

# Guide to Writing Empathy Poems

**What Is an Empathy Poem?** An empathy poem is a creative way to understand and express another person's emotions, thoughts, or experiences. It encourages students to "step into someone else's shoes" and describe what they might see, hear, and feel from that perspective. This helps students build emotional awareness and connection with others.

## When to Use Empathy Poems:

- After reading *When Things Pass Away* to reflect on the experiences of characters.
  - To help students process their own emotions or connect with someone going through a challenging time.
  - In classroom discussions about kindness, community, or understanding differences.
- 

## Steps for Teaching Empathy Poems

### Step 1: Introduce Empathy

1. **Explain Empathy:** Share what empathy means: understanding and sharing someone else's feelings. Use examples: "If your friend loses a pet, how might they feel? How would you support them?"
2. **Connect to the Story:** If using *When Things Pass Away*, discuss key characters or situations in the story where loss or change occurs. Ask students: "How might the characters feel in this situation?"

### Step 2: Plan the Poem

#### Use a Graphic Organizer (see below):

- **I see...** (What does the person notice around them? What do they see happening?)
- **I hear...** (What might they hear? Are there words, sounds, or silence?)
- **I feel...** (What emotions might they experience? Sadness, hope, confusion?)

#### Prompt Questions for Planning:

- Who is the person you are imagining? (A character, a friend, yourself?)
- What is the situation they are experiencing? (Loss, change, a new beginning?)
- How do their surroundings reflect their emotions? (Bright sunshine, falling leaves, quiet room?)

### Step 3: Model the Process

1. Share an example empathy poem. For instance, if the character in *When Things Pass Away* loses something precious:  
*I see the empty space where they used to sit.*  
*I hear quiet whispers, memories floating in the air.*  
*I feel a heaviness in my heart, but also a spark of hope.*
2. Show how the “I see,” “I hear,” “I feel” prompts guide the poem’s creation.

#### Step 4: Guide Student Writing

1. **Individual or Group Writing:**
  - Students use the prompts to draft their empathy poems. For younger students, they may write one line per prompt. Older students can expand to multiple lines or stanzas.
2. **Encourage Creativity:** Allow students to add descriptive language, metaphors, or illustrations to deepen their expression.

#### Step 5: Share and Reflect

1. **Sharing Circle:** Invite students to read their poems aloud or display them in the classroom. Discuss common themes or emotions.
  2. **Reflection Questions:**
    - What did you learn about empathy from writing this poem?
    - How can empathy help us in our classroom or community?
- 

#### Tips for Teachers

1. **Scaffold for Younger Students:**
    - Provide sentence starters (e.g., “I see a...” or “I feel...”).
    - Allow students to draw their responses before writing.
  2. **Encourage Expression:** Remind students there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Focus on expressing feelings.
  3. **Adapt for Group Work:**
    - Create a collaborative empathy poem as a class or in small groups.
    - Assign each group member a line to contribute.
  4. **Integrate with Art:** Pair poems with illustrations or create a class “Empathy Wall” displaying their work.
- 

#### Extensions

1. **Empathy Poem Exchange:** Students write poems from the perspective of a peer or character and exchange them to discuss their thoughts.

2. **Community Connection:** Partner with local organizations (e.g., hospitals, shelters) to share empathy poems as messages of support.
3. **Empathy Journals:** Encourage students to write weekly empathy poems about different situations or characters.