



The Lantern English Co.  
The Creative Writer

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## **Intro to Writing Poetry – Syllabus**

**Course Description:** Words can do more than explain an idea. They can capture a moment, tell a story, create a rhythm, or give shape to a feeling. In this course, students will learn how to write poetry by exploring both the basic tools of poetry and a variety of poetic forms. With weekly guidance and practice, students will experiment with language, discover new ways to express their ideas, and create a collection of original poems, including acrostics, haiku, ballads, sonnets, epics, limericks, odes or elegies, and free verse poems.

**REQUIREMENT:** Students must have a general understanding of basic writing skills, including proper use of grammar and mechanics. ***Recommended for students 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade.***

### **Course Outline:**

**Week One:** Poetry Basics

**Week Two:** Acrostics

**Week Three:** Haiku

**Week Four:** Ballads & Sonnets

**Week Five:** Epics

**Week Six:** Limericks

**Week Seven:** Odes & Elegies

**Week Eight:** Free Verse

**Grading Information:** All assignments will be graded using *The Creative Writer Rubric* and averaged to receive a final course grade.



## Intro to Writing Poetry

### Lesson Two: Acrostics

#### SAMPLE LESSON

While it may seem elementary (literally!), acrostic poetry is quite deceptive in its simplicity. Acrostics are a ***combination of creativity and structure that are used to explore complex themes***. Despite the fact that acrostics are used to teach poetry basics to many young writers, acrostics date back to ancient Greece, where they were commonly used to convey secret messages. How fun!

#### WHAT IS AN ACROSTIC? –

An acrostic poem is one where a certain letter in each line spells a word or phrase when read vertically. The word or phrase is often the theme or subject of the poem. Acrostic poems may or may not rhyme.

**NOTE:** Acrostics are different from acronyms. **Acrostics form real words and phrases only** and are considered a piece of poetry, while acronyms are created for the practical purpose of shortening names and phrases (and they can form real words or made up words).

There are five main types of acrostics:

- **Conventional** – The first letter of each line forms a word or message

**Example:** “An Acrostic” by Edgar Allan Poe

Elizabeth is in vain you say

“Love not” – thou sayest it in so sweet a way:

In vain those word from thee or L. E. L.

Zantippe’s talents had enforced so well:

Ah! If that language from they heart arise,

Breathe it less gently forth – and veil thine eyes.

Endymion, recollect, when Luna tried

To cure his love – was cured of all beside –

His folly – pride – and passion – for he died.

- **Telestich** – The last letter of each line forms a word or message

**Example:** “Shire Horse” by Michael Lockwood

Stands so high**H**  
 Huge hooves to**O**  
 Impatiently waits fo**R**  
 Reins and harnes**S**  
 Eager to leave

- **Mesostic** – The middles of words or lines form a word or message

**Example:** A mesostic acrostic made from “The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe

And the Raven neve**R** flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting  
 On the pallid bust of Pallas just **A**bove my chamber door;  
 And his eyes ha**V**e all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,  
 And the lamp-light o’er him str**E**aming throws his shadow on the floor;  
 And my soul from out that shadow that lies floati**N**g on the floor  
 Shall be lifted--nevermore!

- **Double Acrostic** – Both the first and last letters of each line form words or messages

**Example:** “Wonder” by Cynthia BuhainBaello

What fascinating thoughts to kno**W**  
 Occupy its duckling mind s**O**  
 Notice how its focus is take**N**  
 Discovering the plane flying, an**D**  
 Expressing in its eyes aw**E**  
 Realizing, a bigger bird can soa**R**.

- **Abecedarian** – An acrostic that spells out the alphabet instead of a word or message

**Example:** Excerpt from “April Abecedarian Spring Poem” by Michelle Kogan

April starts with fits & foibles but  
 By golly springs finally begun—cause bluebells are billowing out,  
 Crocuses are here and gone—  
 Dear dandelions still under-earth but daffodils are  
 Everywhere, open and opening, and Echinaceas sprouts sprouting...

- **Non-Standard** – An acrostic where letters are emphasized in places other than the beginning and end

**Example:** “Desert Escape” by Emily Hostetter (from her elementary school days)

Her mane **is** blowing in the wind,  
her tail is flowing out **be**hind her.  
Her hooves hit the sand **wi**th a dull thud  
as she canter**s** into the moonlit horizon.  
The cliffs loom up in **f**ront of her  
and she comes to a skidding halt.  
Cowboy voices shout behind **he**r.  
She can't turn back without getting caught.  
**Sh**e has no choice.  
She takes her chance**s** and charges up the cliff,  
to freedom.

### **BUT WHAT IS THE PURPOSE? –**

Although acrostics can be a fun way to send secret messages, they're not frequently used for that purpose in today's world. Over time, acrostics were used less frequently for hidden messages and became cherished for their literary value instead.

The beauty of acrostics is that they can be as simple or as detailed as the poet wants them to be. Many of us made acrostics using our names as young children. You may remember a time that your parents or a teacher made you write your name vertically on a sheet of paper and then had you pick one characteristic that describes you for each letter. By the end, you had a poem about you!

#### **Example:**

Eloquent

Mindful

Imaginative

Loyal

Yappy (This one was harder than I thought it'd be!)

While an acrostic can be a fun and silly way to introduce yourself or to create a poem about someone you love, they can also be quite complex if the poet designs them to be. Writing poetry in acrostic form can add

deeper meaning to the poem through the intentional word choices of the poet. Some poets also create their acrostics to be puzzles, making their readers search for the hidden message and deeper meaning of the poem.

### HOW TO CREATE AN ACROSTIC POEM –

- **Brainstorm Subjects & Themes** – List ideas for the subject or theme that will be the foundation for your poem. Do you want to write an acrostic about yourself? Do you want to create one for someone you care about or to celebrate a special occasion? Do you want to explore a deeper theme like nature, family, friendship, feelings, etc.?
- **Brainstorm Related Words** – You want your vertical word to connect to the content (theme) of the poem. List words and phrases that relate to your chosen theme. Come up with a few different options so that if one word doesn't work out, you have more to work with.
- **Decide on Type** – Determine what kind of acrostic you want to write.
- **Write** – Start writing! If you've chosen to write a conventional acrostic, write your chosen word vertically, then each line of your poem will begin with a letter of that word. If you've chosen to write a telestich acrostic, then it doesn't matter how each line begins. Instead, you'll make sure each line ends with a letter of your chosen word.

### NOTE ON WORD CHOICE—

As writers, we should be intentional about word choice in every form of writing, but you want to be even more so when it comes to creating acrostics. The vertical word you choose should directly tie to the theme of the acrostic, and each line should also carry meaning related to the theme. Acrostics don't need to rhyme (though they certainly can if you want them to!); instead, the poetic value comes from the meaningful word choices throughout the piece.

### Assignment 2: Exploring You and the World Around You

Complete the following **two** parts:

1. Using my example above, type your name vertically on the page. Choose one word or a short phrase for each letter of your name. Each line should describe a characteristic of you.

2. Following the brainstorming steps given above, choose a subject/theme to explore and a vertical word that fits that theme. Then, submit an acrostic poem written in the style of your choice (conventional, telestich, mesostic, double acrostic, abecedarian, non-standard). **Please bold the letters of your acrostic word.**

**Turn in both acrostics.**