

Write On!

A Weekly Newsletter by The Evergreen State College Writing Center
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VOLUME II ISSUE XVII

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NEXT WEEK...

Poetry—Haiku

Writing Center News:

April is National Poetry Month! Celebrate poesy today!

Workshops-Week Three:

April 14th: 2:00-3:00—Sentence Patterns I: Locating Subjects and Verbs

3:00-4:30—Lab Reports Part II: Peer Review

4:30-6:00—Thesis Statements: Recognition and Development

****All workshops take place on Wednesdays in Lib. 2221. Check out our Web site, www.evergreen.edu/writingcenter, for workshop descriptions and handouts!****

Tutor of the Week

CHALEN KELLY

- **Year:** Junior
- **Focus of study:** Education, literature, film, and communication
- **Length of time at the Center:** 2 quarters
- **Favorite things to tutor:** Poetry and fiction
- **Favorite book(s):** *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky
- **Favorite book(s) when she was seven:** *Anything* by Walter Farley

CAN YOU ...

STUMP THE

TUTOR? Darla Wombat asks, "What is a caesura? Can you give an example?"



We're glad you asked, Darla! A caesura (pronounced \sih-ZHUR-uh; -ZUR-) is a pause or break in a line of verse; it is usually indicated by a punctuation mark.

For example: Edna St. Vincent Millay uses semicolons, commas, and even dashes to indicate caesuras in the first eight lines of her "Sonnet I":

Thou art not lovelier than lilacs,—no,
Nor honeysuckle; thou art not more fair
Than small white single poppies,—I can bear
Thy beauty; though I bend before thee, though
From left to right, not knowing where to go,
I turn my troubled eyes, nor here nor there
Find any refuge from thee, yet I swear
So has it been with mist,—with moonlight so.

**from Renascence and Other Poems*

Note: A caesura is also defined as a pause or an interruption in a conversation, a speech, or even a film.

~Poetry~

My Obsession with Line Breaks

"For it is important that awake people be awake
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep."

~William Stafford, A Ritual to Read Each Other

by Sandra Yannone, Ph.D., Director of the Writing Center

Writing poetry requires consummate juggling skills: attention to sound, metaphor, form, individual words. In fact, writing poetry requires keeping so many balls in the air that a few tend to get overlooked in the blur of motion. Early in my career, I overlooked the importance of line breaks until poet Lucie Brock-Broido pulled me aside after class and said, "Your line breaks are sloppy. They don't tell me anything. I want you to *obsess* over your line breaks." So I did.

At its most basic, a line break is the last word of a line of poetry. Whether you use punctuation to stop or pause at the end of the line or run the line over into the next without any punctuation (*enjambment*), you create a deliberate, visual break at the end of each line. The reader's eye sees the line break as a pause as s/he moves from the right margin to the left margin. This eye movement alone enriches the meaning of a poem. My favorite visual trick is using the line break to switch a word's function:

*"as I bent to kiss him before each death
defying act. . ."*

In this example, the brain processes "death" as a noun until the eye returns to the beginning of the next line and learns that "death" functions as an adjective.

I also like to use line breaks to build anticipation, usually with a verb, and then drop down to begin the next line with an unexpected image:

*". . . The headline still accused
the iceberg. . ."*

Lucie Brock-Broido also had me pay attention to the line as an individual unit of meaning. I found that once I began scrutinizing the line break, I began seeing the first word of each line. I learned to use line breaks and line beginnings to ballast the entire line. Before I had my line break epiphanies, my lines broke, then began predominantly with an article, preposition, or pronoun. After, I noticed that more of my line beginnings included concrete nouns, adjectives, and verbs:

*"filled the cell with eight gallons of lager. He escaped
intoxicated. . ."*

I should share that Lucie Brock-Broido didn't tell me specifically how to obsess. She just said, "Obsess," and I obeyed. I wrote a poem and broke the lines over and over. An obsession created *my* rules for line breaks in *my* poems; it can do the same for you in yours. So, go on, brave poet: obsess.

**examples from Sandra Yannone's "Bess Houdini Reveals Her Secret to the Modern World," published in Luna magazine, 2003.*