

# Expanding Business Educators' Instructional Toolkits: Using Poetry Writing to Develop Creativity, Fluency of Expression, and Reflection Skills in Business Courses

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## About the Author

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## Abstract

This article describes how business educators can expand their instructional toolkits by using poetry writing in their courses to develop creativity, fluent expression, and reflection skills. Information about how to introduce poetry writing to students and how to incorporate poetry from a single assignment to a longer 30-day Poetry Challenge is presented along with assignment assessment criteria. Results of an exploratory 30-Day Poetry Challenge are discussed.

*Keywords: instructional strategies, business education, poetry writing, creativity, fluid expression, reflection*

Poetry is everywhere. People are introduced to it during childhood and school years when youngsters sometimes chuckle at its mesmerizing rhythm and rhyme. Later, consumers are exposed to its jingles in print and electronic advertisements and in television commercials. People hear and enjoy it captured in the lyrics of songs. The public encounters it at performances as seemingly different as poetry slams and hit Broadway musicals like *Hamilton*. People listen to it for comfort at solemn events like funerals and for inspiration at exuberant ones like commencements. Many find value in the poetry of ancients like Homer and Sappho, classicists like Emily Dickinson and William Shakespeare, and modernists like Walt Whitman and Amanda Gorman, National Youth Poet Laureate, whose masterfully composed and delivered message captivated those witnessing President Biden's inauguration. Omnipresent, poetry in its many forms serves diverse human needs by thoughtfully mixing perceived events and feelings as people transition from cradle to grave. As Beattie-Moss (2015) noted, "the American public still longs for the kinds of insights that only poetry can deliver" (n. p.).

While everyone is constantly exposed to poetry, do most people—business educators included—really understand and appreciate its varied and enriching contributions? What is the essence of poetry, anyway? Simply stated, poetry is an experience and/or emotion conveyed through concise, precise language arranged in a recognizable form with lines and/or stanzas. That meaningful message often incorporates some pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables with rhymes at the ends of certain lines and/or stanzas, sometimes with earlier lines repeated (J. C. Scott, personal communication, March 11, 2023). Table 1 shows characteristics of some selected common poetic structures that help to differentiate them from other types. Table 2 provides a basic glossary of some selected poetry-related terms.

The common building blocks of poetry include both general literary devices and those more specialized literary devices well-suited to poetry. The former include such devices as analogy, hyperbole, imagery, metaphor, personification, and simile, while the latter include such devices as alliteration, consonance/assonance, euphony/cacophony, meter, repetition, and rhyme (see <https://writers.com/common-literacy-devices#poetry-devices> for an expanded listing of devices, their definitions, and examples).

Poetry is an available but often overlooked instructional tool that business educators can use to help them successfully teach their various subject matters. This effective, adaptable educational vehicle is probably overlooked or discounted by most business teachers because they perceive themselves as unprepared to integrate poetry with business content and because their instructional topics and poetry seem far, far apart and unrelated. Please remember that the goal of business educators when using poetry as an instructional tool is not to overly focus on the process of teaching of poetry writing but instead to use poetry writing as a means of engagement and of expression for teaching business content in novel, unexpected ways that capture and hold the attention of most learners, especially those often slow or reluctant to engage with business education content using more traditional teaching methods (J. C. Scott, personal communication, March 11, 2023).

Since training professional poets is not business educators' purpose, business educators should judiciously choose and utilize only those aspects of poetry that most effectively assist them in reaching their own instructional goals as is later documented in this article. With some basic understanding about poetry fundamentals and how they can be effectively used to teach business content, business educators can quickly introduce, experiment with, and refine over time their use of the powerful instructional vehicle of poetry in their classrooms, expanding their instructional toolkits and self-confidence during that process.

