

LAURA PURDIE SALAS

small writes for brighter days

BIOPOEMS

Teachers introduced me to the biopoem, which usually uses a person as a topic. But I love to have students write about things that aren't even alive!

Grade level: K-2 (probably just the group poem); 3-adult (the whole shebang)

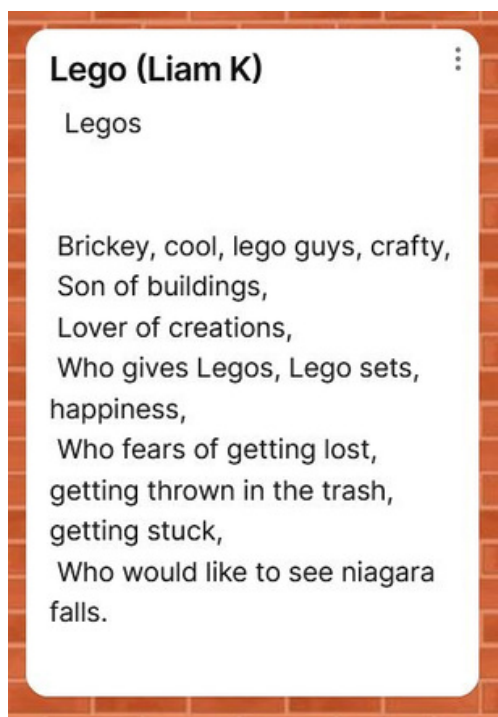
Time: 45 minutes if you move quickly and write just a few lines

BIOPOEM FORMAT

Show students the format of a biopoem and **read a couple of samples.**

Biopoem Format

1. First name
2. Four adjectives
3. Child of (x) and (y)
4. Lover of (3 things)
5. Who feels (3 different feelings and when they are felt)
6. Who gives (3 things)
7. Who fears (3 things)
8. Who would like to see (3 things)
9. Who lives (brief description)
10. Who (wild card)
11. Last name



student poem

EXAMPLES

Here's one of mine that uses the entire form—all 11 lines—and one from a student.

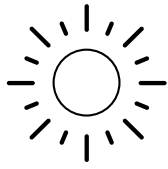
Airplane Flight

by Laura Purdie Salas

takeoff
 rushing, rolling, slanting, flying!
 child of ground and sky
 lover of clouds, sunshine, and lift
 who feels scared of lightning, awed at
 mountains, and free as a bird
 who gives family reunions, emergency
 care, and adventure
 who fears volcanic ash, thunderstorms,
 and flocks of geese
 who would like to see long runways,
 sunsets, and happy people
 who lives in hangars, on tarmacs,
 and above the clouds
 who will see you safely home...
 landing

Sleepovers (Marley, 3rd grade)

Sleepovers
 Soft, cozy, blankets.
 Daughter of popping popcorn.
 Lover of friends, fun and happiness.
 Who feels fun, kindness and love.
 Who gives presents, candy and care
 Who fears to sleep in the dark,
 and in different bed
 Who would like to see the imaginative
 life with friends
 Who lives a non-imaginative lonely life
 with no friends
 But now it's okay that now i have
 friends.
 Slumber Party



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GROUP TOPIC

Choose a topic for a group poem.

I like to let kids vote among several images: a firework, an alligator, a rocket, and a sailing ship, for example.

Chat about common words.

If your topic's "a baseball," ask each student to write 3 words that describe a baseball. Ask, "Who has 'round' on your list?" And then "white." Probably many hands will go up. Common words spill from our brains first. There's nothing wrong with them, as they declutter our head so we can think of more unusual, distinctive words!

BRAINSTORM

As a group, **brainstorm 10-20 words** related to the topic. After a few common words, push for unique, specific words, too. Ask, "What's a word you're thinking of that maybe nobody else has thought of?" Here's a group sample about "firework":

booming	flashing
outburst	like fire
burst of color	bright
colorful	extreme
exploding	sparkles
POP	powerful
4th of July	loud
light of sparks	colorful sparks
shiny	sulfur
dazzling	isolated

DRAFT

Show the structure of a biopoem again. As a group, write a quick, complete biopoem draft. Give lots of encouragement and affirmation.

Remind kids not to judge the first draft. The group poem might not hang together because so many students contribute.



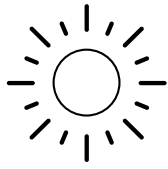
INDIVIDUAL TOPIC

Next, **students choose individual topics.** Something they love or fear makes a good topic.

Hand out **distinctive paper or large index cards** for students to write their poem on.

Students **brainstorm for 2-4 minutes.** You could toss out a few prompts, such as:

- feelings
- places
- smells
- textures
- colors
- tastes
- sounds
- steps of a process
- objects associated with it
- favorite moment
- why it's important
- why it's funny
- why it's sad
- What detail or secret do YOU know about your topic that most people don't know? [This one's usually a favorite.]



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Paint: Clayton F. (5-27-16)

COLORFUL

who fears dullness and hatred
who proves creativity
who gives happiness, satisfaction
and love

ACRYLIC

student poem

STUDENT EXAMPLES

Gymnastics (Scarlett G)

Son of strength
Daughter of flips
Who sheds tears, rips skin, gives
high fives and smiles

Minecraft (Alex H)

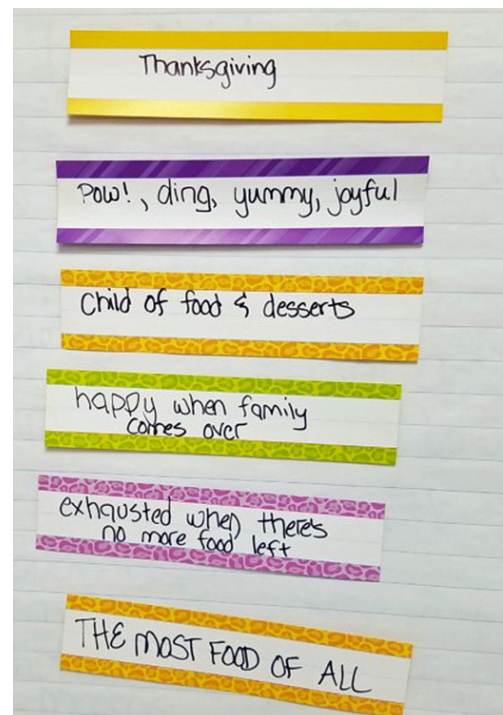
Son of Notch
Son of programming
Who is adventurous and
wondrous
Cave game

WRITE!

Students write mini biopoems. They come up with their **first and last lines first**. Since their topics aren't people, ask students to get creative for their first and last lines. They come up with some fabulous ideas!

Then students **write middle lines**. (How many? It depends how much time you have.) You can have fun choosing which lines. Draw numbered ping pong balls, roll dice, count letters in a student's name, etc. Read the number out loud, and then students write that line from the form. For the last of the middle lines, let kids choose which one they want. Or assign your own favorite! Mine is #3, "Child of X and Y." Something about that prompt draws wonderful lines from students.

Invite volunteers to share their poems and **celebrate** all the efforts.



3rd grade group poem