



Developed by Prof. Jonathan Holden, First Poet Laureate of Kansas

Poetry Lesson Plan: Poems in Sections, The Mosaic Format

Grades: 11,12 > College Level

Objective — The student will:

- understand the meaning of the term "metaphor"
- write a poem that utilizes (a) "metaphor" in its construction
- gain better understanding of the literary terms "figurative" and "literal."
- demonstrate an awareness of similar and/or comparative metaphors by writing the poem in mosaic format, the end result being that each individual section of the poem, when read together, provides one overall metaphor
- will understand the meaning of cliché and avoid usage of cliché in the poem

Hint: Have each student think of and list experiences, incidents or occurrences that might not be similar in context or circumstance but provide nearly like outcomes or lessons. Also, provide and/or have students provide examples of "figurative" and "literal" literal statements.

Poems in Sections: The Mosaic Format

Write a poem which satisfies the following criteria:

1. The poem must consist of three, four, or five short numbered sections.
2. No section should be rhymed.
3. The poem should have a title which:
 - a. gives the reader at least some clue as to what the overall poem is about;
 - b. like the title "Religion Back Home" and "Eclipse," (see following examples) the title should be both literal & figurative.
4. Each section should be a complete little poem in its own right, very concrete and rich in imagery, and with its own sense of an ending.
5. Each section should, like all achieved poems, in a way that is both indirect yet vivid touch upon a different facet of the poem's overall theme.
6. All the sections of the poem, despite their differences, should contribute to whatever the point is which the overall poem is trying to suggest, but the poem should not read only like a list of examples, because:
7. The whole--all the sections taken (read) together--should be greater than the sum of the parts. In other words, all of the "mini" poems together, as a whole, should be a kind of metaphor.
8. The point of the poem should be sufficiently subtle and complex to require the strategy outlined above.

Continued on next page

EXAMPLE 1

Religion Back Home

i.
When God's parachute failed,
about the spring of 1945,
the sky in Texas jerked open
and we all sailed easily
into this new strange harness on the stars.

ii.
The minister smoked,
and he drank,
and there was that woman in the choir,
but what really finished him--
he wore spats.

iii.
A Short Review of Samson Agonistes
Written for Miss Arrington's Class
in Liberal High School

Our Father Who art in Heaven
can lick their Father Who art in Heaven.

iv.
When my little brother chanted,
"In 1492 Jesus crossed the ocean blue,"
Mother said, "Bob, you mean
Columbus crossed the ocean blue.
And he said, "always did get
them two guys mixed up.

--William Stafford

EXAMPLE 2

Eclipse

i.
Recall the light
that moved under the bedroom door,
that sifted through the dust-mice caught
beneath the bed, then was gone.
It was your mother in the hall,
deep in the night--the sound of water
from the bathroom, the whine of plumbing
like the torturer's bride escaped
into the wall.

ii.
I could not turn
away from their flash when distant
visiting relatives took pictures:
I stared at the blue bulbs
they licked then stuck in steel
sockets. Afterward, the seared spot
still floating in my eye,
I would secretly peel the plastic
coating off--a safety device
they told me, in case the glass globe
should explode.

iii.
My father held
the black, almost opaque sheets for me
to protect my eyes, he said, but
I would remember this eclipse forever.
The papers carried stories of two boys
gone blind from unprotected staring.
They should have had such a father
as mine, I said, but wondered
what it was like, that last moment
of sun, that ring of corrosive light
just at that moment beyond recall.

--Bin Ramke

Some questions to consider regarding example 2:

1. What does the title have to do with the body of the poem?
2. What literal situation does the first section describe?
3. How does Section 2 contribute to the whole?
4. What is the entire poem really about?