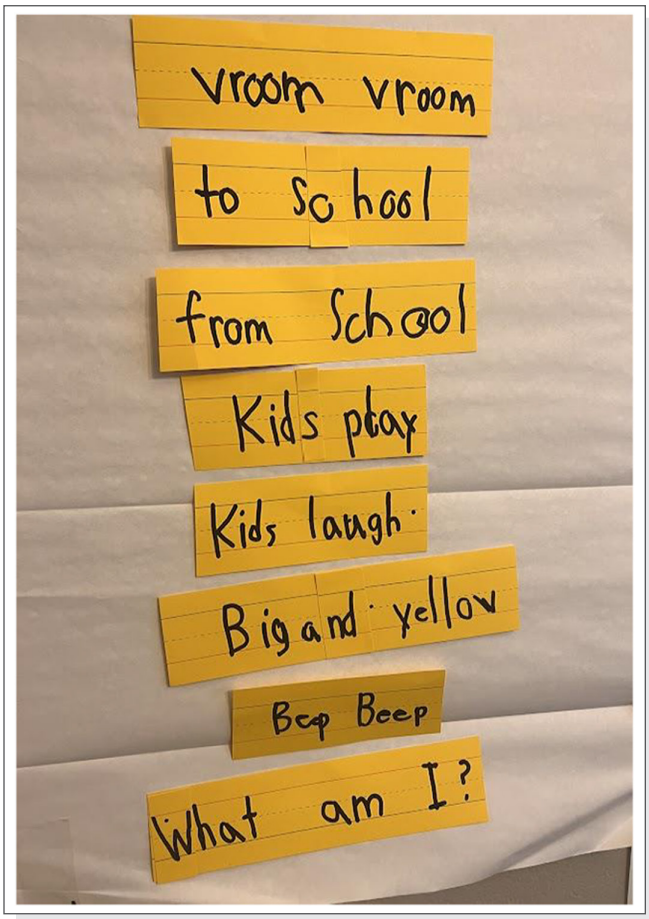


FIGURE 7
Guided Writing (First Grade)



We were able to easily guide the students in editing their writing on the go because we used sentence strips. For example, a student needing more practice writing high-frequency words wrote *wut* instead of *what* for the last line of the poem. We reminded the student to check the word wall for that word, and then cut a sentence strip to tape over the original. This quick editing move reinforced conventional writing while also reminding students that it is okay to make mistakes!

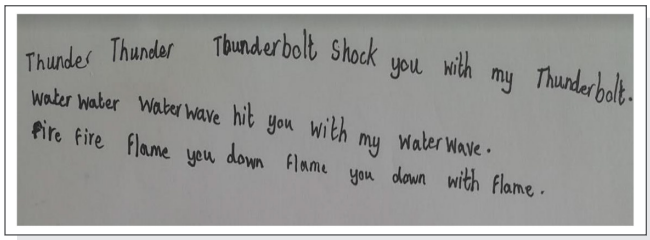
Independent Writing

Independent writing invites students to transfer their knowledge to their own piece, taking control of both the composition and conventions of the writing. In this instructional practice, the teacher coaches some to move the student forward in writing, but most of the work is completed by the student. Although independence is a goal of GRR, it is important to note that the feedback cycle between the student and teacher is just as important in this phase as in a phase with heavier scaffolding. The feedback during independent writing supports student agency and transference of skills through practices like goal setting, peer-to-peer feedback, one-on-one conferring with a teacher, writing clubs, and self-reflection tools (McGee, 2017).

The example (Figure 8) below highlights the independent work of a student applying what they have learned about poetry to their own poem about thunder, water, and fire. In this example, the student generated the idea for the poem independently, using techniques he learned from other poems we read together in class. As he wrote, we provided some assistance on the application of the genre characteristics of poetry, like repetition of *thunder thunder*, and taught unfamiliar spelling patterns, such as digraphs like *sh* and *ck* in *shock*, using one-to-one conferring to provide feedback throughout the process.

