# Poem, Drama, or Prose? Spot the Structure

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| **Teacher** | | **Class** | Grade 4 |
| **Subject** | ELA | **Topic** | Poetry and drama structure |
| **Date** | | **Room** | |
| **Lesson length** | 60 minutes | **Country** | United States |

Students learn how poems, drama, and prose look and sound different. They sort three rain texts and prove each form with structure clues.

## Curriculum links

- Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text. [1]

## Learning objectives

- Students will explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose.
- Students will identify poem parts verse, rhythm, meter and drama parts cast, setting, dialogue, stage directions.
- Students will use structure words to prove a text type in speech and writing.

## Success criteria

- I can name poem, drama, or prose and give two structure clues.
- I can point to verse and rhythm in a poem and dialogue and stage directions in drama.
- I can explain how structure changes how a text looks or sounds.

## What students already know

Show three shapes with no words: short broken lines, speaker names with parentheses, block paragraph. Ask: Which looks like a poem, a play, a story, and what have you seen before?

## Key words

| | |
|---|---|
| **verse** | words set in short lines that make up a poem [1] |
| **rhythm** | a repeated beat you can hear when you read aloud [3] |
| **meter** | the steady count of beats kept in the lines of a poem [1] |
| **stanza** | a group of lines with space around it, like a paragraph for a poem [3] |
| **dialogue** | the words a character says out loud to others [1] |
| **stage directions** | notes in parentheses that tell actors how to move or speak [1] |

## Materials

- Slides 1-11 with projector and speakers
- Printed Text A poem, Text B drama scene, Text C prose paragraph about rain
- Three label cards per group: Poem, Drama, Prose
- Highlighters, crayons, whiteboards and markers

## Before the lesson

- Print Text A, B, C sets and Poem, Drama, Prose label cards, one set per group of 3-4
- Print Worksheet Task D, one per pair, and prepare pre-highlighted set with stanza breaks, speaker names, and paragraph indent in color

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- Printed copies of Worksheet Task D for plenary
- Test Slides 5 and 7 and Video clip 2 (0:00–2:35) and Video clip 1 (0:00–3:14) for sound and picture
- Set desks for small groups with space to lay out three texts side by side

## Lesson outline

**0–5 min** **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

*Hook students with the rain mystery and recall how the three forms look on the page.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 1 Poems, Drama, and Prose [title]: Spot the structure like a detective!
2. Show Slide 2 and read: Three friends tell about rain as a poem, a play, and a story. Ask: How does each one look on the page?
3. Say the hook: I found three pages all about rain, but they look totally different. Help me figure out which is which.
4. Take 3 quick ideas from turn-and-talk and keep the three texts a mystery for later.

**STUDENTS DO**

1. Look at Slide 2 three shapes and turn and tell a partner what looks different.
2. Share one look-clue with the class, such as short lines, speaker names, or long paragraph.

**Say:** Today we are structure detectives. You will tell a poem, drama, and prose apart using structural clues. Look closely at shape first, then listen for beat or speakers. We will prove every answer with clues.

**Ask:** What do you already know about how a poem looks different from a story? (Poem has short lines and spaces, story has sentences in block paragraphs.) · What have you seen in a play that you do not see in a story? (Speaker names, what they say, and notes in parentheses about moving and speaking.)

**Check understanding:** Thumbs up if you can name one look-clue for poem or play. If many thumbs down, point again to Slide 2 shapes and name one clue together.

**Support:** Point to one shape at a time and let students echo: short lines, speakers, paragraph. **Stretch:** Ask: Why might a writer pick short lines instead of a paragraph for rain?

Use: Slides 1-2

5–17 min **Teaching** 12 min · Whole class

*Teach major differences between poems, drama, and prose and the words for their parts.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 3 and walk through: Writer starts with an idea, Chooses poem, drama, or prose, Builds it with special parts.
2. Show Slide 4 and read: Plays are written to be performed, not just read. and Stage directions tell actors where to move and how to speak.
3. Play Video clip 2 (0:00–2:35) on Slide 5 and tell students to listen for verse, dialogue, and paragraphs.
4. Build a 3-column chart live: Poem - verse, rhythm, meter, lines, stanzas; Drama - cast, setting, dialogue, stage directions; Prose - paragraphs, narration.

**STUDENTS DO**

1. Watch and listen for the three target words verse, dialogue, and paragraphs.
2. Repeat each structure word and point to it on the chart when the teacher names a clue.

