

AMS Fall 2010 Conference

*Poetic Magic: Turning Free
Writing into Verse*

*A study of the List Poem, the Diamante, the
Cinquain, the Quatrain, the Fibonacci,
and the Triolet*

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Session Number 2

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Workshop Overview

Title: Poetic Magic: Turning Free Writing into Verse

Description: This workshop will provide teachers with a comprehensive six poem packet offering students a cross-curricular, manipulative, creative methodology by which to express mastery of a particular subject. The academic skills focused upon in *Poetic Magic* are parts of speech, content mastery, alphabetizing, practice in the use of reference materials, and poetic expression. Participants will be led through the initial journal writing phase, word bank development, and poem production phases of this workshop. Teachers will be given a set of all necessary handouts, thus enabling easy classroom implementation. *Poetic Magic* demonstrates a structural, predictable method of teaching form poetry and would benefit both elementary and middle school teachers.

Upon completion, this packet of lessons could span the course of 6 to 8 class sessions.

Materials: Handouts consisting of structural fill-in-the blank guides for each poetic form, dictionaries, scissors, tape, lined paper/journal, and colored pencils/sharp tipped markers

Outline:

1. Everyone is an expert at something. What is it that the participant knows a great deal about? Or, what topic has the student been studying that they now understand a great deal about? After a brief instructional period, writers draft a journal entry expressing every single thing that they know about a particular topic. Free write for 15 minutes.
2. After a brief sharing of these rough-draft essays, writers delve through their pieces circling nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives with distinctive colors.
3. A summary of the six poetic forms will be presented featuring poems from the book *A Kick in the Head: An Everyday Guide to Poetic Forms* by Paul Janeczko.
4. Participants will work through their packets, individually or with a partner, beginning with the List Poem, during which they will create a word bank of nouns, verbs, and adjectives that pertain to the Free Write topic. The parts of speech word bank words will be used while creating the Diamante and Cinquain. The structural form of the Quatrain, Fibbonoci, and Triolet are illustrated in the presentation and the handouts.
5. The workshop concludes with a shared reading of pieces.

The Case for this Workshop: This workshop offers a manipulative, didactic methodology for teaching poetry, parts of speech, reference material practice, essay writing, and project reporting. The structure of the handouts offers an easy format for the creation of various types of poetry. This workshop would be particularly helpful for the busy teacher who needs a functional instructional format for poetry instruction.

TEKS Annotation: 110.15.b.15.A, 110.15.b.16.B, 110.15.b.17, 110.15.b.20.A, 110.17.b.16.B, 110.18.b.15.B.i, 110.18.b.15.B.ii, 110.19.b.19.A.i, 110.19.b.19.A.ii, 110.19.b.19.A.iii, 110.19.b.19.A.iv,

Step One: The Free Write

Free Write Rules:

The basic unit of writing practice is the timed exercise. You may time yourself for ten minutes, twenty minutes, or an hour. It's up to you. At the beginning you may want to start small and after a week increase your time...It doesn't matter. What does matter is that whatever amount of time you choose for that session, you must commit yourself to it and for that full period:

1. Keep your hand moving. (Don't pause to reread the line you have just written. That's stalling and trying to get control of what you're saying.)
2. Don't cross out. (That is editing as you write. Even if you write something you didn't mean to write, leave it.)
3. Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar. (Don't even care about staying within the margins and lines on the page.)
4. Lose control.
5. Don't think. Don't get logical.
6. Go for the jugular. (If something comes up in your writing that is scary or naked, dive right into it. It probably has lots of energy.)

-Natalie Goldberg in Writing Down the Bones (pg. 8)

Everyone is an expert at something.

- What is it that the participant knows a great deal about?
- Or, what topic has the student been studying?
- What is their passion?
- Their troubles?
- Their joys?

After a brief overview of the Free Write Rules, writers draft a journal entry expressing *every single thing* that they know about a particular topic. Free write for 15 minutes.

Word Study

After a brief sharing of Free Write pieces, students participate in an in-depth word study unearthing the words necessary to create poetic magic.

