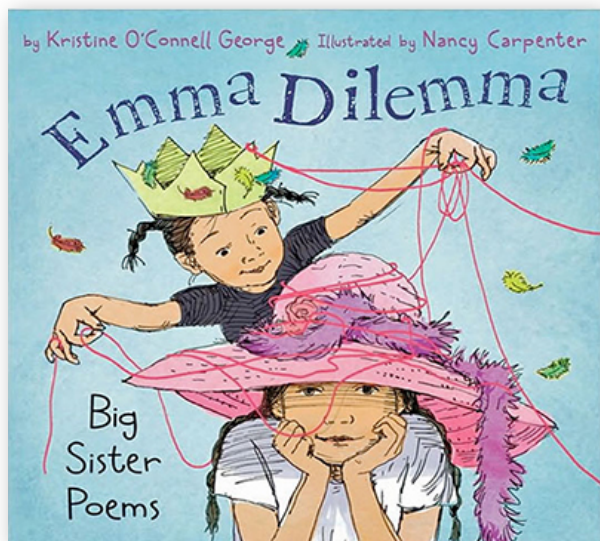


Sibquain Writing Guide



Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems

by Kristine O'Connell George
Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter
Clarion Books an Imprint of Houghton
Mifflin Harcourt

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48 Pages Ages 6 to 11

Awards

Claudia Lewis Award – Bank Street

ALA Notable

Bulletin Blue Ribbon Selection

School Library Journal Best Book

Junior Library Guild

★ ...vignettes form such a vivid portrait of Emma and Jessica that readers may feel as if they personally know them—and a tense turn of events will have readers holding their breath."—Publishers Weekly, starred review

★ A potent combination of accessibility and understanding, this will work well as a read-alone or a read-aloud, offering sympathy to those who are in the older-sib position and perspective to those who aren't."—Bulletin, starred review

★ Spring-colored line drawings in pen-and-ink and digital media are filled with engaging details, expressive characters, and lots of humor, and bring the family dynamics to life while the verses build to a climactic situation that brings these youngsters together in a touching way."—School Library Journal, starred review

★ Older siblings everywhere will recognize the big-sister's view of family fury and fun."—Booklist, starred review

To learn more about Emma Dilemma, visit: www.kristinegeorge.com

DISCUSSION TOPICS . . . after reading *Emma Dilemma*

Use the discussion topics below to guide your students toward higher level thinking before they begin to brainstorm and write their sibquains.

SHOW, DON'T TELL

Writers of all ages are often reminded to “Show, don’t tell.” Strong, evocative writing—whether prose or poetry—relies on examples and incidents rather than adjectives and adverbs.

The poems in *Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems* demonstrate this writing maxim. For example, George does not just tell the reader that Emma, can be a brat. Instead, she *shows* this, giving specific examples and details: Emma strings yarn all over Jessica’s tidy room; Emma uses Jessica’s markers draws on her sister’s soccer ball, *and* leaves the caps off.



© Nancy Carpenter

Likewise, there are concrete examples of tender moments that show the reader that these two sisters do love each other. Without any adjectives, we know that Jessica is “nice” and “kind” because she lets Emma crawl into bed with her at night. Jessica reads to Emma and even remembers the names of Emma’s rocks.

After the reading these poems, invite students to share stories about their siblings. Guide them toward finding specific telling details and developing stories and incidents that will help create pictures in their listeners’ minds. Students are often surprised at how much stronger and more engaging their work is when they *show* rather than tell.

POINT OF VIEW



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Each of the 34 poems are written in the voice of Jessica, the older sister. But what about Emma? How does she feel? How would she describe the same event? Is she an adoring little sister? Or, is she sometimes frustrated that she can’t keep up with Jessica and do everything that Jessica does.

Read “Soccer Game,” “Late for School,” “Picture Books,” and “Accident” and invite students to discuss and possibly write poems from Emma’s point of view.

