THE POETRY OF POWER

Students will use a thesaurus to develop a vocabulary that they can use in poems describing developments in their state.

**What You Need**
- Access to internet for research
- Online thesauruses
- Poetry collections and anthologies
- Paper
- Felt-tip pens

**What to Do**

1. Find, or have students find, examples of poems that use powerful and expressive language to describe everyday events. Have students listen as you read aloud the poems. Help them identify the words that give the verses their excitement and strength.

2. Tell students that they are each going to write a poem about an important event in their state’s history, using the most expressive language they can think of. With student input, develop a list of such events (for example, a battle, the founding of a major city, or getting electric power from a hydroelectric dam).

3. Model the method by which students can find effective synonyms for their poems. Read the description of an event from a reference source. Ask students to identify the words, if any, that best dramatize the event. Then refer to the thesaurus for more powerful synonyms. For example, the entry might describe water running over a dam. Read aloud synonyms for *running*, such as *gushing*, *jetting*, *shooting*, and *roaring*. Ask students to judge which words are strongest.

4. Create a wall of synonyms using paper. As students research each event, have them write key words on the wall and list more expressive synonyms below each word.

5. Have students work independently to write their poems, referring to the words on the wall.

6. After students have completed a rough draft, have them exchange papers with a classmate for a peer critique. Then students can revise if necessary and make a final copy.