Dear students
This week's tutorial, like last week's, was aimed at helping you revise poetry. We studied 'From not him' by Wopko Jensma.
Please keep in mind that poetry is often open for discussion and you can disagree with my arguments. However, you should always support your interpretations with evidence from the poem.
Our ultimate goal in this course is to develop a sensitivity to how form affects meaning -- how the way in which things are said influences what those things mean. This means that any observations you make about structural features of the poem must be related to their effect on the poem's meaning, and any comments on the poem's meaning must be supported by clear references to relevant structural features of the poem.

Exercises:
1. The poem seems to be written from the perspective of a child, as the speaker says that "we love our daddy" (line 8). This suggests that the
subject of the poem is related to the speaker through a familial relationship.

2. The subject of the poem, the speaker's "daddy" (line 8), seems to be a strict and respectable member of society as he "forbids" (line 1) his children from dancing, "leads" (line 2) church services, "has a stable job" (line 3) for which he is always "on time" (line 4), and "never gets drunk" (line 5). The speaker also mentions that the subject of the poem is widely respected by his community, which indicates that our sense of the subject as an upstanding member of general society is correct. However, there is also the subtle indication that perhaps the subject is not as straitlaced as his curated social status would suggest, as the speaker says that the subject has "respect for most people" (line 6) which by implication suggests that there are some people he does not respect. This is somewhat of a contradiction to the preceding lines, and suggests that his behaviour in these preceding lines might be more carefully constructed than we might initially suspect.

3. The word "but" (line 9) suggests to us that the speaker is going to
introduce an incongruent element to the narrative being developed about the subject of the poem. This is heightened by the use of the word "wiggles" (line 11), which suggests a playfulness that is at odds with the stern portrait of the subject developed by the preceding lines.

4. In the context of apartheid, this poem might be read as a protest poem in several ways. Firstly, the contradictory concepts in the poem might suggest that the South African nation as a whole was, through strict and stern rules and regulations governing people's behaviour like those adhered to by the poem's subject, suppressing joyful and creative possibilities in its citizens -- symbolised by the subject's response to music. Secondly, the poem might be a portrait of the very strict social standards that disadvantaged groups had to adhere to for their own safety under apartheid rule; it suggests that the performance of respectability (not dancing, not drinking, but instead going to church and being a model employee) was a way to fly under the radar and avoid persecution by apartheid authorities. It is interesting that the subject
"forbids" (line 1) his children from dancing, thus regulating their behaviour as well as his own -- this suggests that their behaviour might put them at risk of persecution, too, and these performances of respectability are aimed at ensuring a non-white family's survival during the apartheid years. Ultimately, the poem seems critical of the indicators of respectability so carefully performed by the father, and alludes to something far more interesting and promising through his emotively suggestive response to certain kinds of music.