

Crafting Lune Poems

By: Sevi

Education level: Elementary, Middle School, High School

Genre: Poetry

Time frame: Self-Paced

Objective: Generate easy, successful poems and multi-stanza poems.

Prior knowledge and skills: None

Required materials: Pencils, paper

Literary model: Bridgette Meinhold's [100 Days of Lune Poems](#)

Sequence of activities (self-paced):

By middle school, many students will be familiar and practiced with writing a haiku, a traditional Japanese three-line poem containing 17 syllables in a 5-7-5 syllable structure. Rarely though, have students tried writing *lunes*, a poetic structure I am increasingly fond of because of its simplicity, accessibility to new writers, and ability to make beautiful sounding poetic mini stanzas that can be woven together into multi-stanza poems.

Lunes, also known as the American Haiku, is a poetic form popularized by poet Robert Kelly, and follows the form of 5-3-5 (also counting syllables). My favorite version to teach however, is a variant on this by poet Jack Collom, where instead of counting syllables, you count the words (no matter the length), utilizing a 3-5-3 word structure.

The name *lune* translates to "little moon" in French, referring to the crescent-shaped, short-long-short visual appearance of the poem on the page, which many students will find an exciting discovery in.

Lunes are a self-contained tercet (three-line stanza), and although the form is structured, it leaves room for plenty of flexibility. Each line can stand alone as a complete thought, or the lines can be *enjamed*, having a continuous thought flow seamlessly across line breaks.

Lune structure looks like this:

1. The Kelly Lune (Syllable-Based)

Structure:

- Line 1: 5 syllables
- Line 2: 3 syllables
- Line 3: 5 syllables

2. The Collom Lune (Word-Based)

Structure:

- Line 1: 3 words
- Line 2: 5 words
- Line 3: 3 words

I especially like to utilize the Collom's lune with beginning and younger poets because once you get going, it can be easy to quickly generate a lot of lunes, allowing for free-flowing thoughts and an abandonment of perfectionism that hold many new poets back.

For middle schoolers and older, I try to encourage this by challenging them to write several lunes, 5 or more, with the understanding that the first several probably won't be any good, and maybe you will get just one that you appreciate out of every few you write. It's a nice reflection that writing, just like any other creative practice, instrument, sport or hobby, takes a lot of tries to get something you like. Being patient with yourself is key.

Lunes can rhyme but generally do not. The final line is often most successful with an impactful ending, although not necessarily, and I would suggest not focusing on that especially in the beginning. The benefit of lunes is just to get the writing going; the rest will follow in time. Although commonly focused on nature, daily observations, or brief moments of feeling, lunes can be about any subject matter.

Encourage students to start with a subject matter they enjoy, or have recently felt a strong emotion toward. Have them format their paper with 5 sets of "3-5-3's" and let it

flow! You will be surprised with the poetic content, and can do this process as it fits your class to help build longer, stacking cohesive poems.

Below are some examples of 2 of Collom's lures, stitched together to make a 2 stanza poem, what would your next stanza be?

Forward you stand
in the cafeteria line waiting
for your tray

Sit with me
this rain against the window
is sounding away