

LESSON PLAN TITLE: On Another Planet

Writer-in-Residence: Rachel Cawkwell

Grade Level: 2nd-6th

Model Works Used: “Astronomers Locate a New Planet” by Matthew Olzmann

Literary Learning objective(s): Students will consider different elements in a narrative poem, including setting, characters, and problem.

Themes: travel, outerspace, materials, identifying problems

MDE/SEL Standards:

- 2nd grade reading standard: Ask and answer such question as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text
- 3rd grade reading standard: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for answers
- Responsible decision-making (identifying problems)

Materials Needed: paper, pencil, crayons (optional), dice (optional)

Opening Activity

Today we’re going to outer space. Let’s start by drawing an alien friend to come with us on the journey!

To figure out what our friend looks like, either roll a dice or ask someone at home to tell you four numbers less than ten. Put each number in a space below and then draw below or on your own paper.

My alien has _____ eyes, _____ teeth, _____ arms, and _____ legs.

My alien is named _____.

Pre-Discussion

Now that we have an alien friend, let's look at some places we could visit in space! If you want, go find a REAL photo of outer space that you like at <https://spacetelescope.org/images/archive/top100/>. Or just look at the photo below.



Woa. What's going on in this photo? What do you think those objects are made of? What would it be like to be there in real life, with your alien friend?

Model Poem Discussion

We're now going to travel to a planet that scientists discovered in 2011 that they think is made entirely of diamond! Close your eyes and imagine it! Here's part of what a poet from Detroit named Matthew Olzmann imagined. You can listen along as I read it (see the video for this lesson).

Like the universe's largest engagement ring, it twirls
and sparkles its way through infinity.
The citizens of the new world know about luxury.
They can live for a thousand years.
Their hearts are little clocks
with silver pendulums pulsing inside,
Eyes like onyx, teeth like pearl.
But it's not always easy. They know hunger.
They starve. A field made of diamond
is impossible to plow; shovels crumble and fold
like paper animals. So frequent is famine,
that when two people get married,
one gives the other a locket filled with dirt.
That's the rare thing, the treasured thing, there.
It takes decades to save for,
but the ground beneath them glows,
and people find a way.

There are some hard words in this poem. Let's focus on what we can figure out about the world made of diamonds, and if we need to, we can look some words up in the dictionary.

Matthew tells us about the planet by giving us information about the setting (WHERE we are), the characters (WHO lives there), and the problems (WHAT is hard).

Find in the poem one detail you notice about the setting.

Find one detail about the characters.

Find one detail about the problem of living on a planet made of diamonds.

Later in the poem, after what we read together, Matthew talks about some things he does not like on Earth and why he sometimes wishes he could go somewhere else. Now that I'm stuck inside all day, sometimes I think about going other places, too.

Prewriting

So, let's travel together to another planet! What would that planet be made of? You can choose one of the following objects or something from your imagination.



Lava



Peanut Butter



Trampolines



Feathers



Balloons

Writing Prompt

Write a poem about a new planet! Follow the steps of the worksheet. Be sure to include details about the setting, characters, and a problem on the planet.

Share / Reflect

When you are done writing, share your poem with someone in your house. Would they want to visit your planet? Can you brainstorm together ways to deal with the main problem on your planet?

What was the most fun part to imagine? Did you like writing about the setting, characters, or problem most? Next time you feel like writing, you can choose to just focus on your favorite part instead of doing all three.

Title: On a Planet Made of _____

SETTING. Tell us about 3 places on your planet. You can pick from below.



city

park

forest

mountain

farm

lake

Example: There are tall, fluffy skyscrapers in the marshmallow cities.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

CHARACTERS. Tell us three details about the people who live on your planet. You can pick from below.



heart



brain



hair



dance moves



clothing

Example. The people have glowing, sapphire hearts.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

PROBLEM. What would be hard about living on this planet?

Check/Highlight all that apply

- Text by a contemporary/diverse author
- Translated text
- Visual Thinking Strategies
- Close reading or other analysis
- At least one step of the writing process
- Planning & Reflection Strategy
- New device, concept or theme
- Social-Emotional Learning
 - Self-Management
 - Social Awareness
 - Relationship Skills
 - Responsible-Decision Making
 - Self-Awareness