Bear Poetry

Grade Level: 1–6

Standards:

Minnesota Academic Standards in Science Codes
1.4.1.1.1, 3.4.1.1.2, 5.4.1.1.1 – Living things are diverse with many different observable characteristics that enable them to grow, reproduce and survive
1.4.2.1.1, 1.4.2.1.2 – Natural systems have many components that interact to maintain the living system
1.4.3.1.1, 1.4.3.1.2 – Plants and animals undergo a series of orderly changes during their life cycles
3.4.3.2.1, 3.4.3.2.2 – Offspring are generally similar to their parents, but may have variations that can be advantageous or disadvantageous in a particular environment

Writing Benchmarks K-5 (Common Core Writing Standards K-5, 6-12)
3.6.4.4 - 5.6.4.4, 6.7.4.4, 3.6.5.5 - 5.6.5.5, 6.7.5.5, 3.6.6.6 - 5.6.6.6, 6.7.6.6 – Production and Distribution of Writing
3.6.7.7 - 5.6.7.7, 6.7.7.7, 3.6.8.8 - 5.6.8.8, 6.7.8.8 – Research to Build and Present Knowledge
3.6.10.10 - 5.6.10.10, 6.7.10.10 – Range of Writing

Link Resources:
www.bear.org
www.bearstudy.org
Online Interactive Poetry Resource:
http://www.readwritethink.org/search/?resource_type=16&q=poetry&sort_order=relevance

ABCs of Black Bears – book versions:
http://www.bear.org/website/images/stories/education-outreach/resources/ABCs_100dpi.pdf (low res)

Online Interactive Poetry Resource:
http://www.readwritethink.org/search/?resource_type=16&q=poetry&sort_order=relevance

Goal:
Students learn scientific facts about bears and communicate those facts in one or more written poems.

Curriculum Focus:
Science, Written Language

Lesson:
Read the ABCs of Black Bears as a class read-aloud. Discuss various facts as you read. Provide a ‘bear book area (use a milk crate to hold the books) so that students can research additional facts as they write. Choose one or more types of poetry to model and write together as a class or to have students write individually. If the class makes several poems or types of poems, they could be gathered into a class book or displayed with bear facts in the hallway.
Acrostics
Sample:
When the winter winds blow
Over the forest
Older bears find their
dens and
Sleep soundly till spring.

Help the students choose a bear word from the book for the acrostic. Short words are easiest! Write a whole-class poem first to model the writing process.

Brainstorm words that could be used for each letter in the chosen word. Younger students might write only one word for each letter. Older students or those more able might be able to write a longer phrase or sentence and connect the ideas throughout their poems.

The first letter of each line should be capitalized and might be colored to emphasize the hidden word. Experienced poets might choose to write more acrostics with their own word choices after the class poems are finished.

Limericks
Sample:
There once was a bear named Lily
She peered out of her den and looked silly,
Her cub nestled close
And tapped Lily’s nose
And together they slept on the hilly.

Limericks are a bit trickier. The pattern of the poem is based on syllables and rhymes –

1. la da da da da da da da
2. la da da da da da da da
3. la da da da da
4. la da da da da
5. la da da da da da da da

Lines 1, 2 and 5 should rhyme the final word.
Lines 3 and 4 should rhyme the final word.

Use poetic license if the rhymes and the syllables don’t quite work out – if it sounds good, go for it. Limericks are often funny but try to include some true facts in your poems.

I teach the students to say the pattern out loud, and they catch on quickly. I also give them paper marked in blank spaces for writing the syllables in the correct number for each line.

Choose a bear topic from the book and together brainstorm possible first lines. Then find as many rhyming words as you can with that line. Change the line if you need to, and use a thesaurus. Let the students suggest lines/phrases and work it out together to get a “class” limerick.

Now have students individually or in pairs/groups work on a different limerick.
**Haiku**

Sample:

Bear cubs follow their mothers,
climbing up trees and
running through woods – WAIT!

