

Creative Writing (Not a State Fair Project)

(To enroll in the Creative Writing project, select Collections and Hobbies: Creative Writing in 4HOnline.)

Guidelines:

1. You may choose to exhibit a Short Story, Poetry and/or Journaling.
2. Project divisions are: Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced.
3. Due to the time it takes the Judge to read each exhibit, Creative Writing will not be judged open. Efforts will be made to provide judges feedback via score cards.
4. Writings may be typed or handwritten.
5. Neatness Counts.

Exhibit Requirements:

Beginner: Grades 3, 4 and 5

Exhibit a notebook with a total of 5 entries. Entries can be a combination of poems, shorts stories or journaling. See below for specific details for each category. If your notebook contains more than 5 entries make sure to mare the 5 you have selected for judging.

- a. Poetry: Poems may be any length or style.
- b. Journaling: Show at least 30 days of journaling, this counts as 3 entries. Each journal entry must be dated.
- c. Short Story: Short Stories must be your original work and at least one page in length..

Intermediate: Grades 6, 7 and 8

- Exhibit a notebook with a total of 10 entries. Entries can be a combination of poems, shorts stories or journaling. See below for specific details for each category. If your notebook contains more than 10 entries make sure to mare the 10 you have selected for judging.

- a. Poetry: Poems may be any length or style.
- b. Journaling: Show at least 45 days of journaling, this counts as 6 entries. Each journal entry must be dated.
- c. Short Story: Short Stories must be your original work and at least one page in length.

Advanced: Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12

- Exhibit a notebook with a total of 15 entries. Entries can be a combination of poems, shorts stories or journaling. See below for specific details for each category. If your notebook contains more than 15 entries make sure to mare the 15 you have selected for judging.

- a. Poetry: Poems may be any length or style.
- b. Journaling: Show at least 60 days of journaling, this counts as 10 entries. Each journal entry must be dated.
- c. Short Story: Short Stories must be your original work and at least one page in length.

4-H CREATIVE WRITING

This project is designed to help you explore your writing talents. To develop good writing skills, practice is a necessity. You may choose to try poetry or play writing. Or you may wish to experiment with essays, biographies, novels, short stories or autobiographies, or children's stories.

Your individual interest should determine the topic you choose to write about. It could be something of current concern such as the pros and cons of nuclear energy production, or the problem of air pollution in the Ohio Valley. Or maybe you would prefer to write a story or poem about an event that affected you personally or a historical sketch.

Whatever the topic, be sure to write it in a tone that you are comfortable with.

Will it be a serious, factual account or a humorous look at life?

Just let yourself go and have fun with this project. Write to your heart's content.

There will be time later to clean up the details.

TO GET YOU STARTED

First of all, get your tools together. Paper, several pencils, a notebook, dictionary and thesaurus will all be helpful. You may also wish to have a pouch which zips tightly to keep all of your materials together.

One skill that you will find helpful as you set out to write is observation. How can you express how you view an object or happening unless you really "see" it. You can practice this skill by looking at a very ordinary thing such as playground swings at an abandoned school playground, and give a full description of what you see. Did you notice the rusting frame, the broken seat, and the weeds growing around it? Did it give you a different feeling than a shiny new set of swings at a store? Of course. So, you see, your descriptions of what you see can also help you set a mood.

You may also find it helpful to look at the same object at different times of the day or in various types of weather. Note how this can change how you "see" the object or event.

CHOOSING A SUBJECT

Choosing a subject is important and you get ideas from many places. Think about an event that you have found exciting to tell about in a normal conversation with your friends. Take an ordinary event, like walking to school and give your imagination freedom to develop it into a wild adventure. Maybe something that you recently read made you angry, and you wish to tell your feelings about the subject. No matter which method you use in selecting your subject, be sure that it is something **YOU** really are interested in writing about.

GRAMMAR

A QUICK REVIEW OF SOME PROBLEM AREAS

Their, There, They're

All three of these words are pronounced in the same way, but when writing, the proper word must be used, based on the spelling. Here are the differences:

Their is a possessive word. (Their books, their house, their cookies)

There can be a place (Go there), or concerning this matter (There you are wrong); or to express concern (there, there, don't worry); or as an intensive (John there is a good boy); or as denoting an action taking place now (there goes the whistle).

