Teacher’s Guide for the BioPoem Strategy as Part of a Character Analysis for Of Mice and Men

**Purpose:** The purpose of this strategy is to help students think more thoroughly about a character in the text. The elements in the BioPoem are designed to stretch students’ minds and vocabularies. Students generally enjoy this assignment because of the feeling of accomplishment they get from such intense thinking.

**Context:** This particular BioPoem would fit in best near the end of the novel because it is in essence a character analysis. It should not be done as after the book is read because class time at that point would be best spent on talking about the ending. But, perhaps just before reading chapter five, or even at the midpoint of chapter five. By this time, students have a pretty good understanding of different characters’ intentions, motives, and desires and they can more easily carry out this analysis.

**Directions:** Students are going to need a fair amount of time with this. It is imperative, also, that they look at other BioPoems as models so that they will be able to see what their end-goal is. They should go over the formula as a class. Make sure they understand what is wanted with each term (even if it means going over basic parts of speech for a moment). You might even want to start writing one as a class so that they can see and understand the thought process. It is difficult to write a poem like this in a group. It is better during the writing process if they work individually. Also, having multiple copies of a thesaurus or dictionary available might ease their writing. If class time is limited, it can also double as a homework assignment. After the students have completed their writing, it is fun for them to share and to hear the poems from their classmates. You might even want to divide them into small groups as to a certain character (perhaps, put all those who did theirs on Lennie together, etc.) or, as to a variety of characters (perhaps, a representative of each character) during the reading of the poems so they could compare and contrast their own work.

**Assessment:** This poem will require a significant amount of work/thought and thus it should be weighted to reflect that. You might want to consider giving extra points for the most creative efforts. But, because of the work involved, each student that completes it, according to the formula, should receive a decent grade.