

100 Poetry Prompts



*A Poetry Prompt
Journal*

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Local Gems Press

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Forms & Topics

Sonnet (Italian)

Italian Sonnets, also known as Petrarchan Sonnets after the Italian poet Petrarch feature one octave or two quatrains followed by a sestet and is traditionally written in Iambic Pentameter. The octave forms a proposition or presents a problem or question which is then solved in the following sestet. Generally, the ninth line of the ninth line of the poem contains a volta which leads to the resolution of the problem presented in the previous eight lines.

The Italian sonnet follows a rhyme scheme of

A-
B-
B-
A-
A-
B-
B-
A
C-
D-
E-
C-
D-
E

Sonnet (English)

The English sonnet, is of course known by English majors everywhere as the Shakespearean, sonnet. Like the earlier Italian Sonnet, the English Sonnet is comprised of 14 lines, but has a different rhyme scheme set up. It contains 3 quatrains and a couplet.

A

B

A

B

C

D

C

D

E

F

E

F

G

G

It is expected to be written in iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter is defined as a unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

x / x / x / x / x /

Haiku

Haiku is a form of traditional Japanese poetry. Haiku is, a 17-syllable verse form consisting of three metrical units of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. In traditional Japanese, the Haiku typically had a theme about nature and included a seasonal word.

5
7
5

Senryu

Senryu is a form of traditional Japanese poetry similar to the Haiku. It is a 17-syllable verse form consisting of three metrical units of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. Unlike the Haiku which deals with nature, the Senryu deals with human nature.

5

7

5

Dodoitsu

The Dodoitsu is a Japanese poetry form. Often about love or work, and usually comical, Dodoitsu poems consist of four lines with the structure:

- 7
- 7
- 7
- 5

Tanka

The Tanka, or "short poem," is one of the most well known and well-used forms of Japanese poetry. In the ninth and tenth centuries, this style of short poems dominated Japanese poetry styles and it was one of if not the most popular form of original Waka.

A Tanka's form is five lines.

5
7
5
7
7

31 syllables in total in the original Japanese.

Sedoka

From the Zen practice of rapid question-answer between a master and a student or, between two lovers. The 2 stanzas are often parallels, sometimes taking the form of an internal dialogue or contemplative dilemma.

The Sedoka is:

- 2 stanzas of 3 lines each
- 19 syllables or less
- often 5-7-7, sometimes 5-7-5 is used for each stanza.
- the stanzas should be parallel to each other, or in some ways opposites without being directly contradictory.

Triolet

A Triolet is a French poetic stanza form of 8 lines, traditionally in iambic pentameter.

A

B

a - Rhymes with 1st line.

A - Identical to 1st line.

a - Rhymes with 1st line.

b - Rhymes with 2nd line.

A - Identical to 1st line.

B - Identical to 2nd line.

Sestina

A complex French verse form, typically unrhymed, with six stanzas of six lines each and a three-line envoy. The end words of the first stanza are repeated in a different order as end words in each of the subsequent five stanzas; the closing envoy contains all six words, two per line, placed in the middle and at the end of the three lines. The patterns of word repetition are as follows, with each number representing the final word of a line, and each row of numbers representing a stanza:

1 2 3 4 5 6
6 1 5 2 4 3
3 6 4 1 2 5
5 3 2 6 1 4
4 5 1 3 6 2
2 4 6 5 3 1
(6 2) (1 4) (5 3)

Acrostic

An acrostic poem is a simple form poem in which the first letter of each line spells out a word.

Acrostic poems
Contain within each first letter
Representing a word arranged
On purpose for poetic value
Specifically to show
The value a word can possess
In using each fist letter
Consciously

Limerick

Sometimes poetry has a reputation for being sad and depressing--and then there are funny poems like Limericks. The structure of a Limerick is relatively simple:

A
A
B
B
A

Traditionally most Limericks have 9 syllables per line, but the rules on this vary. Write a Limerick.

Fibonacci

A Fibonacci poem is a newer poetic form that bases itself off of the mathematical Fibonacci sequence where each number equals the previous two numbers before it. In poetry, the sequence translates to syllable count. The typical fib is a six line, 20 syllable poem with a syllable count by line of

- 1
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 5
- 8 -

with as many syllables per line as the line's corresponding place in the Fibonacci sequence. However, some Fibonacci poets try to challenge themselves to make the poems go longer than 6 lines.

Ars Poetica

Write a poem about poetry or being a poet.

Ekphrastic

Ekphrastic poetry is poetry inspired by a work of art. Find a piece of art that moves you and write a poem inspired by it.

Epistolary

Write a poem that takes the form of a letter.

Found

Pick a random book off of your shelf, and go to a random page. Pick out a random sentence, or 10 random words, and write a poem using these words that you found on the page.

Dream

We all have dreams. Dreams sometimes don't make any sense--- sometimes they confuse us, other times they intrigue us. Sometimes both. Sometimes the imagery stays with us even after we've woken. Write a poem describing the imagery in a dream.