They're is a contraction (two words joined together). In this case, "they" and "are" are joined. If you question when to use "they're", just substitute "they are" in the sentence. "They're here" and "They are here" say the same things. "There here" is never used in a sentence, as it makes no sense.

Try these: (Circle the correct answer)

(There, Their, They're) is a monster on the loose.

(There, Their, They're) dog bites kids.

(There, Their, They're) the biggest animals in the world.

This is (there, their, they're) red car.

Was, Were

"Was" is usually used if you are talking about one person or thing (I was there, Ted was there, She was there, It was there). NEVER use "We was there" or "They was there". "Were" is usually used when more than one person or thing is involved (We were there, They were there).

There is an exception, however. Whenever "you" is used, were is correct; no matter if the "you" is one person (You were the only one there), or if the "you" is more than one person (You dancers were three). NEVER USE "You was there".

Try these: (Circle the correct answer)

The dog (was, were) in the house

They (was, were) in the house

We (was, were) in the house

You (was, were) in the house

Themselves, Himself, Herself, Itself

"Theirselves" and "Theirself" are not words; just completely throw them out of your speech and writing. The correct word is "themselves". ("They were proud of themselves". For one person or thing, use, himself, herself, or itself (he was proud of himself, the cat gave itself a bath).

Try these (Circle the correct answer)

They did it (theirselves, themselves)

They were happy with (theirselves, themselves)

POETRY

A poet sets out to present an idea. Often this idea has come from the emotional stimulus of a scene which may appear to be very ordinary to another person, but to the poet it is a unique experience worthy of putting down in a poetic form. If something that you see or hear strikes you, write it down. Though you have no intention of writing about it at the moment, it may be useful in the future. Observation and writing practices are as important in writing poetry as they are in prose writing. You may wish to review the paragraphs about observation on page 1.

Getting Started

Before you begin, you must plan. Decide what you have to accomplish with the poem. Do you wish to entertain?? Educate?? Ask for an opinion?? Or describe something??

Next you may want to decide on a form. Though this is not necessary, it can often be helpful for a beginner.

Meter

Words, like music, have a “beat”. In poetry, this “beat” is called meter. Meter is organized by syllables and accents. These syllables and accents are called poetic “feet”. Here are five types of “feet”:

Iambic foot: One light stress followed by one heavy stress (up set')

Trochaic foot: The reverse of iambic; one heavy stress followed by a light stress (mur'der)

Anapestic foot: Two light stresses followed by a heavy stress (un der stand')

Dactylic foot - The reverse of anapestic; heavy stress followed by two light ones (har' wor ing)

Spondaic foot: Two heavy stresses (coat' tail')

The number of “feet” in a line determines the “meter”. Here are some types of meter:

Monometer: one foot (rarely used)

Dimeter: two feet (rarely used)

Trimeter: three feet

Tetrameter: four feet

Pentameter: five feet

Hexameter: six feet

Therefore, a line of poetry with five sets of one light stress followed by a heavy stress would be a line of iambic pentameter. Here is an example:

The girl' has put' her hat' into' a box../Notice how you can almost tap your foot to the rhythm. Continue the same basic meter throughout your poem with only slight variation to break up the monotony.

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Form

One of the most common types of verse is “blank verse”. Blank verse consists of unrhymed, iambic pentameter lines. Slight variations to avoid monotony are acceptable.

Another form is writing in couplets. Iambic pentameter lines which are rhymed in pairs are called couplets. Here is an example (from a circa 1612 poem of unknown authorship):

The silver swan, who living had no note,
When death approached, unlocked her silent throat;

Though a couplet can serve as a stanza (like a paragraph in prose), the quatrain, which has four lines, is much more popular.

The sonnet is another popular English form. A sonnet consists of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter verse which have a rhyme pattern. The English sonnet is usually arranged as three groups of four lines (quatrain), and then a couplet. Many times each quatrain expresses a separate idea.

Free verse is a form which has no particular pattern (iambic pentameter, etc.), but should still have a rhythm or beat. It would seem that without all those rules about patterns, free verse would be easier to write. This, however, is not true. Good free verse still takes much thought and planning.

