Merced County
Office of Education

Writing Festival

2025-26
Writing Festival Entries

Reference Handbook

Grades Pre – 12
Pre-School may enter Small Group/Whole Class Only

MERCED COUNTY
Office *of*
Education
NURTURE • SERVE • LEAD

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Changes are made annually to this handbook. Please destroy all previous copies to avoid misfiled
entries or risk entries being disqualified.

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TEXT TYPES

OPINION/ARGUMENTATIVE

The submissions in this category should be used to change the reader's point of view, to bring about some action on the reader's part, or to ask the reader to accept the writer's explanation or evaluation of a concept, issue, or problem.

Although young children are not able to produce fully developed logical arguments, they develop a variety of methods to extend and elaborate their work by providing examples, offering reasons for their assertions, and explaining, cause and effect. These kinds of expository structures are steps on the road to argument. In grades K-5, the term "opinion" is used to refer to this developing form of argument.

INFORMATIONAL/EXPLANATORY

The submissions in this category should convey information accurately. This kind of writing serves one or more closely related purposes: to increase readers' knowledge of a subject, to help readers better understand a procedure or process, or to provide readers with an enhanced comprehension of a concept.

NARRATIVE WRITING

The submissions in this category should convey experience, either real or imaginary, and uses time as its deep structure. It can be used for many purposes, such as to inform, instruct, persuade, or entertain.

OPEN

Some categories may fall under any of the three text types.

PROSE
Division

Item	CATEGORY TITLE This title is to be listed on Student Entry Form	Category Type	DIVISION (List this Division on Entry Page)
1	Critique/Evaluation	Opinion/Argumentative	Prose
2	Job Application Cover Ltr. **(9-12 Grd. Only)**	Opinion/Argumentative	Prose
3	Essay/Speech – Persuasive/Argumentative	Opinion/Argumentative	Prose
4	Letter/Editorial – Persuasive	Opinion/Argumentative	Prose
5	Resume **(9-12 Grd. Only)**	Informative/Explanatory	Prose
6	Autobiographical	Informative/Explanatory	Prose
7	Biographical	Informative/Explanatory	Prose
8	Informational Writing (previously research)	Informative/Explanatory	Prose
9	Response to Literature – Fiction	Informative/Explanatory	Prose
10	Response to Literature – Non-Fiction	Informative/Explanatory	Prose
11	Response to Literature – Poetry	Informative/Explanatory	Prose
12	Reflective Composition **(9-12 Grd. Only)**	Narrative	Prose
13	Observational Writing	Narrative	Prose
14	Fable	Narrative	Prose
15	Legend	Narrative	Prose
16	Myth	Narrative	Prose
17	Parody **(5-12 Grd. Only)**	Narrative	Prose
18	Point of View **(TK-8 Grd. Only)**	Narrative	Prose
19	Short Story	Narrative	Prose
20	Script **(7-12 Grd. Only)**	Narrative	Prose
21	Tall Tale	Narrative	Prose
22	Compare/Contrast	Open	Prose
23	Description	Open	Prose
24	Problem/Solution	Open	Prose
25	Friendly Letter **(TK-5 Grd. Only)**	Open	Prose
A.	**Not a Category -** *Small Group Entry* (2-6 students) **GRD: Pre-2 ONLY –See page 18 for details.**	**A & B** May enter in any of the grade permissible Prose category listed below	Prose: Small Group
B.	**Not a Category -** *Whole Class Entry* **GRD: Pre-2 ONLY –See page 18 for details.**		Prose: Whole Class

Three (3) entries from each of the categories listed may be submitted for each class/grade level. Entries for Small Group (Pre-2 ONLY) and Whole Class (Pre-2 ONLY) will be counted as one of the three entries being submitted in that category for that class. See page 18 for details.

PROSE CATEGORIES

<u>**Opinion/Argumentative**</u>

1. CRITIQUE CATEGORY

The writer presents a judgment on the worth of an item like a book, movie, artwork, or consumer product - supported with reasons and evidence.

2. JOB APPLICATION COVER LETTER CATEGORY (9-12 ONLY)

A job application cover letter is one of the most important job-search documents. An effective letter can get a phone call for an interview, but a poorly written application letter usually spells continued unemployment. Effective application letters give the reader some insight into the applicant as an individual, highlights the applicant's capabilities and strengths, and explains how his/her qualities can contribute to the organization or position for which the applicant is applying.

Because the winning entries will be displayed publicly, **DO NOT USE A PERSONAL ADDRESS ON ENTRIES. FOR SAFETY REASONS A FAKE ADDRESS (123 Main Street) OR THE SCHOOL ADDRESS MUST BE USED.**

<u>Suggestions for Writing:</u>

> Your Address
> Your City, State and Zip Code
>
> Date
>
> Their First and Last Name
>   Their Position/Title
>   Company Name
>   Address
>   City, State and Zip Code
>
> Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. Last Name:
>
> The first paragraph of your cover letter should get the reader's attention, stimulate interest, and be appropriate for the job you are seeking. You should make your goal clear to readers, and preview the rest of your letter. It is also appropriate to mention where you learned of the job opening.
>
> Focus on your two or three strongest qualifications for a position in your cover letter. Even only one strong qualification is enough to discuss in a cover letter. Each qualification you discuss should be placed in its own paragraph, and your letter as a whole should not exceed one typed page.
>
> Each body paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that highlights one qualification. This qualification should be illustrated with specific details, and you should demonstrate how this qualification will benefit the employer. Ask the reader to refer to your resume, if possible.
>
> Your conclusion should ask for a personal interview (be flexible regarding a date and time for the interview), be specific about how the interviewer should contact you, and include a thank you.

Sincerely,

Your Signature
Your Name

Enclosure: resume

3. ESSAY/SPEECH – Persuasive/Argumentative/Opinion CATEGORY

Persuasive writing is written language that attempts to convince the reader to accept a point of view. Some writers believe that all good writing tries to persuade the reader to accept a point of view. These writers have excellent arguments to support their point of view, but for our purposes, persuasion will be given a narrow definition. This category will include papers in which the author states a point of view and makes a deliberate attempt to persuade the reader to agree.

In order to write persuasively, the young author must be able to:

- State a clear position on a proposition or proposal.
- Recognize and state the pros and cons of the argument.
- Support the stated position with relevant information, evidence, illustrations, anecdotes, or opinions of authorities.
- Anticipate and address readers' concerns and counterarguments.
- Use language that will convince the reader to agree with the proposal.

Possible Organization:

Beginning

- State the issue and your intention in writing about it.
- Clearly state your position.
- Identify yourself and the audience you are addressing.
- State your opinion.

