

GIFTED EDUCATION NEWS-PAGE

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Igniting Creativity in Gifted Learners, K-6: Strategies for Every Teacher (2009) by Joan Franklin Smutny and S. E. von Fremd (Editors and Contributors). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

This book provides many excellent examples of effective methods for teaching elementary level gifted students. Smutny and von Fremd have included many recommended teaching strategies from different educators in the following sections: Creativity: A Gift for the Gifted, Making Creativity Work: Practical Suggestions by Classroom Teachers, Literacy Strategies: Reading and Writing, Social Studies Strategies, Science Strategies, Mathematics Strategies, Strategies in the Arts, and Discovering Your Own Creativity. They introduce each section with an instructive summary of the major concepts discussed by the authors, and they emphasize the importance of creative teaching and learning in all educational areas. Teachers will find the book to be well-organized and “user-friendly” because all of the subject matter articles have a similar pattern for discussing strategies: Main Concept, Level, Application, and Description.

Igniting Creativity in Gifted Learners, K-6 includes a total of forty-nine authors who have written articles about creativity and teaching strategies for gifted students. These authors are experienced public school educators, university professors, and independent consultants in the gifted field. They represent a wide-range of interests related to both the practical and theoretical aspects of teaching the gifted.

Why is the book useful for teachers of the gifted?

It should be emphasized that each article on creativity and teaching strategies is primarily based upon the practical classroom experiences of the author(s). This is an important feature of the book that distinguishes it from other curriculum guides for teaching the gifted; it provides detailed teaching strategies that have been demonstrated by experienced teachers to be effective in gifted education programs.

What are some examples of teaching strategies discussed by the authors?

- **Literacy Strategies** – Reading Focus, Writing Focus, Creative Explorations of Words, Literature Circles that Promote Higher Level Discussions, Interpreting Literature: Reader’s Theater for Gifted Learners.
- **Social Studies Strategies** – Historic Games of Strategy and Geography, Student Historians, Primary Source Learning: Thinking Through Puzzles Life Created.
- **Science Strategies** – An Eclectic Approach to Science Instruction for Gifted Students, Creative Strategies for TWO Solar Science Units for Primary and Intermediate Grades, Rain Forest, Imagining Trees.
- **Mathematics Strategies** – Critical and Creative Thinking Ideas in Math, Multiple Strategies for Encouraging Divergent Thinking in Math, How Do YOU Count to Ten? - An Exploration of Number Bases.
- **Strategies in the Arts** – Creative Arts and Words: Creative Approach to Reading, Writing, and Arts for Young Elementary Students, Music Improvisation and Composition: Essential Strategies for Developing Musicianship and Engaging the Creative Minds of Children in the Music Education Classroom.

Why should teachers of the gifted and parents purchase this book?

This is an useful and comprehensive resource of effective strategies for teaching gifted students in grades k - 6. These strategies are for many areas of expertise, e.g., gifted specialists and teachers in reading, social studies, science, mathematics, and the arts. The book will inspire all teachers to design their own strategies for successfully teaching the gifted. Therefore, it is one of the best educational investments both teachers and parents can make in this time of restricted school and personal budgets.

“The creative process—structured within the limits and demands of the classroom—offers gifted students just the sort of environment that enables them to become motivated again. A common thread among all the contributors to this book is the conviction that the creative process is of value to both the emotional well-being and the intellectual growth of gifted learners. The high motivation, engagement, and initiative it generates are often the most immediate effects. Beyond that, teachers notice that creative work stimulates higher-level thinking in a wide range of ways: analysis of problems; awareness of new questions; flexible thinking across disciplines; sensitivity to pattern, color, gesture, nuance; heightened sensory awareness; discovery of connections; probing of new mysteries. It also fosters a richer, more nuanced understanding of an issue or subject rarely achieved in ordinary ways.” (p. 7, **Chapter 1 – Creativity: A Gift for the Gifted** from **Igniting Creativity in Gifted Learners, K-6: Strategies for Every Teacher** (2009) by Joan Franklin Smutny and S. E. von Fremd – Editors and Contributors).

Two Poets Gifted Students Should Study during National Poetry Month (April 2009)

Czeslaw Milosz (1911-2004) – Master of the Intellectual Poem. Polish underground fighter against the Nazis in World War II, and staunch opponent of Communism in the 1960s until its demise in Eastern Europe. He defected to the West in 1951 and emigrated to the United States in 1960 where he became a Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of California - Berkeley. Milosz received a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980.

Incantation (1968)

Human reason is beautiful and invincible.
No bars, no barbed wire, no pulping of books,
No sentence of banishment can prevail against it.
It establishes the universal ideas in language,
And guides our hand so we write Truth and Justice
With capital letters, lie and oppression with small.
It puts what should be above things as they are,
Is an enemy of despair and a friend of hope.
It does not know Jew from Greek or slave from master,
Giving us the estate of the world to manage.
It saves austere and transparent phrases
From the filthy discord of tortured words.

It says that everything is new under the sun,
Opens the congealed fist of the past.
Beautiful and very young are Philo-Sophia
And poetry, her ally in the service of the good.
As late as yesterday Nature celebrated their birth,
The news was brought to the mountains by a unicorn and an echo.
Their friendship will be glorious, their time has no limit.
Their enemies have delivered themselves to destruction.

*Translated from the Polish by Czeslaw Milosz and Robert Pinsky
Czeslaw Milosz*

From **Poems to Read: A New Favorite Poem Project Anthology** (2002) by Robert Pinsky and Maggie Dietz (Editors), p. 317.

Emily Dickinson (1830-86) – Prolific New England poet with a reclusive disposition. Only seven of her 1,775 poems were published (anonymously) during her lifetime. Her poetry is noted for its plain words and lines that have deep metaphoric meanings. Dickinson's unrequited genius was finally recognized in the 1950s and 1960s when all of her poems were finally published.

“Hope” is the thing with Feathers (Number 254, c. 1861)

Hope is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—

And sweetest—in the gale—is heard—
And sore must be the storm—
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm—

I've heard it in the chilliest land—
And on the strangest Sea—
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb— of Me.

From **America's Favorite Poems** (2000) by Robert Pinsky and Maggie Dietz (Editors), p. 72.

Tell all the Truth but tell it Slant (Number 1129, c. 1868)

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased

With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind—

From **Good Poems** (2003) by Garrison Keillor (Editor), p. 230.