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VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT**

Workshop:

My Feeling Is An Animal

Learn how to use metaphor, stanzas and line breaks as you create an original poem inspired by colorful, emotional animals. You will also learn how cultural differences shape how humans demonstrate emotion.

Teaching Artist:

Eric Elshtain

Workshop duration: 25 - 45 minutes



Transcript

Eric: Hello! My name is Eric. My pronouns are he/him/his, and I am a poet that teaches with Snow City Arts. Thank you for inviting Snow City Arts into your room! Today, we will work together to compose a short poem. You'll be able to do it even if you have never written a poem before.

In this video, I'm going to show you how to compose a poem using animal imagery to create a description or an explanation of an emotion. I will also show you how to transform sentences into lines of poetry. You don't need to have any experience with poetry whatsoever in order to be able to write this poem. All you need is any piece of paper and a writing utensil, and if you need to have somebody else write down your ideas for you, that is totally fine.

Pause this video at any time to give yourself time to think up your ideas and to get them down on paper.

Alright, let's get started.

In this exercise, you will compose a five-stanza poem, each stanza containing two to four lines. The **stanza** is any group of lines in a poem. Each stanza will consist of your answers to four simple questions.

My daughter is here to help show you how this will work. Your poem will begin as a list of answers to these questions, and then you will form those answers into a simple sentence.

Okay, are you ready?

Christie: Yeah!

Eric: Let's get started.

So first, write down the name of a feeling or emotion. Any feeling or emotion that someone might have. And please follow along. Grab your pen and your piece of paper or have someone write down your ideas for you.

[Pause the video to write.]

Do you have it?

Transcript Continued

Christie: Yep!

Eric: Okay. Next, imagine that somehow that feeling or emotion can magically transform into an animal. What animal does that feeling become?

[Pause the video to write.]

Eric: Now, what color is that animal? You can stick with real-life colors. Or you can be more fanciful like a pink zebra, or a rainbow-colored tortoise.

[Pause the video to write.]

Eric: Do you have your color?

Christie: Yep.

Eric: Perfect.

Now finally, what is this animal doing? Try not to give the animal any human behavior. For example, if your emotion was sadness, don't describe the animal as crying. How would that particular animal show sadness? Imagine, looking at what the animal is doing and being able to say that animal show sadness.

[Pause the video to write.]

All right. Would you read your list?

Christie: The emotion is disappointment. The animal is a gray rat, and it is scrounging a barren landscape for food.

Eric: Perfect. That's fantastic!

So you would write that in a sentence: *Disappointment is a gray rat scrounging a barren landscape for food.*

Now it's your turn—you're going to repeat the same instruction four times. So you will have five instances of emotions that have transformed into a specifically colored animal that is doing something to show that emotion.

Transcript Continued

[Pause the video to write.]

Eric: Would you read, so they can hear again?

Christie: *Disappointment is a gray rat scrounging a barren landscape for food.*

Eric: Fantastic!

Using two of the sentences, let's walk through how we can break these sentences into shorter lines creating lines of poetry.

So first off, I'm just going to separate the emotion and the animal from the behavior that's being described, creating two two-line stanzas, which are called **couplets**. And I'm parsing out the information by just choosing two pieces of information to put on each line. And that's a totally legitimate way to break up lines of poetry.

Now I can show how to **break** lines of poetry into sections that help highlight certain sounds by isolating them on the ends of lines and within lines. So I'm just making some choices here, thinking about what certain words sound like.

And so I have:

*Disappointment
is a gray rat
scrounging a barren
landscape for food.*

And putting those "T" sounds at the end helps highlight those. "Scrounging a barren": I like those "R" sounds together. And "for food"—highlighting those "F" sounds. That's **alliteration**.

And then:

*Sadness is a blue elephant
drinking alone
from a muddy watering hole.*

What I noticed is "alone" and "hole"—putting those at the ends of lines helps highlight those "O" sounds, and then I end up with one four-line stanza and one

Transcript Continued

three-line stanza. There are many different ways to create lines of poetry, and I just showed you two of those ways.

Christie: So we have:

*Glumness is a ghost-white tortoise who's stuck on its back.
Glee is a pink hen brooding on its eggs,
and excitement is a yellow squirrel that found a nut tree.*

Eric: Fantastic. So what do you want to title your poem? What do you think this poem is about?

Christie: I know that it's about emotions.

Eric: Do you think that word should be in the title?

Christie: Yeah.

Eric: And what is another thing that occurs often in that poem?

Christie: Animals and their behaviors.

Eric: So animals, behaviors, and emotions: think of those three words and come up with the title.

Christie: "Emotional Animals."

Eric: Perfect.

[Pause the video to title your poem.]

Eric: In your poem, you've used animal imagery to describe emotions through **metaphor**. And if you think about it, every day we use images to communicate emotions through our facial expressions. But has anyone ever looked at your face and asked you if you were feeling a certain way when you were not experiencing that feeling?

Maybe you were thinking about something and had a very serious look on your face, and a parent looked at you and said, "Are you angry?" or "Are you bored?" Think about those times when someone mistook your expression for

Transcript Continued

a feeling that you were not experiencing. And now consider the fact that like different languages, different cultures, and societies have different ways to express and to understand certain emotions.

For example, one culture might find one emotion positive, while another culture views that same emotion negatively. Sometimes this can lead to misunderstandings between people from different cultures and traditions. There are also different ideas about emotion, depending on your gender, unwritten “rules” about who can feel a certain way or express an emotion.

Think of the old phrase “boys don’t cry.” And think of how a woman who isn’t smiling may be asked if she is angry or sad. Has that ever happened to you?

So while emotions are universally felt, everybody feels emotion across the world, they are differently understood and differently communicated in different cultures and in different traditions.

You can follow the link below to explore this idea about culture and emotion:

<https://tinyurl.com/y9qeakc5>

Thank you for working with me today. I hope you will choose to work with Snow City Arts soon.

If you are interested in receiving school credit

for the work you have completed in this workshop, or if you would like to have your work **displayed in a Snow City Arts exhibition space or virtual gallery:**

Visit <https://snowcityarts.org/consent-releases/> to learn more.

Contact us at programs@snowcityarts.org if you have questions, would like to offer feedback, or would like to continue working with us virtually.



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