Thinker: My Puppy Poet and Me

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RedRover Readers Program: Objective 3: Lesson 3D

Goals and Objectives: Relate narratives to their own lives to understand how people and animal characters in a story may feel and do things differently or the same as they would.

Time: 45 minutes (25 reading and discussion, 20 poem activity)

Materials: Anchor text ("Thinker: My Puppy Poet and Me")

1. **Before Reading:** As a class, discuss the following topics:

   ● Who do you think "Thinker" is?
   ● What is a poet?
   ● Do you think a puppy can be a poet? Why or why not?
   ● How do you think a puppy can be a poet?
   ● What does it mean to express yourself? What are some ways you express yourself at home? What are some ways you express yourself at school?

2. **During Reading:** Read the book to the class. Pause on different pages and discuss the story.

Read the first poem, "Naming Me," aloud.

Ask students:
   ● Do you think names are important? Why or why not?
   ● Do you think the name Thinker is more important to the boy or the dog? Why?
   ● When the dog says, "A place that named me Thinker was the perfect place for me," do you think the dog is really thinking about his name or other things?
   ● What makes a perfect home for a dog or other animal?
   ● What do you think this story will be about?

When you read the poem "Two Poets Talking," ask:
   ● What does **recite** mean? Dogs can't really recite or say poems. How else might a dog communicate how they feel?
   ● What do you think "word-music" is? How might "word-music" say more than words alone can express?

After the poem, "Tell Me Jace," ask:
   ● How do you think Jace feels in this picture? How do you know?

- Why might Thinker be asking why some folks are mean and some are nice?

After reading the poem "You Can Go," ask:
- Why do you think Jace is worried Thinker will "talk" in school?

After reading "Pets' Day," ask:
- What do you think Thinker means when he goes to school and says, "Who am I if I am not myself?'"
- Why does Thinker's poetry start all the other pets in the classroom singing and dancing? Do you think this is really about the pets or the kids?
- What does it mean to "be yourself?"

3. **After Reading:** Review the story's illustrations with students and ask to reinforce and extend their understanding of the text:

Ask students:
- Who do you think is more of a "thinker," the boy or the dog and why?
- Describe the relationship between Jace and Thinker.
- Look back at the illustrations from the classroom on the pages after the poem "Pets' Day." Ask:
    - What do you notice about the illustrations? How do the students feel? How do you feel looking at the illustrations knowing all the kids and pets are being themselves?
    - Where or when are you most yourself? Are you with a pet? Why might some people feel most like themselves when they are with a pet?

4. **Write a haiku activity:**

Reread the poem "Weather Haiku." Explain that a **haiku** is a three-line poem. The first line has words with five syllables. The second line has words making up seven syllables. The third line has words that add up to five syllables, like this:

Syllables:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Cool	out	here	to	day,		
2.	but	I	don't	need	my	swea	ter.
3.	My	hair	is	e	nough.		

Think of a time or place you most feel yourself. Write your own haiku about this time or place.

At the End of the Lesson

Ask students to reflect on the question, "What did you learn from today's book and discussion that you didn't know before?" You can do this with the whole group, in a sharing circle or related class meeting format, by having students fill out index cards, or other formats as you choose. We recommend that you have a variety of formats. After getting a sense of what the students learned, reinforce key themes that they mentioned, and perhaps add one or two that you would like them to keep in mind from the key concepts. Also discuss any follow up assignments or take home materials. Remember the students' responses to the question, "What did you learn?" to add to your report about this reading.