

“A Poison Tree”

About this set of materials...

This set of materials is based on the experience of Holy Trinity College. It illustrates how teachers can make use of the poem “A Poison Tree” to encourage learners to think critically about what “friends” and “enemies” are. The thought-provoking questions employed by the teacher help promote higher-order thinking.

Texts and materials used in this exemplar



A Poison Tree

Strand Targets

- To converse and exchange points of view about feelings, ideas and experiences (ISb, KS3)
- To understand how different texts are organised and expressed and apply this understanding to one’s learning and use of the language (KSf, KS3)
- To respond to characters, events, issues and themes in imaginative and other narrative texts through oral, written and performative means (ESb, KS4) such as:
 - making predictions and inferences
 - analysing the actions and motivation of characters and the significance of events
 - relating to one’s experiences
 - putting oneself in the imaginary roles and situations in the text
 - participating in dramatic presentations and reflecting on the way in which authors use language to create effects

Learning Targets/ Objectives

- **Text-type:** poems

- **Language features:** rhymes, imagery

- **Language skills:**

Listening:

Listen for intended meanings, feelings and attitudes

- Understand and interpret different kinds of spoken texts
- Establish and infer meanings from clues

Reading:

Understand, interpret and analyse different written texts

- Understand different feelings, views and attitudes
- Use linguistic and contextual clues and general knowledge to determine the meaning of the written text
- Interpret how linguistic and structural devices achieve certain effects
- Understand hidden intentions of the writer

Speaking:

Present information, ideas and feelings clearly and coherently

- Convey ideas and information in conversations or discussions
- Express, elicit and respond to ideas, opinions and feelings in a group discussion

- Use appropriate intonation and stress, and vary volume, tone of voice and speed to convey intended meanings and feelings

- **Generic skills:**

- Creativity
- Critical thinking skills
- Communication skills
- Self-management skills

- **Values and Attitudes:** tolerance, justice

Learning and Teaching Process

1. The teacher asked the learners a series of questions, motivating them to think and talk about their enemies, e.g. why they regarded them as enemies and how they treated them.
2. The teacher modelled the desired way of sharing by telling the learners a trick she and her friend played on a classmate they did not like when they were in S.5.



3. After giving the learners some time to talk about their enemies, the teacher invited some of them to tell the whole class who their enemies were and why. She also helped learners to elaborate by asking a few follow-up questions.



Impact on Learning

Learners

- ✓ *develop their speaking skills by conversing and exchanging points of view and feelings about their enemies*
- ✓ *cultivate and adopt free and open attitudes towards different opinions, ideas and values*



- ✓ *develop their speaking skills of expressing opinions and feelings by relating to their past experiences with their enemies*



Learning and Teaching Process

4. The teacher had invited two learners to act the poem out when she read it aloud. Pictures were drawn on the blackboard as a backdrop.

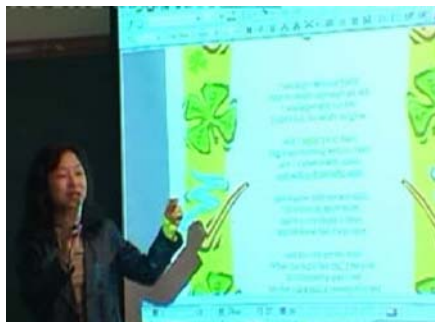


5. Then the teacher checked learners' understanding of the dramatization of the poem by asking them a series of exploring questions.
6. The teacher showed the learners the poem and taught them the structure of a poem, including the development of stanzas and the ideas and feelings in each of them.



A Poison Tree

7. The teacher also offered explanations of the meaning of difficult words and the use of images.



Impact on Learning




Learners



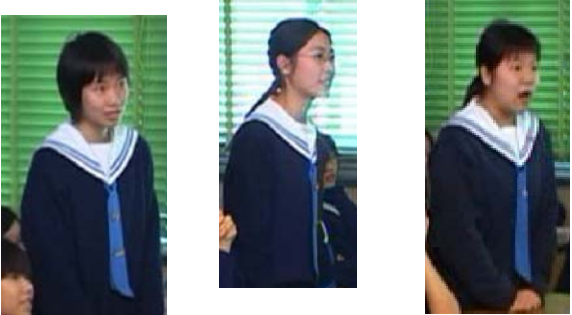
✓ *develop a response to the characters, events and issues in the poem through oral and performative means such as:*



- *putting themselves in the imaginary roles and situation in the poem*
- *participating in the dramatic presentation of the poem*

✓ *understand how the poem is organised and expressed by:*

- *comprehending the thoughts and feelings conveyed by the author*
- *understanding the language through which the thoughts and feelings are expressed*
- *finding out the encoded values (tolerance, justice etc)*

Learning and Teaching Process	Impact on Learning
<p>8. The teacher arranged learners to discuss in groups and suggest a title for the poem.</p> <p>9. The teacher walked around and helped learners focus their thoughts by posing stimulating questions.</p> <p>10. Groups wrote their titles on the board.</p> <p>11. A representative from each group explained the title they proposed. The teacher might guide them in refining or making further elaboration on the title.</p> <p>12. After the presentations, learners voted for the best title and the teacher revealed the original title.</p>	<p><i>Learners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>are actively involved in collaborative learning and benefit from their peers during group discussions, by being</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>open and responsive to others' ideas; and</i> • <i>active in exchanging and rethinking ideas</i>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>strengthen their creative abilities such as</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>fluency (the ability to produce many ideas in response to an open-ended problem, question or task)</i> • <i>originality</i> ✓ <i>exercise critical thinking skills during the process of creating and voting for a title for the poem by giving evaluative comments based on reasoned judgment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>reflect and improve on the effectiveness of their own communication in presentation and elaboration of the title proposed by their own group</i>  

Learning and Teaching Process	Impact on Learning
<p>13. The teacher invited some learners to read the poem aloud and encouraged them to read expressively. Then she told them the different feelings they should express in different stanzas.</p>  <p>14. The teacher verified and clarified learners' understanding by asking them to locate all the "it"s in the poem and found out what they referred to.</p>  <p>15. The teacher asked learners to read aloud together all the rhyming words in the poem.</p>	<p><i>Learners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>enhance their aesthetic experience in imaginative literature (poem) by developing personal responses or expression through activities such as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>participating in the reading of the poem, and</i>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>appreciating the effect of sound patterns including rhythm and rhyme</i>

Learning and Teaching Process	Impact on Learning
<p>16. The teacher asked learners to form groups and discuss whether the writer of the poem was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a man or woman • poor or rich • educated or not <p>She walked around to help develop learners' discussions through questions which promote higher-order thinking.</p>   <p>17. The teacher invited some learners to report and justify their opinions about the identity of the writer. And then the teacher gave a conclusion to the discussions.</p>	<p><i>Learners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>adopt creative attitudes such as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>independent judgment, and</i> • <i>open-mindedness to new and unusual ideas</i> ✓ <i>exercise critical thinking skills by employing contextual clues to interpret the voice in the poem</i> ✓ <i>further enhance their reading skills when they search for the writer's identity by:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>making use of knowledge of the world</i> • <i>understanding different feelings, views and attitudes</i> • <i>identifying implied meanings through inferencing</i> 