Middle

- Support your position with relevant evidence and valid reasons, using examples and details.
- State the position(s) an opponent may take and give evidence and reasons an opponent may use.
- Counter the opposing position(s) with facts and ideas that support your position.

End

- Restate the issue and your position.
- Summarize how your evidence and reasons support your position.
- Conclude with a summary of your opinion.

4. LETTER/EDITORIAL – Persuasive/Argumentative/Opinion CATEGORY

See Essay/Speech above.

Sample Outline of a Persuasive Letter:

Dateline	Date
Sender's Address	Address City, State and Zip Code
Inside Address	Company Name Attention Address City, State and Zip Code
Salutation	Dear _____ :
Introductory Paragraph	Include your name and your position, a brief description of the cruise line development project, and your reason for writing this letter.
First Body Paragraph	Explain three major reasons why this company should invest in forming a partnership with the Port of Corpus Christi to open a new cruise line. Describe the uniqueness of this location.
Second Body Paragraph	Request an opportunity to set up a meeting to give a formal presentation to the head of the company to further discuss this proposal.
Conclusion Paragraph	Offer your availability to answer any questions, and state that you will follow up with a phone call.
Complimentary Closing	Sincerely,
Signature	Patrick H. Sebranek
Name	Patrick H. Sebranek

Informative/Explanatory

5. RESUME CATEGORY (9-12 ONLY)

Because the winning entries will be displayed publicly, **DO NOT USE A PERSONAL ADDRESS ON ENTRIES. FOR SAFETY REASONS A FAKE ADDRESS (123 Main Street) OR THE SCHOOL ADDRESS MUST BE USED.**

The resume is a selling tool that outlines the applicant's skills and experiences so an employer can see, at a glance, how he/she can contribute to the employer's workplace. The most effective resumes are clearly focused on a specific job title and address the employer's stated requirements for the position. The more the applicant knows about the duties and skills required for the job--and organizes the resume around these points--the more effective the resume.

6. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CATEGORY

An autobiography tells of a <u>specific incident or event</u> in the writer's life. It includes rich details of important scenes, people, and feelings that are significant to the writer. The writer may state or imply the significance of the event.

<u>Suggestions for Writing</u>:

 "I-5?" STRATEGY IS AS FOLLOWS:

1. WHERE did it take place?
2. WHEN did it take place?
3. WHO was involved?
4. WHAT exactly happened?
5. WHY was it important to you . . . then? now?

HOW "I - 5?" STRATEGY WORKS:

In the "I-5?" strategy, the "WHAT" response should cover the telling of the incident or event...the "WHO" response should include detailed character description of people involved and their feelings...the "WHEN and WHERE" responses should establish a time orientation and general geographic location as well as a scene description of the actual site of the incident...the "WHY" responses should reveal the significance of the event in the writer's eyes, both at the time and from a later perspective.

7. BIOGRAPHICAL CATEGORY

Biographical papers will relate incidents about a real person. The biography will tell of places, people, and events in the life of the person. This information will be gathered in as many ways as possible.

<u>The Organization</u>:

• Typically told in third person

• Will include information about people, places, and events of importance to the subject:
    in early childhood
    while growing up
    as an adult

• Will use anecdotes to help the reader know the person

• Will use interviews and/or quotations from the person, interviews of people who know or knew the person, or from letters, newspapers or other secondary sources

• Will show changes in lifestyle

8. INFORMATIONAL WRITING (FORMERLY RESEARCH)

The compositions for this category may be assignments from any subject area. The research may be from reading, interviews, observation, or experiments. Research should include information from three or more sources or from a series of observations or experiments. The paper will be written to inform the reader about a specific topic. The format should be that of a formal paper according to the grade level standards outlined in the Common Core Standards. Library research papers should have a bibliography and other papers should list sources of information and approximate times that the information was gathered.

The Organization

Compositions will include:
    Introduction
        Telling what the topic is
        Telling what the report is about
    Body of the paper
        The information
        Interpretation of the information
    Conclusion
        Completes the paper including any conclusions that the author
        wishes to discuss
     Bibliography listing information sources and/or work cited (grades 6-12 only)

9. RESPONSE TO LITERATURE – FICTION CATEGORY

In this category, students **respond** to a fictional work. Response papers are opportunities for students to consider carefully what they have read. In the response students should demonstrate an understanding of the literary work; support judgments through references to both the text and prior knowledge; develop interpretations that exhibit careful reading, understanding and insight. Response papers are not book reports that explain what was read, it explains what they think about what they read.

In addition, students in grades 8-12 should support judgments through references to the text, other literary works, other authors, or to personal knowledge; draw supported inferences about the effects of a literary work on its audience; demonstrate awareness of the author's stylistic devices and an appreciation of the effects created; identify and assess the impact of perceived ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text; analyze the use of imagery, language, universal themes, and unique aspects of the text (11-12 only).

Suggestions for Writing:

The following guidelines are intended to be used for responding to a reading. Read whatever you've been asked to respond to, and while reading, think about the following questions.

- What do you think about what you are reading?

- What do you agree or disagree with?
- What can you identify with? Have you had any applicable experience?
- Have you read or heard anything that applies to this what the writer said in the article or book?
- What would be the best way to evaluate the reading material?

Keeping your responses to these questions in mind, follow these prewriting steps.

Prewriting for Your Response Paper
The following statements could be used in a response paper. Complete as many statements as possible, from the list below, about what you just read.

My Reaction/Response to What I Just Read Is That . . .

I think that	In addition,
I see that	For example,
I feel that	Moreover,
It seems that	However,
In my opinion,	Consequently,
Because	Finally,
A good quote is	In conclusion,

What you've done in completing these statements is written a very rough response paper. Now it needs to be organized.

Organizing Your Response Paper
A response paper has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

The **introduction** should contain all the basic information in one or two paragraphs.

Sentence 1:   This sentence should give the **title, author,** and **publication** you read.
Sentences 2, 3, and sometimes 4: These sentences give a brief **summary** of what you read **(nutshell).**
Sentence 5: This sentence is your **thesis statement.** You **agree, disagree, identify,** or **evaluate.**

Your **introduction** should include a concise, one sentence, focused, thesis. This is the focused statement of your reaction/response. Write the thesis statement first, then, decide on the key points that will focus your ideas. These will be your topic sentences.

