Poetry: A Text Set for 4th grade

I. Introduction

This text set includes nine books and one video within the genre of poetry. It will be used to supplement the fourth grade poetry unit, in order to provide a vast array of poetry types and difficulty. The fourth grade SOL particularly involves students writing poetry; however, this text set will provide students with background and practice. These poetry books will act as models for the students when they are expected to write their own poems later.

Many students find poetry to be boring, have difficulty relating, and/or have difficulty with the analyzing that is often involved. This text set aims to engage all students by including a variety of different types of poetry. For example, there are poems written by both children and adults, as well as both male and female, poems about particular topics that may be of interest to students, poems that may be familiar and others that are new, poems from different cultures, serious poems and funny poems, etc.

Assuming that a typical fourth grade classroom will have students who are below grade level, on grade level, and above grade level readers, this text set provides poetry material that is accessible to each student. Specifically, reading materials begin at a 2nd grade level (2 grade levels below) and peak at a 7th grade level (3 grade levels above). Readability was calculated using the Fry graph by Edward Fry. Each text was further analyzed using Bader’s Textbook Analysis Chart. For a quick reference, each text is prefaced with its type of poetry, the elements of poetry present, the topic of the text, and the Fry Readability grade level equivalent.

SOL connection:
4.7 The student will write effective narratives, poems, and explanations.
   a) Focus on one aspect of a topic.
   b) Develop a plan for writing.
   c) Organize writing to convey a central idea.
   d) Write several related paragraphs on the same topic.
   e) Utilize elements of style, including word choice and sentence variation.
   f) Write rhymed, unrhymed, and patterned poetry.
   g) Use available technology.
II. Text Set

(1) What A Day It Was At School! by Jack Prelutsky
Type: Humorous
Elements: Rhyme
Topic: School
Fry Readability: 4th grade

a. Introduction/Summary: What A Day It Was At School! is a collection of seventeen poems. Every poem centers around school and what students experience there, both positive and negative. Issues addressed include, but are not limited to, homework, resource classes, field trips, lunch time, classmates, and writing poetry. All of the poems included have a predictable rhyming scheme. The characters are animals; however, the fact that they are experiencing things with which students are familiar makes it easily relatable. This book relates to my content area, because it obviously involves reading and poetry is a good source for practicing fluency and prosody.

b. Rationale:
- Reluctant readers: The text will engage reluctant readers in that they will be able to relate to the experiences that the characters have. They will most likely be interested in the poems dealing with having difficulty with homework and tests, friends at school, and embarrassing moments. In reading the funny poems, the student will not necessarily realize that they are doing work. It would also be more engaging for fluency practice than a bland passage pulled out of a workbook.
- All Students: The text will definitely activate schema for all students. Every student experiences being at school five days a week for nine months out of the year. Every student has experience with doing homework, learning math, and going to lunch, for example. The characters are just like them, besides the fact that they are represented as animals.

c. Usage of text: I would definitely use this text in my classroom to model, teach, and practice fluency. I would use this book, as well as other authentic poetry texts in place of an official textbook. I think that students will learn much more from these authentic texts, rather than reading from a textbook how you write poetry. Through books, such as this, students will get to experience poetry. I would use the text for all phases of PAR. In the preparation stage, I would ask questions about school to tap into their background knowledge. Additionally, I would go over important poetry terms, such as rhyme, rhyme scheme, etc. In the assistance stage, I would model fluency through a read aloud and assist with any difficult vocabulary, as well as get students to compare and contrast their own experiences with the characters. For the reflection phase, I would extend the reading experience by having students read independently or in pairs to demonstrate their learning. At this time, I would evaluate for fluency, taking notes and making instructional decisions based on student performance.
d. **Readability:** The Fry Readability measure puts this text on a 4th grade level. I would agree with this, as there is some difficult vocabulary dispersed throughout the text. The concepts are appropriate really to any grade level, and the text assumes that students have had the same general experiences at school. The text is well organized, with a table of contents at the front, so that students may easily find a specific poem. Language follows a clear, predictable rhyming pattern. The pictures are, by no means, award-winning; however, they do aid the poems, providing further detail.

