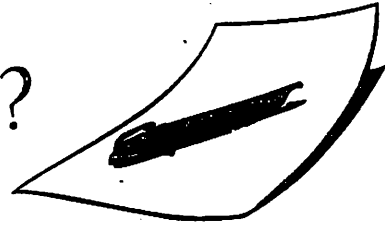


Getting Started

Culled from our collective experience, here are some "rescue" notes for teachers and students to help in the study of poetry. Add new revelations to the following posted list throughout the semester. You may want to use this or a similar list in your classroom. Here are a few guidelines.

What Is Poetry?



Poetry . . .

- expresses the music and lyricism in language
- teaches us about the richness of language and its capabilities
- defines and frames deep feelings
- is personal and can be about anything and everything
- should give pleasure and speak to the reader and the listener
- is intended to be read aloud
- is a way of seeing, translating and hearing
- is intense and captures distilled perception
- communicates on all levels of intellect and emotion
- explores the meaning and mysteries of life
- must be age and interest appropriate to be appreciated

Literary Devices

- Alliteration
 - All alligators are awesome
- Anthropomorphism
 - Charlotte wrote, "Some Pig!"
- Simile
 - My sister was crying like a baby.
- Hyperbole
 - I have a billion friends!
- Onomatopoeia
 - Slap, crash, zoom, splash
- Personification
 - The clouds raced across the sky.
- Metaphor
 - The man was a bear.
- Oxymoron
 - I ate jumbo shrimp for dinner.

Adapted from: Building a Writing Community

Metaphor

Definition

A metaphor is a figure of speech. The word describes language that is used to compare dissimilar objects that are alike in some way. A metaphor deals with two items in a way that makes the statement vivid and strong. The comparison gives the metaphorical statement more meaning and helps make a mind picture. The words **like, as, than, similar to, resembles** are not used. (These terms are used in similes.) Strong metaphors stay in our memory because of the clever comparisons that are used. This skill is the mark of a good writer!

- Examples:**
- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Metaphor: | "Juliet is the sun." Shakespeare |
| In plain language: | Juliet is pretty. |
| Metaphor: | I cannot wrestle with this monster problem. |
| In plain language: | The problem is too big for me. |
| Metaphor: | That athlete is a powerhouse. |
| In plain language: | That athlete is strong. |
| Metaphor: | The campers were hungry little birds twittering at the table. |
| In plain language: | The hungry kids made noises around the table. |
| Metaphor: | Strength and dignity are her clothing. |
| In plain language: | She is strong and dignified. |
| Metaphor: | The red pop spilled out a bib of crimson red. |
| In plain language: | The red pop spilled on the shirt. |
| Metaphor: | That guy is a motor mouth. |
| In plain language: | That guy never shuts up. |
| Metaphor: | Time, you old gypsy man, will you not stay? |
| In plain language: | Time goes by quickly. |
| Metaphor: | Music is the honey of the human spirit. |
| In plain language: | Music is sweet and tells us something about people. |



Guidelines: In the metaphors above, explain how one thing equals another and conjures up a strong mental picture. How is Juliet like the sun; how are hungry campers like birds; how is a problem like a monster; how is strength and dignity like clothing; how is spilled red pop like a bib; how is time like a gypsy man; how is music like honey?

SIMILES

sly as a fox
small like a mouse
cold as a naked rat in winter
like two puppies nobody wanted
like salt fish in a barrel
funny as a monkey
as cold as an ice cube
as sad as a weeping willow
feels like butterflies in my stomach
cool as a cucumber
as white as a ghost
a heart like stone
crazy as a June bug
smart as an encyclopedia
pretty as a rose
as loud as a blowhorn
as pretty as a picture
as fast as a sprinter in the Olympics
as fast as a red Ferrari
like a kid in a toy store
howled like the wind
as vicious as a lion
deadly as a cobra
dead as a doornail
like a bull in a china shop
strong as an ox
gentle as a lamb
eyes like little black beads

fast as a cheetah
bright as a bulb
hot as the sun
sweet as candy
tiny as a bug
fearless as a lion
shiny as a star
hair looked like snakes
as tough as nails
light as a feather
she sang like a bird
a smile like a crocodile
as tall as a giraffe
shiny like a star
squeal like a pig
as slow as a turtle
as black as oil
like an animal in love
as hot as fire
as dumb as a doorknob
dirty as a pig
as slow as a snail
as slow as molasses
eyes like stars
fell like a brick
fresh as a daisy
sleep like a log
white as snow

