Poetry Craft Tips

Directions: Read the tips below and choose one or more to try out in your poem.

- Help readers make a mental image in their mind by choosing precise words.
  Example: periwinkle instead of blue

- Use words that show one or more of the five senses.

- The decision of where to use line breaks impacts meaning.
  Example: Set a word or phrase on a line all by itself for impact.

- Use alliteration with purpose.
  Example: To show the mood or to create pacing (how quickly or slowly the reader reads a section of your poem)

- Try a circular ending. Begin and end your poem by repeating a word, phrase, or idea.

- Vary the length of your stanzas. Follow a long stanza with a short stanza (or the reverse) to show a change in events, a change within a character, the passing of time, and more.

- Repeat words or phrases to create rhythm and beat.

- Repeat words or phrases to show that an idea is important.

- Convey feelings, motivations, and action with strong verbs.
  Example: dip into the water is different from cannonball into the water

- Use a metaphor or simile to compare, enhancing meaning and imagination.

Source: Adapted from “Writing Strategies Used in Poetry” (pages 48-49) of Writing Is Magic, or Is It? Using Mentor Texts to Develop the Writer’s Craft by Jennifer M. Bogard and Mary C. McMackin (2015).