Background for Teacher
The cinquain is a highly structured form of poetry. It requires a fluent and flexible writer. The format commands attention to word choice, word meaning, syllabication, and parts of speech, while at the same time expressing a meaningful message. To the unskilled writer, the focus often becomes following the rigor of the format rules rather than writing to create meaning or to achieve a musical sense in the poetry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True Cinquain</th>
<th>Modified Cinquain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line 1: 1 word title (noun) 2 syllables</td>
<td>Line 1: 1 word title (noun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 2: 2 descriptive words (adjectives) 4 syllables</td>
<td>Line 2: 2 descriptive words (adjectives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 3: 3 words that express action 6 syllables</td>
<td>Line 3: 3 words that express action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 4: 4 words that express feeling 8 syllables</td>
<td>Line 4: 4 words that express feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 5: 1 word (synonyms or reference to title in line 1) 2 syllables</td>
<td>Line 5: 1 word (synonyms or reference to title in line 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the structured nature of the cinquain form, teachers often choose to introduce a modified version of the cinquain. Using the modified cinquain with less-experienced students and offering more experienced students the option to use either form, frees students to choose words for expression rather than for mechanics.

Student Objectives
- Write a cinquain poem
- Understand and identify different parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs
- Understand and use synonyms and other parts of speech to write cinquain poetry

Introduce the Poetry
For more-experienced writers
- Explain that true cinquain poetry is written using five nonrhyming lines that contain 22 syllables in a predictable syllable pattern (2-4-6-8-2). Line 1 contains one word (the title). Line 2 contains two words that describe the title. Line 3 contains three words that express action. Line 4 contains four words that express feeling; and line 5 is made up of one word that recalls the title. Provide the true cinquain about friendship as an example.

For less-experienced writers
- Explain that a modified cinquain poem follows the same word pattern rules as the true cinquain, but doesn’t count syllables. A modified cinquain poem is written using five nonrhyming lines in a predictable pattern. Line 1 contains one word (the title). Line 2 contains two words that describe the title. Line 3 contains three words that express action. Line 4 contains four words that express feeling; and line 5 is made up of one word that recalls the title. Provide the modified cinquain about a sunbeam as an example.
Lesson Plan (continued)

- Discuss with students how and why the modified version of the cinquain might have evolved (counting syllables made the form very difficult, and so on). Accept any answers students can justify.

Teach the Poetry
- Write the following examples of cinquain poetry on the board or overhead projector, or hand out a copy of the samples page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True Cinquain</th>
<th>Modified Cinquain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Sunbeam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precious, awe/some</td>
<td>Radi/ant, bright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright/ens gloom/y mo/ments</td>
<td>Stream/ing, pour/ing, soft/ly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain/bow's tres/ure trove dis/cov/ered</td>
<td>Al/ways makes me hap/py</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al/ways</td>
<td>Gold/en</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Review the syllable pattern in each poem with students.
- Discuss how cinquain poetry stresses the use of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in writing. Have students identify different parts of speech in the friendship poem and explain their function (Friendship: noun—describes the topic; Precious, awesome: adjectives—describe the topic; Brightens gloomy moments: adverb, adjective, and noun—express an action; Rainbow’s treasure trove discovered: noun, adjective, noun, verb—express a feeling; Always: adverb—refers to the title.)

Model Writing a Cinquain
- The first step in writing a cinquain poem is choosing a good topic. Cinquain poems may be written about any topic. Choose a topic that can be described using a variety of words or phrases.
- Have students brainstorm possible topics about which to write. Subjects might include: words from a content area being studied; names of friends, family members, and pets; a favorite hobby; or any other topic of interest. Encourage students to name topics that can be easily described or that evoke strong feeling or opinion. Record students’ suggestions on the board or overhead projector.
- Choose a topic from the generated list that you know students are familiar with and write it on the board or overhead projector.
- Write Line 1 on the board and invite students to name a noun that describes the topic. List their suggestions in the Line 1 row. Continue by writing Line 2 on the board and asking students to name nouns that describe the topic. List their suggestions in the Line 2 row. Continue the process through Line 5.
- Choose examples from each row, and write a model cinquain poem for the chosen topic on the board or overhead projector.
- Have students write their own cinquain poem using the same topic. Encourage them to use a dictionary or thesaurus to find synonyms that might be more interesting and concise.
Word Work: Parts of Speech
- Review the meaning and function of the following terms:
  - **noun**: names a person, place, or thing
  - **verb**: expresses action
  - **adjective**: describes a noun or pronoun
  - **adverb**: describes or modifies an action
  - **synonym**: means the same, or almost the same, thing as another word
- Discuss how understanding parts of speech and synonyms can help a poet find words that fit the criteria of cinquain poetry. For example, if a poet were writing about summer and wanted to explain that it was hot, but needed a two-syllable word, the poet might think of a two-syllable synonym for *hot*, such as *steaming*.
- Use this opportunity to introduce and model using a thesaurus. Explain to students how to locate an adjective in a thesaurus and then list the synonyms for that adjective. Encourage them to practice the activity with other words before they use a thesaurus for their cinquain.

Poetry Practice
- Have students work individually or in pairs to choose another topic from the generated topic list on the board. Then have them create a cinquain poem as independent practice.
- Remind students that each line in a cinquain poem should begin with a capital letter and that other forms of punctuation, such as commas, may be added to clarify the meaning and improve the flow of the poem. Further emphasize that more-experienced writers should pay attention to the function and syllable count of words and phrases in order to ensure their poem fits the cinquain format.
- As students write, encourage them to brainstorm to find words and phrases that communicate and fit the structure of their cinquain poem.
- Have students revise their work in order to improve understanding and flow by adding, deleting, consolidating, and rearranging words as necessary.

Use the Worksheets for Practice
- Have students compose a cinquain poem using the scaffolded worksheets. There are three choices of worksheets and a samples page:
  - **Worksheet 1** for students who need additional support
  - **Worksheet 2** for students who have a basic understanding of cinquain poems
  - **Worksheet 3** for students who have a solid understanding of cinquain poems
  - **Samples** for examples of cinquain poetry

Extend the Activity
- Celebrate the writing process by having students read their poetry aloud with fluency, rhythm, and expression.
- Encourage students to write a cinquain poem on a topic that is the opposite of one they have already written. For example, if they chose to write about summer, have them write about winter. Publish the opposing poems on facing pages in a class book.
- Assign a class topic. Have each student write a cinquain on that topic. Compare the different word choices students used. Point out and discuss the number of words students used in common.
- Have students share their writing with as many different audiences as possible. Poetry may be published through classroom or schoolwide displays, a poetry book, a school newsletter or website, an online poetry contest, or any other creative form of communication.
• Practice fluency by having students read their poems into a tape recorder. Save their best readings. Make the recordings available for other classes and/or grade levels to check out and listen to.

• Publish grade or class books on the same topic. For instance, if you are studying plants, one group might write a cinquain about trees, another about flowers, and another about cacti. Compile all of the poems into a book titled “Plant Life” and place the book in your school library.