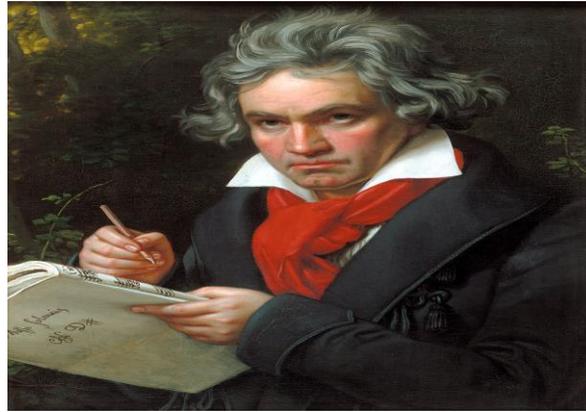


Lesson Plan

Sounds and Silences: Line Breaks



<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6f/Beethoven.jpg>

Abstract: [Noemi Martinez Cress](#)' lesson plan, "Sounds and Silence," she teaches students how to organize their poem into lines. After the previous lesson, during which students started to write their first short poems (usually in large block, like paragraph or prose), "The Poem (As the Cat)" by Williams Carlos Williams is used as a model to help students explore how to shape their writing and rewrite their poems using line breaks.

Grade: 1st Grade

Genre: Poetry

Common Core State Standards ([Refer to the ELA Standards > Writing > Grade 1](#)):

- ELA-LITERACY.W.1.5: With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

Guiding Questions:

- The students are asked to give an example of a poem (nursery rhymes) they have read or heard. Does a poem sound the same as a story?
- The students are shown "[The Poem \(As the Cat\)](#)" and a copy of a page in a story chapter. Is a poem the same shape on the page as a story?

Suggested Continuation Practice for Classroom Teacher: Have students pair up; read their revised and shaped poems to each other; and discuss, line per line, how they chose their line breaks in the context of their poems.

LESSON

Introduction: Overall goal is that each student writes a poem. This lesson objective is to show the fundamentals of line breaks:

- Each line is broken at a particular place where the poet wants the reader to pause.
- The way lines are broken affects the rhythm of the poem.
- Each line is a unit of meaning within the poem.
- Each line should have energy in it; lines that are too long let the energy leak out.
- Line breaks are a personal decision. Line breaks are the way students read and hear their poem, where they want to pause—based on their emotions and heartbeat. There is no right or wrong.

Warm-up activity:

Part 1: Group (5-10 minutes)

In the poem from the previous lesson, the students' senses and vivid imagery (pictures) were used to help the reader experience what was seen, heard, felt, tasted, touched, or imagined.

- Who can name the five senses?
- Why is imagination important?
- Why is using vivid images in our writing important?

Part 2: Group (5-10 minutes)

By now, the students have written their first poem quickly and without giving thought to shape.

- Students are shown a copy of [“The Poem \(As the Cat\).”](#) The teacher reads the poem aloud, as if revealing a mystery, accenting the line breaks and white spaces between the stanzas. The teacher asks the students to close their eyes and imagine the cat's journey.
 - Have any of you seen a cat move carefully over delicate objects?
 - What does that look like?
 - Students role play the cat's movement. How is the rhythm (the beat) of the movement? How does it read in this poem? (“Slowly,” they say.)
 - Read aloud the same poem written in prose. Again, students to role play the cat. With this rhythm, without any pauses, the cat tumbles into the flowerpot!
 - Explain the use of line breaks. Using the prose version of the poem, introduce the students to the use of the slash (/) to indicate line breaks.
 - Students are asked to show with slashes where Williams would have made his pauses had he written his poem first in prose. Teacher and students shape the poem on a SmartBoard, eraser board, or easel.

Main Activity:

Group (20-25 mins)

- Students reread their own poems quietly, listening to the words and to the pauses between each word.

- As they read, they listen to their own voices and put a slash wherever they take a natural breath or pause. Students also listen for words that don't sound right or ends of lines that might not work.
- Students then rewrite their poems with line breaks on a clean page.

Closing:

Group (5 mins)

- A few students read their poems aloud, accentuating their pauses. (The poems are shown on a screen, if possible.)
- The students ask why the poet chose certain line breaks. How do the line breaks make the poem sound? What pops out? How do they make the readers feel?

Materials:

- Access to eraser board, SmartBoard, or easel
- Large copies of [“The Poem \(As the Cat\),”](#) one in the shape of the poem and the other in prose
- Lined paper for the students to rewrite their poems

Vocabulary: Rhythm (beat), line break, slash

Multi-Modal Approaches to Learning:

- **Aural:** sounds calling for long and short lines that look disorderly on the page
- **Interpersonal:** class discussion, participation, and critique
- **Bodily Kinesthetic:** a physical experience via role-playing of the cat's journey