

An Aurora Cinquain

Overview:

Students write a cinquain poem about the aurora following the specific form developed by American poet Adelaide Crapsey. See “Infusing Native Language in the Science Curriculum” to incorporate Native language into this lesson.

Objectives:

The student will:

- understand the word-based cinquain format;
- understand the syllable-based cinquain format; and
- write two cinquains about the aurora.

Materials:

- *Aurora Alive* multimedia video playlist
- VISUAL AID: “A Student Cinquain”
- STUDENT WORKSHEET: “An Aurora Cinquain”

Activity Procedure:

1. Provide students with an overview of the history and technique of writing a cinquain. A cinquain is a five-line poem. Each line has a predetermined number of words or syllables. The cinquain is an American poetry form developed by Adelaide Crapsey in about 1909. She was influenced by the Japanese haiku, and developed the cinquain in order to convey thoughts and observations in a brief, succinct way.
2. Read several cinquains to the students or allow them to browse through cinquains and pick one they enjoy. Invite them to share their selections with the class. Examples of cinquains can be found at <http://www.ahapoetry.com/cinqhmpg.htm>.
3. Explain that students will write cinquains using formulas that Adelaide Crapsey developed. Cinquains work best if they are about something specific, rather than emotions or ideas. For this activity, the aurora will be the subject. Distribute the STUDENT WORKSHEET: “An Aurora Cinquain” and explain the cinquain formulas on the worksheet. Place the VISUAL AID: “A Student Cinquain” on the projector. Show students how the cinquain follows the syllable-based formula.
4. Encourage students to use the video playlist to help them come up with ideas for their poems.
5. Ask students to write their cinquains. Explain that each line does not need to be a complete thought. Students should let the poem flow from one line into the next. The last line can provide understanding or the element of surprise.
6. After students have completed their cinquains, ask them to share their poems with a partner.

Answers to Student Worksheet:

1. *Poems will vary but should follow this format:*
Line 1 - 1 word title (subject); Line 2 - 2 words describing the subject; Line 3 - 3 words describing an action related to the subject; Line 4 - 4 words describing a feeling related to the subject; Line 5 - 1 word that refers to the subject (can be a synonym)
2. *Poems will vary but should follow this format:*
Line 1 - 2 syllables; Line 2 - 4 syllables; Line 3 - 6 syllables; Line 4 - 8 syllables; Line 5 - 2 syllables

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Directions: There are two standard formulas for writing cinquains. The first prescribes the number of words for each line. The second designates the number of syllables instead of words. Please read about the formulas below and write an aurora cinquain using each formula.

Word-based Formula:

- Line 1 - 1 word title (subject)
- Line 2 - 2 words describing the subject
- Line 3 - 3 words describing an action related to the subject
- Line 4 - 4 words describing a feeling related to the subject
- Line 5 - 1 word that refers to the subject (can be a synonym)

Example:

*Aurora
dancing green
glowing, flowing, swirling
filling me with awe
lights*

1. Write your own word-based cinquain about the aurora.

Syllable-based Formula:

- Line 1 - 2 syllables
- Line 2 - 4 syllables
- Line 3 - 6 syllables
- Line 4 - 8 syllables
- Line 5 - 2 syllables

Example:

*Long rays
piercing the sky
moonless, still, night divine
frozen breath, frosty eyelashes
fading*

2. Write your own syllable-based cinquain about the aurora.
