James Edwin Campbell
19th Century African American Poet

Grades K-2

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Overview

James Edwin Campbell was an African American poet, who was born in Pomeroy, Ohio, in 1867. He penned his early verses while studying at Pomeroy High School (now known at Meigs High School) and published his first book of poetry, *Driftings & Gleanings*, in 1887. This book is written in Standard English, while his second collection, *Echoes from the Cabin & Elsewhere* (1895), employs the rich dialect of the African Americans in the Appalachian region in which he was raised.

Lesson Objectives *(Ohio English Language Standards Reference Numbers)*

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Determine central themes and analyze their development, summarizing key supporting details and ideas. RL K-2: #2
- Interpret words and phrases, including connotative and figurative meanings. RL K-2 #4
- Ask and answer key details in the text, retell the story of the poem, and identify characters, settings and major events. RL K-2: #1, #3
- Ask and answer questions about unknown words in the text, and understand parts of a poem such as stanzas and rhyming patterns. RL K-2: #1, #2, #4
- Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud. RL K-2: #6
- Actively engage in group-reading activities of poetry with purpose and understanding. RL K-2: #10
- Name the author of a text. RL K-2: #6
- Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print – reading left to right and top to bottom of page and words are separated by spaces. Recognize the features of a sentence such as first word, capitalization, ending punctuation. RF K-2: #1a,c
- Recognize and produce rhyming words. RF K-2: #1
- Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners such as peers and adults in small and larger groups. SL K-2: #1
• Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail. **SL K-2: #2**

• Recognize and name end-punctuation. **L K-2: #2**

• Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases. **L K-2: #4**

**Student Activities**

Students will complete the following activities in Session 1

• Listen to the teacher read the poem “Bird-Song”
• Participate in a choral reading of the poem
• Illustrate the poem with a mural drawing
• Participate in lesson about stanzas, exclamation points, onomatopoeia and rhyming
• Learn vocabulary words

Students will complete the following activities in Session 2

• Listen to the teacher read the poem “Negro Lullaby”
• Participate in a choral reading of the poem
• Illustrate the poem with a mural drawing
• Participate in a lesson about Black English dialect
• Learn vocabulary words

Student will participate in activities set up in centers.

• Read the “Center Activities Guide” and select the ones most appealing to grade and interest levels.

**Materials Needed**

• Mural paper and tape
• Colored pencils, markers or crayons
• Recordings of birdcalls: these can be found online or even the smartphone application, *Chirp*.
• A new shiny penny for each student (banks often have them)
• Materials for “Center Activities”

**Teacher Preparations**

• Read over the Teacher’s Edition biography of James Edwin Campbell to become familiar with his story. His obituary is also of interest.
• Read *Recognizing Dialect in Creative Writings* by Michelle O’Malley, PhD
• Read *Learning about Poetry* by Christina Veladota, Ph.D.
• Copy the poems on chart paper
• This lesson plan is divided into two sessions; however, you can combine
the sessions for a longer class period or omit some activities for shorter
sessions. Center Activities are also provided for more in-depth
experiences. Follow the Center Activities Guide to include them.

Procedures
Session 1 – “Bird-Song”
• Explain to the students they will be learning about African American poet,
James Edwin Campbell, and looking at two of his poems. Read the grade
level biography found in the “Student Masters’s Section” of this packet to
the students or have a student read it out loud while the others follow
along. Discuss the poet’s life with the children – he was born in Pomeroy,
Ohio, near the Appalachian Mountains and the Ohio River, that he
published two books of poetry, and was also a teacher, principal, and
president of a college.
• Introduce “Bird-Song” to the students by reading it aloud. Read it again
while pointing to the words on the word chart.
• Teach the word “stanza” to the students and tell them you will be looking
at the first stanza of the poem a little closer to see what the poem means.
• Introduce the word onomatopoeia and ask them if they can spot
onomatopoeia in the first line of the poem. (Cheereen! Cheewink!) Have
them think of other onomatopoeia words that describe the sound of
animals – oink, moo, hiss, meow, woof, etc.
• Point out the exclamation points and ask why they are
there. Are the birds
sad, afraid, excited?
• Vocabulary words to explain in the first stanza are “pipe” and “lay.” In
the time period the poem was written, this phrase means the birds were
singing a poem. (“Pipe” means to sing and “lay” is a poem that is sung.)
• Based on the birds telling the poet they have “come to stay,” the hillsides
turning green, the bright sun and light sky, the poem is set in the spring,
although summer would also be an acceptable answer. Ask the students
questions about these lines to help them infer the season.
• Look at the second stanza and tell the students that some lines match lines
in the first stanza. Ask them to help you identify which lines are the same.
• Point out that the word “list” is an old way of saying, “listen,” and
because it is a shorter word, it fits in the poem better.
• Ask the students to help you find words that rhyme throughout the entire
poem. Point out that at the beginning of the poem some words rhyme
every other line, but towards the end of the poem lines that are next to
each other rhyme.
• Read the poem again and have the students do a choral reading of the
onomatopoeia lines of the birds’ song. (Cheereen! Cheewink!)
• Tape mural paper on the wall and distribute crayons, markers, or colored pencils. Tell the students to draw trees with birds in them singing to the poet on the ground. Remind them of the season, of the green hills, the bright sun, and the light sky (meaning it is not stormy.) See Centers Activities Guide for other suggestions about the mural.

