

An Exercise in Reading Poetry

"Finding Microscopic Treasure" using Castles: Old Stone Poems

You can invite your students to imagine looking through a microscope when they read selections from Castles: Old Stone Poems by Rebecca Dotlich, J. Patrick Lewis, Dan Burr which is in our library. Pamela Sissi Carroll suggests that students use three types of lenses when they read poetry:

- A mirror to see reflections of their own experience
- A microscope to explore the elements of a text
- A telescope to see beyond the text itself

These are examples of figurative language hidden in the poems from Castles: Old Stone Poems.

Alliteration:

"descended stairwells seething"
from 'Tower of London'

Metaphor: (of cooking)

"gobbles, stir, toss, brew, kettle, sip"
from Introductory poem

Personification:

"I am the Gothic Castle Bran."
from 'Bran Castle'

Allusion:

"Sir Prince of Print"
from 'Hearst Castle'

Repetition:

"By bridge, by beam, by load of brick"
from 'Olavinlinna Castle'

Imagery:

"A ladder swung-a cloudy chain-"
from 'The Castle in the Air'

Simile:

"Its roofs slope up like sun-picked petals."
from 'Himeji Castle'

Onomatopoeia:

"clear as the clang of cowbells, ah!"
from 'Chillon Castle'

An Exercise in Writing Poetry

"Address-a-Castle" Apostrophe Poems

This is a writing activity that encourages students to research a castle and then create a poem that addresses the castle. You may use Castles: Old Stone Poems as a springboard.

Ask students to:

1. Read the poems in the collection and select one they enjoyed [as a model on how to address their own poem].
2. "Microscopically" re-read their chosen poem several times.
3. Refer to the "Medieval Minutes" in the back of the book about their particular poem. These minutes offer explanations about the history and legends alluded to in the poem which will provide them with more details to use in their poem. Using this model, they can collect their own information about any castle they might wish to research.
4. Then complete the following form to create their "Address-a-Castle Apostrophe Poem."

Poem Formula:

To... Name the Castle with an adjective or two if you choose

You... Address the castle in another manner

With...or Who... Describe something about the castle, an event that occurred there, someone who once lived there, etc.

I say... Tell what you would say to the castle.

Example:

*To Swedish Castle Gripsholm
You drafty, damp, and dreary donjon
With towers tall and windows few
I say, "Release those boys that you have a grip on,
Your heirs from prison spew!"*

“Key to the Castle” Acrostics using Castles: Old Stone Poems

Show the students a key and let them suggest what the key might open. You may then invite your students to secretly select the castle door they would most like to open in order to tour the cast.

- Read the poems in Castles: Old Stone Poems and the “Medieval Minutes.” [Students may also select another castle to research and use for their acrostic poem.]*
- Students must create an acrostic using the castle name or the location, including any information they have learned about the castle from the poem, the minutes, or their own research.
- If you want to extend this acrostic exercise, post the poems on a map and allow classmates to identify the names of the castles at each location.

Everstanding Castle

In the land of Ireland stands Castle Bunratty fair,
Red was the blood that stained her walls.
Everstanding, raised for power by Thomas De Clare,
Lost, the power De Clare gained, destroyed by clans
claiming her halls,
And warriors fierce for their wounds to be cured
Now went to Durty Nelly's
Drinking her brew, which made their speech slurred!

Abigail West

***Suggestion:** Students can create acrostic poems using characters, images, ideas, etc. from the book: Alfred Kropp, Excaliber, Knights, Ferrari, etc.