

Program Name: Collecting Your Wits and Other Bits: A Writing Workshop

Artist: Cynthia Pederson

## Special Requirements:

Blackboard and a table.

\*\* Students must bring a selection from their collections\*\*

## Special Points of Interest:

In Japan, frogs are the symbol of Good Luck. One myth deals with the idea that bullfrogs are descended from a great ancestor who could suck all the mosquitoes out of a room in a single breath!

## Other programs by this artist:

[-How Tall Do Sunflowers Grow?](#)  
[-Parody, Politics and Paintings](#)

## Workshop Description

Cynthia Pederson has a fascination for frogs. Her collection of frog curios has inspired her writing, including the poem “Reasons for a Frog Repository”. Although sure that real frogs should not be “frog-gotten” in favor of glass and fabric ones, Cynthia also recognizes that almost everyone collects something.

Cynthia uses treasured objects as a basis for creative writing. By understanding the concept of material culture, students can begin to examine objects for clues. These clues can then be used as the foundation for a story, poem, or other creative endeavor.

Cynthia encourages students

to become object detectives and artifact scribes. Object detectives might ask: How and of what is this object made? By whom? Where? When? Examples from Cynthia’s collection are used to help students begin to answer these questions about their own collections. Students are asked to share an object from their collection and to write a paragraph from that object’s point of view. These descriptions are rewritten and then mixed together. Each description is read aloud as the group tries to match the words to the object, thus testing the power of artifact scribes to be accurate as well as creative.

## Educational Objectives & Standards

Students will:

- Discuss collections, material culture and writing techniques
- Use critical and analytical thinking through the creative writing process

National Language Arts Standards:

- Use descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas

Behavioral Studies

- Know how a culture’s art works and artifacts reflects its values and beliefs

## Artist Bio: Cynthia Pederson

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Cynthia Pederson is an experienced writer, researcher, and teacher. She takes great joy in passing along knowledge through the many workshops and presentations she leads.

Cynthia holds several advanced degrees in literature, creative writing, and library science. Her teaching certificate for grades K-8 has given her the opportunity to gain experience in several teaching positions.

Cynthia's publications include

two volumes of poetry, an adult literacy curriculum guide, literary reviews, newspaper articles, plus poems, articles, and essays in many journals, magazines, and anthologies. Her poetry has won a number of awards including the *Carruth Award*, *The Great Poets Award*, and the *Florence Levitt Kahn Award*.

Cynthia has entertained many with her storytelling performances, including the original story "The Wide-Eyed Tree Frog Who Loved Books".

### List of Resources:

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#### Books:

##### Poem-Making: Ways to Begin Writing Poetry

by Myra Cohn Livingston  
HarperCollins; 1st ed edition  
(May 15, 1991)  
ISBN: 0060240199

##### How to Write Poetry (Scholastic Guides)

by Paul B. Janeczko  
Scholastic;  
(April 1, 2001)  
ISBN: 0590100785

##### Investigating Artifacts

by Katharine Barrett, Lincoln Bergman, Gigi Dornfest, Linda Lipner, Carolyn Willard  
Great Explorations; Teacher edition (September 1, 2000)  
ISBN: 0924886498



Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

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### Vocabulary

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**alliteration:** The repetition of the same sounds or of the same kinds of sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables, as in "on scrolls of silver snowy sentences."

**investigating:** The name for the tasks that people undertake in their work to access information and generate the database of knowledge from which they will write a report or paper.

**metaphor:** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison.

**onomatopoeia:** The formation or use of words such as *buzz* or *murmur* that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to.

**personification:** A figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities or are represented as possessing human form, as in "Hunger sat shivering on the road" or "Flowers danced about the lawn."

**simile:** A figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by *like* or *as*.

### Post-Workshop Activities

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1. Have students catalog their collections. Include measurements, features, and other properties in the descriptions
2. Become an *object detective* while cataloging the collection. Research the items using the library or Internet
3. Have the students think of new ways to present their collections, designing effective and creative methods for artistic display and organization.
4. Create original characters based on the material culture discovered in the item. Who made it? How was it manufactured? What was the person thinking while they were creating it?