SILK ROAD JOURNEYS: ANALYZING POETRY

NAME: Laura Wright
SCHOOL: Niles North High School
SUBJECT AREA: English Literature and Composition
GRADE LEVEL: Tenth Grade (designed for sophomores studying a unit on poetry)

STATE GOALS
• STATE GOAL 1: Read with understanding and fluency.
• STATE GOAL 2: Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras and ideas.
• STATE GOAL 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.
• STATE GOAL 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.
• STATE GOAL 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess and communicate information.

OBJECTIVES
• Students will
  • Gain an understanding of the history of the Silk Road and how people and objects were transformed through the journey.
  • Hear and view the children’s book We’re Riding on a Caravan and analyze its rhyme and meter.
  • Read Robert Pinsky’s “Shirt” and discuss the ways the shirt’s journey is conveyed in the poem.

MATERIALS/RESOURCES/GALLERY OBJECTS
• The picture book We’re Riding on a Caravan by Laurie Krebs and Helen Cann
• Document camera
• Copies of the poem “Shirt” by Robert Pinsky from The Internet Poetry Archive, http://www.ibiblio.org/ipa/poems/pinsky/shirt.php
• “Analyzing Poetry” Worksheet (below)

PROCEDURES
1. Give students a brief history of the Silk Road as a conduit for transformation of culture and art/goods.
2. Distribute copies of the “Analyzing Poetry” Worksheet (below) and give students a chance to look at the questions.
3. Using the document camera so that students can see the pictures in the book, read We’re Riding on a Caravan. Use the Worksheet to analyze the poetry of the book and discuss how the author uses language to create tone and convey meaning to the reader.
4. Distribute “Shirt” by Robert Pinsky. Read the poem aloud in class and then have students use the analyzing poetry Worksheet to discuss the poem.
WORKSHEET

ANALYZING POETRY

As we look at *We’re Riding on a Caravan* and “Shirt” today, answer the following questions to help you determine how the poets are using language to convey meaning.

Questions for *We’re Riding on a Caravan*

1. What is the rhythm and meter of the text? What is the rhyme scheme?

2. Tap out the rhythm on your desk. How does the rhythm reflect the journey itself? List some adjectives you would use to describe the journey as it is depicted in this book.

3. Name some of the things you learned about the Silk Road through the descriptions of the journey in this book.

4. How do the descriptions and the artwork demonstrate both the adventurous and the difficult aspects of the journey along the Silk Road?

5. Overall, what tone and message are the author and artist trying to convey in this book?

Questions for “Shirt”

1. Although it is a rather mundane object, the shirt is surrounded by history. In this poem, we see many different historical associations with the shirt. In the space below, create a bubble map with “shirt” in the middle and all of the historical references in the poem surrounding it.

2. Pinsky uses a technique called cataloging, or listing, in this poem. Take a look at the lists he creates in this poem and describe the effect it has on you, the reader.

3. What are some of the details the author uses in this poem and why does he mention them?

4. What message do you think Pinsky is trying to convey in this poem? Make sure you explain what makes you think so.