**Don’t Hate Poetry**

Elizabeth R. Rector

I dedicate this collection of works to my loyal friends and loving family.

To God be the glory.

Thank you the teachers that formed my talents as well as my personality from Wilson Elementary, Borger Middle School, Cinco Ranch Junior High, Cinco Ranch High, Seven Lakes High School and Texas Christian University:

Ms. Medellin, Ms. Marflak, Beth Kitchens, Sharron Liner, Lori Newland, Mrs. Helmcamp, Rudy dela Rosa, John P. Irish, Scott Patterson, Steve Levering, Broc Sears, Bill Johnson, Catherine Coleman, Jacqueline Lambiase, Chantel Langlinais, David Vanderwerken and Curt Rode.

**Foreword**

Poetry has the worst reputation in popular culture. No seriously. You try telling someone that you write poetry and see what kind of reaction you get.

Yet, poetry is all around us. It doesn’t have to rhyme or be in some notable literary journal. It can be in the rap song you’re listening to, it can be in the words of a beautiful speech, or it can be a brilliant scribble in a long forgotten notebook.

Writing poetry doesn’t make you a sissy or a scholar. It makes you human - a human who has ideas, experiences, and emotions that cannot be summed up in a formal essay or quick conversation.

A poem should make you feel. A poem should make you experience. A poem should make you question. A poem should make you realize how undeniably, inextricably, and beautifully tied to humanity you are.

**About the Author**

I have vivid memories of sitting at my father’s old typewriter in the dim evening light beneath a large, totally 90s lamp, writing poetry. Granted, I was only 8 or 9, so what I wrote probably couldn’t be deemed “poetry” per se. But it was the beginning of my love for this complex craft.

My name is Elizabeth Rector, and I’ve been writing and drawing since I was old enough to hold a pencil.

I graduated in Seven Lakes High School’s first class and attended Texas Christian University. There I majored in strategic communications and minored in art. Upon moving back home to Katy, I became a copywriter for various ad firms and tutored on the side. It was through tutoring that I realized I was truly meant to be a teacher.

So now I’m a teacher! Yay! Why do you care about me?

Well, I’m here to share with you my collection of poems that has been a decade in the making. I’ve also thrown in some “Poetry Breaks” where I discuss various topics relating to life and writing.

I may be young, and because of that fact, many people overlook or underestimate me. But you know what? It doesn’t matter! I founded/named my high school’s newspaper, The Torch, I was on TCU’s newspaper staff, I was cartoonist of the year twice, I’ve been published four times and I was the creative director for TCU’s poetry journal, eleven40seven.

Through the years I have been fortunate enough to fall in love with writing, art and teaching, and I consider myself blessed to have found each calling.

This book isn’t about making myself successful or proving anything, this book is about my life’s journey. And if it makes just one person fall in love with poetry as deeply as I have – then I will consider it a roaring success.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**6 Poetry Dead?**

**7 To Taste the Sky**

**8 Ferrara**

**9 A November to Remember**

**10 City Gem**

**11 Tingle**

**12 My Name is Lizzy**

**13 Poetry Break - What is Good Poetry?**

**14 Seven Deadly Sins: Lust**

**15 Grounded**

**16 The Toy Chest**

**17 Valve**

**18 Poetry Break – Different Types of Poetry**

**19 Diet Life**

**20 War and Retreat**

**21 MERSA and Murmurs**

**22 Cavity**

**23 Poetry Break – Making**

**24 Oxygen**

**25 Ambrosia**

**26 Vanished**

**27 Why Do People Hate Poetry?**

**28 Broken Clock**

**39 Twenty Three, Twenty Four, Twenty Five**

**30/31 Borger, TX**

**32 Poetry Break – Devices You Can Use**

**33 Wander**

**34 Can I Trust You**

**35 Peanut Butter Cups**

**36 Electric, The Art of Archery, My Salad**

**37 In Memorium**

**38 Wreck**

**39 The Last Farmer**

**40 Poetry Break – The Mechanics of Poetry**

**41 I Never Chose Fear**

**42 The Right Key**

**43 Desk Job**

**44 Waiting Room**

**45 Converge**

**46 There Once Was a Spider**

**47 Verbal Indigestion**

**48 T’was the Night Before My Birthday**

**49 Innocence Falling**

**50 Poetry Break – Write Your Own Poem**

**Poetry Dead?**

Why you here?