Though not the only forms of poetry, those described above do give an idea of the major types. Remember that all of them have slight variations which are acceptable.

Metaphor

Metaphors are very important in poetry. It is the comparison between two things that are quite different, without using “like” or “as”. If “like” or “as” is used the comparison is called a simile. Here are examples:

Metaphor: Her rose-blushed cheek

Simile: Her cheeks, like red roses

HOW TO READ POETRY

Poetry is a concentrated way of telling a story, documenting an event or expressing a feeling. It should be noted that a poem, just like a story, is “saying” something. The poet does not intend to confuse the reader, but is trying to get a point across.

Because a poem is so concentrated, it may take a little work to get to the meaning. In a story, the writer can devote several paragraphs to the description of a character, whereas in poetry the poet must convey the personality of a character by use of a couple of well-laced lines in the poem. Though you may find this way of expressing ideas difficult to figure out, this concentration of things may be just the thing that gives power and beauty to the poem.

In unraveling the meaning of a poem, looking at the punctuation can help. Though the lines are arranged according to rhyme or meter rather than having one sentence per line, you can find the sentences by looking at the punctuation marks.

Try reading from the beginning of a sentence to the end of a sentence without regard for where the line of a poem starts. Here is an example:

Her hair of bright strands flowing down
Is what I loved. It was not her
Beguiling smile or ways so sweet
That lured me so
And made my life so full.

As you can see - if you read “her hair of bright strands flowing down” and then “is what I loved. It was not her”, as a separate part, you will have a hard time getting at the meaning. But if you read “her hair of bright strands flowing down is what I loved,” as a complete sentence you get the idea immediately. This does not mean that you should not read a poem line by line to get the beauty of the poem’s rhythm, but that if you have read the poem and are having a rough time understanding it fully, looking at the punctuation can help.

Tone

Try to pick up the tone of the poem. Is it loving, sarcastic or matter-of-fact in tone? Just as you can say “come here” in a variety of ways, the words of a poem can mean different things depending on the tone.

A Glossary of Poetic Terms A-Z

These poetry terms are from the letters A-Z. They are from The Norton Introduction to Literature, sixth edition:

Alliteration- the repetition of sounds in nearby words; usually the initial consonant sounds of word and sometimes internal consonants in stressed syllables.

Assonance-repetition of vowel sounds in a line or series of lines; can affect pace and the way words included in the pattern seem underscored

Allusion-referring to a text or myth, outside of the poem itself, that carries its own history of meaning

Ambiguity-meaning more than one thing

Analogy-finding a commonality between things that are not alike

Blank Verse-unrhymed iambic pentameter

Concrete Poetry/Shaped Verse-an attempt to supplement or replace verbal meaning with visual devices from painting and sculpture

Connotation-what a word suggests instead of its specific meaning

Connote-suggesting, in addition to explicit meaning

Controlling Metaphor-a metaphor that dominates or organizes an entire poem

Denote-to mean or stand for (note from your host: think of DENote as the DEfinition of something or what it generally means, CONnote is what is being suggested or CONning you into thinking about instead!)

Denotation-a direct meaning, not implied (as in denote/connote, the opposite of connotation)

Discursive Structure-organized in the form of a treatise, argument, or essay

Extended Metaphor-a complex metaphor that extends through a long segment of the poem

Figurative Language-using figures of speech

Figures of Speech-using familiar terms to compare something that is pictured or figured in the poem

Free Verse-Poetry that avoids meter and has no significant recurrent stress rhythms, although it may use other repetitive patterns

Limerick-has been popular for hundreds of years, and is often the very first poem learned and memorized by young children. Limericks can be serious or fun.

Metaphor-one thing pictured as if it were something else, suggested a likeness or analogy

Narrative Structure-based on a straightforward chronological framework

Occasional poem-written for or about a specific public or private occasion

Onomatopoeia-a word that sounds like what it describes (note from your host: an example is “buzz”)

Personification-treating an abstraction as a person

Precision-accuracy of language or description

Prose Poem-a composition written as prose but having the concentrated, rhythmic, figurative language characteristic of poetry

Prose-the ordinary form of spoken or written language, without metrical structure, as distinguished from poetry or verse

Referential-using a particular historic event in a poem

Reflective/Meditative Structure-pondering a subject, theme, or event, and letting the mind play with it, skipping from one sound to another, or to related thoughts or objects as the mind receives them

Setting-time and place of the poem’s action

Simile-a comparison of one thing to another, usually the words “like” or “as” to draw the connection (note from your host: an example is “life is like a box of chocolates-you never know what you’re gonna get”)

Situation-what’s happening at the beginning of the poem

Spatial Setting-where the poem takes place

Sonnets-are poems of 14 lines done in an iambic pentameter style.

