

Breaking the Mold: Bringing Voice to Expository Writing through Diamante Poetry

“The wastebasket is a writer’s best friend” is attributed to Isaac Singer. I don’t know precisely why he uttered this refrain, but I know many writers could apply it to their expository writing experiences. We feel that nonfiction writing doesn’t connect to our lives the way a personal narrative does or that it can’t entertain the way an imaginative piece can.

A key reason for these reactions is that we have been confined to writing models that are encyclopedia-like nonfiction. We feel expository writing has no voice... no soul. As a result, our own writing has been dry... a disconnect...an assignment to be completed. It lacks voice too.

Well... the times they are a changing! This modified diamante poem structure can be used with just about any piece of nonfiction and it will bring a breath of fresh air to the deflated expository piece.

Here’s the structure for a modified five line diamante poem:

1st line: a single word regarding your general reaction to the subject

2nd line: an action phrase

3rd line: choose one of the following:

- an “I see statement”
- an exclamatory statement
- a question
- an observation

4th line: a simile or metaphor

5th line: a single word summation

(For a complete explanation of the procedure to be used to teach this structure, refer to the article entitled, “The Expository Pyramid and the Gradual Release of Responsibility Process... A Way Out of the Expository Writing Quagmire”.)

Take a look at the following abbreviated explanation for the diamante poem:

Familiarize readers with the above requirements of a diamante poem. This helps set a purpose for the reading. During or after the first reading of your expository material begin making decisions about the lines in the poem. Refer to the following three examples of completed poems which use informational texts of varying levels of difficulty.

Examples of modified diamante poems:

By reading these deceptively simple poems, can you get the gist of the expository books and the writer’s reaction to them?

- Let's get started with a reaction to *Carrying Babies* by Jo Windsor, an early level book from Rigby's *Sails* series.

Amazing
Hold on tightly little one
I wonder if there are other ways to carry our young?
Parenting is like climbing the tallest mountain
Responsibility

- An early-fluent book from Rigby Literacy, authored by W. MacDonald is titled *Training a Guide Dog*. How will this poem be different from our first sample?

Remarkable
Dedicated and focused on the task
So many lives have been altered by man's best friend!
Guide dogs are windows into the world.
Partners

- The last selection comes from *Mars*, Kids Discover, Pub. This is a fabulous series for about fourth graders on up. I have been receiving these magazines at my home for over ten years now. I just love their engaging format, interesting topics and well written informative content.

Sci-fi-like
Looking for Martian life
I see a time when we may have people colonizing Mars.
It beckons us like a locked closet door at Christmas time.
Possibilities

By looking outside that old drab box and looking to poetry as a model, we have an avenue to bring soul to the heart of expository writing. These poems invite us to take a closer, deeper look at the text. We must engage in higher level thinking skills to produce these gems. Might they invite us into more extensive writing using the same resources? Maybe...So diamond like, indeed is the diamante poem. Our voice returns.

Voila!

P.S. Use the Internet by using a search engine .
Input diamante poems . Multiple sites exist. What-a-kick!
Who would have believed twenty years ago that we would have immediate
access to multiple sites on an Internet for anything, let alone the diamante , a seven
lined poem that is shaped like a diamond . Some things are simply worth a little
celebration.

I think this just may be one of them. Ü