e. **Reference:**

(2) **Love That Dog** by Sharon Creech  
Type: Novel in Verse  
Elements: Form  
Topic: A boy who hates poetry, but finds his voice through it  
Fry Readability: 6th grade

a. **Introduction/Summary:** *Love That Dog* is about a young boy (probably upper elementary), who is a reluctant poet. His teacher encourages his writing through getting him to write about something that is important to him: his dog. While this is a novel, it is in verse form. There is a clear story, which is engaging and easy to follow. The story plays out through journal entries that the boy writes for class, which makes the text itself very unique. Due to the fact that it is a novel, it is written in free verse and follows no rhyming scheme. The main character is very relatable, even to females. Obviously being a novel, this text relates to my content area of reading, but it specifically relates to poetry through its literary elements.

b. **Rationale:**  
   - **Reluctant readers:** Reluctant readers will be drawn to the text and the main character, because he is just like them. He is a reluctant student, particularly related to poetry. These students will identify with his struggle to understand poetry and ultimately to become a poet himself. I think that students will learn the content along with the character.
   - **All Students:** I think that all students, not just those that are reluctant readers, will be drawn to this book. Every student can relate to the experience of struggling with a school subject or topic at some time or another. The catchy and humorous writing is another draw to this book that makes it hard to put down once you start reading.

c. **Usage of text:** There are a number of ways with which I might use this text. Probably the most likely would be to use it as a read aloud, because it would not be possible to use this as independent reading for the entire class, as it is on a 6th grade readability level. However, I find that it is a valuable story for all to hear in building their own confidence as poets. I could also see using it as an independent read for some advanced students in a literature circle type setting. I would definitely want to use this in the preparation stage of PAR, simply because it would likely build students own confidence. Additionally, it
would make a good introduction to poetry, by showing students how the boy did not understand poetry and did not want to write it, but that even he grew to enjoy it and become a real poet.

d. **Readability:** Based on the Fry Readability Graph, this text would be on a 6th grade level. Linguistically, I believe that the Fry reading matches to the text. Conceptually, there is a sad event at the end of the book; however, I believe that 4th grade advanced readers could handle it. Additionally, the concept of poetry is very well introduced throughout the book. The book is organized very uniquely, in a journal entry style, but this serves the story well. The writing style was spot on, especially considering that the writer is supposed to be a young boy. The format is appropriate and appealing, especially with the addition of the boy’s own concrete poem within the book.

e. **Reference:**

(3) *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein
Type: Humorous/Nonsense
Elements: Rhythm, Rhyme, Form, Onomatopoeia, Personification
Topic: Collection of Funny Poems, ranging in subject and characters
Fry Readability: 3rd grade

a. **Introduction/Summary:** *Where the Sidewalk Ends* is a collection of 127 poems, each with a different subject and/or character(s) and ranging in length. They are all humorous, even nonsensical in some cases, and follow a rhyming scheme. For my content area of reading, this would relate to literary elements and fluency. Additionally, it would make for some great read alouds.

b. **Rationale:**
- **Reluctant readers:** Even the most reluctant readers will find it hard to resist these wonderfully zany poems. Silverstein has a unique ability to appeal to most all students. Additionally, with the diversity in subjects, there would be a good chance of finding at least one particular poem that could interest these readers. By drawing the students in with these engaging poems, it would be easier to sneak in some mini-lessons on poetry conventions.
- **All Students:** Most all students love Shel Silverstein’s poems for their rhymes and funny stories. Even kids who do not like poetry can usually list a Shel Silverstein poem that they do like. I am not sure that students personally relate so much to Silverstein’s characters, though some are young boys and girls like themselves, but I think that the appeal is great enough to overcome this.

