



# Know Your Poetry – Short Forms

## Transcript

- Speaker 1: Want to impress your pals by knowing all about short form poetry?
- Speaker 2: Why would that impress my pals?
- Speaker 1: It impresses all of my pals.
- Speaker 2: Really?
- Speaker 3: You're so knowledgeable, especially about short form poetry.
- Speaker 1: Thanks BFF.
- Speaker 2: Are all your friends rabbits?
- Speaker 1: No.
- Speaker 2: Right.
- Speaker 1: What is poetry? That's a great question Voiceover Guy Two.
- Speaker 2: I didn't asked that.
- Speaker 1: Poetry is an art form that expresses feelings and ideas through language, with an emphasis on diction and rhythm.
- Speaker 2: Some say it's a painting in words.
- Speaker 1: Excellent.
- Speaker 2: But I say it's a way of saying something without actually saying it properly.
- Speaker 1: What's the function of short form poetry?
- Speaker 2: To baffle? To bemuse? To bamboozle?
- Speaker 1: Actually, short form poetry serves many functions. It entertains, amuses, inspires, it questions.
- Speaker 2: Go on.
- Speaker 1: It's a way of developing language skills. A way of expressing yourself creatively and it serves as a gateway to longer poetry forms.
- Speaker 2: Intriguing.





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- Speaker 1: Oh, it is. Some short form poetry utilises refrains.
- Speaker 2: Refrain?
- Speaker 1: A refrain is a repeated part in a poem. It often occurs at the end of a stanza.
- Speaker 2: A stanza?
- Speaker 1: That's George Costanza. A stanza is a group of lines in the poem.
- Speaker 2: Like a paragraph?
- Speaker 1: Precisely. Imagery is important. Often, short form poetry focuses on a specific image like a bunny.
- Speaker 2: Okay.
- Speaker 1: What are some types of short form poetry? Glad you asked.
- Speaker 2: Again, I didn't.
- Speaker 1: The many types of short form poetry include alexandroid.
- Speaker 2: Poems specifically about droids?
- Speaker 1: Not quite. They're a type of 12 line poem. Some other types are tankas, epitaphs, riddles. A riddle like this: "Ten-pin bowling, picnics and more. Road trips, sleepovers; that's not all. I do all these things with my furry friends. There are ten, twenty, eighty, it never ends." It took me all year to write that.
- Speaker 2: That was worth it.
- Speaker 1: Jinsei, rondels and sijo are other types.
- Speaker 2: It sounds like you're making up words.
- Speaker 1: They're all worth exploring. Not now.
- Speaker 2: Sorry.
- Speaker 1: Two popular short form types of poetry are haiku and cinquain. What is a haiku? How does a haiku work? Two more excellent questions.
- Speaker 2: Are you even listening to me?
- Speaker 1: A haiku always contains three lines and five moras.





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Speaker 2: Mora?

Speaker 1: Mora is a single sound unit in Japanese. In English, the closest equivalent of a mora is a syllable. Side note: a word's mora count and its syllable count can vary when the word is translated from Japanese to English.

Speaker 2: Side note: Japan is cool.

Speaker 1: A haiku has five moras in the first line, seven moras in the second line and five in the third line, 17 moras in total.

Speaker 2: Pithy. Kind of like Twitter, how you can only use 140 characters.

Speaker 1: I guess. Here's an example of a Haiku.

"In the sun we play

Bunnies bounce, soft to the touch

My best friends forevz"

Speaker 2: #awkward.

Speaker 1: Traditionally, a haiku contained a kigo which means a seasonal reference. For example, Autumn Moonlight by Matsuo Basho.

Autumn Moonlight -

A worm digs silently

Into the chestnut.

Speaker 2: So that kigo is autumn moonlight?

Speaker 1: Excellent. Matsuo Basho is probably the greatest haikuist ever. He's the Kanye West of his time.

Speaker 2: Do you even know who that is?

Speaker 1: Nope. Inspired by haiku and tanka, another popular form is the cinquain. A cinquain contains a series of images that form one larger image. A cinquain structure has a series of five lines with the rising and falling syllable counts. The first line contains two syllables, the second line has four syllables. The third line, six. The fourth line, eight. The final line, two syllables. Other poets use structural variations to this. The two, four, six, eight, two form is credited to American poet, Adelaide Crapsey.





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Speaker 2: Crapsey?!

Speaker 1: Real mature. The cinquain doesn't rhyme. Also, the final line refers to the subject of the poem which is the title. Here's a cinquain from Adelaide Crapsey - November Night:

Listen...

With faint dry sound,

Like steps of passing ghosts,

The leaves, frost-crip'd, break from the trees

And fall.

Speaker 2: Wow, pretty.

Speaker 1: Indeed. A limerick, a triolet? Care to hear me explain them?

Speaker 2: Even if I say no, I'm sure you will anyway.

Speaker 1: That's what I'm getting paid for. A limerick structure contains five lines. The third and fourth lines are the shortest.

Speaker 2: Like a bridge in a song.

Speaker 1: Exactly. Limericks have a rhyming scheme. The first line rhymes with the second line. The third line rhymes with the fourth. The fifth line returns to the first line.

Speaker 2: Wait a minute. You're getting paid for this? Where's my payment?

Speaker 1: With limericks, a strong beat is created by a strict syllable count. Eight to nine syllables in lines one, two and five. Five to six syllables in lines three and four. Most limericks are humorous like the ones by Edward Lear, a poet who popularised limericks. Here's a funny one.

There was an Old Man with a beard,

Who said, "It is just as I'd feared! --

Two Owls and a Hen,

Four Larks and a Wren,

Have all built their nests in my beard."





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Speaker 2: That's terrifying. Eight beards squawking at your face, their beaks, their claws.

Speaker 1: It's meant to be funny.

Speaker 2: That's a nightmare, mate.

Speaker 1: Shall I move on to triplets? Triplets work like so. Line one is repeated in lines four and seven. Line two is repeated in line eight.

Speaker 2: Does triplet and triplet mean the three uses of the same line?

Speaker 1: Well spotted. The triplet only has five original lines making it appear simple, but it's harder than it looks. Celebrated writer Thomas Hardy mastered it. Listen to his triplet, How Great My Grief.

How great my grief, my joys how few,

Since first it was my fate to know thee!

-Have the slow years not brought to view

How great my grief, my joys how few,

Nor memory shaped old times anew,

Nor loving-kindness helped to show thee

How great my grief, my joys how few,

Since first it was my fate to know thee?

Speaker 2: Great lesson. We sure are proud to be your best pals.

Speaker 1: Thanks BFFs.

