

Curriculum Guide / Lesson Plan for Teachers:

Teaching the Poetry of
CARMEN TAFOLLA

Poet Laureate of San Antonio, Texas

Author of the poetry collections

Curandera

Sonnets to Human Beings

Sonnets and Salsa

Rebozos, et al.

and other works of fiction and nonfiction for children and young adults

Incorporating creative writing exercises created

by Julia Alvarez (poet, bestselling novelist)

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Poetry and the TEKS

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) specifies that poetry be taught to grades 6 to 12 for two distinct purposes. All 4(A) and 3(A) TEKS address the comprehension of a poetic literary text: “Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from texts to support their understanding.” All 15(B) and 14(B) TEKS require students to actually write poetry, using specific elements common to most poetry.

This brief guide will relate, grade-by-grade, the TEKS to the “Creative Writing Exercises Based on the Poetry of Carmen Tafolla” provided on this website. All seven poems presented on the Tafolla website can be used at every level, with the exception of Poem VII, “La Malinche,” which should be reserved for upper grades.

By using the exercises provided, students can accomplish both the comprehension and the writing goals specified by TEKS. Perhaps more importantly, these are poems that use language and images that students throughout the Southwest can readily identify with. But this is hardly Tafolla’s only audience. Tafolla’s poems have successfully generated a global audience. Her work has been the subject of Ph.D. dissertations from Germany to Spain, Argentina to Canada. Her poems are powerful evocations of what it is to live in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural world.

Grade 6:

- 4(A) — Explain how figurative language (e.g., personification, metaphors, similes, hyperbole) contributes to the meaning of a poem.
- 15(B)—Write poems using (i) poetic techniques (e.g., alliteration, onomatopoeia); and (ii) figurative language (e.g., similes, metaphors); and (iii) graphic elements (e.g., capital letters, line length).
 - Exercise I.1 and I.4 — Figurative language (metaphor, hyperbole) and literary techniques (repetition/refrain, use of historical allusion) to identify and attempt to emulate.
 - Exercise II.2 — Figurative language and literary techniques (literary allusion, use of non-literary cultural sources, code-switching) to identify and attempt to emulate.
 - Exercise III.2 — Figurative language and literary techniques (metaphor, personification, hyperbole, graphic elements) to identify and attempt to emulate.
 - Exercises IV.1 and IV.2 — Figurative language and literary techniques (extended metaphor, personification) to identify and attempt to emulate.

Grade 7:

- 4(A) Analyze the importance of graphical elements (e.g., capital letters, line length, word position) on the meaning of a poem.
- 15(B) Write poems using (i) poetic techniques (e.g., rhyme scheme, meter); and (ii) figurative language (e.g., personification, idioms, hyperbole); and (iii) graphic elements (e.g., word position).
 - Exercises I.1 and I.4 — Figurative language (metaphor, hyperbole) and literary techniques (repetition/refrain, use of historical allusion) to analyze and attempt to emulate.
 - Exercise II.2 — Figurative language and literary techniques (literary allusion, use of non-literary cultural sources, code-switching) to analyze and attempt to emulate.

- Exercise III.2 — Figurative language and literary techniques (metaphor, personification, hyperbole, graphic elements) to analyze and attempt to emulate.
- Exercises IV.1 and IV.2 — Figurative language and literary techniques (extended metaphor, personification) to analyze and attempt to emulate.
- Exercise V.1 — Figurative language and literary techniques (rhyme, alliteration, ekphrastic writing) to analyze and attempt to emulate.
- Exercise VI.1 — Figurative language and literary techniques (rhyme, alliteration, rhythm) to analyze and attempt to emulate.

Grade 8:

- 4(A) Compare and contrast the relationship between the purpose and characteristics of different poetic forms (e.g., epic poetry, lyric poetry).
- 15(B) Write poems using (i) poetic techniques (e.g., rhyme scheme, meter); and (ii) figurative language (e.g., personification, idioms, hyperbole); and (iii) graphic elements (e.g., word position).
 - Exercise II.1 — Poetic forms (question and response), idiom (code switching) to examine and attempt to emulate.
 - Exercises IV.1 and IV.2 — Poetic forms (stanza formation, creating forms), figurative language (extended metaphor, personification) to examine and attempt to emulate.
 - Exercise V.1 — Poetic forms (altered sonnet form, creating forms), poetic technique (ekphrastic poetry, use of meter and rhyme) to examine and attempt to emulate.
 - Exercises VI.1 and VI.2 — Poetic forms (question and response), idiom (code switching) and figurative language (personification) to examine and attempt to emulate.

