

Area of Pho-cus

Photography and Descriptive Poetry

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Grade Level	5th Grade	**Time Frame**	1-2 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	100 minutes
Course	Composition, Creative Writing		

Essential Question

What is the best part of me?

Summary

Using Wendy Ewald's book of children's photography and poetry as a mentor text, students will compose descriptive poems based on photographs that they take of their favorite personal feature.

Snapshot

Engage

Students engage in a discussion and quick-write about the best features of others and themselves.

Explore

Students experience the book "The Best Part of Me" by Wendy Ewald.

Explain

Using the book and their quick-writes as inspiration, students take a picture of their favorite feature, called their Area of Pho-cus.

Extend

Inspired by their photos, students compose a poem using "The Best Part of Me" as a mentor text.

Evaluate

Students share their photographs and poems and engage in a final discussion about the best features of their class community.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts (Grade 5)

5.2.W.1: Students will apply components of a recursive writing process for multiple purposes to create a focused, organized, and coherent piece of writing.
5.2.W.2: Students will plan (e.g., outline) and prewrite a first draft as necessary.

Attachments

- Lesson Slides—Area of Pho-cus.pptx

Materials

- "The Best Part of Me" by Wendy Ewald (picture book or YouTube read-aloud)
- Lesson Slides—Area of Pho-cus
- Digital camera (or smartphone, tablet, computer with webcam, or other device with a camera)
- Writing materials
- Cardstock or other decorative paper
- Photo printer
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

Engage

Display **slide 5** from the attached **Lesson Slides** with the photo of a cat looking in the mirror. Let students wonder out loud what the cat sees in the mirror when it looks at its reflection. What does the cat like the best? What is its favorite feature? What would the cat say its best asset is?

Display **slide 6** and ask students to write a response to the prompt "The best part of me is _____ because _____." After enough time has passed, let students share their responses out loud with the class. Display **slide 7** to give students sentence stems that will push their thinking further.

Possible Responses

Sample student responses might be, "The best part of me is my ears because I can hear my family and friends" or "The best part of me is my tail because it twitches when I feel happy."

Next, point to your elbow and explain why that part of you is your absolute favorite feature. You can really ham it up and explain that this is your favorite part because it allows you to lean on tables or offer an alternative way to wave.

Teacher's Note

This part of the Engage activity can be as cheesy as you'd like, and, of course, you can choose another feature as your focus rather than an elbow.

Ask students what their favorite features are and use the Think-Pair-Share strategy to have them choose a feature, explain why it is their favorite, share with a partner, and then share with the whole class. While students are sharing, display **slide 8** to show the essential question, "What is the best part of me?"

Keeping It G-Rated

Depending on the maturity or grade level of your students, consider limiting the features that can be chosen to the face, arms, etc., to avoid any situations that might derail the class.

Alternative Consideration

You might consider focusing on personality traits rather than physical traits.

Explore

This lesson is based on Wendy Ewald's book "The Best Part of Me." If a hard copy of the book is not available, consider watching and listening to a read-aloud of the book here (and linked on **slide 9**).

Reading Option

Because the book is composed of several photographs and poems, you may choose to read a select few rather than the whole text.

Ask students what they notice about the photographs that accompany each poem. What color are they? What is the effect of having the photographs in black and white? What impact does it make on the reader to have the photographs focus closely on a single feature? How would the effect be different if the photographs showed the whole person?

Next, as you read or listen to each poem, ask students what they notice about the poem's rhyme scheme and format. Students will likely point out that many of the poems are free verse, while others end in rhyming words. Some of the poems have repetition and similes while others do not.

Explain

Explain that students will be composing their own compositions inspired by their favorite features. While there is room for flexibility with the compositions, it might be simplest to have students model their poems after those in “The Best Part of Me.” Ask students to do the following:

1. Show students examples of a cropped and mounted photo on **slide 10**.
2. Using a digital camera, computer or tablet camera application, or a phone camera, have students take a picture of their favorite feature. Again, you might consider limiting which features can be chosen. Tell students that these photos are going to be called an "Area of Pho-cus."
3. Once the photos are taken, have students crop them to showcase each Area of Pho-cus in detail.
4. Have students mount their printed and cropped photo on a piece of cardstock, leaving room for a poem to follow.

Extend

To compose a poem to accompany their Area of Pho-cus photograph, have students:

1. Describe what their best part looks like—its size, color, shape, texture, etc.
2. Tell what their best part allows them to do that they enjoy.
3. Use the phrase "the best part of me" somewhere in their poem.

To help students with ideas, display **slide 11** and allow them to read or listen to the poems in the book again.

- What are the physical characteristics of _____? Use precise words and comparisons to help others visualize details: Size, shape, form, close-up details, colors, reflectivity, textures, etc.
- How does _____ resemble an inanimate object (a plant, toy, etc.) ? In what ways does _____ help you have fun?
- In what ways does _____ help you accomplish important things?
- When you think about your _____ what emotions do you feel?
- If you want to mention one thing about _____ that you don't like, what is it?
- In what ways does your _____ trigger POSITIVE associations (pleasantly reminding you of people, animals, objects, places, or events)?

You might choose to set a number of lines or rhyme scheme for students' poems, but consider letting them be free-verse to celebrate students' unique expression of their Area of Pho-cus.

Once poems are completed, have students neatly transfer them to the paper on which their photograph is mounted. Optionally, allow students to decorate their poems using colored paper or other coloring materials.

Evaluate

Students can share their completed poems either in small groups or with the whole class. To display the beautiful work created by students, make a space either in your classroom or in the hallway.

For a class evaluation, consider using the Chalk Talk strategy. For this activity, write on a white board the phrase "The best part of our class is..." and let students brainstorm ideas of what makes their class or hour a strong community.

Chalk Talk

Using different colored dry-erase markers, invite students to come up to the board together to write ideas of what makes their classroom community strong. Sample student responses might include humor, talents, experiences, friendships, inside jokes, or goals.

Once the board is filled with student responses, consider taking a class photo in front of the board to display along with the collection of Area of Pho-cus products.

Resources

- Barron, M. [MeghanBarron89]. (2015, September 10). *Best part of me read aloud* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0Sk1EAD8JY
- Ewald, W. (2002). The best part of me. Little, Brown.
- K20 Center (n.d.). Chalk talk. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/197
- K20 Center (n.d.). Think-pair-share. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139