From Imagery to a new Persona

A student's way in to Frank X Walker's *I Dedicate This Ride*

The following writing lessons accompany Frank X Walker's *I Dedicate This Ride,* a book of persona poetry inspired by the life and career of jockey Isaac Murphy. These lessons were designed with high school students in mind; however, they could be adapted for younger students. To appreciate Walker's use of telling a story through persona poetry, it is the intention of these lessons to ultimately instruct students to write a persona poem. The lessons assume students have some knowledge of poetic form. They begin with development of a poetic vocabulary through use of visual art. Imagery lessons engage students in use of poetic language. From these introductory lessons, students move to an appreciation of Walker's use of imagery. Next, students explore the use of personification, then to invented persona. Finally, students will find using the voice of a real person brings them to a better understanding of the many people who are a part of our world.

The Kentucky standards for high school students that apply to these lessons and are listed on pages 2 and 3. Please note the new Common Core State Standards have been used from the "Crosswalk" document available at http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/. If teachers would like to relate these to Program of Studies it is available on this document.

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English Language Arts Common Core Standards:

CC.9-10.L.3 Knowledge of Language: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CC.9-10.L.5 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CC.9-10.L.5.a Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: Interpret figures of speech (e.g., satire, sarcasm) in context and analyze their role in the text.

CC.9-10.R.I.6 Craft and Structure: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view

CC.9-10.R.L.4 Craft and Structure: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CC.9-10.R.L.10 Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10,read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CC.9-10.W.2.d Text Types and Purposes: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

CC.9-10.W.3.a Text Types and Purposes: Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

CC.9-10.W.3.d Text Types and Purposes: Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

CC.11-12.L.3 Knowledge of Language: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CC.11-12.L.5 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CC.11-12.L.5.a Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.

CC.11-12.R.I.6 Craft and Structure: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

CC.11-12.R.L.4 Craft and Structure: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.(Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CC.11-12.R.L.10 Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CC.11-12.W.2.d Text Types and Purposes: Use precise language, domain specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.

CC.11-12.W.3.a Text Types and Purposes: Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

CC.11-12.W.3.d Text Types and Purposes: Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

LESSON 1
Building a Poetic Vocabulary - Imagery

Objective: Students are introduced to the concept of imagery by consciously writing using the senses to describe a common object.

Materials: nothing beyond common classroom equipment – a blackboard, pencil, paper

Procedure:
> **Step 1:** Give students a definition of imagery – *language that appeals to the senses*. Use of imagery enables a reader to *experience* what the writer wishes to communicate rather than simple being told.
> **Step 2:** Write the following words on the board: **apple   my backpack**
> Under each write the 5 senses: taste, touch, smell, sound, sight
> (When imagery is discussed these may be referred to as gustatory, tactile, olfactory, auditory and visual imagery) Ask students to list words describing these two things using the senses. The chart may look like the following:

	APPLE	MY BACKPACK
Taste	tart	X
Touch	smooth	course
Smell	sweet	like moldy cheese
Sound	crunch	swish
Sight	red	black, ripped, held together with safety pins

> **Step 3:** Students are asked to write a paragraph about each item using the words they selected for imagery. Some students may need a starter phrase. For example:

> The apple lay in the basket…
> I took the apple from the branch. It was…
> My backpack is an extension of me. It looks like…
> As I set my backpack beside her desk she looked at me strangely. This backpack..

> Allow about 5 minutes for writing.
> **Step 4:** Students are given the opportunity to share. Explain the audience should *experience* the item as they read because this is the purpose of imagery.

> **Formative Assessment:** As students share their imagery-laden passages, ask other class members to identify the words which appeal to the senses and what sense is "engaged."

LESSON 2
Imagery from Art

Objective: Students will build a poetic vocabulary from visual art related to the horse industry. This will not only introduce them to thoroughbred racing, but lead to an appreciation of the authentic diction used in Frank X. Walker's *I Dedicate This Ride.*.Student will use this vocabulary to write imagery laden prose about the visual art. Finally students will understand the effectiveness of imagery to communicate an experience to a reader.

Materials: Pictures of horses, race track, backside workers, pageantry of race day etc. These may easily be accessed using Google Images.

Procedure:

Step 1: Students are given a picture of horses, a race track, backside workers, the pageantry of race day. (These can be obtained through "google images." It's suggested these are laminated, eliminating the need to collect these for each lesson.)