SIMILES

In “Freedom,” Jessica is thrilled that she’ll have her friend all to herself without her little sister, Emma, “stuck to me / like a burr / stuck to my stock.” Discuss this simile with your students. Can they picture it? (Some students might not be familiar with burrs; if you can find some burrs, pass them around so students can handle them.) What other similes might work?



Next, hand out 3 x 5” index cards. Ask students to think of a good simile or find similes in their reading. Later, collect the cards and create a display of the best similes. The display can be added to over time as students create or discover additional similes.

SIBLING DICTIONARY



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In “Translator,” Jessica translates ‘Emma Language’ in which nostrils are “nozzles,” a calculator is a “count-a-lator” and scrambled eggs are “squabbled eggs.”

Ask students if their siblings (or they themselves) have a special language of invented words they use at home. Have them interview family members as well.

Create a class “dictionary,” defining these invented words. Students can illustrate their entries and share the stories behind their family’s invented words.

Sibquain Writing Guide



Sibquains on display in Christy McCabe's second grade classroom

What is a sibquain?

We're glad you asked! A sibquain is a cinquain poem written about a sibling! (Students that do not have a brother or sister can write about a cousin or other family member.)

Cinquain + Sibling = Sibquain

CINQUAINS

Cinquains (sin canes) are 5-line poems. This traditional form, as designed by [Adelaide Crapsey](#) (1878-1914), is structured as follows:

First line:	2 syllables
Second line:	4 syllables
Third line:	6 syllables
Fourth line:	8 syllables
Fifth line:	2 syllables

However, contemporary cinquains are taught in a variety of ways such as assigning parts of speech for each line. Sometimes, words are substituted for syllables so the first line would contain two words, the second line four words, and so on.

However, no matter how this form is taught, cinquains offer young writers a fun and versatile form to help them structure their thoughts into powerful, succinct poems. Most importantly, since cinquains do not rhyme, beginning writers aren't locked into searching for a rhyming word. Instead, they can concentrate on choosing terrific vocabulary for their poems.

CINQUAIN EXAMPLE (Traditional form)

T-shirt,
you're my best thing
though you've faded so much
no one knows what you said when you
were new.

Myra Cohn Livingston

RESOURCES FOR TEACHING CINQUAINS

NCTE: [Read Write Think](#) Multiple activities and standards
[Teacher's Guide for Toasting Marshmallows](#) by Kristine O'Connell George

Poem-Making: Ways to Begin Writing Poetry by Myra Cohn Livingston HarperCollins 1991

MORE ABOUT CINQUAINS

[Cinquain.org](#) More about Adelaide Crapsey and samples of her cinquains

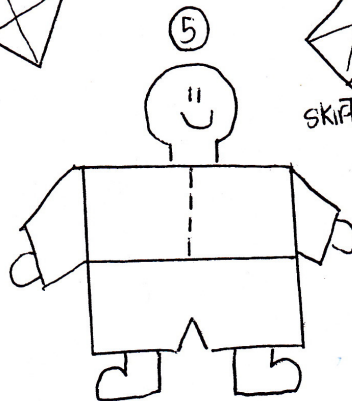
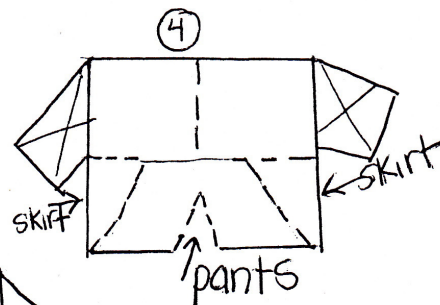
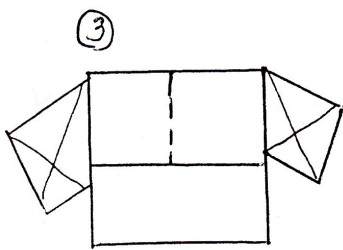
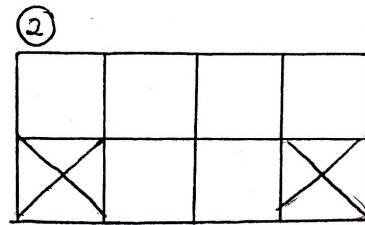
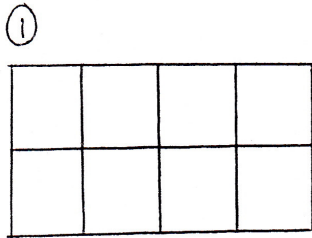
[Sing Out for Cinquain!](#) by Lee Bennett Hopkins A brief discussion of the origin of this poetic form as an unrhymed poem without constraints.