List

Sometimes a list can tell us a lot. Write a poem that takes the form of a list, it can be a shopping list, a list of items, a to-do list, or any kind of list.

Dialogue

Write a poem that takes the form of a dialogue between two people. They can be real people, imagined people, or even historical figures.

Metaphor

Write a poem that compares something to something else, make heavy use of metaphor in the poem.

Overheard

Write a poem about a conversation you overheard, or about someone overhearing a conversation you were having.

Nostalgia

Write a poem about a memory or about something that makes you feel nostalgic.

Concrete

A concrete poem, sometimes referred to as a visual or image poem, is a poem that takes the form of an image. Write a concrete poem.

Sequel

Write a poem that serves as a sequel to a poem you have already written.

Thank You Note

Write a poem that takes the form of a thank you note.

Archaic Word

Write a poem that is dedicated to or makes good use of an archaic word that is rarely used in regular contemporary conversation.

Hometown

Write a poem that celebrates your home town. What is unique or interesting about it?

Alliteration

Write a poem that makes heavy use of alliteration.

“Peter piper picked a patch of perfect poems proliferating proper punctuation!”

Indecision

Write a poem about a time either you or someone you know felt extreme indecision. It could be about a purchase, a relationship, a specific situation---a time it was nearly impossible to make a decision between multiple choices.

Faith

We all have faith in something. Normally we associate faith with religion, and while this is true, we also need faith to wake up in the morning, believe the sun will come back, leave our houses during the day. Write a poem about something you have faith in.

Chance

Write a poem about something that happened by chance. A chance encounter, a random decision, etc.

Praise

There is a lot of negative poetry out there complaining about something, from family, to relationships to politics. Let's break the pattern! Write a poem that praises something or someone.

Street

There's such a thing as street poetry, but this is something different.
Write a poem about the street you grew up on.

Prophecy

Some would say the only difference between a prediction and a prophecy is that prophecies come true. Others would say the only difference is that a prediction is spoken, a prophecy is written down. Write a poem that prophesizes something.

Repetition

Write a poem that uses the same word 10 times or the same line at least 3 times. Heavy repetition.

Harvests

When we plant seeds, the hope is that we will one day see the fruits of our labor. Write a poem about a harvest, whether a literal harvest of crops, or a metaphorical harvest of results for hard work.

Meter & Structure

One Long Sentence

Write a poem that is one long run-on sentence.

Iambic Trimeter

Write a poem in Iambic Trimeter. That is a poem with lines of unstressed and stressed syllables stretching three feet each.

- / - / - /

Trochaic Trimeter

Write a poem in Trochaic Trimeter. That is a poem with lines of stressed and unstressed syllables stretching three feet each.

/ - / - / -

Iambic Pentameter

Write a poem in Iambic Pentameter. That is a poem with lines of unstressed and stressed syllables stretching five feet each.

- / - / - / - / - /

Word Bank 1

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Reputation Luck Elder

Addiction Interact Tree

Happen Incomplete Chapter

Word Bank 2

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Wisdom Gratitude Globe
Expectation Change Game
Becoming Reason Music

Word Bank 3

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Moustache

Guilt

Erase

Entice

Overt

Entrench

Assume

Ignite

Inundate

Word Bank 4

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Letter Revenge Cobbler

Autumn Technology Infuse

Leverage Intricate Biological

Word Bank 5

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Indentured Allowing Empower

Trust Latitude Cautious

Alarm Structure Difference

Word Bank 6

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Theory Expertise Mastermind

Solution Music Model

Response Luck Reason

Word Bank 7

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Hook

Difference

Chapter

Realize

Coach

Chronicle

Approach

Baffle

Consume

Word Bank 8

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Share

Happen

Advertise

Inclusive

Exclusive

Relief

Tree

Interact

Mandate

Word Bank 9

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Vision

Elder

Difference

Ideology

Position

Game

Trench

Becoming

Change

Word Bank 10

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Dream

Mirage

Path

Tug

Ironic

Endear

Transform

Elevate

Ghost

Word Bank 11

Write a poem that uses 5 or more of the following words:

Leadership

Encompass

Lesson

Diameter

Wrath

Mimic

Alleviate

Betrayal

Worship

First or Last Line 5

Write a poem that begins or ends with the following line:

Even a cup of coffee has feelings...

First or Last Line 6

Write a poem that begins or ends with the following line:

Ask and you shall receive...

First or Last Line 7

Write a poem that begins or ends with the following line:

If only the walls could speak...

First or Last Line 8

Write a poem that begins or ends with the following line:

There was a time...

First or Last Line 9

Write a poem that begins or ends with the following line:

There was a place...

First or Last Line 10

Write a poem that begins or ends with the following line:

If I am reincarnated...

First or Last Line 11

Write a poem that begins or ends with the following line:

It was the craziest thing I ever saw...

First or Last Line 12

Write a poem that begins or ends with the following line:

And then the skies opened...



Local Gems Poetry Press is a small Long Island, NY based poetry press dedicated to spreading poetry through performance and the written word. Local Gems believes in building local poetry communities through publications and events.

Local Gems has published over 250 titles.

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