



Opening Activities (10-15 minutes)

Option 1: Start with the ice-breaker “Personal Introductions with a Creative Twist.” Everyone introduces themselves through a set of basic questions: How old are you? What’s your favorite food? What do you like about poetry? Ask them to mime an activity they like to do. Pass around colored pencils; make artistic name tags that incorporate symbols/drawings that the student feels represents them. Ask students to save their namecards and bring them to future meetings.

Option 2: Have students create a name tag (if they haven’t already) before playing the opposites game. If the students were here the week prior, use this time to name-game: ask them to come up with an alliterative sentence that describes their mood. If they need to sub “k’s” for “c’s” to keep the alliteration going, that’s fine. For example, Kyle might say, “Kyle is calm as a cucumber and cool as can be.”

Option 3: Circle up to play the opposite game. Each person says one word that is “opposite” the word that came before. For example, if I say “tree,” the next person might say “penny,” or if I say “shark,” the next person might say “bedspread.” Discuss what makes the game fun and how it relates to poetry through use of language, freedom of expression, ambiguous interpretation, etc.

Option 4: Introduce 3-6 poems. Each person (including facilitators) reads two lines from each poem and passes it to the next person. This brings in multiple voices and gets everyone to participate. Then, ask everyone to underline their favorite phrase. Afterwards, go around and only read the underlined phrases to make a whole new collaborative poem from all the poems we introduced.

Option 5: Use the exercise “I used to be but now I’m not.” Ask students to come up with different lines of how they’ve changed over the years; for example, “I used to be afraid of the dark, but now I can’t sleep with light in my eyes,” or “I used to walk on shorter legs, but now I stand taller than my father.”

Option 6: Play the slugs and emeralds game: give a slug to something you didn't like this week, and give an emerald to something you enjoyed. After everyone gets a turn, go around the circle once more, but ask each person to change the words "slugs" and "emeralds" to something else that represents the same thing. For example, a slug might be "mud, thorns, or spiders" and an emerald might be "rubies, sunshine, or kittens," etc.

Option 7: Play the onomatopoeia game: Take turns going around the circle. One person starts by making a sound (no stereotypical animal noises), and the person to their right has to name an object/situation/or even a feeling that goes with it. For example, *(that vibrating noise your tongue makes on the roof of your mouth)* might mean "a card in my bicycle spokes," or "my grandpa's old truck trying to start."

Option 8: Bring in some poems for the students to read. As one person reads aloud, the others will shout out styles to read it in, i.e. happy, sad, silly, fast, etc. It becomes a fun game to change how you read/perform poetry pieces.

Option 9: Choose a verb that begins with the same letter as your first name (ex. Jumping Jason, and then he would jump).