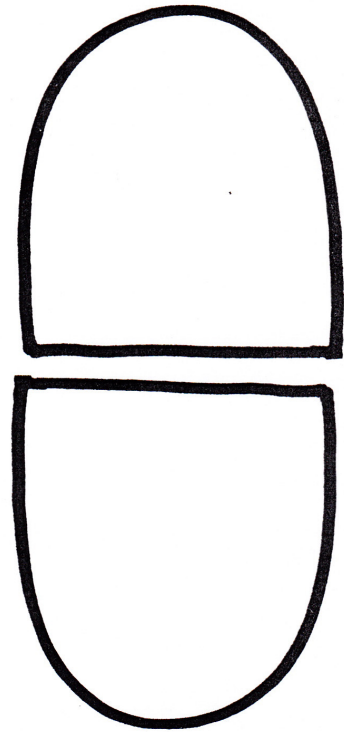
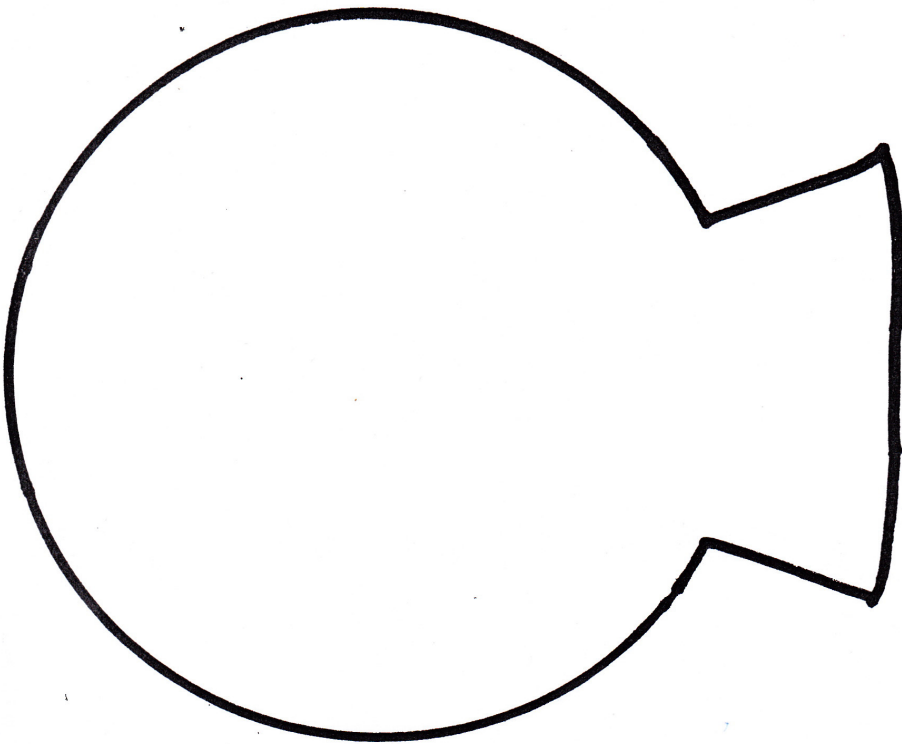