Goodbye.

Why write, why try?

You don't have the time

Just go to bed

Didn't you know

That poetry is dead?

That nobody wants that shit

if it don't rhyme

If it's not for a grade

What's the point,

who has the time?

Didn't no one tell you

- Poetry is gone

The death breath of English

Only alive in song

Well not really

Not anymore

Not for long

Don't you know

That cool kids don't care

if it's a way to crawl

into someone else's skin

if it's a way to look at humanity

And for once in your life see kin

To feel something you've never felt

To deal with things you've never dealt

Searing pain and burning joy

Wicked loss and undying love

That stands the test of time, survives the years

And gives you the chance

To cry humanity's immortal tears

Nah, it's silly, it's dumb

Let's get lost in lazy

It's easy, it's numb

English is gone

Didn't they tell you?

It died

Some people said it was alive

Some people lied.

**To Taste the Sky**

Clouds float over the masses

And I wonder, if I were to take a bite of the sky

How would the clouds taste?

Heavy, sticky, sweet like molasses

Or salty & bitter from their tears yet to cry

Cumulus, Cirrus, Nimbus, Stratus

How would each taste?

Would they cling to my tongue like cotton candy

And melt away when they hit spit

Or remain solid and steady but

Twist and Conform with each lick

Leaving a road where my tongue once was

The lightening bolts as chewed clouds meet

tickling my tongue in a frenzied buzz

Leaving behind an electric heat

What would it be like?

To be above what's

Above it all

To lick the rain drops

Before they fall.

**Ferrara**

The crinkled foil was bright and the plastic box gave way easily to reveal the ball of orange-flavored chocolate.

Much like a real orange, my chocolate orange was unbending, defiantly refusing to split apart when it should have easily given in.

The lying picture on the box said it was simple to break the globe open.

Here I was, fighting with a chocolate orange on this Saturday morning. With onlookers in my side vision, probably wondering if I was really this stupid.

But the chocolate wouldn’t bust open. Not with the prying of thumbs or the pulling of fingers. It stuck to itself, safely impenetrable, in a sphere of frustration.

I giggled at myself and wrenched at it with a white plastic knife until, finally, one slice came tumbling out.

I cracked the code of chocolate and life and the smell of oranges drifted upward.