• Enrichment Activity: Ask students to write a bird poem using another onomatopoeia such as tweet, chirp, peep, caw, cock a doodle do, etc.

• Preparation for tomorrow’s lesson: Invite the students to bring a stuffed animal or doll to school to use in tomorrow’s poetry lesson, “Negro Lullaby.”

**Session 2 – “Negro Lullaby”**

• Review the biography of James Edwin Campbell with the students and remind them he was African American and lived in the Appalachian Mountains in the town of Pomeroy, Ohio, which is next to the Ohio River. Explain to the students that Campbell heard different ways of talking when he was growing up – very proper English in the school he attended, along with Appalachian Mountain dialect and Black English among his friends and family.

• Tell the students that the poem they have already read, “Bird-Song” is written in Standard English. Today you will look at a poem written in Black English and it is a lullaby. Ask if they have heard that word and if they have ever heard a lullaby.

• Read the poem aloud. (It might take practice before reading to the students to master the Black English dialect. Consult Recognizing Dialect in Creative Writings Michelle O’Malley, PhD for tips.)

• Repeat the words “Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey,” and tell the students to rock a pretend baby in their arms when they hear those words in the poem as you read it again. (If planned ahead, students can bring a stuffed animal or doll from home to cradle while rocking to the lullaby.)

• Read the first stanza of “Negro Lullaby” using the word chart and ask the students if they see or hear words that are unfamiliar to them. Most likely these will be the Black English words. Using the Black English Translation in the Resources Section of this packet, explain each word and phrase the students bring up.

• Ask the students to identify the insect mentioned in the first stanza, and circle the word “cricket” when they name it. Do the same with the birds.

• Read the first chorus and go over unfamiliar words. Tell the children that the mother wants her baby to go to sleep, but it won’t close its eyes, and they are shining as bright as a new coin. Hand out the bright shiny pennies to the children and ask them if they understand better what the mother is saying now that they see bright, shiny, new money. Ask the
students if they see an exclamation point in the chorus like they did in “Bird-Song.”

- Read the second stanza and go over unfamiliar dialect words. Explain the imagery of the moon being like a baby in a cradle and the stars falling asleep. Tell them the Mother is trying to convince the baby to fall asleep, too. Ask the students if their parents have ever told them to be quiet so someone could sleep? Perhaps there are other children in the household that are making noise and the mother is telling them to be quiet so the baby will go to sleep. Maybe they are knocking at the nursery door wanting their mother’s attention? Ask what the end punctuation is in the second stanza and what that might tell us about how the mother is feeling towards the noisy children?
- Read the second chorus and explain unfamiliar words the children ask about. Ask if they think the baby is finally asleep.
- Do a choral reading of the poem, with the children reading “Hush-er by, hush-er by, my honey” as it comes up in the poem and rocking their pretend babies or stuffed animals. Have them act out the “sh–sh-sh” line at the end by putting their index finger to their lips.

**Center Activities Guide**
The following centers can be set up to enrich the lesson plans. Materials are easily found. It is suggested they be kept in a special box to be used from year to year.

**Listening/Art Center:**
1. Students can listen to birdsongs on CD or from Internet sources. There is also a free smartphone application called “Chirp.” While listening to birds, they can color reproducible bird coloring sheets found at [http://www.coloring.ws/birds.htm](http://www.coloring.ws/birds.htm)
2. Students can listen to lullabies on CD. While listening they can illustrate the Campbell poem “Negro Lullaby.” Students can also draw pictures of themselves being sung to sleep or making noise while Mama is singing to younger brothers and sisters. Additional drawings can be of the birds and other nature references in the poem. Teachers can also use the “Chirp” application to play the songs of specific birds mentioned in the poem.
3. Students can draw pictures of Campbell’s hometown of Pomeroy, Ohio, in the Appalachian Mountains next to the Ohio River. They can listen to a CD of folk music that includes banjos while drawing the pictures.

**Dramatic Play Center:**
1. Students can act out the “Negro Lullaby” roles of mama rocking the baby and the other children making noise. They can play the parts of
the animals mentioned in the poem as well. They can also bring a favorite stuffed animal or doll to rock to sleep while listening to the lullaby CD.

Art Projects:
1. Students will illustrate the Campbell poem, “Bird-Song” on mural paper as a group, or individually. They can draw the birds in the trees singing to the poet on the ground, or can make bird collages from magazines pictures. Craft store feathers can also be glued to the birds for a 3-D effect. Play the birdcall CD or smartphone application, Chirp, while the children draw.
2. Students will illustrate the Campbell poem, “Negro Lullaby” on mural paper as a group, or individually. They can draw Mama rocking her baby while the other children are making noise, the various animals mentioned in the poem, and the moon shining through the mountain gap. They can write the words “hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey” all along the bottom or top of the mural as well as, “shhhhhh” to indicate a baby is trying to go to sleep. Play the lullaby CD while they children are drawing.
3. Remind students that owls are mentioned in “Negro Lullaby.” Next tell them about the famous artist James Audubon, who traveled the world drawing birds in the wild. Ask them to color the owl coloring sheet (reproducible master provided) while looking at the stuffed owl. Encourage them to match the colors on the coloring sheet with those of the stuffed owl if they can, and pretend to be Audubon. Sample colored owl is provided.

