Concrete Poetry
Review

Yesterday we looked at some of the basic structural elements of a poem. What were they?

December Leaves
by Kaye Starbird

The fallen leaves are cornflakes A
That fill the lawn’s wide dish, B
And night and noon C
The wind’s a spoon C
That stirs them with a swish. B

Rhyme scheme

Stanza

Line
Today’s question:

How does the structure of a poem affect its meaning?
Concrete Poetry

Concrete poem - a poem in which the placement of words on the page is just as important in conveying the meaning of the poem as the meaning of the actual words used.
“Siesta of a Hungarian Snake”
by Edwin Morgan
"40-Love"
by Roger McGough

middle aged
couple playing
ten nis
when the
game ends
and they
go home
the net
will still be
tween

Turn to your group and explain how the placement of words in this poem adds to its meaning.
“Forsythia”
by Mary Ellen Solt
“Poem” by Philip G. Tannenbaum

I don't like telephone booths
“Concrete Cat”
by Dorthi Charles
“She Loves Me”
by Emmett Williams
“Song of a Dandelion Seed”
by Unknown

Round and round we go, twirling swirling,
through the air, falling, drifting, sprawling.
And round and round we go, before we grow.
“Suppose Columbus”

by Charles Suhor

But first, some background info
Christopher Columbus

• Born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451
• Worked on merchant sailing ships when he was 14 and became fascinated with exploring new lands.
• This time period was known as the Age of Discovery or the Age of Exploration.
Christopher Columbus

• Columbus traveled around Europe for 7 years looking for someone to finance his adventures.

• Most explorers at the time thought the Earth was flat and tried to sail to India by heading East around the tip of Africa.

• Believing that the Earth was round, Columbus said that he would sail West, in the opposite direction.
Christopher Columbus

• Finally in 1492, the King of Spain agreed to fund the voyage to the West Indies.

• Columbus was given a crew of 90 men and 3 ships: the Nina, Pinta, and the Santa Maria.

• During the voyage, the crew was tempted to mutiny and return to Spain after no land was spotted for days.
Christopher Columbus

• Eventually the crew landed in the Caribbean Island known as Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

• Even thought he never made it to the West Indies, Columbus is still credited with discovering the Americas on October 12, 1492.

• He died in 1506 at the age of 55.
“Suppose Columbus” by Charles Suhor
Group Work:

• Read through the poem on your own first. Make note of any words you have trouble with.

• Read the poem once more with your group, discussing any words you found troublesome during your independent reading.

• Discuss the analysis questions as a group and record your answers on your page.

• Be prepared to share your responses with the class.
“Suppose Columbus”
by Charles Suhor

1. How is your eye movement when reading this poem related to what the poem says and to Columbus' actual voyage from Spain?

2. Explain how the author of the poem "re-imagines" Columbus' voyage. What are the results of the new version of the voyage?

3. Why do the ships' names shift slightly more to the left each time they appear in the poem?
“Suppose Columbus”
by Charles Suhor

4. Why are only two ships listed in line thirteen? Only one in line sixteen?

5. This poem would make sense if read aloud to someone who doesn’t have a copy in his/her hands. What would a listener miss, though, from an oral reading?

6. Are there any other shapes or layouts that would have worked for this poem? Describe them.
Concrete Poems

Your Turn
Create your own concrete poem

Experiment with the nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty” as you transform it into a concrete poem. How would you organize the text to add to the overall meaning of the poem?

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,*
*Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.*
*All the king's horses and all the king's men*
*Couldn't put Humpty together again.*