Familiar structures of poems can also serve as a scaffold for students writing. For example, the fourth grader

FIGURE 8
Independent Writing (Third Grade)



featured below (Figure 9) wrote a character poem about herself. In this example, we provided some assistance during a one-on-one conference with spelling words with inflectional endings using the double consonant rule, such as *crossing*, *traffic*, and *shopping*. Additionally, because character poems use a familiar structure, the student could lean on the sentence stems as a scaffold for the composition of their poem. Finally, since the class was working on these poems collaboratively, students engaged in peer-to-peer feedback to offer suggestions and compliments to the other poets in the class. This feedback was used to set goals for revision and generate ideas for new poems.

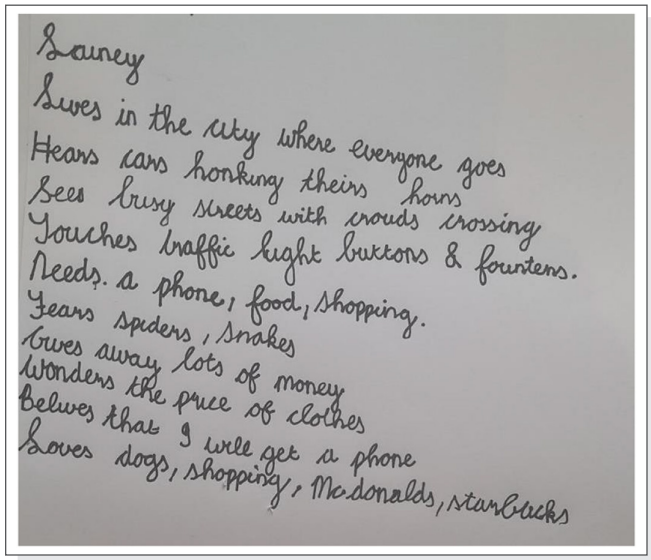
Conclusion

Writing poetry values student creativity and promotes high levels of engagement and playfulness, while also reinforcing many important foundational skills needed for conventional writing. When writing poetry, students slow down to pay attention to poetic language, manipulating it in increasingly complex and creative manners. Students begin manipulating the physical space and using words to create rhythm and meter in their poems. As a result, students develop complex ideas and bring meaning to what otherwise might go unnoticed.

Creativity and playfulness are at work when writing poetry, and teachers can take advantage of the genre to teach important foundational literacy skills and support the encoding process of young writers. Shared writing, interactive writing, and independent writing are structures that teachers can use to specifically scaffold instruction according to the needs of their students. Teachers can also use a mix of structures we highlighted based on the specific needs of individual small groups. If we, as educators, lean into this genre of writing, we not only teach the genre-specific characteristics but also the foundational skills that are crucial in literacy development.

Most importantly, "poems teach us how to be stronger, kinder, wiser human beings" (Vanderwater, 2018, p. 224). Shared and interactive experiences in poetry writing build community and foster playful language. Just like Amanda Gorman reminds us, there is a poet inside of all of us (2017). Our students come into our classrooms with stories, songs, and poems bursting out of them. As teachers, we can help students unlock many of those words through the genre of poetry writing.

FIGURE 9
Independent Writing (Fourth Grade)



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Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest relating to the information in this article.

Ethics Statement

Figures 2–9 The authors received parent permission to use the student writing included in all figures.

TAKE ACTION!

1. Look for opportunities to integrate shared poetry writing experiences across the curriculum (i.e., Earth Day).
2. Use a variety of tools, like sentence strips, to reinforce concepts of poetry and provide opportunities for students to manipulate the words and sentences.
3. Plan weekly small groups for writing by level of support needed with the goal to release toward independence.

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MORE TO EXPLORE

- Kids' Poems: How to Introduce Poetry to Elementary School Children by Regie Routman, Scholastic Teaching Tools (2021)
- Poetry Begins with Play by Lisa Keeler, Two Writing Teachers (2017)
- Poetry Portfolios: Using Poetry to Teach Reading by Jennifer Reed, ReadWriteThink
- Poetry Now Podcast from the Poetry Foundation
- Poem of the Day by the Poetry Foundation