

Writing Activity: Musical Poetry

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Directions: Langston Hughes wrote intimately about his feelings toward jazz in his poem “Jazzonia.” Now it’s your turn. Write a short poem about your favorite type of music. To write a poem, begin by choosing a topic, feeling, attitude, or belief that you feel strongly about. Think about whether or not you want your poem to rhyme, if it will have a shape, and what tone it will take (angry, happy, sad, sarcastic, etc.).

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Poets use different techniques to express their thoughts and feelings in a few well-chosen words. Hughes uses the specific setting of a Harlem cabaret for his poem. Another approach might be to focus on the music itself, or a particular musician, without giving a specific setting.

Repetition is also a common technique in poetry. For example, Hughes repeats a pattern in the phrases “Oh, silver tree!” and “Oh, singing tree!” and “Oh, shining tree!”

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There is no “right” way to compose your poem. You might answer the questions on the following screens to help generate ideas. Use them as a place to “think on paper.” Don’t feel that you have to fill in every blank. For example, you might get an idea of a poem by listing several key words. Once you have a poem started, come back to your answers only if you are stuck for ideas.

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What is my favorite type of music?

Where am I when I listen to this music?

Do I want to focus on a specific musician(s)?

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Do I want to include dance?

What feelings do I experience when I hear this music?

What are some key words or images I might want to use in my poem?

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What tone should my poem take?

Do I want my poem to rhyme?

How should my poem look on the page?

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An effective poem

- relates the writer's feelings
- creates word pictures
- uses imagery based on taste, touch, sight, sound, and smell