**A November to Remember**

Strings of streetlights glow around the night's neck

Crate-myrtles reach their wooden fingers to the sky

And I glide along in the dark, a toy car in a plastic play set

Pulled back and let go on a grooved track

The apartment's dark, and I leave it that way

Walking past light-switches with their heads bowed

It's amazing how quiet can sound so loud

The night, the silence, it all presses down

On this makeshift home, in this Lego town

November stretches its cold black fingers

Digits fanning apart, threatening to reach out

To pull me in, and never spit me back

**City Gem**

Cut gems shimmer

As they sit on the highway

The red of their brakes lost in the light of day

A steady hum comes from the roadway

The pulsing bloodstream of the city

Beats through concrete veins

From far away it looks like heaven

The golden sun catches clouds on fire with its rays

And shines off the angular glass bodies of tall buildings

That rise out of the soft earth

Wet and glistening with the morning mist's sheen

The grass and trees scream green

A striking contrast to the sky so red and pink

The world is a sliced geode

Beautiful and translucent

Warm humidity stretching it's wet fingers so far

The hot breath of a new day, heaving on my car

**Tingle**

It came as a surprise

That my most ticklish spot

Is my hands

I discovered it at work

While lost in thought

As languid fingers drew a map

On my palm

Where ridges rise and fall

Like crests and troughs

And in the blazing wake

of exploring fingers

is a burning trail

That aches and tickles

In a sweet discomfort

I traced the outline of my hand

Until I reached the borders

of the sensation

losing the electricity

the shaking vibration

that races at the surface

Pulled from somewhere

mysterious in me

It's a warm, sweet tickle

That starts at the palm

and turns to a hearty laugh

as it edges from my thumb

It lights up where my fingers join my hand

Quiets at the stalks of them

And breaks out again

but ceases at my finger tips

Where my thumb faces my fingers

The tickle is dead

It lives on the outer side

of the digit instead

And a curious swipe

along the back of each finger

reveals a nervous shout of tingles

Along the skin so pale

that culminates in a synapses' kiss

just before reaching the nail

And when the inquiring fingers retire

The sensation lingers on my porcelain skin

A squirming tingle that I wish to stop

and at the same time, wish to start again

**My Name is Lizzy**

My name is Lizzy

But not like McGuire

You'd better get busy

'Cause this rhyme's on fire

They say fools rush in

And you're about to get burned

I took you to school

But you still haven't learned

So we're taking it outside

It's time for recess

And the first lesson is

You can't beat what's better than the best

We're back in session

And it's time for a test

But this isn't multiple choice

It's fill in the blank

And you've got no voice

Your rhyme is weak and hollow

You speak, but no one follows

Spitting of strife you've never had

Drugs you've never dealt

A life you've never led

And feelings you haven't felt

This isn't a game, it's rap

And I'm not here for the fame

The name or the paper stack

I'm here for the words, the heart and the art

The very things that you seem to lack

**POETRY BREAK**

**What is Good Poetry?**

Poetry isn’t like math, there is no right answer. People prefer different styles of poetry to others. Shakespeare for example, really favored Iambic Pentameter. Seriously, he was obsessed with it. You just have to experiment with different styles and see what works for you.

When I was in college, I tried many times to get some of my poems published in the on-campus literary journal. They accepted my art once, but never my poetry. I questioned if I was good enough. And I’ve come to realize that it was never about being “good,” because “good” is a relative term that depends on the judgment of whoever is reading it.

I took a fair amount of poetry classes in college and got a couple of rejection letters from that literary journal (which I ended up working on for a semester, ironically enough…) and the most important thing I learned was that…I don’t care who thinks my poetry is good!

I break a bunch of rules, I hate sticking to guidelines, and sometimes my poems don’t even rhyme. But after writing, I step back and read my poem, and if it pulls at my heart, then I know it’s good enough for me.

My professor would probably say to read through a bunch of examples of different poets and styles – to try them all – to give each a chance. And that’s exactly what you should do!

And if after doing that…you want to forget all of it and just write how you want… do exactly that.

**Poetry Tips**

**+ Avoid vague concepts like “love,” “death,” or “sadness,” instead, focus on how those things make you feel and translate that feeling into your poetry.**

**+ Utilize the human senses – how did something taste, feel, smell, hear or look like?**

**+ Include minute little details that put the reader “at the scene” of your poem. Set the stage.**

**+Pay close attention to how the rhyme scheme affects your poem. For example, if I had a poem about the ocean, I would give the poem a seesaw rhythm to mimic the ocean’s undulating waves.**

**+Make sure that pauses and line breaks are there for a reason; whether you’re switching ideas, feelings, scenes, or just want to add emphasis to certain lines.**

**SEVEN DEADLY SINS: LUST**

You lick dry lips

Flecks of flesh

Sting beneath

An alcoholic breath

Wander through

The air that's heaving

A nicotine fog

Here there is no

breathing

And nothing good

can come from

a meeting

In this place, but you

Abandon empathy

The second

That you see

-her face

The world is quiet

Time dead in space

Behind deaf ears

Thumps a tale

of love and betrayal

Into the din it's laced

She runs pomegranate

colored nails

down the side

of your face

And with apple red lips

she gives you a sour sweet

kiss

Your hands disappear

Where her hips dip

She tickles

your face

With black eye lashes

Takes your hand

Leads you through the masses

To some other place

With the same

coal black heels

That will walk through

your ashes

**GROUNDED**

He looks up at the sky

With an unwavering black eye

Spreading dark wings

But failing to fly

And he stays on the ground

Questioning why

He's bound to the ground

When his siblings can fly

Wondering if he'll be left

Behind to die

A bird with no tale

He tries but he fails

To fly with no sails

He's sitting prey

They bring him food

But could stop someday

Leave him to a life

And a death in the grass

And fly away.