c. **Usage of text:** I would use this text to augment a poetry unit. It could be used most effectively in the assistance stage, by using Silverstein’s poems as models for elements of poetry, particularly rhyme. While I would make the text available in the classroom library for students to read independently in their spare time, I would most likely read the poems aloud to model fluency and to point out elements.
d. **Readability:** Based upon the Fry Readability measure, the text is placed on a 3rd grade level. Linguistically speaking, Silverstein does employ some nonsense words occasionally for the purposes of rhyming. However, there is a definite pattern due to the rhyming schemes. In reference to the conceptual factors, some of the subject matter is out there, but not in the sense that 4th grade students, even below grade level ones, could handle or understand. There is an index at the back of the book, ordered by titles, which makes it both quick and easy to find specific poems. The humorous and rhythmic writing style makes the text incredibly appealing. The format is appropriate for this age group, and the pictures, while simple, add nice visuals to the funny words.

e. **Reference:**

(4) **Kids Pick The Funniest Poems** selected by Bruce Lansky
Type: Humorous/Nonsense
Elements: Rhyme, Rhythm, Alliteration
Topic: Favorite funny poems written by various poets
Fry Readability: 2nd grade

a. **Introduction/Summary:** This collection of funny poems consists of both familiar and unfamiliar poets’ work. The poems are separated into categories, including: Me, Parents, Brothers and Sisters, Friends, School, Disasters, Monsters, Strange Stories, and Advice. This text relates to my content area of reading, because students would be learning about poetry elements while practicing their reading skills.

b. **Rationale:**
   - **Reluctant readers:** The title alone would hopefully immediately engage some reluctant readers to this text. Knowing that kids, like them, have picked out these poems as being the funniest poems would be a draw of the book. Once they open the book and begin to read, I think that they will find the poems funny and will recognize some of the poems, as well as the poets. This text covers rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration elements of poetry, so these could be learned or reinforced through the text.
   - **All Students:** I think that students will see themselves in a number of the characters, because a lot of the poems deal with kids and their issues and feelings. They will, most likely, initially relate to the book because of its title. I think that each child should be able to find a category or at least one poem that could serve as a personal bridge to learning, as categories include things like parents, siblings, and school, which all kids understand.

c. **Usage of text:** This text will simply serve as reinforcement of the poetry content. I think that I would keep the text in the classroom library, so it would be available to students throughout all three stages of PAR. I might do a few read alouds out of it, but, for the most part, students would be able to
peruse it independently during assistance stage for a model or the reflection stage for reinforcement and simply enjoyment.

d. **Readability:** The Fry Readability measures this text on the 2nd grade level. I would agree with this measure, because the text appears appropriate to that age, with the majority of the words being decodable. There are few big words with which below grade level students would struggle. The concepts are appropriate and the book is organized into categories, making it easy to find certain poems. There are black and white pictures which accompany the majority of the poems, but they are mostly just for fun and do not add much to the poem.

e. **Reference:**

(5) **Color Me A Rhyme: Nature Poems for Young People** by Jane Yolen
Type: Free Verse, Haiku
Elements: Imagery, Metaphor
Topic: Nature poems that employ the senses
Fry Readability: 5th grade

a. **Introduction/Summary:** *Color Me A Rhyme* is a book of poems about nature. Each poem has the title of color, which then describes things in nature with that color. Imagery and metaphor are key poetry elements that are explored in this text. This relates to my content area of reading, because I would ask students to read these poems to gain insights about the elements of poetry.

b. **Rationale:**
   - **Reluctant readers:** It would probably be difficult to interest reluctant readers in this text. It is a challenging book, which would only be appropriate for above level students. The vocabulary and linguistic features can be tricky. Probably the best way to interest reluctant readers would be through the pictures, which are real photographs. However, if the text did spark an interest, students could learn about two of the most difficult poetry elements from it.
   - **All Students:** The biggest draw of the book, most likely, for all students would be the pictures. The “character” of the book is nature itself. All students have been outside and experienced nature in some way, but this would be most likely to activate schema in students who camp, hunt, or spend a substantial amount of time in the outdoors.