Speaker-the “persona” of the poem; whoever is speaking as the voice of the poem (which is often not the poet!)

Subject-the topic of the poem; what the poem is about

Syllabic Verse-a precise number of syllables to a line, repeated in subsequent stanzas.

Symbol-something that stands for something else

Symbolic Poem-use of symbols is so pervasive and internally consistent that the larger, referential world is distance or forgotten

Syntax-the formal arrangement of words in a sentence

Temporal Setting-the time the poem takes place

Theme-what the poem is saying about its subject

Tone-the attitude the poem displays about the subject or theme

Technopaegnia-the construction of poems with visual appeal

Traditional Symbols-symbols that, through years of usage, have acquired an agreed-on significance (i.e.—a cross)

Villanelle-a French poetic style that can be both fun and serious. Villanellas are poems of 19 lines comprising six stanzas with an alternating rhyming scheme.

Word Order—the positioning of words in relation to one another

The Lines in a Poem

One of the basic ways to group poetry is by the number of lines in a poem.

Couplet-two lines

Tercet-three lines

Quatrain-four lines

Quintet-five lines

Sestet-six lines

Septet-seven lines

Octave-eight lines

JOURNALING

The Tradition of Journaling

Keeping a journal is nothing new to millions of children and teenagers who have written in little books with small locks that only they can open. Some do this for a short time in their life. Others continue the tradition of journaling for their entire life.

The word “journal” means different things to different people. For a psychologist, it is a tool for a patient’s self analysis. For a writer, it is a notebook of one’s ideas or thoughts. For an employee at a workplace, it is a way to record daily activities, which can help focus on long term projects and goals.

The Benefits of Journaling

For most of us, a journal is a day-to-day diary or log of your experiences, feelings and thoughts. Journaling is a process to record your emotions, goals, accomplishments and personal growth throughout your life. Journaling can help:

Reveal your personal insight and wisdom

Express your hopes and fears

Allows your creative self to expand

Strengthens one’s self-confidence

Clarifies your values and thoughts about things

Reduces personal stress

Helps you to improve your writing skills (a fun way to putting your thoughts into words)

How to Begin Journaling

Whether you write a few lines, a few paragraphs, or pages—journaling can help you express your inner thoughts and feelings about your friends, school, family and life on a regular basis. Your journal should contain whatever you want to write about.

It is important to first find a quiet time in the day and a quiet place to journal. Set the journal where you will see it every day. You may use a notebook, loose leaf paper, a blank book, a favorite journal, or a computer to begin writing down your thoughts and feelings.

What to Journal On

Some journal writers prefer loose leaf paper so they can insert pages into a notebook. Others prefer the hardbound journals. If you are concerned about making a mistake in your journal, this may also prevent you from writing as freely as you should. It might be better if you purchase loose leaf paper or a spiral bound pad of paper to begin journaling. The important thing is to explore what works best for you and what makes you feel more comfortable as your journal.

The Technique of Journaling

There are many journaling techniques. Each of us think about things in different ways. If you are stuck and have nothing to write about, try recording “snippets” of ideas, conversations with people, feelings, quotes, or images of your thoughts. Draw pictures. Make a collage from a magazine. Use whichever technique helps you to express yourself that day.

Journaling Tips

Set your journal where you will see it everyday, i.e., on your nightstand or at your desk. This will help remind you to journal.

Part of keeping a journal is skipping a day, a week, and even months.

It doesn't matter if you write one word or several sentences or paragraphs, there is no limit to how much or how little you write each day. The important thing is what works best for you that day.

Journal whatever is important for you to write about right then and there.

Keeping your journal private. That can mean setting boundaries with those in your home, it may mean hiding it, or locking it away. You will have to make an individual decision about what that means to you.

