

Classroom and Home Activities for
Verses for Mom's Heart
By
Steven L. Layne

About This Book

From skinned knees to broken hearts, from birthdays to wedding days - mothers provide the protection, guidance, inspiration, and love that offer us hope for the future. This beautifully illustrated collection of poems resonates with the voices of children, teens, and adults, reminding readers of the incomparable role mothers play in our lives.

As with their bestselling companion title *Verses for Dad's Heart*, Layne and Klinger have again crossed the boundaries of age, race, and gender in verse and illustration - creating a book in which every mother can find her best reflection.

This guide contains a variety of activities for use with students in grades 1-12 that will help them reflect upon and respond to the poems in
Verses for Mom's Heart.

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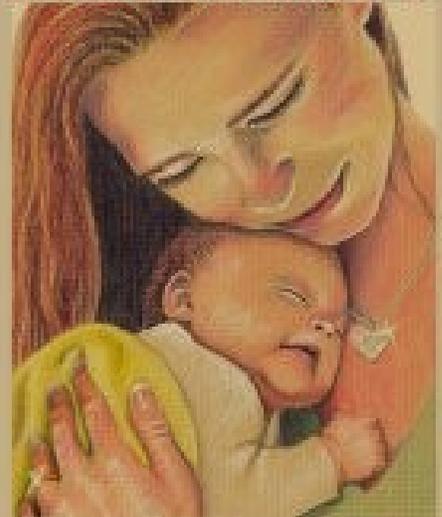
Suggested activities by grade level

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Poetry writing exercises

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VERSES for MOM'S HEART



By Steven L. Layne

Illustrations by Gail Greaves Klinger

VERSES FOR MOM'S HEART

Written by Steven L. Layne

Illustrated by Gail Greaves Klinger

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This study guide created by
Dr. Jill Cole.

Verses for Mom's Heart

(For Middle and High School)

A **theme** is the major idea of a work of art. Examine the theme of the entire book of poetry—***Verses for Mom's Heart***.

Examples of themes are the following:

Structure	Perspective	Characteristics
Change	Cause and Effect	Relationships
Cycles	Alike and Different	Explanation

Which of these themes do you think fits *Verses for Mom's Heart* best? Why? Find some quotes from various poems that provide connections to the theme you chose. Then explain how all the quotes express the theme. Look at the example below:

Theme: Perspective / A mother *always* loves. Even when...

- "I forgot my *only* line in the second-grade pageant," (p. 5)
- "She runs his errands, makes his bed, and stocks the fridge to keep him fed." (p. 18)
- "It's mom who listens to my woes. Her eyes insist she truly Knows..." (p. 23)
- "You *weren't* my mother. I think I made it clear from day one –" (p. 24)
- "You would have allowed my sullen silences to exist clear to infinity if that's how long it took." (p. 25)
- "You refused to pay us for work that contributed to the home;" (p. 28)
- "You refused to question why we didn't make the team, get the lead, or win first place;" (p. 29)
- "When they needed someone to clean and press our band uniforms in under forty-eight hours, I volunteered with confidence, 'My mom will!'" (p. 32)

These quotes show how a mom loves through many different circumstances. Through good times and hard times, a mother's perspective is one of care and nurture toward her family.

I'm Tellin' Mom

(For Primary Grades)

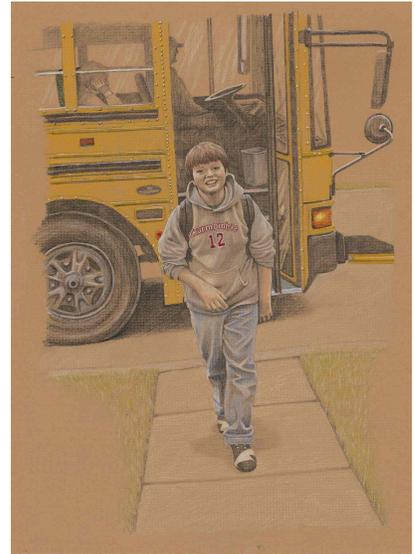
What are some of the things *you* tell *your* mom? Use the line, "I'm tellin' Mom" from Steven Layne's poem, and create the second lines yourself. Maybe you can rhyme the lines, but you don't have to. A lot of poems don't rhyme. For example, you might write:

I'm tellin' Mom!
I had a great day!

I'm tellin' Mom!
I made a new friend.

I'm tellin' Mom!
His name is T.J.

I'm tellin' Mom!
He's coming over today!



Your poem can have as many stanzas as you want.

Illustration by Gail Greaves Klinger

My Mother's Love

(For Upper Elementary, Middle, and High School)

Steven Layne's poem, "My Mother's Love" talks about some "Best of Times" and "Worst of Times" in life. After you read the poem, draw a timeline of your life that includes some of the best and worst times YOU have experienced. One example of how you can draw your timeline is by placing the "Best Times" above the line and the "Worst Times" below the line as follows:

1994
I got my
new
puppy,
Oliver.

2000
I won
an award
for my
poem.

2005
I gradu-
ated from
Middle
School.

1995
I broke
my leg.
Ouch!

1997
Grandma
died.

Illustration by Gail Greaves Klinger

Use the topics you chose for your timeline to write an autobiography or a memoir. Don't forget to include the people who helped you celebrate the good times and the people who helped you grieve the worst times.

