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Developing students' reading skills is a critical goal that begins in the primary grades. Yet with each successive grade, students must acquire increasing skills at reading and understanding a variety of texts. *The Poet and the Professor: Poems for Building Reading Skills* provides valuable instructional tools and engaging materials and activities for increasing student skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. As you use the poems, lessons, and activities in this book, you will know that you are not only providing instruction based on solid educational research, but also giving students opportunities to learn and practice specific academic standards.

The Poet and the Professor: Poems for Building Reading Skills has been designed to provide high-interest instructional texts and lessons based on best practices in reading education. The concept of the book was developed by Dr. Timothy Rasinski, Professor of Literacy Education at Kent State University and author of numerous articles, books, and publications on reading education. The poems in this book were written by Brod Bagert, whose catchy and humorous books of poetry have entertained and inspired scores of young people to embrace poetry.

In its *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read* (2006), the National Reading Panel noted predominant themes in the research on the development of reading comprehension skills. The core of *The Poet and the Professor: Poems for Building Reading Skills* revolves around the NRP's findings, specifically, 1) "Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that cannot be understood without a clear description of the role that vocabulary development and vocabulary instruction play in the understanding of what has been read,"

and 2) "Comprehension is an active process that requires an intentional and thoughtful interaction between the reader and the text."

Making Connections

Studies show that making connections—drawing upon prior knowledge, emotions, opinions, understandings, and experiences—helps students better understand what they are reading (Harvey and Goudvis 2000). Keene and Zimmermann (1997) concluded that students comprehend better when they make different kinds of connections: text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world.

Text-to-self connections are those that are individual and personal. For example, in Lesson 25 of this book, prior to reading a poem about rules, the Making Connections section suggests having students think about a time when they broke the rules.

Text-to-text connections are those that identify similarities between one thing that has been read (whether a whole book or a single word) and a new text. In other words, students use the familiar to help them understand the unfamiliar.

Text-to-world connections are those that are more global than personal. These include information or impressions students have acquired from such things as reading stories and watching movies (narrative), studying science or social studies (expository), seeing ads on TV or in magazines (persuasive), and participating in discussions. One goal of this book is to challenge students to draw upon their prior knowledge and experiences to prepare them to better understand what they will read.

How to Use This Book

The Poet and the Professor: Poems for Building Reading Skills is a succession of lessons built around a compilation of poems. The program includes this book (which is a teacher's resource for using the poems to build reading skills), the Audio CD, and the Teacher Resource CD.

This book contains the 30 poems used in the program. Accompanying each poem is a lesson plan that contains the sections Making Connections, Comprehension Strategy, Standards-Based Skill Focus, and Vocabulary Word Study. Information and ideas about how to relate the poem to each of these areas is provided on this page. For more information about each section, see the Research section of the book (pp. 4–6). In addition, two activity pages are provided that relate to the Standards-Based Skill Focus and the Vocabulary Word Study sections of the lesson plan.

The Audio CD contains recordings of each of the poems in the book. Students can follow the text on their own copies of the poem pages, on an interactive whiteboard, or on an overhead projector.

The Teacher Resource CD contains a variety of resources that can be used to enhance the lessons provided in this book. The color poem pages can be photocopied on a transparency, displayed on an interactive whiteboard, or printed and copied for each student. The color activity pages are also included on the Teacher Resource CD. Finally, provided on the CD is a page-turning book that includes all of the poems used in this program. This page-turning book allows students to refer to all the poems in a digital format. This page-turning book can also be displayed on an interactive whiteboard for easy viewing during a whole-class lesson.



The collage shows several pages from the lesson plan for the poem "Poet to Poet" by Kelly. The pages include:

- Lesson Plan:** Contains sections for "Poet to Poet", "Making Connections", "Standards-Based Skill Focus: Using Similes to Compare", "Vocabulary Word Study", and "Comprehension Strategy".
- Comparing with Similes:** A page with a "Skill Focus" header. It includes a "Directions" section for reading paragraphs and comparing them to something else. It features a diagram showing a bird flying and a tree with a nest, with arrows indicating comparisons. Below the diagram are several fill-in-the-blank sentences: "Growing up is like _____", "When I grow up, I hope to be as powerful as _____", "Waiting decades to become an adult is like _____", and "It seems as far away as _____".
- Word Study:** A page with a "Word Study" header. It includes a "Directions" section for identifying words in the poem that end with the letter 'e'. It features a table for "Word List", "Nouns", and "Plural Nouns". The "Word List" contains: pines, grass, earth, acorns, eggs, bugs, leaves, holes, roots, and night. The "Nouns" and "Plural Nouns" columns are empty for student input.
- Extension:** A section titled "Extension" with a "Directions" section: "Writing a poem is not as hard as you think. Start with a rhyming pattern and the words will come to you. Get some practice by copying and then completing the unfinished poem below." It includes a small illustration of a bird.

About the Poet—Brod Bagert

A Chorus of Voices

The student poets in Ms. Caliri’s class are the acknowledged writers of “The Stars of the Flying Horse,” but the real author is poet Brod Bagert. It is his voice heard in all the letters and poems.



Encouraged by his teacher, Brod Bagert wrote his first poem in the third grade and has been writing ever since. In high school, his relationship with poetry deepened as he struggled through the love-hate experience of reading the

classics in the original Greek and Latin. As a university student, he was intrigued when another student from a neighboring college requested permission to publish two of his poems in her school’s poetry review, an experience that led him to discover the power of poetry in the dating ritual.

