

# **A Blast of Creativity and Engagement: Bringing Reversible Verse Poems to Life in the Classroom**

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**Abstract:** This article outlines a four-step classroom activity that utilizes reversible verse poems to ignite student imagination and critical thinking. Learn how to guide students through brainstorming, free verse writing, crafting mirrored poems, and refining their work. Discover the power of this engaging approach in fostering language exploration and a deeper appreciation for poetry.

**Keywords:** reversible verse poetry, mirror poetry, brainstorming, free verse, point of view

Have you ever discovered a new form of poetry that sparked your imagination? While browsing the Scholastic book order, I stumbled upon "Mirror Mirror" and "Follow Follow" by Marilyn Singer, two collections of reversible verse poetry and I instantly fell in love. I was intrigued by the concept and decided to explore this unique genre with my fourth-grade class during Poetry Month – a welcome diversion in the spring!

Reversible verse poems, also known as mirror poems, are poems that read the same forwards and backwards, yet convey different meanings. Brining this unique reading format into the classroom exemplifies looking at the world through multiple perspectives and delving into content instead of taking it for face value. This duality adds a layer of complexity and intrigue, making reversible verse a fantastic tool for engaging students in the art of poetry.

After reading the poetry books and learning about reverse poetry I delved into the world of reversible verse poems with students using this captivating activity that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and an appreciation for language.

## **Step 1: Brainstorming a Universe of Words**

To get started, each student chose a theme for their poem. We then embarked on a brainstorming session. Students used a four-column chart to anchor their thoughts, generating lists of nouns, verbs, adjectives, sensory details (sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and feelings) related to their chosen themes. This brainstorming session served as a word bank, providing a rich pool of language for students to draw upon in the next step. Thesauruses and peer discussions allowed students to expand their word bank after their initial brainstorm.

## **Step 2: Free Verse Flow**

With their creative juices flowing, the students dove into writing free verse poems around their chosen themes. The key here was to encourage students to focus on expressing themselves freely without worrying about the reverse component just yet. Students started with a free verse to get the idea of their theme on paper. We also discussed point of view, helping students choose a perspective that best suited their theme.

## **Step 3: The Mirror Image Takes Shape**

Now came the challenge – crafting the reverse poem! Each student folded a fresh sheet of paper in half. On one side, they transcribed their initial poem. On the other side, they began writing the reverse, mirroring the lines from the first poem but with a twist: these lines needed to convey a different meaning from a different perspective. As students wrote the first draft of their reverse poem, they simply copied it line by line from bottom to top. This step emphasized the importance of word choice, punctuation, and perspective in shaping voice.

#### **Step 4: Reflecting and Refining**

With both poems side-by-side, the students returned to their brainstorming lists. This time, students used these word banks to refine their poems. They experimented with moving phrases, adjusting punctuation, shortening or combining lines, and editing the second poem to truly reflect the first from a different viewpoint. This final step allowed students to fine-tune their poems and strengthen their voices as writers.

The entire process was a joy for students as well as from the observation point of facilitator. We were all actively engaged, and some students even tackled multiple reverse poems. The challenge of crafting the reverse poem and considering different perspectives pushed their creativity and critical thinking skills. Most importantly, we all had a lot of fun exploring this unique form of poetry!

This activity demonstrates how poetry can be an exciting and accessible adventure for students. By incorporating reversible verse poems into your classroom, you can spark a love for language, inspire creative expression, and open doors to a whole new world of literary possibilities.

#### **Example “Shaping Futures” by Lori Rice**

**Step 1:** Brainstorm: teaching, learning, growing, power, share, future

**Step 2:** Free verse flow: Influencing their behavior teachers and students give power to minds and shape futures.

**Step 3:** The Mirror Image Takes Shape:

##### Original Poem:

Influencing their behavior  
teachers and students  
give power to minds  
and shape futures.

##### Reverse Poem:

and shape futures.  
give power to minds  
teachers and students  
Influencing their behavior

## Step Four: Reflecting and Refining

Influencing behavior  
teachers and students  
gives power  
minds and  
shapes  
the future.

The future  
Shapes  
Minds and  
Gives power.  
Teachers and students  
Influencing behavior.

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