The **body** should contain paragraphs that provide support for your thesis. Each paragraph should contain one idea. Topic sentences should support the thesis, and the final sentence of each paragraph should lead into the next paragraph. Develop your ideas by adding examples, quotations, and details to your paragraphs. **Example:**

Topic Sentence
detail -- example --quotation --detail -- example -- quotation -- detail -- example -- quotation -- detail -- example --quotation
Summary Sentence

You can structure your paragraphs in two ways:
Author /**You**   OR   **Author** in contrast to **You**

The **conclusion** can be a restatement of what you said in your paper. It also can be a comment, which focuses your overall reaction. Finally, it can be a prediction of the effects of what you're reacting to. **Note:** your conclusion should include no new information.

10. RESPONSE TO LITERATURE – NON-FICTION CATEGORY

In this category, students read and **respond** to a nonfiction piece of writing. See above Response to Literature- Fiction, for an explanation and suggestions for writing.

11. RESPONSE TO LITERATURE – POETRY CATEGORY

In this category, students read and **respond** to a work of poetry. See above Response to Literature- Fiction, for an explanation and suggestions for writing. Original works of poetry should be submitted to poetry division only.

Narrative

12. REFLECTIVE COMPOSITION CATEGORY (9-12 ONLY)

Reflective compositions explore the significance of personal experiences, events, conditions, or concerns by using rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, description, exposition, persuasion). Comparisons are drawn between specific incidents and broader themes that illustrate the writer's important beliefs or generalizations about life. A balance is maintained in describing individual incidents and relating those incidents to more general and abstract ideas.

13. OBSERVATIONAL WRITING CATEGORY

The writer recreates a perceptual experience for the reader and presents the writer's vision of a specific person, place, object, animal or activity.

In Observational Writing, the writer: assumes an observational stance, identifies the subject of the observation, provides the context for the observation, and presents the actual experience.

In a good observational writing, the writer: takes a writer's stance as "observer", not "participant: (moving from the center to the periphery of what is being written about); draws on memory; identifies the subject of observation and locates it in a specific place and time (context); focuses on what she or he has observed; tries to make the reader see the subject, rather than just say he or she saw it; and is selective about which details of the observation to include. In presenting the observational experience, it uses factual descriptions as well as other techniques - dialogue; concrete, sensory language; narration of event; and shifts between close-ups and distant views.

Observational writing is characteristically distant, impersonal, presentational and less expressive in the writing about personal experiences than Autobiographical and Biographical Narratives. It doesn't argue for the value of a subject as in Evaluation. It is more concerned with shared perception than straightforward transmission of information, as is Report of Information.

Suggestions for Writing:

" I SAY-YOU SEE?" STRATEGY IS AS FOLLOWS

  I.   SUBJECT...Identify what has been observed

  II.   SETTING (time, place)...give location of the subject when
          you observed it.

  III.   SELECT AND SORT...cluster your subject then select details
          that clearly show the subject...use sensory impressions/actions/
          dialogue...sort details in order to use.

  IV.   SHARE...let reader "see" what you "saw", use "scientific
          eye" in sharing the subject.

14. FABLE CATEGORY

A fable is a short tale that teaches a moral, usually with animals and inanimate objects as characters. The plot generally involves wise or foolish actions by the characters and a strong focus is given on the point to be made. **The moral is stated specifically at the end.**

Suggestions for Writing:

Read and discuss many fables. Brainstorm and list the common attributes of a fable, such as animal characters with human qualities, foolish and wise characters and actions, a moral stated at the end.

After reading a fable, brainstorm other ways to show the same moral. Choose one of the suggestions and write new fable.

Decide on the moral of a proverb. Write a fable to show the moral.

Decide what the moral is for stories in reading books, newspapers, etc. State the moral clearly. Write fables for the moral.
Give a list of morals. Have students each choose one and write a fable illustrating the moral.

15. LEGEND CATEGORY

This category includes stories about the idealized history of a culture based on <u>historical truth</u>. Characters are heroes and heroines who are powerful, and sometimes, superhuman. A combination of role models and wish fulfillment for people of the culture. Helps audience overcome feeling of personal insignificance.

<u>Suggestions for Writing:</u>

List the problems of society, which we do not seem to be able to solve.

Decide on a hero or heroine to solve the problems. List the attributes he or she would need. Write character sketches of the hero or heroine. Tell how this person would solve one of the problems of society.

Write legends for the period of history or the place or culture being studied in Social Science. Either make up heroes or base the hero on someone who lived at the time.

Rewrite old legends in modern language. Write a legend as a play or a television script.

16. MYTH CATEGORY

Myths are stories used to explain concerns of religion and science. Show culture's core beliefs and values. Explains forces of nature, natural phenomena, and the relationship of man to nature. Full of wonder about why the world is like it is. Characters are people, gods, and animals or objects that represent natural or supernatural forces. Part of oral tradition of nearly all cultures. Told in impersonal third person. Experience is of the community, not of the individuals.

<u>Suggestions for Writing:</u>

Look at natural events. Pretend that you know nothing about how and why an event happens. Think of possible explanations based on what you do know and what you have experienced.

Look at the natural phenomena from the point of view of a writer of science fiction. Set up guidelines of what was known at the given time. The writer starts with what is known and pushes just a little into the unknown.

Myths include the following elements; adventure, adversity, challenge, comedy, courage, cunning, daring, deception, foolhardiness, and strength. Experiment with ways to show these qualities. Incorporate the best ideas into myths.

17. PARODY CATEGORY (5-12 ONLY)

A Parody is a <u>comic imitation</u> of a literary work. A writer creates a parody to <u>ridicule</u> the work of another by exaggerating that author's style or treatment of subject matter.

Parodists <u>usually</u> choose famous writers who have a distinctive style, so that the reader can easily recognize the subject of the parody. For example, the American authors Ernest Hemingway and Henry James have often been parodied. Parodists exaggerate Hemingway's crisp style and James's complicated sentences.

Expert parodists thoroughly know the subject they are parodying. A successful parody demonstrates not only the understanding of the original author, but also the parodist's own skill   Although parody involves criticism, it is also a kind of appreciation. By selecting a certain author, the parodist acknowledges that the subject is both original and well known.

Many early English novelists began their careers as parodists, including Jane Austen, Henry Fielding, and William Makepeace Thackeray. Perhaps the leading American parodist of the mid-1900's is Peter De Vries. Almost all of his novels have passages in which he parodies the work of others. Outstanding collections of parodies include Parodies: *An Anthology from Chaucer to Beerbohm and After* (1960) World Book

18. POINT OF VIEW CATEGORY (TK-8 ONLY) – <u>NOT AN OPINION PIECE</u>

1. Write about events from a different point of view. Can include a person outside of yourself.

    Examples:

    a. Cinderella's slipper
    b. Plymouth Rock
    c. Native American experiencing the arrival of a European explorer
    d. Paul Revere's horse
    e. George Washington

19. SHORT STORY CATEGORY

The short story category includes any <u>narrative</u> that tells a story about <u>one</u> or <u>more characters</u> attempting to <u>solve a problem</u>. The story may be true or invented. Included in this category will be stories written in the tradition of folk literature.

