(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules
Poetry and Grammar

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Grade Level	8th Grade
Subject	English/Language Arts

Essential Question
How can grammatical rules add structure and variety to poetry?

Summary

It has been said that poetry is a place to break all the rules. In this lesson, students will not quite be rule-breakers; instead, they will work with rules of grammar to learn how to integrate more structure and variety in verse. Using Shel Silverstein's poetry, students will analyze pieces for elements of grammar and then modify assorted poems to practice incorporating those elements.

Snapshot

Engage
Students engage in a Card Sort activity that establishes elements of grammar: parallel structure, gerunds, predicates, and complex sentences.

Explore
Students listen and follow along with the text of Shel Silverstein's poem "Messy Room," identifying the different grammatical elements they hear and read.

Explain
Students analyze a range of Shel Silverstein poems for grammatical elements and then create Anchor Charts in groups.

Extend
Students modify and expand a range of Shel Silverstein poems to incorporate new instances of the grammatical elements.

Evaluate
Students Commit and Toss new lines from the modified poems, identifying which element was used.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 8)

8.5.R.2: Recognize and explain the impact on meaning of parts of speech in sentences:
- nouns
- verbals (i.e., gerunds, participles, infinitives)
- cumulative and coordinate adjectives
- vague pronouns
- singular they / them / their
- coordinating, subordinating, and correlative conjunctions
- adverbs
- interjections

8.5.W.1: Compose simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences to add clarity and variety in their writing.

8.5.W.2: Create clarity and/or add variety to their writing with nouns, verbs, verbals, adjectives, prepositions, adverbs, pronouns, and conjunctions.

Attachments

- Card Sort—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules - Spanish.docx
- Card Sort—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules - Spanish.pdf
- Card Sort—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules.docx
- Card Sort—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules.pdf
- Lesson Slides—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules.pptx
- Messy Room Poem—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules - Spanish.docx
- Messy Room Poem—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules - Spanish.pdf
- Messy Room Poem—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules.docx
- Messy Room Poem—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules.pdf
- Shel Silverstein Poems—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules - Spanish.docx
- Shel Silverstein Poems—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules - Spanish.pdf
- Shel Silverstein Poems—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules.docx
- Shel Silverstein Poems—(Not Quite) Breaking All the Rules.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Card Sort (attached)
- Shel Silverstein poems (attached)
- Writing materials
- Notebook paper

Engage

> **Grammar Modification: Your Choice!**
>
> This lesson engages students in analyzing text for and using gerunds, predicates, coordinating conjunctions, and both complex and compound-complex sentences. However, you might choose to focus on other elements of grammar. All attachments are easy to modify to suit using different elements. Additionally, this lesson presupposes that students have had some introduction to elements of grammar. If not, an introductory lesson might be helpful to teach before this one.

Using the Card Sort strategy, have students work in groups to match the grammatical terms with their textual examples. To begin, print and cut out as many cards from the attached **Card Sort** handout as needed for groups (number of sets will depend on class size and grouping needs). Consider having the cards already cut-out and paperclipped together to give to groups. Give as much time as needed (no more than 10 minutes suggested) for students to match cards.

After enough time as elapsed, go through the example slides in the attached **Lesson Slides** (**slides 3-7**) as a way for students to check their knowledge.

> **Teacher's Note**
>
> If this is not enough time spent on gerunds, predicates, coordinating conjunctions, and compound and compound-complex sentences, then a scaffolding mini-lesson might be needed. Also, keep in mind that this Card Sort handout can be modified to suit different needs/terms.

After spending time talking about each of these terms, introduce the following questions to consider:

- What have you heard about poetry and not having to follow "rules"?
- How can poetry be viewed as richer or more accessible without rules?
- How can poetry be stronger with some rules? How could the elements of grammar you worked with add structure and variety to poetry?

Introduce the essential question (**slide 8**): How can grammatical rules add structure and variety to poetry?

Explore

Pass out copies of the attached **"Messy Room" poem** by Shel Silverstein. Depending on your preference, copies can be given to each student or to pairs. Students will be annotating these copies.

Play the audio/video of "Messy Room" found on YouTube (**slide 9**).

> **Embedded video**
> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1K9GR2EOOA

As the video plays, ask students to read and listen to the words of the poem. As they follow along visually and auditorily, ask students to locate and annotate the gerunds, predicates, coordinating conjunctions, and compound and compound-complex sentences that they observe.

