

# Teacher Guide: a "Just Because" Poem

## Introduce poetry as a literary form.

**What is poetry?** Poetry is a type of writing. It stirs our imagination and senses by carefully choosing and organizing words to create meaning and rhythm.

## Read and discuss the sample poem together.

"Just Because" poems use structure and repetition to challenge stereotypes.

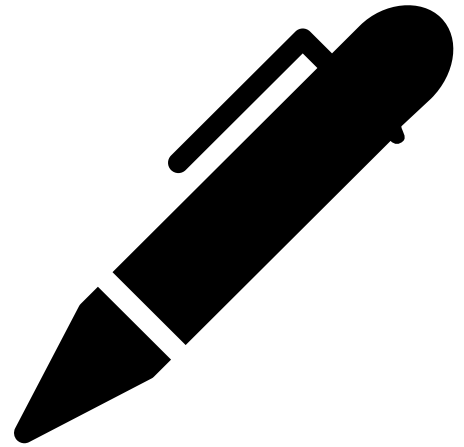
### Just Because

by Tracie Padal

Just because I'm small  
doesn't mean I can't dream big,  
doesn't mean I'm not still growing,  
doesn't mean I'm worthless.

Just because I can't reach the top shelf  
doesn't mean I can't reach for stars,  
doesn't mean you should look down on me,  
doesn't mean I don't walk tall.

Just because I'm small,  
let me be me.



**What are stereotypes?**

**What is this poem about? How does it make you feel?**

**How does this poem challenge your assumptions about someone?**

## Brainstorm together.

Make a list of stereotypes as a class.

## Write.

Write a sample poem together. Choose one stereotype and brainstorm words and ideas that go with it, then use the template to create a poem.

Challenge students to continue brainstorming and create their own poems, choosing a topic that is personally meaningful.

## Share.

Read your poems out-loud.

- Listen for repetition and structure. Practice identifying the **stanzas**.
  - Stanzas are lines grouped together in a structure that repeats throughout the poem.
- How do the poems make you feel? How do they create empathy? Why is empathy important?



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