

In the **Spotlight**

Grades
2-4

by | Sharron L. McElmeel

A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams by Jen Bryant. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.

A River of Words

Poets, Poems, and Artists

William Carlos Williams was friendly with many poets and artists. Open the door to further exploration of other poets and artists with these activity and discussion suggestions.

“The Song of Hiawatha”

On the page opposite the illustration of William Carlos Williams racing up the steps to the Horace Mann school, there is an excerpt from “The Song of Hiawatha.” That poem is shown with the date 1808. Investigate the author of the poem and the significance of the 1808 date.

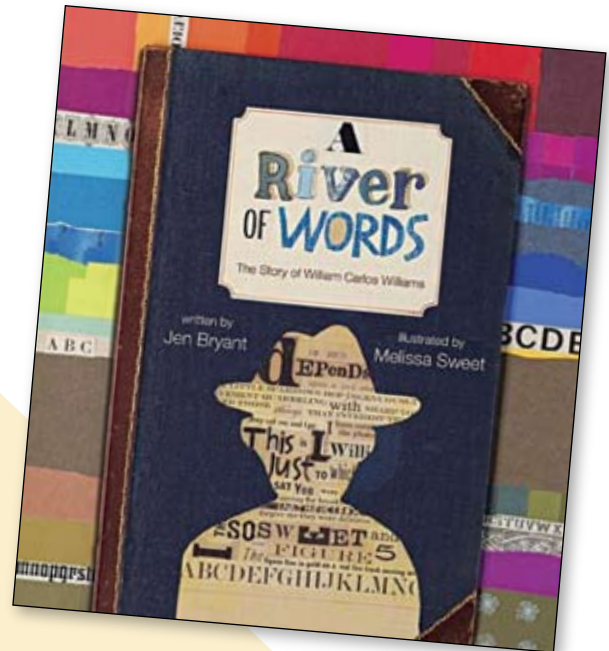
Marianne Moore

William Carlos Williams knew fellow poet Marianne Moore very well. Jen Bryant also wrote a biography of Moore entitled *Call me Marianne*.

- Read about Marianne Moore and create a timeline for Moore’s life in the style of the timeline that Bryant included in *A River of Words*. Include three segments: Moore’s life, World Events during Marianne Moore’s life, and poems written (published).
- After reading both biographies, make a list of similarities and differences between Williams and Moore. One similarity might be their keen sense of observation.

A Symbolic Portrait

Charles Demuth’s painting, “I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold” is a symbolic portrait of his friend William Carlos Williams. The portrait incorporates symbols and images that have some significance to Williams. Create a portrait of one of your friends.



Identify images, artifacts, and colors that could represent elements or events in the life of your friend. Use photographs, magazine pictures, paintings, or objects to create a collage portrait. Title the portrait and display it in a class art gallery. Locate a copy of “I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Web site.



Sharron L. McElmeel is the director of *McBookwords*, a literacy organization; and an instructor of children’s literature and of young adult literature at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. She writes often about literature for young readers. Her most recent book is *Picture That! From Mendel to Normandy: Picture Books and Ideas, Curriculum and Connections*—for Tweens and Teens (*Libraries Unlimited*). Visit Sharron’s Web site at www.mcelmeel.com.