



How My Poetry Inspired My Paintings

Rachel Allen Dillon

CAEA Conference

November 14-15, 2015

1-2pm



Biography

- UW Madison Art and Design (Dot painting since 1991)
- Through Endangered Eyes Published in 2009
 - 2009 Accepted into the juried Artists for Conservation
 - 2010 Received an Honorable Mention for the Eric Hoffer Literacy Award
 - 2013 – to present, One of the panel judges (along with Wyland and Andrew Zuckerman, etc.) for the National Youth Art Competition hosted by the Endangered Species Coalition
 - 2015 Art Commission for the Nature Conservancy of San Francisco
- Author/Illustrator school visits began in 2009
- Started after school art program in Folsom the fall of 2010
- Artist in Residence Program at Dingle Elementary Spring 2012
- 2014 – Present Established Art docent program for elementary school in Folsom
- Art teacher for a private elementary school in Folsom the fall of 2012 - 2015



What will we Cover?

- Science/Poetry/Painting Project
- Connecting Words and Art
- Utilizing Science and Language Arts for extra Art Class Time
- Writing Non Fiction Poetry
- Lesson Plan/Project

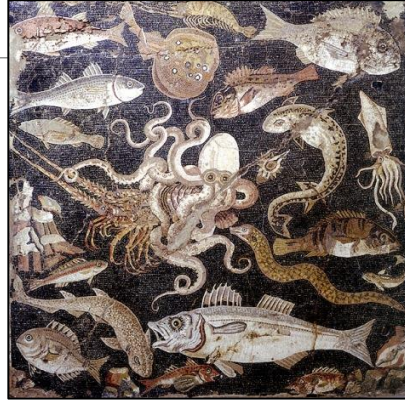
My Passions



Aboriginal Acrylic Dot Painting and Mosaics

Australia has been a place that has impacted me throughout my life.

I LOVE the how dots alone are a defined shape, but together with color can define a shape or an image.



Endangered Species

One area that can immediately break my heart, is hearing about an animal suffering.

I believe everything on the planet is interconnected and has a purpose on Earth.



Writing

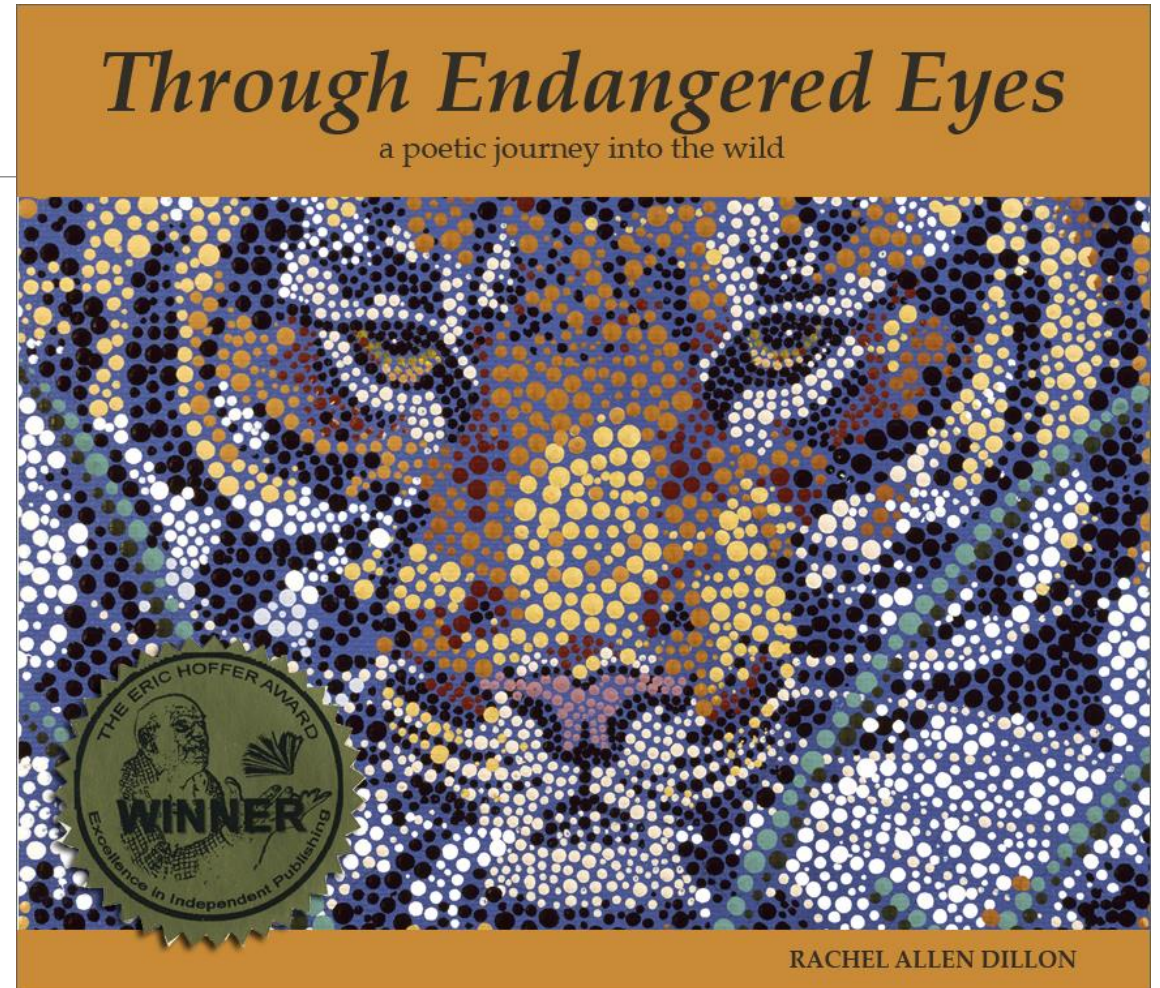
I've been writing to express myself for as long as I can remember.