Activity Center:
1. Matching Game – Purchase two inexpensive bird field-guides or print two photos of several birds from the Internet. Put each set of photos in plastic freezer bags for storage. Students will match pictures of the birds. The bird pictures can be laminated.
2. Don’t Wake the Baby! – Use a small doll or stuffed animal for the “baby” and have children sit in a circle. Use a timer with a buzzer or a smartphone with a timer. Set the length of time to various amounts throughout the game, but shorter times between 15 and 60 seconds are the best. Have children quickly pass the baby around the circle. When the timer goes off, the student with the baby is the noisy brother or sister in the Campbell poem, “Negro Lullaby.” Have the other children put their fingers to their lips and say, “shhhhh!” all together to the player who “woke the baby.” The player then rocks the baby and says or sings, “Hush-er-by, Hush-er-by, my honey,” to put the baby back to sleep again. Start the game again with a different setting on the timer.
**Enrichment:**

1. For older children, facts about birds and short reports about birds can be assigned as research projects from the Internet, library or classroom materials.
2. Students can be encouraged to write their own poems about mamas, babies or birds.
3. Students can do some of the activities found on Cornell University’s excellent website at home with their families and then report back to the class about it. The web address is included on the bottom of the Campbell poem, “Bird-Song.” [http://www.birds.cornell.edu/education/kids](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/education/kids)

**Evaluation**

After the two sessions, students will be able to:
1. identify rhyming words with 80% accuracy by circling correct rhymes on rhyming worksheet.

2. name onomatopoeia words for the sounds made by the following animals:
cow (moo)    snake (hiss)    dog (woof or bow wow)    cat (meow)    pig (oink)

3. Explain the simile, “eyes as bright as money” in “Negro Lullaby.” *(The baby’s eyes are open and shining bright – it is not sleepy!)*

4. Answer the following questions about the poems:
   a. Who were the birds singing to in “Bird-Song?” *The poet*
   b. What season is “Bird-Song” about? *(Spring or Summer)*
   c. What sound did the birds make? *(Cheereen, Cheewink!)*
   d. What is a lullaby? *(A song to lull a baby to sleep.)*
   e. Who is singing the lullaby in “Negro Lullaby?” *(The baby’s mother)*
   f. Name one insect in the lullaby poem. *(cricket)*
   g. Name a bird in the lullaby poem. *(hoot owl, whippoorwill, screech owl)*
   h. Which one of these is not in the lullaby poem? Moon  Stars  Sun *(Sun)*
   i. What way of speaking is the lullaby poem? *(Black English)*
   j. Who wrote the two poems and where was he from? *(James Edwin Campbell from Pomeroy, Ohio.)*
Rhyming Fun! – *Teacher’s Edition*
Circle the rhyming words. There will be (2) two in each group.

1. a. I love to *sing.*
   
   b. My dog is named Sally.
   
   c. On Monday I lost my *ring.*

2. a. Did you see my Dad?
   
   b. Can you hear the *band?*
   
   c. We love to play in the *sand.*

3. a. We like to run and *play.*
   
   b. He was lost and could not find his *way.*
   
   c. She broke her cup and plate.

4. a. The baby is fast *asleep.*
   
   b. Did you see my little chick?
   
   c. The little bird went cheep, *cheep.*

5. a. The new book was great!
   
   b. That was the best movie I have ever *seen.*
   
   c. The grass is very *green.*
James Edwin Campbell, African American poet and author, was born in the Ohio River town of Pomeroy, Ohio, in 1867 — just two years after the end of the Civil War. Located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, Pomeroy was known for its coal mining and salt industry that employed thousands of Welsh, Germans, and African Americans at the time.

Campbell’s father worked in the salt works. These operations refined salt water collected from deep wells that tapped an ancient underground body of ocean water. After the salt was collected from boiling of the water, it was shipped to cities along the Ohio River, until competition from salt works in other states drove the Pomeroy industry out of business.

Pomeroy’s coal mines and salt works were predominantly established by wealthy businessmen from New England who founded the town in the early 1800’s. Rather than sending their children off to boarding schools, these affluent families established the Pomeroy Academy and hired teachers from the best schools in the country, including Harvard University. The Academy was eventually renamed Pomeroy High School.

Campbell and his siblings attended a school that was segregated from white children called Kerr’s Run Colored School; however, the school only went to the eighth grade. One of Campbell’s classmates is credited with appealing to the school board of Pomeroy High School to allow black children to continue their education. The school officials agreed, and African American students were allowed in the school many years before laws required they even be given a high school education, much less in a desegregated school!

The students of Kerr’s Run Colored School took advantage of this rare opportunity and became some of the best students in the high school. The courses were difficult, and Campbell worked very hard at his studies. A few years after graduation his first book of poetry, Driftings & Gleanings, was published. He also successfully passed the teacher’s exam and began teaching at African American schools in Ohio and West Virginia.

Campbell became well known for his writing and was hired to edit two African American newspapers in West Virginia. At the same time his poetry and essays were published throughout the country in literary magazines and in
newspapers. He also gave speeches about equal rights for African Americans and was an activist for improved laws and opportunities for his race. These accomplishments occurred before he was 25 years of age!

In 1891, Campbell was hired as the first president of West Virginia Colored Institute (WVCI), a school of higher education originally established for African Americans near Charleston, West Virginia. The school is now West Virginia State University, and Campbell is credited with establishing a solid foundation for the school’s future growth. In 1894 he received an honorary Ph.B (equivalent to a bachelor’s degree) from the historically black university, Shaw University, in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Campbell left WVCI in 1894 for Chicago to pursue writing full time. In 1895 he published his second book of poetry, *Echoes from the Cabin & Elsewhere*. This book was primarily written in Black English dialect, something that up until that time had only been done by white poets mimicking, and sometimes poking fun, at slaves on Southern plantations. Campbell wrote dialect poems based on the language he grew up hearing in Pomeroy. Some of his poems have traces of the speech still heard in the Appalachian Mountains while others make use of the Black English spoken by African Americans at the time.