I'm Tellin' Mom

(For Elementary and Middle School)

Steven Layne uses an apostrophe in an interesting way in this poem.

Why is there an apostrophe at the end of “tellin’?” Why did Steven Layne decide to use it there?

Notice at the end of the poem, he does the same thing with “nothin’.” Do you know the reason?

This is called poetic license. Steven Layne wanted “tellin’” and “nothin’” to add to the informal, “child-like” mood of the poem.

Here are some other words that sometimes appear with an apostrophe where a letter is missing. Can you use one or more of them in a poem or story to create a specific mood?

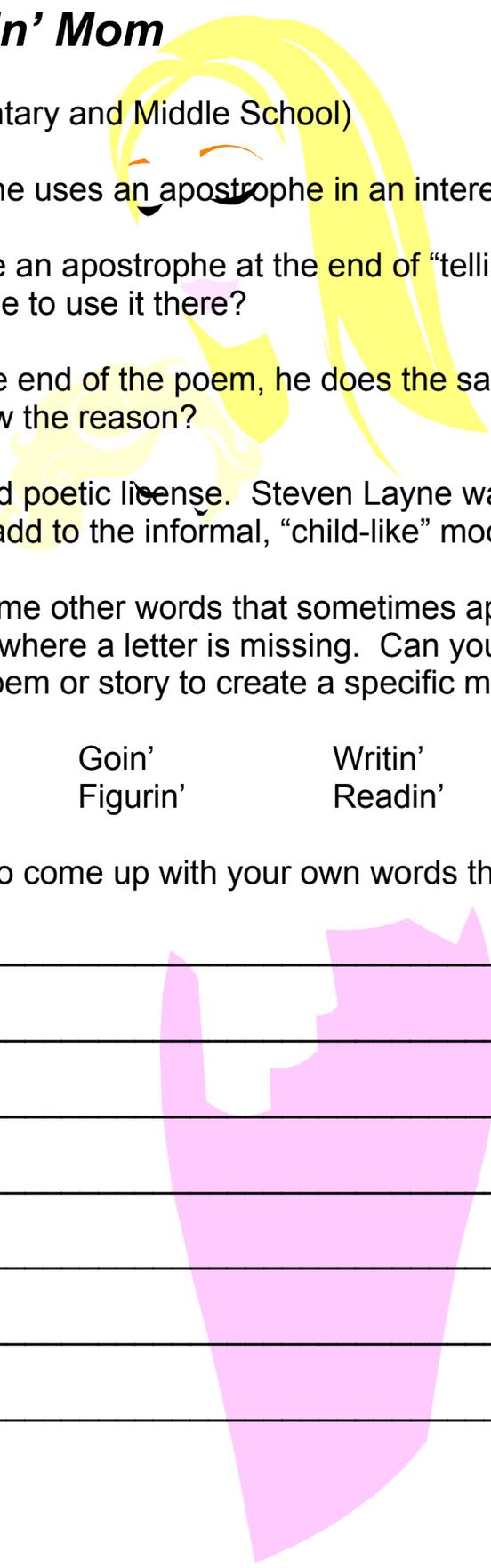
Lettin’
Paintin’

Goin’
Figurin’

Writin’
Readin’

Sittin’
Wonderin’

You can also come up with your own words that contain apostrophes!



No Worries

(For All Ages)



There are a lot of rules in the house described in this poem. List some of the rules of *your* house below. Are any of them humorous? Which ones are absolutely crucial?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What would be your “dream rules” for your house? List them below with a rationale. Be sure you have a good reason for your rules!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now try using these two lists to create your own poem or story.



Firewalker

(For Upper Elementary, Middle, and High School)

Every family is different and has its own struggles. Steven Layne's poem "Firewalker" is about a stepfamily and uses colors to represent feelings. Whatever type of family you have, you can use colors to express your feelings as well. Choose some colors, and write or draw below how those colors represent emotions about your family. Do any of these colors spark your imagination?

Ruby Red
Violet
Lemon Yellow
Hot Pink
Periwinkle

Turquoise
Magenta
Sky Blue
Gold
Burnt Orange

Silver
Chartreuse
Auburn
Smoky Gray
Coral

Do you have a firewalker in your house? Which colors would you use to represent him/her?

Mommy's Work

(For All Ages)



all

The poem “Mommy’s Work” talks about the work a mother does. We probably all feel that WE do a lot of work in whatever stage of life we are experiencing at the moment. Read this poem and then write a “Work” poem for whatever YOU are working at right now. Some title suggestions are listed below. Use the space on this sheet to take notes on several of the titles, then see which one has the most ideas and use that title for your poem.

A Teenager's Work

A First Grader's Work

An Older Brother/Sister's Work

A Babysitter's Work

A Teacher's Work

A Basketball Player's Work

A Son/Daughter's Work

The Best Story of All



(For All Ages)

Storytelling is an ancient art. Although we have radio, television, and computers now, storytelling can still be enjoyable and rewarding.