Grade 9:

- 3(A) Analyze the effects of diction and imagery (e.g., controlling images, figurative language, understatement, overstatement, irony, paradox) in poetry.
- 14(B) Write a poem using a variety of poetic techniques (e.g., structural elements, figurative language) and a variety of poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads).
 - Exercises I.1-4 — Diction (changes in level), figurative language and literary techniques (metaphor, personification, hyperbole, graphic elements), imagery (controlling image, extended descriptive metaphor) to analyze and emulate.
 - Exercise II.2 — Diction (code switching), figurative language and literary techniques (metaphor, literary allusion, hyperbole, graphic/structural elements), imagery (use of sources) to analyze and emulate.
 - Exercise III.1 — Diction (code switching, use of quotations), figurative language and literary techniques (metaphor, literary allusion, hyperbole, graphic/structural elements) to analyze and emulate.
 - Exercise V.1 — Poetic forms (altered sonnet form, creating forms), poetic technique (ekphrastic poetry, use of meter and rhyme) to analyze and emulate.
 - Exercises VI.1 and VI.2 — Poetic forms (question and response), idiom (code switching) and figurative language (personification) to analyze and emulate.

Grade 10:

- 3(A) Analyze the structure or prosody (e.g., meter, rhyme scheme) and graphic elements (e.g., line length, punctuation, word position) in poetry.
- 14(B) Write a poem using a variety of poetic techniques (e.g., structural elements, figurative language) and a variety of poetic forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads).
 - Exercises I.1-4 — Figurative language and literary techniques (metaphor, personification, hyperbole, graphic elements, code switching), imagery (controlling image, extended descriptive metaphor) to analyze and emulate.
 - Exercise II.2 — Figurative language and prosody (metaphor, literary allusion, hyperbole, graphic/structural elements, code switching), imagery (use of sources) to analyze and emulate.
 - Exercise III.1 — Figurative language and literary techniques (metaphor, literary allusion, hyperbole, graphic/structural elements, code switching, use of quotations) to analyze and emulate.
 - Exercises IV.1 and IV.2 — Figurative language and literary techniques (extended metaphor, personification) to analyze and emulate.
 - Exercise V.1 — Poetic forms/prosody (altered sonnet form, creating forms), poetic technique (ekphrastic poetry, use of meter and rhyme) to analyze and emulate.
 - Exercises VI.1 and VI.2 — Poetic forms (question and response), idiom (code switching) and figurative language (personification) to analyze and emulate.

Grade 11:

- 3(A) Analyze the effects of metrics, rhyme schemes (e.g., end, internal, slant, eye), and other conventions in American poetry.
- 14(B) Write a poem that reflects an awareness of poetic conventions and traditions within different forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads, free verse).
 - Exercises I.1-4 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (metaphor, personification, hyperbole, graphic elements, code switching), imagery (controlling image, extended descriptive metaphor) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing trends in American poetry.
 - Exercise II.2 — Poetic conventions and prosody (metaphor, literary allusion, hyperbole, graphic/structural elements, code switching), imagery (use of sources) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing trends in American poetry.
 - Exercise III.1 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (metaphor, literary allusion, hyperbole, graphic/structural elements, code switching, use of quotations) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing trends in American poetry.
 - Exercises IV.1 and IV.2 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (extended metaphor, personification) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing trends in American poetry.
 - Exercise V.1 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (altered sonnet form, creating forms), poetic technique (ekphrastic poetry, use of meter and rhyme) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing trends in American poetry.
 - Exercises VI.1 and VI.2 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (question and response), idiom (code switching) and figurative language (personification) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing trends in American poetry.

Grade 12:

- 3(A) Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, graphics, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods.
- 14(B) Write a poem that reflects an awareness of poetic conventions and traditions within different forms (e.g., sonnets, ballads, free verse).
 - Exercises I.1-4 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (metaphor, personification, hyperbole, graphic elements, code switching), imagery (controlling image, extended descriptive metaphor), historical perspective (use of historical allusion and analysis) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing traditions in poetry.
 - Exercise II.2 — Poetic conventions and prosody (metaphor, literary allusion, hyperbole, graphic/structural elements, code switching), imagery (use of sources) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing traditions in poetry.
 - Exercise III.1 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (metaphor, literary allusion, hyperbole, graphic/structural elements, code switching, use of quotations) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing traditions in poetry.
 - Exercises IV.1 and IV.2 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (extended metaphor, personification), historical perspective (use of historical allusion and analysis) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing traditions in poetry.
 - Exercise V.1 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (altered sonnet form, creating forms), poetic technique (ekphrastic poetry, use of meter and rhyme) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing traditions in poetry.
 - Exercises VI.1 and VI.2 — Poetic conventions and literary techniques (question and response), idiom (code switching) and figurative language (personification) to analyze and emulate. Establishing awareness of changing traditions in poetry.
 - Exercises VII.1-2 — Poetic use of historical perspective (use of historical allusion and analysis), establishing awareness of changing traditions in poetry (this is an important poem in the history of Chicano poetry), poetic conventions (metaphor, personification, graphic elements, code switching), to analyze and emulate.