

*Writing poetry can be fun.  
Why not give it a try?*

Everyone loves rhythm, but how many times have you giggled in delight when someone (perhaps you) has inadvertently made a rhyme? Many times. Right? Everyone loves rhyme, too!

Poetry, for me, is a means of expressing thoughts, feelings, or emotions in the most concise way. It allows one to teach, inspire, or guide without the need for footnotes of research or scientific studies to backup what is said. Most of my poetry is written for the average Joe rather than for the erudite, but I write for the open-minded and thoughtful. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that my goal is to stimulate thought and acceptance of new ideas. If it is read only for enjoyment, that is a worthwhile goal in itself, and may well be my only aim in writing many of the poems.

Some of my work is for those who seek self-acceptance in the discovery that at times we all experience awkward, embarrassing, or frustrating situations. People, after all, are pretty much the same, no matter what their particular circumstances, races, or cultures might be. We all have our dreams and yearnings, and all of us have hopes for a better life in a better world. So, many of my poems are just an expression of people being people. This serves one in relating to others. However, I like to uplift, inspire, or give hope. This is probably my primary goal in writing.

Sometimes I like the challenge of trying out new formats. Using various meters and rhyme patterns can be broadening for both the writer and the reader. It breaks the monotony of a consistent poetic form. I feel that variety in a book of poetry is necessary to hold the reader's interest. Even my favorite styles, such as the villanelle, become boring to write, as well as to read, if not interspersed with other forms.

The truth is, I don't like the idea of being constrained to rigid formats. I like for my thoughts to flow in whatever direction inspiration might lead them. Though it is sometimes stimulating to follow a particular format, for the most part I do not decide upon a form or style when I start to write. I let the words come in whatever pattern they flow into. In many occasions the

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first draft is the completed poem and is left untouched. Often I do change a word or two, or a line, or perhaps reposition a line or verse after the poem has “cooled” and I can take a fresh look at it. No doubt experience governs the need for editing, as the more you write the easier it gets.

Reviewers who study a poem strictly for mechanics may miss the depth or the beauty of the content. I’m not much of a conformist anyway, so I like my own style, whether it fits a pattern or not.

I cringe at verse with forced rhyme. Please don’t do that. It sounds stilted and amateurish. Use words and meter that are euphonious and expressive. It is wise to study the basic metric styles so you can maintain a cadence. Sometimes, after writing a poem, I sing-song it to ensure a consistent rhythm. (Do refrain from sing-songing when reading to others.) Write from the heart, not the mind. Enjoy the trip. Representative of some of the various formats of poems in this book are the poems listed below.

The most common form used by poets is a rhymed verse containing five-lined stanzas, in a meter called iambic pentameter. Sounds like a mouthful, doesn’t it? Don’t let it scare you. The iambic meter consists of one light syllable, followed by an emphasized syllable. Try saying, taDA, taDA, taDA, taDA, taDA. Each taDA is a metric foot. Pentameter simply means there are five feet in each line. I notice that my most common usage is iambic with four feet to the line, a tetrameter. Here are two examples.

### *Hope*

At eve/ry dawn/ the sun/ hangs low.  
Its light/ is faint/ Upon/ the morn./  
The dark/ness holds/ a pro/mise though,/  
A new/ day’s wait/ing to/ be born./

### *The Cat*

A cat’s/ a bit/ of fur/ and purr./  
It can/ be him/ or can/ be her./  
No mat/ter which,/it loves/ a pat,/  
For af/ter all,/a cat’s/ a cat./

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As you can see, the meter used is iambic. Other poems may have a dadaDA, dadaDA rhythm. We won't go into the many rhythms.

I have marked off the feet in each of the above poems. "Hope" has an a-b-a-b rhyme, which simply means that the first and third lines rhyme and the second and fourth lines rhyme.

The rhyme scheme for "The Cat" is a-a-b-b, meaning the first two lines rhyme and the last two lines rhyme. It is not necessary to have a double rhyme in a verse. There are many rhyme patterns. Be creative.