Personification

Definition

*Personification is a figure of speech. This strategy is used to give objects, things or animals human characteristics which we recognize in ourselves. This technique is used to animate things with qualities which we know very well belong to people. Personification heightens and emphasizes any description in terms we can relate to. The root word **person** gives a clue to how this word developed its meaning.*

- Examples:**
- In plain language: **Isn't that a nice small car?**
Personification: **Isn't she the sweetest little gal you ever saw?**
- In plain language: **I take an awful picture.**
Personification: **The camera hates me.**
- In plain language: **My air conditioner sounds broken.**
Personification: **My air conditioner is wheezing with pain.**
- In plain language: **The garments on the clothesline moved in the wind.**
Personification: **The garments performed a gypsy dance on the clothesline.**
- In plain language: **The cabin perched on the side of the hill.**
Personification: **The cabin hung onto the hill for dear life!**



- Guidelines:** When we use personification, it makes thoughts come alive and gives more power! Think in terms of ordinary nonhuman nouns. List these on the chalkboard. Now think of human actions and feelings these nouns are involved in. Ask for suggestions from the class. Some suggestions might be: old toys, a new house, a broken guitar, a jawbreaker, a diseased tree, a bowl of mush, a beautiful plane, a caught fish, a baseball mitt, a kettle drum, socks, a lawn mower, a motor scooter, a birthday cake, a wrench, a dirty dog . . . As in the examples above, give a straight descriptive sentence and then personify the same sentence.

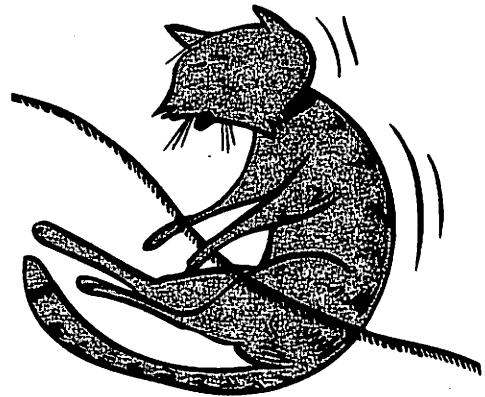
Alliteration

Definition

When the beginning of words start with the same consonant or vowel sounds in stressed syllables—and the words are close together, the effect is called alliteration. It takes a bit of listening to hear the repetition of a unit of sound, almost like an echo. It is a device that is used to have dramatic impact on the listener. The sounds may sound similar though the letters may not be similar, such as **city** and **seal**, **fish** and **philosophy**, **quick** and **cat**.

Examples:

- **Toby teaches tiny tots in Toledo**
- **Crazy cat climbed up the crooked cable**
- **Strong Sally slipped on Stanley's icy surface**
- **Mad Maxie maneuvers a mean motorcycle**



Try a class exercise using each letter of the alphabet (below) to demonstrate an alliterative phrase or sentence.

Angus the ape ate an avocado

B _____

C _____

D _____

E _____

F _____ to Z

Hyperbole

Definition

Hyperbole is a figure of speech. It is a device which uses exaggeration to give a statement impact. We hear it and use it frequently in everyday conversation and read it often in books, newspapers and magazines. It is so common that we are often not aware that we are using this technique. The good part is that people understand even though we are using hyperbole for effect.

Examples: Hyperbole: **I am so hungry I could eat a horse!**
In plain language: **I am starved.**

Hyperbole: **His face got beet red and I thought he would explode.**

In plain language: **He got really mad.**

Hyperbole: **This old rag—it's from the dinosaur age!**

In plain language: **This is an old shirt.**



Hyperbole: **I told you to stop that a hundred times.**

In plain language: **I've told you more than once.**

Hyperbole: **The banana split has whipped cream a mile high.**

In plain language: **The banana split has lots of whipped cream.**

Guidelines: Hyperbole offers the opportunity to have fun backwards and forwards. Read the hyperbole above and ask for the literal translations, or read the literal statements above and ask for the students' hyperboles! With class assistance, ask for questions that challenge the talents of the Hyperbole Hunters.

For example:

- How hot was it? "It was so hot that: My body fat melted down to my ankles."
- How cold was it? "It was so cold that . . ."
- How dumb was the dog? "The dog was so dumb that . . ."
- How good was the food? "The food was so good that . . ."

