

POEM STARTERS

for Intermediates

Need a kick-start for writing poetry? Try these poetry ideas.

Pictures

(look at the book *Heart to Heart*, ed. by Jan Greenberg, for poetry based on art)

1. Collect some unusual photographs or copies of interesting artwork.
2. Choose one piece and think about it: what is the mood? Movement? Color? Meaning?
3. Try writing a "diamante" summing up your interpretation of the picture.

Diamante Format: Start and end with a noun. Line format: 1 word, 2 words, 3, 5, 3, 2, 1:

Merlin:
gentle wags,
soft liquid eyes.
His touch is always warm.
Do dogs smile?
Merlin does.
Happiness!

Voice of Another

(look at Joyce Sidman's "Walt Tells it Like it Is" from *Eureka!*)

1. Choose a figure in history or literature that you've studied.
2. Pretend you are that figure, telling the world who you are and how you came to do what you did.
3. Concentrate on Voice: a society debutante would sound different than Abe Lincoln.

Place of Refuge

(look at William Butler Yeats' "Lake Isle of Innisfree")

1. Think of a place you feel safe; you feel most like YOU.
2. Who is there? What does it look like, smell like, sound like? Are there tastes associated with this place? certain activities?
3. Write a poem to put the reader in your special place, using sensory details.

Emotions

(look at Emily Dickinson's "Hope is the thing with feathers")

1. Brainstorm different emotions and choose one
2. Imagine it as a physical thing/person: what does it look like, act like, sound like?
3. Write a poem making the abstract concrete. "Embarrassment flutters about like a lady with too many shawls."

Memory

(look at Theodore Roethke's "Child on Top of a Greenhouse")

1. Think back over your life: which memories come to mind? Joyful, sad, embarrassing, exciting times; first time you did something, loss of a loved one, etc.
2. Choose one and try to capture that moment: use all five senses to tell us: Who was there? What were you feeling? What sights? Noises? Smells? Why was this moment important (show, not tell)? Remember, you are not telling a story--you are capturing a moment within the story

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