

William Lewandowski

Sentence/Line Breaks in Poetry

Length: Two 50-minute class periods

Grade: 9 – 10

Standards Addressed:

9.4.4.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

9.7.3.3: Write narratives and other creative texts develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

(b) Use literary and narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, rhythm, repetition, rhyme, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

(d) Use precise words and phrases, telling details, figurative and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

Materials:

- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo
- Photocopies of “Monday, October 29: Fights” by Elizabeth Acevedo
- Photocopies of “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams
- *Breaking Sentences* Worksheet
- *Broken Sentence Poetry* Writing Assignment Sheet
- Document Camera and/or Projector to screenshare.

- Highlighters, colored pencils, crayons, markers, etc. for labeling text

Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Recognize and demonstrate the concrete nature of poetry writing by reading “Monday, October 29: Fights” by Elizabeth Acevedo (p. 173-4) and “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams by marking up the poems and practicing breaking up prose into poetic lines and stanzas.
- Compose their own broken sentence poem using their own original writing.

Assessment:*Exemplary*

(Objective 1): Student highlights each sentence of “Monday, October 29: Fights” with a different color to make each sentence stand out to them. Student takes William Carlos Williams’ “This is Just to Say” and puts the poem into sentence form, adding the correct punctuation where it’s needed to form standard, prose sentences. Student takes the three passages of prose lines and creates three different poems by adding line breaks to the sentences. An exemplary student breaks the lines at points that are meaningful and purposeful, rather than randomly and chaotically.

(Objective 2): Student writes three to five (or more) meaningful, thoughtful prose/sentences about their topic of choice. Their lines are filled with creativity and give the reader a vivid picture by using sensory language and emotion. An exemplary student takes their lines of prose and breaks them in a purposeful way that is not distracting and adds to the language and words.

Proficient

(Objective 1): Student highlights each sentence of “Monday, October 29: Fights” with a different color to make each sentence stand out to them. Student takes William Carlos Williams’ “This is Just to Say” and puts the poem into sentence form. Student takes the three passages of prose lines and creates three different poems by adding line breaks to the sentences. A proficient student breaks the lines at points that may make sense but don’t always have the most impactful configuration.

(Objective 2): Student writes three to five original and thoughtful prose/sentences about their topic of choice. Their lines give the reader a decent picture and understanding of their ideas by using some good sensory language and emotion, but there’s some room for improvement. A proficient student takes their lines of prose and breaks them in an interesting way that sometimes works well and sometimes falls a touch flat, though their line breaks are creative and show effort.

Developing

(Objective 1): Student highlights each sentence of “Monday, October 29: Fights” with a different color to make each sentence stand out to them. Student takes William Carlos Williams’ “This is Just to Say” and puts the poem into sentence form. Student takes the three passages of prose lines and creates three different poems by adding line breaks to the sentences. A developing student breaks the lines at points that don’t really make sense and creates an odd reading or configuration of the poem.

(Objective 2): Student writes three to five simple but original prose/sentences about their topic of choice. Their lines give the reader a vague picture and understanding of their ideas by using very little sensory language and emotion. A developing student takes their lines of prose and breaks them in a way that doesn’t work well and does not add to the prose.

Inadequate

(Objective 1): Student does not highlight each sentence of “Monday, October 29: Fights” with a different color and does not clearly distinguish each sentence. Student takes William Carlos Williams’ “This is Just to Say” and but does not correctly puts the poem into sentence form. Student takes the three passages of prose lines and attempts to piece together three different poems by adding line breaks to the sentences. An inadequate student breaks the lines at points that do not have any rhyme or reason and creates a haphazard configuration that seems unthoughtful.

(Objective 2): Student writes three to five (or less) bland, unoriginal prose/sentences about their topic of choice. Their lines provide little emotion or sensory language and does not create a strong picture in the reader’s head. An inadequate student takes these lines of prose and breaks them in a way seems forced or random.

Procedure:

First Class Period:

1. At the beginning of class, have students discuss with one another what they think about Xiomara’s poetry? Do they find it captivating? Do they enjoy the emotion? Do they like her sensory language? Do they hate it? Do they think it’s too boring? Too confusing? (5 minutes)
2. Bringing the class back together, pull up on a document camera or on screen sharing “Monday, October 29: Fights” on page 173 of *The Poet X*. Begin today’s lesson by what this poem possesses: concrete language and full sentences. This poem in particular is written in full, regular sentences that use typical, concrete language. There is no wildly flowery language. There is no figurative language. There are a few poems throughout *The*

Poet X that are like this. Notice how each line, though, where the sentence breaks, the last word of the sentence is a strong, 10-cent word, typically not a simple word.

