# The Teaching Process

**Grade Level(s):** 3 to 12

**Subject Areas:** English/Reading/Language Arts

**Lesson Overview:** Through this 5E model lesson, students examine the inspiration of the Chesapeake Bay in Gilbert Byron's poetry. Students analyze and illustrate Byron poems, research the relationship of people to the Chesapeake Bay through a visit to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, and then write their own poem inspired by Byron's style and subject matter.

**Compelling Question:** How did Gilbert Byron's experiences in the Chesapeake influence his poetry?

**List of Materials:**
- Gilbert Byron-inspired Fill-in Poem worksheet (*Engage*)
- *Crab Talk* text (*Engage, Explore, Explain*)
- *River Schooling* text (*Explore, Explain*)
- *These Chesapeake Men* text (*Explore, Explain*)
- *Chesapeake Calendar* text (*Explore, Explain*)
- Alternate text: *Song* (may be substituted for *Chesapeake Calendar*)
- [Selected Poems by Gilbert Byron](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YouTube_video) *YouTube video* (*Explore*)

**Background Information:**
Gilbert Byron, often called “The Chesapeake's Thoreau,” was a writer who lived for nearly his entire life on the Eastern Shore. Author of 14 books and over 70 poems, short stories, and articles, most of Byron's works were written in his cabin on Old House Cove in St. Michaels, where he lived alone for almost 45 years.

Byron was born in Chestertown, Maryland in 1903 and later attended Washington College. He went on to teach school for 33 years across three states, and published notable works including *These Chesapeake Men* (1942), *The Lord's Oyster* (1957), and *Sunbathing with the Professors* (1982). After Byron's death in 1991, his cabin was relocated to Pickering Creek Audubon Center where it is preserved today.

**Additional Resources:**
- *Gilbert Byron: A Life Worth Examining* by Jaques Baker
## Instructional Process

### Engage

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| 1. Distribute the Gilbert Byron-inspired Fill-in Poem worksheet and ask students to complete their own version of a Gilbert Byron poem. After an initial attempt at a Mad-Libs style poem, students may revise their word choices so their poem makes sense. **Scaffolding Ideas:**  
  - Before students write their own poems, work in small groups or as a class to brainstorm possible words to include in the poem. Sort words into groups of nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc.  
  - Give students the list of word types to brainstorm and fill in on their poem.  
  - Start with one focus word like “crab” and brainstorm other adjectives, nouns, and verbs that support the focus word. Give students the focus word or ask them to choose a Chesapeake-related animal.  | Students complete the Fill-in Poem to create their own version of a Gilbert Byron poem. After students finish their poems, all or some students may share their work with the class. Students then read Crab Talk as a class, and are briefly introduced to Gilbert Byron. |
| 2. Ask students to share their original and revised fill-in poems. What strategies did they use to select the words for their poems? What challenges did they encounter?  |  |
| 3. Read Crab Talk with your students. They can follow along with the poem, and then compare Gilbert Byron’s work with their own. Which words were similar or different? Do the poems tell similar or different stories?  |  |
| 4. Introduce Gilbert Byron through a brief biography, and relate to the compelling question: how did his experiences in the Chesapeake influence his poetry?  |  |

### Explore

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| Divide students into partners or small groups to examine selected Gilbert Byron poems including River Schooling, These Chesapeake Men, Chesapeake Calendar, and Crab Talk. Depending on your lesson objectives, you may ask students to:  
  - analyze the poetic devices used in the poems  
  - annotate the imagery in the poems  
  - compare two or more poems **Scaffolding Ideas:**  
  - Preview and conduct initial readings of poems as a class  
  - Listen to the poems on the Selected Poems by Gilbert Byron YouTube video  
  - Assign students to read one poem and share with their group through a jigsaw exercise  | Students analyze one or more Gilbert Byron poems based on lesson objectives. Poem selections include:  
  - River Schooling  
  - These Chesapeake Men  
  - Chesapeake Calendar  
  - Crab Talk  
  - Song (may be substituted for Chesapeake Calendar)  |
**Explain**

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<td>1. Based on your study of the selected Gilbert Byron poems, ask students to select the poem to which they feel most connected and illustrate the poem.</td>
<td>Students illustrate one of the selected Gilbert Byron poems.</td>
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<td>2. Display work in a gallery walk, and challenge other students to identify the poem being shown in the illustration.</td>
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**Elaborate**

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<td>Arrange to visit the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum to complement your lesson. Appropriate programs might include: Oystering Legacy immersive tour, Bay Bounty guided tour, or the Bay Discovery guided tour.</td>
<td>Prepare students for their visit to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum by introducing the final Evaluation task. While on their field trip, students should make note of stories, artifacts, animals, or experiences that would make good inspiration for their Chesapeake poem.</td>
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<td>For more information or to make a reservation inquiry, check out <a href="http://cbmm.org/learn/school-programs">cbmm.org/learn/school-programs</a></td>
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**Evaluate**

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<td>Students will write a Gilbert Byron-inspired poem based on their Chesapeake Bay experiences and their field trip to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. The teacher should facilitate the writing process, including helping students brainstorm topics about which to write, peer review, and publish their writing. These poems may also be used as the lesson assessment.</td>
<td>Based on their Chesapeake Bay experiences and their field trip to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, students write a unique Gilbert Byron-inspired poem. Poems can be published electronically, shared in the classroom, or included in writing portfolios.</td>
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<td><strong>Scaffolding Ideas:</strong></td>
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<td>• After students write their Byron-inspired poem, ask them to construct a reflective explanation about how their poem reflects Byron’s voice and style.</td>
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Gilbert Byron-inspired Fill-in Poem

This poem is about a little boy who encounters a Chesapeake animal. Fold the paper in half along the dotted line and brainstorm words in your list. Then fill in the numbered blanks to create your Gilbert Byron-inspired poem.

