

I'm An Alichickapotamous: Writing an Autobiographical Poem

Language Objectives:

- The student will write an autobiographical poem based on the headdress of his or her creation.
- The student will identify the characteristics of an autobiographical poem.
- The student will modify the poem using the writing process.
- The student will orally present his or her poem.

Visual Art Objectives:

- The student will collaborate with a partner to design a headdress.
- The student will sketch an animal. When the sketch is completed, he or she will pass it to a partner, who will add an animal.
- The student will combine the animals to create a new animal, and design a headdress based on the animal of his or her creation.
- The student will present the headdress in accompaniment to the poem.

Vocabulary: autobiographical poem, headdress, collaborate

DAY ONE

Anticipatory Set:

(5 min)

TTW calls on students and asks them to name one important fact about themselves and then use an adjective to describe this fact. TTW explain the concept of the autobiographical poem.

Procedures:

(20 min)

TTW show students *Frontlet Headdress* by the Nuxalk Peoples and use the Inquiry Method (or Visual Thinking Strategy) to discuss the sculpture with students. TTW ask students open ended questions to encourage participation.

EXAMPLE: *Frontlet Headdress*, Nuxalk Peoples

- Questions:
- How many animals do you see in the mask?
 - What kind of animals do you think they are?
 - How can you tell?
 - What materials do you think were used to make this?
 - How do you think the mask was used?

TTW continue to ask questions and point out the details as students mention them.

Guided Practice: “Exquisite Corpse”

(15 min)

TSW work in groups of 2 – 4 students to play a game called “exquisite corpse.” To play this game, TSW fold a piece of paper lengthwise into 2 – 4 parts (one for each group member). One student will begin by drawing a part of an animal in the top section of the paper. When finished, TSW pass the paper to the next student without letting the second student see what the first student has drawn. TSW continue drawing and passing until everyone has had a turn.

Independent Practice: Headdress Making

(20 min)

TSW continue to work in a small group and design a headdress based on the “exquisite corpse” drawing. TSW use cardboard, collage materials, felt, and other art and craft supplies to create a 3-dimensional headdress based on the exquisite corpse drawing. The original work of art may serve as inspiration.

Closure:

TTW tell students that they will continue to work on the headdress and write an autobiographical poem in a later class.

DAY TWO**Anticipatory Set:**

(15 min)

TTW include a mini-lesson on the elements of an autobiographical poem, presenting a format (an example is included below). Together, the class will write an autobiographical poem about the class (or the teacher).

Guided Practice: Headdress Making

(15 min)

TSW work in the same small groups to complete the headdress based on the “exquisite corpse” drawing from the previous session. The Nuxalk *Frontlet Headdress* may be projected or handed out to the class as an example.

Independent Practice: Individual Writing

(20 min)

As the groups finish the headdresses, each student will write his or her own poem about the headdress (or drawing). Each student will use the template for an autobiographical poem and write a poem as if they were the combination of animals represented in the group project.

Closure:

(10 min)

TTW ask if any students are ready to present the poems and headdresses to the class. Finished works will be displayed in a designated spot (blackboard, table, wall, etc.) 2 – 3 students will present their story to the class.

Materials:

Digital images or photocopies of Nuxalk *Frontlet Headdress*

Colored pencils

Collage/craft materials (feathers, felt, beads, pieces of mirror, washers, pipe cleaners)

Paint

Glue

Paper

Autobiographical poem example:

1. First name. I am Allen the Alichickapotamous.
2. Four descriptive traits. I have skinny little legs, a big scaly body, a long nose and sharp teeth.
3. Sibling of... Sibling of Hilda the Hippoalichicken.
4. Who likes... Who likes laying in the sun, swimming in the swamp, jazz and eating grass.
5. Who feels... Who feels happy when it's Jazz Fest.
6. Who needs... Who needs a hug.
7. Who gives... Who gives his time to entertain tourists on swamp tours.
8. Who fears... Who fears speeding air boats.
9. Who would like to see... Who would like to see another Alichickapotamous.
10. Resident of... Resident of Louisiana.

Suggestions for advanced practice:

Writing: The students can create their own format for the poem which can be rhyming or non-rhyming.

Art-making: The headdress can be made from recycled or found objects. Students may take several class periods to work on the project. Teachers may want to incorporate the project with a study of natives of the Northwest Coast. The poems can be written from drawings if necessary.