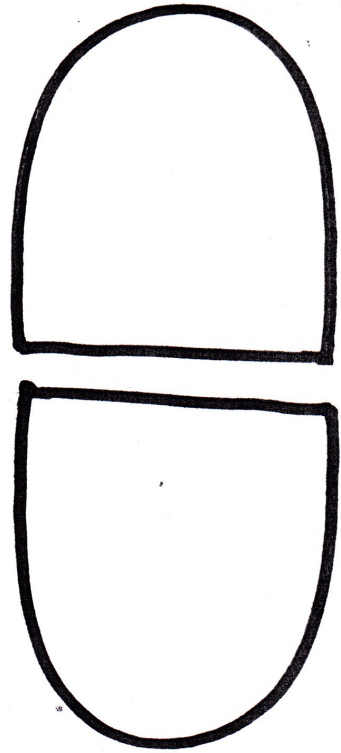
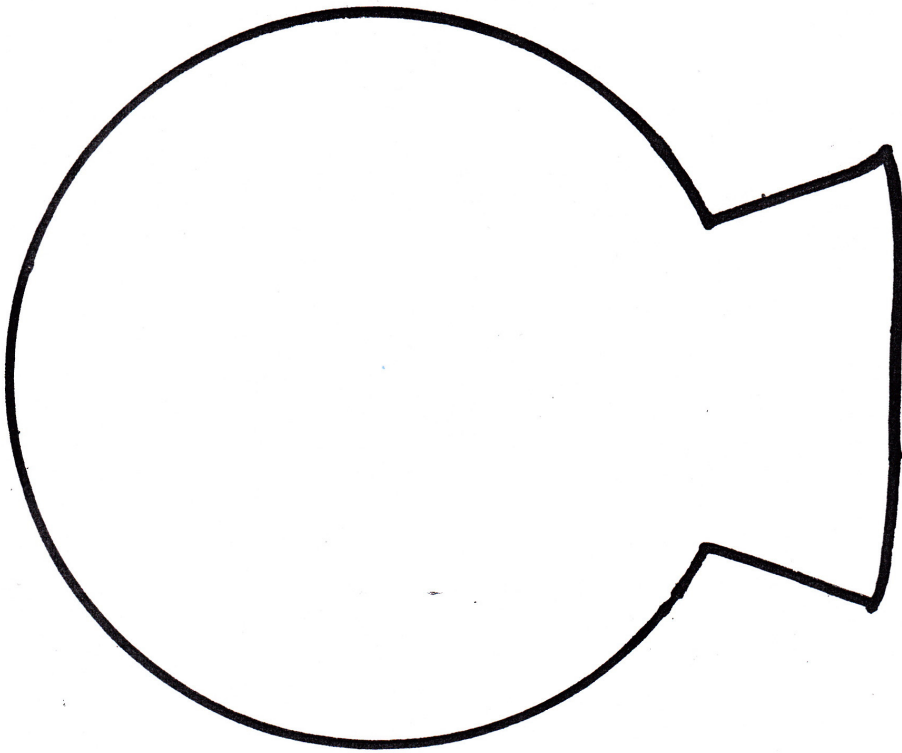


