

# The Poet's Time Machine: Stepping into the Shoes of Giants

## Lesson Overview

In this lesson, Ivy Kate will explore the lives, historical contexts, and distinct writing styles of three literary icons: William Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, and Oscar Wilde. By analyzing their unique "voices," she will learn how to mimic their styles to create her own original works.

## Materials Needed

- Access to the internet or library books for poet biographies
- Copies of the following poems: *Sonnet 18* (Shakespeare), *Song of Myself - Section 1* (Whitman), and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol - excerpt* (Wilde)
- "The Poet's Passport" (A dedicated notebook or digital document)
- Highlighters (three different colors)
- A timer or stopwatch

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## Learning Objectives

- **Analyze:** Identify the unique stylistic markers and historical influences of Shakespeare, Whitman, and Wilde.
- **Compare:** Contrast the structured rhythm of the Renaissance with the free verse of the American Transcendentalist movement and the aestheticism of the Victorian era.
- **Create:** Compose three short "Postcards from the Past" written in the specific voice of each poet.

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## 1. Introduction: The Voice Match Hook (10 Minutes)

**The Hook:** Imagine you are at a dinner party. One guest is wearing a velvet suit and cracking witty jokes; one is wearing a ruff collar and speaking in riddles; and one is outside hugging a tree and humming to himself. Who is who?

**Discussion:** Introduce the "Big Three":

- **William Shakespeare (1564-1616):** The "Bard of Avon." Master of structure and human drama.
- **Walt Whitman (1819-1892):** The "Father of Free Verse." A rebel who broke all the rules to celebrate the individual.
- **Oscar Wilde (1854-1900):** The "Prince of Wit." Believed art should be beautiful above all else and loved a good "burn."

## 2. The Body: I Do, We Do, You Do (45 Minutes)

### Part I: The "I Do" - Detective Work (History & Style)

Read a brief bio of each poet. Look for their "Historical Why":

- **Shakespeare:** Lived in a time of strict social hierarchies and the Black Plague. Poetry was a way to find order in chaos. Look for *Iambic Pentameter* (da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM).
- **Whitman:** Lived through the American Civil War. He wanted a poetry that felt as big and messy and free as the American wilderness. Look for *Anaphora* (repeating words at the start of lines).
- **Wilde:** Lived in Victorian England, where everything was "proper." He used poetry and plays to poke fun at high society. Look for *Epigrams* (short, clever, witty statements).

### Part II: The "We Do" - Color-Coded Analysis

Take the three selected poems and use your highlighters to find the "Fingerprints":

- **Yellow:** Highlight Shakespeare's rhymes and his 10-syllable rhythm.
- **Blue:** Highlight Whitman's long, rambling lines and his use of "I" and "You."
- **Pink:** Highlight Wilde's sophisticated vocabulary and his focus on beauty or intense emotion.

### Part III: The "You Do" - The Poet's Postcard Challenge

Ivy Kate will now become the "Ghostwriter." Choose a modern topic (like a smartphone, a trip to the moon, or a slice of pizza) and write a 4–6 line poem from the perspective of each poet:

1. **The Shakespeare Postcard:** Must use a rhyme scheme (AABB or ABAB) and try to follow a 10-syllable beat.
2. **The Whitman Postcard:** No rhyming! Use long lines, list things you see, and celebrate the object with "O!"
3. **The Wilde Postcard:** Use at least one very "fancy" word and include a witty observation or a "burn."

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## 3. Conclusion: The Gallery Walk (15 Minutes)

**Summary:** Recap how history changes the way we write. Shakespeare needed structure; Whitman needed freedom; Wilde needed wit.

**Recap Activity:** Read your three postcards aloud.

- Which voice felt most natural to you?
- Which poet would you want as a mentor?

**Takeaway:** Poetry isn't just words on a page; it's a time-capsule of a person's personality and the era they lived in.

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## Success Criteria

- **Historical Context:** Can explain one major historical event that influenced each poet.
  - **Stylistic Accuracy:** The three "Postcards" show clear differences (e.g., one rhymes, one is free verse, one is witty).
  - **Analysis:** Correctly identified the "fingerprints" in the provided poems during the color-coding activity.
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## Adaptability & Differentiation

- **For the Advanced Learner (Extension):** Write a "Rap Battle" script between Oscar Wilde and Walt Whitman where they critique each other's styles.
  - **For Scaffolding (Support):** Use "Sentence Starters" for the postcards (e.g., Whitman: "I celebrate the [object], I see the [object]...")
  - **Multi-Sensory Option:** Listen to professional readings of the poems on YouTube to hear the difference in rhythm and tone before writing.
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## Assessment Methods

- **Formative (During Lesson):** The "Color-Coded Analysis" serves as a check for understanding of poetic devices.
- **Summative (End of Lesson):** The three "Postcards" act as the final demonstration of the ability to apply style and voice.