Parts of Speech - Cinquain Poems

Summary
Students will - describe the basic conventions of cinquain. - interpret examples of cinquain. - characterize the relationship between structure and meaning in cinquain. - compose a cinquain that describes a familiar person, place, or thing.

Time Frame
3 class periods of 30 minutes each

Life Skills
Communication

Materials
Sample Cinquain Handout Cinquain Graphic Organizer Cinquain Reflections Worksheet

Student Prior Knowledge
Parts of speech

Instructional Procedures
Session One: Learning about Cinquain Share examples of cinquain with your students. You might compose your own examples or compose examples with your students, before students write individually or in small groups. A student reproducible of sample cinquains is also available. You or the students might read the poems aloud. Try reading some of the cinquain more than once to show how different words can be emphasized and to talk about line breaks. See "Joyful Noises: Creating Poems for Voices and Ears" for more information on reading poetry aloud. Invite them to look for similarities and patterns among the cinquain that you read as a group. To help students notice the patterns, write several of the poems on the board or on a handout with similar lines parallel (all first lines parallel, all second lines parallel, and so on). Students should be able to extract the basic elements of these poems. You might lead students through the exploration process by asking them to think aloud about these questions: How many lines do these poems have? What do you notice about the words on the first line? (second, third, etc.) Which words seem most important to each poem, and why? How do the lines relate to each other? How does the structure (the organization of the lines) relate to the meaning? If you rearrange the words, how does the meaning change?

Session Two: Writing Cinquain Students will likely recognize most of the characteristics of the cinquain. To make the form more manageable for students as they write their own cinquain, modify and revise their list of characteristics to follow this organization:
Line 1: a one-word title, a noun that tells what the poem is about
Line 2: two adjectives describing the title
Line 3: three -ing action verbs
Line 4: a related phrase
Line 5: a synonym for the title
Here's an example:
Sheepdog
Gentle, shaggy
ambling, rambling, shambling
a rollicking hayrick of unruly hair
Sadie

Once you and your students establish the characteristics of a cinquain, students can use the Student Reproducible Cinquain Graphic Organizer to compose original poems of their own. Students can work individually, with partners, or in small groups. Once students have finished their poems, the cinquains can be shared with the entire class.

Extensions

Make stapleless books out of the cinquain.
Illustrate the cinquain on a sheet of paper with colored pencils or fine-line markers.
Write other types of poetry (see web resources below) such as haiku and sestina.
Create a bulletin board or school Web site anthology of your cinquain.

Web Resources

Serious Play: Reading Poetry with Children http://www.poets.org/exh/Exhibit.cfm?prmlID=10
The Academy of American Poets Web site has tips that help "translate [students'] energy, once aroused and captured, into the desire to read poetry seriously, to do the intellectual work necessary to gain a basic mastery of the literary art." The site includes excerpts to recommended poems and excerpts books on teaching poetry to children by Jim Trelease, and by Kenneth Koch.
Sharing Poetry With Children
http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1994/2/94.02.02.x.html
Roberta Mazzucco, the site's author, explores "the question [of] how a teacher can sustain a conversation about poetry" with an explanation of her own classroom experience, teaching techniques, and lesson plans.
This teacher's tip sheet shares tips for bringing poetry into the classroom with specific methods that you can use immediately with students as well as suggestions for poetry to share and resources where you can learn more.
Seasonal Haiku
In this Grades 3-5 lesson plan, students write and illustrate original haiku based on the season of the year.

Assessment Plan

While students work, use kidwatching techniques to observe and monitor students' progress. Once the activity is complete, provide verbal feedback as individuals or groups share their work with the class. Commentary might focus on the students' feelings about the person, place, or thing described in the cinquain (e.g., "Your poem suggests that you really love your dog. Was it hard to choose just what to say in just five lines?"), particularly interesting word choice (e.g., "You choose the word ornery to describe your dog. That's a word that means 'stubborn or cranky.' Can you tell me something ornery that your dog has done recently?"), and your own reaction or connection to the poems (e.g., "Your poem reminds me of my first dog, Taffi. Especially when you say that your dog is "a playful bundle of trouble." That's a good description of a puppy.")
After students have shared their cinquain with the class, students could reflect on their own and their classmates's poems. Students could discuss their reactions out loud or use the cinquain reflections worksheet to record their thoughts.

Authors