

Problems with Teaching Poetic Form Without Having a Poetic Experience

There once was a class who did write
A poem for homework each night
But their rhyme was so poor
And their ideas so unsure
And this piece of paper is white.

When students are overly focused on making things rhyme, they very rarely pay attention to the meaning of the poem. Since making meaning is essential to the writing process, poetry focused on form, rather than substance, is usually very weak. Words are chosen because they rhyme, not because they make sense in the poem.

Teachers frequently rely upon poetic forms such as the haiku, diamante, or acrostic to introduce writing poetry. The problem with this approach, as noted above, is that writers who first attempt to write a poem to fit a form often don't write poetry that says anything meaningful. Additionally, *emerging poets* often have difficulty moving on to other forms of poetry after having "mastered" a particular form. (It's easier, after all, to finish counting syllables than it is to ensure that the poem actually communicates an idea.)

Any
Crude
Roster
Of
Silly
Terms
Is
Compiled

This piece of writing
Has seventeen syllables
But is not haiku!

