Biopoem
Out of the Dust

Purpose
This strategy is designed to help students further understand, synthesize and solidify their conceptions of a character. The biopoem format makes it easy for students to play with ideas about subject, theme, setting, voice, etc. This is a good strategy to use towards the end of a reading, when students have a better grasp of what the characters are really like.

Directions
Towards the end or after finishing Out of the Dust, tell students that they may pick any of the characters from the novel to write a biopoem about. Give them the specific format of the biopoem, but encourage them to be as creative as they can in the blanks.

Line 1. First name
Line 2. Four traits that describe character
Line 3. Relative (brother, sister, daughter, etc.) of ______
Line 4. Lover of ______ (list three things or people)
Line 5. Who feels _____ (three items)
Line 6. Who needs _____ (three items)
Line 7. Who fears _____ (three items)
Line 8. Who gives _____ (three items)
Line 9. Who would like to see _____ (three items)
Line 10. Resident of _____
Line 11. Last Name

Assessment
The primary purpose of this assignment is to evaluate a student’s understanding of the characters, rather than their poetic ability, so the grading emphasis should be on content rather than language. This is a great way to check students understanding and create connections between events and characters in the novel.
Example Biopoem

Billie Jo
Red, long-legged, restless, dusty
Daughter of Bayard and Polly
Lover of the piano, her parents, and her unborn brother
Who feels that she must escape the dust, unforgiven, and unforgiving
Who needs the closeness with her father again,
to play the piano,
and to find herself
Who fears being trapped in dust forever, being alone, and fire
Who gives her all to the piano,
purpose to her father,
and up on getting out of the dust
Who would like to see her mother again,
the wheat grow strong,
and a day without dust,
Resident of the Dust Bowl—Joyce City, Oklahoma
Kelby

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