

HOW TO WRITE A POEM

Lesson Objective

In this lesson, you will learn how to identify some common poetic elements in English poetry. You will also learn how to write a few simple types of poems. You'll be a poet before you know it!

Did you know...

A poem doesn't have to **rhyme**, but most poems do have **rhythm**. When words rhyme, they end with the same sounds (*fry* rhymes with *cry*). The word *rhyme* can be a verb and a noun. As a noun it refers to a type of poem that rhymes. *Rhythm* is always a noun. It refers to a pattern of sounds that work well together.

Warm-Up

A. Writing

Choose three words that have one syllable (e.g., run, time, see). Write your words down. Now make a list of words that **rhyme** with each word you chose. Then discuss these questions with your partner.

1. Which word had the most rhyming words?
2. Which word had the least amount of rhyming words? Can you put your heads together and think of any more words that rhyme with your words?
3. Why do many children's poems and stories use "rhyme"?
4. Why is it important to read poems out loud?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match these words to their correct definitions.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. rhyme (<i>verb</i>) | a) a single paragraph or grouping in a poem or song |
| ___ 2. rhythm | b) a drawing that helps tell a story |
| ___ 3. syllable | c) a symbolic comparison without "like" or "as" |
| ___ 4. illustration | d) to have the same final sound |
| ___ 5. antonym | e) a word meaning the opposite |
| ___ 6. good copy | f) a final draft of writing to be handed in or displayed |
| ___ 7. rhyme scheme | g) a single beat (separate vowel sound) in a word |
| ___ 8. meter | h) a set pattern of rhyming endings in a structured poem (ABABAB) |
| ___ 9. alliteration | i) a set number of syllables per line in a poem or stanza |
| ___ 10. simile | j) a pattern or set of sounds or lines that work well together |
| ___ 11. metaphor | k) a comparison using "like" or "as" |
| ___ 12. stanza | l) similar sounds at the beginning of closely placed words |

Elements of Poetry

Here are a few elements of poetry.

Try to identify these elements whenever you read poetry, and try to use them in your own poems when you're writing.

A. Rhyme Scheme

The rhyme scheme of a poem is a set pattern. You can use letters to show which lines will rhyme. Some types of poems have a set rhyme scheme.

- AB AB AB
- AA BB CC DD

B. Meter

The meter of a poem is the number of syllables a line has. You can use numbers to show the number of syllables for each line. Each stanza may be the same. Some types of poems have a set meter.

- 5, 7, 5
- 8-9, 5, 7

C. Alliteration

Many poems use a literary device called alliteration. This means that some of the words that are placed near each other have similar beginning sounds.

- slithering, slimy, snake
- million miles

D. Simile

A simile is a type of comparison that is often found in poetry. Similes use the words "like" or "as" to show that something is the same or similar.

- She shone like a sunbeam.
- He felt as high as the moon.

E. Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that makes a symbolic comparison. Metaphors do this without using "like" or "as."

- Love is a trainwreck.
- His eyes were ice.

Task 1

ANALYZING A POEM

Read the poem out loud with a partner. Identify the rhyme scheme and meter. Look for examples of alliteration, simile, and metaphor.

The Gardener

Life is like a rose
that dies and grows

Today blooms bright red
Yesterday bled

With petals and thorns
it laughs and mourns

In exquisite form
until the storm

Types of Poems cont.

B. Diamante

Another easy poem to write is a diamond-shaped poem. These seven-lined poems are called diamantes.

HOW TO WRITE A DIAMONTE POEM

1. Choose two antonyms.
(e.g., sun/moon, mother/father, winter/summer)
2. Get a lined piece of paper and write the first word at the top of the page in the center (line 1). Use a capital for the first letter in your word (e.g., Sun).
3. Below your first word, skip six lines. Write your opposite noun (line 7). Capitalize this word, too (e.g., Moon).
4. Go back to the top of your poem and write line 2. Write two adjectives that describe your first noun.
5. Below those adjectives, write three -ing verbs related to your first noun (line 3).
6. On line 4, write four nouns. The first two nouns are related to the first word in your poem (line 1). The second two nouns are related to the last word in your poem (line 7).
7. Next, write three -ing verbs related to the noun on line 7.
8. Finally, write two adjectives that describe the noun on line 7.
9. Does your poem look like a diamond? If not, make a good copy on another piece of paper. Make sure it's diamond-shaped.
10. Read your poem to the class or to your teacher.

