



POEM FOR TWO VOICES

Purpose:

Encouraging exchange of ideas and active debates of opposing viewpoints is one of the strongest, most memorable instructional strategies, according to recent research. One method for combining creative writing with the study of factual events in a history, geography, or economics class is to the "Poem for Two Voices." This strategy requires students to put themselves into another person's experiences in another time or place, considering what that individual would say if we could listen to a debate between him/her and an individual from his/her opposing point of view.

This strategy can be an effective follow-up to the analysis of primary sources, in which two opposing or contrasting viewpoints were expressed, asking students to quote from the source or rephrase it in their own words, as they write the "poem."

Student poems also make for good classroom performances and readers' theatres, involving groups of students or the entire class.

Procedure:

1. Engage students in a study of two points of view toward an historic or contemporary event. Ask students to jot down important reasoning behind the differing perspectives, which they will later use for reference when writing their "Poems for Two Voices."
2. Assign students into pairs. Each member of the pair is to represent one of two opposing viewpoints. Together, the pair will create a "Poem for Two Voices," writing statements from their own perspectives AND finding common ground for statements made by both perspectives.

A POEM FOR TWO VOICES

I am _____

I am _____

*(Declare the subject
for our debate)*

*(Declare what side I have taken
this side of the debate.)*

*(Declare what side I have taken
this side of the debate.)*

(Declare a point of agreement.)

*(Explain the reasoning behind
my point of view.)*

*(Explain the reasoning behind
my point of view.)*

*(Respond to the previous
statement made by my
opponent.)*

*(Declare another point of
agreement or rephrase earlier
statement.)*

*(Respond to the previous
statement made by my
opponent.)*

*(Use extended reasoning or
elaboration to explain my point
of view.)*

*(Use extended reasoning or
elaboration to explain my point
of view.)*

*(Summarize with a strong
statement what we both
agree upon.)*

Secondary Social Studies sample:

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>I am Chief John Ross of the Cherokee Nation.</p> | <p>The destiny of the Indian is of great concern and importance.</p> <p>We should avoid the calamity that happened to the Mohegan, Delaware, and Narrangansett people.</p> <p>The encroachment of white settlers onto Indian lands is an endless flow.</p> <p>Into the new lands, whites should not pursue the Indian.</p> | <p>I am Andrew Jackson, President of the United States of America.</p> |
| <p>We, the Cherokee, reject the idea that we cannot live among the white settlers peacefully.</p> | | <p>"All experiments for the improvement of the Indian (situation) have failed."</p> |
| <p>We have already adopted the white man's dress, language, customs, and even religion.</p> | | <p>"(The Indian) cannot live in contact with civilized community."</p> |
| <p>"The Cherokee, under any circumstance have no weapon to use but argument. If that should fail, we must submit."</p> | | <p>All tribes must eventually move to lands beyond the Mississippi, by force, if necessary.</p> |
| <p>"I still strongly hope we shall find ultimate justice from...the people of the United States."</p> | | <p>There, they can find "countless herds of buffalo" and in a 'short time, adapt their own habits."</p> |

** Quotations from John Ross taken from address to the Cherokee Nation, July 2, 1836.
 Quotations from Andrew Jackson taken from address to Congress, 1835.*