The Poetry of Phrases
Foundation Lesson

About this Lesson
Learning grammar by writing poetry can be a memorable experience for students and adults alike. These activities cause students to think of the different types of phrases and clauses as tools in their writer’s toolbox. Grammar study becomes painless and even enjoyable when students realize how valuable and interesting these writing tools can be.

Several different poetry patterns are listed and modeled in the student activity. Examples written by sixth grade students are used to introduce the lesson. Students should have access to the “Phrase Toolbox” and the “Clause Toolbox” to help them clarify grammatical concepts through the lesson.

Extensive study of the types of phrases is not needed. Models are provided for each task, so students can simply wade in and follow the examples.

This lesson is included in Module 3: Integrating Grammar, Exploring Syntax.

Objectives
Students will
- demonstrate understanding of different types of phrases.
- imitate models to advance their own style and voice.
- manipulate phrases and clauses to create meaning.

Level
Grades Six through Ten

Connection to Common Core Standards for English Language Arts
LTF® Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the Common Core Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult grade-level-specific Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
<th>Depth of Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.1</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.3</td>
<td>Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.4</td>
<td>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>III</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Implicitly addressed in this lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
<th>Depth of Knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>SL.1</td>
<td>Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**LTF Skill Focus**

The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade 6 and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for this lesson identifies the grade level the skills are actually introduced.

**Levels of Thinking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Close Reading</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Composition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>written, spoken, and visual texts</td>
<td>purposeful use of language for effect</td>
<td>written, spoken, and visual products</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Thinking</th>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Phrases</strong></td>
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<td>Appositive (7)</td>
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<td>Gerund (8)</td>
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<td>Infinitive (6)</td>
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<td>Participial (8)</td>
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<td>Prepositional (6)</td>
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<td><strong>Clauses</strong></td>
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<td>Dependent/Subordinate</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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<td><strong>Sentence Variety</strong></td>
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<td>Sentence Beginnings</td>
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<td>Sentence Combining</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Style/Voice</strong></td>
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<td>Conscious Manipulation of sentence Patterns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experimentation with Sentence Variety</td>
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**Connections to AP**

Analysis of syntactical devices is required of students in both the free response and multiple choice sections of AP English Literature and AP English Language exams. Understanding syntax in poetry enables students to perform this analysis more effectively.

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Materials and Resources
- *Sentence Composing for Middle School* by Don Killgallon
- *Sentence Composing for High School* by Don Killgallon
- Grammar Foundation Lesson: “Sentence Structure Basics”
- Grammar Foundation Lesson: “Sentence Variations”
- Technology Extension for “The Poetry of Phrases”

Assessments
The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:
- phrase poetry writing assignment

Teaching Suggestions
Teachers may want to have students try the activity first as a group, then in pairs, then on their own. It is important that students have access to the Phrase and Clause Toolboxes for reference and examples. Form, punctuation, and capitalization are optional, depending on the teacher’s instruction. Some models have punctuation while others have none. This is strictly the teacher’s choice for the assignment. Teachers may want to discuss poetic license, the privilege, sometimes claimed by poets, of departing from normal word order, pronunciation, punctuation, etc. Poetic license liberates the poet to do as he/she wishes to enhance creativity.

This activity may be repeated for use with different pieces of literature to focus on various aspects: theme, characterization, setting, etc.

Answers
Poems created for this lesson will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses.
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Student Samples of Phrase Poetry

Wild eyes glancing every which way
Uncanny ears listening to every small squeak,
Brain thinking of wondrous ways to catch its prey
the owl hunted
in the sky
on the ground
in the dark
in the hope
of catching his supper (Michael Delong, Grade 6)

His cloak billowing in the biting wind,
his eyes dry from the frigid temperature,
his boots crunching over the new snow,
he marched to the battlefield
sword drawn,
muscles tensed
ears cocked
focus narrowed
with fire in his eyes. (Whit Shaw, Grade 6)