Once my children were born, I became a lover of children's books. I looked for a book that combined information about endangered animals that was more than the facts, when I didn't find what I envisioned, I created it.

My Book

I was a new mom when I started my book, and at first I came at it from an artist's perspective more than a writer's. It seemed fitting to write a poem about the animal as well as paint it, but it wasn't until I worked with my editor and art director that I learned to tie the two together.

What I'd like to do today is use my book as an example of a project that is interdisciplinary as well as how my art became more powerful when I listened to the words in my poetry.



Interdisciplinary Integration

Organizing a curriculum around a project in multiple disciplines. The disciplines are less defined in an interdisciplinary concept.

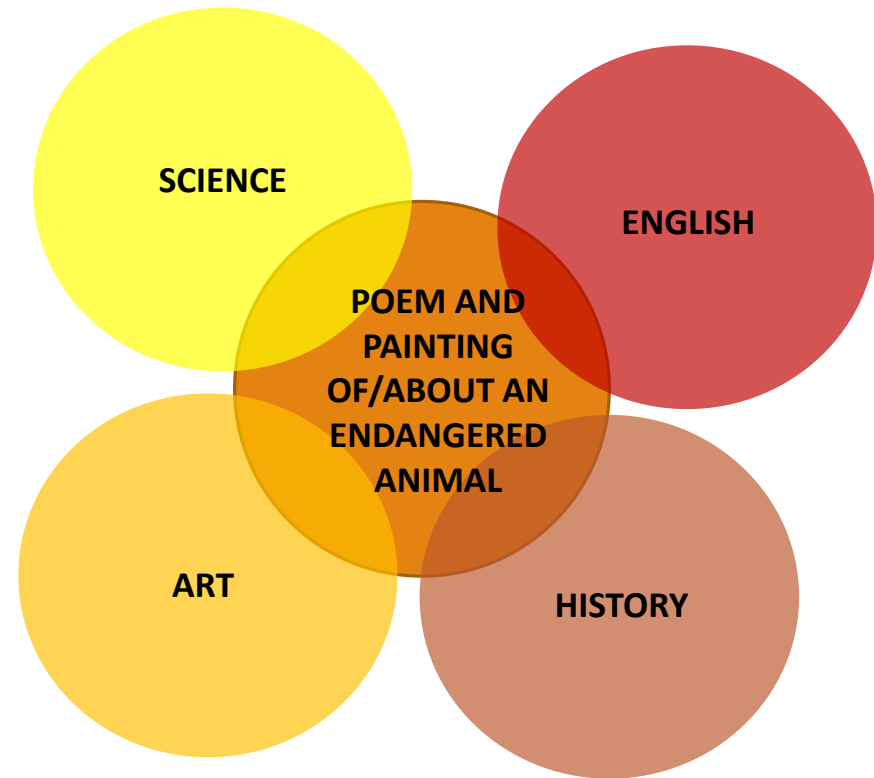
DISCIPLINES:

Science – Endangered species

English – Expression through poetry

History – Australian Aboriginal acrylic dot painting as a method of painting

Art – Painting the endangered species in the poem in dots



Ask for Time

I understand that art teachers have limited time in the classroom, as art is often a “privilege” and not a “necessity.”

