

Poetry in a Math Classroom

Nancy Rudolph

Synopsis

Poetry in a math classroom? It turns out that there are a lot of connections between poetry and mathematics. Poems can be about anything, including mathematics or mathematicians. Poems can be structured using mathematics and measured analytically using prosody. For example, concrete poems form images on the page that match the words in the poem. Square poems contain the same number of lines and syllables per line. Both poetry and mathematics require precise vocabulary to help the reader visualize the words. As my seminar leader David Teague stated, both mathematics and poetry have the capacity to describe the world precisely. They both use patterns and symbols to define ideas. In this unit, students will write poems (in a well-defined form such as Haiku or Tanka) to define vocabulary terms for algebra and geometry. They will also use poems to reinforce mathematical content such as equations of horizontal and vertical lines using Piet Mondrian's art and linear regression based on the prosody in Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*. Students' poems will be used as review or as a form of assessment.