

Cinquain - Poetry Writing

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Courtesy of Ruth Breton, USA

A great activity for Junior Youth Animator Training -- ask participants to write poems about youth using the Cinquain. This style of poetry can take any theme, even pull out words and phrases from the quotations and make very beautiful poems. Can be used while studying any Ruhi book.

About Cinquains

Perhaps as early as in 1909, the shy and sensitive Adelaide Crapsy had read *A Hundred Verses from Old Japan*, William N. Porter's translations of the *Hyakunin Isshu* anthology and *From the Eastern Sea* by Yone Nogushis. In Adelaide's notebook she lists eleven tanka and eight haiku she had translated from *Anthologie de la littérature japonaise des origines au XX siècle* from Marcel Revon. So influenced, she developed her own poetic system which she then called cinquain.

These short, unrhymed poems consisting of twenty-two syllables distributed as 2, 4, 6, 8, 2, in five lines were related to but not copied from Japanese literary styles. Though she devised this form in 1909 - 1910, most of the fifteen poems she saved were written between 1911 and 1914. An early death at 37 from tuberculosis prevented her from exploring the genre further.

Published posthumously, in 1915, with her other works as *The Complete Poems*, cinquains came to be well-known only through the efforts of Carl Sandburg in his anthology, *Cornhuskers*, 1918 and Louis Utermeyer's *Modern American Poetry*, 1919.

Line 1: a one word line, a noun, that gives the poem its title

Line 2: Two adjectives that describes what the poem is about

Line 3: Three action – ing verbs that describes something - the subject of the poem

Line 4: A phrase that indicates a feeling related to the subject of the poem

Line 5: A one- word line, noun, that sums up what the poem is about, essentially.

Examples of Cinquains

Youth

Beautiful, inquisitive

Exploring, Developing, Growing

Movers of the world

Hope

(C. Maghzi)

Nas

Kind, Strong

Loving, Providing, Caring

A friend to all

Helper

(C. Maghzi)

Saplings

Courageous, Vital

Reviving, Ennobling, Rehabilitating

Developing the gifts innate

Heroes

(S. Ali)

Youth

Intense, Vulnerable

Exploring, Collaging, Melanging

Trying on new identities

Metamorphosis

(D. Bryant & L. Campbell)

Youth

Fearless, Noble

Striving, Teaching, Learning

Spearhead of any enterprise

Lions

(V. Ali)

Children

Happy, Joyous

Singing, Laughing, Praying

Awaiting chances to serve

Gladiators

(B. Azad)

Group

Mischievous, Loud

Yelling, Laughing, Searching

Love watching them grow

Junior Youth

(R. Breton)