

Writer's Block: Creative Writing Exercises

Advanced Acrostic Poem (Grades 6 - 12)



By Mackayla Kelsey

Introduction:

An acrostic is a poem in which the first letter of each line spells out a word, message or the alphabet. This is a common poetry exercise among younger writers and their names, taking each letter of the writer's name and spelling out a word that describes them. This exercise is a more advanced version of that!

What's in a name? Well, lots of things! Names, in a simple understanding, are symbols - they are made up of shapes and sounds. In a more complex understanding, names hold identities and experiences that are unique to each of us. This goal of this creative writing exercise is to develop the skill of micro-description and relational writing. Basically, focusing on real specific details and descriptions of each letter's shape and sound individually, and then the relationship of the shape and sound of the letter to the person.

Description:

1. Write out each letter in your name and observe them, visually and audially (by sight and by sound). How does each letter look and sound? Does the L look long, and sound languid? Does the S look squiggly and sound confusingly silent? Do this for each letter!
2. Once you've noted some observations about each letter, ask yourself these questions: what emotional themes arise? How do the shapes and sounds interact when next two each other? Does one letter transition quickly to the next, maybe abruptly? Does that feel sudden or slow? How do these letters represent parts of you as a person - either

physically, emotionally, culturally. Etc.? Maybe the letter looks like something too - an X looks like a street intersection or maybe an S looks like a snake.

3. After you've made some general observations about themes, patterns, etc. Start writing! The cool thing with poetry is that, as a form, it is not bounded by shape. Meaning, it could be a circle, a spiral, a paragraph block.

Example:

My name is Mackayla, but I go by Mack for short. Here is an example of an advanced acrostic poem using the four letters in my nickname.

M. A soft, low hum dipping down into a middle. *Mmmmmm*. An expansive exhalation of something good.. The sound a child makes while eating the last bite of chocolate cake that has been baking in the window under an August sun. I do not know if it is a savoring, or a consuming?

A. One of three, an indefinite article. A thing both unsure of herself, and with infinite room to grow.

C. Like the curl of boring hair that has a dawning glow in the right light. A ribbon of sound, run scissors across it and it will contract, close in on itself. Something with sides, a container to hold in.

K. In the Greek language, it is the symbol for an open hand. A gesture of welcoming. If spoken: a sound for concession at the end. A giving in, a giving up, because a hand can only hold on to a thing for so long before it must open to let go. *Ahhhh*.