As a short story writer, you must create the illusion of a narrator who tells the story for you. You may use the first-person narrator ("I felt my face suddenly flush with anger"), or third-person ("her face suddenly flushed with anger"), or a compromise between the two extremes, the third-person limited omniscient narrator ("She felt herself growing angry") or have the narrator report an action as it is happening now ("I am mad," "She flushes with anger," "She feels herself growing angry").

Whatever limitation you place on your narrator to clarify his point of view, stick with it. Don't commit the narrative "sin", as so many beginning writers do, of jumping without

warning from one point of view to another. The reader can't appreciate your story if he has to keep asking, "Who's talking now?"

The Organization:

The short story has:

<u>A Setting</u>:	Telling <u>where</u> and <u>when</u> the story takes place
<u>Characters</u>:	Beings who do things, have problems, want things, and try to solve problems and get the things they want
<u>A Plot</u>:	A <u>conflict or problem to be solved</u> <u>Events</u> or episodes leading to the climax
<u>Climax</u>:	The part you can't wait for when an attempt is made to solve the problem
<u>Resolution</u>:	How the problem was solved, if solved. Typically includes some reflection or personal insight gained.

20. SCRIPT CATEGORY (7-12 Only)

A script is a document that outlines every aural, visual, behavioral and lingual element required to tell a story. It is crucial to remember that a script is meant to be visual. You don't tell your audience your story, you **show** them. Write what they will see and hear.

<u>Place:</u>
- Provide enough information for the reader to "see" what you mean but avoid superfluous details.

<u>Character:</u>
- Describe important elements about eh character (e.g. age, physical traits)
- Mention specific actions such as the person's walk/posture, tics and facial expression.

<u>Dialogue:</u>
- Use dialogue only when information cannot be given in any other way. (e.g. through the action, setting and facial expression)
- Good dialogues are pertinent, dynamic and add new information.
- Instead of speaking, a character can reply to another character with silence or action.
- When there is an interruption at the end of the dialogue or silence, use ellipsis.
- Avoid unnecessary dialogue

<u>Action:</u>

- Write only what can be seen and is relevant to the story (Don't, make reference to the past or future).
- Use clear and direct language,
- Write short, accurate sentence in the present tense.

21. TALL TALE CATEGORY

A tall tale is story about people with <u>amazing powers.</u> Oral tradition usually had a series of stories about the same amazing person. The person usually has tools, belongings, or pets with equally amazing powers. Tall Tales may or may not be based on a historical person. Contains hyperboles (intentionally exaggerated figures of speech).

<u>Suggestions for Writing:</u>

The tall tale is the truth stretched and stretched and stretched.

1. Make a list of 20 things that most people do every day.

2. Invent a person who has super powers to do some of those things better, faster or in unusual ways.

3. Write a description of the person. Include examples of how he or she does the things on the list. Compare how the super person does things with how most people do them.

4. Think about how you play a favorite game or do something like clean your room. Think about clothing, places, and objects you use. Tell how the super person does or does not need different objects.

22. COMPARE/CONTRAST CATEGORY

When you **compare** things, you show their **similarities**; when you **contrast** things, you show their **differences**. We can really understand only those things that are familiar to us or similar to things we already understand, so comparing and contrasting the unfamiliar with the familiar is one of the most important techniques for writing. You can, and probably do, use comparison and contrast to describe things, to define things, to analyze things, to make an argument -- to do, in fact, almost any kind of writing.

Many teachers assign topics that ask writers to write an essay comparing and contrasting two or more ideas, but besides its value in organizing an essay, comparison/contrast is also useful as a technique:

- to structure a paragraph
- to work within other techniques or modes
- to define a complex idea (by comparing to something similar and contrasting it with its opposite)
- to think about one thing in terms of another (like the present in terms of the past or the past in terms of the future or humans in terms of primates)
- to make an argument, first describing what people shouldn't do and then ending - with a bang! - with what they should

When they are comparing and contrasting, for example, two ideas, like corsets and footbinding, there are multiple ways to structure the essay. Below are two possible variations.

1. First compare, then contrast (or vice versa).

Writers using a comparison/contrast structure might begin by discussing the ways in which corsets are similar to footbinding, then they move to a description of the ways in which the two ideas are different. This method is probably the one used most commonly.

I. Introduction
II. Corsets and footbinding are similar.
III. Corsets and footbinding are different.
IV. Conclusion

This structure focuses on the comparison and contrast instead of on the two ideas (e.g., corsetry and footbinding) being compared and contrasted.

Clearly, the sequence is important. If you begin with the comparison, then the contrast will get emphasis - the logical movement is from thinking about similarities to thinking about differences. If you begin by contrasting the ideas (and then move toward a comparison), the similarities get emphasis.

2. Only compare or only contrast.

It is always possible, of course, to write an essay that treats only the similarities or differences between ideas.

*Writers who **only compare** two ideas sometimes briefly mention the contrast in the introduction and then move on so that they don't lead readers to think they can't make relevant distinctions.

*Writers who **only contrast** ideas sometimes briefly summarize similarities in the conclusion so they don't leave the impression that they are thinking in opposites.

23. DESCRIPTION CATEGORY

What is a Description? All good descriptive writing <u>creates an impression</u> for the reader. It <u>paints a vivid word picture of a person, place or thing</u>. To make a picture clear, the writer includes details. Many of the details in a description appeal to the senses; hearing, seeing, smelling, touching or feeling. In the best descriptions the details are as specific as the writer can possibl**y** make them.