1. Using **colored pencils or waterproof markers** designate a color for each part of speech.
 - a. Choose a vibrant color for verbs - maybe red
 - b. Another for nouns.
 - c. Another for adverbs.
 - d. One more for adjectives.
2. Review the attributes of a noun with the students.
 - a. A person
 - b. Place
 - c. Thing
3. Reread the Free Write and circle all nouns with the color designated for that part of speech.
4. Review the attributes of the verb.
 - a. The part of speech that expresses action
 - b. -ing verbs are especially useful with Six Pack poems
5. Reread the Free Write and circle all verbs with the color designated for that part of speech.
6. Review the attributes of the adverb with the students.
 - a. A part of speech that modifies verbs, adjectives, or adverbs
 - b. -ly words are adverbs
 - c. Sensory words
7. Reread the Free Write and circle all adverbs with the color designated for that part of speech.
8. Review the attributes of the adjective.
 - a. Words that modify nouns
 - b. Words that quantify – tell how many
 - c. Words that distinguish or describe
 - d. Sensory words
9. Reread the Free Write and circle all adjectives with the color designated for that part of speech.
10. Review color part of speech classification. Transfer the list of words to the Word Study Chart.

Word Study Chart

Nouns	Verbs	Adverbs	Adjectives

The List Poem

A list poem is great fun to write because the poet gets to include lots of rich details about a subject. You might write a list poem about your friends – give a few memorable details about each – or about a family vacation, maybe with details of what went wrong. A list poem is more than a list: it uses details and precise language to show the reader what the poet has noticed about a thing or a situation.

- Paul B. Janeczko (pg. 59)

A list poem takes the deceptively simple everyday form of a list in order to describe something in detail. It can be rhymed or unrhymed (Janeczko 51).

There are a variety of methods to use in writing a List Poem.

1. Classify their topics into ten subset topics. Describe the subset with a descriptive line or phrase. Use Avis Harley's "Slug File" printed on page 9 as an example of this poetic format.
2. Write a Ways List. Samples of this structure are featured on Page 9. Encourage the writer to list at least 7 to 13 points or "ways" to look at their topic
3. Write an alphabetic list poem using the guide on page 10. In this form, have the child write one attribute for each letter of the alphabet describing their chosen topic.

Sample List Poems

Slug File

Home Address:

“Shady Lawn”

Working Hours:

dusk ‘til dawn

Hobbies/Sports:

likes to climb

Special skills:

making slime

Occupation:

midnight thief

Favorite food:

salad leaf

Color choice:

veggie green

Height and Weight:

long and lean

Next of kin:

Mollusc clan

Appetite:

gargantuan

Nine Ways to Look at a Hammer

1. Among a thousand household items on the hardware store shelves, the only one purchased was the hammer.
2. A hammer and a nail aren't much; a hammer a nail and some wood-well, they're a house.
3. The bang of the hammer createth carpentry, and whenin the threshold is completeth, thou resteth upon thy hammer.
4. Rome wasn't built in a day especially without a hammer.
5. When the house was complete, the hammer clanked to the bottom of one of many tool boxes.
6. I don't know which to prefer, the sound of a hammer against a nail or the silence when the job is done.
7. The nail's in the wood. It must be hammer time.
8. Noah didn't make the ark himself, you know. The hammer helped out, too.
9. It was evening all afternoon. The nail gun nailed and it was going to nail. The hammer lay untouched in the tool shed.

-Avis Harley

-Micheal Stoltz

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

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J

K

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M

N

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P

Q

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V

W

X

Y

Z

The Diamante

A diamante poem is a seven line poem written in the shape of a diamond, each line using specific types of words. It serves as a fun way to focus on parts of speech, as well as effective word choice. It is easier to teach than it looks. Refer to the Word Study list for inspiration.

The Diamante is poem about contrasts, about two things that are completely different, total opposites such as: night/day, bird/fish, airplane/car, etc. There are specific rules to the structure, much like putting together a poem puzzle. One very important rule is that they may not repeat any words.

Begin by writing a diamante together on the board. For example:

Pool
 wet, wild
 slipping, sliding, splashing
 flippers, snorkels, umbrellas, sunbaths
 drying, snacking, snoozing
 quiet, restful
 Sand

- The first line is one word, and it is the topic of the poem. It can be a singular or plural noun. The 7th line is also one word, and either a singular or plural noun. The 1st and 7th lines should be in contrast with one another.
- The second line is made up of two adjectives that describe the noun from the first line.
- The 3rd line is three –ing verbs, or active verbs, that tell actions associated with the noun on the first line.
- The 4th line is the longest line and the turning point of the poem. This line has four more nouns. The first two nouns are associated with the noun on the first line. The second pair of nouns are associated with the noun from the 7th line.
- The 5th line is three –ing verbs, or active verbs, that tell actions associated with the noun on the 7th line.
- The 6th line has two adjectives that describe the noun on the 7th line.
- The 7th line is a singular or plural noun that contrasts with the one from the last line.

WRAP UP: Have the students read their diamantes aloud. Have them dramatically emphasize their words on the 4th line, setting up the contrast for their poem. Reading aloud with specific intent helps to build confidence when performing in public.