Among the major benefits from business educators using poetry as classroom instructional devices are the following:

- Garners student attention, especially that of reluctant learners (J. C. Scott, personal communication, January 15, 2023)
- Builds an inclusive learning community (Blaszczynski, 2022)

**Table 1*****Characteristics of Some Common Poetic Forms***

<b>Type</b>	<b>Application(s)</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Rhyme scheme</b>
Acrostic	Poetic expressions, prose, and word puzzles, which can be used for entertainment and/or educational purposes	Variable number of lines; first letter of each word often spells out a name, word, or message that reveals the topic or theme	Optional
Anti-ode	Negative emotion expressions	Brief; no line and no stanza specifications	Optional
Free verse	Non-traditionally structured modern poetic expressions	Variable number of lines and stanzas	Optional
Haiku	Essence, mood, or instance expressions	Three lines with five, seven, and five syllables each; one stanza	Usually none; rarely in lines one and three
Ode	Praise, approval, or admiration expressions	Brief; no line and no stanza specifications; originally sung or chanted with musical accompaniment	Optional
Renga; also known as Rengu or Renku	Essence, mood, or instance expressions	Three lines with five, seven, and five syllables each linked with two lines with seven syllables each, creating the first stanza; pairs or small groups compose alternating stanzas up to a mutually agreed number of stanzas or 100 stanzas	None
Tricube	Variable expressions	Each line has three syllables; three lines make one stanza; three stanzas make one tricube	None
Triolet	Variable expressions	Eight lines; line one repeats as line four and seven; line two repeats as line eight; one stanza	Two repeated rhymed lines with additional non-repeating rhymes; ABaAabAB

*Note.* Table adapted from Rayfield, I. (n.d.). 9 different types of poetry. <https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/childrens-article/different-types-of-poetry-for-kids> and other reliable sources.

*Note.* In the rhyme-scheme column, capital letters indicate paired rhyming lines; lower-case letters indicate non-repeating rhymes in poems.

**Table 2****A Basic Glossary of Selected Poetry-Related Terms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Cinquain	A stanza with five lines; also known as a quintain or quintet
Couplet	A stanza with two lines, usually rhyming
Line	A group of related words that convey meaning separated from other lines in poetry by punctuation and/or white space not caused by the right margin
Meter	The pattern of stressed (long-sounding) and unstressed (short-sounding) syllables, sometimes known as beats, in lines of poetry
Rhyme scheme	A selected pattern of rhyming within the lines or stanzas
Quatrain	A stanza with four lines, often with various rhyme schemes
Stanza	A specified number of lines in poetry grouped together by theme, length, meter, or rhyme scheme; also known as a verse
Syllable	A single unbroken vowel sound within a spoken or written word

*Note.* Table adapted from Rayfie (n.d.).

- Develops teamwork (Blaszczynski, 2022; Ross & Adams, 2016)
- Manages stress while learning content (Longo, n.d.)
- Enhances emotional intelligence (Morris, Urbanski, & Fuller, 2005)
- Fosters personal and professional creativity (Kellerman & Seligman, 2023)
- Encourages mindfulness (University of California San Diego Center for Mindfulness, 2021)
- Strengthens oral communication (Hoger, 2012)
- Focuses on concise, precise communication (Beattie-Moss, 2015)
- Makes complex messages easier for others to understand (Beattie-Moss, 2015)
- Expresses perceived truth intellectually and emotionally (Beattie-Moss, 2015)
- Expands business educators' teaching toolkits (J. C. Scott, personal communication, January 15, 2023)

### **Article Purpose**

The purpose of this article is to provide business educators with information about using poetry writing as an instructional tool to enhance the creativity, fluency of expression, and reflection skills of students.

### **Review of Literature**

Integrating poetry with business content is not just a recent idea appearing in the literature. For example, Vaill (1981) and Billmoria (1999) advocated for using poetry within management education. In 2010, Morgan wrote an entire book about what poetry brings to business. Other researchers and writers have addressed complementary themes. For instance, Bobko and Tejada (2000) argued that for the 21st century liberal arts and management should be linked. In their book for The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Colby, Ehrlich, Sullivan, and Dolle (2011) advocated for more liberal learning for undergraduate business education. Hoger (2012) encouraged the use of poetry recitation to improve business students' oral communication skills. Van Buskirk and London (2017) characterized poetry as deep intelligence for organizational behavior classrooms. Davis (2019) used poetry writing in a

graduate course in microeconomics that featured specialized instruction by a poet. Results of the experimental study revealed deeper learning with the poetry-writing group than the narrative-writing group (Davis, 2019). In 2022 Blaszczynski discussed how to use an acrostic poetry-writing icebreaker activity to facilitate team-building. Thus, the literature identifies a number of important linkages between poetry and business content that for various reasons most business educators have chosen to ignore, perhaps including feelings of inadequacy or underpreparedness when incorporating poetry into business courses.

