Kim Addonizio Generative Workshop Prompt Sample

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Concessional Poems

I occasionally teach a five-mornings-a-week Zoom class on the turn and poetic structure. Over the five days, we talk about different ways poems move from their opening to someplace new. We talk about the value of surprise. We look at a lot of poems to get a feel for how they’re put together, and everyone experiments with using these rhetorical strategies to generate some new work.

Concession comes from the Latin, “to yield.” A concessional poem argues for something the writer cares passionately about, while first giving the other side of the issue a little breathing room. Combining the power of a rhetorical strategy with the power of poetic language makes for some amazing work. Quintilian’s praesumptio or prolepsis: anticipating by ‘confessing something we can afford to concede’; Cicero’s praemunitio, or defending ‘by anticipating objections to some point we intend to make later.’

Although the wind
Blows terribly here,
The moonlight also leaks
Between the roof planks
Of this ruined house.

--Izumi Shikibu

Poetry

I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers that there is in it after all, a place for the genuine. —Marianne Moore

PROMPT: Start with a concession, then argue the opposite or change your mind. Here are some possible subjects to think about; or choose your own. Then make a specific statement—take a position, explore it, and then engineer a reversal.

Sex (bad sex, outdoor sex, married sex, sexual fantasy, etc.)
Example: Of course, one-night stands are a disaster.

Love (unrequited, romantic, agape, mother-love, child-love, pet-love)
Example: Never fall in love with your best friend’s wife.
Or: You can’t change the person you love.

Time
Example: There’s no escaping the past.

Other possible subjects: History, elections, poverty, children, drugs, death, divorce, God, luck, fate, art, human nature. In your reading and daily life, look for poems, speeches, statements, and arguments that make concessional moves.

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Sandra Beasley Generative Workshop Prompt Sample

Persona Poems

I first started running workshops and making classroom visits in tandem with the 2010 publication of my second collection, *I Was the Jukebox*. The collection includes a number of persona poems where the speaker is a mythological figure, an object, or an animal (probably, in part, because I was working on a memoir simultaneously). Soon after, I was appointed the HoCoPoLitSo writer-in-residence for the 2011–2012 school year, which entailed visiting twelve high schools in Howard County. I had to think quickly and strategically about how to adapt a mode I’d gravitated to intuitively—persona poems—find exemplar poems with which I could be in dialogue and create a step-by-step drafting approach that could work for someone even if they weren’t confident in their skills. To get younger students more excited to share their work, I gamified it. I told students they could only name the “speaker” in the title, and then I had them share their drafts without that title in tandem with challenging their classmates to guess the speaker. As I moved these workshops into college-level and adult spaces, I found that participants resisted the prescriptive nature of this process, so I developed a secondary bank of more open-ended, self-guided persona-based prompts.

Generative Prompt, Guided

*Does peanut butter really get along with jelly?*

*What if your family’s car could talk?*

*How would your dog run the world, if he were in charge?*

Write a poem from an unexpected point of view.

What object or creature is my subject? ________________________________

Where does my subject “live”? Where is it kept? ________________________________

What are three words that describe how my subject looks?

_____________________    ______________________    ______________________

What is the texture of my subject’s surfaces? ________________________________

What is a sound that my subject makes? ________________________________

Who does my subject “see”? Who uses it, or plays with it, and how?
What is my subject’s favorite part of a day? Least favorite part of the day?

What does my subject wish for? ________________________________

What is my subject afraid of? (Even if it is not alive—imagine it is.)

Idea: Make your last line *I wish that they…. (What is the wish? And who is the “they”?)*

Write a poem of 6–10 lines, “The ________ Speaks,” using the ideas above.

Be sure that the only direct mention of the object or creature occurs in the title.

Generative Prompts, Self-Guided

1) Deliver a dramatic monologue from the perspective of a common kitchen object, which focuses on a fear or secret held by the object.

2) Write an elegy for someone by delivering it in the voice of that person’s longtime pet.

3) Engage a historical event by adopting the point of view of a tool, weapon, sporting good, or item of clothing that was used at that event.

4) Write a poem in the voice of a lost toy, using the sensory values of sound and smell.

5) Compose an epistolary poem that is a letter to you, the poet, from an imagined someone who lives in a country you have never visited.

6) Write a poem that tracks the journey from something that begins as a plant in the natural world, to its existence as food prepared for a human audience.
7) Imagine what a car complains about, perhaps focusing on a commute or road trip.

8) Write in the voice of something very small, evaluating something that is very big; or, write in the voice of something very big, evaluating something that is very small.

9) Design a polyphonic poem that channels multiple playing cards from a 52-card deck.

10) Write a poem as if the parent or child of a famous inventor, judging their legacy.

11) Create a to-do list as put together by a bed, couch, chair, or public sitting surface.

12) Write an acrostic poem in the voice of a celebrity or literary figure, in which the celebrity or figure is not named other than in the letters comprising the acrostic.

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Flower Conroy Generative Workshop Prompt Sample

Provided as separate pdf
Maya C. Popa Generative Workshop Prompt Sample

Writing a Love Poem

Every poem is a love poem. Every poem is a political poem. So say the masters. Every love poem is political. Every political poem must fall in love.

— Jericho Brown

I tend to organize craft packets around a particular theme, gesture, or mode, selecting poems across time that speak widely and variously to that preoccupation. Love poems are particularly versatile in this respect.

Prompt:

Choose whichever category of love speaks to you at the moment (romantic, platonic, familial, amor mundi, etc.).

Think of a moment or image that will serve as your generative starting point. The poem is not “about” anything yet. You want to draw on the feeling that this moment or image stirs in you to write.

Write for 20-30 minutes. Then ask yourself which other subjects or themes have naturally caught the poem’s attention. How is love complicated by them? In what ways is this a love poem and a poem about something else?

Now, read what you’ve written. Where can you deepen further or turn the subject at a different angle to arrive someplace else? Continue generating.

When you have a robust enough draft, only then should you begin shaping the poem, cutting what feels extraneous or out of place. (Your mind should be given time and space to make unexpected leaps before your editing mind curtails and rethinks such efforts.)

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