

Start Making Sense

Write a poem about something you love, such as a sport, walking your dog, or a special memory. Try using all five senses to create imagery. Describe what you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste - whether you are playing football with your friends or geocaching with your family.

Happy Holidays/Hateful Holidays

Holidays make great topics for poetry. We get dressed up, sing and dance together, and have good things to eat. Write a poem about a holiday, but make sure it's specific. Tell a best or worst birthday story, or write a poem listing all the costumes you've ever worn on Halloween.

Sometimes holidays are a drag. There might be rules or traditions that you don't understand. People in your family might expect you to act a certain way. Write a poem about a holiday that wasn't so great, or one

This or That?

Try writing an opposites poem with two stanzas. Your poem can describe "Before and After" or "Then and Now." It could also be about opposites like "Summer and Winter" or "Home and School."

Challenge: Use rhyme to make your poem funny.

You Are What You Wear

Write about your favorite piece of clothing - a lucky shirt, a pair of jeans you've graffitied with colored pens, or your favorite fuzzy socks. What makes that thing special to you?

Challenge: Try a concrete poem. Shape your poem so it looks like the piece of clothing you're writing about.

Food for Thought

Everybody eats! There are many ways to write a food poem. You can write a list poem about your favorite food using your five senses. You can write a recipe poem, describing how to make your favorite food. Or you can write a poem about a food tradition - a dish that your family shares on special occasions.

A Sound Riddle

What if you wrote about a place using only the sounds you hear there? Would readers be able to guess where your poem is set? Imagine going to that place with a blindfold on (or go there for real and close your eyes for a few minutes). Focus on what you hear, then write it all down. To help your readers guess your place correctly, use onomatopoeia words - words that sound like the noise they describe.

Parody

Something funny happened to you at school today and you want to write about it. But simply telling the story feels a little ho-hum. Try a parody! Take a few lines from a favorite book or song. Rewrite the words to fit your story. This might not look like a poem when you are done. That's okay. Dramatic - or comedic - dialogue has a lot in common with poetry.

Taken from Laura Shovan's *The Last Fifth Grade of Emerson Elementary*

Personification Poem

Instead of writing a poem about an object, write *to* an object. This is called using direct address. Choose anything you like for this poem: a window, a dust bunny, your sister's cell phone, the silver dragon on your best friend's bookshelf. Act as if that object is your new buddy and write a note to it. If you're stuck, try writing to the pen or pencil you're using. What words might be stuck in there?

Challenge: Instead of writing to the object you are personifying, let it speak for itself. What would your backpack complain about if it could talk?

Paint a Portrait

We usually think about portraits as works of art, such as paintings or photographs. But we can also make portraits of people with words. Write a poem describing your favorite teacher or coach or your oldest friend. Include details to show what made - or makes - that person so great. Did she play flag football with you at recess? Did he shake your hand every morning or help you learn your favorite pop song on the piano?

Recess

Describe your favorite thing to do at recess. A game, a sport, or talking with friends? Try using short lines for this poem. Short lines give a poem a fast rhythm, and we all know recess goes by too fast.

The Story of My (Nick)Name

Have you ever asked where your name comes from? Names are part of who we are. They can connect us with our family history. What's the story of your name or nickname? Was there ever a time when you didn't like your name? What do you like about it? Tell the story of your name.

Picture This

Write about a photograph you love. It can be a funny photo, a picture of someone you care about, or of a special place you've been to or dream of visiting someday. Include specific details about the photograph, such as who is in it, what else you see in the picture, and where it was taken. Write down all the things you can see in your photograph, but also tell why it's important to you.

Routine Description

Think about something you do every day. Do you rush out the door every morning, or wake up early and get things done? Write a free verse poem describing a routine. Brainstorm by listing everything you do before school, or while getting ready to play a sport. Once you have a list, pick a few things that seem interesting. Spend a few lines describing each item.

Mirror, Mirror

Write an "I Am" self-portrait poem. Think of each stanza as a paragraph with its own main idea. Begin each stanza with the phrase "I am": "I am shoulder pads and a football helmet," "I am hands that sign words," "I am recipes of my own invention." The more detailed images your poem has, the better your readers will get to know who you are.

"Stream-of-Consciousness" Poem

In stream-of-consciousness writing, the author writes down everything that comes into her mind. Sit down and write whatever pops into your brain, no matter how wacky it is. Don't try to fix or edit as you write. After a page or a paragraph of writing, put your poem away for a few days. When it's time to revise, read what you wrote and highlight parts you like. See if you can build a poem from those highlighted bits.

Taken from Laura Shovan's *The Last Fifth Grade of Emerson Elementary*