

Family of Words: Created by Chris Forhan

This exercise should take **60-90** minutes, and it can be performed as a group or individually. I suggest having the students talk about the example given here too for a launch pad into their poem. Now, here is the exercise. Have the students pick a root word with two syllables. Make sure it is a word they have a relationship with, maybe one of their favorite words or a word that they just learned that they would like incorporate into their spoken and written vocabulary. Then, have the students pick three concrete nouns that are sonically similar to the first two syllable word they choose. When I say concrete, I mean nouns that are tangible and can be touched in the physical world, i.e. no abstractions like “love,” “fear,” or “hope.” Also, when I say sonically similar, I mean that the words may rhyme with the root word or use letters that are present in the root word. After the students have chosen these three words, have them pick two active verbs that are also sonically similar to the root word. By active, I mean verbs that denote action and not thought or a thought process or a verbal action like “thinking” or “saying.” Then, have the students select one adjective that is sonically similar to the root word. Finally, have the students create one made-up word that uses at least two sounds from the root word. Next, have the students create a poem using this list of generated words. This is a good exercise to perform with the students so that they can get the gist of the exercise and see some of our very own work (This means we should maybe try to the exercise ourselves while we are teaching it to the students). Additionally as said before, this exercise might be performed better with the whole group writing one poem at first together before the students try it individually. And, this exercise will be a good opportunity to discuss the different parts of speech, i.e. as a mentor we should give them examples of what a noun, verb, and adjective are. Here is an example of the exercise by Chris Forhan:

Two syllable root word: Luggage

Three concrete notes that are sonically similar to the root word: licorice, mug, and gull.

Two active verbs that are sonically similar to the root word: languish, joust.

One adjective that is sonically similar to the root word: ghastly.

One made-up word that uses at least two sounds from the root word: glump.

Example poem:

On the Beach a Domestic Moment of Thought

Luggage, licorice, and a mug
joust over ghastly glumps
and languish over the gull
sewn to the blue sky above.