PART I: INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for this response was the presentation on Monday by local writers, namely Rodney Morales, Darrel Lum, Juliet Kono, Gary Pak, and Mahealani Kamau'u. Perhaps the most important idea I gained was Morales' confirmation that fictional works can be an important tool for teaching history. Many teachers know this from intuition or actual experience, as colleagues Hubert and Lilly indicated.

The poetry readings by Kono and Kamau'u led me to think of having my students do more poetry and, in turn, I thought of using "imitation writing" to help them get started. "Imitation writing" is simply taking an appealing work and using it as both a stimulus for thought and a model for structure. While this borders on plagiarism, acknowledgment of the original author makes this method more acceptable. And, if "imitation is flattery," most authors tend to look favorably upon such acknowledged use of their work by students.

Once students become comfortable using the models of mature writers, their skills will improve and so will their confidence ("Eh, I'm just as good as so-and-so, yeah?!)"). At this point they should be weaned away from imitation and encouraged to try out their own wings by writing original works.

PART II: MATERIALS

1. Several transparencies, each with a short, interesting poem. (For this Institute lesson plan, I have selected these poems: "Ho, Just Cause I Speak Pidgin No Mean I Dumb," Diane Kahanu; "Tutu on the Curb," Eric Chock; "etiquette," Jean Yamasaki Toyama; "Tansu I," Raynette Takizawa; and "Strange Scent," Tamara Laulani Wong-Morrison
2. Overhead projector, screen.
3. Handout "Imitation Poetry"

PART II: OBJECTIVES

PURPOSE: To teach students a poetic means of expressing their thoughts and feelings regarding historical events and persons, or cultural concepts.

The student:
1. will demonstrate confidence in using poetry as a means of self-expression;
2. will express his or her thoughts or feelings about historical events and persons, or cultural concepts.

TIME: 45 minutes for introduction and guided exercises; 1 night for homework (first draft).
PART III: PROCEDURE

1. Stimulus: Project a poem on the screen. Let students mull it over on their own for a minute.

2. Ask a volunteer to read the poem out loud.

3. Engage students in an analysis of the poem in regards to its artistic merits (devices, structure, etc.), as well as its message (content, meaning).

4. When students appear to be comfortable with the poem, challenge them to follow the structure of the poem but replace the words. Do this as a large group exercise, allowing each person to contribute a new poem. Encourage the students to follow these guidelines as best they can: A) replace major words but try to stick to the course content; B) keep each new word in the same part of speech as the original (but these are not requirements, so be flexible).

EXAMPLE 1:

Ho. Just Cause I Speak Pidgin
No Mean I Dumb

by Diane Kahanu

Pidgin short.
Fast.
Match.

If I say
What you going to do with that?
No say how.
I feeling curious.

What you going do with that?
Now you know.
I not just niele.

I like know
but I ain’t
no cop.

Pidgin safe.
Like Refuge, Pu’uhonua,
from the City.

Yo. Just Causes I See Powers
the Things I Do

by Kawika Makanani

Falling short.
Far.
Mashed.

If I ask
What fo’ they did what they did?
No say how
I getting niele.

What I going do about it?
Now you know.
I not just sitting.

I like restore
cause I ain’t
no PG.

Be strong.
Like Lili’u, Pu’uhonua,
from the past.

5. When the large group sample is done, project a second poem. Follow the earlier procedures but this time divide students into
small groups. Each group will come up with their own poem. Have them share the work with the whole class.

EXAMPLE 2:

Tansu I
by Raynette Takizawa

in old tansu drawers
the family crest disintegrates
on rust mottled kimonos.
what was once a wedding gown
i will fashion into silken robes
for hostessing . . . seduction.

brilliant obi--
threaded silver and fine gold--
binds me until
i cannot breathe
and feet too large for tabis
strut without grace before
the mirror.

Kupuna
by Kawika Makanani

in moldy Hawaiian papers
ka 'olelo makuahine sings
of my mystic kupuna .
what was once a trodden race
i see transformed into solid pillars
for supporting . . . honua .

brilliant orb--
sacred red and fiery gold--
binds me until
i cannot see
and feel too profane for tabus
kneel without fear before the
akua.

6. If students get the picture, pass out the assignment sheet "Imitation Poetry." This will be for homework. If the students need another example, project a third poem and follow the earlier steps.

Example 3:

etiquette
by Jean Yamasaki Toyama

Eating a fish head is an art
which must be done
with refinement and
gusto.
Refinement because
as one dismantles the
brain, the eyes, the head
one must not offend the sensibilities of
others.
Gusto so that they may be assured that the
head
is the most delectable of tastes
and it is.

protocol
by Kawika Makanani

Hearing a conch shell is an annoyance
which must be endured
with patience and
aloha .
Patience because
as one turns the
loko , the maka , the po'o
one must not offend the sensibilities of
a'i'i .
Aloha so that they may be assured that
their/people
are the most loyal of subjects
and they are.
7. When the assignment is due, have students meet in groups to critique each other's work. Give students another day to revise and write a final draft for evaluation.

PART IV: REFERENCES

All poems were taken from The Best of Bamboo Ridge, The Hawaii Writers' Quarterly, edited by Eric Chock and Darrell H. Y. Lum, 1986.

Sincere apologies to my colleagues: I learned about "imitation writing" as a fellow in the 1983 Summer Institute of the Hawaii Writing Project. Unfortunately, having moved recently, I threw out the instructional material that would have been useful to you. This also leaves me lacking a bibliography.

WRITTEN BY: R. Kawika Makanani
"IMITATION POETRY"

Directions: Select either poem 1 or poem 2 to imitate. Follow the "imitation poetry" procedures we covered in class.

Poem 1:

**Tutu on the Curb**
by Eric Chock

Tutu standing on the corner,  
she look so nice!  
Her hair all pin up in one bun,  
one huge red hibiscus hanging out  
over her right ear,  
her blue Hawaiian print muu muu  
blowing in the wind  
as one bus driver blows one huge cloud  
of smoke around her,  
no wonder her hair so grey!  
She squint and wiggle her nose  
at the heat  
and the thick stink fumes  
the bus driver just fatted all over her.  
You can see her shrivel up  
and shrink a little bit more.  
Pretty soon, she going disappear  
from the curb  
forever.

Poem 2:

**Strange Scent**
by Tamara Laulani Wong-Morrison

Hear the beating of the pahu  
distant and warning.  
Beware--a strange wave has washed upon the rocks  
even the crabs run from their homes.  
In the night it passed over shining black water, gliding--not  
knowing where it came from  
or where it's going  
An omnipresence--there.  
Me, I tried to sleep under starless sky  
but too dark  
too strange  
too still.  
I feel I will never be the same again.