In December 1895, Campbell came to visit his family in Pomeroy for the holidays and to give readings throughout the region from his new book of poetry. After a few weeks, he became very ill and died January 27, 1896, at the age of 28 at his parents’ home. It is thought he contracted typhoid from the recurring epidemics of the disease in Chicago where he was living at the time.

Campbell’s untimely death was a tragic loss to his family as well as the literary community. He is credited as a pioneer among black poets for use of dialect and predates the better-known black poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar. Campbell’s works are also of special interest to those who study the language of those from the Appalachian Mountains as well as Black English.

**Bird-Song — *Teacher’s Edition***

by James Edwin Campbell

Cheereen! Cheewink! O poet,  
We've come to stay, to stay.  
Cheereen! Cheewink! You know it,  
And smile as we pipe our lay.  
Cheereen! Cheereen! Cheewink! Cheereen!

*Bird-Song was published in Campbell’s second poetry book, *Echoes from the Cabin & Elsewhere* (1895).*

*Students will participate in choral reading;  
illustrate the poem with a mural; listen to the poem;  
and learn about stanzas, exclamation points, onomatopoeia and rhyming.*
See all the hillsides turning green,
The sun is bright,
The sky is light,
Cheereen! Cheereen! Cheereen!

Cheereen! Cheewink! O poet,
We've come to play, to play.
Cheereen! Cheewink! You know it —
O smile as we pipe our lay.
Cheereen! Cheewink! Cheereen! Cheewink!
O list our notes, they rise, they sink
Upon the air,
So rich, so rare,
Cheereen! Cheereen! Cheereen!

**Negro Lullaby — *Teacher’s Edition***
by James Edwin Campbell

Mammy's baby, go ter sleep,
Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey;
Cross de hyarf de cricket creep,
Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey.
Hoot owl callin' f'um de ol' sycamo'
'Way down yon'er in de holler;
While de whip-po'-will an' de li'l' screech owl
Dey des try dey bes' ter folleer.

Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my deah,
Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey;
Shet yo' eyes an' drap off ter sleep —
O yo' eyes dey bright ez money!

Mammy's sugah, go ter sleep,
Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey;
Baby stars done cease ter peep,
Hush-er-by, hush er-by, my honey.
De moon raise slim froo de ol' mounting gap,
In hits cradle hits been ur rockin'
De li'l' baby stars all fars' ur sleep —
You chillen bettah stop dat knockin'!
Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, hush er-by, my deah,
Hush-er by, hush-er-by, my honey,
Noddin’, noddin’, nod — ur sleep at lars,
Sh — sh — sh — sh — my honey.

Black English Translation— “Negro Lullaby”

First Stanza
...go ter sleep: go to sleep

Hush-er-by: another way of saying the more familiar term used in lullabies, “hush-a-by.”

Cross de hyarf de cricket creep: Across the hearth the cricket creeps

Hoot owl callin’ f’um de ol’ sycamo’: Hoot owl calling from the old sycamore

Way down von’er in de Holler: Way down yonder in the hollow

While de whip-po’-will an’ de li’l’ screech owl: While the whippoorwill and the little screech owl

Dey des try dey bes’ ter foller: They just try their best to follow

First Chorus
...hush-er-by, my deah: hush-a-by my dear

Shet yo’ eyes an’ drap off ter sleep: Shut your eyes and drop off to sleep

O yo’ eyes dey bright ez money: O, your eyes, they are bright as money

Second Stanza
Mammy’s sugah, go ter sleep: Mammy’s sugar, go to sleep

Baby stars done cease ter peep: Baby stars have ceased to peep

De moon raise slim froo de ol’ mounting gap: The moon rises slim through the old mountain gap
In its cradle it has been a-rocking

De li’l’ baby stars all fars’ ur sleep: The little baby stars all fast asleep

You children better stop that knocking

Second Chorus
Noddin’, noddin’, nod – ur sleep at lars: Nodding, nodding, nod – asleep at last

Recognizing Dialect in Creative Writings
Michelle O’Malley, PhD

[Note to teachers: When discussing the following dialect content, consider having the students look at one of the Campbell poems so they can learn to identify these concepts based on an actual poem. Not all of these concepts will be appropriate for all grade levels, but the information might be useful for better understanding of the dialect use in general.]

The content of this curriculum challenges both teachers and students to view Appalachia from a fresh perspective and to acknowledge it as a creative, dynamic force. James Edwin Campbell’s story and his body of work, while first demonstrating that the region’s creative forces have been at work - sometimes in obscurity - for over a century, perfectly illustrate the themes of mountains, music, history, language and ethnicity. Campbell’s work lays claim to his unique place in African-American/Appalachian regional history.

More specifically, Campbell not only produces unique poems and stories but also does so from a very unique place – a unique geographic place, a unique personal place and an important linguistic/cultural place. In the late 19th century, black American writers who wrote in dialect primarily represented the speech of the southern black experience: the Gullah of the Sea Isles and the Plantation English of the deeper south where African languages, English, Spanish and others contributed to a distinct pidgin that soon developed into a Creole specific to the southern plantation culture.