Example of a descriptive paragraph from "Prairie Christmas", by Paul Engle**:**

> *While my mother and sister went into the house, the team was unhitched and taken into the barn, to be covered with blankets and given a little grain. That winter odor of a barn is a wonderfully complex one, rich and warm and utterly unlike the smell of the same barn in summer. The body heat of many animals weighing a thousand pounds or more; pigs in one corner making their dark, brown-sounding grunts; milk cattle nuzzling the manager for wisps of hay; horses eyeing the newcomers and rolling their deep, oval eyes white; oats, hay, and straw tangy still with the live August sunlight; the sharp odor of leather harness rubbed with Neat's foot oil to keep it supple; molasses-sweet odor of ensilage in the silo where the fodder was almost fermenting. It is a smell from strong and living things, and my father always said it was the secret of health, that it scoured out a man's lungs.*

Can you find at least two places where Paul Engle mentions the <u>odors</u> in the barn? How does he describe the <u>sounds</u> made by the pigs? What sense is he appealing to? What kinds of animal feed does he <u>see</u> in the barn? Does the author's naming the different animals and telling where they are and what they are doing help you to <u>see</u> the interior of the barn? How is the atmosphere in the barn described?
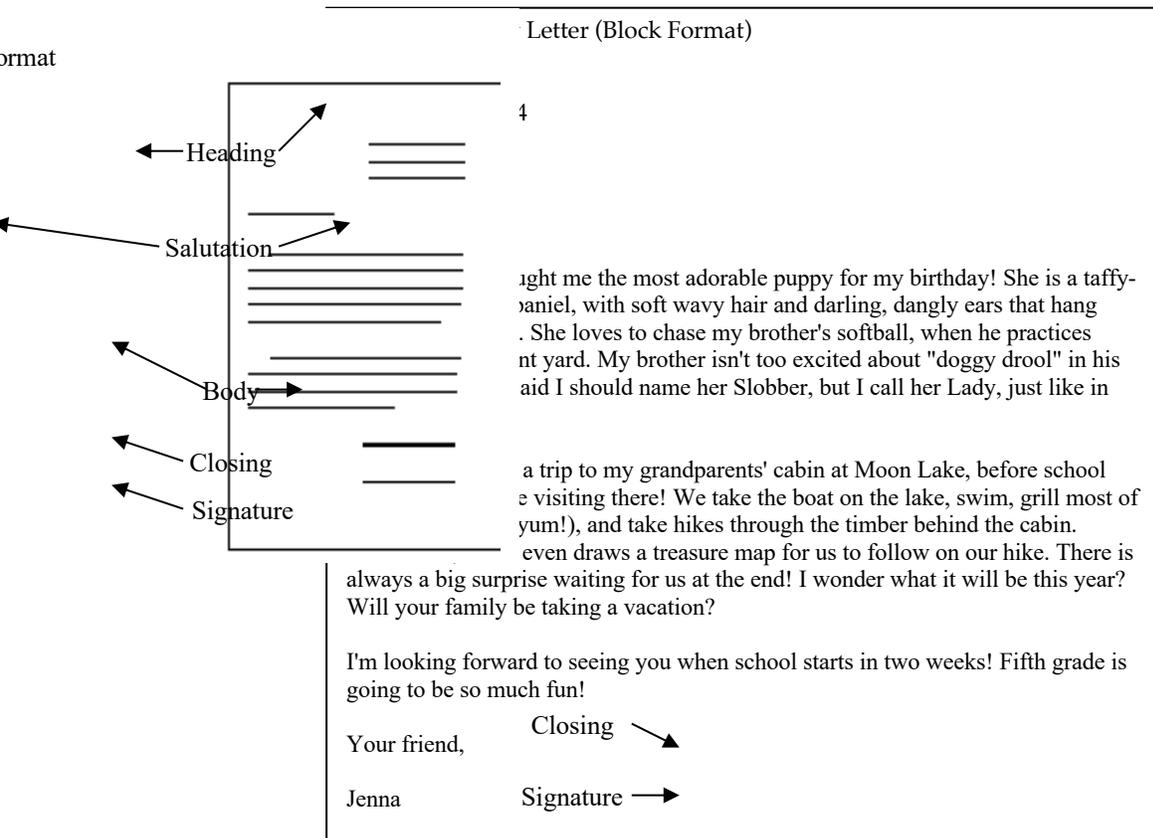
24. PROBLEM/SOLUTION CATEGORY

The writer describes and analyzes a specific problem, then <u>proposes</u> and <u>argues</u> for a solution.

The writer begins by stating the problem, either by personal anecdote, dramatization of the problem, or simple statement. The writer <u>describes the</u> <u>problem in enough detail that the reader understands the problem, its causes and effects, and consequences for failing to resolve it</u>. The writer presents, in a coherent, logical way, one or more solutions to convince the reader that one or more of the proposed solutions is an effective way to proceed. Reasons are given in support of the solution(s).

25. FRIENDLY LETTER CATEGORY (K-5 ONLY)

No title on entry form

There are five basic parts in a standard friendly letter: the **heading,** which includes the date**;** the **salutation** or **greeting,** which is always followed by a comma**;** the **body;** the **closing,** which is always followed by a comma; and the **signature.** Letters entered in this competition should contain all five parts.   For K-1 students, only the date is required in the heading. For grades 2-5, the inside address is also required. The traditional friendly letter format or the block format may be used. **DO NOT USE A PERSONAL ADDRESS ON ENTRIES. FOR SAFETY REASONS USE A FAKE ADDRESS or THE SCHOOL ADDRESS.**

Letter (Block Format)

ormat

←—Heading

Salutation

...ight me the most adorable puppy for my birthday! She is a taffy-
...paniel, with soft wavy hair and darling, dangly ears that hang
... She loves to chase my brother's softball, when he practices
...nt yard. My brother isn't too excited about "doggy drool" in his
...aid I should name her Slobber, but I call her Lady, just like in

Body

Closing

Signature

...a trip to my grandparents' cabin at Moon Lake, before school
...e visiting there! We take the boat on the lake, swim, grill most of
...yum!), and take hikes through the timber behind the cabin.
...even draws a treasure map for us to follow on our hike. There is
always a big surprise waiting for us at the end! I wonder what it will be this year?
Will your family be taking a vacation?

I'm looking forward to seeing you when school starts in two weeks! Fifth grade is
going to be so much fun!

Your friend,   Closing

Jenna   Signature →

PreSchool, TK, Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Grade
Classes **ONLY**
– No exceptions –

Small Group and Whole Class may enter in any of the grade permissible categories of Prose and Poetry

Small Group and Whole Class Entries Reference

Small Group Writing 2-6 Students (Pre-2 Only) and **Whole Class Interactive/Shared Writing (Pre-2 Only**) are permitted to enter in any of the grade permissible Prose/Poetry Categories.
(to be included in each class entry of 3 pieces per category). May enter in any of the grade permissible Prose category listed.

SMALL GROUP WRITING (Pre-2 ONLY, group of 2–6 students)
-Each participant from winning entries will receive a medal
- Appropriate for grade level Pre-2
- A variety of students are involved
- Denotes a clue of originality
- Work that would be interesting to read/listen to by other primary students
- Denotes some type of visual imaginary

WHOLE CLASS ENTRY (Pre-2 ONLY)
-Winning Classrooms will receive a medal. All participants from winning team will receive a certificate.
Whole class entries are interactive/shared writing entries.
Interactive writing is a very powerful strategy for helping children learn about letters, sounds, words and sentences. It is an element of a balanced language program that also includes reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading, model writing, and independent reading and writing.