Step 2: Students are to make an imagery chart as the previous day's lesson, but this time the images are inspired by the pictures. For example, a picture of a horse in its stall may produce a chart as follows:

Taste	x
Touch	silky mane
	soft nose
	course coat
	warm breath
Smell	fresh hay
Sound	bridle jingles
	horse snorts
	horse stamps feet
Sight	dark brown
	white star
	wide eyed

Step 3: Students write a paragraph about the picture they are given using imagery identified on their chart.

Allow about 5 minutes of writing time. If students have difficulty beginning the paragraph, the teacher may suggest a sentence starter.

Step 4: When students complete their paragraphs, take them up along with the picture. Find some place in the room to immediately display the pictures.

Formative Assessment: Read a paragraph and ask students to identify about which picture the paragraph was written. This can be done formally or informally. If the photos are numbered, each student could indicate the photo's description with its number on a sheet of paper. If informal, students who volunteer randomly to indicate the match of photo with description.

Follow up discussion about what words in the paragraph produce imagery, plus the specific type of imagery should be identified.

LESSON 3

Applying Imagery to Poetry

Objective: Students apply what they learned in previous classes – the concept of imagery - to Frank X Walker's poetry. Student's will then write a poem inspired by the horse industry art viewed last class.

Materials: Frank X Walker's *I Dedicate this Ride.* Enough copies for each student of the poems "I Thought Slavery Was a Song," "Temple of My Familiar," "Mass Choir." Colored pencils.

Procedure:

Step 1 – Handout three poems from Walker's book. Students are given 3 colored pencils.

Step 2 – Poems should be read aloud by teacher or volunteers. Students are to <u>underline the imagery</u> found in each poem using a different color pencil to determine the different types of imagery. For example, underline in blue for auditory imagery, red for olfactory imagery and green for visual imagery. Note: Walker uses auditory imagery effectively in these poems. But, olfactory imagery in "Temple of My Familiar" is both unusual and paradoxical!

Step 3 – Discuss imagery found in the poems. Students identify not only the diction used to create the imagery, but also what effect it has on the reader.

Step 4 – Return pictures and imagery word lists from previous class. Much like Walker, students will use imagery to write a short poem.

Step 5 – Inform students they are going to write an *ekphrastic* poem - a poem in response to an art form, in this case visual art. Use of imagery vocabulary identified previously is required. (Depending on student level, you may not have to go to step 6.) Allow 10 – 15 writing time.

Step 6 - Show students a copy of "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams. Discuss the imagery in this short poem and note the pattern (3 words, 1 word/ 4 stanzas). Ask students to imitate this pattern with the picture from the past class. Their imagery vocabulary provides the diction! See attachment #1 for an example. This short poem format will give students unfamiliar with poetry some confidence. Allow writing time.

Step 7 – Students should be given time to share their poetry.

Step 8 – Next, students are to rewrite the poem they have just completed, or write a new one. This time they are to *personify something* in the poem – the horse, of course, is a good choice, but it can be an object, like a feed bucket. Again, see Attachment #1.

Note: Other concepts are at work here: Form, economy of words, importance of diction. Depending on the level or experience of the class, teachers may want to point out the other poetic elements involved.   **6**

Formative Assessment: Poems written are the assessment of whether students understand the importance of imagery in poetry. These poems with the pictures would make a great classroom display as they enjoy more of the poetry from *I Dedicate this Ride.*

Attachment #1

Ekphrastic poem using "The Red Wheel Barrow" as a model.

The Red Wheel Barrow
by William Carlos Williams

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

Example photo from google images.

topper-keeneland.jpg

	1st poem	2nd Poem (personified)

1st poem

2nd Poem (personified)

Race Day
Morning of dreams
awakened

by warm breeze
through

silk, black mane
flying

passed roar of
crowd.

My Race Day
I awaken to
dreams

of warm breezes
through

my flying black
mane

As I roar
past.

LESSON 4
The effect of persona poetry

Objective: Students will understand the value of persona poetry in communicating a viewpoint of another person, not only to the reader, but the writer as well.

Materials: Enough copies of poems "I Dedicate This Ride" and "Murphy's Secret" for members of the class. A selection of other poems written in a persona other than Isaac Murphy from *I Dedicate this Ride.*

Procedure: From previous lessons students gained an understanding of imagery, applied it Walker's poetry, applied it to their interpretation of visual art and finally personified an animal or object from the same picture using this imagery. Today's lesson takes the idea of personification a step further. Instead of an object of an animal, students become someone else.

Frank X Walker takes on the persona of someone from jockey Isaac Murphy's life , or Murphy himself, as the poem's speaker in each poem with the exception of the final poem, where the speaker is Walker himself. Walker applies poetic language, including imagery, in poetic form so these speakers from Murphy's life may tell his/her story.