Campbell’s work stands out, not only for its quality and content focus, but also for its language form. While readers can identify aspects of early forms of “black English”, one also finds significant, and quite early, use of Appalachian English – written in an ‘eye-dialect’ so that readers are invited to read the works out loud, thereby experiencing the melodic components of Campbell’s compositions while still reveling in the beauty, the pain, the lyrics of the J.E. Campbell body of work.
In practice, we can often pick out the primary vowel features of Appalachian English, monophthongization of /ay/, fronting of /u/ and /o/, and vowel reduction in unstressed syllables, for example. But other examples of vowel changes as a result of rhotic influence are written to represent a very “Black English” sound – specifically, the Black English of the plantation south...

Additionally, the use of dialect in historical writing serves to engage the reader on a more personal level by offering closer access to the speakers and their thoughts. And by reading the pieces aloud, consumers are able to participate in the events depicted!

Finally, the value of recognizing/using/teaching dialect through poetry and short stories teaches our students to appreciate the language forms of their communities and families. These activities are also good vehicles for teachers who choose to introduce the idea of ‘code switching’ – the practice, employed by many, of transitioning from one language variety/dialect to another depending upon the context or situation. Students can be made to feel more comfortable with their primary dialect in speaking situations and, at the same time, continue to be motivated to use a more formal variety of the language for school projects and/or student-teacher interactions.

**Important Terminology:**

**Dialect** – dialect includes unique vocabulary and phrases as well as pronunciation patterns and grammatical forms that diverge from Standard American English (SAE).

**Code switching** – this is the process of switching from one dialect/language to another

**Pronunciation/“accent”** – this is one component of a dialect. “Accent” refers to how we pronounce certain vowels or consonants or where we place word stress, for example.

**Syntax/grammar** – this refers to any “rule” for phrase or sentence construction as well as the use of subject-verb agreement or irregular verb forms in ‘regular’ environments...

**Appalachian** – a reference to anything from the vast, 13-state region (from Mississippi to NY) that is defined as Appalachian

**Black English/AAVE** – African American Vernacular English or Black English is a specific dialect of English and one that is represented in Campbell’s poems

**Gullah** – this language form developed in South Carolina and Georgia during the era of slavery in the US.

**Phonology** – diphthong, monophthong, rhotic, deletions, stopping, insertions, vowel mergers, tensing, raising...

**Plantation English** – mixture of the speech of the plantation owners, their overseers, and the slaves brought to them from Africa. Even before the Africans
landed on the east coast of North America, they were already using a pidgin that
developed on the western coast of Africa as a result of the English-speaking slave
traders and the Wolof, Hausa, Bambara, etc. speakers of the interior living in close
quarters for extended periods of time...

A Sense of Place – a theme that permeates Campbell's body of work is, perhaps,
BEST illustrated by the language forms he chooses to employ: a mixture of Standard
English, Appalachian English and Black English/AAVE.

(Dialect)Features of Black English: These items are frequently observed in the
speech of today's speakers of Black English as well as many Southern English
varieties – including some Appalachians. These may not all be present in Campbell's
poems, but many will be observed.

Phonology
Final consonant deletions – For example, ‘cold’ goes to ‘col’ or ‘pond’ goes to ‘pon’
“stopping” – sounds that require continuous airflow are stopped. For example,
‘they’ goes to ‘dey’ or ‘this’ goes to ‘dis’
Final “s” deletions – For example, ’50 cents’ goes to ’50 cent’ or ’3 girls’ goes to ‘3
girl’

Vocabulary
“Aint” – does NOT mean “is not”.... Instead, examine the following:
“He ain't leave no keys.” – He didn’t leave any keys.
“I ain’t got no cards.” - I don’t have any cards

Syntax/grammar
Habitual “be”: the verb ‘to be’ is used without inflection in the present, habitual
tense. For example, ‘He be tall’ or “She be happy’.
Uninflected “to be” in continuous constructions: Present continuous tense uses
‘be’ plus the –ing ending on the main verb. For example, ‘He be runnin” or ‘she be
sleepin’ for statements about what’s happening now.
Inversions – “What time it is?”, “How you can do that?”

(Dialect) Features of Appalachian English: This is just a ‘taster’ of some of the
most common features of Appalachian English today. Some of these are evidenced
in the Campbell poems, and others are available for additional study/review by
students living among and using these forms regularly.

Phonology
r-full: the letter ‘r’ is produced in all environments
**r-insertions:** sometimes an ‘r’ is inserted where it is not represented in spelling. For example: ‘wash’ goes to ‘warsh’

**monophthongizations on diphthongs** like in “light”, “like”, “might”, “mine”...these words employ a diphthong when pronounced by most speakers in the Midwestern region. In many rural Appalachian varieties of English, those diphthongs become monophthongs – so ‘light’ goes to ‘lat’ and ‘might’ goes to ‘mat’ and so on...

**weak syllable deletions:** In many rural dialects, and in rapid speech most anywhere, the weakest (fastest and most quiet in speech) syllable in a multi-syllable word is often deleted. For example, ‘remember’ goes to ‘member, ‘suppose’ goes to ‘spose, and ‘confessed goes to ‘fessed

**consonant deletions:** They->‘ey and them->‘em
tire/fire as “tar/far”: Common vowel + ‘r’ production in Appalachian varieties

**Vocabulary**

Positive “anymore”
Yet = still
LOTS of Scots and German nouns and verbs

**Syntax**

a-prefixing: a-huntin’ and a-fishin’
da-prefixing: might could

“The car needs washed.” Vs “The car needs washing.”

s-adding on the verb when 3rd person subject is plural:
The dogs walks… The people goes...