Acrostic Poetry

Definition

In an acrostic poem the letters of the subject are written down (vertically) to form the word of choice. Next to each letter the poetic statement is written horizontally to express the subject in innovative ways.

Examples:

Me

My heart beats inside of me
Every second of the day and night!

Space Cadet

Say, kid,
Please come down to Earth.
All of us are waiting!
Could you please try?
Enough of all your weird behavior.

Can you settle down
And act human and not like a
Ding dong?
Even your best friend is annoyed.
Take off that space helmet!

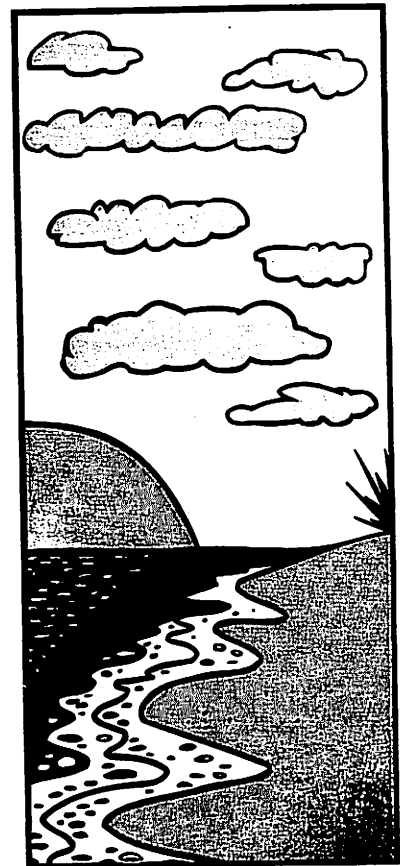


Haiku

Definition

The haiku is a Japanese verse in three lines. Line one has 5 syllables, line two has 7 syllables and line three has 5 syllables. The 17 syllables are a compressed form which is a composition in praise of nature. Many original books of haiku verse in Japanese are illustrated gracefully in pen and ink sketches which capture the essence of a simple moment in nature. Haiku is a mood piece in which there is no rhyme and there are no metaphors or similes! There is a rhythmic difference between Japanese and English, therefore much is lost in the translation. I have broken the rule in the examples below, regarding figures of speech, because the haiku seemed lifeless without them. This is known as poetic license.

- Examples:*
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Old crow in command | (5) |
| Always foraging for food | (7) |
| On his daily route | (5) |
| <hr/> | |
| A color riot | (5) |
| Lilac bush bursts into bloom | (7) |
| A splash of flowers | (5) |
| <hr/> | |
| Ink black night cover | (5) |
| A wrapper of soft silence | (7) |
| Our way lit with stars | (5) |
| <hr/> | |
| Water slaps the shore | (5) |
| Against the white crystal sand | (7) |
| Under a hot sun | (5) |



Guidelines: Find examples of authentic Japanese haiku poetry books to get a sense of the simplicity of this form. Practice the skill of syllabication, as a class, by tapping out syllables against the desk or by clapping. Say the words out loud in unison to help the rhythmic exercise. For variations, give the class a first line only and let each student complete the second and third lines independently. Read aloud to check syllabication and appreciate the variations of the poets in the class. Enlist the skills of the art teacher to instruct in the fragile haiku art which accompanies the poems.

Tanka

Definition

This is another form of Japanese poetry which is very similar to haiku. Tanka is quite different, however, because it uses simile, metaphor, personification and more vivid images than haiku. It also calls for more syllables and is stronger and more expressive in its expression. The topics express love, nature, sadness and seasons. There are five lines in which we count the syllables: 5, 7, 5, 7, 7—a total of 31 syllables. This form of poetry dates back amazingly to 1200 years ago.