### **Poetry Fear and Poetry Inadequacy**

A poet colleague who teaches poetry in secondary schools reported that students are more receptive when it is described as creative writing (S. Williams, personal communication, September 10, 2022). For some reason, students are frightened when an activity is called poetry writing. This phenomenon is known as metrophobia, an irrational, exaggerated fear or phobia regarding poetry (Timothy & Obiekezie, 2019). Strategies for overcoming metrophobia include focusing on the process of poetry writing rather than on the final product or the refinement of the produced poem. Poetry inadequacy arises when students believe that there is a correct way and an incorrect way to write poetry. When the end product such as a revised poem is the focus, a fixed mindset is encouraged. Focusing on the process of poetry writing rather than focusing on the end product contributes to a growth mindset (Blaszczynski, 2022; Dweck, 2006), which lessens student fear. One strategy for helping students in secondary-level grades to focus on process is to use the Poetry Machine to assist them in following the correct poetic structure (Kangasharju, Iiomaki, Lakkala, & Toom, 2022). The authors suggested that artificial intelligence interfaces might be able to reinforce similarly correct poetic structure for more mature learners.

### **Creativity, Expression Fluency, and Reflection**

What skills do employers require their workers to possess? One often overlooked skill has become a core competency for many organizations: creativity (Kellerman & Seligman, 2023; Wickam, 2021). According to Kellerman and Seligman (2023), “jobs will become increasingly creative” (p. 139). This trend “is also about the accelerating pace of change and the increasing complexity of businesses, which demand original responses to novel challenges far more frequently than ever before” (p. 139).

By its very nature, poetry writing contributes to the development of creativity (Myhill & Wilson, 2013). Creativity in poetry writing is enhanced through the use of free-verse poems that allow students to create their own poetic structures. In addition, allowing students to select topics for poems promotes accessibility and encourages students to write about what matters to them (X. Bentley, personal communication, January 30, 2021).

Fluency in writing is increased through frequent writing. The writing assignment need not be extensive; the frequency of writing is what builds skill. Stevens and Cooper (2009) noted that “practice builds fluency in writing and the motivation to write” (p. 49).

Using student reflections in business courses assists with building self-awareness (Porter, 2017), one aspect of emotional intelligence that enables students to modify their behaviors and engage in self-management, the second aspect of emotional intelligence. Further, Ardel and Grunwald (2018) concluded that self-reflection encourages growth during challenging times.

While reflections may be spoken during a class meeting, written reflections submitted privately to the teacher encourage students to reflect more openly without fear of judgment from fellow students (A. Knighton, personal communication, December 16, 2020). Reflections on action, those that occur after a project or assignment is completed, enable students to think more deeply about what has been learned and how that new learning may be applied to both their professional and personal lives (Stevens & Cooper, 2009). Thus, reflections reinforce two writing principles highlighted by Stevens and Cooper (2009): (a) writing is thinking, and (b) writing practice develops fluency in written expression.

Only a few writers such as Blaszczyński (2022) have provided business teachers and trainers with detailed instructions about using a particular type of poetry-based activity for a specific business-related purpose. A thorough search of the literature did not uncover any comprehensive plan for integrating poetry with business content. Grasping for scarce bits of detailed instructional guidance, business educators likely feel inadequate about and unprepared for using poetry as a classroom instructional tool.

## **Methodology of the Study**

### **Project Genesis**

The reported study stemmed from receiving one of three Poetry in the Disciplines Fellowships at the author's employing university at a major metropolitan state educational institution for Spring of 2021. The purpose of the fellowship program was to introduce poetry into non-traditional disciplines. The application proposal contained a description of a Mindful Poetry project to be introduced into a Mindful Manager course offered by the Department of Management. Feedback from the application process indicated that the selection committee was intrigued by a business professor implementing a poetry unit in the curriculum and recognized the potential of the project since writing poetry is a mindful activity (A. Knighton, personal communication, December 16, 2020).

### **Study Preparation**

With a 30-year background in teaching business communication and minimal formal poetry training, the researcher realized that incorporating poetry would be a new endeavor. Preparation for the project included four aspects. First, the Poetry in the Disciplines director held a Zoom meeting with the researcher, determined the project scope, and provided guidance about the types of poems to introduce and appropriate resources for student use. Second, the researcher attended a 75-minute Regional Writing Project workshop on Zoom about nature poetry the week before the project began. The workshop provided practice in writing poetry and modeled best practices for incorporating poetry in the classroom. Third, the researcher independently investigated other poetry resources that are included in Table 3.

