Biopoem Activity

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde (Signet Classics, 2004)

Purpose of this Strategy
This activity helps writers to synthesize their learning about a subject: a person, place, thing, concept, or event. In this particular activity, students are encouraged to focus their learning on a person, a character of their choice in the play. The Biopoem follows a pattern that makes it easier for beginning writers to complete as they play with ideas. This activity is designed to reach out to and assist students with a culturally diverse background or who are perhaps learning English as a second language; instead of the traditional writing assignment, this task explores other ways of creative thinking. This assignment addresses the cultural needs of students in this particular population while also engaging the entire class in meaningful learning.

Directions
Instruct the students to fill in the blanks with a character of their choice from the play. They can get as creative as they want in responding to the likes, dislikes, emotions, etc. of this character.

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 __________ __________ __________ (List three emotions)
Line 6: Who needs __________ __________ __________ (List three items)
Line 7: Who fears __________ __________ __________ (List three emotions)
Line 8: Who gives __________ __________ __________ (List three items)
Line 9: Who would like to see __________ __________ __________ (List three items)
Line 10: Resident of __________
Line 11: Last name.

Example
You can show the following poem that was done by Kathryn Collins about Pearl from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter:

Pearl
Her mother’s only treasure, beautiful, brilliant, glimmering
Daughter of Dimmesdale and Hester
Lover of laughter, light and her mother
Who feels fury, passion and magic
Who needs to experience grief, to become human, to learn sympathy
Who fears nothing, never, null
Who gives love, torment, and joy
Who would like to see Dimmesdale on the scaffold in the daylight, Dimmesdale live, and her mother to explain the truth about the Scarlet Letter.
Resident of Boston
Bastard.

Read Aloud
As the teacher, write a Biopoem yourself and be willing to share it with your students. Invite students who feel comfortable enough to sit in the author’s chair and read their completed Biopoems to the class.

Lee, BYU, 2009
Assessment

This is an excellent formative assessment that will show you how deeply your students understand the characters of the work you’re reading – their personalities, desires, talents, and fears. Students are able to connect to a character on a more meaningful level. This activity allows the students who are a little unsure of themselves to express themselves in a unique and informal way to show you what they know.