If you don't have time to spend a couple of classes writing the non-fiction poem about an endangered species, perhaps you can ask the science teacher or the English teacher if you can utilize their class time or perhaps ask the English teacher to work with you on the poetry portion of the project, then you can focus on the visual aspect.



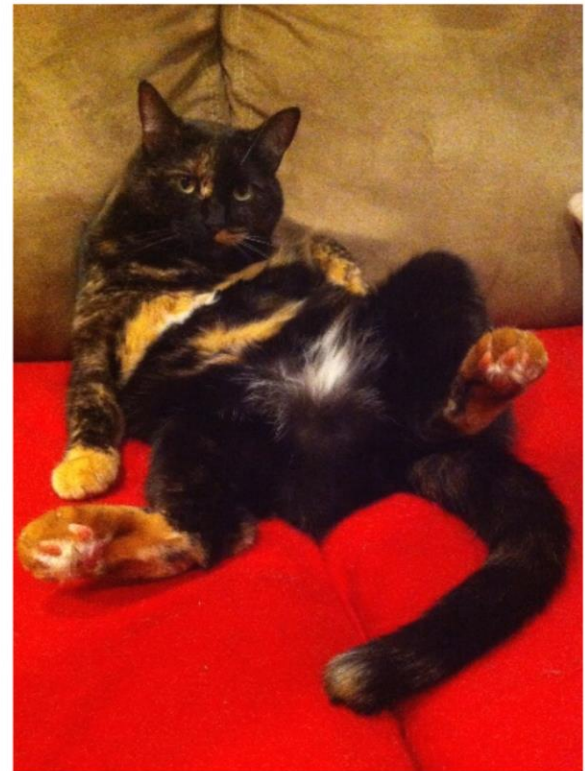
Finding the Words

We love to listen to rhythms in language. So how can we connect language to art? By focusing on the words to inspire the image.

But first we have to find the words.

I tell kids that poetry is saying something important with few words. It can be interpreted differently based on the reader. And it can be written in a way that leaves a person asking, what more is the writer trying to say?





Start Small

Words can craft a mood or idea. They can trigger memories. So asking a student to draw something when you say the word “cat” can evoke completely different visual responses. For me, it is an image of one of my cats curled up in my lap with their eyes closed in a peaceful way. For another person, it might be an image of a cat hissing and scratching based on a negative experience.

Start with a simple sentence as an exercise. Choose something that can have multiple interpretations. Utilize verbs and adjectives. Build on the sentence with questions.

- *It was a dark day.*
- *The balloon moved through the trees.*

What does that look like to someone? What emotion?

What kind of balloon (hot air, helium)?

What do the trees look like?