Her beautiful wings noiselessly flapping,
her eyes shining brightly,
her feathers ruffling with the light wind,
the dove slipped swiftly through the night sky
in the dark
with only the light of the moon to guide her
the ground rushing by
the clouds way up high
on the way to her loved ones. (Andrew Pansick, Grade 6)
His head sweating
His mouth dry
His heart racing with every step he took,
the gladiator walked
into the arena
to the tigers
to the lions
to his adversaries
to his death.  
(Brian Cummisky, Grade 6)

His forest green cloak sticking to his fur,
his sweat burning his eyes,
his sword glistening in the moonlight,
Matthias the Mouse struck
with the sword
of the warrior Martin
in the dead of night
in the rain
for the love of his home.  
(Adam Genecov, Grade 6)

Following is an example of a phrase poem based on *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

1. Subject—the setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and how it reveals theme

2. Ideas about the subject—Maycomb, Alabama—tired, old, filled with injustice, prejudice, social castes, racial separation, and gender inequity

3. Phrases that include those ideas:
   filled with ignorance
   suffocating under racial prejudice
   divided among social castes
   suffering from gender inequity

4. Poem:
   Maycomb was a tired, old town  
   filled with ignorance  
   suffocating under racial prejudice  
   divided among social castes  
   suffering from gender inequity  
   A place where justice will never prevail.  

   (independent clause)
   (participial phrase)
   (participial phrase)
   (participial phrase)
   (participial phrase)
   (appositive with dependent clause)
This poem could now be used as the basis for an essay, with each of the phrases serving as a topic for a body paragraph.

**Poetry of Phrases Patterns**

Using the “Phrase Toolbox” and the “Clause Toolbox” as resources, write poems that have the following grammatical structures. You may want to change the form and the appearance of the poem on the page.

**Pattern #1**

absolute phrase
absolute phrase
absolute phrase
independent clause
prepositional phrase
prepositional phrase
prepositional phrase
prepositional phrase
prepositional phrase

*Example: (based on Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck)*

His paw-like hands petting overly hard,
The dead puppy hidden in his jacket,
The pretty girl half-buried in the hay,
Lennie remembered to run
to the brushy pond
despite his confusion
in worry and fear
of George’s anger
of lost rabbits.

**Pattern #2**

gerund phrase as the subject
finish the sentence with a rhyme.
gerund phrase as the subject
finish the sentence with a rhyme.
gerund phrase as the subject
finish the sentence with a rhyme.
gerund phrase as the subject
finish the sentence with a rhyme.
Example: (based on The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton)

Remaining at large
  helps us avoid a murder charge.
Cutting our hair
  lets us hide from strangers’ stares.
Quoting Robert Frost
  makes us believe we’re not so lost.
Knowing “Nothing Gold Can Stay”
  reminds us to seize every day.

**Pattern #3**

independent clause with an appositive phrase in it
  participial phrase
  participial phrase
  participial phrase
  participial phrase
  participial phrase

Example: (based on Lord of the Flies by William Golding)

Two dominant boys, Ralph and Jack, emerge as leaders
  working together for a time,
  organizing their groups,
  maintaining the fire signal,
  constructing shelters,
  breaking apart to become archenemies in the end.

**Pattern #4**

a subordinate clause
  an independent clause
  an infinitive phrase and a prepositional phrase
  an infinitive phrase and a prepositional phrase
  an infinitive phrase and a prepositional phrase
  an infinitive phrase and a prepositional phrase
  a final independent clause.

Example: (based on “Snow” by Julia Alvarez)

When Yolanda was in the fourth grade,
  Sister Zoe told the children
  to watch for signs of nuclear war,
  to file out into the hall,
  to fall to the floor,
  to cover their heads with their coats.
  Sister Zoe wanted to protect her students.
Pattern #5

Free Style

Using your Phrase and Clause Toolboxes, create a pattern similar to the ones used in the previous activities. The following instructions were used to write the poem based on *To Kill a Mockingbird* used earlier in the activity.

1. Select a subject from literature or as otherwise instructed.
2. Brainstorm some ideas about the subject.
3. Write phrases that include those ideas.
4. Put your phrases into the pattern you have selected and add other elements included in the pattern.