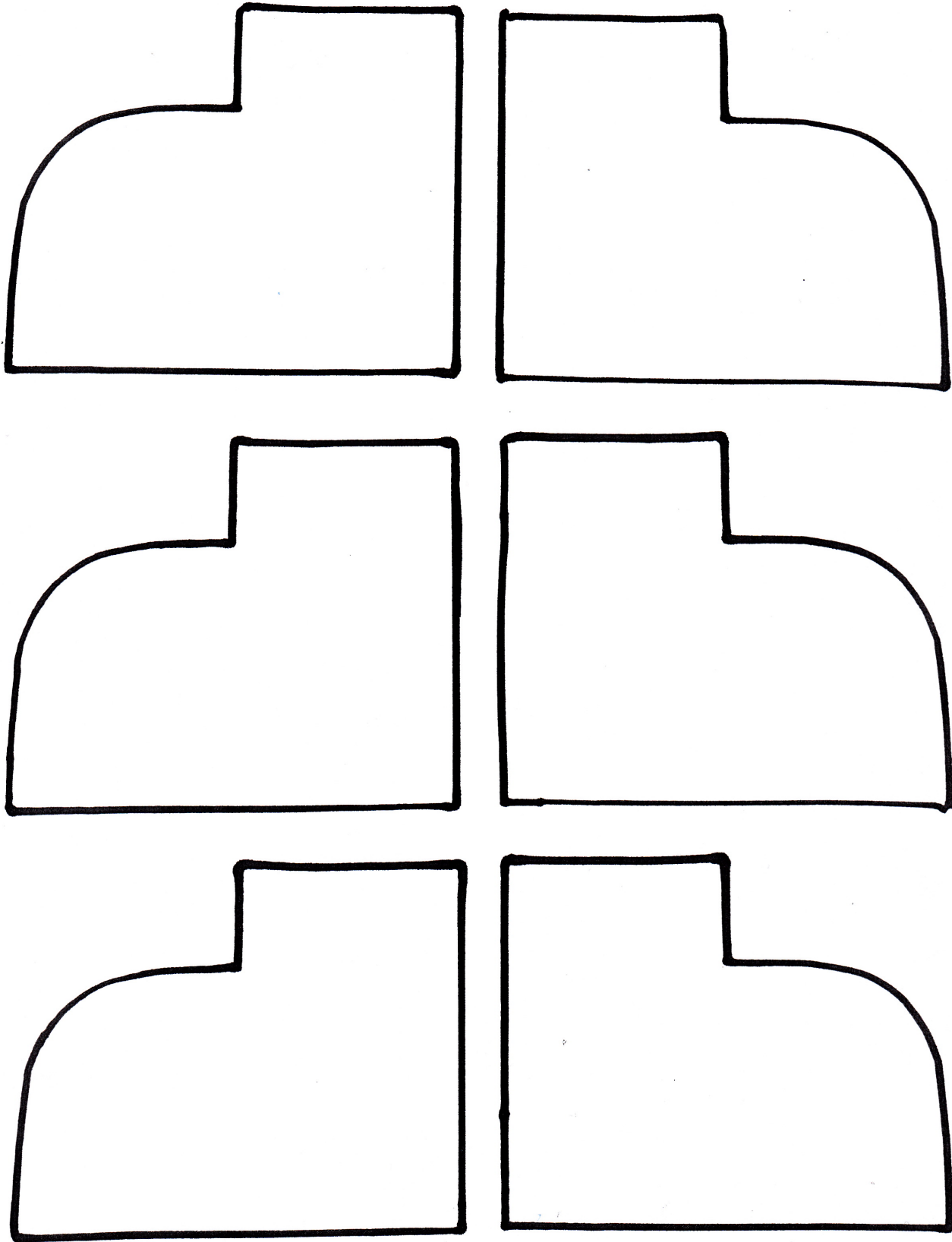
Directions: Sibquain Art

by Christy McCabe, Quail Summit, Diamond Bar, CA

1. Fold a piece of 18" x 12" construction paper into 8 squares as shown.
2. Cut out the squares on the bottom left and right as shown. Save them to use as arms.
3. Fold the top 2 outside squares to the middle, then glue the saved squares on each side for the arms.
4. Cut a small triangle in the bottom middle for pants or cut large triangles off each side of the bottom to make a skirt.
5. Glue on head, hand and shoe pieces. Decorate with creativity! I gave my students the option of using yarn or construction paper for hair. Some of the boys added ears out of scraps. Some made sneakers and even Army boots.
6. Have a great time!







My Cinquain about My Sister

by _____

My Cinquain about My Brother

by _____

We'd love to see your students' Sibquains! Or other activities using *Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems*.

Contact: Kristine George author@kristinegeorge.com

ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR USING EMMA DILEMMA IN CLASSROOMS AND LIBRARIES

Check out Sylvia Vardell's Poetry for Children [Readers' Guides: Emma Dilemma](#) written by her students: Courtney Kaman and Kendra Caskey

[A message to young readers](#) at ReaderKiz.

Pair *Emma Dilemma Big Sister Poems* with *Ramona and Beezus* and *Ramona the Pest* by Beverly Cleary

Learn more about the author and illustrator of *Emma Dilemma*:

[Kristine O'Connell George](#)

[Nancy Carpenter](#)

