1. Listen!
   A good way to start a writing session (J. Bruchac in Alphabet of the Trees)
   Whitman quote

2. Why are we doing this?
   All poetry is communication – who are you writing for?
   Yourself? for observation and self-discovery, but may be limiting
   Define an imaginary reader (Kooser, Poetry Home Repair Manual)
   For teaching/interpretation

3. Poems are triggered by bits of language, glimpses of life; ideas emerge whether
   intended or not (Kooser)
   Essential details, no spare parts
   Don’t be intimidated, but much to gain from learning form and tradition

4. Why Birds?
   All the wonders of birds, all the benefits of observing, journals etc.
   An aside on collections – many famous bird poems, Bright Wings anthology
   features less well known.

   The Oven Bird – Frost

   There is a LOT going on here, but don’t fret about it
   Meanings are clear enough, but you may find different at new reading
   Beware of over analysis: “What is the poet trying to say?” as if you can’t hear

5. How we use poems

   Discovery – See things as if for the first time –
   What if you’d never seen or heard a cardinal?

   Description and metaphor – examples in the power point from T. Gannon, J.
   Kerouac, R. Hass and myself

   Communicate! many audiences, many messages

6. Forms
   haiku
   cinquain – the “English class” form vs. the syllable count form
   quatrains
   acrostic or alphabet poems – first letters, etc.
   free verse
   metered verse
   ode
   sonnet

   shape - concrete poetry – Snyder
7. Detail – observation
The most effective poems are not likely from sweeping panorama but from close observation of detail.
“Be one of those on whom nothing is lost,”
Henry James

7. Exercise
Each participant contributes an observation words or short phrase about the cardinal – or your memory of a cardinal
Take as much from the audience as possible, then do a group exercise to assemble into a rough draft poem

Keep a journal, and use it!

Some exercise ideas you might try:
- Copy descriptions from books, field guides, other sources, cut them into pieces and reassemble into a poem
- Become the bird – write from the bird’s perspective, maybe as it might speak to you
- Make a list of everything about a bird, all the birds in this area (or any other topic) – this is to focus on detail first, idea later
- Deck: Collect your own interesting or useful words, play with rearranging them (your own magnetic poetry)

Group:
- Cut up, in a group, is like “deck” done quickly
- List poems work as a group exercise
- Circle poem, put words on a circle, draw lines to connect, write about each connection and then assemble
- Chant: “I am the owl… I am the owl that… (hunts by night, sees well in the dark
- Questions: usual W W W W W, but also How, What if, Does it, Is it true?

(See especially The Practice of Poetry for exercise ideas.)

8. Conclusion
What is the definition of a good poem?
“One I like.” – Howard Moss

Why does it matter?
Mary Oliver quote

Be Like the Bird – Victor Hugo

John M. Elliott, Education Manager, FPDCC
jmelliott@upstreaminterp.com
Upstreaminterp.com
References


McClatchy, J. D., Editor, On Wings of Song: Poems About Birds, Everyman's Library, 2000


Paschen, Elise and Rebecca Presson Mosby, editors, Poetry Speaks, Sourcebooks, 2001


Timpane, John PhD with Maureen Watts, Poetry for Dummies, Wiley Publishing Inc., 2001

About what it says it is.

Tom Gannon’s Cool Bird Poems
http://incolor.in nebraska.com/tgannon/bird.html#cred

Huge anthology of poetry

Poetry Through the Ages.
http://www.webexhibits.org/poetry/
An Expressive Journey: forms, writing, etc

Jane Reichold’s World of Poetry
http://www.ahapoetry.com/
Short forms, especially haiku, lots on writing

Poetry Primer
http://hrsbs taff.ednet.ns.ca/davidc/6c_files/Poem%20pics/poetry_primer.htm
Examples and suggested writing activities for a few forms