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Lesson – Our Dreams

Dreams in Poetry

In this **Lesson – Our Dreams** we will use our five senses and our imagination to concentrate on **the dreams** and **the goals** that we want to accomplish in our life. We will also learn to use two kinds of comparisons in poetry – **similes** and **metaphors**.

All human beings, especially young people, have the ability to dream and to imagine how they would like their future life to be. Many times these dreams become life goals that people try to make real. For example, ever since I was a child I always dreamed of being a writer and many years later I have fulfilled this dream.

In order to write your next poem, I want you to prepare using these steps:

Step 1 Interview a family member

Step 2 Imagine your future – "Life is a Dream"

Step 3 Read and discuss two poems from my book *Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems* (Children's Book Press 2000) and a third poem from my most recent book, *Poems to Dream Together* (Lee & Low Books 2005).

Step 1: Interview a Family Member or Close Friend

Conduct an informal interview with a member of your family (father, mother, grandmother, grandfather, uncle, aunt, big brother or sister, cousins or others) about the dreams or the goals that they had in life when they were your age. Some of the questions you could ask are:

- * When they were your age, what did they dream about doing in their life?
- * Did they have a dream that later became a goal for their life?
- * Did they manage to realize some of the dreams they had at your age?
- * What dream or goal do they want to achieve in the future?
- * What advice do they have for young people like you about how to make dreams come true?

Write a short summary of the answers so that you can read them later.

Step 2: Imagine Your Future – "Life Is a Dream"

A great Spanish writer, **Pedro Calderón de la Barca** (1600-1681) gave the title "*Life is a dream*" to one of his plays. This play is considered one of the most profound and moving works of the Golden Age in Spain. For this author, dreams are an essential part of life, because at the beginning and at the end, life is like a dream. Whatever life we want to have in the future, we first have to dream it in order to make it real.

We use our imagination to project ourselves into the future. In order to concentrate on our future life, let's imagine that you are twice the age you are now. If you are now 15-18 years old, imagine that you're 27-30 years old:

- * Where do you find yourself?
- * What kind of work are you doing?
- * What dreams or goals have you realized?
- * How about the predictions or desires that your family had for you? Did they come true?
- * How would you compare the dreams that you have with those of the person you interviewed?

Make a short summary of the answers to these questions, in order to prepare yourself to write your poem.

Step 3: Read and Discuss Three Poems

Before writing your poem about your dreams and life goals I want you to read three poems of mine. The first two appear in the book *Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems*. The poem, "**My Mother's Hands**," is about the dreams my mother had that her children would continue their education in the United States.

My Mother's Hands

are as eloquent
as the finest books

they prune rosebushes
with the same skill

they once picked
lettuce in the fields

and later cleaned
and packed sardines

nothing makes them
happier than getting

good report cards
from us her children

then these hands, calloused
from working so hard

embrace and caress us
light and soft as silk

"here you can become
all you want to be"

my mother reminds us
repeating:

“¡sí se puede!
yes, you can do it!”

- * In this poem there is a poetic comparison (**simile**): Can you find it?
- * What does this comparison mean?
- * What do you think the mother dreams for her children?
- * How do you interpret what the mother says in the last three stanzas?

The second poem of mine that I want you to read is called "**Promised Land**" and it's about what happened to my brothers and sisters and me.

Promised Land

it turns out
my mother
was right

my brothers
my sisters
and I went on

to college
to follow
our own call

this is our
Promised Land
after all

- * How do you interpret the title of this poem?
- * Why do I say, "my mother was right?"
- What relation do you find between this poem and what I write about my family in the next section of my book called "**Afterword**"?

The third poem of mine is called "**Dreaming Up the Future**" and comes from my most recent book *Poems to Dream* Together. It was inspired by school children writing poems in response to a previous version of this same lesson:

Dreaming Up the Future

let us see ourselves
twenty years from now—
who is now the nurse
the doctor who can heal

who is now the teacher
who can teach and learn
from students as well
the actor making us laugh

the lawyer who defends
the poor, the innocent
the activist who strives
for a better world for all

who is now the mother
the father who help
a son or a daughter
to stay on in school

the scientist, the artist,
the poet, who dream up
–in their own ways–
solutions to old questions

the best way for making
our dreams come true
is to dream on and on
and never stop dreaming

Now I want you to write a poem.

Lesson – Our Dreams

Your Assignment: Write a poem about your own dreams

Using what you did in **Steps 1, 2, and 3** of this workshop, write a poem about the dreams and the goals that you have for your own life.

Imagine the life you want to have 12 or 13 years in the future. Then ask yourself:

- * Where can I see myself?
- * Who can I hear near me?
- * What gives me the most satisfaction?
- * What makes my parents most proud of me?
- * What do I like most about my life?
- * What would I like to change or improve in my future life?

Then write your poem using at least one poetic comparison (**simile** or **metaphor**).

- In a **simile** you compare using the word “**like**” or “**as**”:

My mother's hands are light and soft as silk

- In a **metaphor** the comparison is direct:

Your teeth are pearls