Fourth, the researcher wrote sample poems to introduce each of the four chosen poem structures to students.

### **Study Participants**

Twenty-five senior-level management majors were enrolled in and completed The Mindful Manager course. The university, located in a large metropolitan area, is a Hispanic-Serving Institution; 21 students identified as Hispanic/Latina(x), 2 students identified as Asian Pacific Islander, 1 student identified as Middle Eastern, and 1 student identified as Caucasian/White. Given this ethnic mix, this study focuses attention on the Hispanic/Latina(x) perspective about writing poetry in business courses, an understudied population.

### **Study Overview**

Using a 30-day challenge format to write poetry is motivating to students who participate in various challenges at gyms, work, and in their personal lives. The 30-Day Poetry Challenge consisted of five assignments. Four sets of weekly assignments used a specified poetic structure in which students wrote five poems focusing on course-related themes. The challenge began in Week 1 with an unstructured poetic form, free verse. Week 2 progressed to tribu poems, with a specific structure. Week 3 poems had a cinquain (five-line) structure, while Week 4 poems took the triolet (eight-line) form. The culminating poetry activity required students to cull through the 20 poems they had written and select their best six poems representing each of the four poem structures and two additional poems of their own choice plus an assignment reflection.

Each of the four weekly poetry assignments was worth 25 points. The anthology collection assignment that included a reflection about the 30-Day Poetry Challenge was worth 50 points. Assignments were evaluated using the following criteria: inclusion of a title, adherence to one of the weekly themes, adherence to the specified poetic structure, and spelling. The entire 30-Day Poetry Challenge was worth 150 points or 15 percent of the course grade.

### **Poetry Writing Introduction**

Getting started with the 30-Day Poetry Challenge is a pivotal experience. Introducing poetry in an accessible manner is key to engaging and motivating students.

Providing a brief definition of poetry before writing is helpful. A formal definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes poetry as “the expression of beautiful or elevated thought, imagination, or feeling using appropriate language” (Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 1615). One National Poet Laureate described poetry as “singing on paper” (Harjo-Sapulpa, 2019). The prevalence of poetry in modern life through ads, commercial jingles, rap performances, and spoken word performances such as Amanda Gorman’s performance at the 2021 presidential inauguration are some examples that teachers can share with students.

One effective way to introduce poetry writing in business courses is through an alphapoem (see Ross & Adams, 2016) as described by Blaszczyński (2022). Alphapoems, also known as acrostic

poems, may be created in a group as a collaborative activity, focusing on creativity. Creating a poem in a group lessens anxiety and scaffolds or seamlessly transitions the poetry-writing process that some students find intimidating. An example of an alphapoem using the acrostic Write follows:

- **W**elcome yourself to the task by
- **R**eviewing the purpose and audience.
- **I**mplement an outline and then
- **T**ake time to draft and revise.
- **E**dit ruthlessly.

An example of an alphapoem created by students and used with permission follows:

**Report** – by Lara AlKousa and Elaine Gomez  
Relax, take a deep breath; you got this because  
Effort is all it takes, and  
People are there to support you. So,  
Outline and review your work, and  
Remember to  
Thank yourself for all your hard work!

Another effective way to introduce poetry is to ask students to read a few poems from the University of California San Diego Center for Mindfulness website (n.d.) for homework and select phrases from five or six poems that resonate with them. They can then create a Microsoft Word file containing the phrases that can be used during the next biweekly class session as inspiration for writing free-verse poems.

Alternatively, students could select random words from a list created by the instructor. For example, the researcher created a list of words (breathe, energy, heal, light, observe, pause, positive, nature, rest, relax, and sound) from the Healing Words Magnetic Poetry Kit (see Table 3) that served as an impetus for writing a poem about positive aspects of nature.

