

Program Name: Poetry Workshop

Artist: Frank Higgins

## Special Requirements:

This workshop is designed for students in grades 3-12. All workshops are adjusted appropriately according to age group.

Frank Higgins also offers a playwriting workshop through KCYA for grades 5-12. See our catalog for details.

Other programs by this artist:

[-Playwriting Workshop](#)

## Workshop Description

Published author and teaching artist Frank Higgins teaches poetry workshops that concentrate on rhythm, sound, and imagery, as well as exploring the subconscious mind.

Students will learn to attend to sound and movement in their creative writing. Frank emphasizes sound and movement in poetry and helps students bring their poems alive.

In this workshop, Frank provides participants with techniques for improving their writing while encouraging their creativity. Schools often will put together an anthology of the work his students create. Here is a sample poem by a ninth-grade student in Frank's workshop:

### *EGGS*

*In my nightmares my whole family  
turns into eggs.  
Some of us are hardboiled,  
some of us are scrambled,  
and then we turn into cartoons  
and are chased by forks and skillets  
and plates.  
When they poke us we get steamed.  
Some of us get smashed or break.*



## Educational Objectives & Standards

Students will:

- Develop and enhance the writing skills of rhythm and sound
- Develop the ability to look within and write from the unconscious
- Develop the ability to edit and rewrite one's work objectively

Language Arts:

- Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of literary passages and texts
- Uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas (e.g., common figures of speech, sensory details)





List of Resources:

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**Books:**

How to Write a Poem  
by Kathleen Christopher  
Null; Teacher Created  
Resources (1998);  
ISBN: 1576903311

Haiku Handbook: How to  
Write, Share, and Teach  
Haiku

by William J. Higginson  
Kodansha International  
(JPN); Reissue edition  
(February 1, 1992)  
ISBN: 4770014309

Haiku: A Poet's Guide

by Lee Gurga  
Modern Haiku Press (May  
1, 2003)  
ISBN: 0974189405

Contact KCYA for more  
information about this and  
other programs

816.531.4022  
KC YA.org

**Frank Higgins** is the author of "The Sweet By 'n' By" which was produced with Tony-winner Blythe Danner and Oscar-winner Gwyneth Paltrow, and "Black Pearl Sings!" which was produced with Tony-winner Tonya Pinkins. His plays have been seen in New York, and at the Williamstown Theater Festival, the Old Globe Theatre, Ford's Theater in Washington, DC, Northlight Theatre in Chicago, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theater, Inter-Act Theater in Philadelphia, Horizons Theater in Atlanta, and many other places. Among his other plays are "WMKS:

Where Music Kills Sorrow," "Gunplay," and "Miracles." Several scenes from "Gunplay" were read on Capitol Hill just before Congress passed the 'Brady Bill.' He has also written several plays for young audiences, including "Anansi the Spider and The Middle Passage" which had a national tour and will be produced in Feb of 2013 at Union Station by Theatre for Young America. His play "The Country of the Blind" appeared at the Coterie. He is the author of two books of poetry, and two books of haiku, and teaches playwriting at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Vocabulary

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**Alliteration:** repetition of initial letter sounds.

**Assonance:** rhyming of vowel sounds.

**Climax:** the highest point of interest or excitement.

**Consonance:** repetition of consonant sounds.

**Denotation:** the exact meaning without adding ideas it may contain.

**Irony:** the exact opposite of what one means.

**Personification:** to think of or show and idea or thing as a person. (a ship is often referred to as "she")

**Stanza:** a group of lines that forms one of the sections in a poem.

**The Unconscious:** what's beneath the surface of our awareness.

Post-Workshop Activities

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1. Mr. Higgins said that using alliteration, consonance, and assonance in poetry can make poetry more easily remembered. What are other literary techniques or figures of speech that make poetry fun, interesting and memorable? Can you find examples of them in your favorite poems?
2. The poet plays with language in the poem, *Eggs*. The eggs are a *metaphor* for people—the poet's family. What might the poet be able to say about his nightmares or fears for his family by talking about them this way? Does it expand on the possible meanings of the poem or limit them?
3. Consider the use of *poetic language*. What are possible definitions of that term? Is the use of language in poetry different than its use in a report, an essay, or a short story? Why or why not?