

# Creative Writing/Poetry Lesson Plan

**Artist Name:** Dana Teen Lomax

**Art Form:** Creative Writing

**Grade Level(s):** Middle/High School

**Class Objective:** To encourage students to let sound drive their poems and take them to unexpected language and ideas.

## LEVEL ONE

### The Abstract Nude

To begin the lesson, look at the following cubist piece by Pablo Picasso. Ask students how the piece differs from other portraits they are familiar with. How is this portrait different from the Mona Lisa, for example?



Talk about abstraction and how it changes the portrait. What colors are used? What shapes? What feelings does the piece evoke? How far can an artist push away from representation and still have it “represent”?

## LEVEL TWO

### The Abstract Poem

Then ask the students if they have ever heard the saying “A rose is a rose is a rose...” and if they know who wrote it. Introduce Gertrude Stein and her poem “If I Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Pablo Picasso.”

The text is here:

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/ifitoldnew.html>

or hear Stein read the work here:

[http://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Stein/1935/Stein-Gertrude I-Told-Him.mp3](http://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Stein/1935/Stein-Gertrude%20I-Told-Him.mp3)

What do the students notice in the work? (Some might say something like, “Is this a poem?” or “This sounds like a broken record!” Is Stein painting an actual portrait of Picasso? Does the reader get a picture of him? If yes, what does he look like? If not, what is she doing instead? What are the similarities between Picasso’s portrait and Stein’s?

The conversation will come around to repetition, rhythm, rhyme, and sound. In what ways is Stein’s poem enacting Picasso’s artistic vision of abstraction?

### LEVEL THREE

#### The Assignment

**Exercise:** Ask students to think of someone they are close too. Ask them to really take a minute and think of specific things this person does and says. Ask them how this person makes them feel. Encourage them to take a moment to really try and picture this person wholly in their minds. Once they all have someone in mind, invite them to write a portrait of them based on sound. Remind students that meaning is secondary to repetition and rhyme in this poem. They don’t have to “mean” this poem, but “sound” it. Below is an example of a piece written from this exercise.

#### Invisible Mom

She’s invisible she is invisible invisible is she,  
invisibility

She she is not here not there there no  
here no there not anywhere that is where  
she’s not not not here nor there

Drugs is her not her but her  
here drugs here her is here for here is  
near near no not not here

Life is not live live is not live  
life full live life done live  
no life

She lives invisible not visible but  
in no inn no motel on hills nor the  
place we life live fully invisible.

Zack