

Pharrell Williams “Happy”

Using Images to Express Emotion

This lesson is intended to help participants:

- identify how poets use images to express their feelings,
- and use images to express their own feelings.

Some concrete thinkers may have difficulty associating images with emotion. Please allow time to process before offering guidance and suggestions. However, some students will benefit from supports, including word banks to choose from. Make them available as needed.

In order to adapt the lesson to students who need more or less structure, there are two sets of poem forms. Peel-off labels with visual cues are available for the first form. These are also very helpful for non-verbal students.¹ If you would like to make labels with cues for the second form, use your search engine filtered by “images” and filtered again by “free to use and share” to select images for the words. Print them on mailing labels.

These forms are provided for students who benefit from structure. Students who prefer to write more freely should be encouraged to do so, but please ask them to use at least one image in their poems.

This lesson may need to be broken into two or more days, depending on time constraints and your students’ attention span.

Materials and Advance Preparation

LED Projector

Slide show or [official video](#) for Pharrell Williams’ “Happy”

Feeling Poem Word Bank (three or four copies for the teacher to offer only if needed)

Twin Fastener Pocket Folders (1 per student) containing:

Lyrics to [“Happy”](#)

Emily Dickenson’s poem [“Hope is the Thing with Feathers”](#)

Poem Frames 1-2: Happy and Sad Poems

Peel off Labels for Happy and Sad Feeling Images (in back pocket)

Poem Frames 3-5: Feeling Poems

Invitation

Have students show with their bodies that they are sad. Probably there will be a downward direction to their bodies and little movement. Describe what you see, noting the downward direction and using comparisons e.g.: “You are dropping down like a flower that hasn’t been

¹ I have also seen a teacher fill a tub with toys for a student with profound CP. The teacher wrote down the images as the young woman touched the toys. She then wrote a poem based on the images, which we published as a collaborative poem.

watered. When we are sad sometimes we say we're feeling _____." Listen to suggestions. Provide a lot of processing time before offering the word "down" if it is not forthcoming.

Get the students to list things that are low, or go down. You may need to offer a few examples. Write all these on the board for later.

Have students show with their bodies that they are happy. Probably there will be an upward direction and a lot of movement. Describe what you see in a similar way, e.g. "You keep going up. You look like a bouncing kitten. When we think of happiness, we think of things that go _____." Again provide plenty of wait time. You may get unexpected answers. Write these down, but guide them to suggest the word "up." Discuss how we use "going up" to describe happiness. "That lifts me up, or that raises my spirits." Have them list a few things that go up and write them on the board.

Lyrics and Poems with Feeling Images

Either show the [official music video for "Happy."](#) or make your own PowerPoint slide show, using images filtered by "Free to Use and Share." I made my own in order to include an individual with Down Syndrome in the presentation.

Have them open their folders and look at the selection of [lyrics](#) for "Happy." Allowing ample processing time, discuss the comparisons in the first verse. Some students, if they are very literal, may not understand why a room without a roof is a happy image (think about it literally; it could be rainy and cold). If this happens, help them imagine that their feelings going up and up and then hitting the ceiling. Now help them imagine their feelings going up and up and there IS no roof. Provide time and encouragement to identify on their own that "sunshine" and a "hot air balloon" are also images of happiness.

Read the stanza from "[Hope is the thing with feathers.](#)" What is Dickinson comparing hope to? (A bird.) Discuss why she uses that image. If not forthcoming, mention both the fact that birds fly and also that when we are hopeful, our hearts sometimes flutter, like a feathery bird.

Writing Prompts

Ask them to name things that make them happy and write these on a dry erase board along with the words already identified for things that go up.

Do the same for things that make them sad.

Modification for students who have difficulty generating ideas or are nonverbal: Point out the peel off labels in the back of the folder. Let them use choose from these to offer suggestions.

Tell them they can use these words to write poems about emotions, and what they do when they have these feelings.

