

Writing a Memorable Poem

Now that you've explored the characteristics of memorable poems, it's time to begin writing a poem of your own. We'll use the image below—which shows two dirty, homeless boys alone on a Chinese street—as our prompt. You'll want to see the image in color before you write to get a better sense for the conditions the boys are living in. After exploring the image carefully, work through the steps in the table below to write your own poem.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/rachdian/3860551699/sizes/o/>

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Questions for Consideration	Your Responses
<p>Remember that many of the best poems are concrete. Instead of sharing complicated language, they appeal to the basic senses of their audiences.</p> <p>Which senses come to mind when you look at this image? Which senses would the boys in the image wrestle with on a daily basis? Would their bodies hurt? Why? Would they be warm? Cold? What would they be listening for?</p> <p>If you were standing on the same street, what would you hear? Smell? Feel? See?</p>	
<p>Many of the best poems are unexpected, either communicating with audiences in a nontraditional way or sharing ideas that are startling. Is there anything surprising about this image? What impact does that have on you as a reader?</p>	
<p>Many of the best poems are emotional, making viewers feel instead of simply think. Influential people know that when they can tap into powerful emotions like joy, anger, hilarity, shame, fear or pain, their ideas are more likely to be remembered.</p> <p>Which emotion do you think is appropriate to try to get across in your poem about this image? Will that emotion resonate with readers? Why?</p>	

<p>Many of the best poets use <i>interesting words and phrases</i>—or combinations of interesting words and phrases—to catch the attention of their readers.</p> <p>What words and/or phrases come to mind when you look at this image? What words or phrases can be used to communicate the senses that this image reminds you of? The emotions? The surprising situation?</p> <p>Remember to choose the most powerful words that come to mind! You might even need to get out the thesaurus to make better choices. Circle the words and/or phrases in your list that you feel communicate the strongest emotions, senses and feelings.</p>	
<p>Many of the best poets pay careful attention <i>to how their poems sound when read out loud</i>. They use rhythm and rhyme or word combinations that are interesting to the ear.</p> <p>Look at this list of poetry techniques and decide which strategies you'd like to try to include in your poem. Your choice should be made based on the emotions and feelings that you're trying to communicate and the kinds of words in that you've already brainstormed.</p> <p>Remember that you don't have to use every strategy in this list, but you can use more than one if it works in your poem. Also remember that the strategies that you use might be different from the strategies used by your peers.</p> <p>What's important is finding strategies that work for the emotions, feelings, senses and/or ideas that you're trying to communicate to readers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Repetition: Poets often repeat powerful word and phrases throughout the course of their poem. This can add rhythm or draw the reader's attention to important ideas. <input type="checkbox"/> Alliteration: Poets often repeat consonant sounds at the beginning of words: "<i>To watch tadpoles and catch CRayfish in the CReek.</i>" <input type="checkbox"/> Assonance: Poets often repeat vowel sounds in lines of their poems: <i>gIfts to skInny-dIppers from the cow's pond down In the pasture.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Consonance: Poets often repeat consonant sounds in lines of their poems: "<i>But pleaSe don't bother with the flieS, or So Says the laZy horSe in the corner.</i>" <input type="checkbox"/> Rhyme: Poets often incorporate rhyming words into their poems. Rhyming can be incorporated informally within a line or as a part of a pattern throughout an entire piece: "<i>Fingers l-ICK, t-ICK-ling an electr-IC crescendo.</i>" <input type="checkbox"/> Onomatopoeia: Poets often use words that sound like what they mean: "<i>The BUZZ of the bees leaves me buckled on my knees.</i>"
<p><i>Now it's time to write a first draft of your poem.</i> While drafting, don't spend too much time thinking! Instead, concentrate on getting your ideas down on paper.</p> <p>While it's important to remember that you're trying to communicate unexpected feelings, senses and emotions to your readers, it's also important to remember that you can always revise and edit your work.</p> <p>When you're finished with your first draft, circle the words and phrases that you're proudest of. Which words and phrases will catch the attention of your readers? Why?</p> <p>Then, underline words and phrases that seem unnecessary—either because they don't communicate any new information to the reader or because they're uninteresting.</p>	

After you've finished a first draft of your poem, **have a partner or a parent review it with you**. To be sure that you'll get feedback that can help you to polish your final copy, ask them to answer the following questions:

1. *What surprised you about my poem?*
2. *What feelings did my poem make you think about?*
3. *When you read my poem out loud, how did it sound? Does it flow well? Are there any sections that you thought were particularly interesting to listen to? Are there any sections that don't read well?*
4. *What did you think of the words that I chose to use in my poem? Are there any that are particularly strong? Any that are particularly weak and in need of revision?*
5. *Did my poem seem complete to you? Does it convey an entire idea? Can you see a logical order? A clear beginning, middle and ending?*
6. *What is the most remarkable thing about my poem? The least remarkable thing? If you were going to make one change to my poem, what would it be?*

Now that you've had a partner/parent review your poem for you, **it's time to knock out a final copy**. Spend time looking carefully at the feedback that you've collected.

What suggestions do you think are the most valuable? Why do you agree with those suggestions? How can you incorporate those suggestions into your final copy? What suggestions are you likely to ignore? Why?

Remember that because poems are typically short pieces, EVERY choice that you make is super important! Changing one or two words to add consonance, assonance, alliteration, repetition, rhyme or onomatopoeia can make a huge difference in the overall quality of your final product.

Also remember to spend time reading your poem out loud while creating your final copy. Sound is an important element of quality poetry, so your piece has to read well orally in order to be completely appreciated.