

Kansas City Young Audiences

Teacher Program Guide

Poetry Workshop

Artist: Frank Higgins

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Contact KCYA for
more information on
this and other
programs.

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Workshop Description

Published author and teaching artist Frank Higgins teaches poetry workshops that concentrate on rhythm, sound, and imagery, as well as exploring the subconscious mind.

Students will learn to attend to sound and movement in their creative writing. Frank emphasizes sound and movement in poetry and helps students bring their poems alive.

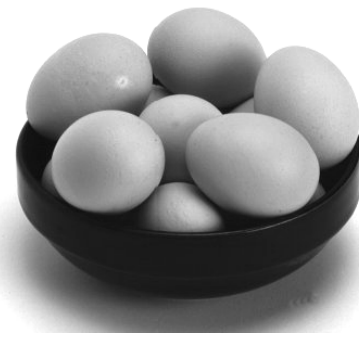
In this workshop, Frank provides participants with techniques for improving their writing while encouraging their creativity. Schools often will put together an anthology of the work his students create. Here is a sample poem by a ninth-grade student in Frank's workshop:

EGGS

*In my nightmares my whole family
turns into eggs.*

*Some of us are hardboiled,
some of us are scrambled,
and then we turn into cartoons
and are chased by forks and skillets
and plates.*

*When they poke us we get steamed.
Some of us get smashed or break.*



Educational Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Develop and enhance the writing skills of rhythm and sound
- Develop the ability to look within and write from the unconscious
- Develop the ability to edit and rewrite one's work objectively

Language Arts:

- Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of literary passages and texts
- Uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas (e.g., common figures of speech, sensory details)

Special Points of Interest:

This workshop is designed for students in grades 3-12. All workshops are adjusted appropriately according to age group.

Frank Higgins also offers a playwriting workshop through KCYA for grades 5-12. See our catalog for details.

Artist Bio: Frank Higgins

Frank Higgins was a member of the first graduating class of UMKC's Professional Writing Program. He has published two books of poetry, two books of haiku, and a number of plays.

Frank's play *Miracles*, which started at Missouri Repertory Theatre, has played to sellout audiences in Virginia and was produced at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego for a six-week run in 1997. A scene and monologue from the play were chosen for the annual anthologies *Best Scenes of 1996* and *Best Monologues of 1996*.

His play *The Sweet By 'N'* By has been produced around the

country, including the Williamstown Theatre Festival where it featured Tony-winner Blythe Danner and her daughter Gwyneth Paltrow. The play was later produced at the Barter Theatre where it became one of the biggest hits for a straight play in that theater's 65-year history.

Another play by Frank, *Gunplay*, has been produced in New York and Los Angeles, as well as having a few scenes read before Congress on Capitol Hill.

His play, *The Country of the Blind*, debuted at the Coterie in Crown Center in 2007.



Frank Higgins

Vocabulary

Alliteration: repetition of initial letter sounds.

Assonance: rhyming of vowel sounds.

Climax: the highest point of interest or excitement.

Consonance: repetition of consonant sounds.

Denotation: the exact meaning without adding ideas it may contain.

Irony: the exact opposite of what one means.

Personification: to think of or show and idea or thing as a person. (a ship is often referred to as "she")

Stanza: a group of lines that forms one of the sections in a poem.

The Unconscious: what's beneath the surface of our awareness.

Post-Workshop Activities

1. Mr. Higgins said that using alliteration, consonance, and assonance in poetry can make poetry more easily remembered. What are other literary techniques or figures of speech that make poetry fun, interesting and memorable? Can you find examples of them in your favorite poems?
2. The poet plays with language in the poem, *Eggs*. The eggs are a *metaphor* for people—the poet's family. What might the poet be able to say about his nightmares or fears for his family by talking about them this way? Does it expand on the possible meanings of the poem or limit them?
3. Consider the use of *poetic language*. What are possible definitions of that term? Is the use of language in poetry different than its use in a report, an essay, or a short story? Why or why not?



List of Resources

BOOKS

How to Write a Poem by Kathleen Christopher Null; Teacher Created Resources (1998); ISBN: 1576903311

Haiku Handbook: How to Write, Share, and Teach Haiku by William J. Higginson; Kodansha International (JPN); Reissue edition (February 1, 1992) ISBN: 4770014309

Haiku: A Poet's Guide by Lee Gurga; Modern Haiku Press (May 1, 2003) ISBN: 0974189405