There are two sets of poem frames in their folders. This is to allow modifications depending on student needs and interests. The first set describes only happiness and sadness and is highly structured. The second set allows students to choose any feeling, but provides some choices for those who need them. This set provides two more loosely structured frames and blank lines for those who do not want to use a preset structure.

For students who want structure provide "Poem Frames 1-2" for writing poetry about feeling happy or sad (pages 8-10). Point out the labels available for those who need them, but encourage

creativity for those who are able to generate their own ideas. Also point to the words already written on the board.

For students who want more choice provide “Poem Frames 3-5”, with a list of feelings and comparing words (page 11- 15) These frames provide templates for them to choose from, as well as lined paper to allow them to choose their own form.

In either case, students will probably need to insert additional words on the green and blue lines if they want their poems to make sense.

Conclusion

Provide students who choose to the opportunity to read their poems aloud, or have them read aloud by a teacher or aide. Do not pressure them to read their poems. Writing with prompts can be very challenging for some, and anxiety about reading the poems aloud will only make the challenges harder. For those who do share their poems, point out or ask others to point out their images. Ask peers to say what they liked about one another’s poems.

If you are going to publish the poem, help them proofread. It is important to be mindful that poets have a poetic license to bend an break all rules of grammar, punctuation, and logic. Some poems are very clear and formal. Some poems are very abstract. Help them be sure they wrote what *they* wanted to write and provide opportunities for them to grow as poets, but don’t force your ideas about clarity and good grammar on their poems.

Sample dialogues:

Teacher: Here you say, “I go to the store and bought candy.” “I go” is something you are doing right now, but “bought candy” is something you already did. I feel a little confused by that. Did you mean for me to feel confused?

Poet: No.

Teacher: Since you don’t want me to feel confused, how can we make this easier to understand?

Teacher: This says “Sad water tree fall lake.” Your poem has images and doesn’t tell a story I can follow. A poem with images only is one kind of poem. Another kind is a poem that has a images plus story to follow. Do you want just images or images plus story?

Poet: Images.

Teacher: You chose to share your feelings with images only. A lot of really good poets write that way.

A SWING



FAMILY



AIRPLANES



BIKING



FLOWERS



BIRD



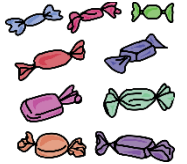
A PARK



A DOG



CANDY



A PLAYGROUND



A CAT



MUSIC



SWIM



VIDEO GAMES



DANCING



BALLGAMES



VIDEOS



SINGING



BOWLING



MOVIES



RUNNING



SNOW



SPRING



SHOPPING



BIRTHDAYS



SUMMER



BEACH



FRIENDS



A CAR



THEME PARKS



ACHING FEET



ICY



OLD SHOES



BAD HAIR



A HEADACHE



OUT OF MONEY



BARE TREES



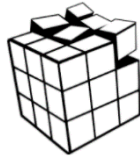
A HURT PUPPY



POPPED BALLOON



A BROKEN GAME



LEFT OUT



RAINY DAY



CLOUDY DAYS



LONELINESS



SNOW MELTING



DROPPED ICE CREAM



A LOST PET



SOMEONE LEAVING



DYING FLOWER



MOLDY FOOD



SORE MUSCLES



AN EMPTY COOKIE JAR



NO BALLGAME



SORE THROAT



EMPTY ROOMS



NO COMPUTER



SPILT DRINK



GETTING SICK



NO TV



TORN CLOTHES



ASK FOR HELP



HANG MY HEAD



SHAKE MY HEAD



CLAP



HOP



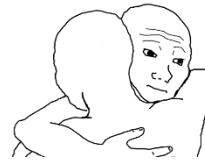
SHOUT



COMPLAIN



HUG



SING



CRY



HUM



SIT STILL



DANCE



JUMP



SMILE



FLAP MY HANDS



LAUGH



SPIN



FROWN



LIKE TO BE ALONE



STOMP MY FEET



GO FAST



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LIKE TO BE WITH OTHER PEOPLE



SWIRL



GO SLOW



ROCK



TELL SOMEONE



GRIN



RUN



WHISTLE



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POEM FRAMES 1-2: Happy and Sad Poems

Write a poem about a feeling. This example about being joyful. On the next two pages are unfinished poems about being happy or sad. Choose one and finish the poem. If you prefer, you can use the same poem frame, but mark out "happy" or "sad" and put in another feeling.

