



How to Write Poetry

Mister Lemur Style!

Moving Kids Forward. Taking Parents Back.™

SUMMARY

1. Generate an idea/topic
2. Select your rhythm (musicality)
3. Choose a rhyme scheme
4. Create and have fun!

1. Generate an idea/topic

In writing *Mister Lemur's Train of Thought*, we focused on writing what we know. If you like a topic and know more about it, you are more likely to be able to come up with an interesting "angle" on the subject.

We typically look for things around us that we like, then put different spins on them. For example, in the story "Cowabunga," which is about milkshakes, we thought "We really like milkshakes. What if instead of being made in machines, they were made some other way?" After thinking of different ways that they could be made, we thought the most fun story was to have the whole cow (with the milk inside) shaken. Then we made up a story about how that cow would have been shaken in the first place. The result was the story below: (PS – don't try this on a real cow!)

Cowabunga

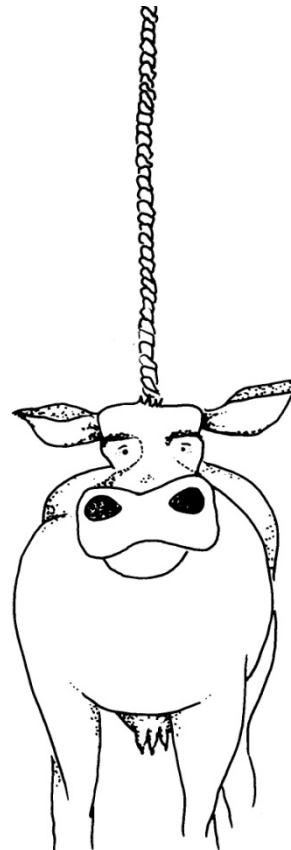
My uncle Howard always makes
the most amazing farm fresh shakes.
But what I didn't know till now
is that they come straight from a cow.

He drives a milk cow up a ridge,
up to the Cowabunga bridge.
Then carefully, so he's not gored
he will attach a bungee cord,
between her legs, around her waist,
ensuring it is tightly placed.

Then he'll yell "Yaa!" and crack the whip
which gives her such a start she'll slip.
She'll fall then spring and spring and bounce,
the milk will shake, every last ounce.

And then, he says "I milk her quick,
before she can get motion sick."

And if the bungee cord should break?
"We'll get no milk... but we'll have steak."





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2. The Rhythm (Musicality) of Poetry:

You can think of writing poetry as making beats with words, or more specifically pieces of words called “syllables.” Through timing and emphasis on certain syllables you verbally create the beat that gives poetry its flow.

Those who understand music and know “4/4 time” will recognize that quite a few Mister Lemur stories are written in 4/4 time. That is four beats per measure, with emphasis on every other syllable for the beat, with an occasional pause in the middle or at the end. Typically this leads to an eight syllable line, with four down beats and four up beats. For example, the first story in *Mister Lemur's Train of Thought* (titled Train of Thought) opens with these lines:

Come and ride the train of thought
it doesn't matter where.
To ride you simply close your eyes
or pick a spot and stare.

Sometimes you'll be the engineer,
sometimes you're on the ride,
and on this train you'll be amazed
at whom you'll sit beside.

Now try reading it again emphasizing every other syllable (the bold syllables). Read it at a consistent pace so that each syllable (or the word “pause”) takes the same amount of time to read.

Come and **ride** the **train** of **thought** it
doesn't **matter** **where** (pause) (**pause**) to
ride you **simply** **close** your **eyes** or
pick a **spot** and **stare** (pause) (**pause**) some-
times you'll **be** the **engineer** some-
times you're **on** the **ride** (pause) (**pause**) and
on this **train** you'll **be** **amazed** at
whom you'll **sit** **beside** (pause) (**pause**) (pause).

Do you notice how each line has four syllables in bold print and four syllables (or pauses) not in bold print, and they alternate throughout? This is the musicality of poetry. Think of the bold syllables as “down beats” – maybe the kick drum) and the others as the up-beats (perhaps the snare drum.)



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3. Select a Rhyme Scheme:

Rhyme Scheme describes the manner in which rhyming words are arranged. Not all poetry is rhyming, but Mister Lemur thinks rhyming poetry is a lot more fun!

The poem below is an example of an “A B C B” Rhyme Scheme.

This pain is not normal, **A**
and please understand, **B**
it feels like I've swallowed **C**
a whole marching band. **B**



The “A B C B” describes how the last syllable in the line rhymes. In this example, the “mal” in “normal” is the end of the first line of the poem. The second line ends with “understand.” If “understand” rhymed with “normal” (which it does not) then the second line would be an A. Since it does not rhyme, the next letter in the alphabet (B) is assigned. The third line ends with “swallowed.” If swallowed rhymed with normal it would be an A (but it of course does not), and if swallowed rhymed with “understand” it would be a B – though again – it does not, so we assign the letter C. The fourth and final line of the stanza ends with “band.” “Band” does not rhyme with “normal,” so it is not an “A”. Band does, however, rhyme with “understand,” so we assign the letter B to it to show that it rhymes with “understand.” Thus, we know from the “A B C B” notation that the second and 4th lines will rhyme in this stanza, while the first and third line will not rhyme with any other lines in the stanza.

Make sense? Try assigning letters to the following:

Tepin Pepper, by Mister Lemur

You have not lived until you've tried
a Tepin pepper deep fat fried.
My first bite made me squirm and choke.
My ears emitted greenish smoke.

My eyes got wide, my face turned red.
I yelled for water, milk and bread.
If one were handy, heaven knows,
I would have sucked a garden hose.

And finally I did stop the blaze...
by gargling with some mayonnaise!
But so my friends would be impressed
I said "It's great!" ...and ate the rest.



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Answer: This is an “A A B B” poem.

For example:

You have not lived until you’ve tried (A)
a Tepin pepper deep fat fried. (A)
My first bite made me squirm and choke. (B)
My ears emitted greenish smoke. (B)

Why? “Tried” is first, so it gets “A.” Since “fried” (the last word of the second line) rhymes with “tried” (the last word of the first line), it also gets an “A.” “Choke,” the last word in the third line does not rhyme with “tried” or “fried,” so it gets the next un-used letter, “B.” The last word in the 4th line does not rhyme with “tried” or “fried,” so it is not an “A,” but it does rhyme with “choke,” making it a “B.”

4. Finally, Create and have fun! Try it yourself:

1. Generate an idea
2. Select your rhythm (musicality)
3. Choose a rhyme scheme
4. Create and have fun!

Happy Writing!



~ Mister Lemur