Table 3

**30-Day Poetry Challenge Resources**

Resource	Description	Location
Magnetic Poetry Kits	Kits containing words on magnets that can be placed on a refrigerator; the words serve as building blocks for poems. Words contained in The Healing Words kit were used for inspiration for the 30-Day Poetry Challenge.	<a href="http://www.magneticpoetry.com">www.magneticpoetry.com</a>
Poetic Forms	A glossary of poetry patterns	<a href="https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/creative_writing/pattern_and_variation_in_poetry/index.html">https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/creative_writing/pattern_and_variation_in_poetry/index.html</a> .
Poetry Foundation	Glossary of Poetic Terms; online discussions of poetic forms and creative writing workshops	<a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms</a>
Poetry in America	30-minute television show featuring well-known personalities and academics discussing a featured poem	Consult local Public Broadcasting System (PBS) listings
Poetry Machine	Artificial intelligence interface used to assist in writing poetry	<a href="https://poetrygames.org/poetry-machine/poetry-45.php">https://poetrygames.org/poetry-machine/poetry-45.php</a>
Super Soul Sunday Interview with Joy Harjo-Sulpulpa	Discussion of the power of poetry with Joy Harjo-Sulpulpa, the first Native American poet laureate (2019-2022).	<a href="https://www.oprah.com/app/supersoul-sunday-full-episodes/html">https://www.oprah.com/app/supersoul-sunday-full-episodes/html</a>
University of California San Diego	Poetry selections that can be used in a beginning poetry activity	<a href="https://cih.ucsd.edu/mindfulness/ mindful-poetry">https://cih.ucsd.edu/mindfulness/ mindful-poetry</a>
Writer's Digest	Examples of and instructions for writing various poetic forms	<a href="https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-poetry">https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-poetry</a>

**Poetry Writing Modeling**

High-impact instructional practices incorporate modeling and showing examples to students before they begin a new activity (X. Bentley, personal communication, January 30, 2021). With the 30-Day Poetry Challenge, incorporating instructor-created examples met this recommended high-impact practice standard. Examples were created for students and shared. The instructor wrote additional poems as the students created their own poems to create a sense of community. Inviting students to read their poems also develops community, especially when encouraging comments are made about such poem attributes as rhyme, alliteration, and humor.

## **Weekly Assignments**

The four weekly poem assignments are described in Table 4. Each poem structure is described, an example of that structure is provided, and the weekly poem themes are listed.

All poems were evaluated based upon inclusion of a title, adherence to the poem structure, focus (use of that week's themes), and spelling.

## **Mid-way Student Reflection**

Students were asked to provide feedback about the 30-Day Poetry Challenge mid-way by answering two questions:

1. What is working well with the 30-Day Poetry Challenge?
2. What is not working as well for you with the 30-Day Poetry Challenge? Please share any ideas you have to make the challenge better.

Representative comments from students are included in the following paragraphs, with comments about what was working well appearing in the next paragraph and suggestions for improvement in the following paragraph.

One student commented, "I like that we have a different topic for the 5 poems we have to write. I also like the fact that we practice writing a poem in class as well." Another student stated, "To be honest, I never really saw myself as one to enjoy writing poems, but now I look forward to writing them. I'm enjoying this activity a lot more than I expected." Still another student responded, "It is very helpful that we practice the poems in class and share them because I get a better grasp on how to approach the poem. I have never written poems prior to this class."

Comments about recommendations for improving the Poetry Challenge included, "I believe we should have the ability to write one topic of our choice when we are assigned the weekly collection challenge assignments." Another student commented, "I would have requirements for specific poems to use features such as a rhyme scheme, alliteration, or rhythm to enhance the quality of the poems being written." Yet another student suggested, "Before writing the poems[,] practice [counting] syllables and focus on those [theme] words that are powerful. Tell us everything in that one word. I get stuck when I can't get to express what I feel with [the constraints of using] limited syllables."