**Learning about Poetry**

By Christina Veladota, PhD

**Some Poetry Basics**

[Note to teachers: When presenting the following poetic terms, you should have the students look at one of the Campbell poems so they can learn to identify these concepts based on an actual poem. Not all of these concepts will be appropriate for all grade levels, but the information might be useful for better understanding of poetry in general.]

- When reading a poem, read it as if it is written in prose. If a line is **enjambed**, then let your eye move to the next line without stopping. If you encounter an **end-stopped** line, then pause as you would with prose.
- The word **enjambment** refers to a line of poetry that does not end with a comma, period, or any other punctuation.
- An **end-stop** refers to a line of poetry that ends with a punctuation mark.
- **Line break** refers to where the poet chooses to end a line of a poem and move to the next line.
• A stanza refers to the unit of lines in a section of a poem. Think of it as the equivalent of a paragraph. Some poems are broken into several stanzas, while some are made up of only one stanza. Stanzas come in many lengths. Some poems use one stanza length throughout; others use a variety of lengths. Uniform stanza length tends to make a poem appear more formal than a poem that uses a variety of lengths.

• **Tone** refers to the attitude of the speaker in a poem. Does the speaker seem happy? Sad? Reflective? Angry?

• **Syntax** refers to the word order in a poem. Many times, the word order in a poem will be the same as you encounter it in speech and in prose. Other times, the word order will be turned around, which can enhance / change the meaning. Used with *enjambment*, unexpected *syntax* can surprise the reader.

• **Rhyme scheme** refers to the organization of rhyme in a poem. There are a lot of rhyming patterns out there. Some examples are abba, aabb, abab. These describe possible *quatrain* rhyme schemes. Depending on the length of the stanza, the scheme could be different. Not all poems use rhyme!

• **Imagery** refers to the pictures the poet “paints” in words. What do you “see” in the poem? Sometimes the use of *similes* and *metaphors* help create these pictures. A good image helps you access one (or all) of your five senses and helps convey the **tone** of the poem.

### What is a Simile?

The basic definition of a simile is that it’s a comparison of two things using the word *like* or *as*. Remind students that when using a simile in a poem, the poet can conjure up images that are often surprising to the reader.

For example: *The moon is like a silver coin in the sky.*

### What is a Metaphor?

A metaphor is a comparison of two things that does not use the words *like* or *as*. Remind students that metaphors can create more powerful images than similes. Metaphors suggest that one thing *is* the other thing and not merely similar to it.

For example: *The moon is a silver coin in the sky.*

### What is Personification?

Personification is a figure of speech that gives human traits to an inanimate object (a thing), an animal, or an idea.

For example: *The leaves danced in the wind.*
What is an **Antonym**?
An antonym is a word that has the opposite meaning to another word.

Examples: *day / night*   *true / false*   *dark / light*

What is a **Synonym**?
A synonym is a word that has the same (or similar) meaning to another word.

Example (same meaning): *street* and *avenue*
Example (similar meaning): *stop* and *yield*

What is a **Homonym**?
A homonym is a word that is spelled and pronounced the same way, but has different meanings. (For our purposes, we will not address homophones or homographs.)

Example: *bear* is an animal or can mean to carry something

What is **Alliteration**?
The word alliteration refers to the repetition of consonant sounds.

For example: “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.”

**Tips for Reading a Poem:**

- Read the poem once through without worrying about understanding it. If possible, read it aloud.
- Read it a second time. Circle or underline repeated words, phrases, or ideas.
- Circle or underline related images such as parts of the body (hands, eyes, feet, hair, etc.), or different types of weather (wind, rain, sunshine, snow, etc.).
- Think about why these things or ideas are repeated, or used often.
- What is the basic action of the poem? The *basic action* of the poem is similar to the plot of a story. What is happening in the poem? When considering this, don’t worry about finding a meaning yet.
- Who is the speaker of the poem? The speaker in a poem is equivalent to the narrator in a short story or novel; it’s the voice or character that’s telling the story.
• Identify similes in the poem.
• Identify metaphors in the poem.
• What is the tone of this poem? Is it happy, sad, fearful, or is there some other kind of emotion conveyed through the language and imagery? Identify a line or two that illustrates the tone.
• Does this poem rhyme? If so, what is the rhyme scheme?
• What about syntax? The word syntax refers to word order and sentence structure. Some poets employ syntax that is different from ordinary speech. Do you see examples of this in the poem?
• Does this poem have a set structure to it? Are the stanzas uniform all the same length? If so, why do you think the poet chose this structure? If not, why not?
• Consider what you think this poem is about

Additional Resources
1. Wikipedia Entry (contains a few inaccuracies such as cause of Campbell’s death. He died of typhoid, which often causes pneumonia-like symptoms.)