Remember to use your journal for your benefit and well being, whatever that means to you.

The start of your journal can be the day you feel you want to start recording your experiences and thoughts. (There is no set time of year to begin a journal).

What you want to write with, a pen or a pencil is up to you. You may have a favorite pen that helps make your writing easier because it glides across the paper and it fits comfortably in your hand.

The 30 Day Journal

A good way to begin journaling is to write about one situation or topic for 30 days in a journal. Think about this one topic and write about it for a set amount of time each day. Some ideas for this journal are:

Pick one specific topic or goal. “I want to exercise more.” Or “What career do I want to pursue?” Or “I want to write a story.” Journal every day for the next 30 days just about that goal. Why you want the goal. How you will achieve your goal, the actions you will take. Your feelings about yourself as you move toward your goal.

Journal for the next 30 days what you are grateful for. Take time each day to remember the small and the big things that happened to you each day. Think about what you are the most grateful for, and write that down. Today I am grateful for _____ . This can also be a great family project. Set one book where the whole family can see it every day.

Everyone can jump right in, journaling what they are grateful for that day.

Start a dream journal. Set the book by your nightstand for the next 30 days and write down your dreams. You can write the whole dream or journal what stands out for you. You can even write down just the symbols, say it was rain, clouds, flying, or school.

Other Types of Journals

Some people prefer to have more than one journal. Each journal focuses on a different topic. A person can write into their different journals for several years. The journals become a written scrapbook of your experiences and memories over time.

Family Journal—Journal about yourself and your family, the children, your parents, or relatives. Have a weekly ‘family journal night,’ where the whole family can get together and either journal or discuss their journals.

Letter Journal—After you’ve written a letter, make a copy and keep it in its own file or binder.

Memory Journal—Think back, and journal one memory a day.

Gratitude Journal—Journal one thing in your life that you are grateful for each day.

Prayer Journal—Journal a prayer a day. Your prayer, a friend’s, the prayer from the paper, etc.

Good Thoughts Journal—Journal at least one good thought each day.

Books/Movies Journal—Journal the books you have read or the movies you have seen. Who suggested the book or movie? Who did you see the movie with? What did you think about the book or movie?

Friendship Journal—Journal your experiences and feelings about the lunch you just had with a friend, your visit with your sister, what you are looking forward to with a co-worker and the new work project.

Birthday Journal—Have your friends pick a date and journal why they picked that date, and ask them to retell a funny story, journal how you met, or say why they care for you as they do.

Recipe Journal—Journal past and present recipes. Include where you got the recipe, where and when you served it, who was there, and what they thought. You can keep a journal for salads, dinners and a third for desserts.

Sports Journal—Journal your experiences with your favorite team(s).

Collection/Hobby Journal—Journal your experiences and feelings about what you collect or your hobby, your stamps, coins, furniture, scrapbooking, dolls, etc. Besides journaling about the actual collection, you can record your feelings, what you saw, what you heard, who you met.

Focus Journal—Journal what you want to focus on tomorrow, or what you did focus on today.

Travel Journal—Journal your travels, all those adventures and experiences.

Nature Journal—This type of journal means drawing what you see, identifying and making notes about where you found specimens, what it looks like, what is unique, and even including poetry or prose about what you saw. Nature journaling is a way to observe and connect with the world around you.

Non-Traditional Journals

Each time you see a quote, cartoon, small article or picture that reaches out to you and where you are in your life, paste it in a notebook with a comment and the date.

For any age, drawing is also a way to journal. Sketch the things you see around you. Buy a small sketch pad that you can keep with you at all times. Draw flowers, birds, leaves or anything that draws your eye and touches you. Be sure to date each sketch and make comments on your thoughts if you wish.

Keep a notebook that is similar to an organizer. Each night before you go to bed make a list of what you wish to accomplish the next day. Date it at the top of the page; be sure to include everything, especially personal goals. Once you have begun this, make notations at the bottom of the list as to why you didn’t get something accomplished, or your feelings on what you did get done.

Sometimes when the written word doesn’t flow, your journaling doesn’t have to stop. You can use signs and symbols to represent yourself, your family, or your activities. Write words around the symbol (i.e., a stick person to represent you.)

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