> **Step 1 –** As a warm-up, discuss use of personification in poetry. Objects and concepts are commonly brought to life in literature. For example:
>
> > I am the school door that yawns open and swallows the waiting school children.
> > I am cancer, eating away at the future he was never promised.
>
> From the following suggestions ask student to write a statement personifying the object. Start sentences with the phrase "I am."
>
> Love   a knife   music   pizza   your Geometry book
>
> **Step 2 –** Students should share at least one of their sentences. Answer: What effect does it have to personify something? What kind of understanding results?
>
> **Step 3 –** Instruct students to select a person from their immediate family and become them for a few minutes. Write a short prose passage as if they are that family member. Instruct students to use first person and place the person they are becoming in a typical family setting. Allow about 5 minutes of writing time.
>
> **Step 4 –** Before reading their passages ask students if anyone gained a new understanding while writing this piece. If yes, ask them to explain and then read their paragraph.

Step 5 – Look at Walker's poems "Murphy's Secret" and "I Dedicate This Ride" in which the speaker is Isaac Murphy. Students are to answer the following questions:

1. What does the reader discover about Isaac Murphy as a jockey?
2. What does the reader discover about Isaac Murphy as a man?
3. What does the reader discover about Isaac Murphy as an African-American?
4. How does taking on the *persona* of Isaac Murphy better assist the reader in understanding Isaac Murphy than the poet simple writing about Isaac Murphy?
5. Consider the first stanzas. How would it read if it were not in first person?(see example response below) And does this change the affect the poem has on you as its reader?

   Possible response for *Murphy's Secret:*
   When folks find who he is
   They want to know what he says to them
   If they are white he tells them he says

   Possible response for *I Dedicate This Ride:*
   When he comes barreling down the stretch,
   he always thinks about his daddy, James Burns,
   a runaway slave turned soldier.

Step 6 – Divide students into small groups. Give each group a poem from Walker's book. Select persona that is NOT Isaac Murphy.   Suggestions:

"The Right to Bear Arms"	persona – James Burns
"The Heart of the Matter"	persona – America Burns
"Uncle Eli's Boys"	persona – Eli Jordan
"Touch"	persona – Lucy Murphy
"Nomenclature"	persona – America Burns
"Too Heavy"	persona – Lucy Murphy
"Ain't Your Uncle Tom or Uncle Remus"	persona – Eli Jordan

One member of student groups should read the poem assigned to the group aloud. Then the group should discuss the following questions:

1-What was the relationship of this person to Isaac Murphy? Would they be a reliable person to give information about him? How do you know from the poem?

2 – What does the poem reveal about Murphy as a jockey? A man? An African-American? Cite specific examples.

Formative Assessment: Each student group reads the poem assigned aloud and explains their responses to the questions.

Lesson 5
Writing persona poems
Summative Assessment

Objective: Students apply what they have learned about imagery, personification and persona poems to write an original series of persona poems. This becomes an assignment that is the summative assessment for this writing unit.

Materials: Students will need a facility for research, or access to a computer.

Procedure:
Step 1 – Students are assigned to find an historical person or a person currently in the news from which to write a group of persona poems. Number of poems created will be determined by the teacher. Suggest they write a minimum of 5 poems and use 3 personas.
Step 2 – Students are given library time or computer time to determine what person they want to use as their subject, as well as the 3 personas they will use. Teachers may want to require source verification.
Step 3 – Teacher establishes a timeline/deadline for the persona poem series.

Summative Assessment:
Teachers have the option of how formal/informal they will assess the persona poems that result. A formal approach would include a teacher created rubric. (An example is given in Attachment #2.) An assessment could include an oral presentation score with a rationale for student choices in creating the varied personas following the reading, as well as a writing score.

Final Words:
These lessons are just one way to involve students in Frank X Walker's *I Dedicate This Ride.* There can be many more.   As teacher's "dedicating your ride" every day to the education of Kentucky's youth, I invite you to add more.

Attachment #2

Suggested Rubric for a series of Personal Poems

100 = Student selected a viable person from which to inspire a group of persona poems. Student adhered to the requirement of having a group of ____ poems written in a minimum of ____ personas. Quality research is evident. Student has carefully selected 3 personas to tell the selected personas story. Student wrote each poem in first person in the persona of selected individual. Effective poetic form is used.   Student employs poetic language, such as imagery and metaphor, to enhance the telling of the persona's story. Considerations of punctuation, line breaks, economy of words, form are evident in creating the poems. The overall effect of the poem is an enhanced understanding of the selected persona by the reader.