Table 4

## Weekly Poetry Challenge Assignments

Week/Poem Structure	Specific Poem Example	Week Themes
1/Free verse 10 or more lines	<b>The Poet Within</b> Have you ever written a poem? You are more poetic than you think. Poems are in songs and rap and do not require much ink. Instead, they require thought and playing with words. Soon your poem will be heard by those you choose to include. Now you can say, "I am a poet and I know it!"	Mindfulness Breath Mindful eating Challenge The future
2/Tricube 3 syllables per line, 3 lines per stanza, and 3 stanza; 9 lines total	<b>Elastic Time</b> Elastic time is now and later.  Elastic Girl rocked it stretching up.  Flexibly reaching out snapping back.	Attitude Gratitude Stress Slow Time
3/Cinquain 5 lines Line numbers and syllables: 1 = 2 2 = 4 3 = 6 4 = 8 5 = 2	<b>Filler Words Are Empty</b> Filler Words clutter thoughts Uh, er, um, okay, yeah You know, you guys, man, dude, like, hey Empty	Filler words Mindful listening Procrastination Seeing Smiling
4/Triolet 8 lines Lines numbers and directions 1 = none 2 = none 3 = Rhymes with Line 1 4 = Repeat Line 1 5 = Rhymes with Line 1 6 = Rhymes with Line 2 7 = Repeat Line 1 8 = Repeat Line 2	<b>Paused by Awe</b> Silence provides a perfect pause Amid an overwhelming day. Silence heals because Silence provides a perfect pause. Silence sometimes awes When there are no words to say. Silence provides a perfect pause Amid an overwhelming day.	Autopilot Mindful technology Silence Sound Your choice

As a result of this student feedback, a “your choice” theme was added to the fourth poetry collection so students could write about what was important to them or what they wanted to express.

In summary, overall feedback from the mid-semester reflection was positive. Students mentioned the sense of accomplishment that was gained from writing poetry as well as their developmental transition from being intimidated by the poetry assignments to eagerly anticipating future assignments. One of the suggestions was implemented during this pilot study; (other student suggestions were implemented when teaching during subsequent semesters).

### **Culminating Activity**

The culminating activity in the 30-Day Poetry Challenge is described in the Appendix.

### **Sample Student Poems from Their Anthologies**

The following poems are included with the approval of the student-poets.

#### **Challenges** – (Theme: Challenge, Free Verse) by **Gabby Thomas**

I am not particularly good at challenges.  
Sticking to them, particularly.  
I've failed to complete most of the challenges I began.  
You can say that I am successful, in that regard.  
I have never stuck to a resolution,  
And God knows I have yet to read the Bible in a year  
(He knows my heart though!).  
But it's never too late.  
In fact, I challenge myself.  
I challenge myself to finish what I started, even when it's hard.

#### **Marathon** - (Theme: Slow, Tricube) by **Manuel Santiago**

Just like a  
Marathon,  
Pace yourself.

Life is not  
A race so  
Take your time.  
Be gentle  
And enjoy  
The process.

#### **Never Again** (Theme: Procrastination, Cinquain) by **Priscilla Zeng**

Rushing  
to finish my

assignment by the date,  
I always say never again.  
I lied.

**My Loving Kittens** – (Theme: Your Choice, Triolet) by **Hamzeh Alawad**

Cleo and Crème Brûlée,  
My royal feline friends,  
My fluffy furballs, I hate being away.  
Cleo and Crème Brûlée,  
Elegant kittys [sic], however can I repay?  
My love for them transcends.  
Cleo and Crème Brûlée,  
My royal feline friends.

**Final Student Perceptions**

During the end-of-course evaluation, students provided feedback about the 30-Day Poetry Challenge that was positive overall. All 25 students recommended that the poetry project be continued during future semesters. In a final course reflection about the most valuable course activities, 5 students or 20% rated the 30-Day Poetry Challenge as the most valuable activity, 2 students or 8% rated the 30-Day Poetry Challenge as the second-most valuable activity, and 2 students or 8% rated the 30-Day Poetry Challenge as the third-most valuable activity. More than one-third—36%--of the students ranked the 30-Day Poetry Challenge very highly. Two students did not enjoy writing the initial poetry-writing assignments; however, they reported becoming more skilled, which, in turn, increased their enjoyment to a moderate level by the end of the 30-Day Poetry Challenge.

Students also recognized and reported that their creativity was being developed, a skill that is coveted by employers (Kellerman & Seligman, 2023; Wickam, 2021). Six students or 24% reported that their creativity was enhanced through the 30-Day Poetry Challenge. One student commented, “These poems give us the freedom to use our creative minds to come up with poems that have true meaning. They allow me to use a part of my brain that really doesn’t get utilized as much.”

Other unanticipated outcomes from the 30-Day Poetry Challenge included the following student-reported outcomes. Some students wrote a poem a day even after the 30-Day Poetry Challenge concluded. Other students eagerly shared their poems with friends and family members. Some students had not written poetry before the 30-Day Challenge and enjoyed reading their poems aloud to the class on Zoom as well as appreciated hearing other students read their poems. Still other students formed weekly poetry-writing groups. Students reported transitioning from a state of being intimidated by poetry to looking forward to completing the next poetry-related business assignment.