- Examples:*
- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| White and silent snow | (5) |
| Creates the winter landscape | (7) |
| A peaceful blanket | (5) |
| An artist's windswept canvas | (7) |
| Falling, drifting, tender flakes | (7) |

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Auto-Bio Poem
(Auto-Biography)

Line 1 Your first name
Line 2 Four descriptive traits about yourself
Line 3 Sibling of (sibling means brother or sister)
Line 4 Lover of (people, ideas)
Line 5 Who feels...
Line 6 Who needs...
Line 7 Who gives...
Line 8 Who fears...
Line 9 Who would like to see...
Line 10 Resident of (your city)
Line 11 Your last name

EXAMPLE

Nancy
Honest, caring, curious, energetic
Sister of Kenneth
Laughter, learning, challenge
Joy when traveling
Sunshine every day
Friendship, encouragement, and smiles
Pain, hunger, and the end of summer
Contentment for all living things
Phoenix
Haugen

Diamante

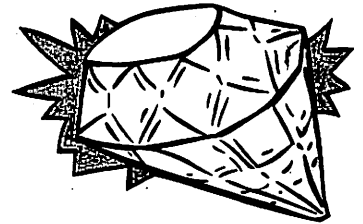
Definition

Diamante is the Italian word for diamond. This poetic form, created by the poet Iris Tiedt, takes the form of a diamond when it is completed. There are two patterns to choose from—both of which must be viewed visually to appreciate. Pattern 1 develops one topic. Pattern 2 starts out with one theme and in the middle begins to move toward an opposite theme.

Examples: Pattern 1

Construct the lines as follows:

- Line 1 **Choose a topic** (noun)
- Line 2 **Use two describing words** (adjectives)
- Line 3 **Use three action words** (verbs or “ing” action words)
- Line 4 **Use a four-word phrase capturing some feeling about the topic**
- Line 5 **Use three action words** (verbs or “ing” action words)
- Line 6 **Use two describing words** (adjectives)
- Line 7 **Use a synonym for an ending word**
(noun, strong word or hyphenated word for the topic)



Example 1: This poem expresses one theme about a pop singing star.

Star
Famous, successful,
Singing, dancing, shouting
Mesmerizing the adoring audience
Performing, working, reaching
Frenzied, dazzling
Showman

Couplet

Definition

A couple is made up of two people, two things, two of everything. And so in verse a couplet is made up of two lines that rhyme, usually in iambic pentameter. (Listen to the rhythm and your ears will help you understand.) A complete idea may be expressed in a couplet or a long poem may be made up of many couplets (see hexadquad). These poems may be humorous or serious.

Examples: **But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored and sorrows end.**

Shakespeare



**Chocolate candy is sweet and yummy
It goes down smoothly in my tummy!**

Couplet

33

Clerihew

Definition

This humorous biographic form was named after its creator, Edmund Clerihew Bentley, who wrote the first Clerihew poem about himself. It is a quatrain (four lines) based upon someone's name and is designed to give a clue about the personality of the person in the poem. The rhyme scheme is aa, bb. Finding rhyme words for names can be a problem, therefore the writer may use the first or the last name in order to compose a rhyme.

Examples:

Ernestine Babbage (a)
Had the brains of a cabbage (a)
But she understood (b)
What it meant to be good! (b)

Chuckie Lee Stein (a)
Is thoughtful and kind! (a)
If you are in need (b)
He'll be there indeed! (b)

Billy Ruffy (a)
Is not a toughie. (a)
He refuses to fight (b)
'Cause he knows it's not right (b)

Sorenson, Dan (a)
Is quite a ham! (a)
He likes to act (b)
And that's a fact! (b)



Guidelines:

This is a fun exercise using names—but remember—people feel keenly about their family names so it is not appropriate to use the name of someone in class. You may make fun of your own name as much as you please. Try using make-believe names, the names of celebrities or any you have heard that you think are peculiar and have rhyming possibilities. My favorite winner in the strange name category is the surname, Kadickle! What's a surname? What's a given name? Just for fun, can you think of names with great rhyming possibilities? (*Kadickle* rhymes with *pickle*!)

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Clerihew

Quatrain

Definition

The clue to this poetic form is in its title. A quarter of something is a fourth, a quart is four cups and a quadrangle has four angles. A quatrain, then, is written in four verses with different rhyme schemes. It may be written as a, a, b, b; a, a, a, a; a, b, c, b; or a, b, a, b. It is a nice arrangement which allows for a compact statement.