2. Poetry Foundation
   http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/james-edwin-campbell

3. Article about the acquisition of Campbell’s first book, Driftings & Gleanings at Ohio University Libraries. Both of Campbell’s books are in the Archives and Special Collections Department of Alden Library at Ohio University.
   http://www.ohio.edu/news/months/jan97/161.html

4. Excerpts from Campbell’s dialect book, Echoes From the Cabin & Elsewhere
   http://allpoetry.com/James-Edwin-Campbell

5. African American Poetry of the Nineteenth Century. Page 306
   https://books.google.com/books?id=ffq8pS2UxkB&pg=PA306&lpg=PA306&dq=poetry.org+James+Edwin+Campbell&source=bl&ots=k96dRO8jMk&sig=KjRr0BnEGLqlBLNuuNjR468LiGzQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=-pPJvVNNIt4GxBpzTgqAF&ved=0CEEQ6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=poetry.org%20James%20Edwin%20Campbell&f=false

6. Poem Hunter
   http://www.poemhunter.com/james-edwin-campbell/

7. The historical marker for Campbell, once installed in Pomeroy, is currently in disrepair due to an accident, and has been removed until it can be re-welded.
JAMES EDWIN CAMPBELL OBITUARY

The Pomeroy Tribune-Telegraph, January 29, 1896

J. EDWIN CAMPBELL DEAD!

HE HAS SUNG HIS LAST SONG ON EARTH.

HIS SOUL TAKES ITS FLIGHT AT THE TURN OF THE NIGHT.

James Edwin Campbell, dialect poet and story writer is dead. His soul took its flight from earth at midnight Sunday night. He was conscious to the end and died as a weary child going to sleep.

He came to the home of his parents Mr. and Mrs. James Campbell of the First Ward from Chicago about a month ago on a holiday vacation not feeling well. Some two weeks ago he was taken with grip and a racking pain in the head. A week ago Monday he manifested symptoms of pneumonia and took to his bed. Typhoid symptoms and peritonitis followed. Thursday his condition became alarming and his wife, who is a teacher in Wilberforce College, was summoned by wire to his bedside. He grew gradually worse from day to day and died in collapse.

Deceased was born in Pomeroy, 28 years ago the 28th of last September. He graduated from the Pomeroy High School with the class of 1884 and afterward taught in various parts of the country. On August 5, 1891 he was married to Miss Mary E (sic) Champ, a refined and educated lady, of New Athens, Ohio. She is a graduate of Marietta College, class of ’87, and is a teacher of considerable note. She is a daughter of J. A. (sic) Champ connected for many years with the summer (sic) school at Parkersburg.

While a teacher of marked ability, Campbell achieved more fame in his dialect writings. The readers of this paper are familiar with the character of his work, it having had the pleasure of publishing many of his productions. His dialect poetry has attracted widespread popularity. He went to Chicago last summer and made a decided hit in the western literary metropolis with his melodious jingles. Mr.
Campbell has written two books of poems, a collection of his best work. One, “Echoes from the Cabin and Elsewhere,” he published since going to Chicago, and while employed on the literary staff of the Chicago Times-Herald. In the past few months he had been called upon to read from his works in various places in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. His last public appearance was in the Baptist Church in this city on the evening of January 2, when his audience was carried away with his recitations. At that time he appeared to have a long and successful life before him. He had reached a position in his profession where his reputation as a writer made his literary wares of ready sale at good prices. He was better known and more highly appreciated abroad than at home. While his writings were mostly humorous, pathetic and true to life, it required a person of some literary ability to get the real meat out of his works, particularly his dialect work. His first work “Driftings and Gleanings” was published in 1887 at Charleston, W. VA. In his introduction to this work Mr. Campbell says: “The poems or perhaps it is better to say verses, have been written just when the mood was upon me. Some were composed after I had retired and would ring in my ears like Mark Twain’s

“Punch brothers, punch with care,  
Punch in the presence of the passenjare,”

until I would be obliged to get up and write them down. Some of them were written when I was a schoolboy, attending the Pomeroy High School and were read before the dear old P.H.S.L.S. (Peace its ashes!) Some were written while I was ‘teaching the young idea how to shoot,’ and ‘pouring the fresh instruction o’er the mind’ at Rutland, Ohio. Others still have been written since I have been the editor of the West Virginia Enterprise and have been published in that journal.”

He dedicated this work to his mother and it is but necessary to quote from this dedicatory notice to show the real character of the man, viz:

In presenting this little volume to the public, as is customary, I must dedicate it to some one, but whom? Who will consider it an honor to be so remembered? No one? Yes, there is one.

To this one then, I dedicate it.
To one whose every heart beat has been as loyal and as true to me as the pointing of the needle to the pole, who has with loving care and anxious solicitude watched over my every step, as from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood to the threshold of manhood, I have tottered, then walked the “flinty slopes” and (can’t read a few words here) awards of this life: to one who has thought no sacrifice too great, no denial too severe, for the pleasure, comfort, and advantage of her boy.....whose every thought has been for my welfare, and whose patience I have oftentimes severely tried with my boyish headstrong ways, and whose kind acts I have perhaps too often accepted as “written in hand:” to that dearest, holiest, safest, best blessing ever spared to a boy, I dedicate this book:

“Love droops, friends may fail,
And the leaves of friendship fall.
But the tender love of a mother
Outlives them all."

The funeral takes place from the Wesleyan Church at Kerr’s Run at 10 a.m. Thursday. The funeral discourse to be delivered by Rev. Lawrence, of Parkersburg, assisted by Rev. Hill of the Baptist Church of this city. The remains will be buried on the hill above Minersville. We know no more fitting close to this article than the epilogue written himself at the close of his first book, viz:

‘Tis done, my songs are sung,
I close the book and finally turn away.
What tho’ no roses at my feet are flung,
Nor plaudits wild greet loud my uncouth lay
I sang not for praise alone.