c. **Usage of text:** This text would be used to augment the poetry unit for the advanced readers. It would probably be most useful for the preparation stage of PAR. Advanced readers could independently read the poems to find examples of imagery and metaphor and to grasp the concepts. I can see using this in a center, where the advanced readers read independently or as a small group to identify poetic elements and then practice writing their own free verse nature/color poems, using this text as a model.
d. **Readability**: The Fry Readability measure places this text on a 5th grade level. I can even see, by perusing the text, how it could be an even higher grade placement. Linguistically, there is a decent amount of unfamiliar vocabulary, so it would take a skilled reader. The concepts are developmentally appropriate. There is a table of contents at the front of the book, making it easy to locate particular poems. The writing style is very experienced. The pictures, as mentioned, are photographs, which beautifully augment the words on the page. This is a very visually appealing text.


(6) **Monster Goose** by Judy Sierra  
Type: Mother Goose Rhyme  
Elements: Rhyme, Rhythm, Alliteration, Personification  
Topic: Familiar Mother Goose rhymes are parodied with monster characters.  
Fry Readability: 3rd grade

a. **Introduction/Summary**: *Monster Goose* is a collection of parodied rhymes of famous Mother Goose rhymes. While the rhymes in the book are based upon “scary” characters, which children will also be familiar, it is more of a silly-scary book than anything. All of the poems do rhyme and so rhythm, because we are familiar with the original. Alliteration and personification are also present in this text. The text relates to my content area of reading, because I would either be reading the text aloud to students, modeling fluency and teaching poetry elements, or students would be reading independently for practice and/or reinforcement.

b. **Rationale**:  
- **Reluctant readers**: Reluctant readers would probably continue to be reluctant if *Mother Goose* was placed in front of them, but *Monster Goose* is a catchy title which draws the attention. I think that reluctant readers will be curious to see how the Mother Goose rhymes that they have known since they were little will be changed around with these characters. If the reluctant reader has any interest in scary type characters, this would also be a selling point. The rhymes in the book are very obvious and predictable, so this book could be a good tool for practicing rhyme.  
- **All Students**: Students will not necessarily “see themselves” in these particular characters, but I think that most will still be able to activate their schema through the familiarity of these rhymes from the old Mother Goose stories.

c. **Usage of text**: This text would be used to augment the poetry unit. I would probably use the text during the preparation and reflection stages. For preparation, I would read a few aloud, hopefully enticing them to read it independently in their spare time. For reflection, I might read some aloud again, but pause just before the end word in a line, asking them to provide the word. This would allow me to see that they understand the concept of rhyme.
d. **Readability:** Fry Readability places this text on the 3rd grade level. I find that this book is appropriate for that age group. Words are mostly decodable and the vocabulary is controlled. The poems are nonsensical and meant to be somewhat disgusting, but there is nothing over the top that would be inappropriate conceptually. The book is well written, in that it sets the right tone for the types of poems that are present in the text. There are color pictures to go along with each poem. These pictures are quite detailed, and kids will probably enjoy looking for all the little items that the poem talks about.

e. **Reference:**

(7) **Ten-Second Rainshowers: Poems by Young People** compiled by S. Lyne  
Type: Free Verse  
Elements: Imagery, Simile, Metaphor, Insight  
Fry Readability: 2nd grade

a. **Introduction/Summary:** *Ten-Second Rainshowers* is a collection of poetry written by students ages eight to eighteen. The collection is broken up into sections, based upon the topic of the poem. Some follow a rhyme scheme, but most are free verse. This relates to the content area of reading, because I would ask my students to read these poems to both understand poetry elements, but also that they too are poets.

b. **Rationale:**  
- **Reluctant readers:** Reluctant readers may be drawn to the fact that the authors of these poems are young students, just like themselves. They will be more likely to identify with the poets in this book and find a common experience among the poems. Many students believe that poetry has to rhyme, so I think that this book would be great for teaching students about free verse and that poetry really is just your thoughts written down.  
- **All Students:** All students will likely identify with the young authors. Many of the poets are actually students from local Virginia schools, which is another draw. Due to the way in which the book is broken up, I think that each student could find a subject area with which they are most interested or have some sort of connection.