**Final Instructor Perceptions**

Participating in the 30-Day Poetry Challenge along with the students assisted in building a classroom community of poetry writers. Being willing to take risks by sharing personal poems with students and by reading them aloud before students were invited to share their creations, the instructor helped to reduce writing anxiety and encouraged student participation. An unexpected outcome was the therapeutic effect of poetry writing during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on student reflections about the 30-Day Poetry Challenge and the quality of their poetry collections, the instructor realized that significant student learning occurred during the 30-Day Poetry Challenge. Poems written by students provided the instructor with windows into students' thought processes as well as mirrors revealing students' emotions and perceptions, which influenced and guided the classroom instructional processes.

### **Study Limitations**

This study was conducted during pandemic conditions using Zoom to deliver instruction. If the 30-Day Poetry Challenge resulted in the reported positive outcomes during difficult and challenging circumstances, it will probably work well in the traditional face-to-face classroom, although that needs to be confirmed.

### **Instructional Practice Implications**

Based on the results of the reported exploratory 30-Day Poetry Challenge in the management course, using poetry writing as an instructional tool engages students in the content material. In particular, students identified the 30-Day Poetry Challenge as one of the most valuable course activities, with 36% of the students ranking the 30-Day Poetry Challenge among the top- three learning activities. Students favorably perceived the integration of poetry with management topics—using poetry as a tool for incorporating management education content. Creating poetry requires students to engage in self-reflection, which aids in the development of emotional intelligence aspects such as self-awareness and self-management, critical qualities for effective managers to possess (see Ardel & Grunwald, 2018; Porter, 2017).

The following recommendations for further research are advocated:

1. The study should be replicated in the same environment to determine whether the findings are similar during a non-pandemic environment.
2. The study should be replicated in Non-Hispanic Serving Institutions to determine if the results are confirmed with other student populations.
3. The study should be replicated with a longer time frame of 60 days or an entire semester. This extension of time for the Poetry Challenge would enable expanding the poetic forms to include other types of poetry such as haiku, renga, ode, anti-ode, ballad, elegy, limerick, and sonnet.
4. The Poetry Challenge should be investigated in other types of business courses, especially in business communication courses because of its typical written and oral communication components. This expansion would enable the instructor to emphasize

the oral communication component through the reading and oral interpretation of poems and through spoken word performances. If students perceive such poetic devices as the meter, alliteration, and rhyme of poetry, they are primed for enhanced delivery of oral contributions. It would be interesting to observe any perceivable changes in the transfer of poetic delivery skills into business-related oral presentation skills.

5. Based upon student comments and the study by Davis (2019), who incorporated poetry-refinement techniques, the instructor could introduce higher level poetic devices such as consonance/assonance, euphony/cacophony, and repetition to prepare students to create more complex poetic creations. Doing so would enhance the created poems by adding refinement, polish, and sophistication to them.
6. This study should be expanded to include experimenting with the use of artificial intelligence interfaces such as Poetry Machine (Kangasharju, Iiomaki, Lakkala, & Toom, 2022). These interfaces are aimed toward secondary students as well as adults and could prove helpful to those whose first language is not English and who may struggle with writing anxiety and writing fluency.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Challenge Anthology and Reflection Assignment**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this assignment is twofold:

1. To revise and improve your six best poems from the 30-Day Poetry Challenge
2. To reflect upon the 30-Day Poetry Challenge

#### **Tasks**

Review your collection of 20 poems; choose your best 6, including at least one representative of each form and revise and improve the selected 6 poems.

Write a one-page minimum preface to your mindful poetry anthology, explaining the relationships among the poems and their themes. In addition, answer these questions:

- What were your own experiences of writing the poems? Please describe your experiences in detail, including your poem-creation process.
- Of the six poems in your anthology, which poem is your favorite? Why?
- Of the four poem structures you used this semester—free verse, tercet, cinquain, and triolet--which poem structure is your favorite? Why? Which poem structure is your least favorite? Why?
- Have you noticed any differences in your relationship with poetry from the beginning of the semester to now? Please explain any noted differences.

#### **Evaluation**

This 50-point assignment will be evaluated based upon the thoroughness of responses to the reflection questions, the inclusion of six poems representing the four poem structures, the inclusion of poem titles, and language mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure).