lyrical LANGUAGE LAB

LESSON 13

HONING YOUR WRITING WITH FREE VERSE

PRACTICE SHEET

The following exercises are for your eyes only, so don't worry about writing amazing free verse poems. Do worry about using vivid, tight, and specific language.

PART 1: Character Development

1. Reread "Sisters" by Janet Wong.
2. Write a short free verse poem that encapsulates your main character and includes clues to his/her personality, problem, emotional state, and/or relationship to another character.
3. Optional: Rewrite the free verse character poem as a rhyming stanza.
4. Consider what you left out that was in the original. Do you really need it?
5. Optional: Share your character development poem in the class forum.

   NOTE: THIS IS A FLASH FEEDBACK LESSON. The character poems are the only part that will receive feedback, though you are welcome to post all your exercises.

PART 2: Rhythm and Sound

1. Reread "Beavers in November" by Marilyn Singer.
2. Choose a short section of your manuscript or poem and rewrite it as a free verse poem that captures the desired rhythm of your story/character. Is it fast-paced and bouncy or slow and lyrical? Consider diction and the properties of the sounds you choose.
3. Consider what you left out that was in the original. Do you really need it?

PART 3: Story Structure

1. Reread "Sign Me Up" by David L. Harrison.
2. Rewrite your Work-in-Progress (WIP) in free verse, paying particular attention to elements of story structure.
3. Consider what you left out that was in the original. Do you really need it?

REMEMBER…

…that when trying these exercises, the idea is not to merely write your whole story or poem *down* the page instead of *across* it – that's not what free verse is. Rather, the idea is to **distill your work** into one or a series of *short* free verse poems with the goal of seeing

- where you can tighten your writing
- how you can use sound, rhythm, and word choice to enhance your story
- how you can bring more of the natural rhythms of spoken language into your verse
- how your structure holds up without all the bells and whistles of rhyme

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