

I'm not a bot



Poetry free verse examples

If you're looking for a way to present poetry in the classroom, free-verse poems are a great place to start. Unlike standard poetry, you'll find that free-verse poem examples break rules and don't have to rhyme or follow any specific meter. Since themes of nature, love, and life are often represented, poems using free-verse provide plenty of opportunities to teach students how to analyze poetry. Check out our list of the best free-verse poems for the classroom below! (Note: Every classroom is different, so please be sure to review these poems before sharing them with students to ensure they align with your learning environment.)

FREE PRINTABLE Click the button to receive your bundle of printable poetry activities for haiku, limerick, ode, and more. Get My Free Poetry Worksheets

Themes: Curiosity and wonder, perception vs. reality
Literary devices: Personification, imagery, rhetorical questions

This poem is a charming exploration of the quiet comfort of the night sky as the author contemplates the world and its ever-present mysteries.

Themes: Imagination, creativity, childhood, playfulness
Literary devices: Onomatopoeia, repetition, hyperbole

With its rhythmic and energetic tone, this poem brings out a sense of childlike wonder and creativity. It's all about the pure, messy fun of exploring nature, embracing the carefree spirit of childhood.

Themes: Transience, impermanence, nature's quiet power
Literary devices: Metaphor, personification, imagery

With gentle yet powerful imagery, this poem using free verse captures the mysterious beauty of nature's movements in a way that is both whimsical and thought-provoking.

Themes: Human connection with nature, transition
Literary devices: Personification, simile, imagery

This free verse poem's warm simplicity creates a quiet, reflective moment, infusing the wonder of a crisp autumn night with human familiarity.

Themes: Simplicity, interconnectedness, minimalism
Literary devices: Imagery, symbolism

This short yet profound poem highlights the beauty and quiet significance of everyday delight.

Themes: Everyday moments as poetry, sensory experience
Literary devices: Imagery, tone, minimalism

Williams captures an ordinary act of everyday life with humor and honesty.

Themes: Hope as an enduring force, resilience in adversity
Literary devices: Metaphor, personification, imagery

This poem's simple yet profound imagery makes it a timeless meditation on the power of the human spirit.

Themes: Death and reflection, distortion of reality
Literary devices: Juxtaposition, symbolism, tone

Atwood's poem cleverly explores perception and disappearance, pulling the reader into mystery of identity and loss.

Themes: Journey of the self, loss, resilience, acceptance of change
Literary devices: Personification, metaphor, imagery

This meditative poem reflects on identity, loss, and perseverance. It recognizes the past's impact but focuses on growth, showing that life is always changing and moving forward.

Themes: Wonder at the simple and ordinary, power of the present
Literary devices: Imagery, exclamation

This poem encourages readers to slow down, enjoy the present, and find joy in life's simple yet profound wonders.

Themes: Hope, progress, love, unity
Literary devices: Symbolism, imagery, repetition

Written for President Obama's 2009 inauguration, this poem is a tribute to everyday people, resilience, and hope for the future.

Themes: Music and creativity, playfulness, exploration
Literary devices: Repetition, rhyme, anaphora

This playful poem highlights the richness of sound and creativity by listing instruments from different cultures and genres. It uses the literary device of anaphora in repeating the phrase "I play."

Themes: The power and beauty of nature, adventure, exploration
Literary devices: Imagery, personification, enjambment

This poem captures the excitement of exploration and the endless energy of the ocean.

Themes: Self-expression, unconventional thinking, celebrating creativity
Literary devices: Imagery, contrast, enjambment, rhyme

This poem is all about breaking the rules of poetry and writing in a way that feels natural. The playful tone and strong imagery make it a celebration of creativity and individuality.

Themes: Deferred dreams, racial inequality, negative consequences
Literary devices: Simile, imagery, rhetorical questions

This poignant poem contemplates the possible outcomes when people's dreams are consistently deferred as a result of racial inequality. Here is the deepest secret nobody knows ...

