

THE LIST POEM

Our lives are filled with lists. There are shopping lists, laundry lists, lists of rules, catalogs, order forms, roll call, things to do, phone books, dates, and appointments. The list poem is therefore one of the oldest and most organic forms of poetry. But what makes a list poem different from a grocery list? Honestly, a shopping list could be a list poem IF it is made with the following characteristics: artistry, a condensed symbolic language, a sense for word sound, rhythm, and musicality.

A list poem is one of the easiest kinds of poems to write because it doesn't require either rhythm or rhyme. But that doesn't mean you should write down anything helter-skelter. Here's a list of elements that makes a list poem a poem instead of just a list:

- The writer is telling you something--pointing something out--saying, "Look at this" or, "Think about this."
- There's a beginning and an end to it, like in a story.
- Each item in the list is written the same way.
- They rarely rhyme.
- And it is fun to juxtapose things that seem non-sequential: fruits and meats, nuts and dairy, big picture to little flower.
- List poems have a layering effect.

Begin by simply brainstorming a list. Whatever comes to mind, write it down. Allow your brainstorm to wonder off on tangents. Just write it all down. Go back over the list and look for new tangents. Add plenty of adjectives, glorious and mundane. In the editing and rewriting of the list, juggle the order. Play with the pattern. Pay careful attention to the sounds of words, the rhythm, alliteration, long vowels and short.

Here are some examples:

My Noisy Brother

by Bruce Lansky

My brother's such a noisy kid,
when he eats soup he slurps.
When he drinks milk he gargles.
And after meals he burps.
He cracks his knuckles when he's
bored.
He whistles when he walks.
He snaps his fingers when he sings.
and when he's mad he squawks.
At night my brother snores so loud
it sounds just like a riot.
Even when he sleeps
my noisy brother isn't quiet.

Driving at Dawn

by Van K. Brock

A dead rabbit by the roadside,
Sunlight turning his ears to rose
petals.

A new electric fence,
Its five barbed wires tight
As a steel-stringed banjo.

The feet of a fat dove
On a high black line
Throbbing to the hum
Of a thousand waterfalls.

A flock of egrets in a field of cows.

Three Great Blue Herons like
hunchbacked
pelicans in a watering pond.

The red leaves of a bush
Burning inside me.

A swamp holding its breath.

When I Count to Three

by Lauri Bohanan

When I count to three,
the toys better be picked up.

When I count to three,
the quarter will disappear from my
fist.

When I count to three,
your butt better be in the car.

When I count to three,
I'll have calmed down.

When I count to three,
the swats will end.

When I count to three,
the world will explode.

When I count to three,
the pain will be gone.

http://webbschool.com/rhood/creativewriting/list_poem.htm