Diamante



The Cinquain

This poetic form takes its name from the word *quinque*, “five.” The cinquain (SING-kane) is like the haiku in that it is composed of a set number of syllable (22) and a per line syllable count (2-4-6-8-2). A good cinquain will flow from beginning to end rather than sounding like five separate lines. (Lanesczko 56).

*Oh, cat
are you grinning
curled in the window seat
as sun warms you this December
morning?*

-Paul B. Lanesczko

Using the Word Study and the form printed on page 14, create a cinquain. Either structure the poem using the parts of speech approach printed on the form or simply follow the syllabic structure modeled in the cinquain above.

Poem Title _____

Line 1: (1 word noun-2 syllables)

Line 2: (2 adjectives-4 syllables)

Line 3: (3 action words-6 syllables)

Line 4: (4 feeling words-8 syllables)

Line 5: (1 word referring to Line 1-2 syllables)

The Quatrain

The quatrain, the most common stanza in English poetry, is made up of four lines. Although it can be unrhymed, poets usually follow an *abab* or an *abba* rhyme scheme (Janesczko 56).

The Tyger

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry

-William Blake

Steps to writing a quatrain:

1. Have students choose a subject for the quatrain based their Free Write.
2. Choose a rhyme scheme before beginning to write. Common schemes are ABAB, ABBA, or AABA.
3. If poem is rhyme-free, decide upon the syllabic count of each line.
4. An example of ABAB rhyme scheme would be:

A: Today there was some snow

B: It's falling down a **treat**

A: Then the wind began to blow

B: And now it's turned to **sleet**.

ABAB Quatrain Structure

A: _____

B: _____

A: _____

B: _____

or

ABBA Quatrain Structure

A: _____

B: _____

B: _____

A: _____

or

AABA Quatrain Structure

A: _____

A: _____

B: _____

A: _____

Or 4 unrhymed lines with similar syllabic counts.

The Fibonacci

*This poem is easy to write. Count the syllables of your phrases.
Put the correct number syllables on the line labeled with that particular number.
These poems play with white space in an intriguing way.*

Title _____

1 syllable _____

1 syllable _____

2 syllables _____

3 syllables _____

5 syllables _____

8 syllables _____

8 syllables _____

5 syllables _____

3 syllables _____

2 syllables _____

1 syllable _____

1 syllable _____

Fibonacci Poems from Manor Elementary

My Favorite Things

I'm
real
good at
soccer. Yes!
The best uniform.
I've got everything I need.
Soccer is my favorite thing.
Soccer is the best.
Shooting goals.
Winning
Sport
Fun

Things That I Like

I
like
softball.
I get to
make friends and see my
friends. For reading, I need a light
right next to me and I need a
book so I can read.
Oh, I love
to read...
so
cool!

What I Am Good At

I
like
writing
sentences.
Opinion, spelling
Punctuation, scary stories
I write silly and true stories.
I express myself.
Make-believe
I can
write
well.

Triolet

A triolet is an eight-line poem in which line 1 repeats as lines 4 and 7 and line 2 repeats as line 8.

Although you might expect a triolet to have three lines, it actually has eight. The triolet gets its name from the fact that the first line occurs three times within the poem. In fact, the first two lines of the poem repeats as the last two lines of the poem and the opening line is also repeated as line 4. The rhyme scheme of a triolet looks like this: *abaaabab*. (Janesczko 57).

The Cow's Complaint

How unkind to keep me here

When, over there, the grass is greener.

Tender blades – so far, so near –

How unkind to keep me here!

Through this fence they make me peer

At sweeter stems; what could be meaner?

How unkind to keep me here

When, over there, the grass is greener.

-Alice Schertle

Analysis:

A: How unkind to keep me here

B: When, over there, the grass is greener.

A: Tender blades – so far, so near –

A: How unkind to keep me here!

A: Through this fence they make me peer

B: At sweeter stems; what could be *meaner?*

A: How unkind to keep me here

B: When, over there, the grass is greener.

Title _____

A: _____

B: _____

A: _____

A: _____

A: _____

B: _____

A: _____

Bibliography

Atwell, Nancy. Lessons that Change Writers. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002.

Goldberg, Natalie. Writing Down the Bones – Freeing the Writer Within. Boston: Shambala, 1986.

“How to Write a Quatrain Poem.” Available at:
<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Quatrain-Poem>. Date accessed: 7 June 2010.

Janeczko, Paul B. A Kick in the Head – An Everyday Guide to Poetic Forms. Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2009.