



Gwanwyn Poetry Prompt #1

The Everyday, Togetherness, and Letter Poems

One great way into writing poems is to write about things which happen every day. Things as simple as cooking or washing up, pursuing a hobby, watching TV, can result in some great poems. Writing about everyday things which we share with others – a phone call, a conversation, a walk – can result in poems which are celebrations of togetherness and the people who matter to us.

In this poem, you are going to write about doing something everyday with someone else. This could be happening now, or it could be a memory of the past. Folding sheets with a mother, visiting grandchildren, going shopping with a friend...

In your poem, think about some of these things:

- What sort of senses are involved in doing the activity? What sort of sounds and smells are there? Are these the sounds of knitting, the smells of cooking, the sounds of ducks quacking as you walk around a pond?
- Are either of the people involved saying anything? What sorts of things?
- What exactly are each of you doing? What sorts of movements are there with the hands and so on?
- Where is this happening? You can describe the surroundings – the room or the natural space this is happening in.
- How does it feel to be doing this with someone?

1. Making Notes

A good way to begin the poem is simply by making some notes about the experience, to build into a poem. For example, here are some notes I wrote this morning, when going for a walk in the local park with my notebook:

- Half of the world is sky, blue sky.
- The bandstand has no band in it, so the breeze plays its oompa music through the railings.
- My shadow walks in front of me, smudged pioneer. I chase him down the path.
- The sound of my feet smacking the pavement, applauding me for finally doing some exercise.
- Children playing football, scoring goals, running rings around the morning.

2. Writing Your Poem

Once you have a strong set of notes, incorporate these in a poem.

There's a great example of a poem about doing something everyday available at this link, Seamus Heaney's 'Clearances,' section 3. ['When all the others were away at Mass' | Shortlist | RTÉ - Poem for Ireland \(rte.ie\)](#). You can also hear the poet reading the poem here. [Seamus Heaney - When all the others were away at Mass \(YouTube\)](#).

I love the way Heaney describes the experience of peeling potatoes with his mother, and the togetherness of the experience. The poem is great at the sights and sounds of peeling potatoes, and it's clear from the ending of the poem just how important this experience was and how much it's lasted.



A few years ago, when trying to write about hobbies and the everyday, I wrote this poem about my father's favourite hobby, which is looking after cars.

How to Renovate a Morris Minor

That's him, in the camouflage green overalls,
hiding under the car all day from my mother.
What is he but a pair of feet, my father,

muttering prayers to God and the sump gasket,
wearing oil drips, enough zips for all
his secrets? On his back, he pokes a spanner

up at a nut, as if unscrewing heaven;
grease-fingers make a crime scene of the kitchen.
He gives the stars in his bucket to the bonnet

and when he sees his face in it then it
is smiling. His foot on the accelerator
makes the world go, his right arm at the auction

can't say *No* and when the day is over,
that's him, that's him – he's snoring on the sofa,
Practical Classics open on his lap –

his eyes dart under their lids as he sleeps,
like Jaguars he's racing in his dreams.

Jonathan Edwards

There's a video reading of this poem available here: [The Poetry Station | How to Renovate a Morris Minor](#).

Enjoy writing your poem about an everyday experience!



3. Sending your poem to a friend

When you've written your poem, the next step is to send it to someone! If you've written your poem about having coffee with a friend or going shopping with a relative, send them the poem and see what they think. You can ask them to write the next section of the poem and send it back to you. If you keep this going over time, you'll develop a lovely celebration of your experiences together, and you can even grow the poem by including more people, so that the writing itself is part of your togetherness.

4. Sharing your poem

Please share your poem with us. You can email a copy or an audio file of you reading your poem to gwanwyn@agecymru.org.uk. Alternatively, you can post a copy to:

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Credits

This worksheet was created by Jonathan Edwards, for the Unearthing Creativity project. Unearthing Creativity is a collaboration between Marion Cheung, Naz Syed, Creative Lives and Age Cymru, and is funded by the Arts Council of Wales.

