

Poetry Writing Prompts

Wired to Operate

Technological and scientific advances have recently enabled surgeons to implant a chip into a human brain that, through a computer, can send signals to the body allowing a person living with paralysis to regain movement. Write a poem reflecting on your own observations about autonomy, the role of technology, and the physical mechanisms of the body. Think of unique ways to describe the inner workings of our minds, muscles, and limbs.

Color My Seasons

Visual artists who have been productive over long stretches of time often develop certain periods of work with shared characteristics, such as similar color palettes. For example, Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse both had dark periods, Pablo Picasso had his blue and rose periods, and Victor Vasarely had a black-and-white period. As we begin to think about the year's transition from summer to autumn, bringing along with it seasonal changes in light and sound, consider embarking on a new period of your own work. Write a short poem inspired by your observations of the different colors, moods, and scenery around you that signal the forthcoming autumn season. To begin the *color-turning* period, for example, what might be your key points of inspiration, in terms of imagery and vocabulary?

Changes in the Weather

Heat dome, corn sweat, thundersnow. Meteorologists and weather reports often coin new words and phrases for the purposes of both explaining and entertaining. Learn some new weather-related terminology, or create your own phrases that explain existing and made-up weather phenomena. Select one of these terms as the title of a poem, and allow it to guide your imagination as you write your lines. Do you end up with a poem that is somehow connected to meteorology, or does the title lead you toward a completely different direction.

Begin at the End

If you're having trouble starting a poem, begin at the end. Take a single collection of poems (yours *or* someone else) and make a list of the last two words from each poem. Then write your own poem using only these words. Be vigilant at first utilizing just the vocabulary from the list. After a couple of drafts, stray from the limited words to help bring the poem to its full realization.

One Sentence

The challenge is simple: Write a poem that is a single sentence long. But don't write just any old sentence. Instead, challenge yourself to sustain the sentence for as long as possible. Use all the tools of syntax, grammar, and poetic form to help keep it going. While these tools are already at play when writing a poem, the single-sentence constraint will force you into exciting and unexpected rhetorical solutions.