

Introduction to Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated Instruction for English contains twenty English activities that will engage students of varying ability levels, learning styles and areas of interest. All of the activities encompass several of the multiple intelligences. The lessons are designed to provide you with models of differentiated instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of your students.

Carol Ann Tomlinson in *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners* encourages educators to look at teaching and learning in a new way. Using the phrase “One size doesn’t fit all”, she presents a philosophy of educational beliefs:

- Students must be seen as individuals. While students are assigned year levels by age, they differ in their readiness to learn, their interests and their style of learning.
- These differences are significant enough to require teachers to make accommodations and differentiate by content, process and student products. Curriculum tells us what to teach; differentiation gives us strategies to make teaching more successful.
- Students learn best when connections are made between the curriculum, student interests and students’ previous learning experiences.
- Students should be given the opportunity to work in flexible groups. Different lessons point toward grouping students in different ways: individually, heterogeneously, homogeneously, in a whole group, by student interests and so forth.
- There should be ongoing assessment to help plan effective instruction.

To address the diverse ways that students learn and their learning styles, we can look to Howard Gardner’s eight intelligences to provide a framework. Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences encourages us to scrutinise our attitudes toward learning so that each student can learn in a more relaxed environment.

Let’s explore what multiple intelligences look like in the English classroom.



Visual/Spatial

Perceives the visual world with accuracy; can transform and visualise three dimensions in a two-dimensional space. Encourage this intelligence by using graphs and making sketches, exploring spatial visualisation problems and using mapping activities.



Verbal/Linguistic

Appreciates and understands the structure, meaning and function of language. These students can communicate effectively in both written and verbal form. Encourage this intelligence by using class to discuss ideas, making written and oral presentations, and doing research projects.



Logical/Mathematical

Ability to recognise logical or numerical patterns and observe patterns in symbolic form. Enjoys problems requiring the use of deductive or inductive reasoning and is able to follow a chain of reasoning. Encourage this intelligence by organising and analysing data, designing and working with spreadsheets, working on critical-thinking and estimation problems, and helping students make predictions based on the analysis of numerical data.

The Format of the Book

The twenty lessons in this book have been developed to take advantage of a number of differentiation strategies. These include:

- Student-centred activities, where the teacher acts as a guide to foster students' self-reliance as learners
- A variety of instructional materials
- Varying approaches to assessment, including nontraditional assessment and assessment by multiple means
- Flexibility in how the teacher presents the material
- Flexible grouping options, with suggestions regarding activities that work best as individual projects, for pairs and for small groups
- Flexible time to complete projects according to student levels and needs
- Multiple-option assignments, where students are given a choice of ways to pursue a topic and present concepts
- Multiple perspectives on ideas are encouraged.
- Students are encouraged to problem-solve independently, to use their background knowledge and to use their individual talents and skills.
- Students are encouraged to make interest-based learning choices.
- Multiple intelligences are addressed in each activity, and are listed on the teacher page.

You can either use these lessons as they are presented, or adapt them to your own curriculum. It is hoped that these lessons will further serve as a springboard for you to use your own ingenuity to rework lessons to meet the unique abilities of all students.

Random Acts of Poetry

OVERVIEW

Students learn about several different poetry forms and write poems that they place around their school and community. They may also recite poems over the school intercom during morning announcements or at a school assembly.



Multiple Intelligences

verbal/linguistic, musical/rhythmic, intrapersonal



Skills

working in a group, memorising, reciting, writing poetry, analysing poetry



Materials/Resources

multiple copies of a variety of poems to show poetic forms and conventions

Differentiation Strategies

There are a variety of poetic forms available to students of all abilities. Advanced students might try writing sonnets, while students with basic skills could write haiku, acrostic poems or rhyming couplets. Free verse can be both accessible and highly sophisticated, depending on the subject matter vocabulary.

What to Do

1. Brainstorm about poetry. Start with a class brainstorm of what poetry is. Students are likely to think that poetry always rhymes and has metre, is usually about love and is hard to understand. On the other hand, students may think that any collection of words can be poetry, that it has no rules or conventions.

After the brainstorm, show students a poem that doesn't fit many of their stereotypes. Ask them to discuss how the poem is different from their expectations. Finally, give students the list of poetry terms on pages 40–41 to help them understand how poets use language.

2. Read and analyse poems. Have students break into groups according to ability. Give each group a collection of poems that are challenging but understandable. Ask students to use their glossary of poetry terms to explain how each poem is structured. Then ask them to put the meaning of the poem into their own words, talk about how it makes them feel and analyse what the poet did to create the feeling of the poem. Have each group complete a poetry discussion sheet on their discussions.
3. Teach a poem. Each group should choose one of the poems in their packets and teach it to the large group.
4. Write poems. Based on the models in their packets, students should begin drafting

their own poems, creating one modelled on each poem in their packets. Small groups can work together to offer writing conferences, using their knowledge of the poems they studied to create group criteria for poems.

5. Share poems. When everyone has written their poems, have students place their poems around the school or community. They can be placed on walls, over water fountains, on stairwells or on bulletin boards.

Assessment

Students may be evaluated on their group work and on the poems they write. Poetry is somewhat subjective, so it's useful to have students generate criteria for successful poems and use those criteria in your evaluation.

Literary Terms/Poetic Devices

Directions: Use this glossary to help you analyse and write poems according to your teacher's instructions.

alliteration: repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds in words that are close together

allusion: reference to someone or something that is known in history, religion or some branch of culture

apostrophe: a technique by which a writer addresses an inanimate object, an idea or a person who is either dead or absent

assonance: repetition of same or similar vowel sounds followed by different consonant sounds, especially in words that are close together

blank verse: verse written in unrhymed iambic pentameter

cadence: natural, rhythmic rise and fall of language as it is normally spoken

caesura: pause or break within a line of poetry

concrete poem: words in a poem arranged on the page to suggest a visual representation of the subject

consonance: repetition of the same or similar final consonant sounds

couplet: two consecutive rhyming lines of poetry

figure of speech: word or phrase describing one thing in terms of another – simile, metaphor, personification, symbol and so on

free verse: poetry that does not conform to a regular rhyme or meter scheme

hyperbole: exaggeration or overstatement of fact

iamb: a metrical foot made of one short or unstressed syllable and one long or stressed syllable

iambic pentameter: a type of meter in which there are five iambs to a line

(continued)

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