The world then began to nibble away at Brod’s love for poetry. He graduated from law school, married his high-school sweetheart, got elected to public office, and wrote fewer and fewer poems. Then, as a young father, he began to write poems for his own children to recite in their school programs. He was hooked. Deriving less and less satisfaction from a law practice and public career, poetry soon became his full-time occupation.

Brod is now the award-winning author of 17 books of poetry: 10 for children, two for young adults, and five for adults. He is also the author of an Edgar Allan Poe anthology and coauthor of the U.S. Department of Education’s *Helping Your Child Learn to Read* (1993). He has appeared at hundreds

of conferences and thousands of schools and has performed his poetry in all 50 states and on five of the world’s seven continents.

The heart of Brod’s poetry is voice—not just his own voice, but a whole chorus of voices. In a poem for kindergarteners, you will hear the voice of a kindergartener; in a poem for classroom teachers, you will hear the voice of a classroom teacher.

Brod’s active performance schedule keeps him on the road about half the year. The other half he spends at home in New Orleans. He reads books, rides his bicycle, gardens with his wife Debby, and dotes on their three rambunctious grandsons.

These poems are dedicated to
Cathy Barker.

—Brod Bagert

Poet to Poet

This is the fourth in a collection of poems by our imaginary student poets. Here, Kai-ying first tries her hand at poetry by responding to Timothy’s poem.



Making Connections

- Prepare students to draw parallels from their own lives to what they will read. Ask students to think of a time when someone said or did something that affected them. Give students time to reflect and then call on students to answer these questions: What does it mean to be “touched” by someone’s words? To “follow in someone’s footsteps”? To be inspired by someone else’s words or actions?
- Tell students that they will listen as you read a poem in which Kai-ying responds to Timothy’s poem with one of her own. Ask students to connect their own experiences to Kai-ying’s as you read the poem.

Comprehension Strategy: Making Comparisons

- Distribute copies of the poem or display the poem for students to see.
- Explain that a good strategy for understanding or explaining something is to compare it to something else. Continue by telling students that in this poem, Kai-ying is comparing the growth of two things—acorns into oak trees and eggs into eagles. Check students’ deeper understanding by asking what the poem is about—roots and wings, acorns and eggs, oak trees and eagles, or something else? If necessary, reveal that the poem is actually about Kai-ying herself and she is comparing her own growing up to the oak tree and the eagle.

Standards-Based Skill Focus: Using Similes to Compare

- Remind students that a *simile* is a comparison using *like* or *as*. Review some of the similes in lesson 3 (page 26). Explain that Kai-ying compares growing up to the growth of an acorn into an oak tree and an egg into an eagle. Tell students that Kai-ying wants to be strong and powerful when she grows up, but she is not sure if she wants to be like an oak tree or like an eagle.
- Distribute copies of page 36 for students to complete individually. Ask students to share their responses.

Vocabulary Word Study

- Have students find and highlight the following words in the poem: *acorns*, *decades*, *leaps*, and *soars*. Point out that all four words end with the letter *s*. Review that adding the letter *s* to some nouns makes them plural (or mean more than one). Ask students to look again at the four highlighted words and determine which are plurals and which are not. Call on students to explain why each word is or is not a plural. (*Acorns* and *decades* are plural nouns; *leaps* and *soars* are verbs.)
- Distribute copies of page 37 for students to complete independently.

Poet to Poet

Timothy Hickman, your poem was so sweet
it almost made me cry.
I knew I'd never write like you,
but I knew I had to try.

So I wrote this little poem last night.
It was very hard to do.
But now I'm glad I did it
'cause I wrote it just for you.

Roots and Wings

to Timothy Hickman
by Kai-ying

Acorns and eggs,
two very small things,
but one will grow roots,
and one will grow wings.

One stands on the earth
as the decades march by,
while the other leaps upward
and soars in the sky.

Oak trees and eagles,
both powerful things,
but which one's for me,
the roots...or the wings?



Name: _____

Comparing with Similes

- I. Directions:** As you read the paragraphs below, look for things being compared to something else. If the comparison uses *like* or *as*, it is a simile. Underline each simile you find. Draw arrows to connect the two things being compared. The first one is done for you.

Roots by Kelly

As children, we are like, acorns. Growing up is like putting roots into the ground. Learning is like reaching upward toward the sky. By growing and learning, we become adults who are as strong as oak trees.

Wings by Tom

As children, we are like, eggs. Growing up is like spreading your wings. Learning is like soaring higher and higher. By growing and learning, we become adults who are as strong as mighty eagles.

- II. Directions:** Now it is your turn to do some explaining. Complete the sentences below. Use similes wherever you can to clarify your thoughts by comparing each thing to something else.

Growing up is like _____.

When I grow up, I hope to be as powerful as _____.

Waiting decades to become an adult is like _____.

It seems as far away as _____.

Name: _____

Poet to Poet

Directions: Notice that every word in the word list box ends with the letter s. It is your job to sort them. First, cross out any words that are not nouns (naming words). Next, copy all the words that are nouns into the Nouns column. Then copy any of those words that are plural into the Plural Nouns column.

Word List		Nouns	Plural Nouns
princess	reads		
grows	wings		
words	dress		
seems	thoughts		
acorns	teaches		
eggs	bus		
leaps	knows		
glass	things		
soars	Mars		
roots	shines		
eagles			

Extension

Writing a poem is not as hard as you think. Start with a rhyming pattern and the words will come to you. Get some practice by copying and then completing the unfinished poem below.

A _____ day, a bad day

They're not the same.

One is like _____.

The other is like _____.

