



Acrostic Poem

ABSOLUTE

An acrostic poem spells out a word using the first letter of each line. Usually, this is a descriptive poem showing someone's name, an idea, or a summary theme. Read these examples and then try some of your own!

Preserve the high honour of poems dear,
Oh poor acrostic-writer: by design,
Each line of verse that you will lay down here
My name discover, line by singing line.

Oliver Tearle

Elizabeth it is in vain you say
'Love not' — thou sayest it in so sweet a way:
In vain those words from thee or L. E. L.
Zantippe's talents had enforced so well:
Ah! if that language from thy 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.

Edgar Allan Poe

L is for the way you look at me
O is for the only one I see
V is very, very extraordinary
E is even more than anyone that you adore can

Milt Gabler
(made famous by Nat King Cole)

Anecdote

An anecdote is a short story usually biographical and often autobiographical. They're used in speeches to grab the audience's attention at the beginning or included as illustrating examples, but anecdotes can easily stand on their own. They maximize being interesting while minimizing time spent reading or telling, making them perfect for small talk while getting to know someone. Take a look at these famous anecdotes, and see if you can jot down a few you know:

Benjamin Franklin became a vegetarian when he was sixteen years old and often kept a “vegetable diet” when he needed to save money or cook more quickly to get back to work. However, on the voyage from Boston to Philadelphia, he smelled fish being fried and wanted desperately to eat one. When he found out that one of the fish had eaten a smaller fish, still in its belly, he reasoned, “If you eat one another, I don’t see why we mayn’t eat you.” This is how he learned it’s “so convenient a thing to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do.”

The ancient city of Gordium had a complex knot that tied on its sacred oxcart to a temple post so complex that it was pronounced whoever could untie it would be destined to rule the known world. As Alexander the Great marched through, he stopped, studied the knot, and then cut it in half with his sword.

Actress Angela Lansbury worried about her daughter as she fell into a bad crowd, enraptured with this Hollywood deadbeat who introduced her to drugs and prompted her to take up stealing. He was so charismatic that she kept going back to him, so Angela moved the whole family to Ireland. That deadbeat was Charles Manson.

Two kids put their money together to get an ICEE drink so they could each have half. The first kid slurped on the straw, drinking up the entire cup. When the other complained, he said, “My half was on top, so I had to drink your half to get to it.”

I carried a cup of coffee all the way from the coffee shop to my office. Its lid wasn’t on very well, so I was extremely careful walking down the halls, going up the stairs, and unlocking my door. Finally, I was back safely and so proud of how cautious I had been. Since I was busy being proud of myself, I didn’t realize I set the cup at just enough of an angle that, when I let go, it spilled in a dark brown wave all across my desk. I laughed to keep myself from crying.



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Clerihew



Created by Edmund Clerihew Bentley, the clerihew is a four-line biographical poem. It follows an AABB rhyme scheme with various length and meter, giving it flexibility to describe the person. First the person is named, and the rest of the poem presents a jokey portrayal. Check out these examples and compose a few of your own!

Sir Humphry Davy
Abominated gravy.
He lived in the odium
Of having discovered sodium.

E. Clerihew Bentley

Abraham Lincoln
Was always thinkin'
About how to save the nation
Through emancipation

Jen Glantz

When Karl Marx
Found the phrase 'financial sharks,'
He sang a Te Deum
In the British Museum.

W.H. Auden



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Haiku

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Haiku is a famous Japanese poetry style that began as hokku, opening stanza to longer renga epic works (like quotes at the beginning of a chapter). By the 1600s, haiku started to be composed alone, focusing on setting a mood or showing a scene. Haiku traditionally follow a formula of three lines of 17 syllables: a 5/7/5 poem. Enjoy these famous haiku and try composing some of your own, and you can play with the number of syllables as it suits your imagery.

An ancient pond
A frog jumps in
The splash of water
Matsuo Basho

I write, erase, rewrite
Erase again, and then
A poppy blooms
Katsushika Hokusai

O snail,
Climb Mount Fuji
But slowly
Kobayahsi Issa

A sunny spring day
People are doing nothing
In the small village
Shiki

Lend me your arms,
Fast as thunderbolts,
For a pillow on my journey
Hendrik Doeuff

First: five syllables
Second: seven syllables
Third: five syllables
Ron Padgett

Burgers on the grill
Lawn chair creaks as I lean back
Cicadas whirring
Anonymous



Two-Sentence Story

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The two-sentence story gained is said to have started with the first line of Fredric Brown's 1948 short story "Knock":

The last man on Earth sat alone in a room. There was a knock on the door...

These kinds of horror stories took off in popularity in the 2010s on Reddit and Twitter. A few examples:

I found a picture of me sleeping on my phone. I live alone.

It was terrifying suddenly seeing a face peering in my window. Worse, I live on the sixth floor.

You might also have heard two-sentence stories in one-two punch jokes from standup comedians:

In America, you can always find a party. In Russia, the Party always finds you.
(Yakov Smirnov)

My boss told me to have a good day, so I went home early.

The key to a good two-sentence story is the **setup** followed by the **twist**, which gives the story its emotional recoil. Give it a try yourself! Set up a story and then show what twist you can give. Here are a few more for inspiration:

When the astronauts tried to plant their flag, they hit metal. It was the wreckage of a spaceship bearing the name of their own.

"I love you," he confessed. "Oh, that's nice," she replied.