

# Lesson Plan: Poetry Detectives - Uncovering Secrets with Our Senses

## Materials Needed:

- Notebook or plain paper
  - Pencils, pens, and colored markers
  - A small bag or box with a few "mystery objects" (e.g., a crinkly leaf, a smooth stone, a piece of chocolate, a lemon wedge, a soft piece of fabric)
  - A whiteboard or large piece of paper for modeling
  - Printed or on-screen copies of the poems: "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams and "First Fall" by Maggie Smith
  - "Sensory Detective Notes" worksheet (a sheet of paper divided into five sections labeled: Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch)
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## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- **Identify** words in a poem that describe what you can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.
  - **Explain** how these "sense words" help create a picture or a feeling in your mind.
  - **Write** your own short poem using at least three of the five senses.
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## Lesson Plan

### 1. Introduction (10 minutes)

#### Hook: The Mystery Object Game

**Educator says:** "Today, we are going to become Poetry Detectives! A detective's job is to find hidden clues, and our first mission is to solve a mystery using our senses. I have a secret object here. I want you to close your eyes and use your other senses to guess what it is."

- Present one of the mystery objects (like the crinkly leaf or soft fabric) to the student without letting them see it.
- Ask guiding questions: "What does it *feel* like? Is it rough or smooth? What does it *sound* like when you touch it? Does it have a *smell*?"
- After a few guesses, let the student see the object. Repeat with another object, like the lemon, focusing on smell and maybe even a tiny taste.

#### Setting the Goal

**Educator says:** "Great detective work! You used your senses to figure out the mystery. Poets do the exact same thing. They use special 'sense words' as clues to help us imagine exactly what they are describing. Today, our mission is to find these sense clues in poems and then use them to write our own secret-message poems."

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## 2. Body (25 minutes)

### I Do: Modeling How to Find "Sense Clues" (5 mins)

**Educator says:** "Let's be detectives together. I'm going to read a short poem and think out loud to find the sense clues. Our main tool is our 'Sensory Detective Notes' chart. It has a spot for each of our five senses."

(On the whiteboard, draw a simple chart with five columns: Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch.)

### Poem: "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams

*so much depends  
upon*

*a red wheel  
barrow*

*glazed with rain  
water*

*beside the white  
chickens*

### Educator's Think-Aloud:

- "Okay, let's read the first part... 'a red wheel barrow'. Hmm, 'red' is a color, so that's a **sight** word. I'll write 'red wheel barrow' in my Sight column."
- "'glazed with rain water'. 'Glazed' makes me think of something shiny, so that's **sight**. But 'rain water' also makes me think of how something wet would *feel*. I'll put 'rain water' in my **Touch** column, too."
- "'beside the white chickens'. 'White' is another color, so that goes in the **Sight** column. I can almost hear the chickens clucking, but the poem doesn't say that, so I'll stick to the clues that are actually written down."

### We Do: Guided Detective Work (10 mins)

**Educator says:** "Now it's your turn to help me. Let's investigate a new poem together. I'll read it, and you shout out 'Clue!' when you hear a word that uses one of our five senses."

### Poem: "First Fall" by Maggie Smith

*We kick at the leaves, making a satisfying  
**crunch**, the sound of breaking bones.  
We want to be the ones to crack them open.  
We are the giants, and the leaves are tiny people.  
It's a good game. When the wind blows, it's a  
color storm: a flurry of gold and red.*

- Read the poem aloud once. Then read it again, line by line.
- Ask questions to guide the student:
  - "In the first line, do you see any clues? What sense does the word 'crunch' use?" (Sound)
  - "Let's add 'crunch' to our Sound column. What about 'color storm' and 'flurry of gold and

red'? Which sense is that?" (Sight)

- "What about the feeling of the wind blowing? Which sense would that be?" (Touch)
- Fill in a new "Sensory Detective Notes" chart together.

### You Do: Independent Practice & Creative Application (10 mins)

**Educator says:** "You've proven you're an expert detective! Now it's time for your final mission. I want you to write your own short poem about something you like—it could be about playing a video game, eating pizza, or jumping in a puddle. Your goal is to include clues for at least **three different senses**."

#### Instructions:

1. Choose a topic (e.g., "My Favorite Snack").
2. Brainstorm some "sense words" about it first. For pizza, you might think: *hot cheese* (touch/taste), *bubbly sauce* (sight/sound), *herby smell* (smell).
3. Write a short poem (4-6 lines is perfect) that uses at least three of those words. Don't worry about rhyming!

**Success Criteria:** "A successful poem will create a clear picture in the reader's mind by using words that describe at least three of the five senses."

### 3. Conclusion (5 minutes)

#### Share and Recap

- Invite the student to share their poem aloud.
- After they read, ask: "Which three senses did you use as clues in your poem? How did you help me see, hear, or taste what you were describing?"
- Praise their specific word choices. ("I love how you used the word 'sizzling'—I could really hear it!")

#### Reinforce the Takeaway

**Educator says:** "Fantastic work today, Detective! We discovered that poets use sensory details—words for sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch—to make their writing come alive. It's like they are giving us a virtual reality headset to experience the poem. You can use this powerful tool in any story or description you write!"

### Differentiation and Adaptability

- **For Scaffolding:** Before the "You Do" writing activity, brainstorm a list of sensory words together related to a simple topic like "A Day at the Beach." The student can then use this word bank to build their poem.
- **For Extension:** Challenge the student to write a poem that uses all five senses. Or, ask them to find an object in the room and write a "riddle poem" describing it using only sensory details, and you have to guess what it is.
- **For a Classroom or Group:** The "You Do" activity can be done as a 'Think-Pair-Share'. Students brainstorm ideas alone, share them with a partner, and then a few volunteers share their poems with the whole class.

## Assessment

- **Formative:** Observe student's responses during the "We Do" activity and their ability to correctly categorize sense words on the shared chart.
- **Summative:** The student's original poem is the final assessment. Check if it meets the success criteria of including at least three distinct sensory details.