Poetry of the Bighorn

Objectives:
Students will be able to express their knowledge of bighorn sheep through poetry.

Common Core State Standards:
- RL.1.10 With prompting and support, read prose and poetry
- RL.2.10 Read and comprehend literature, including poetry
- RL.3.10 Read and comprehend literature, including poetry
- RF.3.4 Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression.
- RL.4.10 Read and comprehend literature, including poetry.
- RF.4.4 Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression.
- RL.5.10 Read and comprehend literature, including poetry.
- RF.5.4 Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression.

Background:
Throughout time poetry has been a medium for expressing ideas, emotions, and beliefs. History has been told, legends passed down, and faith strengthened by simple poems written by passionate people. A literal definition of poetry is “the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts.” Poetry can be the expression of a heart filled with passion and love, whether that is a passion for justice, or faith; or a love of nature or family. Poetry is a means of expressing our hopes and dreams, emotions and beliefs.

Materials:
- Writing materials
- Photos of bighorn sheep to help students visualize (optional)

Procedures:
1. Everyone can be a poet, at least to some extent. This activity is designed to take knowledge about bighorn sheep that students have learned and apply it to means of expression with less rules.
2. There are many ways to go about this. Photos of bighorn sheep and their habitat could be placed on groups of students’ desks to initiate conversations and ideas about these sheep. Perhaps giving time to allow students in imagine they are a bighorn and what that might feel like, how it lives, where it travels, and how plants
and other animals look from its perspective.

3. Using these thoughts, students could write free verse or rhyming. Cinquain and haiku are interesting forms that can be taught, which include more structure. Even a poem written as a group could be fun.

Poem Examples:

**Haiku:** Haiku (high-koo) are short three-line poems with a 5-7-5 syllable structure that use sensory language to capture a feeling or image. They are often inspired by an element of nature, a moment of beauty, or another poignant experience. Haiku poetry was originally developed by Japanese poets, and the form was adopted (and adapted) by virtually every modern language, including English. The secret to writing great haiku is to be observant and appreciate nature.

**Example:**

Tall cliffs abound it
Yet it glides from rock to rock
The desert bighorn.

**Cinquain:** A cinquain poem has five lines. The word comes from the French cinq, which means five.

Cinquain poems have the following pattern:

Line 1 = 2 syllables
Line 2 = 4 syllables
Line 3 = 6 syllables
Line 4 = 8 syllables
Line 5 = 2 syllables

There are no specific rules about writing a cinquain other than it must have five lines and the correct syllable count. However, most poets feel that it is better to stick with concrete objects than with abstract ideas (“My Dog” rather than “Happiness”).

It is also true that mixing the emphasis of the syllables (or words) will create a stronger effect than writing a string of words with similar lengths and emphasis. Other poetic devices such as assonance and alliteration can be used to help make your cinquain poem memorable.

Organizing the ideas in your cinquain to follow the order below is another suggestion:

Title
Description of the title
Some action about the title
Feeling about the title
Synonym (similar word) for the title

**Example:**

Bighorn
Curved horns on head
Jumping from rock to rock
The magnificent beast stands high
Wild sheep

**Diamante:** A diamante is a poem shaped like a diamond. It can be used to show that words are related through shades of meaning from one extreme to an opposite extreme, following a pattern of parts of speech like this:

- noun
- adjective adjective
- participle participle participle
- noun noun noun noun
- participle participle participle
- adjective adjective
- noun

Another way of thinking about it is:

Line 1: Beginning subject
Line 2: Two describing words about line 1
The key element is that the first noun and the last noun are unlike, almost like opposites.

**Example:**

Lamb  
Small, White  
Growing, Jumping, Playing  
Hoof, Hair, Wing, Feather  
Soaring, Looking, Gliding  
Brown, Large  
Golden Eagle

**Assessment:** Through their poems, a teacher could assess elements learned from several lessons taught about bighorn sheep. For example, the above diamante would demonstrate that the student understood that a young sheep, the lamb, is part of a food chain also belonging to the golden eagle, which often times preys upon lambs. The descriptions of the lamb also would demonstrate an understanding of what a lamb looks like and actions associated with a young sheep.