Themes: Love, devotion, deep connection
Literary devices: Metaphor, imagery, repetition, enjambment

In this love poem, e.e. cummings expresses a deep and abiding love and connection using the run-on style of enjambment.

Themes: Decay, death, memories of the past
Literary devices: Allusion, symbolism, imagery

This renowned poem reflects on a world that is lost and broken after the turmoil of World War I.

Themes: Ambiguity, surprise, humor
Literary devices: Wordplay, brevity, irony, imagery

This short, humorous poem revels in simplicity while delivering a playful twist.

Themes: Absence, emptiness, profound nature of silence
Literary devices: Contrast, imagery, personification

This poem invites readers to think about different kinds of silence and realize that silence can have value, depth, and meaning.

Themes: Curiosity, nature, discovery
Literary devices: Metaphor, imagery, questioning

This poem demonstrates how grappling with nature can be both fascinating and puzzling and prompts us to explore and question the world around us.

Themes: Fleeting moments, the beauty of everyday moments
Literary devices: Imagery, metaphor, juxtaposition

This short poem depicts a brief glimpse of people's faces in a busy place that reminds the author of petals on a wet tree branch.

Themes: Perception and reality
Literary devices: Imagery, enjambment

In this poem, Stevens delves into the concept of observing things for what they are, without imposing human feelings and labels. You may write me down in history

With your bitter, twisted lies ...

Themes: Pride, confidence, hope
Literary devices: Repetition, simile, metaphor

A powerful anthem celebrating strength and resilience, Angelou's poem is full of positivity and confidence.

Themes: Growth and transformation, courage
Literary devices: Symbolism, imagery, contrast

This short, powerful poem confirms that staying safe may feel comfortable, but real happiness and growth come from taking risks.

Themes: Connection to nature, gratitude, resilience
Literary devices: Free verse, symbolism, anaphora, repetition

Harjo implores readers to be grateful in all things, even difficult moments that can create wisdom and renewal.

Themes: A father's love and sacrifice for his family
Literary devices: Personification, symbolism, enjambment

A poem about looking back and appreciating all the little things we have taken for granted.

Themes: Slowing down, appreciating the present, fleeting nature of childhood
Literary devices: Contrast, imagery, repetition

A mother taking her small daughter on errands impatiently hurries her daughter, then catches herself as she realizes sweet moments are lost when we rush through life.

Themes: Impermanence, control vs. letting go
Literary devices: Metaphor, personification, imagery

This poem observes how things naturally change over time, even when we try to hold on to them.

Themes: Change, impermanence, memory and reflection
Literary devices: Second-person perspective, enjambment, symbolism

The poem reminds us that no matter where we go, time moves along, and we are always changing too.

Themes: Race and strength, freedom, expressing your voice
Literary devices: Metaphor, imagery, contrast, simile

This poem points out how pressure and struggle can create something valuable, like coal turning into a diamond.

Themes: Individuality, challenging the status quo, progress
Literary devices: Irony, allusion, tone

This poem is recognition of not fitting into traditional expectations and the discomfort that may bring to other people.

Themes: Racial equality, resilience and strength, overcoming injustice
Literary devices: Repetition, tone shift, metaphor

This is a powerful poem about equality and hope for the future. It encourages us to believe in justice and advocate for a better future for all.

Themes: Self-love, belonging, finding peace
Literary devices: Second-person perspective, enjambment, mood

This gentle poem is a reassuring piece of advice encouraging people to embrace themselves just as they are.

Themes: Nostalgia, childhood memories, loss and longing
Literary devices: Imagery, personification, metaphor

A sweet childhood memory triggers a longing for childhood and lost innocence.

Themes: Loneliness, connection, search for meaning
Literary devices: Simile, metaphor, enjambment

The poem teaches us that even when we feel alone, expressing ourselves creatively can bring comfort and make us feel whole again.

