

10 Classroom Ideas & Activities for Joy Harjo's *How We Became Human*

1. Read aloud one of the poems and ask students to draw what they see when they are listening to it. Read it more than once. Let some of the students read it also. Optional: Have them include a line or phrase from the poem on the drawing.
2. Give each student in the class one of the poems from the book and have them create a collage/drawing of the main images in the poem. This is a great way for students to “analyze” a poem without them realizing they are actually doing analysis. Have magazines, clipart, etc. available or have them do the whole collage in a computer program.
3. Let students read some of the poems in the book. Have each student pick a word, phrase, or line from any poem and use it for the title of their own poem. They can then write their own poem influenced by that title.
4. Have students pick a word or series of words from a poem and make an acrostic poem from them.
5. Put students into groups, each with a different poem. Have the groups decide how to present their poem to the class. They can do a round-robin reading, group reading, alternate reading, include illustrations, etc. Give them time to plan and then do the presentations.
6. Photocopy some of the poems and distribute one to each student. Have them do a blackout poem with their page. They black-out certain words to make a new poem with the words that are left. The blackout can take the form of an illustration. There are great examples here: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/john-depasquale/blackout-poetry/>.
7. For middle/high school students: Have students research a person, place or event mentioned in one of the poems (or in NOTES at end of book). Have them write a paragraph describing the poem and a paragraph explaining what they learned from their research that adds to the poem. This is an opportunity to teach research skills, also.
8. For middle/high school students: Read some of the prose poems in the book. Have students write their own prose poem on any subject. Here is a good site to explain prose poems with examples: <https://diymfa.com/writing/poets-revolt-brief-guide-prose-poem>.
9. Read “Remember” (p. 42) with students. Have them write their own remember poem by writing 10 lines, each one starting with the words “I remember.” They can write about actual things they remember, or they can be made up, or a combination of both.
10. LGAA Big Read Poem Contest: Have students write their own poem inspired by one of Harjo's poems. Big cash prizes. See the guidelines and entry forms at <https://rompoetry.com/lg-big-read/>.