Task 3

Follow the instructions and write a diamante poem. Share your poem with a classmate by reading it out loud. Check to see if your classmate's poem follows the proper structure of a diamante poem.

Example:

Sun
bright, hot
blinding, burning, smiling
day, heat, night, crescent
shining, waning, hiding
cool, bright
Moon

My Poem:

Types of Poems cont.

C. Limerick

Another fun poem to write is a limerick. This five-line poem is usually a bit humorous. It can also be nonsense. Limericks have a specific rhyme scheme (AABBA).

HOW TO WRITE A LIMERICK

1. The first line of a limerick usually begins with "There once was a...". Complete this line with the name of a person, animal, creature, or place. Try to choose a word that is easy to rhyme with. (E.g., *There once was a grandpa named Lars.*) Your first line should be 8 to 9 syllables.
2. Your second line will include a line that usually begins with "who" or "that." This line should contain about the same amount of syllables as the first line. The last word must rhyme with the last word in the first line. (E.g., *who loved to drive really fast cars.*)
3. Next, write two shorter lines that continue the story in a funny way. These lines must rhyme with each other and should contain 5 or 6 syllables. (E.g., *He had a Corvette / that drove like a jet.*)
4. Finally, write one last line. The last word must rhyme with the last word in the first two lines. It should complete the story or description in a funny way, and should have the same amount of syllables as the first few lines. (E.g., *And one day he drove it to Mars.*)

Task 4

Follow the instructions above and write a limerick. Share your limerick out loud with your classmates. Help your classmates rewrite any poems that don't follow the set structure or rhyme scheme. Which limerick is the funniest?

Example:

There once was a grandpa named Lars
who loved to drive really fast cars.
He had a Corvette
that drove like a jet.
And one day he drove it to Mars.

My Poem:

Types of Poems cont.

D. Haiku

This is another three-line poem with a set rhyme scheme. A haiku is a Japanese-style poem, but we are going to practice writing one in English. The subject of a haiku is usually a single moment in time. It is often about beauty in nature. It describes the image and the feeling.

HOW TO WRITE A HAIKU

1. *Find a subject.*

Think about the last time you wanted to take a picture of something beautiful. That is a good subject for a haiku. If you can't think of something, go for a walk. Wait until something captures your interest. Take a picture in your mind.

2. *Follow the set structure.*

Use the structure below. Your poem should contain one word that allows the reader to understand what season it is (e.g., sunflower, mistletoe, pumpkin). Also, try to include some of the senses (feel, touch, sight, smell, taste). Use the following structure:

- The first line has 5 syllables.
- The second line has 7 syllables.
- The last line has 5 syllables.

Note:

A haiku does not have a title and it does not rhyme. Unlike other poems, it does not contain metaphors or similes.

Task 5

Follow the instructions above and write your own haiku. Then have your partner review the poem using the haiku checklist.

Example:

The boy looks way up
—the palms are waving freely,
coconuts dangle

My Poem:

Haiku Checklist

- Can you picture this moment?
- Does it use 5,7,5 meter?
- Does it lack a title?
- Does it lack rhyme?
- Is it about nature?
- Can you guess the season?

Comprehension Check-In

Work with a partner and answer the following questions based on the lesson so far.

1. What is the difference between rhyme and rhythm?
2. What is the difference between a simile and a metaphor?
3. What is the meter in a haiku?
4. How do you write an acrostic poem?
5. What is the rhyme scheme of a limerick?

Vocabulary Review

Read each example. Identify the poetic element or type of poem that it is an example of. These are all vocabulary words that you have learned in this lesson.

#	Example	Poetic Element or Type of Poem
1	What a cute, cuddly creature	
2	His love was a swing on an old playground.	
3	There once was a bear from North Bay	
4	leaning, stretching, falling	
5	AB AB AB AB	
6	With skin as soft as lamb's wool.	
7	Shining Ultra Nutrient	

The 5 Senses 🔍

Poems are full of emotions and feelings. A good poem includes many of the human senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch, feeling). Do some dictionary work with a partner. Search for synonyms and antonyms for the following adjectives.

#	Adjective	Synonyms	Antonyms
1	beautiful		
2	dark		
3	fun		
4	hot		
5	strong		
6	happy		
7	sweet		
8	delicious		
9	loud		
10	soft		

Writing Challenge

POETRY ANTHOLOGY

Choose any of the types of poems you've learned about and write another poem. Include some of the new adjectives that you wrote on page 8. You can also try writing a free verse poem. In a free verse poem, the rhyme scheme and meter do not have a set pattern. Your poem should still have rhythm.

