



Poetry Writing and Chapbook Development
Artist: Dawn Diez Willis



Dawn Diez Willis

Grade Level:
3-12

About the Artist:

Dawn Diez Willis is a poet and fiction writer. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Oregon and an Oregon Teaching License with endorsements in Elementary Education, Language Arts and Art. Her first book of poems, *Still Life with Judas and Lightning*, is forthcoming from Airlie Press in fall 2013. Her work has been awarded an Oregon Literary Arts Fellowship and published in a wide variety of journals including *The Iowa Review*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Gulf Coast* and *Southern Poetry Review*. She is a co-founder of the student arts journal *Through Our Eyes* which began through an Oregon Arts Council grant. During its four year run, the journal featured creative work by incarcerated students and was entirely edited by students trained by Ms. Willis. Formerly an editor with *Northwest Review*, she currently serves as an editor with Airlie Press.

Objectives:

- To gain confidence in reading, discussing, and writing poetry
- To gain understanding about the tools poets use to communicate with readers and to create beauty, as well as power, in their poetry
- To understand and utilize imagery to enhance writing
- To acquire knowledge about the way poems are built by using Lewis Turco's model, which says that the poem has four levels: typographical level, sonic level, sensory level and ideation level
- To utilize model poems as the basis for original creative work
- To develop poetry about the events, concerns and observations of daily life

Activities:

(Not limited to the projects listed below)

- **Accordion Book Poem:** This two-to-four session workshop takes students through a variety of writing exercises that allow them to create and moderately revise a small group of poems. Students will each construct a small and simple accordion book to display one of these poems as the final project. Accordion books and poem activities can be adapted to any desired topic.
- **Mini Chapbook:** This workshop can be as few as two sessions, with less construction of the book, to as many sessions as desired by the school or teacher. The length of the book and the possibility for size, binding, and placement of poems within the chapbook vary widely and can be adapted to suit differing units during the year. The primary focus will be on writing poems that are in some way thematically or imaginatively linked in order to create a sense of flow and unity in the final chapbook. Students will each compose their own final chapbook.
- Other projects can be designed to suit the needs and ideas of a given classroom teacher or school. Ms. Willis is also available for pure poetry workshops in which students will respond to a variety of writing exercises and learn to constructively critique each other's work.
- Single classroom sessions are available

Workshop Size Limits:

- Standard classroom size (no more than approximately 35 students per session) with an adult helper, preferably a classroom teacher or skilled aide

Special Equipment:

- Seating and tables for students, as well as a white board, chalk board, flipchart, or document camera

Space Needed:

- Standard classroom accommodations

Connections to the Curriculum:

- **Language Arts:**
Students will analyze, discuss and imitate the rhetorical and figurative approaches of a variety of poets. Ms. Willis's lessons have many connections to the Core State Standards in English Language Arts. Teachers and administrators are encouraged to contact the poet for a detailed discussion about the ways in which these poetry workshops address key standards for a given grade level. Workshops can be designed to specifically address certain core Language Arts Standards indicated by the teacher or administrator for any grade level or to enhance any desired classroom curriculum focus.
- **Math, Social Studies, Science, Drama**
Workshops can be designed to explore key concepts in these and other areas to make connections across curriculums that support and enhance learning in these subject areas.