

“Credo” Poem Using the Repetition of a Phrase

The repetition of a word or phrase in a poem is a literary device found in poetry since biblical times. While we know that repetition can sometimes weaken the energy of a poem, this form of repetition can infuse the poem with a sense of importance and intensify our engagement with the poem’s significance. In addition, it contributes to a dimension of unification within the poem, as well as an interconnection of all things.

- 1) Tell students that the word, “Credo,” means “I believe” in Latin. Write the word on the board and “I believe” below it. Discuss how we usually connect those two words with religious or philosophical principles. Tell them that this writing experience will ask them to think of what we usually consider “ordinary” things as objects of importance.
- 2) Direct students to jot down words naming objects, places, people, pets, interests, etc. For example, their lists might include a baby sister or brother, a musical instrument, a soccer ball, a favorite article of clothing, a technological device (iphone, etc.), a pet, a season, a mountain, a river, etc. Give them about a minute or two.
- 3) Pass out the sample poem, “Credo,” or project it on a screen. Since there are ten stanzas, you might call on ten students to read a stanza, or you might prefer to read the entire poem yourself.
- 4) Point out that each stanza begins with the words, “I believe,” followed by some concrete, descriptive detail.
- 5) Tell them that the technique involves building a poem in which each stanza picks up a word or idea from the previous stanza. Demonstrate this by reading the first stanza. Then read the second and ask what word or idea did the poet pick up from the first stanza in order to begin the next one. Continue through the poem until students have a solid grasp of the progression. Note that the last two stanzas might not be as obvious, but they definitely follow the sequence.
- 6) Ask students to share their favorite or thought-provoking parts of the poem.
- 7) Remind students that the poem began with the poet’s focus on the car and then grew from there, encompassing such things as flowers & whales, truth, forgiveness, escalators, music, rivers, nose rings, hatred, and the summation of “a song we all can hear.”
- 8) Tell students to select something from their list and to start their poem with that, e.g., “I believe in the blank sheet in my notebook....”
- 9) Write, share, enjoy!