**Say:** Poems use verse, rhythm, and meter, which means short lines and a beat you can hear [1]. Drama uses casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, and stage directions to be acted [1]. Prose uses sentences grouped in paragraphs with narration that tells what happens. Stanzas separate poems into groups of lines like paragraphs in prose [3].

**Worked example:** Think of rain: Poem clue is lines grouped in a stanza with the same beat. Drama clue is a cast list and Setting: school yard, rainy day with Student A: (pointing) Look! Prose clue is sentences in a paragraph with narration telling who did what.

**Ask:** How is verse in a poem different from a paragraph in prose? (Verse is short lines, often in stanzas with rhythm; paragraph is sentences grouped together with narration.) · What parts tell you a text is drama and meant to be performed? (Cast of characters, setting, dialogue the characters say, and stage directions in parentheses.) · Where does the number of beats and rhythm of words in each line matter most? [3] (In a poem, where line lengths and beat make rhythm and meter.)

**Check understanding:** Whiteboards: teacher calls a clue, students write Poem, Drama, or Prose. Reteach any column with many errors using chart.

**Support:** Keep the 3-column chart visible and give a clue bank card listing what to look for in each form.
**Stretch:** Ask: If you hear a steady beat and rhyming lines, which form and which words prove it?

Use: Slides 3-5, Video clip 2 (0:00–2:35)

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17–30 min **Guided Practice** 13 min · Whole class

*Model how to use look and sound steps to spot stanza breaks and stage directions.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 6: Step 1: Look at lines - verse and stanzas? Step 2: See speakers and parentheses? Step 3: See paragraphs and narration?
2. Play Video clip 1 (0:00–3:14) on Slide 7 and stop to name cast list, setting, and dialogue and one stage direction telling how to move.
3. Model with two short texts on the board, thinking aloud through Steps 1 to 3 and marking clues.
4. Have pairs whisper-predict the form before you confirm with two clues.

**STUDENTS DO**

1. Follow Steps 1 to 3 on fingers and whisper the form to a partner.
2. Clap the beat for Text A and point to the parentheses and setting words for Text B.

**Say:** We do it together. First look at lines. Are they verse and stanzas with rhythm and beats [3]? Next look for speakers and parentheses for stage directions. If you see paragraphs and narration, it is prose. Always point to two clues to prove it.

**Worked example:** Text A: Rain patters splish splash! Puddles jump and dance. Step 1: I see short lines, not sentences in a paragraph. I hear a strong beat when I clap it. That is verse and rhythm, so poem [1]. Text B: Student A: (pointing) Look! Setting: school yard, rainy day. Step 2: I see a speaker name Student A and words in parentheses (pointing) that tell how to move. I see Setting: school yard, rainy day. That is dialogue, stage directions, and setting, so drama [1].

**Ask:** In Text B, which words are dialogue and which are stage directions? (Look! is dialogue said out loud; (pointing) is stage direction telling how to move.) · Why is Text A a poem and not prose? (It is verse in short lines with rhythm, not sentences in paragraphs; stanzas work like paragraphs in prose [3].)

**Check understanding:** Fist to five: How sure are you to spot verse versus dialogue? If many show 1-2, remodel Step 2 with another dialogue line.

**Support:** Echo-clap the beat after the teacher with dots under each word, and pre-circle the parentheses to focus eyes. **Stretch:** Ask: Change one word in Text A - does the beat count stay the same or change, and how do you know?

Use: Slides 6-7, Video clip 1 (0:00–3:14)

30–50 min **Main Activity** 20 min · Groups

*Sort poem, drama, and prose texts in groups and prove each choice with two clues.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 8 task and hand out mixed Text A poem, Text B drama scene, Text C prose paragraph plus Poem, Drama, Prose label cards and highlighters.
2. Read directions: Lay out the three texts, hunt for shape clues, mark stanzas, verse and rhythm, and mark cast, setting, dialogue, and stage directions.
3. Circulate, prompt groups to point to exact lines and count beats per line together.
4. Stop at 15 minutes for groups to place labels and rehearse saying form plus two clues.

**STUDENTS DO**

1. In groups lay out A, B, C, highlight stanza breaks, speaker names, parentheses, setting words, and paragraph indent.
2. Place Poem, Drama, Prose labels and practice proving each with two clues, pointing to the exact words.

**Say:** You are Structure Sort Detectives. You will tell a poem, drama, and prose apart using structural clues. Mark what you see, place a label on each text, and be ready to point to two clues to prove it. Text C to sort is: The rain tapped on the roof while the three friends ran for the awning and told stories until it stopped.

