

Mini-Lesson: What Early Poems Reveal About Voice

Based on three original poems from high school writing assignments

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Introduction

Sometimes a writing assignment surprises you. You're told to rhyme, or follow a pattern, or use a vocabulary list—and what ends up on the page reveals more than expected.

These three early poems were written in high school for typical creative writing prompts. I didn't set out to say something personal, but somehow, my personality still crept in. The patterns, structure, and sounds I chose became a way to work through emotions I wasn't ready to name.

Each poem shows a different approach: sound play, structured metaphor, or reflective statement. Together, they show how even beginner-level assignments help us develop poetic voice.

Poems + Commentary

Poem 1: Thoughts

Structure: Couplet / aphorism

Theme: Truths, values, moral clarity

Poem:

Love and friendship bridge all space
Make the world a better place.

To have joy one must share it,
Happiness was born a twin.

Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others
Cannot keep it from themselves.

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Commentary:

This poem reads like a collection of “truths” we were asked to express in poetic form. It’s optimistic, simple, and structured—early signs of how I liked to make order through rhythm. The repetition of form helped the ideas feel grounded, even if they were broad.

Poem 2: Nonsense

Structure: Rhyme-heavy, suffix-based

Theme: Wordplay, chaos, sound as structure

Poem:

I’m in captivity to my perplexity.
They say I need humility to attain immortality.
My captivity has lasted an eternity.
It was a terrible calamity,
when my adversity became an extremity.

I guess I should affect a gravity
to receive a principality,
but because of my iniquity,
they sent me importunity.

They think they have lots of equity,
only, they really have enmity.

I’ll say goodbye,
until my ability enables me
to come to an affinity with my adversary.

Commentary:

This one still makes me smile. The assignment was to write a poem using a single suffix, and I chose “-ity.” We had to make the poem rhyme, at least loosely, and still have it make some kind of sense. I focused on choosing words that fit the pattern while still connecting in meaning. It became a rhythm-driven poem where repetition created energy, even when the meaning wandered.

Poem 3: Moods

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Structure: List poem

Theme: Emotional color language

Poem:

Blue is the color of my sadness.

Green is the shade of my jealousy.

Yellow means I'm deliriously happy.

Red shows my anger and my joy.

Brown is evidence of my drabness.

Black shows sophistication.

Colors—the essence of my moods.

Commentary:

This was likely written in response to a prompt about describing emotion without naming it directly. Using color as a metaphor helped make emotions more visual. It also helped me think about identity through contrast and categories—each color standing in for a feeling I didn't always know how to express.

Writing Exercises

1. Constraint as Discovery

Choose one suffix (like “-tion,” “-ity,” “-ance”) and write a poem using only words that end with that suffix. Let the repetition guide the mood or tone.

2. Abstract to Concrete

Write a short poem about an emotion without naming it. Use color, shape, or setting to express the feeling indirectly.

3. Dialogue with Yourself

Find a poem or paragraph you wrote at least a year ago. Write a second poem next to it. Respond, question, or build on what your younger self wrote.

Reflection Prompt

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Even if you don't have older poems or writing to look back on, think about how you approach writing today. What patterns do you notice in your voice, such as structure, sound, tone, or the kinds of words you return to?

Is there a rhythm you tend to use without thinking? A kind of mood you write best in? A certain image or phrase you often reach for?

Take a moment to notice what your current writing already reveals about your voice. You may be more consistent than you realize.