

Six Room Image Poem

Teachers can use this exercise to **generate writing** that might be revised at a later time. It can also be used as a written **response** to art and encourages close looking.

Any landscape works well for this exercise, preferably something representational. It also works as a strategy to help young writers create the mood or atmosphere they want their own stories to have.

Engagement Strategies: Sometimes a good book can transport you to a place that seems very real in your mind. As writers we all dream of being able to do that. The writer probably used a lot of sensory details to make that place (setting) come alive in your reader's imagination.

Most of us tend to tell the reader what to SEE, rather than create an image (mind picture) for the reader by tapping into the other senses.

Questions/Talking Points:

-This exercise is called a 6 Room Poem. The poet Rilke once compared writing poetry to "venturing into hitherto unexplained rooms." This exercise helps us remember to use all of our senses as we write so that the reader of OUR writing can have that amazing experience you have when you read a good book or read a poem.

In each square you will be prompted to free write in a way that will push you to use sensory words and create interesting images (mind pictures) for what might become a poem or another kind of descriptive writing later on.

-Divide a paper into 6 squares or rooms. In the first room describe what you see in the painting. In room 2, look at the same place but just focus on the light. For example: Is the sun bright? Are there shadows? What about color? In the 3rd room write about the same image, but focus on sound. Are there any voices? Is there a rustling of leaves? If it's silence how would you describe that silence? In room # 4, write down any questions you have about the image. What do you want to know more about? What are you wondering? In room 5 write down any feelings you have about this image. Finally in room 6, look over the other 5 rooms and select one word, phrase or line you've written that seems important and repeat it three times.

-If you choose to use this writing as a poem later, you can experiment with line breaks, adding and subtracting words, etc. (see student example)

-If you are working on a story that has a specific setting, go back to that writing and use this exercise to make the images stronger.

-Of course this exercise can be done without anything to look at. Have students close their eyes and imagine a place of importance to them. This place can have a happy, lonely or frightening memory attached to it.

Adapted from: Awakening the Heart-Exploring Poetry in the Elementary and Middle School.
Heard, Georgia, Heinemann