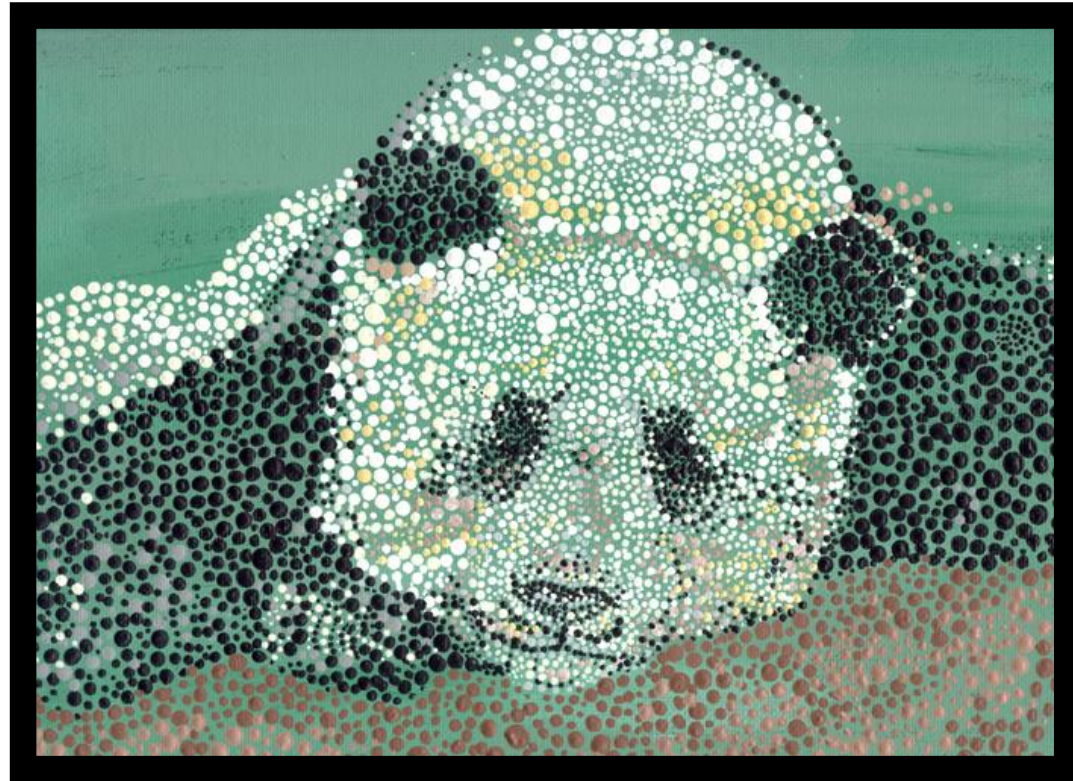
Was there a celebration? Is there a note on the string?

How Does Non-fiction Poetry Differ?

Non-fiction poetry is based on facts. Sometimes it requires the reader to research the topic to better understand the meaning behind the choice of words. Creative interpretation isn't as abundant because it is based on facts. What's interesting about non-fiction poetry is the gratification a reader might feel after being able to decipher it's meaning.

