



**Dr. Bowles: CIED 5022**  
**Project Descriptor: Bio Poem Assignment**

Greetings, Interns!

Your first assignment for Classroom Management has two goals: to help build a learning community and to promote self-reflection through a creative assignment. The task has two parts: the Bio Poem and the Extension Description.

To create your Bio Poem, you must follow a few simple directions— then fly and soar on wings of your imagination! The directions focus on the creation of a pseudo sonnet, which modifies the traditional Italian form into a flexible container for your identity. Remember, many of the assignments we accomplish in Classroom Management are designed to model situations you are likely to encounter in your own classrooms. Objections on the part of students fit that model (poetry is for English majors / I hate poetry / I'm not creative / this is stupid).

**Sonnet?** Here's a definition from *The American Heritage*: "A 14-line verse form usually having one of several conventional rhyme schemes."

**Italian sonnet?** Think Petrarchan. Here's a definition from *The American Heritage*: "A sonnet containing an octave with the rhyme pattern *abbaabba* and a sestet of various rhyme patterns such a *cdecde* or *cdcdcd*."

So, we have an octave and a sestet to write. As for the fancy rhyme schemes, well.... Forget 'em. Few poets writing today would be willing to tackle the Petrarchan form. I won't ask you to do so, but a few students in the past have willingly picked up the gauntlet and met the challenge successfully.

**The underlying idea** is to have you consider the meaning of this thing called "poem" and how it differs from other kinds of writing. Remember, as dutiful teachers we are always teaching across the curriculum. Like most traditions in our post post-modern culture, static poetic forms have become passé, faded by changing convention, way out of fashion, and morbidly out-of-date. But a poem worth its salt must have some kind of form, mustn't it?

***Here is the 'formula' for you as the Bard:***

1. The title of your Bio Poem will be your name. The poem will consist of 14 lines based on the theme of SELF.

2. The first 8 of the 14 lines, the octave, will be subordinate clauses beginning with the relative pronoun “Whose.”
3. The last 6 of the 14 lines, the sestet, will be subordinate clauses beginning with the relative pronoun “Who.”
4. The octave will focus on your personal identity, using such phrases as whose family, whose favorite, whose parents, and so on. Remember, in the octave you are writing about yourself. In the context of the teacher-student relationship, you as a student are providing information to help your teacher plan effective instructional strategies and productive lessons.
5. In a traditional Italian sonnet, the sestet signals a change in subject matter, hence the change in rhyme scheme and number of lines. In our poem, we will also change subject matter in the sestet. You should move beyond family, habit, and inclination into the deeper realms of self. Let the six lines of the sestet speak directly about any of the physical, psychological, spiritual, cognitive, or kinesthetic aspects that help you define SELF.

**Follow any theme about self** that comes to you. You may want to use part of the Bio Poem to explain why you’ve chosen your particular field of expertise to anchor your teaching career. For example, my foreign language students could explain in poetic imagery why they’ve chosen French or Spanish as their language to teach.

If the Muse visits and you are inspired beyond measure, then go ahead and write a formal Italian sonnet. I promise to be very appropriately impressed! I’ve written a model to help you visualize the pattern.

Imagine that I am your student. Think about all you can find in the poem that would be useful to you as a teacher.

*Freddie Elizabeth Alexander Bowles*

Whose family hails from old and new lands  
 Whose first name stems from her father’s  
 Whose middle name links back to her mom’s  
 Whose lineage settled in the eastern delta of Arkansas  
 Whose favorite foods include breads and pastries  
 Whose preferred music must have percussion and piano  
 Whose fav singers cry the blues  
 Whose *Nachtisch* should be layered with whipped or ice cream

Who speaks or understands four other languages  
 Who publishes under a *nom de plume*  
 Who counts over thirty countries in her four passports  
 Who enjoys dancing and moving  
 Who relies on a power greater than self  
 Who loves Teacher Bowles, son Marcus, and furry friends Gandalf, Isis, and Ulysses.

***There you have it: 14 lines, one octave, one sestet, one self.***

**The Extension Description** involves a bit of reflection and a tad of application. Reflect on your students and your content areas. Briefly describe how you would adapt this assignment to fit one of your classes. Explain how you would include it in your plan for instruction. Identify problems and opportunities. Remember, it's important to adapt and adjust lessons to meet the capabilities of your students. For example, you may want to instruct your students to begin every line with "who," rather than "whose." You could choose another form with a different number of lines. You may decide to have your students focus on a specific theme such as sports, ethnicity, or hobbies. You could also direct them to write about their family and their experiences in school.

Earlier in my career, when I taught the German language, I would direct my students to write poems to anchor a descriptive adjective exercise for a lesson about family. They could write either about themselves or about one of their family members. I would also shorten the line requirement. For a Level One class, I would use a gap-fill format because so many students struggled with syntax. The activity provided me with background information about my students and also addressed Danielson's Domain 1: Planning and Preparation and Domain 3: Instruction. The poem exercise could also be adapted to an exercise calling for a description of the student's house, which would give me an idea of their socioeconomic background. For a Level One class, I would provide a Word Bank for students to use in their poems.

**Project Rubric: 30 points**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Target 5-4</i>	<i>Acceptable 3-2</i>	<i>Unacceptable 1-0</i>
<b>Poem: Format</b>	Octave and sestet included 5 points	Octave or sestet included 3 points	Neither octave nor sestet included (free verse) No points
<b>Poem: Editing</b>	No errors 5 points	0-3 errors 3 points	More than 3 errors No points
<b>Extension: Relation to Content Area</b>	Content area identified; poem connected to a topic with detailed explanations 5-4	Either content area identified or poem connected to topic; limited explanations 3-2	Vague relation to content area or topic; unclear explanation of connection 1-0
<b>Extension: Adaptation to your own class</b>	Clear explanation of use 5-4	Vague explanation of use 3-2	No explanation of poem's use 1-0
<b>Extension: Identification of problems and opportunities</b>	Multiple problems <b>and</b> opportunities identified 5-4	One problem and one opportunity identified 3-2	One problem or one opportunity identified 1-0
<b>Submission</b>	By due date 5	One day late 3	More than one day late 0