**Worked example:** Group proof sounds like this: Text A is a poem because I see verse in two short lines: Rain patters splish splash! Puddles jump and dance. I hear the same beat when we clap it, so rhythm and meter [1]. Text B is drama because I see Setting: school yard, rainy day and Student A: (pointing) Look! where Look! is dialogue and (pointing) is a stage direction [1]. Text C is prose because I see sentences grouped in a paragraph with narration telling what the friends did.

**Ask:** Which text has stanzas and verse, and how do you know? (Text A; short lines with spaces and beat, stanzas separate groups of lines [3].) · Which text has dialogue and stage directions, and which words prove it? (Text B; dialogue Look! and stage direction (pointing) plus setting words school yard, rainy day.)

**Check understanding:** Each group holds up labels and points to two clues. Visit groups with wrong labels, ask Step 1-3 again, and have them compare with a correct group.

**Support:** Give a pre-highlighted set where the stanza breaks, speaker names, and paragraph indent are already marked in color. **Stretch:** Ask students to add one sentence explaining how the shape changes how it sounds when read aloud.

Use: Slide 8

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

*Use structure words to choose a form and check learning with an exit ticket.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 9 and review: Verse, rhythm, meter - lines and beat in poems, Cast and setting - who acts and where it happens, Dialogue - words characters say out loud.
2. Show Slide 10 vote: Which form would you use to tell about a windy day? Take votes for poem with rhythm and verse, drama with dialogue and stage directions, prose story with paragraphs.
3. Hand out Worksheet Task D and have pairs do one writer need: pick the best form and tell why it fits.
4. Show Slide 11 exit ticket and have students write two sentences to hand in.

**STUDENTS DO**

1. Vote, then in pairs complete one item from Worksheet Task D, saying why the form fits.
2. Write exit ticket: One thing I learned today about structure is... and I can prove a text is a poem or drama because...

**Say:** There is no one right vote, but you must give structure reasons. Say the form name and the clue. If you want beat and short lines, pick poem. If you want speakers and actions to perform, pick drama. If you want paragraphs to narrate, pick prose.

**Ask:** If a writer wants actors to perform a windy day, which form fits best and why? (Drama, because cast, setting, dialogue, and stage directions tell who acts and how to move and speak.) · If a writer wants beat and short lines about wind, which structure words prove it is a poem? (Verse, rhythm, and meter in lines and stanzas.)

**Check understanding:** Read 3 exit tickets aloud and check for two correct clues. If weak, revisit Slide 9 chart tomorrow at bell work.

**Support:** Provide sentence starters on strips, like This is a poem because I see ___ and I hear ___. **Stretch:** Ask: Explain if short lines would make the windy day feel fast or slow and why.

Use: Slides 9-11, Worksheet Task D

## Common mistakes

| Mistake | How to spot it | How to fix it |
|---|---|---|
| Thinking any short text or any lines on a page is a poem | Labels poem for drama dialogue or prose paragraph because it is short | Ask for verse and rhythm proof: check for lines and stanzas with beat, not sentences in paragraphs; stanzas separate poems into groups of lines like paragraphs in prose [3] |
| Mixing up dialogue and stage directions | Points to (pointing) as what the character says | Cover speaker name, read aloud only dialogue, then read parentheses as action notes that tell how to move or speak in drama [1] |
| Calling prose a drama because people talk | Sees quotation marks in a paragraph and labels it a play | Look for cast list, setting line, speaker names and parentheses for drama versus paragraphs and narration for prose [1] |

## Support

- Give pre-highlighted set where the stanza breaks, speaker names, and paragraph indent are already marked in color
- Use echo-clap, dots under words for beats, choice bank of stage directions, and sentence starters for proving answers

## Stretch

- Ask students to add one sentence explaining how the shape changes how it sounds when read aloud
- Have students make their own two-clue cards or add a new sensible stage direction in parentheses and explain the effect

## For the LSE or teaching assistant

Stay with target groups during Main Activity sort; prompt Steps 1-3, help count beats and find parentheses, and scribe the two-clue proof sentence if needed.

## Check for understanding

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| Name two structural elements that prove a text is a drama. | Any two: cast of characters, setting, dialogue, stage directions, descriptions [1] |
| A text has verse in short lines grouped in stanzas with a clear beat. Is it a poem, drama, or prose, and why? | Poem, because verse, rhythm, meter and stanzas show poem structure [1] |
| How is a stanza in a poem like a paragraph in prose? | Both group ideas; stanzas separate poems into groups of lines like paragraphs separate prose [3] |

## Homework

Tell someone at home one way a poem looks different from prose and show them one clue.

## Sources


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