c. **Usage of text:** I would definitely use this text as a learning tool to particularly supplement the study of free verse poetry. Many students seem to have a hard time grasping poetry that does not rhyme, so this book has some perfect examples, not to mention that they are written by students like themselves. I can see using the text for both the preparation and assistance stages of PAR. For preparation, it could be used to introduce free verse and provide some examples. In this stage, being that it is an easier text, the class could practice some oral reading strategies, including choral, buddy, or dramatic readings. For assistance, the student could use the poems as a further model if more assistance was needed. In this stage, it would be used more independently by students who deemed it necessary.
d. **Readability:** The Fry Readability measure puts this text on a 2nd grade level. Linguistically speaking, most of the words appear to be decodable and the vocabulary well controlled. Conceptually, I think that below grade level fourth graders would understand the material, for the most part, though there are some poems that delve into some deep stuff. The collection is logically organized into sections by theme. The writing style is great, as you can really feel the writers’ emotions. There are only pictures at the beginning of each new section, but they are not really needed throughout because the poems speak for themselves.

e. **Reference:**

(8) “Sounds of Poetry” United Streaming video
Type: Lyric/Expressive
Elements: Sound, Onomatopoeia, Rhythm
Topic: Using words and rhythm to describe everyday sounds
Intended Audience: grades K-2

a. **Introduction/Summary:** This video from Discovery Education’s United Streaming website contains five segments, totaling just less than eleven minutes. Each segment teaches students how to use words and rhythms to write verse about everyday sounds they hear all around them. Specifically, the segments discuss how rhythm creates mood, how to better understand rhythm and rhyme, finding rhythm in everyday sounds, practicing rhythmic writing, and pre-writing activities. This video relates to the content area of reading, because it augments a poetry unit to help students better understand some of the elements and conventions.

b. **Rationale:**
   - **Reluctant readers:** Even the most reluctant students are usually willing to watch a video, so hopefully this would entice those students. While short, it is a good video that visually and auditorily defines rhythm and rhyme, so I think that it would be a helpful aid.
   - **All Students:** All students usually enjoy the chance to watch a video in school. I think that students would easily be able to relate to the clip, because they will recognize many of the everyday sounds that the video explores. Additionally, it will probably lead them to think of other sounds they hear that were not included.

c. **Usage of text:** This video would be used obviously as a supplement to the poetry unit. I can see using it in either the preparation or assistance stage of PAR. Either way, I would most likely use it as individual work at a computer center. I would know which students needed additional help with this concept and could send them to that center for further instruction/assistance. It could also be used in the center as an introductory sort of lesson on the concept.
d. **Readability:** Obviously the readability of a video clip cannot be determined. However, Discovery Education deemed the video appropriate for approximately kindergarten through second grade. Conceptually, I think that this would be appropriate for only those students that were below grade level and struggling with the concept. It is organized nicely into the five different segments, so it would be easy to show only one clip that might be needed. The video is appealing in its format, with the visuals and sounds to demonstrate the concept.

e. **Reference:**

(9) *R is for Rhyme: A Poetry Alphabet* by Judy Young  
**Type:** Various  
**Elements:** Rhyme, Rhythm, Metaphor, Onomatopoeia, Form, Simile, Imagery, Alliteration  
**Topic:** Poetry concepts in an alphabet book form  
**Fry Readability:** 7th grade

a. **Introduction/Summary:*** R is for Rhyme is a wonderful book, full of information about and examples of poetry. Each letter of the alphabet represents some type of poem or an element of poetry. For example, A is for Acrostic, B is for Ballad, and C is for Cinquain. Each page has a definition and detailed description of that word, as well as an example of a poem that exemplifies that word. This text relates to my content area of reading, because it provides a chance for reading and practicing poetry, but also provides background reading with which to comprehend the concept.

