

Written poetry activity

POETRY TEMPLATES

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever spent time outside and felt the warm breeze on your cheek, the soft moss under your feet or the radiant sun on your skin? Have you noticed the smell of the forest or the qualities of the beings around you? You can use all of these sensations to create your very own poem!

Tap into your sensory experience and capture the feelings in poetry to share with others, or to keep as your own. The two templates below will provide some inspiration to get you started!

While there are no rules to writing poetry, here are a few tips for those who may want some guidance:

1. Emotion is one of the most important aspects of poetry! If you think of a story or poem you enjoy, it is likely because it evokes a certain emotion or the themes explored feel relatable to you. Slow down and take time to notice the emotions that arise in your body as you write.
2. As you are describing your experience in your poem, try using figurative language to animate the world around you. It is fine to say what you mean with matter-of-fact descriptions, but using similes or metaphors can bring more vibrance to your poem.
3. Everyone is a poet and every poet has their own voice. You will find yours as you continue writing by noticing patterns and forms you usually write with. Don't try to copy someone else's style of poetry but instead write what feels true to you. This way your unique voice will come forward in your writing.
4. Your poems do not need to be perfect, good or even impactful. As long as they are true to your experience, they will be great!

Feel free to share your poems with us by sending them to education@sierraclub.bc.ca

EXERCISE 1

Reflecting Your Experience in Writing

Go outside, mindfully choose a walking path or place to sit and answer the following prompts.

Close your eyes and take a big breath in, then out. Do this 2-3 times. When breathing in and out, try to find the beginning and the end of your breath to elongate it.

Begin with an exciting opening line describing the setting you are in. You may want to describe one thing in the environment in relation to another.

- Example: "The sun filters through the trees as it wakes."

Next, tune into your sensory experience. What sounds do you hear? First notice the louder sounds, then tune into the quieter sounds. Write down what you hear.

- Example: "Chickadee song echoes morning greetings."

What do you smell? It may be subtle, or very strong. Perhaps pleasant, or unpleasant. Write down what you smell.

- Example: "Cedar carried on the back of a flowing breeze."

Now, open your eyes to the world around you. Take a look around. Before anything can capture your attention, let your eyes soften, and notice the colors and shapes you first see around you. Try not to focus on any one plant or area. Write down what you see.

- Examples: "The sun reaching its arms", "Enchanting green archways."

Next, describe what the scene looks like. Who is around (plants, animals, people, wind, etc.)? What captures your attention? Describe your environment and use your senses to bring it to life.

- Example: "Fallen leaves twirl in the wind like dancers."

Shifting perspective, imagine how the environment perceives you. How would those around you (such as the trees, water or wind) describe you? How are you interacting with the environment? Animate the world around you!

- Example: "The river rushes past, waving both hello and goodbye."

Now take 1-2 more big breaths in and out. Let your attention turn inwards, towards your body and how you are feeling. How do you feel in the environment? Write it down.

- Examples: "Presence finds me right where I am", "Gratitude washes over me."

EXERCISE 2

An Animal, A Plant and A Lesson

Now that you're comfortable writing down sensory experiences, try applying this skill. This exercise will have you weaving together connections between different beings and experiences in your own life!

Though the English language can be limiting, as you are writing remember that all landforms, bodies of water, gusts of wind, plants and animals are living lifeforms. Experience them as living in the same way humans are, in that they each have memories, communities, communication networks and gifts.

SECTION 1: AN ANIMAL

- Begin by thinking of an **animal** that you care about or that you see often.
- Do some research. What does this animal look like? What are the behaviours of this animal? What do you feel when you see it? Do you have any cultural connections to this being?
- Imagine this animal has something to teach you through the way it lives (as everything does!). What would this lesson be?
- What feeling does this lesson evoke in you? In what ways does this lesson relate to your own experiences?

SECTION 2: A PLANT

- Now think of a **plant** that you care about or see often.
- Do some more research. In what environments does this plant grow? Where does it not grow? Which plants thrive beside it? How do you interact with this plant in your daily/weekly/monthly life? If edible, how does it make you feel to harvest and/or eat this plant? How does it make you feel to look at this plant? If you were to touch it, what would it feel like?
- Imagine this plant has something to teach you through the way it lives (as everything does!). What would this lesson be?
- What feeling does this lesson evoke in you? In what way does this lesson relate to your own experiences?

SECTION 3: A LESSON

Now that you have a clear image in your mind of these wondrous beings, can you connect the **lessons** learned from them? How do these lessons relate to your own life experiences? What would you compare these plants and animals to? Are these beings ever found in the same environment, and if so, how would they interact with each other?

EXAMPLE

The raven, black, pointed
eyes full of memory
truth and remembrance
keep the mind sharp

Quiet in its wisdom
understanding the value of silence
staying close
to the land upon which it was raised

The cedar stretches to the sky
its bark dark and layered with a long
memory
roots tangled in both rich and poor soil
revealing the truth of time
the cedar speaks in whispers
sharing in oxygen and care

Bird and tree
bound by the moist air
and pulsing earth beneath and around them

Blessed with a quiet wisdom
the raven calls from the branches of the
cedar
its message one of patience and
remembrance
of what has been and what will come

The tree of life
stands, steady, reaching to teach us
to grow and adapt
to listen to the wind and its quiet earth
a reminder that
truth is found in silence
in stillness, in remembering

Write your own poem

Try taking all these lessons and write your own poetry in the space below.

Remember, your poem does not need to be perfect. As long as it is true to your experience, it will be great!