

## Sounding Off!



**Sound is becoming so ubiquitous** in our world that it sometimes seems to jar out the other more subtle senses.

My mother, who became deaf, would sometimes share with me that perhaps her quiet world was really a blessing because she was immune to harsh and angry words, screeches and crashes, the confusion of constant “white noise” all around, so she could therefore, think, focus and reflect more clearly.

**But, she also missed beautiful music, birds, her children’s voices...**

**(Unless she could hear it as she read it! And my mother was a voracious reader. No wonder.)**

Have you ever muted the sound in a scary movie? Not as scary anymore is it?

How often do you hear rhyme and rhythm in the games of children and in the nursery rhymes and books they love?

How often do you see onomatopoeia used in naming...such as the kiwi bird?

Remember how we pondered on the beginning of language...how it arose from mimicking sounds?

How often do you hear alliteration in slogans and sayings...wild and wooly west, I’ll do or die, rock and roll, don’t get on your high horse with me, she’s a go-getter...You probably know many more than these tried and true phrases coming from my broken brain!

Before going farther, let’s all **read and react to an article, Listen to the Breeze**, as we keep considering sound.

Sound is all around. When you were an infant, you almost magically learned to distinguish words and syntax from the sounds streaming around you. Your listening skills were prodigious! Sometimes, however, it seems as people grow older we lose that capacity to listen and learn intently. We need to relearn it...to practice the art of listening (not merely hearing). **Sound is the primary medium of language.** You know how serious a parent or teacher’s warning is by the tone of voice more than the actual words. One of the characteristics of aesthetic and excellent writing (a 6) as opposed to utilitarian, every day writing (a 3) is its quality of sound. Even when read silently, poetry and a great deal of prose, is meant to be heard in the mind’s ear. **You will discover sound elements in virtually every interesting and excellent piece of writing you encounter, so please be aware and share.**

With this in mind, we’ll read just a few short and/or strange pieces that are sound driven:

(if you want any for your Antholio, remember to copy or Xerox one for yourself during a work day.)

1. Jazz Fantasia by Carl Sandburg
2. Maybe Dats Your Pwoblem Too by Jim Hall
3. hist whist by e e cummings
4. Driving by Myra Cohn Livingston
5. Killer Toads Attack Town by Judith Saunders
6. On the Eating of Mice by Paul Poirot
7. from “The Bells” by Edgar Allen Poe



So many of the poetry models you have in your **Melange of Poetic Models booklet** and that you find on **Shadow Poetry** on the website will develop from sound. Many descriptive pieces of prose are compelling because of how they sound. It’s so much fun to focus on the sound of your writing, so I’ll offer a few assignment choices for you. Are you listening?

*“...and when she sang, the sea/whatever self it had, became the self/that was her song...”*

*from Wallace Stevens’ “The Idea of Order at Key West”*