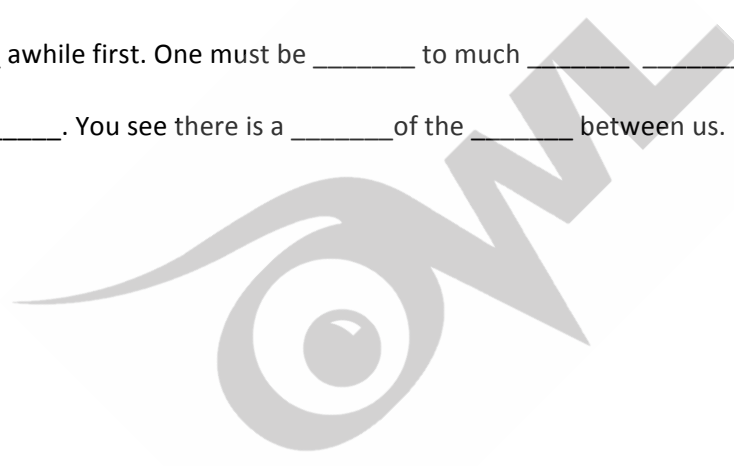


Generative Exercise #1: Poem Mad-Libs

Take a prose poem and remove all the nouns and adjectives. Replace each one with a blank space. Then fill in the spaces with words of your own. For an example, below is a fill-in-the-blank poem I've made from an excerpt from William Carlos Williams' "Kora in Hell: Improvisations II."

When you hang your _____ on the _____ you do not expect to see _____ and them trailing in the _____ . Nor would you expect to keep your _____ clean by putting _____ in a _____ . However and of course if you are a _____ , _____ , _____ and the like going under your _____ every _____ in the _____ you would not leave off the _____ and expect to handle a _____ of _____ without at least mopping yourself on a _____ , _____ as it may be. Then how will you expect a _____ trickle of _____ to follow you through the _____ of this _____ without—oh, come let us walk together into the a _____ awhile first. One must be _____ to much _____ before his _____ are tuned to these _____ . You see there is a _____ of the _____ between us.



Generative Exercise #2: Personal History

Look up the year you were born on Wikipedia. There should be a list of events. Copy down 10-12 things that happened that year. You may have to read articles or research more about the events. Pick one or two events to focus on. The events should serve as a jumping off point, so free write anything you associate with these events. What do the events say about you? Then, use these events to write a poem about your personal history & who you are.



Generative Exercise #3: Writing Into an Image

For teachers:

Collect postcards with interesting images—paintings, other works of art, photographs, etc. Put them into a stack and pass it around the room, telling each student to take a card. Once they have their card, set a timer for ten minutes. Students should free write any ideas/associations they think of in response to their image. Then, shape this material into a poem.



Generative Exercise #4: Image Field Trip

For teachers:

Divide your students into groups of two or three. Then assign each group a place on campus to travel to together. They should spend some time in this spot, at least ten to fifteen minutes taking in the sights, sounds, smells, texture of the place. Each needs to write down their observations, then share an image they've recorded with their partner(s) to be used in the partner's poem. Then, if possible, they should each compose a draft of a poem on location—they must write something before they leave!



Generative Exercise #5: The News Poem

When you want (or need) to be working on a poem, but you feel like you're out of ideas, turn to the news for inspiration. Go to a major news website—NPR is great, but you could also use NBC, CNN, etc. Once you're there, browse through the articles, reading (or listening to) whatever stories interest you. When you find one that really catches your attention, something that amazes you—something you can't stop thinking about—you've found your topic. Free write your response to the story, and consider how it connects to your own life. Let yourself write in fragments, in paragraphs, whatever feels natural. Shape the draft after.



Generative Exercise #6: The Erasure

For teachers:

Erasure poems were made famous most recently by Mary Ruefle in her collection *A Little White Shadow*. To make an erasure poem, a poet begins with a block of found text. This text could come from nearly anything: a newspaper, a magazine, a cereal box, or even an old record cover! Then, instead of adding words, the poet must use white-out to erase words within each sentence. The words that are left form the poem. You could either ask students to bring in their own found texts, or supply them with examples and white-out. The results are often hauntingly beautiful. Students love to do this.

Below, for an example, I've made an erasure of the above exercise:

Erasure famous Mary Ruefle in *A Little White*
Shadow. a poet begins with text. This record !
 anything: news magazine cereal each sentence.
 instead of words poet white-out erase bring in found
The left . You could results hauntingly beautiful
 this.

