

Poetry

Language Arts 10B

Your assignment is to write a poem. Some of you will know right where to begin and already have a topic. All the rest of us are staring blankly at the computer screen and wonder what we can possibly write a poem about. A striking poem begins with an idea that is backed by strong emotions.

STEP 1: A THEME

The theme of your poem is one of the most important parts because it is the point of writing. Your theme/topic is ultimately what you want to share with readers. Poetry is expression of emotion. Poems have been written about everything and anything you can possibly imagine. You will need to decide what to write about. Pick a topic that interests you and that you have emotion about. Emotion fuels poetry. Here are a few ideas to help you generate a topic:

- ❖ Make a list of five things you did today, in the order you did them.
 - ❖ Quickly write down three colors and the smells that you associate with each color.
 - ❖ Write down a dream. If you can't remember one, make it up.
 - ❖ Take 15 minutes to write an early childhood memory, using language a child would use.
 - ❖ Write down something that you marvel at or wonder about
 - ❖ Write down three questions you'd ask as if they were the last questions you could ever ask.
 - ❖ Write down an aphorism (e.g. "A stitch in time saves nine") or a cliché and then debunk it...or prove it
 - ❖ Write three things people have said to you in the past 48 hours. Quote them as closely as you can.
 - ❖ Listen to the sounds around you. Use onomatopoeia and write about what you hear.
 - ❖ Write down something that you feel in conflict with. Write about why.
1. Don't be afraid to take risks. You can write about anything.
 2. Feelings are an important part of poetry. It is the feeling in your poem that can make a poem about something as ordinary as a cupcake be interesting and magical.
 3. Let your imagination run wild. While you are coming up with a theme don't be limited by convention.
 4. Think about the audience as you are writing. Align your theme with their perspective.

STEP 2: FORM

There is a myriad of poetry styles to choose from. Most modern poetry is written in free verse. However, you get to choose—sonnets, blank verse, couplets, etc. As you are thinking about form, you may want to find a poem that you like and mimic it. As you begin to write, read your poem aloud. Poetry is meant to be heard as much as it is meant to be read.

STEP 3: WRITING

Now that you have chosen a subject and a style, it is time to write! Poetry is fueled by emotion, but ultimately comes from the heart. Each line of your poem should have meaning. Poetry is about impact and economy. You want to use vivid words, but as few as you need to get your point across. (That is unless you want to write a poem with fifty-two sections like Walt Whitman!) Here are a few techniques that can help:

Use poetic devices: alliteration, allusion, assonance, metaphor, simile, couplets, end rhyme, enjambment, onomatopoeia, refrain, repetition, and rhyme.

Use imagery. Show, don't tell. Remember that writing poetry is about painting a picture with words.

Note that most poetry is made up of abstract concepts: love, pride, hate, envy. Take these concepts and bring them to life. Use figurate language and imaginative imagery to make your point.

Avoid overused metaphors and clichés.

Use a thesaurus to help you find just the right word. Poets write poetry because they love words and the way that they sound. Thumbing through a thesaurus provides an opportunity to learn new words and spark inspiration.

Draw attention to the unique details of your subject matter. Try to look at your topic from a different point of view.

If you are struggling, make yourself write for timed periods and write whatever comes to mind.

Analyzing someone else's poetry is a great way to get ideas. You can think about what they did and how you might incorporate new techniques into your own work.

STEP 4: REVISE, REWRITE AND SHARE

After you have your poem on paper, you are ready to edit. You will need to read your poem out loud. Read it like you heard it in your head when you were writing. Listen to the rhythm and beat of your poem. Does the rhyme sound natural or forced? Do any of the words sound awkward or out of place? Rework places that are rough. Now you are ready to share your work.