**Poetry-Work with Expanded Sentences**

To enrich children's writing in general, they need to be aware of descriptive words. Put this phrase on the chalkboard:

a big dog

"If we think about a 'big dog,' what picture do we see? We need to know more. What color is it? What is the fur like? Is it friendly? Is it snarling? Is it in motion or standing still or crouching?" Little by little, have students contribute descriptive words that you print on the chalkboard. Before everyone's eyes, the phrase builds to tell more about this dog:

a big brown dog

a big, brown, shaggy dog

a pretty, big, brown, shaggy dog

a pretty, calm, big, brown, shaggy dog

Now everyone can get more of a picture of this dog, making the picture turn out entirely different by the words used. Try this next with "a small cat." Students can do this again and again – and just by the words they select – can turn the cat, dog, horse, rabbit, etc., into a sweet or sympathetic or monstrous animal. It's a good exercise for the use of descriptive words. Perhaps in the end, it can become a poetic phrase that a student wishes to illustrate, or turn into a poetry character, or even be honored as a poem.

a small cat

a small scrawny cat

a frightened, small, scrawny cat

a frightened, snarling, small, scrawny cat

a frightened, snarling, small, scrawny, tiger cat

**A Formula for Poetry**   
Next, students need to find out more about this animal, so use the following formula. Save the title for last.

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A frightened, snarling, small, scrawny, tiger cat

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (a word that tells how it moved)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (a phrase that tells where it went)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (a phrase that tells what it was after)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (a phrase that tells what you hope for the cat)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (a word that sums up the cat or the situation)

Here are two examples that could be read aloud, then taken apart for students so that they understand the formula. Then they can make suggestions and come up with their own cat poem.

*A Hungry Cat*

A frightened, snarling, small, scrawny, tiger cat

leaped

around the corner

after a sparrow eating worms.

I hope it is healthy. Hisssss!

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A frightened, snarling, small, scrawny, tiger cat

slinked

under a bush

to get shelter.

It needs a good family.

Homeless.

Read more on TeacherVision: <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/poetry/activity/5488.html#ixzz1sV44RzI7>