How to Teach Imagery - a lesson plan

By Jay Kirk

This is a lesson plan I use to teach imagery in poetry to my 9th grade high school students. I’ve used this lesson many times and have found it to be very successful.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy
Instructions

1. Step 1

   I always begin with a definition and example of imagery. Currently, I'm using this:

   Imagery - an image, in its basic sense, is something concrete that appeals to any of the five senses - sight, sound, touch, taste, smell - as well as metaphor, simile, and personification.

   For example, the following images might be used to describe a stroll on a summer night:

   Sight - a full moon in a black sky
   Sound - the chirp of crickets
   Taste - the tang of a cold glass of lemonade
   Touch - a warm breeze
   Smell - freshly mowed grass

2. Step 2

   Next, I have the students make a five column chart and I'll have them label each column with one sense in each:

   Sight Sound Touch Taste Smell

3. Step 3

   I tell them to close their eyes (this always scares them) and imagine the perfect Saturday morning. For me in the northwest, it involves the sight of rain outside the windows with the feel of the heat blasting, the sounds my children's cartoons, the taste of pancakes, and the smell of another brewing pot of coffee. I have the students fill in the chart for their own Saturdays, using one or two images for sense.

4. Step 4

   After I've taken a classful of responses (they love sharing these), I'll ask them to describe the mood of a Saturday morning. Responses usually include words like: "warm," "mellow," "quiet," and "peaceful."
5. Step 5

Once we've wrapped this up, I ask them to close their eyes again and I'll start making an obnoxious sound like an alarm clock. Eventually, they open their eyes and give me strange looks (what else is new?) and finally, I'll tell them that it's Monday morning. They all groan and I ask for some images that accompany Monday mornings. We do this orally without filling in the chart again and I usually find that they are even more eager to respond than they are when we offer Saturday images. Once we've exhausted all responses, I'll ask for mood words again and students usually respond with words like: "cold," "horrific," "fast-paced," and "chaotic." Next thing you know, they understand imagery and mood!

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