Themes: Time and memory, exile and displacement
Literary devices: Imagery, enjambment, symbolism

This poem's imagery evokes a sense of searching, as in for a lost homeland or a personal sense of belonging, and reminds us of the enduring power of hope amid uncertainty.

Themes: Change and uncertainty, love as a stabilizing force
Literary devices: Allusion, personification, tone

This poem reminds us that even when things seem uncertain, love and human connection can be a source of strength.

Themes: Childhood innocence, happiness of youth, cycle of life
Literary devices: Unconventional grammar, alliteration, enjambment

This poem uses delightful wordplay to describe the joy of springtime and alludes to the fleeting nature of childhood.

Themes: Mystery of love, vulnerability, emotion
Literary devices: Imagery, personification, unconventional grammar, symbolism, enjambment

In this poem, Cummings describes a deep and abiding connection to his beloved using his typical style of capitalization and enjambment.

Themes: Climate change, environmental justice, colonialism, cultural erasure
Literary devices: Juxtaposition, symbolism, personification

The author reveals her deep connection to her Samoan roots and the ways the world has marginalized her culture.

Themes: Religious devotion, the purity of animals
Literary devices: Alliteration, tone, personification

The poet sees joy, wonder, meaning, and a connection to the divine, expressed through his pet cat.

Themes: Compassion, kindness, quiet bravery, heroism
Literary devices: Imagery, contrast, repetition

Sometimes a hero isn't the strongest, fastest, or most powerful. Sometimes they are the person who shows simple kindness, courage, and compassion when it's needed the most.

Themes: Identity, individuality, emotional complexity
Literary devices: Imagery, contrast, rhetorical questions

This poem affirms that a person's value is more than their appearance or what others think of them—it lies in their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Themes: Sincerity, honesty, unspoken feelings
Literary devices: Metaphor, imagery, simile, anaphora

What does it really mean when someone says "I love you"?

The poet describes feelings of love using simile (heart flutters like a butterfly), anaphora (My knees, My stomach, My mind), and more.

Themes: Determination, self-actualization, encouragement
Literary devices: Dialect, repetition, imagery, metaphor

This poem is a love letter from a mother to her son, encouraging him to embrace perseverance, resilience, and hope.

Themes: Seasons, celebration, nature's role in traditions
Literary devices: Personification, metaphor, symbolism

Told in the voice of a pumpkin, this whimsical poem describes the happiness and fun of the Halloween season.

Themes: Respect for the natural world, beauty in harshness
Literary devices: Personification, tone, imagery

This poem is a gentle reflection about how nature can be both wild and awe-inspiring.

Themes: Human connection, compassion, responsibility
Literary devices: Tone, imagery, symbolism

This poem uses a father's loving care for his son to remind us that kindness, love, and protection are essential for a better world.

Themes: Authenticity, wisdom, environmental awareness
Literary devices: Metaphor, personification, contrast

This short poem reflects on the advice of the author's grandfather to "put honey in your mouth before speaking," suggesting that sweet words can prevent anger.

Themes: Poetry, recognition, connection
Literary devices: Personification, imagery

This poem is about the author's delight about finding something she didn't even know she needed.

Themes: Humor, human imperfection, self-perception
Literary devices: Euphemism, irony, rhyming scheme

This clever poem encourages readers to reflect on how they handle their own mistakes and the importance of honesty in acknowledging them.

Themes: Indecision and self-doubt, fear of rejection
Literary devices: Allusion, dramatic monologue, simile

This poem is an exploration of an older man's internal struggle with aging, self-doubt, and missed opportunities.

Themes: Spirituality and the soul, individuality, self-expression
Literary devices: Alliteration, repetition, imagery

This poem is a joyful and bold celebration of life, nature, and human connection.

Themes: Rebellion, critique of capitalism, suffering
Literary devices: Allusion, enjambment, anaphora

This poem is a bold political rant against capitalism, war, and politics and their contribution to the destruction of individuality and free choice.