Joyful Is

Joyful is spring.

Joyful is family.

Joyful is sunrise, friends, hikes.

When I am joyful I laugh.

When I am joyful I sing.

When I am joyful I dance, hug, cheer.

Happy Is

Happy is _____.

Happy is _____.

Happy is _____, _____, _____.

When I am happy I _____.

When I am happy I _____.

When I am happy I _____, _____, _____.

Sad Is

Sad is _____.

Sad is _____.

Sad is _____, _____, _____.

When I am sad I _____.

When I am sad I _____.

When I am sad I _____, _____, _____.

POEM FRAMES 2-5: Feeling Poems

Pick a feeling from this box. You can change the words a little, for example instead of “angry” you can choose “anger”.

Feeling Words

Angry	Annoyed	Calm	Eager
Excited	Frustrated	Grieving	Happy
Hopeful	Joyful	Lonely	Love
Nervous	Peaceful	Relieved	Sad
Scared	Silly	Troubled	Worried

Pick a phrase to use in your poem from this box:

Comparing Phrases

feels like	feels like a	feels the way	I am a
I seem like	I'm like a	is	is a
is as	is like a	it's like	makes me feel like a
reminds me of a	seems like	seems like	turns me into a

Poem Frame 4

Think of a feeling. On the first few lines write about a time you felt this way.

Now use in the blue line with the feeling you chose. The feeling words are blue.

You may have to add words here if you want your poem to make sense. For example, if you choose “Angry,” and “I am like” you may want to write “When I am angry, I am like.”

Then add the comparing phrase you choose on the green line. The comparing phrases are green.

Now that you have picked a feeling and a comparison, think of an image that goes with your feeling. Pharrell Williams thought happiness was like a hot air balloon. Emily Dickinson thought hope was like a bird.

Write the image you thought of on the purple line. Now you have the beginning of a poem. Finish the poem yourself. You don’t have to use all the lines. There is a place for a title at the top. A lot of people wait until they have written the poem before they add the title.

Title, you can wait until you write the poem and then think of the title

Teachers: For students who choose Poem Frame 2, but still need help with coming up with images and completing the poem, I have provided a word bank and some questions to prompt their writing.

Feeling Images Word Bank:

AIRPLANE	BANGING DRUM	BLOOMING FLOWER	BOX OF DYNAMITE
BUTTERFLY	CANDLE	CLATTERING DISHES	CLOSED DRAWER
CLOUD	CLOUD OF DUST	CLOUDLESS SKY	CLOUDY DAY
DARK ROOM	DRIPPING FAUCET	ELEPHANT	ELEVATOR
EMPTY BEACH	EMPTY HOUSE	FLOWER	FRESHLY CLEANED HOUSE
GALLOPING HORSE	GLOWING CANDLE	HELIUM BALLOON	ICE CUBE
JINGLING KEYS	LOCKED DOOR	OLD HOUSE	OPEN DOOR
POPCORN POPPER	PRETTY TUNE	PUPPY	RACE CAR
RAINBOW	ROCK CONCERT	SCENT OF ROSES	SMOKE ALARM
SODA POP	SUNRISE	SUNSHINE	TANGLED KNOT
THUNDERSTORM	TICKING CLOCK	THUMPING TAIL	TORNADO
TRAIN	VOLCANO	WATERFALL	WILTING FLOWER