Make a good copy of your poem to go in a class poetry anthology. You can also add any other of your favorite poems that you wrote during this lesson.

A Checklist

AFTER WRITING YOUR POEM

- Did I give my poem a title (if necessary)?
- Did I include some poetic elements?
- Did I include some of the five senses?
- Did I read the poem out loud to myself?
- Does my poem use the appropriate meter or rhyme scheme (if applicable)?
- Does my poem have a nice rhythm?
- Did I share my poem with others?

Teachers' Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students learn how to write a few different types of poems, including limericks and acrostic poems. They also learn about common elements found in poetic writing, such as metaphors and similes. After this lesson, your class can put together a poetry anthology.

LEVEL: Intermediate

TAGS: writing, poetry, poet, poem, limerick, haiku, acrostic, diamonte, verse

Lesson Objective

Review the lesson objective with your students.

Warm-Up

A. WRITING

Give your students some time to write a few simple sentences. Don't make any corrections at this time.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

Print copies of page 12 and cut up the strips, or have students do the matching exercise provided on page 1.

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. d | 3. g | 5. e | 7. h | 9. l | 11. c |
| 2. j | 4. b | 6. f | 8. i | 10. k | 12. a |

Elements of Poetry

Task 1

Rhyme scheme: AA BB CC DD

Meter: 5,4 for each stanza

Alliteration: blooms/bright

Simile: *life is like a rose*

Metaphor: life has petals and thorns (good parts and difficult parts), a storm will come (something bad will happen), but for now life feels good (like a beautiful rose in exquisite form)

Types of Poems

You may want to bring in some more examples of acrostic, diamonte, limerick, and haiku poems to show to the class.

A. ACROSTIC

Task 2

Go over the structure of an acrostic poem and have students practice writing one. Give students time to illustrate their poems or ask them to do this at home. Invite your students to read their poems out loud.

B. DIAMONTE

Task 3

Go over the structure of a diamonte poem and have students practice writing one. Give students time to exchange papers and check the formatting of each other's poems.

C. LIMERICK

Task 4

Go over the structure of a limerick poem and have students practice writing one. Give students time to read their limericks out loud. Vote on which limerick is the funniest.

(continued on the next page...)

Teachers' Answer Key cont.

Types of Poems cont.

D. HAIKU

Task 5

Go over the structure of a haiku and have students practice writing one. Give students time to exchange papers and use the haiku checklist. You may also want to find some more examples for them to read.

Comprehension Check-In

1. Rhyme refers to sounds that are the same and rhythm refers to the pattern or beat (syllables).
2. A simile uses the words "like" or "as" to make a direct comparison, while a metaphor uses imagery or symbolism.
3. The meter of a haiku is 5,7,5.
4. To write an acrostic poem, you write one noun vertically down a page in capital letters. Then you describe the word on each line, using the letters to start a word or phrase.
5. The rhyme scheme of a limerick is AABBA.

Vocabulary Review

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. alliteration | 4. diamante | 7. acrostic |
| 2. metaphor | 5. rhyme scheme | |
| 3. limerick | 6. simile | |

The 5 Senses

Individual answers. Give students some time to do this dictionary work with a partner. They can use mobile phone apps, online dictionaries, or traditional dictionaries and thesauruses. Take up the words as a class and have students add to their lists.

Writing Challenge

Give students time to write one final poem that covers all of the senses. Encourage them to use some of the adjectives from the chart they completed. Share the poems out loud and consider making a poetry anthology with all of the poems that your students want to contribute.

A Checklist

Students can refer to this checklist to check if their poems follow the guidelines they've learned about (different types of poems and poetic elements). If you decide to mark their poems, use this checklist.

SPELLING NOTES:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Analyzing*, *Favorite*, *Center*, and *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Analysing*, *Favourite*, *Centre*, and *Practise* (when used as a verb, *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

Extra Vocabulary Practice (optional)

Write definitions in your own words. Cut up these vocabulary strips.
 Challenge a partner to match the vocabulary words to your definitions.

rhyme	
rhythm	
syllable	
illustration	
antonym	
good copy	
rhyme scheme	
meter	
alliteration	
simile	
metaphor	
stanza	