Haiku are Japanese poems that have a strict pattern of syllables and lines. There are 3 lines. Line 1 must have 7 syllables, line 2 must have 5 syllables, and line 3 must have 7 syllables. Try to express a feeling in your haiku. These poems are usually nature related.

Provide a paper with blanks for the syllable pattern in each line. Remind students that an idea might continue into another line, but do not break a word apart into two lines. Writing a “class haiku” first together will help the students get the pattern. Then brainstorm ideas for more poems and allow the students to work with a partner or by themselves to write.

**Free Verse**

Have the students answer these questions in phrases, not sentences, one phrase per line. They will end up with a free verse poem. Just tell them to answer the questions with their first thought, not that they are “writing a poem”. Sometimes students who struggle to write are very successful with this style. For younger students you might need to give the suggested answers orally so they have ideas to choose from – they will personalize them as they write.

1. Where would you find a wild bear? (in the woods, up high in a tree, under a log, in the berry bushes)
2. What color is the bear’s fur? (dark brown, shiny black, warm cinnamon, light blonde)
3. How does the fur feel? (soft and warm, wiry, wet?, thick, fuzzy)
4. Decide how big your bear will be. (a huge male bear, a tiny bear cub, a fat mother bear)
5. When and/or where does your bear sleep? (sleeping when the moon shines, dozing in the sunlight, piled up with brothers and sisters, snoring all night)
6. How and/or where does your bear move? (walking slowly along the path, running through the woods, shuffling through the leaves, scampering after mom, climbing up high in the pine tree)
7. What will your bear eat? (scratching ant pupae from a log, licking the pupae from under a rock, pulling berries off branches with her lips, chewing lazily on a tree branch)
8. How does your bear feel right now? (happy, hungry, curious, scared)

Sample:

In the dark quiet woods,
A glimpse of warm cinnamon
Fur, soft and warm.
The tired mother bear
Tries to sleep, curled in her den.
When her cubs cry out, she turns over
And lazily chews twigs while they nurse.
Contented mama bear.
Diamante
A Diamante poem is a poem in the shape of a diamond. It does not have to rhyme. It can be about one topic or two opposite topics. It uses specific kinds of words in each line.

Sample:

Cub
tiny, brown
sleeping, eating, humming,
in the den together-
nursing, waiting, licking,
furry, warm
Mama

Line 1 is a noun and the topic of your poem.
Line 2 is 2 adjectives describing your topic
Line 3 is 3 “ing” words that your topic would do
Line 4 has 4 nouns or a phrase that connects your topics
Line 5 is 3 “ing” words that your bottom topic would do
Line 6 is two adjectives describing your bottom topic
Line 7 is either the same word as line 1 or a synonym or antonym of that word

Diamantes are fun to type because the form looks best when the words line up correctly – use center alignment. Even young children can type these poems because there are few words.

Cinquains
Cinquains have five lines.
Line 1 is one word (the title)
Line 2 is two words that describe the title.
Line 3 is three words that tell the action
Line 4 is four words that express the feeling
Line 5 is one word that recalls the title

Sample:

Ant pupae
tiny, white,
digging, clawing, licking,
favorite food in springtime - yum!

Write a class cinquain together. For student cinquains, provide a paper with the correct number of blanks per line. Don’t forget to allow poetic license – if the student is happy with it and it sounds good, adapt.
Rhyming Poems
Some students may want to write rhyming poems. These are common in nursery rhymes. They can follow different patterns: lines 1 and 3, lines 2 and 4, or lines 1 and 2, lines 3 and 4, etc. Or you can write a verse, then have a refrain that rhymes, then another verse, and repeat the refrain. Get creative and enjoy! A rhyming dictionary is helpful, and brainstorm possible rhyming words before starting the poem.

Sample:

The bears climb high in trees
When they hear a sound in the breeze.
They can see from up high
Till the danger goes by.
A bear's fur might be black
And her long claws help her attack
The ants that live under the log
As she feeds her cub near the bog.
The cub chases mom all day
While she forages food 'long the way;
At night they seek out a pine tree
And the cub can dream safely.

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