

## What makes a good poetic line?

A guide to identifying the meaning and significance of line-breaks in poetry. Students will explore the rhythm, pace and meaning of poetic lines with creative activities using reading, group writing, independent writing and performance.

### caribbean woman

oh, man,  
oh, man,  
de caribbean woman

oh, man,  
oh. man,  
de caribbean woman

she doan fraid a de marchin beat  
she doan care how he timin sweet  
she doan care if she kill a man  
jus doan mash up she plan

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## READING ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

Spend some time reading the poem out loud, asking students to take turns. Then discuss:

- Which is your favourite line in the poem? Why?
- Can you notice any interesting patterns, rhythms, or beats in the lines? Tap the beat as you read.
- Does everyone agree on the beat?
- How do the lines help you to read the poem with rhythm?



## GROUP WRITING ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

Ask students to turn the following text into a poem by breaking it into lines. Discuss everyone's choices.

*Tyger Tyger, burning bright, In the forests of the night; What immortal hand or eye, Could frame thy fearful symmetry? In what distant deeps or skies. Burnt the fire of thine eyes? On what wings dare he aspire? What the hand, dare seize the fire?<sup>1</sup>*

## INDEPENDENT WRITING ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

Find a poem that you are drafting.

- Look at where you have chosen to end lines. What words are at the end of your lines? Are you happy with these choices?
- Read your poem out loud and listen to the rhythm or beat. Do your lines work with the rhythm?
- Look at the length of your lines. Are all the lines the same length? What would happen if you cut some lines in half or even into 1- or 2-word lines?

Experiment with line breaks in your poetry – remember, you can **RE-INVENT** poetic form.

## PERFORMANCE (15 MINUTES)

Build a performance space in the room and have the students perform a poem from one of the activities. See if you can guess where they break their lines.

<sup>1</sup> Originally William Blake, *The Tyger* (1794)