Examples: Evening red and morning grey (a)
Are the signs of a sunny day. (a)
Evening grey and morning red (b)
Bring rain on the farmer's head. (b)

A weather axiom



There was a man named Finnegan (a)
A long beard grew out of his chin again- (a)
Along came a wind and blew it in again- (a)
Poor old man named Finnegan. (a)

Mother Goose

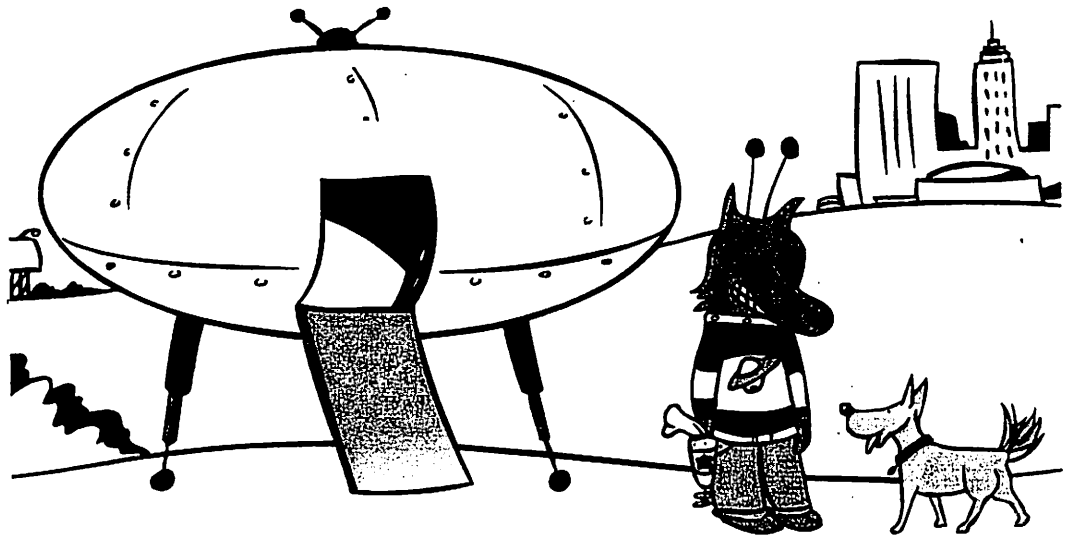
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Cinquain

Definition

An unrhymed form of poetry invented by Adelaide Crapsey whose topics were delicate and sad! The original cinquain (sin-cane) had a set number of five lines and a syllabic pattern of two, four, six, eight, two on respective lines. As this form developed and was used in schools, there are transformations in topics and patterns brought about by students themselves.

- Examples:**
- Line 1** **Topic** (2-syllable word or words)
 - Line 2** **4 syllables** describing topic
 - Line 3** **6 syllables** expressing action
 - Line 4** **8 syllables** expressing feeling
 - Line 5** **2 syllables**—a synonym for the topic



- Creature** (2 syllables)
- From outer space** (4 syllables)
- What ship carried you here?** (6 syllables)
- Are you in search of peace or war?** (8 syllables)
- Stranger** (2 syllables)

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Alphabet Poetry

Definition

This poetic form was invented by the poet, Paul West who must have had a sense of humor! There are many variations of this alphabet poetry starting with the wise selection of a topic. Choose one that has many possibilities such as food, sports, animals, geography or whatever challenges you. The length of the lines is your choice. Listen for rhythm and effect.

Example:

Fashion

Accessories, buttons, caps,
denims, epaulets
feathers, grunge, hemlines,
inseams,
jeans, knickers, Levi's[®],
mittens,
nightgown, overalls, pajamas,
quilted,
raglan, scarf, topcoat,
underwear, vest,
windbreaker,
Xtraordinary
yokes,
zipper



Guidelines:

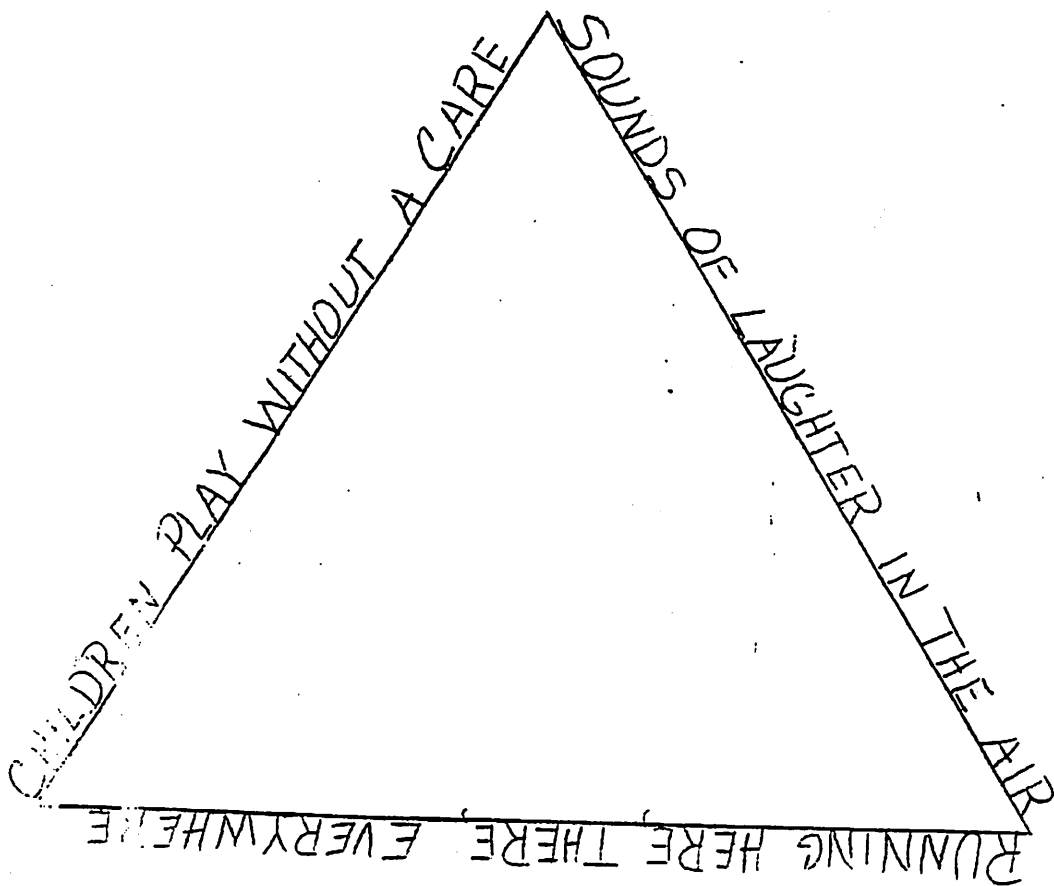
There is, as you may have guessed, a problem with the letters Q, X and Z. Since there are no poetry police, you may use words that have the sounds of Q, X and Z. You may also use some appropriate fashion adjectives in place of fashion nouns, such as, *flashy, bizarre, macho, odd, outrageous*. Try working with topics such as *food, malling* or *sports*. If you select a geographic subject, select places or rivers that have strange names. You may need some cooperative research to satisfy the alphabetical pattern.

2/6

TRIANGLE TRIPLETS

AMERICAN-3 LINES-RHYMING

- WRITTEN AROUND A TRIANGLE
- CAN BE READ FROM ANY POINT



Cento

Definition

Cento is a Latin word which means "patchwork." The form goes back to the second century! The objective in a patchwork poem is to put together lines of poetry, each of which is borrowed from the work of a different poet. This is not easy since the entire poem must make sense! If you want a bigger challenge, you may make the task harder by using the rhyme scheme: aa, bb, cc. However, no matter what choice you make, the syntax, the tense and the person must be consistent!

Examples:

Rhyming

1. Those are pearls that were his eyes (a)
2. And the wild wind sobs and sighs (a)
3. We all conceive the loss of what we love (b)
4. The frozen wind crept on above (b)
5. It was almost easy to say goodby. (c)
6. Look at the stars! Look at the skies. (c)
7. My father's strength was in his eyes

Poets

1. Shakespeare
2. John Clare
3. Robert Pack
4. Percy B. Shelley
5. Stephen Dunn
6. Gerard M. Hopkins
7. Jack Driscoll



(I broke the rule and added this line because it said so much.)

