In the sixth grade English Language Arts curriculum students learn figurative language and it can be used to make written and verbal speech more impactful, effective, and persuasive. Poetry is a wonderful way to explore figurative language and this lesson allows students to use figurative language to create poetry in a variety of ways. Using VoiceThread to create a poetry portfolio provides a lot of flexibility because it can store both visual and audio files.

This lesson is organized into five stations: Title Page, Found Object Poem, Spine Poem, Vocal Recording of Freedom poem, and Reflection. The title page station is done as an entire class and it acts as the students introduction to VoiceThread. At this station students are given a short amount of time to be creative and build a colorful title page with images and text that they will then upload into VoiceThread. This station allows them the chance to express themselves while practicing using Word or PowerPoint uploading images, adding color and text, and using the snippet tool. When students are finished with this station they will have created one slide in their poetry portfolio.

The found object poem station has six to ten fun everyday objects like stuffed animals, toys, office supplies, and/or Knick knacks. Each student will choose one object and use their knowledge of figurative language to write a poem about their chosen object. Once the poem is completed the student will use their laptop to take a picture of the object and upload their poem and picture into their portfolio.

At the spine poem station students will find a table with stacks of books piled on top. Students will root through the piles looking for titles that they can stack together so that when the titles are read from top to bottom they have created a poem. This station allows students to experiment with word combinations and makes them think about the meaning of words and phrases and how those can sell the main idea in just a few short lines. Spine poems are a simple way to tap into student’s creativity and get them excited about poetry.

Prior to starting their portfolio students wrote a free verse poem about freedom using their reading of Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan as inspiration. When writing this poem students had to include a simile, personification and alliteration. Students uploaded their poem into VoiceThread and recorded themselves reading their poem into VoiceThread.

Once students have made their way through all the stations they will have used VoiceThread to build a poetry portfolio. This lesson allows students to put into action various aspects of figurative language that they have learned in class and it allows them to be creative with poetry. Throughout this process students used a variety of methods to create poems in traditional and nontraditional ways.