Read Steven Layne's poem "The Best Story of All," and then think about the stories in your own family. You will know some of the stories very well. For other stories, you can interview members of your family. Write the stories down or create a tape or CD of your family stories. You might record them yourself or ask other family members to tell their stories as you record their voices. Stories don't need to be memorized. Natural language works best for storytelling. Relax and enjoy telling the story!

Share one of your favorite stories with the class. Perhaps you can all get in a circle to tell stories or go outside and meet in small groups to enjoy storytelling.

Make copies of your storytelling tape or CD for your family. They will always be glad you documented their family stories for posterity.

World's Best Mom

(For Primary and Upper Elementary School)

Read Steven Layne's poem "World's Best Mom" and then think about what makes your mom, stepmom, or grandmom the best in the world. Look through magazines, newspapers, etc. and create a collage that you think represents the best things your mom does.

Perhaps you can give your collage as a gift. Can your mom identify everything you put in your collage? She may be surprised by what you admire about her!

Illustration by Gail Greaves Klinger



Mom Deserves a Medal

(For Primary through Upper Elementary School)

Design a medal for someone in your family or someone in your school. Use materials you can find in your classroom or at home. Make it look different from any other medal you have ever seen. What shape and colors can you use? Which letter font will look best?

Prepare a ceremony during which you can present your medal to the recipient at a family gathering or a class meeting. Prepare a speech that explains the reasons for the medal, and create a memory for your family or your school!

Refusals

(For Upper Elementary through High School)

Read the poem “Refusals” and think about the things the mother refused to do. You are often defined as a person not only by what you do but by what you refuse to do as well. Make a list of the things you DO want to do in your life and the things you do NOT want to do. What are your refusals? Why do you think you have chosen them? How do you expect your refusals to impact your life? Use the chart to help you get started.

I WILL...

1. try to be kind to my friends.

2.

3.

I REFUSE...

To get caught in the middle of a fight my friends are having.

Everywhere

(For All Ages)

Many poems use repetition. In this poem the phrase “You’re everywhere” is repeated to create rhythm and emphasize the meaning. Look through the other poems in *Verses for Mom’s Heart*, and note the ones that contain repetition. Copy the repetitive lines. Choose one of the lines to create your own poem with repetition.

Decision Makers

(For Middle School and High School)

After you have read through “Decision Makers” by Steven Layne for simple enjoyment, reread it and look for emotions. Which of the scenarios made you feel happy? Sad? Thankful? Guilty? Hopeful? Worried? Excited? Other emotions?

Take one of these feelings and turn it into a poem or description of your mom or another close relative or friend. While you might use this activity simply to reflect on your family, consider giving a completed poem as a gift. Your words can inspire positive emotions in the recipient!



Illustration by Gail Greaves Klinger

Teenage Drama Queen

(For High School)

Write a poem or a description of your life right now at whatever age you may be. The title could be “Life for Me at...” Perhaps some of the things mentioned in Steven Layne’s poem “Teenage Drama Queen” might fit you, but there may be other feelings you have as well.

Then, interview your mom or dad, an aunt or uncle, or other family member about what life for them was like when they were your age. Write a poem or description for them with a title like “Life for My Mom at....”

Compare the two pieces of writing. What do you discover? What do you find that you didn’t expect? What you learn from this comparison could be another poem!



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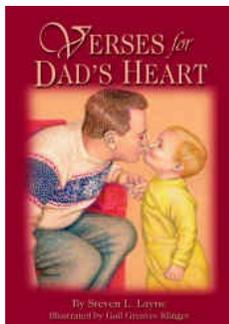
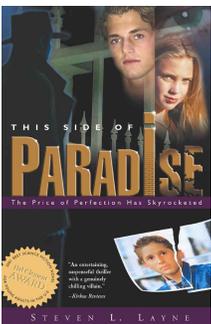
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About the Author

Steven L. Layne is a faculty member in the Department of Education at Judson College in Elgin, IL, where he teaches courses in both literature and pedagogy. He also serves as a respected literacy consultant, motivational keynote speaker, and featured children's author throughout the world. Steve's writing for both children and teens has been honored with multiple awards, and he has written two best-selling gift books of poetry. He lives with his wife and children in St. Charles, Illinois. More information is available on his Web site at www.stevelayne.com.

About the illustrator

Gail Greaves Klinger

Gail Greaves Klinger has been an art educator for over thirty years. She has taught art to all grade levels in public schools and to adults in community-park districts. She is a member of Lively Arts and of the National Art Education Association. Her art has been on public display in many locations

About the study guide developer

Jill Cole

Dr. Jill Cole taught at Henry-Senachwine Grade School in Henry, Illinois, for 22 years. She has loved all the grade levels she has taught which include 1st grade, 2nd grade, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade literacy. In 2002, she moved to Dover, Delaware, to teach at Wesley College in the education department. She teaches courses in literacy, classroom management, and teacher research. Her passion is intrinsically motivating students of all ages to read and enjoy great books.



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