Hold a discussion that revisits the essential question, How can grammatical rules add structure and variety to poetry?

Explain

To have students work deeper to look for these grammatical elements in action, students will next be reading an assortment of Shel Silverstein poems. Print as many sets of the attached assorted poems as needed. It will likely work best to put students into groups for this stage.

The purpose of this activity is for students to explain how they know there are gerunds, predicates, coordinating conjunctions, and compound and compound-complex sentences in these poems. There are three approaches that you could take to facilitate this activity.

1. Students work in groups designated by grammatical element.
2. Students work in groups designated by individual poem.
3. Students work individually and are given a whole set of poems.

Allow an appropriate amount of time (likely 15 or 20 minutes) for students to analyze poems based on their groupings. Students should annotate their poems like they did with "Messy Room" and look for either all grammatical elements or the ones assigned.

After poems are annotated, keep students in the same groups. Depending on what students looked for in their poems, they will create Anchor Charts that display the following:

- An explanation
- An in-text example
- An image

Teacher's Note: Anchor Chart Prep

Depending on the grouping technique that you chose, the Anchor Chart strategy that you use will vary. Students will need printer paper and coloring supplies for this activity.

Because the paper that students will be using is small, they will likely not need as much time as they otherwise would for larger projects.

Display **slide 10**. Tell students that Anchor Charts should include each of the following:

1. The grammatical element name.
2. A clear example of how would you define or explain your grammatical element to someone else (either in your own words or using the definition from the Card Sort).
3. A full-sentence example taken from one of the Shel Silverstein poems.
4. An image that demonstrates the grammatical element.

After the Anchor Charts are completed, they can be posted on the wall as references for future writing and reading exercises. As students create their charts, make sure to walk around and guide students who might need more and different direction or to clarify misunderstandings.

Extend

Now that students have looked for these grammatical elements in text and explained them in their words and images, they will apply what they know by expanding one of the poems that they used for the Explain activity. Ask students to choose one poem to expand. (You might want to pass out fresh copies for this activity, but students could also reuse the copies they have already annotated.) Students can work individually, in a pair, or with a group to add to the poem by writing extra lines that integrate gerunds, predicates, coordinating conjunctions, and compound and compound-complex sentences.

Display **slide 11**, which has instructions for students to follow. Students could consider keeping the same tone of the original poem as they add to it or integrating a new tone. Depending on the needs of the lesson, consider asking students to write as many as two new stanzas or as few as three new lines. The same flexibility applies for which grammatical elements you choose for students. You may modify slide 11 to suit your specific instructional needs.

After students have completed their poems, they can read them aloud and reflect on how their writing relates to the essential question: How can grammatical rules add structure and variety to poetry?

As students reflect on how integrating the lesson's grammatical elements has added structure and variety to their poems, ask them to revisit the discussion of how rules relate to poetry in order to help answer the essential question. How would they respond to those who say poetry is about breaking all the rules? Can there be a balance? Can grammar make poetry richer? If so, how?

Possible Student Responses

Possible student responses to the essential question might include: Using different types of sentences in poetry can make a poem more interesting. Using coordinating conjunctions can expand on an idea and in poetry can add repetition and enhance rhythm. Predicates can heighten action in poetry, helping illustrate what is happening. Following "rules" in poetry helps with structure that can help a poem flow for the reader.

Evaluate

For a simple evaluation, ask students to get out a piece of notebook paper. On it, they should write down ONE original line of their newly modified poem. They will use this paper to engage in the [Commit and Toss](#) strategy. Each student should:

1. Crumple the sheet of paper containing their line of poetry into a ball.
2. Gently toss the ball.
3. Pick up a new paper ball.

Once students have a new paper ball, they should uncrumple it and analyze whether a gerund, predicate, coordinating conjunction, compound and/or compound-complex sentence is shown. Students should then circle and label which grammar elements were used. Students can share out with the whole group or within small groups or pairs if time permits.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Anchor charts. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/64f2b35101a470dda36d44421900af08
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Card sort. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f506976b
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Commit and toss. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f505b3d0
- Perkins, S. (2013, July 6). "Messy Room" by Shel Silverstein [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1K9GR2EOOA
- Silverstein, S. Where the Sidewalk Ends.
- "Messy Room" by Shel Silverstein.
- "Colors" by Shel Silverstein
- "My Roles" by Shel Silverstein
- "Dirty Face" by Shel Silverstein
- "Monsters I've Met" by Shel Silverstein