

Study Guide for Teachers

David Zucker In *Poetry in Motion*

presented by
Young Audiences

(866) 500-9265

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Through *Poetry in Motion*, David Zucker brings poetry to life. David combines acting, mime, vocal gymnastics, humor, audience participation and an old steamer trunk brimming with props and puppets to introduce an irresistible cast of characters drawn from the best children's poems.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Be exposed to a wide range of poetry.
- Be motivated to improve oral and written communication skills
- Hear stories and songs of different cultures
- Be inspired with the power of poetry
- Be challenged to improve their listening skills

ARTIST INFORMATION

David Zucker is a professional mime, actor and director. He holds an MFA from Brandeis University and is the author of the children's book *Uncle Carmello* (Macmillan). David is a popular international performer in theatres, festivals, schools, libraries and museums throughout the U.S.A, United Kingdom, and Greece.

Through over 300 performances a year, he has shared his love of theatre, mime and poetry with hundreds of thousands of children and their families since 1970. In 1996 David was honored by being chosen National Young Audiences Artist of the Year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Poetry is best defined by poets and writers:

"Poetry is beautiful shorthand" - William Cole

"Poetry is speaking paintings" - Plutarch

"A lot of people think, or believe, or know they feel - but that's thinking, or believing or knowing; not feeling. And poetry is feeling - not knowing or believing or thinking." - e. e. cummings

"A poem is an experience, something that has happened to a person." - Lee Bennett

"If there were a recipe for a poem, these would be the ingredients: Word Sounds, Rhythm, Description, Feeling, Memory, Rhyme, and Imagination." – Karia Kuskin

Poems can do all sorts of different things. For example, poems can: make you laugh, stir memories, make you think, share feelings, tell stories, share experiences, send messages, start you wondering, make you feel better, keep you company and take you to far off or imaginary places.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1. Share some favorite poems with your students or visit your library to explore poetry books together.
2. Read selected poems to or with your students and/or have them read poems to you. In what way is reading a poem out loud different from reading a poem silently?
3. Post an interesting photo on the bulletin board. Students can hunt for poems they feel fit the mood or describe the illustration, or they can write their own.
4. Get the visual arts teacher involved! You can do the same activity cited in number 3 above by using pictures drawn by students in an art class.

VOCABULARY WORDS

SIMILE - a poetic or literary tool that uses "like" or "as"

METAPHOR - a literary device that uses one image to convey information about another

RHYTHM - the innate "beat" of the work

POETIC DRAMA - includes dramatic pauses, eye contact, gestures and body movements to enrich a poetic performance

RESOURCES

David Zucker's inspiration for the actual shape of "Poetry in Motion" came from two superb books on children's poetry:

Kennedy, X. J. and Dorothy M. *Knock at a Star: A Child's Introduction to Poetry*. New York: Little Brown, 1982.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett. *Pass the Poetry Please*. New York: Harper Collins, 1987.

Some poets to read: W.B. Yeats, R.L. Stevenson, Jack Prelusky, A.A. Milne, H.W. Longfellow, Robert Frost, Lewis Carroll, Emily Dickenson, Hillaire Beloc

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Work poems into your classroom calendar. Many anthologies exist about holidays, festivals and seasons.
2. Set-up a bulletin board featuring the question, "What's For Lunch?" A table setting can be depicted by stapling paper plates and gluing plastic utensils with a paper tablecloth for a background on the bulletin board. On each plate a food poem can appear. There are volumes of poems about food and many anthologies are divided into categories which often list food as one.

3. Memorizing poems can be fun if seen as an adventure or challenge. Have students pick a favorite poem, or a poem on a favorite subject. Start with short poems and work up to longer ones, the longer the better, eventually. Students will be amazed at what it is possible to commit to memory and such an accomplishment is a ready self-esteem builder.

The basis for David Zucker's "Poetry in Motion" was his eighth grade memorization and performance at a talent show of Alfred Noyes' "The Highway Man."

Make the memorization process part of poetry performance. Stage the presentations and rehearse with students. Being in front of an audience is an important part of engendering a sense of accomplishment, and it is a great motivator for getting them to work on their poem. Make sure to coach students on their vocal expression (a great way to develop good readers). You can also encourage the use of costume pieces, the development of a "character" for the piece (eg. The Alleycat from "Alley Cat with One Life Left") and rehearse specific movements to accompany the vocal performance. Then, students can perform their poems for each other.