During interactive writing the teacher and class, or small group, work together to create written text. The group agrees on what to write through discussion and negotiation. In order to produce the written words, the students articulate the sounds with the teacher and then write the letters and chunks of words that they hear. The teacher may fill in parts of words or whole words, depending upon the group's stage of writing development.

Interactive writing is used for creating stories, writing poems, the retelling of favorite literature, recipes, directions and lists. The pieces created by the students become a part of the classroom environment and are used for reading and rereading. The class may use the pieces for shared reading or may enjoy reading some independently.

POETRY REFERENCE

ABOUT POETRY

Writing poetry is something like taking off a tight pair of shoes and wiggling your toes, happily free from constraints. When young authors write poetry, they are free from the constraints of logic and syntax and punctuation. The writer has control and is free to wiggle words until thought and feelings arrange themselves into the right message.

Poetry has rules, but they are different. The rules of poetry are soft and bend easily, and it's even all right to be silly. The special ways language is used in poetry helps poets learn to use language powerfully. Knowing how to use language powerfully is the greatest gift we can give to our students.

The following are some suggestions before beginning poetry along with a brief description of each of the categories for the poetry division of the Writing Festival.

Before Poetry

Make a List
List making is a valuable skill in itself, but use this skill for building word power as you play with words.
- Colors
  Everything red
  What Blue makes you think about
  All of the words for color based on red
  Colors for your feelings

- Movement
  All the ways your hand moves
  Movement to go with a feeling

Write Telegrams
Give advice to the president, the governor, the principal. A telegram that a character from a book would send to a friend. A telegram of appreciation.

Word Play
Write a sentence with 6 words.
Write a sentence of more than 6 words and every word has an "I" in it.
Make own thesaurus - all of the synonyms and similar meanings you can find.

Activities Leading to Poetry

- Reading poetry aloud
- Listening to poetry
- Memorizing poetry
- Finding poetry and sharing poetry

Observation

Observe one person or object for six minutes. Think of yourself being that person or object. Visualize doing exactly what the person or object is doing. Be aware of how your muscles and skin feel. Do you feel happy, sad or sorry at the end of the observation? How do you feel?

Look at a tree:
  from 100 steps away   describe with words
  from 20 steps away   tell how your image changed
  from 2 steps away   describe with words

Are you sure the tree you described first is the same tree you observed last?

Sit on the playground and watch people's faces:

Think about what each person is feeling, as shown by his or her face.
Make your face do what other people's faces do.
How do you feel?

Stand by a building near a busy street to watch the people:

Guess what each person's job is.
Look at the person carefully to see what it is that makes you think he or she works at _____.

Watch TV with the sound turned off:

What can you tell about the story or program by watching faces?
What can you tell by watching the action?

Observation is the beginning of all writing, but even more with poetry than other forms of written language.

Compression of Language

One of the characteristics of poetry is that language is compressed or distilled. Each work carries a great deal of meaning, supplies the desired emphasis, and conveys a feeling.

Using prefixes, suffixes, and known word cells, make up words for movement.

Make a dictionary for your new words.

Give each child three words to use in conservation. As he or she talks to someone, have the observer tries to guess what the word is.

Make a list of words that you like: The sound, the looks, the meaning, to say over and over.

Go on a listening walk. List the things that make sounds. Leave space between words on the list. Later, fill in the space with words that tell about the sound made by each thing on the list.

Record sounds. Students listen and list the words that come into their minds.

Watch a baby, a bulldozer, a bird or anything that moves. List all of the words that come to mind.

Touch different objects while blindfolded. Describe what is felt. Other students write key words of the description.

Alliteration

Write 3 word phrases beginning with the same sound.

Choose 10 objects. Describe each with 2 or more words beginning with the same sound.

Make lists of all the nouns you can think of that begin with a specific sound

Do the same with verbs, adverbs, and adjectives

Assonance

Do any of the above with vowel sounds.

Consonance

Do the same with consonants in the middle of words, or at the end.

Rhyme

Find words that rhyme with you name. Make a rhyming dictionary. Write quatrains with the rhyming words already chosen. Line 2 and 4: moon-soon. Lines 1 and 3: night-light. Make a list of concrete nouns. Find adjectives that rhyme.
Simile

List nouns. Take each noun and write a sentence.

    A lamp is like moon under glass.

    A _____ is like _____.

  Decide what colors a feeling is like.
            Being frustrated is like purpley black.

  Make pictures of similes.
            Marty is like a long pencil.

<u>Metaphor</u>

Compare yourself to an animal
                        I am a _____ when I am excited.

Make similes about smells or tastes. Change to a metaphor and write a sentence or phrase.

Writing Poetry

Ideas and Suggestions

Poetry can be free or very structured. It can have no specified line or stanza pattern, or it can have a set pattern without deviation. Children should have the opportunity to hear, read, and write poetry with both flexible and rigid boundaries. Most of the rigid forms are included here as Pattern Poetry.

Pattern Poetry gives the writer a rigid structure for language. Some writers find the patterns to be restrictive, but others find a special challenge in creating meaning within a rigid form. Most students, both in elementary and high schools, enjoy working with pattern poetry.

Patterns may be based on kinds of words, rhyme schemes, shape, or syllables. Using the patterns is a kind of word play. Working with patterns is an excellent way to help students learn to manipulate language by finding specific parts of speech, synonyms, the right size word, or different ways to say the same thing. It is also one of the better ways to teach students about the special ways that poets compress and distill language. And, as with any lesson that is highly structured, the success rate and satisfaction for students is high.

To learn to write poetry with rhyme and meter, write parodies of poetry you know well.

Observe a small space. Write 3 sentences.
        Give the subject plus description.
        Give the action of the subject or action directed at the subject.
        Tell about something you feel or wonder about.

Work into a poem. Eliminate words. Use synonyms. Rearrange the word order.

Choose a phrase or sentence from a journal to be worked into a poem.

Write a sentence telling who the audience will be and what you want them to know and feel.

Brainstorm words that might help you get the ideas and feeling into the poem.
Look over the notes you have and decide on the form of the poetry that you will use.

Make two or three phrases with each word.
Try some similes, alliterative phrases, or some other way of bringing attention to words.

Begin putting it all together.

Read aloud to make sure that it sounds like poetry.

Write a couplet as a class. This will be the refrain for poems written by the group. Decide how many stanzas the poem will have and whether or not there will be a rhyme scheme. Let students do this in pairs.