b. **Rationale:**
- **Reluctant readers:** This could be a hard sell for reluctant readers, because it is very different from the other poetry books in the text set. It has a lot more text, which is more difficult (7th grade level). The illustrations are beautiful, though, so I would hope to maybe engage them in that way. In order to both keep them engaged and to help them learn, I would, most likely, have to work through the text with them. I might ask them to read the poem to me, and then I might point out some important facts from the detailed information, prefacing with “Did you know that...?”
- **All Students:** Since this is an information text, there are not really any characters. There are pictures, which show young boys and girls, but no one or two specific characters throughout. The best bet for activating schema would probably be to let them peruse the text, hoping that they might see a poetry type with which they are familiar.

c. **Usage of text:** I think that this text could basically replace the “official” text. It is, I would imagine, much more appealing and smaller than an official textbook. However, the issue here becomes the difficulty of the reading. The majority of my fourth grade class, which would include only a handful of
above grade level readers, would probably be reading on frustration level with this text. Therefore, I think that I would probably have it as an official text, of sorts, for those few advanced readers. I could have them work through this text, in a group, while I worked with those students who were struggling. It would probably still be valuable for me to pull some poems, for read alouds, and some basic information from this book to share with all students. I see the text being used in all stages of PAR. Those students that are using it as an official text would need it in preparation to introduce the concepts, assistance to help them better understand, and reflection to reinforce their learning.

d. **Readability**: The Fry Readability measure places the text at a 7th grade reading level. I would agree, as the vocabulary and the concepts themselves can be challenging. The book is well organized under the alphabet theme. It is very well written, with ideas clearly and directly expressed. It serves extremely well as a learning aid, through its detailed descriptions and the examples that are presented. As mentioned before, the illustrations are beautifully done and add a lot, not so much to the poem or word itself, but to the appeal of the book overall.

e. **Reference**:  

(10) **Science Verse** by Jon Scieszka  
Type: Mother Goose Rhymes, Folk Songs, Humorous  
Elements: Rhythm, Rhyme, Personification  
Topic: Science concepts set to popular poems/songs  
Fry Readability: 4th grade

a. **Introduction/Summary**: In *Science Verse*, a boy gets stuck with the “curse of science verse” while sitting in science class one day. This causes him to learn science through rhymes, which are parodies of famous poems or songs. All twenty one poems are humorous and rhyming, but also do teach some science concept in a simplistic way. This text relates to my content area of reading in that poetry reinforces fluency, which is so important for successful reading.

b. **Rationale**:  
a. **Reluctant readers**: I can see reluctant readers being drawn to the unique illustrations on the cover and inside the book. I think that once these readers are initially drawn by that, they will stick with the book, because the poems are funny and they will, most likely, be familiar with the tunes. From this text, they learn rhyme, rhythm, and practice fluency.  
b. **All Students**: I think that all students will be able to identify with the character of the boy. He is sitting in science class, bored and confused, and creates these poems to help him understand. I think that all students have been bored and/or confused in school at some point in time, and thus could relate. Perhaps the text might even inspire them to create poems or phrases to help them remember something in this unit or another that they do not understand.
c. **Usage of text:** This text would augment the poetry unit. I think that I would probably be more likely to use it in the reflection phase of PAR, for the purposes of reinforcing rhyme and rhythm. These are just fun poems to read, so students could read independently when they have some free time to reinforce concepts and for enjoyment. These would also be good for read alouds, when time permits.

d. **Readability:** The Fry Readability measure places this text on the 4th grade level. Linguistically, I agree with Fry’s measure of the text. I think that the concepts are appropriate for average fourth graders, as they would not be completely unfamiliar with rhyme and they would have background with the science information, as well. Each poem has a title that lets you know what the science topic is, so the book is organized nicely. The pictures are very unique and appealing. They are not so much necessary, but they do add a lot because they are so interesting and funny.

e. **Reference:**