

Acrostic

Acrostic poems are popular with young children. They like to write them using the first letter of each line in their poem to spell out the name of the subject. For instance, a poem about a cat might be set out like this:

Curious, dipping her paw into the pond.

At rest, curled like a question mark.

Tonight, she is a tiger on the prowl.

creature that you want to write about. Make a list of words and ideas, including similes. Now use this to write a descriptive piece of free verse, trying to weave the relevant letter into each line. For example:

A solo fly-by-night

swooping over distant fields;

the sudden glimpse of amber eyes.

It can be more creative to spell out the word down the middle of the poem. This type of poem is called a 'mesostic' poem. Choose the

Haiku

Haiku are very short poems invented by the Japanese. They are rather like taking snapshots with words. Japanese haiku were always three lines long and consisted of 21 syllables using a pattern of 5/7/5 respectively. However, do not worry about counting the syllables – or you may find that all your effort has gone into counting and not enough into choosing the right words. Haiku are not a maths lesson!

Haiku are usually about something seasonal and try to capture a moment in time. Here is a simple way to get going:

1. Think of a season and add a time of day, and you have the first line.
2. For the second line, think of something that you might see.
3. For the third line, add in a typical sound.
4. See the example below – now you have a word snapshot about a hot summer's night.

*Summer midnight –
lightning splinters the darkness;
even the stars tremble.*

Cinquain

Cinquain were invented by the American poet, Adelaide Crapsey. These are rather like haiku as they also take snapshots, capturing a scene. But there is also enough space in a cinquain to add in some sort of comment about what is happening.

The poems are always five lines long – the word 'cinq' in French means 'five'. The poem uses a syllable count that increases until the last line, which is short – 2/4/6/8/2. The final line is often a surprise or comment.

If you do not want to bother counting syllables, an interesting way to write cinquain is by making each line of the poem slightly longer, until the last line, which is one word. Try using this method to describe a scene – use something that you can see or a photo as a starting point. What can you see? Pick out some details and add in other senses, such as what you can hear. For example:

Football

Fans sing-a-long –

Gasping as the ball thuds

Past the goalie's hand... Silence –

Explodes.

Kenning

A kenning is a sort of riddle. They were used by the Vikings and Anglo Saxons. For instance, the Vikings used to call the sea a 'whale-road'. They also named their swords by using kennings – 'bone-cruncher'. A kenning is a rather clever way of identifying what you are talking about without actually using the word – so a cat might be called a 'mouse-catcher', for example.

Select a focus for writing, such as a pair of glasses. Brainstorm information and ideas, for example ears, sight, looking glass, and so on.

Then turn some of these into kennings:

Nose percher

Ear hugger

World viewer

Nose mugger.

Twin windows

Sight clearer

Glass eyeshields

World nearer.