Think of a topic that excites you. Write five lines that could go in a poem on that topic. The line should have from 4 to 6 words in it. The lines do not go together. Choose the one you like best. Use it twice in a poem.

Write a poem with specific directions. For example:

> Write a poem with ten lines.
> > The first line will set the mood of mystery or loneliness.
> > The second line will tell the subject.
> > The third will have a simile.
> > The fourth line will have a color in it.
> > The fifth line will tell and action.
> > The sixth line will tell of a feeling.
> > The seventh line will remind the reader of the mood.
> > The eighth line will tell about the subject.
> > The ninth line will begin to end the poem.
> > The tenth line will complete and leave the reader feeling satisfied.

Decide to be an object. What would you fear if you were this object? Write a poem about the fear.

Change the question to: What would you wish for?

Go back in memory to a particularly important time. Think about what happened. Choose one scene that is particularly vivid and makes you have the same feeling as you had then. Focus on the picture of that scene for a moment. Choose words to go with the scene. Paint a picture of the scene with words. The words will show the reader the scene and tell how you felt.

Give two lines of a stanza. Each student completes the stanza in his or her own way. Put together as a long poem.

Write narrative poetry about people who have overcome serious obstacles to achieve excellence in their field.

Choose a person or invention from a time or place being studied in Social Science. Write a narrative poem or a ballad.

Choose a proverb. Write a poem that gives the same advice.

POETRY
Division

Item	CATEGORY TITLE This title is to be listed on Student Entry Form	GRADE LEVEL	DIVISION (List this Division on Entry Page)
1	Acrostic Category	TK-3	Poetry
2	Cinquain Category	TK-5	Poetry
3	Couplet Category	TK-3	Poetry
4	Diamante Category	TK-12	Poetry
5	Haiku/Senryu Category (counted as ONE entry)	TK-12	Poetry
6	Humorous Category	TK-12	Poetry
7	Lantern Category	TK-3	Poetry
8	Limerick Category	TK-12	Poetry
9	Quatrain Category	TK-12	Poetry
10	Rhymed Category (6 lines or more)	TK-12	Poetry
11	Song Lyrics/Rap Category	TK-12	Poetry
12	Tanka Category	TK-12	Poetry
13	Tercet Category	TK-12	Poetry
14	Triolet Category	TK-12	Poetry
15	Unrhymed Category	TK-12	Poetry
A.	**Not a Category**-*Small Group Entry* (2-6 students) **GRD: Pre-2 ONLY – See page 18 for details.**	**A & B** May enter in any of the grade permissible Poetry category listed below	Poetry: Small Group
B.	**Not a Category**-*Whole Class Entry* **GRD: Pre-2 ONLY – See page 18 for details.**		Poetry: Whole Class

Three (3) entries from the poetry categories listed may be submitted for each class/grade level. Entries for Small Group (Pre-2 ONLY) and Whole Class (Pre-2 ONLY) will be counted as one of the three entries being submitted in that category for that class. See Page 18 for details.

POETRY CATEGORIES

1.   ACROSTIC CATEGORY (TK-3 ONLY)

Acrostic poetry is a form of short verse constructed so that the initial letters of each line are taken consecutively from words. The poem is formed by writing a word vertically down the page. Each line of the poem begins with the letter on that particular line. There is no specific length and the poem dos not have to rhyme. The acrostic form helps unify the message. The tighter the writing the more sophisticated the poem will be.

Suggestions for Writing:

Try an acrostic poem using your name (you can use your first name, or a combination of your first, middle and last names). The words and phrases are all about your character traits. Think of words to describe yourself or ask someone who knows you well to describe you. Make a list of all the words you and other come up with. Use this list to develop an acrostic poem. Use a thesaurus to find synonyms of the words on your list to find the right word or phrase for a particular letter in your name.

Examples:

ELISABETH   TWO BIT

Eats desert first   **T**houghtful
Lively Mom and Wife   **W**isecracker of the bunch
Insatiable quest for learning   **O**wns black-handled switchblade
Savors time gardening
Animated and theatrical   **B**elieves in laughter
Boisterous and brainy   **I**rresistibly funny
Expecting to be a poet   **T**eachers forgot his first name is Keith
Teaching is more than a job
Home is my first love

2.   CINQUAIN CATEGORY (TK-5 ONLY)

The cinquain form originally came from France and was used to make an important statement about a specific subject. The subject for the cinquain is a single scene or object. The poem expresses a feeling about the subject while painting a vivid word picture.

The syllabic pattern appears to be the original pattern. The other patterns may have been developed because children find words easier to understand than syllables. The poem should have a definite feeling of rhythm when read aloud. If it does not, try to balance the syllables so that they are more nearly like the syllabic pattern.

The Classic Form:

- 5 lines, unrhymed
- Syllabic pattern 2-4-6-8-2
- Title of poem often used to make meaning clear
- Is a complete statement or series of statements
- Is punctuated like prose
- Words cannot be carried from one line to another to get correct syllable count

A.	Line 1	single noun--subject
	Line 2	descriptive adjectives
	Line 3	related participles (-ed or -ing)
	Line 4	statement about the subject
	Line 5	one summary word to express emotion or mood

Alternate Form:

B.	Line 1	1 word, the subject
	Line 2	2 words describing the subject
	Line 3	3 words expressing an action
	Line 4	4 words expressing a feeling
	Line 5	a synonym for the title

3.   COUPLET CATEGORY (TK-3 ONLY)

Introduce rhymed poetry with the couplet, two rhymed lines. Young children make up couplets while they play, although they probably could not do if told to make a couplet. The couplet is basic to many rhymed poems or songs. Couplets can be fun for all ages, providing challenge with both matching meter and rhyme.

The Form:

- 2 lines
- Complete poem
- Simple idea expressed
- Rhyming
- Lines have matching number of syllables and matching stress
- May be part of longer stanza or poem
    - closed couplets--meaning completed in two lines
    - open couplets--meaning completed in another couplet
    - meaning may carry through several couplets

An Example:

Plastic Snake.
Very Fake.

4.   DIAMANTE CATEGORY

Diamante means diamond shaped, which describes the shape of the poem. Specific patterns are usually used to give the poem its diamond shape. The thought of the poem shifts in the middle so that the second half expresses a feeling that is the opposite of the feeling in the first half.

