Dialogue Poem

This activity uses the template “Honey Bees” from Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice, Volume 1.

As individuals, partners or groups, students write their own version of a dialogue poem related to the unit on Columbus. Students may be able to come up with their own ideas as characters or subjects for their poem, but some may need suggestions. There are a number of possibilities—here are a few examples:

- One of Columbus’ men and a Taíno person;
- Columbus and a Taíno leader;
- Columbus as a young boy and a young Taíno boy (maybe Star Boy from the book Morning Girl if you use that read aloud activity); or,
- Morning Girl and Star Boy from the book Morning Girl.

“Dialogue poems are effective to use where controversy or different opinions might arise: plantation owner and slave, Hiroshima bomb victim and an Enola Gay pilot” (“Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice,” Volume 1, p. 186)

On the following pages is the example template (taken from Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice, Volume 1).
Dialogue Poem

The example below is written by Paul Fleischman and is found in Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice, Volume 1, p. 43.

BEING A BEE is a pain.
I’m a worker.

I’LL GLADLY EXPLAIN.
I’m up at dawn, guarding
the hive’s narrow entrance
then I take out
the hive’s morning trash
then I put in an hour
making wax,
without two minutes’ time
to sit and relax.

Then I might collect nectar
from the field
three miles north

Or perhaps I’m on
larva detail

feeding the grubs
in their cells,

BEING A BEE is a joy.
I’m a queen.

I’LL GLADLY EXPLAIN.
Upon rising, I’m fed
by my royal attendants,

I’m bathed

Then I’m groomed.

The rest of my day
is quite simply set forth:

I lay eggs,

by the hundred.
wishing that I were still helpless and pale.

Then I pack combs with pollen - not my idea of fun.

Then, weary, I strive to patch up any cracks in the hive.

Then I build some new cells, slaving away at enlarging this Hell, dreading the sight of another sunrise, wondering why we don’t all unionize.

TRULY, A BEE’S IS THE WORST OF ALL LIVES.

I’m loved and I’m lauded, I’m outranked by none.

When I’ve done enough laying

I retire for the rest of the day.

TRULY, A BEE’S IS THE BEST OF ALL LIVES.