**Overfishing of hundreds of thousands of BC-bound sockeye by Alaskan fishers (off Noyes Island)**

**Overfishing of hundreds of thousands of BC-bound sockeye (by Alaskan fishers)**

**Overfishing of hundreds of thousands of (BC-bound) sockeye**

**Overfishing of hundreds (of thousands) of sockeye**

**Overfishing (of hundreds) of sockeye**

**Overfishing (of sockeye)**

**Overfish(ing)**

**Over(fish)**

**O(ver)**

**(O)**

**()**

**!**

**.**

This poem appears in my short story “Narrow Escape,” in my book of short fiction, ***How to Make a Killing Jar.*** To find out what was going on in my head when I wrote it (and to give yourself more ideas for your poetry) flip the page over…

A logo with a pencil in the middle of a glove

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**WHY THE WEIRD POEM?**

In my short story,“**Narrow Escape**,” the protagonist is an ADHD, autistic, claustrophobic worrier. He is always frantic about the world closing in on him. I wanted to give that feeling with the STRUCTURE of the story, so I began with very long paragraphs and very long sentences that got shorter and shorter, smaller and smaller, throughout the story. The story literally closes in on him.

To give you an idea, my first rambling sentence in the story (and first paragraph made up of that one sentence), is about a page and a half long! The story ends with a period all by itself on a line. A period is also known as? An end stop or full stop. Spoiler alert—not a happy ending.

In the poem, I used parentheses like nets. As the protagonist is panicking in the coffee shop, heart racing, he’s looking at a headline, and weird things start to happen to the headline. It gets shorter and shorter, words being “netted” out of it like the disappearing salmon it speaks of. My hope was to give an impression of his world and the story rapidly closing in on him.

Poets often think about space on the page. They also see words (and punctuation) in different ways. I used parentheses like a net here, but I also could have used them to represent a hug. They go around something, like friendly arms.

What can you do with your own writing? If you think of all the punctuation in the world, there are MANY choices out there to choose from. Think about what shapes might mean to you and craft an original poem that makes unique use of the marks in some way.

Notice also, the shrinking effect here is not accidental. It has to do with the man’s claustrophobia AND what is happening to the sockeye fish. It connects in at least those two ways. Of course, stories pick up the pace at the end too, so it helps me accomplish that as a writer as well.

Have fun experimenting with work of your own, and if you don’t have a copy of ***How to Make a Killing Jar*** yet, get one by clicking the QR code below. Remember there are 12 more stories in that collection, and I have written a **100+-page workbook** explaining ideas and techniques I used to craft them. Send me a selfie of you holding my book near your face and I’ll send that workbook to you for… **FREE!**

**A qr code with orange squares

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