They don't have to be bogged down by "is my poetry complex enough?" or "do I have enough literary elements?" By pointing this out to the students, this shows that we can find poetry in everyday contexts. The only difference here is that Xiomara/Acevedo has broken up these considerably "non-poetic" sentences and built this captivating poem. (10 minutes)

3. Hand out a paper copy of "Monday, October 29: Fights" by Elizabeth Acevedo to the students. Using either different colored highlighters, colored pencils, or different types of underlines, give them the next five minutes to label or distinguish each full sentence in the poem. (5 minutes)
4. Let's look at another example: William Carlos Williams' "This is Just to Say." Make sure each student has a copy of this poem as well. Read the poem out loud to the students. The poem is actually a note Williams left on the fridge for his wife. A simple note that he broke up and created a poem out of. Now it's one of his most famous poems, alongside "The Red Wheelbarrow." Using their copy or on a sheet of paper, have the students put the poem back into sentence form. Advise they will need to add punctuation, as Williams has omitted all punctuation. (5-10 minutes)
5. Hand out *Breaking Sentences/Reconstructing Poetic Lines* Worksheet, which is an exercise for students to break up prose into poetry and reconstruct poetry into prose. Explain the worksheet to them and have them work on it individually (10-15 minutes)
6. For the last part of class, allow students to compare what they had, so they can observe how others chose to break up the sentences as well as piece together poetry back into

prose. Alternatively, you can have students share their new poems/prose with the class.

(5-10 minutes)

7. Students will hand in their Acevedo poems, Williams poems, and worksheets at the end of class.

(Before the next class, review their work and give them constructive feedback they can use as writers/poets.)

Second Class Period:

1. The next class period, hand back students' work from the previous day with feedback. Their feedback should give them support and tools to help improve their work. (5-10 minutes)
2. This class period will be focused on writing. At the beginning of class, after having returned yesterday's work, instruct the students on today's assignment. You can either hand out the assignment sheet (attached to this lesson plan), write a summarized statement on the board, or project the assignment sheet for the students to see.
3. Today's assignment is to write three to five thoughtful, creative, original sentences about something they are having trouble talking about out loud *or* any topic they wish to expound upon. (You could mention that these will not be shared with anyone without permission.) Make sure the students understand that they need to write full sentences that have sensory language, as we had been discussing in class in previous lessons, and emotion. They do not need to be concerned about flowery or figurative language, per se, as we want them to be more concerned about the concrete nature of these types of poems. Though it is just three to five sentences, they need to be strongly written and have depth to them. They may have more than five if they would like—no limits.

Once they have written their three to five (or more) strong, thoughtful, meaningful, original sentences, they should break them up into poetic lines. They can do this however they see fit, but they should think about how they are choosing to break the sentences, not just breaking them randomly or thoughtlessly. The breaks should have some purpose, just like we talked about in the previous class (like the lines ending with 10-cent words). (5-10 minutes)

4. The students will have all of class to work on this assignment. (40-45 minutes)
5. They can either turn them in at the end of class or turn them in the next day, depending on the teacher's feeling on how the students are doing.

Remember when giving students feedback on their poetry to be supportive and give them advice on how to improve their writing for next time. Poetry can be scary or gross, so giving encouragement and new tools for writing and for writing poetry will grow their enjoyment for it.)

Differentiation:

For a gifted student, this lesson is a free-range assignment. The first class period could be heightened for them by providing tougher poetry to analyze and break down. As for the second class period, this assignment provides a chance for the student to shine. They can express whatever they want, however they'd like to express it, in whichever words they choose, as openly or as long as they would like. This is really a perfect place for someone feeling they need much more to go above and beyond.

For an ELL student who may have a hard time articulating their words in a way that they want to, allowing them to write in their native language or what ever language they feel most comfortable with would be beneficial for them. They can feel the language barrier be lifted as they write their best work. Students should feel proud and like what they are writing, and they

should be able to write their poem in a way that they can truly open up and use the words they feel fit best.

Citation:

This lesson was inspired by Milnor, Milnor, and Mitchel's "Forging Poetry." pages 187-188, *Bridging English*, Ed. 6, Pearson, 2017. Specifically, the advice from Heard, Collom, and Noethe at the end of 187 and the beginning of 188.

Attachments:

- Photocopy of "Monday, October 29: Fights"
- Photocopy of "This is Just to Say"
- *Breaking Sentences Worksheet*
- *Broken Sentence Poetry Writing Assignment Sheet*