Themes: Loneliness and the search for connection, perseverance, determination
Literary devices: Metaphor, alliteration, imagery

This poem is a short but thoughtful comparison of a tiny spider spinning its web to the search of the human soul for meaning.

Themes: Love and longing, unrequited love
Literary devices: Symbolism, imagery, tone

This poem expresses the despair of one whose love is not returned, equating the loss with that of dying.

Themes: Nature's peace and beauty, solitude, reflection
Literary devices: Metaphor, personification, imagery

This gentle poem contrasts the ambition and struggles of the outside world with the calmness and spiritual satisfaction found in nature.

Themes: Identity and heritage, assimilation, pride
Literary devices: Tone, enjambment, imagery

This poem is an examination of how one's language can be a beautiful link to one's heritage and family.

Themes: Universality of experience, curiosity, connection
Literary devices: Imagery, enjambment, tone

This poem is an anthem to a common experience: people-watching at the airport.

Themes: Life and death, emotional numbness, illness and recovery
Literary devices: Imagery, contrast, tone

In this poem, the gift of a pot of bright-red tulips given to a patient in the hospital intrudes on their sense of peace and stillness.

Themes: Internal pain and struggle, acceptance of suffering
Literary devices: Imagery, irony, allegory

This dark poem explores the ideas of human suffering and self-destruction.

Themes: Truth and reflection, time and aging
Literary devices: Personification, metaphor, imagery, simile

Written from the point of view of a personified mirror, the poem explores the author's fear of aging and death.

Themes: Cultural fusion, bilingualism, global connection
Literary devices: Metaphor, enjambment

This poem celebrates coffee as a unifying force of cultural fusion, history, and commonality among humans.

We Are Teachers Teaching poetry to your students? Download our free poetry worksheet bundle to pair with your lessons. What is Poetry? Is poetry useful for more than just expressing your feelings? Can poetry play a role in your day-to-day life? These are the two major essential questions that play a huge role in this unit, which is a unit not just on poetry but on the major types of poetry as well. The unit is at least a week long, although teachers may find whether it is two weeks or a week and a half varies according to the students and the time they spend on the material. On average, and from experience, it would be about a week and a half. It consists of four lesson plans, each one covering a different type of poetry: Free Verse, Haiku/Cinquain, and the Sonnet.

Reflection: Looking back, I never understood the use for a wide range of technology that was available - it wasn't a malevolent attitude, it was just general ignorance and ambivalence. I never really saw a productive way to use it until now. Although now that I know how to use them, I've already started making use of them. And I intend to continue making use of them as long as you follow the license terms.

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation. No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

girl with kitten free verse poem Little Shelter Cat uzhusrsky / iStock / Getty Images Plus Used under Getty Images license Robert Frost once commented that writing free verse was like "playing tennis without a net." Free verse poems do not follow the rules and have no rhyme or rhythm, but they are still an artistic expression. They are sometimes thought to be a modern form of poetry, but the free verse type of poetry has been around for hundreds of years. Known as the father of free verse, poet Walt Whitman created several free verse poems, including "After the Sea-Ship."

"AFTER the Sea-Ship—after the whistling winds;After the white-gray sails, taut to their spars and ropes,Below, a myriad, myriad waves, hastening, lifting up their necks,Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship:Waves of the ocean, bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,Waves, undulating waves—liquid, uneven, emulous waves,Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant, with curves,Where the great Vessel, sailing and tacking, displaced the surface ..."

Explore Carl Sandburg's astute observation of a cat in fog through the poetic form in his free verse poem "Fog."

"The fog comes on little cat feet.It sits lookingover harbor and cityon silent haunchesand then moves on."