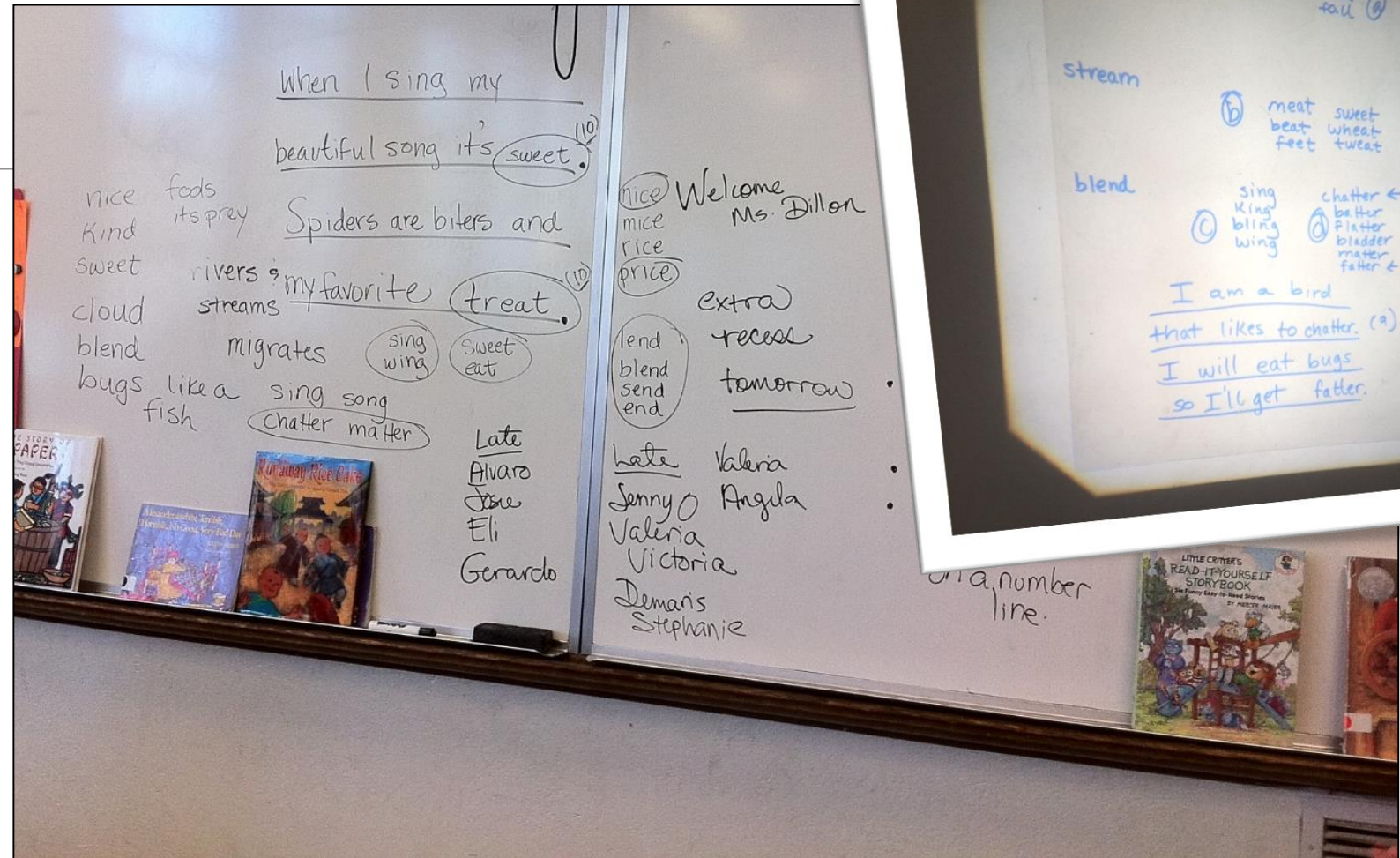
GIANT PANDA

I am very shy
and can smell things far away,
I'm not worried about deep sleep
or if I'll become prey.



Writing Non-fiction Poetry

- Start with the Facts about an animal
- Brainstorm words that might rhyme based on those facts
- Play with the rhythm



When the Poem Doesn't Match the Visual

I see the world
through snow and ice.
My thick warm fur
should have no price.

When the words and illustration connect it makes for a wonderful combination. When they are disconnected, like in this case, you view the two elements as separate.



When it Does Connect...

I see the world
through snow and ice.

My thick warm fur
should have no price.



Great Indian Bustard

I wait for the rains to dance for a mate
She will lay one egg on the ground
We eat all sorts of food from rats to seeds
And keep our home healthy year round.



Hand-out for Students

Use this worksheet to help your students create their poem.

You can download it from my Web site: Racheldillon.com/#teacher-resources

Animal _____

12 UNIQUE AND INTERESTING FACTS

RHYMING WORDS

Line One _____

Line Two _____

Line Three _____

Line Four _____

of Syllables

—

—

—

—

Rhyme These Lines

Same # Syllables

Same # Syllables

Let's Write One Together

Animal: Sierra Nevada Big Horn Sheep

Location: Sierra Nevada along the eastern boundary of Ca in Tuolumne, Mono, Fresno, Inyo, and Tulare counties.

Size: Males (rams) are 3 – 3 ½' tall; Females (ewes) are smaller.

Resources:
defenders.org/wildlife_and_habitat/wildlife/bighorn_sheep.php?lb_v=7; www.dfg.ca.gov/snbs/SheepFacts.html

FACTS

- They are legendary for their ability to climb high, steep, rocky mountain areas.
- A males horns can weigh around 30 lbs and are permanent. Combat between rams has been observed to last longer than 24 hours!
- Within a day after birth, a lamb can walk and climb as well as its mother. A lamb will stay with its mother for the first year of its life.
- Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep rely on sharp eyesight to detect predators.
- Use the same winter and summer ranges each year. In the winter they go to lower elevations than the summer.
- One of the reasons they are dying is from disease spread from domestic goats and sheep.
- Bighorn Sheep have a unique hooves. Rather than being hard like those of a horse or cow, the sheep have rubber-like hooves that allow excellent mobility on steep rock faces



Choose Key Words that can Easily Rhyme with Others!

Climb
Ram
Rocks
Eyesight
Steep
Horns

Curl
Combat
Hours
Sheep
High
Big

RHYMEZONE.com
is a fun resource!

Paint with me
TOMORROW
11:30am-1pm!

7:45 am I'll be doing speed workshopping on dot painting (Beavis/Bondi)

11:30am - 1pm I will be doing a painting workshop (Bondi) \$5 fee, limit 30 students. Leave with your very own dot painted canvas.

My book is for sale in the bookstore throughout the conference.

All of my handouts including outlines of my first book illustrations for students to practice dot painting on can be found at:

RachelDillon.com (Teacher Resources)