



Poetry Prompt 1 - 'How to Make Me'

You are going to be writing a poem called 'How to Make Me.' It will be a celebration of all the things you love and that are special to you, a chance to make something beautiful out of all the things that bring you joy.

1. What's special about you?

To start, have a chat with one of your friends and try to come up with a list of all the things that matter to you. Here are some of the things you might talk about and include in your list. You don't have to cover all of these – do as many or as few as you're happy with.

- Your hobbies
- Your friends and what you get up to
- Your relatives and why you love them
- Places that are special to you: these could be the place you live, names of towns, cities, villages, street names, names of mountains and rivers, places your relatives live, places you've visited...
- Your favourite music, books and films
- Your favourite clothes
- Food and drink you love
- Exercise you enjoy
- Your pets and favourite animals, and why you love them
- Your favourite sayings, and your favourite words. If you're familiar with more than one language, feel free to include things from different languages
- Memories that are important to you
- Any traditions that are important to you, or celebrations that are a highlight of the year
- Any parts of history that you're interested in
- You can talk about your race, beliefs, religion, appearance, dreams and hopes for the future if you want to



Here's my list. How does yours look?

- Playing football and writing poems
- Playing snooker with my friend Huw
- I love my mother for her laugh
- The mountains where I live
- The Welsh National Anthem, and Dylan Thomas's poems
- My pyjamas
- Cadbury's Dairy Milk
- Jogging from my house to the paper shop and back
- My West Highland terrier, Tinker, even though he walks his muddy paw prints through the house
- 'Everything will be okay in the end!'
- Going to watch Wales play football for the first time when I was twelve, with my dad
- Eating enormous Easter eggs every year
- The Chartist Rising which happened near where I live, and which I loved studying in school

If you like, you can use photos that are important to you to help you make your list. By looking at the photos, you'll remember all the people, places and memories that are important to you, and what to include in your poem.



2. Writing your poem

Once you've got your list, you're going to use the details in it to write your poem. Your poem will be in the style of a recipe – but instead of making a cake or a pie, this recipe will be for how to make *you*.

Here's the poem I wrote from my list:

How to Make Me

Take a pinch of the mountains between your thumb and finger.
Throw in a sprinkle of your mother's laugh.
Sing out loud the first two lines of the Welsh National Anthem.
Recite one of Dylan Thomas's poems over the bowl.

Mix in a handful of Cadbury's Dairy Milk.
Cut your pyjama trousers in half and throw in the right leg.
Whisk up the view from the paper shop to the end of the street, and add it
in gently.
Sprinkle over your dog's muddy paw prints and his sense of fun.

Add in the air from a football you've been playing with all day
and Huw's wicked smile each time he beats you at snooker.
Pour over one cup full of tea from your father's flask –
the one he took with him each time you went to watch football together.

When you've mixed everything together, stand well back. In fact, leave the
room.

Come back in half an hour to find the bowl empty
and a boy you've never seen before standing there in the kitchen, who
looks like you.

Offer him a seat at the kitchen table

and bring out bread, cutlery, sauces, the very best food you have.



In case you get stuck, here are the starts of some sentences you could use to help you write your poem:

- Take a pinch of...
- Throw in...
- Mix in...
- Heat...
- Slice...
- Weigh out...
- Separate...
- Whisk...
- Fold in...
- Pour...
- Sprinkle...
- Chop...
- Halve...
- Squeeze...
- Stir...
- Add...

3. Endings

As well as thinking about your list, think carefully about the ending of your poem. You'll see in the last five lines of my poem that I move away from the list and start imagining what might happen when the fantastic recipe is all put together. What will happen at the end of your poem? What sort of amazing and magical thing will happen when all your special things are mixed together and put into the oven? What will have been made? How will it taste? Think about your ending as a way of giving surprise and something new to your poem.

4. Reading out your poem

When you've finished and are happy with your work, read it out to your friends. One fun way to do this is to swap poems with each other and don't tell anyone whose poem you are reading. Then see if they can guess, from the special things the poem mentions, who the poet is. You'll find that you learn a lot about each other as well as about poetry!



Poetry Prompt 2 - 'Anatomy'

Here's a poem I wrote a few years ago:

Anatomy

These shoulder blades are Snowdon, the Brecon Beacons.
Walk gently on them. This spine is the A470;
these palms are Ebbw, Wye, Sirhowy. This tongue

is Henry VIII's Act of Union, these lungs
pneumoconiosis, these rumbling guts
the Gurnos, this neck Dic Penderyn. This manner

of speaking is my children, my children's children.
These vital organs are Nye Bevan, this liver
Richard Burton, this blood my father. These eyes

have been underground for generations; now
they're adjusting to the light. This gap-toothed smile
is the Severn Bridge, seen from the English side.

Here's a link to video of me reading the poem:

<http://poetrystation.org.uk/poems/anatomy>



My idea in this poem was to include all the places, aspects of history and people who really matter to me, and to compare them to different parts of the body.

In your poem, borrow the structure of 'Anatomy' and put in all the things that matter to you. You can use the things from your list from section one of the first writing prompt to give you ideas, or expand this list in any way you need to, to help you write this poem.

If you can, try and make the comparisons you make with different parts of the body work in a visual way. I compared my shoulder blades to mountains for example, because I thought they look a little like that, sticking up on my back. And I compared my palms to rivers, because the little lines in the palms look a little like that.

Of course, all the things in my poem are about Wales, because that was the part of me I most wanted to celebrate in this poem. But your poem can be about whatever aspects of you that you want to sing and celebrate.

You might end up with sentences a little like these: 'These fingernails are the moon, seen from my garden on bonfire night, all the family together...' 'These shoulders are the slope of Woodvale Hill, with me riding my bike down it...' And so on.

As always, think carefully about your ending. I wanted to end on a happy image of coming home, driving back to Wales, seeing the Severn Bridge and being happy that I'd soon be home again. What last image would you like to leave your reader with?

Enjoy writing your poem! And celebrating all the things you love and that are important to you. And when you're finished, enjoy reading it out to your friends, admiring each other's work and finding out more about each other.



Extension work and other ideas for poems

If you're not so keen on the ideas above or simply want to write more poems about things, places and people which are special to you, try one of the following. Whatever you choose to write about, make sure you enjoy yourself!

- Collect some of your favourite photos together and write a poem based around these. Start with describing what you can see in the photo or what you can remember about that time, and see where that leads.
- Write a poem which includes everyone in your street, village or the place where you live. Start with the people you live with at home, and then move out to next-door neighbours, the people who live on the corner...
- Write a poem focusing on one person who's important to you. Start by describing how they look, then move onto memories, things you do together. If you're able to, spend some time interviewing them and asking them questions, and use the answers to write your poem.
- Write a poem about the view from somewhere important to you. This could be the view from your living room window, the view from one end of your street to the other, the view from a hill near where you live...
- Make a list of all your favourite sayings. Ask your friends and relatives for their favourite sayings and add these to the list, and then add as well some of your favourite sentences from poems and lyrics of songs. Feel free to include more than one language. Use the list as the basis of a poem: play around with all the sayings you've collected, and see where this leads you.
- Write a poem about your home, with a different verse for every room, saying why you like it.
- Write a poem about your favourite object. What does it look like? What is it used for? Where did it come from? Where is it kept?
- If you were a country, what would be your national anthem, and what would it celebrate? Write the lyrics to the national anthem of you. It's well worth having a look at the lyrics of national anthems to inspire you.