



# Line it Up

Recommended Grade Range: High School

## Learning Objective(s)

### Students will be able to...

- ✓ Observe and discuss the different ways poets use lines, line-breaks, stanza breaks and white space in free verse poems.

## Lesson Agenda

### Do Now

Begin by passing out one poem typed each as a single paragraph, with no line-breaks or stanza breaks. Ask students to, on their own, arrange the text into lines and stanzas.

- ◆ You may want to review some useful terms with your students — enjambment, end-stopped lines, caesura.
- ◆ You may want to prompt struggling students by asking them to listen to the cadences of the phrases and sentences, and to look for possible exciting ambiguities created by considered line-breaks (aiming to create at least one line that speaks to both the line that precedes it and the line that follows it).

### Share Out

- ◆ Ask students to share their new versions of the paragraph poem.
  - ◆ Discuss their choices, and any differences/similarities the class notices across them.

### Mini Lesson

Put the students into groups, and give each group a poem-paragraph.

- ◆ Ask groups to arrange their text into lines and stanzas.
- ◆ Encourage students to experiment--not merely break the text into syntactical units. They may arrange the same text a couple of different ways — trying longer and shorter lines, various stanzas.
- ◆ Once the group has settled on an arrangement, or tried a few different arrangements, ask them to work together to write a reflection about the process, explaining some of the choices and pointing out the lines that really seem to shine.



### Share Out

Groups will briefly present and discuss the arrangements with each other, then compare them to the original poems and continue discussion.

### Suggestions for Next Steps

- ◆ This assignment would be a fine introduction to lessons on American Modernist poets or the Imagists.
- ◆ You could extend the discussion to include grammar and mechanics (punctuation, sentence structure).
- ◆ Looking closely at a poem's texture will also bring up questions of tone.

### Lesson Resources

#### Suggested Poems:

- "The Farmer" by William Carlos Williams
- "This is Just to Say" by William Carlos Williams
- "One for the Rose" by Galway Kinnell
- "A Lover" by Amy Clampitt
- "Song" by H. D.
- "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams
- "a(l)" by E. E. Cummings
- "in-Just Spring" by E. E. Cummings
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For additional suggestions, and a variation on this lesson, look at "Learning the Lines" in the middle school lesson plans.

The Favorite Poem Project is a nonprofit organization dedicated to celebrating, documenting, and encouraging poetry's role in our lives.



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