Famous free verse wordsmith Robert Graves uses sporadic rhyme within this work; however, there is no specific rhyme scheme. "I now delighIn spiteOf the mightAnd the rightOf classic tradition.In writingAnd rectingStraight ahead,Without let or omission,In any little timeThat runs in my head:Because, I've said,My rhymes no longer shall stand arrayedLike Prussian soldiers on paradeThat march,Stiff as starch,Foot to foot,Boot to boot,Blade to blade"

Modern poet Linda J. Wolff describes her experience with death in her poem, "Free Verse Ode to Birth or Rosebuds."

"Sometimes I need to reach—deep like taprootsBurrowing through the darkness of hardpan dirt—I would want to establish strength; root-like,anchored in the hopes of solidity.Forsake the contamination of instability.Prove I'm the poet of each line of prose,Who needs the weakness of low self-esteemwhen your fingers can grip the heart ..."

You may notice that Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem" does include some rhyming lines. However, there is no set rhyme scheme, bringing power to the few lines that do connect in rhyme. What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore— And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over— like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode? Allen Ginsberg elevated the art of free verse with "Howl," which made him the artistic voice of his generation. "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of wind,who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz,who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs illuminated ..."

Poet Ezra Pound not only uses free verse in his poem "The Return," but he also uses words such as "uncertain wavering" to create an off-balance effect for his reader. "See, they return; ah, see the tentativeMovements, and the slow feet, The trouble in the pace and the uncertain Wavering! See, they return, one, and by one,With fear, as half-awakened;As if the snow should hesitateAnd murmur in the wind, and half turn back, These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe," inviolable."

Free verse poetry came naturally to e.e. cummings, who enjoyed breaking both poetic and writing conventions in all lowercased poems such as "l carry your heart with me (i carry it imny heart) i am never without it (anywhere) go you go, my dear; and whatever is donely only me is your doing, my darling) i fearnio fate (for you are my fate, my sweet) i wantno world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)and it's you are whatever a moon has always meantand whatever a sun will always sing is you ..."

Writing in free verse allowed Sylvia Plath to express unbridled and unstructured emotions, as seen in her poem "Mirror."

"I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.Whatever I see I swallow immediatelyJust as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.I am not cruel, only truthful,The eye of a little god, four-cornered.Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so longI think it is part of my heart. But it flickers.Faces and darkness separate us over and over." The wild, unyielding imagery of T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" would feel too constrained within a set rhyme scheme and verse. "April is the cruellest month, breedingLilacs out of the dead land, mixingMemory and desire, stirringDull roots with spring rain.Winter kept us warm, coveringEarth in forgetful snow, feedingA little life with dried tubers.Summer surprised us, coming over the StarnbergerseeWith a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's,My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,And I was frightened. He said, Marie,Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.In the mountains, there you feel free.I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter."

While these famous poets are well-known for breaking poetic conventions, they're not the only ones who can write poetry this way. Use these original free verse poems by poet Kelly Roper to inspire your next work. Finding the perfect feline friend can be hard. However, sometimes, you just connect with the perfect animal. See how Roper weaves a tale in this narrative, free verse poem. "I walked into the shelter and looked around.Out of all the homeless kitties, you stood out like a beacon.I picked you up, and you purred and snuggled sweetly in my arms.It was like we had always known each other, always been together:I filled out the form, made the donation, and took you home.You're a little shelter cat no more. You're mine."

Roper's language and line length in this poem mirror the random and jarring nature of city potholes. "Zig-zagging down the roadTrying not to stray over the center lineOr hit a curbOr break an axleOr flatten a tireOr wind up in the next surprise sinkhole.Driving in Toledo is not a sportFor the timid or the sane or the under-insured." For most, mornings are a stumble to the coffee maker. Roper expertly crafts the feeling of that first morning cup. "Beautiful brown liquid steaming in my cup,Becoming a muddy river as I stir in the cream.The aroma that gives me courage,The flavor that tastes like hope for a better day,And the energy that renews my will to do it all again my friend."