What tho’ the critiques scornfully sneer
And metre, thought and rhyme with harsh words assail,
And with the wise look of a prophetic sneer,
Predict that such unpolished rhymes will fail
I sang not for their praise.

But from the heart each song arose
Like the spring which bubbled from the mountain side
Then involuntarily a small brooklet downward flows
Then onward until lo! A mighty river sweeps on in pride.
So involuntarily I sang.

I sang because the heary o’er flowed
And songs, to me sweet, unbid would rise,
And the Muse’s face before me ever glowed
Like a bright winged bird, which, alluring ever onward flies.
And so I sang.

"O Mystic Land of Some Day,
Behold our sails spread wide,
As toward the azure mountains
'Neath softest skies we glide;
'Land ho!' the lookout’s calling.
Down oars and sails are falling
Forever, just ahead!"
Acknowledgements

These lesson plans are the result of a group of scholars, public school teachers, and historians desiring to bring James Edwin Campbell back to life in K-12 classrooms during Black History Month. Long overshadowed by African-American poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Campbell predates Dunbar in dialect writing as well as addressing topics pertaining to racial issues of his day.

The following people gave freely of their time, energy and resources to research, write and ultimately provide K-12 students an inspiring introduction to a forgotten poet who has earned his rightful place in African American literature and history.

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Liz Shaw, Meigs County Historical Society Trustee, Folk Musician and Documentary Producer
Christina Veladota, PhD Creative Writing, Poetry, Associate Professor of English Composition & Literature, Washington State Community College, and Poet

Student Masters begin on next page:
James Edwin Campbell
An African American Poet

James Edwin Campbell was an African American poet who was born in Pomeroy Ohio many years ago in 1867. He grew up in the Appalachian Mountains next to the Ohio River and started writing poetry when he was a high school student.

James Edwin was a very good student and was allowed to go to a school that was only open to white children at the time. Many of his African American friends were also allowed in this school, and they worked very hard to prove they were just as smart as the other students. Many of them went on to write books, teach school, and work in government.

When he finished high school, James Edwin taught school and wrote a book of poetry. He was made principal of a school, and he continued to write poetry. He was then made president of a college, and he kept writing poetry. Many of his poems were printed in magazines and newspapers. These poems were written in Standard English, and that is the language most often used today. You learn Standard English in your reading classes at school.

One day James Edwin decided he wanted to write a book of poetry in another language style. He used a way of speaking called Black English to write these poems. It was the way his family and friends spoke when he was growing up, and it was important to him to write their words down.

James Edwin liked to write about people he knew, nature, and music – especially banjos! Some of his poems have been set to music, and he wrote poems that are about dancing, singing, and musical instruments.

When we read poems by James Edwin Campbell today, we might read some in Standard English and some in Black English because he loved to write both ways. Black History Month is a good time to talk about James Edwin Campbell, but his poetry is fun to read any time of year!
Bird-Song
by James Edwin Campbell

Cheereen! Cheewink! O poet,
We've come to stay, to stay.
Cheereen! Cheewink! You know it,
And smile as we pipe our lay.
Cheereen! Cheereen! Cheewink! Cheereen!
See all the hillsides turning green,
The sun is bright,
The sky is light,
Cheereen! Cheereen! Cheereen!

Cheereen! Cheewink! O poet,
We've come to play, to play.
Cheereen! Cheewink! You know it —
O smile as we pipe our lay.
Cheereen! Cheewink! Cheereen! Cheewink!
O list our notes, they rise, they sink
Upon the air,
So rich, so rare,
Cheereen! Cheereen! Cheereen!

Note to parents: An excellent website for bird activities is provided by Cornell University’s Ornithology Dept. If you and your child do any of them, have them share about it with their class!
http://www.birds.cornell.edu/education/kids
Negro Lullaby
by James Edwin Campbell

Mammy's baby, go ter sleep,
Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey;
Cross de hyarf de cricket creep,
Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey.
Hoot owl callin' f'um de ol' sycamo'
'Way down yon'er in de holler;
While de whip-po'-will an' de li'l' screech owl
Dey des try dey bes' ter foller.

Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my deah,
Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey;
Shet yo' eyes an' drap off ter sleep —
O yo' eyes dey bright ez money!

Mammy's sugah, go ter sleep,
Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, my honey;
Baby stars done cease ter peep,
Hush-er-by, hush er-by, my honey.
De moon raise slim froo de ol' mounting gap,
In hits cradle hits been ur rockin'
De li'l' baby stars all fars' ur sleep —
You chillen bettah stop dat knockin'!

Hush-er-by, hush-er-by, hush er-by, my deah,
Hush er by, hush-er-by, my honey,
Noddin', noddin', nod — ur sleep at lars,
Sh — sh — sh — sh — my honey.
Rhyming Fun!

Circle the rhyming words. There will be (2) two in each group.

1. a. I love to sing.
   
   b. My dog is named Sally.
   
   c. On Monday I lost my ring.

2. a. Did you see my Dad?
   
   b. Can you hear the band?
   
   c. We love to play in the sand.

3. a. We like to run and play.
   
   b. He was lost and could not find his way.
   
   c. She broke her cup and plate.

4. a. The baby is fast asleep.
   
   b. Did you see my little chick?
   
   c. The little bird went cheep, cheep.

5. a. The new book was great!
   
   b. That was the best movie I have ever seen.
   
   c. The grass is very green.