The form:

- Shaped like a diamond
- Usually 7 lines
- First and last lines one word each
- First and last lines are antithetical (are opposing words)

Pattern:

<div align="center">

noun
adjective adjective
verb+ing verb+ing verb+ing
noun about noun about noun about noun about
verb+ing verb+ing verb+ing
adjective adjective
noun

</div>

Pattern Description:

1 noun
2 adjectives describing noun
3 participles (ing)
4 nouns or a phrase about the noun
3 participles showing a change in subject
2 adjectives which continue the idea of change
1 noun, the opposite of noun on Line 1

An Example:

<div align="center">

Dirge
Melancholy Sorrowful
Mourning Weeping Suffering
Funeral Procession Parade Celebration
Praising Dancing Rejoicing
Lively Joyful
Melody

</div>

5.   HAIKU/SENRYU CATEGORY (counted as ONE category)

Haiku, a Japanese poetic form, is a brief, simple description of **a detail of nature**, told in a way that evokes emotion. The poet is a careful observer whose words suggest the essence of the subject.

Haiku is an elegant and disciplined art form, and as such, can be a part of a senior high school literature or writing program. At the elementary school level, many teachers include Haiku as a part of the writing program. With younger children, the form is part of the wonderful experience of word play. At all ages, Haiku is rewarding to both teacher and student.

The Form:

- 3 lines of 17 syllables

Line 1	5 syllables	setting
Line 2	7 syllables	subject and action (2 lines)
Line 3	5 syllables	

- Haiku has a **single theme**, typically discusses subjects from the natural world, including seasons, months, animals, insects and even the smallest elements of nature. While haiku does not have to only cover natural subject matter, it is most often used as a celebration of nature.
- Unrhymed with no metrical pattern
- **Present tense**--presented as happening now

An Example:

A web hangs with dew
Silvery in the dawn and
Entices to doom.

The **Senryu** is another Japanese syllable poem. It has exactly the same unrhymed 3 line, 17 syllable form as the Haiku. **The difference is that Senryu can be written on any subject and is more concerned with human nature or emotions and is often humorous and satiric**.

EACH CLASS MAY ONLY SUBMIT 3 ENTRIES TOTAL FOR BOTH HAIKU AND/OR SENRYU

6.   HUMOROUS CATEGORY

Any format. Must be funny.

7.   LANTERN CATEGORY (TK-3 ONLY)

5 lines shaped like a Japanese Lantern

Syllable Pattern: Example:

Line 1	1 syllable	The
Line 2	2 syllables	morning
Line 3	3 syllables	sun comes up
Line 4	4 syllables	to warm the
Line 5	1 syllable	world
		Day.

8.   LIMERICK CATEGORY

The limerick must have been developed by someone who loved puns and other word play. It is hard to find a serious limerick, not that anyone is looking for one. Limericks are for fun, and most students can have fun writing them. Students must be able to keep track of rhyme and meter at the same time in order to write limericks, so this form will be best for middle grades and up. Let your students test their limericks by comparing them to the nursery rhyme, Hickory Dickory Dock. If they know the tune, they can sing the limericks.

The Form:

- 5 Lines
- Has meter
- Rhymes
- Fifth line is usually a surprise, word play, or humorous statement
- Goal of poet is to make the audience laugh or smile

The pattern:

Line 1	rhyme <u>a</u> 3 metrical beats, no more than 9 syllables
Line 2	rhyme and meter same as line 1
Line 3	rhyme <u>b</u> 2 metrical beats, no more than 6 syllables
Line 4	rhyme and meter same as line 3
Line 5	rhyme <u>a</u> 3 metrical beats, no more than 9 syllables

Line 1 and 2 introduce the subject, usually a person
Line 3 and 4 tells something about the subject or solves a problem
Line 5 completes the story, usually humorously.

9.   QUATRAIN CATEGORY

The quatrain may be the most familiar pattern of poetry, since it is the most frequently used form of stanza for longer poems and songs. The quatrain is rhymed and has meter, although both the rhyme and rhythm patterns differ from poem to poem.

The Form:

- 4 lines
- Rhymes
       usually abab
       ballad form – abcb or abac
       aabb or aaaa rhymes are not unusual
- Meter varies

An Example:

       This highway was the way to home.
              Then, it seemed my friend.
       But now, because I chose to roam,
              The highway has no end.

10.   RHYMED CATEGORY (6 LINES OR MORE)

At least 6 lines of a verse consisting of an end rhyme scheme. It usually has a regular meter.

11.   SONG LYRICS/RAP CATEGORY

Lyrics: A short verse, which is intended to express the emotions of the author. Quite often these lyrics are set to music.

There would be a reference as to the melody of the song: either original or "sung to the tune of ---".

Rap: A form of lyric poetry that includes both rhythm and rhyme and is chanted with a definite cadence.

Rap lyrics are in the form of simple rhymes.

EACH CLASS MAY ONLY SUBMIT 3 ENTRIES TOTAL FOR BOTH SONG LYRICS AND/OR RAP

12.   TANKA CATEGORY

The tanka was probably invented by a Japanese student reading a Haiku who could not resist adding another opinion, and that is the way Tanka is usually written. One person writes Haiku, and someone else responds by adding two lines.

The Form:

    3 lines of 17 syllables
            Line 1   5 syllables
            Line 2   7 syllables
            Line 3   5 syllables

    The content is that of a Haiku, description of nature
    2 lines added to complete a thought or tell a story
            Line 4   7 syllables
            Line 5   7 syllables

An Example:

    A cloud at sunset
    Pink, then orange, then crimson,
    Clinging to the day.
    Last rays of light turn purple,
    Darkness claims the cloud for night.

13.   TERCET CATEGORY

The Form:

- 3 lines
- Rhymes – aaa or aba
- Tells brief story
- Humorous

An example:

    My diet is new.
    I'll give it to you,
    And you'll break it, too.

14.   TRIOLET CATEGORY

Triolets are eight-line poems which are usually funny or just fun. The pattern of repetition seems to lend itself to humor much more than to something serious. If you are writing humorous poetry, older students may find triolets to be more of a challenge than limericks are.

The Form:

- 8 lines
- Lines one, four, and seven are the same
- Lines two and eight are the same
- Rhyme pattern -- abaaabab

An Example:

> I haven't a thing to wear tonight
>   (My daughter's a fashion plate.)
> My clothes are either too loose or too tight.
> I haven't a thing to wear tonight.
> There's nothing here even close to right.
>   I wish I hadn't made this date.
> I haven't a thing to wear tonight.
>   (My daughter's a fashion plate.)

15.   UNRHYMED CATEGORY

Free form
Must not be prose

SMALL GROUP POEM (Pre-2 ONLY, GROUP OF 6 STUDENTS OR LESS)
See page 18 of this handbook for more information on small group writing.

WHOLE CLASS INTERACTIVE/SHARED WRITING POEM (Pre-2 ONLY)
See pages 18 of this handbook for more information on interactive writing.