

1046-J1-470

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Playing with Poetry: using mathematics to discover new verses.

In this presentation poet and former mathematics professor JoAnne Growney explores roles that mathematical structures and formulas can play in the creation of poems. Topics will include arithmetical patterns of counting syllables, substitution of new nouns as arguments in a poem-as-function, and application of the Fundamental Theorem of Arithmetic to generate lines of a poem from short phrases that play the roles of primes. Growney will offer examples that explore how mathematical processes can free a poet's imagination from his or her biases or other limitations. (This sort of activity looks back to the OULIPO movement of the 1960s, initiated by a group of writers and mathematicians in France, led by Raymond Queneau and Francois Le Lionnaise. OULIPO (acronym for "Ouvroir de Litterature Potentielle") describes a "Workshop of Potential Literature." Martin Gardner's writings in Scientific American helped to popularize the OULIPO movement in the United States.) Growney will conclude with a few remarks concerning how creation of a piece of mathematics compares with creation of a poem. (Received September 04, 2008)