

Write a Nature Poem with Doris

You may think you can't write poetry, but you can! All it takes is to observe your surroundings; think about what you see, hear, and feel; and put it into words. Poems do not have to rhyme. In fact, trying to find rhyming words sometimes ruins your thoughts. Scroll down for directions on how to write 13 different kinds of poems and to see examples of them.

GROW A POEM

Use the chart below to help you "grow a poem."

- ❖ In the *Sense* column are the words *see*, *hear*, *feel*, *where I am*, and *weather*. You may add the sense of *smell* if you like.
- ❖ In the *What* column write one word on each line that describes what you see, hear, etc.
- ❖ In the *Thought* column write a thought ending with the word you wrote in the *What* column.
- ❖ You can change the form of the *What* word if you like by adding "s", "ing", or "ed" to your word.

Example:

| Sense | What | Thought |
|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>see</i> | trees | I walk among the leafy trees |
| <i>hear</i> | birds | Hiding above are singing birds |
| <i>feel</i> | breeze | Brushing my face, a soft breeze |
| <i>where I am</i> | woods | Whispers through the woods |
| <i>weather</i> | cool | Shady, dark, and cool. |

Got the idea? Now let your senses and the natural surroundings inspire you to be a poet. Write your own words.

| Sense | What | Thought |
|-------------------|-------------|----------------|
| <i>see</i> | | |
| <i>hear</i> | | |
| <i>feel</i> | | |
| <i>smell</i> | | |
| <i>where I am</i> | | |
| <i>weather</i> | | |

NAME POEM

Choose the name of a natural object you are interested in, like *CACTUS*. Write the name down by stacking the letters of the word on top of each other. Each line will begin with a word starting with the letter of that line. The poem does not need to rhyme, but each line should describe something about the subject you are writing about.

Example: **C**an't touch,
 Always sticky.
 Careful!
 Tough, green skin,
 Uses little water,
 Spines instead of leaves.

HAIKU

This is an unrhymed Japanese poem of three structured lines. It is usually light and delicate and is often about something lovely in nature. Sometimes, there is a direct contrast within the verse.

| | | | |
|------------|------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Structure: | 1 st line - 5 syllables | Example: | Coyote howling |
| | 2 nd line - 7 syllables | | His brother barks an answer |
| | 3 rd line - 5 syllables | | The moon shines brightly |

TANKA

This is another oriental verse form similar to Haiku, but two more lines are added.

| | | | |
|------------|------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| Structure: | 1 st line - 5 syllables | Example: | Sonoran Desert |
| | 2 nd line - 7 syllables | | Sun-baked land 'neath cloudless sky |
| | 3 rd line - 5 syllables | | Coyote, rabbit |
| | 4 th line - 7 syllables | | Hide under palo verde |
| | 5 th line - 7 syllables | | Waiting for the cool night air. |

LANTERNS

These are light poems written in the shape of a Japanese lantern.

| | |
|----------|------------------|
| Example: | flowers |
| | reds and yellows |
| | food for insects |
| | nectar and |
| | pollen |

COUPLET

This simple poem consists of two rhyming lines. It often contains a humorous twist.

| | |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| Example: | Hawk, I watch you soar the sky. |
| | Oh, I wish I, too, could fly. |

CLERHEW

This is a four-line poem that makes a brief, humorous statement about a person. In our case we can make that a plant or animal, too.

Structure: 1st line - ends with person's (or animal's or thing's) name
2nd line - rhymes with line 1
3rd and 4th lines - rhyme with each other

Example: Little kit fox
Climbing on a cliff of rocks.
Kangaroo rat hops out from a crack
Pounce and gulp, midnight snack.

QUATRAIN

This is a four-line poem that may follow any one of four different rhyme patterns (AABB, ABAB, ABBA, ABCB). This is an example of an ABCB rhyme pattern.

Example: A Can you see the heat waves
B Rise from the sand?
C Air shimmering, wavering
B Baking the land.

CINQUAIN

This is a five-line verse form.

Structure: line 1 - one word of two syllables (may be the title)
line 2 - four syllables (describing the subject or title)
line 3 - six syllables (showing action)
line 4 - eight syllables (expressing a feeling or observation about the subject)
line 5 - two syllables (describing or renaming the subject)

Example: Bursage
Small gray-green shrub
Shelters young saguaro
Few know your name or who you are
Nurse plant

LIMERICK

This is a humorous five-line poem that follows a definite rhyme pattern and has a particular rhythm.

Structure: Lines 1, 2, and 5 each have three stressed syllables and rhyme with one another (A).
Lines 3 and 4 each have two stressed syllables and rhyme with each other (B).
These lines are indented.

Example: line 1 - There once was a girl who loved snakes.
line 2 - She tried feeding them candy and cakes.
line 3 - But the snakes slithered away
line 4 - And she heard one of them say,
line 5 - "We prefer mice, goodness sakes."

ALLITERATION

This is the repeated use of an accented syllable that has the same beginning sound.

Example: Six sleek snakes slowly slithering southward.

POETRY THROUGH THE SEASONS

Picking up the subtle sounds of nature, think about how the seasons change. What kinds of wildlife are active most during winter, spring, summer, and autumn? What are the seasonal stages of a tree or field of flowers? What sounds may be heard?

Example: From an exhibit in Rocky Mountain National Park

SPRING

Chorus frog calling a mate
Marmot whistling
Redwing blackbirds and mountain bluebirds singing

SUMMER

Otters playing noisily
Steller's jay calling
Crickets chirping

WINTER

Coyote howling
Great horned owl hooting
Mule deer pawing snow and snorting

AUTUMN

Chickadee chattering
Beavertail slapping water
Bull elk bugling

COOKBOOK POETRY

Look through a cookbook and write down the words that tell the cook what must be done with the ingredients. Imagine your favorite, most perfect place. It can be a vast valley stretching miles on end. It might be within 20 feet of you sitting upon rocks at the edge of a park. Use some of the words to tell the reader your recipe for a perfect place. These words may include:

| | | | |
|---------|--------|---------|-------|
| stir | remove | rinse | pour |
| measure | bake | spoon | bake |
| slice | melt | simmer | serve |
| blend | add | combine | taste |
| cover | mix | cool | enjoy |

Example:

Sonoran Desert Flambé

Take a sun-drenched plain.
Add ragged mountains on all sides.
Slice the land with dry arroyos.
Blend in birds, but don't remove their songs.
Stir in snakes and lizards, beetles and spiders.
Mix in rabbits, coyotes, bobcats, and foxes.
Spoon in plants with thorns, spines, and prickles.
Bake in a summer sun.
Cool under a starry night.
Enjoy a slice of desert.

About Doris

Doris Evans is an educator and naturalist who has volunteered with the Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation to help people, like you and me, connect with nature. Among her talents, such as photography, Doris compiled poetry-writing exercises which are used to guide participants in the [Tucson's River of Words](http://www.pima.gov/nrpr/educ/kids/riverofwords.htm) (TROW) Youth Poetry and Art Contest. TROW encourages young people to explore their local environment and express their understandings and experiences through poetry writing and visual art. Find more information about TROW at this link <http://www.pima.gov/nrpr/educ/kids/riverofwords.htm>.

A big ***THANK YOU*** goes out to Doris for allowing us to share her poetry exercises on our Eco Kids Corner website.