



Poster Project: Poem for Two Voices Activity a 45-minute classroom activity Grades K-12 By Courtney Ferrari, Valley Catholic Middle School

Lesson Overview: Students explore a work of art by writing a poem for two voices. These poems are written in two columns, with one person reading each side. The poems are read from top to bottom. Lines read separately show different perspectives; lines at the same level are read in unison and show commonalities. Read in this way, the poem becomes a type of performance art.

Suggested Posters:

- Joseph Hirsch, *Banquet*
- Yosa Buson, *Thatched Retreat on Cold Mountain*

Materials:

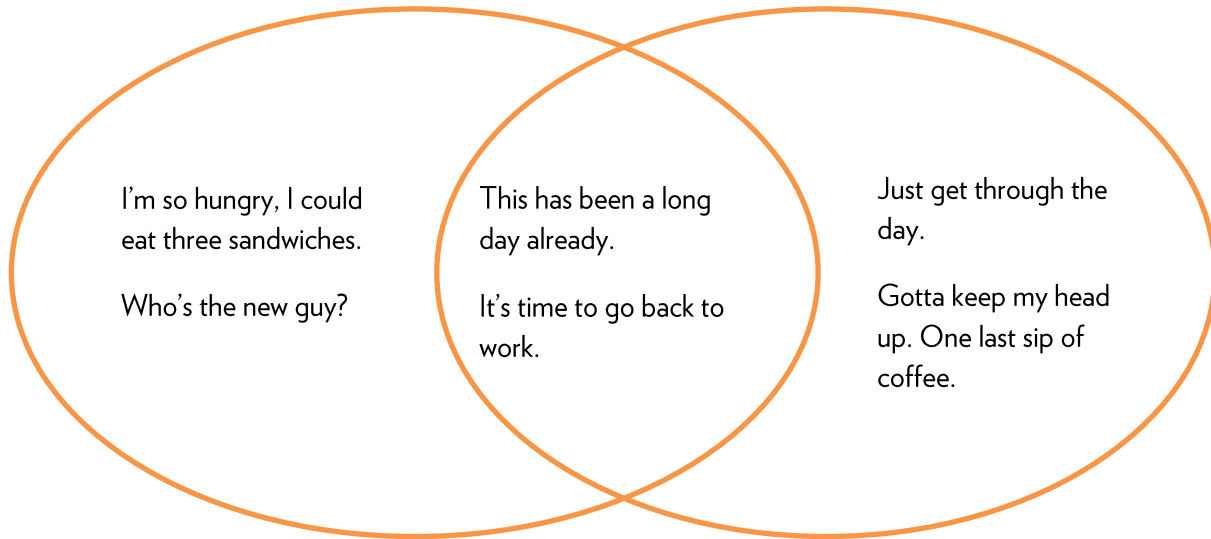
- Portland Art Museum posters, slides, or prints of artwork: any work of art that has two or more people
- Paper: blank for Venn diagram, lined for poem

Before the Lesson:

1. Decide if you want students to write a poem based on historical context (as for Hirsch's *Banquet*) or purely from their imaginations (as for Buson's *Thatched Retreat*). If the former, have students read the context from the back of the poster or provide background on desegregation in the workplace.
2. Prepare enough copies of the artwork for pairs of students to look at. Or prepare digital versions to project.
3. Reserve board space or overhead projector to demonstrate Venn diagram and poem construction.

Lesson Steps:

1. Put students in pairs, provide each with an artwork or project a large one overhead.
2. Each student chooses a different character in the artwork, and brainstorms who their character is, what they're doing and why. Students should imagine what the character was doing before the moment captured in the artwork, what they are thinking about, and what they might do after this moment. (5 minutes)
3. Students use their notes to complete a Venn diagram, putting the two characters' distinctive traits in their own circles, and writing the characters' shared thoughts or actions in the oval created by the overlapping circles. (5 minutes)



4. Students then translate those traits, thoughts, and actions into first-person statements and write them in a poem. (10 minutes) Older students can skip this step and go straight to #5.
5. Finally, students merge their poems, alternating every 1-3 lines so that each character takes turns speaking. After each character speaks once or twice, add a line showing where they come together. (10 minutes) A framework for the beginning of a poem is given below:

First character's lines:	What both characters say	Second character's lines:
I'm so hungry, I could eat three sandwiches	X	X
X	X	Just gotta get through the day.
x	This has been a long day already.	X
Who's the new guy, anyway?	X	X
X	X	Gotta keep my head up. One last sip of coffee before
x	It's time to go back to work	X

6. Provide time for pairs to share their poems with 2-3 other groups (10 minutes)