

POINTERS FOR WRITING POETRY

ELA/MRS. LEUBENBERGER

First Person Voice: Using first person voice grounds a poem.

Avoid: "watching the sky, wishing for a rainbow, and needing one."

Better: "I watched the sky and wished for a rainbow: I needed one."

This makes it sound like you are confident in what you are saying! Go with something like example two, first person voice!

Stay in the Moment: In poetry, it's better to START in the moment (or action) and stay there; you don't have to embed the context with a lot of explanation.

End Strongly: Conclusions are a VERY IMPORTANT part of poems. The deepest meanings can be found there. Your conclusion should leave the reader vibrating with a feeling, idea, image, or question. Draft alternative endings to find one that best conveys or suggests the meaning you are looking for. Think about how poems have left you feeling, strive to leave your reader with strong emotional feelings.

Line Breaks are Critical: Poetry is written to be spoken. Free verse generally breaks into lines to emphasize the pauses a reader's voice might naturally take—the rests, breaths, or silences. This means, that most often, poets end lines on strong words: nouns and verbs. Slicing a line at a weak word like a preposition or a conjunction tells the reader to pause at an insignificant moment, rather than a point of meaning. Line and stanza breaks are the poem's form. Draft your poem using line and stanza breaks right from the start!

Punctuation: Avoid using too much punctuation. You don't need a comma at the end of every line, or a capital letter at the beginning of each line. To begin with, punctuate poetry the way you would prose, using punctuation sparingly, as if the lines of the poem come one after another, like those of a paragraph. Experiment with punctuation, and let it help convey the meaning of your poem.

Language that is "Cut to the Bone": Every word in a poem should be loaded and necessary. You need to weigh each word, each line, and determine "does it do anything for this poem? Does a smart reader need it? Can I pare it? Is this poem elegant shorthand?"

Cadence: Cadence is created by effective repetition. Don't repeat words, unless you are trying to build cadence (rhythm, rhyme, beat). Cadence should make the poem pleasing to the ear. Read (out loud—NOT SKIM) the words of your poem to listen for instances of awkward, purposeless repetition. Replace those areas with

synonyms or pronouns. Recognize the power of DELIBERATE repetition to deepen a meaning of a poem.

The Power of Figurative Language: Simile, metaphor, personification. Use RICH and STUNNING figurative language. Read through poems to find stimulating examples of figurative language. Using sensory language also heightens the meaning of poetry!