

Warm Up Exercise

Pick from one of the following prompts or just write what you want!

- Write a series of questions and answers to compose a poem.
- Write a poem concerning the "absence" of something. Consider the absence as a positive, or a negative.
- Write a poem that begins with a description of an event, telling what appears to be happening. Then give a description of what is really occurring.
- Write a poem using the words, "paper and chalk".
- Write a poem about something that "spirals".
- Write a culinary poem celebrating food.

Time: 15 Minutes

Workshop Guidelines

- 1- Don't censor yourself.
- 2- Don't expect anyone else to censor. We're all adults and while we may hear things we don't agree with, it's not for us to say what a person is allowed or not allowed to write about.
- 3- Push your own boundaries.
- 4- Don't be afraid to ask questions! And listen to what other people in the group have to say—you will learn a lot.
- 5- Please—do not write about fluffy clouds, pretty bunnies, or tiny little kittens—unless it's in an absolutely daring and unique way.
- 6- After someone reads a poem, please try and give one constructive critique and one positive comment.
- 7- Read, read, read other poets. You must read to know what is happening in the poetry world. Ignorance is never an excuse. During class, we will read poems aloud. You are not required to like them or even find them interesting, but you are required to consider them. If you find just one word that strikes you, then the task has achieved its goal.

What is Poetry

Poetry is an imaginative awareness of experience expressed through meaning, sound, and rhythmic language choices so as to evoke an emotional response. Poetry has been known to employ meter and rhyme, but this is by no means necessary. Poetry is an ancient form that has gone through numerous and drastic reinvention over time. The very nature of poetry as an authentic and individual mode of expression makes it nearly impossible to define.

There are as many definitions of poetry as there are poets. Wordsworth defined poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings;" Emily Dickinson said, "If I read a book and it makes my body so cold no fire ever can warm me, I know that is poetry;" and Dylan Thomas defined poetry this way: "Poetry is what makes me laugh or cry or yawn, what makes my toenails twinkle, what makes me want to do this or that or nothing."

Perhaps the characteristic most central to the definition of poetry is its unwillingness to be defined, labeled, or nailed down.

A Few Things to Remember

- Poets cannot afford to be nice all of the time.
- It is important not to censor yourself.
- Poets must look closely at the world around them—they must train themselves to observe.
- Be conscious of your own style and voice (i.e. subject matter, diction, point of view, syntax and grammar, form imagery, and other patterns that you perceive).

Literary Terms to Keep in Mind

Alliteration: Repetition of sounds, primarily at the beginning of a word.

Allusion: Reference to a person, event, or work outside of the literary event

Connotation: The implied or suggested meaning connected with a word.

Donation: The dictionary meaning of a word.

Enjambment: the running on of the thought from one line, couplet, or stanza to the next without a syntactical break.

Imagery: A word or sequence of words representing a sensory experience. Example: "Bells knelling classes to a close."

Simile: A figure of speech in which two unlike things are explicitly compared, as in "Loneliness spreading/fast like a gas fire" (Francis Mayes).

Metaphor: 1-A comparison between essentially unlike things without using words OR application of a name or description to something which is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance. Example: "A mighty fortress is our God." 2-something used, or regarded as being used, to represent something else; emblem; symbol.

Meter: Measured pattern of rhythmic accent in a line of verse.

Personification: Giving inanimate objects animate or living qualities.

Prompts

1. On a scrap piece of paper, write down:

- 5 Adjectives
- 5 Verbs
- 5 Nouns
- 5 Images

Now, take those words and use them to create a poem. You don't need to use all of them! But you must use at least one (1) from each group. Don't worry if the poem makes sense. Just write.

Time: 15 Minutes

2. Pick one of the prompts below.

- Describe an activity—cleaning the house, fishing, painting a picture, bathing a child, dancing, cooking a meal—which could serve as a metaphor for your life, for how you are in the world.
- Take a negative aspect of the self—fear or depression or paralysis or cruelty—and find a concrete image for what it feels like. Once you settle on your topic and the image for it, develop that image in a poem titled "Fear," "Depression," etc.
- Imagine that your shadow (i.e. your inner-uninhibited self) has a name, a face, certain habits, likes and dislikes. Describe your shadow. Then describe what your shadow's reaction is to a particular action you perform—such as tucking in a child, making love, going for a walk, writing a poem.
- Write an entire poem in dialog. Remember to give your character(s) or speaker(s) each a clear and definite voice.

Time: 15 Minutes