An example of a more structured format is the Cinquain (pronounced *sin cane*). It is a five-line unrhymed poem in which each line has 2, 4, 6, 8, and 2 syllables, respectively. It must have a cadence and present a picture that might stir an emotion. There are no cinquains in this book so I will take an example from my next book, which is in process:

### ***Empathy***

The child  
smiled tenderly,  
pushing drooping daisies  
into my hand as, by the grave,  
I wept.

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You can combine cinquains into a cinquain sequence, in which the verses build, yet each verse can stand alone, as in this poem.

*Circle of Life*

The elm  
released a leaf—  
the last gold flame to fall—  
which, having clung tenaciously,  
let go.

The tree,  
now bare and mute,  
no longer whispers low  
its rustling love song to the wind.  
It sleeps.

Come spring,  
Elm will awake  
And deck itself in green,  
inviting birds to seek its shade  
and nest.

Nature  
once more renews  
and demonstrates to man  
the cycle of the universe:  
rebirth.

I watch  
as loved ones cling  
to fragile ties to earth,  
tenaciously, in pain, and won't  
let go.

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Another example of an interesting format to work with is the Minute Verse. It is a twelve line poem with an iambic meter. The syllable count is' 8, 4, 4, 4, 8, 4, 4, 4, 8, 4, 4, 4, with a rhyme scheme of' aa-bb-cc-dd-ee-ff. It presents a moment in time or a momentary mood.

*Midnight and Counting*  
*The Death & Birth of a Millennium*

The year 2000 looms ahead.  
While filled with dread,  
we hold our breath.  
Will we face death  
as our world systems risk collapse?  
Or worse, perhaps?  
Societies'  
economies  
sway flimsily, foundations shake,  
and our mistake  
reveals itself:  
our lust for wealth.

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Then there is the blank verse. It does not give the freedom one would expect. Its structure, too, is complex. It is an unrhymed poem in iambic pentameter and is not normally divided into stanzas. Paragraphs begin and end within a line. Lines should not end with a period.

### *The Making of a Star*

In the illusion of one's life, there are no accidents. The part each actor comes to play is in the script, and so, with care he molds and hones his character, aware that it will fine-tune him if he can play it well, and so prepare him for a part that is a greater challenge for his growth. This then becomes all actors' goal each time they form the blueprint for a lifetime role.

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My last example is called a Villanelle. I have fun with these. This form has five three-line stanzas and one four-line stanza. The first stanza has an a-b-a-rhyme pattern. In each succeeding verse the first line must rhyme with the first line of the first verse; the second line must rhyme with the second line of the first verse, and the third line alternately repeats the first or third line of the first verse. The last verse has four lines, the ending two of which repeat line one and line three of the first verse, as in “Tempered by Time.”

*Tempered by Time*

All of my yesterdays have fled.  
Where have they led? What have I learned?  
The dreams, the bliss, the tears I shed

are all behind. I made my bed,  
and so I lie, my bridges burned.  
All of my yesterdays have fled.

In retrospect, it can be said  
the joys I found, the love I spurned,  
the dreams, the bliss, the tears I shed

were molding me within the tread  
that brought me to the heights I earned.  
All of my yesterdays have fled.

As I look o'er the life I led—  
still seeking that for which I yearned—  
the dreams, the bliss, the tears I shed

were not for naught, though it be said  
the things I touched, my fingers burned.  
All of my yesterdays have fled,  
the dreams, the bliss, the tears I shed.

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A few of the poems in the book were written as song lyrics. They include: “Look to the Stars,” page 5; “I Can,” page 14; “Send Out Love,” page 35; “You Are Music,” page 37; “Let Me Love,” page 40; and “Love in the Wind,” page 41. When I used to drive from Payson—my former home—to Phoenix, I would make up songs and sing them along the way. When I returned home, I would write down the words and tune.

Perhaps you would rather read poetry than write it. That’s okay, too. Poets will love you. If you do decide to write some verse, enjoy it. If you don’t enjoy it, it probably is not for you.

We all have our own talents, and you can be sure you have some, even if you don’t realize it. Your gift may lie in music, dance, sewing, cooking, gardening, or just in helping others. There are many talents, none more important than another. Just delight in whatever you do or whatever makes you feel fulfilled. Be yourself, love yourself, have a happy life, and you will be a successful person! My best wishes to all my readers,

*Jean Warner*