1 ____________ Talk

2 ____________ sent me

To get the 1 ____________

From old 3 ____________,

Down on the 4 ____________

Where the 5 ____________ men seek

6 ____________.

He was mending 7 ____________,

8 ____________ and 9 ____________,

And 10 ____________,

Chewing 11 ____________,

12 ____________ fine,

13 ____________ softly.

He couldn't even 14 ____________,

Little boys like me.

I heard them 15 ____________

In a covered 16 ____________.

Shyly I whispered,

Scared almost dead,

17 “ ____________?"

Rolling an eye, he 18 ____________,

19 “ ____________.”

That's all he said,

19 “ ____________.”

1. Chesapeake animal ________________

2. Family member ________________

3. Person's Name ________________

4. Place ________________

5. Adjective ________________

6. Noun ________________

7. Tool (plural) ________________

8. Material ________________

9. Material ________________

10. Tool ________________

11. Food ________________

12. Verb ending in "-ing" ________________

13. Verb ending in "-ing" ________________

14. Verb (past tense) ________________

15. Verb ending in "-ing" ________________

16. Container ________________

17. Question ________________

18. Verb ________________

19. Phrase ________________
CRAB TALK

By Gilbert Byron, 1942

Mama sent me
To get the crabs
From old Benny,
Down on the creek
Where the shanty men seek
Happiness.
He was mending eel pots,
Tar and twine,
And deft seine needle,
Chewing tobacco,
Spitting fine,
Whistling softly.
He couldn’t even see,
Little boys like me.

I heard them scratching
In a covered basket.
Shyly I whispered,
Scared almost dead,
“Are those the crabs, Captain Ben?”
Rolling an eye, he grunted,
“Them’s them,”
That’s all he said,
“Them’s them.”
RIVER SCHOOLING

By Gilbert Byron, 1937

John has never studied Greek
But he knows the Chesapeake,
Broad bay and river reach,
Low marsh and sandy beach,
Yellow cliffs and harbors deep.

Where the soft crab hides in cell,
Where the sunfish digs his well,
Wild duck flight and terrapin shell,
Tall lighthouse and buoy bell,
Strange stories the watermen tell.

He has never studied angles obtuse
Nor how to prove the hypotenuse,
Yet he has watched the flying goose,
The bellying sails and the jib sheets loose,
Inscribed in a circle of living blues.

A sculling oar will write for John
Greater poetry than anyone,
Searching scholar or worldly Don.

He has a personal kind of knowledge,
Can this be taught in any college?
CHESAPEAKE CALENDAR

By Gilbert Byron, 1947

I.
The eeler comes early in April,  
Bateau with the drums  
Of pistons firing. Does he hear  
Cold spring’s desiring?

Tarry pot and maninose,  
That’s all he’s got.  
Still the note of the fish-hawk lingers  
In his rigid throat

II.
The gaunt man treads the quiet cove  
Where the peeler sheds.  
His heron eyes and clever mesh  
Net them by surprise.

He’s studied the creeks for sixty years,  
Knows old Chesapeake’s  
Natural laws and the color  
Of the soft crab’s claws.

III.
The fogs of fall bring the progger  
And the black duck’s call;  
In tune with the north wind  
And the bitter loon.

Crouched in the marsh he finds freedom  
Hiding with the harsh;  
Often to lack, still to fan  
A small fire in a shack.

IV.
Hip-booted men, with long tongs,  
Come to the cove again;  
Rake the bar of oysters bare  
Yet seldom the surface mar.

Men who never wrote a line  
Are the greatest poets ever.  
Verses of love inscribed upon  
The bottom of the cove.

Song

By Gilbert Byron, 1982

In September the schoolboy longs  
for a pair of oyster tongs.

Mellow October his father takes  
twenty bushels a day with the long rakes.

Brisk November has a colder sky;  
the catch is less but the price is high.

In December the oysters are few  
hardly enough to make a good stew.

January brings ice to Chesapeake;  
the tonger’s boat is trapped in the creek.

February has days of freezing rain,  
yet the man goes to the bars again.

The gales of the March have thier fling,  
he sits by the fire and waits for spring.

In April he puts his tongs away;  
he’ll be trying the crabs in May.
THESE CHESAPEAKE MEN

By Gilbert Byron, 1936

From Chesapeake men I come,
These men a sun-tanned, quiet breed,
With eyes of English blue and faces
Lined with many a watch of sunlit waters;
These men with cautious mouths and lazy stride,
Grizzled-chinned, hip-booted, oil-skinned men;
These men, they fear the Chesapeake,
And yet they would not leave her.

Down to the bay they go,
Top-sailed schooner, one-masted skipjack,
Canoe-stered bugeye, sails full;
Rowing a garvey, sculling a skiff,
Poling a scow, and, if they must —
Pounding along in a bateau powered
With a one cylinder engine.

They seek the imperial shad and the lowly crab,
The oyster, the weakfish, the turtle, the rockfish,
The muskrat, the eel, the terrapin, diamondbacked,
The clam, the blue fish, the wild duck —
And food for their souls
Which they sometimes find.

In the calling of the wild duck,
In the mating of the kingfisher,
In the sloughing of the soft crab,
In the softness of the water’s touch,
In the flight of the great blue heron,
In the sculling of the oar,
In the passing schools of fish,
In the belly of the snail,
In the hauling of the seine,
In the taste of oysters raw,
In the soaring fish-hawk’s wings,
In the touch of southwest wind,
In the little waves that break,
In the surge against the prow,
In the cliffs of yellow clay
In the setting of the sun,
In the quest of quiet harbor —
In the Chesapeake.