

WARM UP: 15 minutes

Using your half sheet peer conference, peer conference with your partner for 20 minutes. Please be sensitive and make sure everyone has a partner. In the event of odd number, a group of three is okay.

LESSON: 10 – 15 minutes

WRITING TIME: 15-20 minutes (No Talking) You may go into your caves ONLY if the room is absolutely silent

## Syntax Poem – Lesson and Assignment

**Syntax** The ordering of words into meaningful verbal patterns such as phrases, clauses, and sentences. Poets often manipulate syntax, changing conventional word order, to place certain emphasis on particular words. Emily Dickinson, for instance, writes about being surprised by a snake in her poem "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass," and includes this line: "His notice sudden is." In addition to the alliterative hissing s-sounds here, Dickinson also effectively manipulates the line's syntax so that the verb is appears unexpectedly at the end, making the snake's hissing presence all the more "sudden."

### Syntax Examples

#### Syntax in Poetry

The general word order of an English sentence is "Subject+Verb+Object". In poetry, however, the word order may be shifted to achieve certain artistic effects such as producing rhythm or melody in the lines, achieving emphasis, heightening connection between two words etc. The unique syntax used in poetry makes it different from prose. Let us consider the following examples of syntax:

#### Example #1

In casual conversations, we can simply say, "I cannot go out" to convey our inability to go out. P J Kavanagh's in his poem *Beyond Decoration* does not rely on merely stating a prosaic "I cannot go out". Rather, he shifts the syntax and says "Go out I cannot", which lays a much stronger emphasis on the inability to go out conveyed by the word "cannot".

#### Example #2

Similarly, Milton shifts words in his poems frequently. Let us analyze lines from his poem *Lycidas*:

"Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,  
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,  
And all their echoes mourn"

The modified word order in the above lines is Object+Subject+Subject Complement+Verb. This is instead of:

“The woods and desert caves,  
With wild thyme and gadding vine o’ergrown,  
And all their echoes mourn thee, Shepherd.

## Syntax in Shakespeare

Writing all of his plays and sonnets in iambic **pentameter**, Shakespeare habitually reversed the general order of English sentences by placing verbs at the end of the sentences.

### Example #1

In *Romeo and Juliet*, he writes,

“What light from yonder window breaks?” instead of using a common expression “What light breaks from yonder window?”

### Example #2

In *Richard III*, he deliberately reverses the word order of a sentence,

“and all the clouds that lowered upon our house buried in the deep bosom of the ocean.” into “And all the clouds that lower’d upon our house in the deep bosom of the ocean buried.”

## Function of Syntax

To convey meaning is one of the main functions of syntax. In literature, writers utilize syntax and diction to achieve certain artistic effects like **mood**, tone etc. Like diction, syntax aims to affect the readers as well as express the writer’s attitude.

**ACTIVITY: With your partner, how many different ways can you manipulate the syntax of the sentence: I ate the chocolate donut. Don’t add or subtract any words. Be ready to report to the class.**

**ACTIVITY: For even more fun! Do the same activity, but be a young Shakespeare. Write the lines in iambic pentameter. (5 pairs of syllables, Ta DUM Ta DUM Ta DUM Ta DUM Ta DUM) Manipulate the line: The snowy mountain fell into the sea. NOTE: Feel free to take words out and add words to develop the rhythm.**

**HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT DUE TOMORROW: Write a poem of at least 50 words in which numerous lines have a non-conventional syntax. Think of yourself as Shakespeare. For even more fun! Use iambic pentameter. Work on developing a MOOD and TONE.**

**Note: This assignment, if you choose to use it, can count as one of your 8 poems.**