Cento

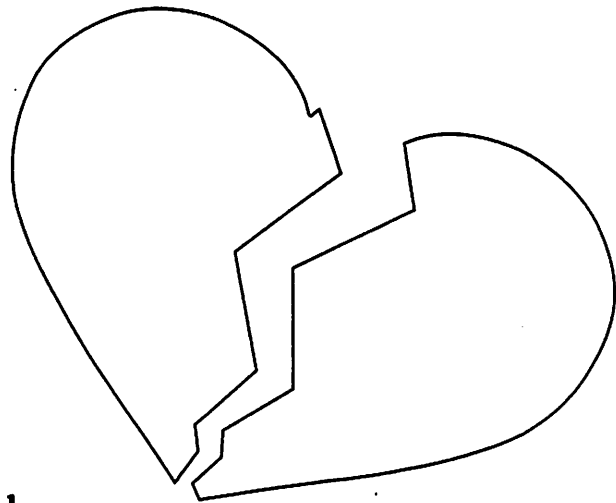
Concrete Poetry

Definition

Concrete poetry is visual word expression. It captures the essence of very specific words and works them through in observable physical ways. You can see **howl** through an open mouth, you can see a pop art sunflower as large as life, the word **smash** or a human struggling **between a rock and a hard place!** or **pie in the sky** floating in the clouds. Concrete poetry has the qualities of pop art in its representation of objects, idioms, proverbs or short popular expressions.

Examples:

- a swimming suit
- a skyscraper
- an eggplant
- a headlight
- time flies
- a broken heart
- drop in
- a hot dog to go
- a face to stop a clock
- flooring it
- a hairy problem



SHAPE POEM

(also known as CONCRETE POEM)

Words, phrases, or sentences written in the shape of the subject it is about.

EXAMPLES FROM STUDENTS AGES 11 AND 12:



an old haunted house at midnight to celebrate.
I'm halloween a white card
- making ghost in a sheet went to

ants ants ants
ants ants ants
ants ants ants
ants ants ants
ants ants
cake cake cake
a FROSTING
cake cake cake
ants ants

Catalog Poetry

Definition

A catalog is a list of items that deals with articles in a particular group. A poetic list may define the qualities of a person, a place, an adventure or anything that captures a vivid description for the reader. Catalog poems may be found in ancient writings, as in Homer's Iliad and the book of Genesis. This pattern in its most elegant form (as in praise on a tombstone) may also be called a "lapidary." It is also found in romantic and modern down-to-earth subjects.

Example:

My Kind of Friends

**I hang out with my friends
Who are great talkers
Who like sports
Who try to keep things smooth
at school
Who don't look for trouble
Who try to be fair
Who don't blame anybody else
for their troubles
People you can lean on for help
People who don't act like idiots
People who are not big mouths
People who know it's cool to be
smart in school!
People who do their best to make it through!**



Sonnet

Definition

The sonnet has a fixed form of 14 lines of 10 syllables each. It is usually written in iambic pentameter—much like the rhythm of natural speech. There are two parts of a sonnet, consisting of three quatrains and an ending couplet. The sonnet explores a subject of particular interest to the poet. The rhyme scheme is abab, cdcd, efef, gg. The summing up of the theme is expressed in the last couplet (two lines). The sonnet was invented by an Italian poet, Giacomo da Lentino in the 1200s and is one of the best-known forms in the Western World used by Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and other great poets. The most popular sonnets are Italian and English, also known as Shakespearean, which will be our choice to work with.

Example:

The following sonnet is about a teenager who has been out until very late at night. His parents have been waiting up for him with great fears for his safety. When he arrives at home he knows very well that there will be an argument which will end in bad feelings and no solutions. It has all happened before. The sonnet expresses both the voice of the boy and his parents.

I'm Not a Baby Anymore!

1. It was silent on our street—late at night (a)
2. My folks in nightclothes hovered at the door (b)
3. This was the reason for another fight (a)
4. I knew by heart the pain that was in store. (b)

1. Now once again they said, "You didn't call!" (c)
2. We argued while my father paced the room (d)
3. I told them I forgot—that says it all! (c)
4. For them it was the painful voice of gloom. (d)

1. "You could be hurt—you gave us quite a scare!" (e)
2. I never meant to give them so much grief (f)
3. These endless battles fill me with despair (e)
4. I've heard it all before—I need relief (f)

1. They say when I am grown that I will see. (g)
2. I know for sure we never will agree! (g)

G.B. Lipson

Guidelines:

Often the description of a poetic form comes to life when students can listen to the finished product. Read the sonnet above to demonstrate the treatment of a topic which poses the problem and the final couplet which makes a philosophical statement. Read also, Shakespeare's sonnet for a sense of the rhythm. The more sophisticated students may be interested in writing their own and meeting the challenge of the structured rhyme scheme. In a class discussion, generate topics that would lend themselves to this challenging form.



**Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the buds of May,
And summers lease hath all too short a date:**

**Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:**

**But thy eternal summer shall not fade.
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wanderest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;**

**So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.**

Shakespeare