Just a bird

Inconsequential

Missing an attribute

So essential

Who never kissed the sun

Or touched the sky

Just a bird

Born with no potential

**THE TOY CHEST**

I whispered your name where no one could hear

It rumbled in the back of my throat and slipped past my lips

Two syllables that were only meant for my ears

The words tasted of coffee and cough syrup

A hint of something once savored

That slipped into a sickly flavor

And rests on the back of my tongue

It makes my stomach want to come undone

It was a toy chest that I saw

With your name carved on its side

And just like you, it was empty inside

Solid wood, put together by the best of hands

Intended for the brightest of plans

Yet there it sat, idly by

Stumbled upon by a wandering eye

Unwanted, un-bought, not paid for

Marked down, forgotten, un-fought for

The hinges collapsed without protest

A rush of cedar coughed from its chest

It’s the name I had planned on calling my kid someday

But in the letters, on the box on the floor, all I can see is you

So it will be a name that will stay at rest

And sit in that store

It was to be the name of my son

But not anymore

**VALVE**

It murmurs and beats

And keeps you here with me

I want to make sure you stay

Even after they take the murmur away

We are inseparable

You are a part of me

And nothing can change that

Not even surgery

**POETRY BREAK**

**Different Types of Poetry**

Poetry comes in many shapes and forms. It can be the brilliant plays of Shakespeare or a fleeting performance of Spoken Word. Poetry exists in songs, advertisements, movies, and everyday interactions. It plays an important role in our literary history and it’s up to you whether or not it’ll play an important role in our literary future.

**Here are some of the forms that poetry comes in:**

**Lyric –** A lyric poem can have a similar form to a song and expresses the feelings and thoughts of the poet.

**Narrative Poems –** These poems, like ballads and epics, tell a story.

**Ode –** A very structured poem that is serious in nature and deeply thoughtful. Often an ode is directed toward someone, something or an event.

**Pastoral –** A poem that focuses on peaceful, idealized, rural life.

**Tanka –** A five line Japanese poem. The first and third line only have five syllables, and the other lines have seven.

**Haiku –** A Japanese poem made up of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Often, Haiku’s focus on an aspect of nature.

**Epigram** – A short, witty poem.

**Elegy** – Either a sad and thoughtful poem, or a poem that laments the death of someone.

**Limerick –** A light poem of five lines with the rhyme scheme of aabba.

**Sonnet** – A 14 line lyric poem. There are two different types of sonnets, there is the Italian sonnet, and the English (Shakespearean) sonnet. (Italian sonnet rhyme scheme: abba abba cdecde (or cdcdcd)) (English sonnet rhyme scheme: abab cdcd efef gg) The final two lines of the English sonnet are called a **couplet** – which is two lines of the same length and rhyme that form a final/complete thought.

**Epic –** A poem that tells the story of a heroic figure.

**Ballad –** A poem that tells a story that resembles a folk tale/legend.

**Spoken Word –** This unique, modern day expression of poetry focuses not only on the poem, but the spoken performance of the poem. Poems are read aloud which brings emotions and personality to the work – usually performed for an audience.

**DIET LIFE**

It fizzes in the silence

Manned by invisible pilots

The bubbles zip to the top

They merge and fizzle and pop

The only sound in the room

is my soda

And it wants drunk

As bad as I want the day to be over

The sugar isn't working

I just noticed it's caffeine free

Someone slap me

Keep me awake and working on this wording

Aluminum and Aspertame

I take a sip and hope

It isn't eroding my brain

Lending to the drain

That started when I first sipped

Phenylalanine

I can't pronounce it but I can drink it

I know what I feel but I can't think it

The metal tab looks up at me

Inanimate but expectantly

No calories, caffeine free

**WAR AND RETREAT**

Blue Irises - bloodshot red - with glimpses of white

My eyes are an American flag

Tethered and tied, worn and dried

To a pole that's long been abandoned

I stare at the night

'Till it turns to light

And wander the land empty-handed

My ears are still ringing, my skin still stinging

From rocks, dirt, metal and flying debris

The earth it was breaking, the land was quaking

And screaming voiceless within it was me

Air burst from my lungs my face a white sheet

But not a soul, not a body - not a man one foot from me

Could hear my call for retreat

**MERSA AND MURMERS**

What does it mean exactly

I don’t want to know

I don’t look it up

I want to let it go

Another medical mess

I can’t handle the reality

Or process what it means

As you say it and look at me

With soil brown eyes

Made of oil and earth

Your heart murmurs

Secret things in

Another language

That only the doctor’s speak

They may be gifted,

But you are the one Bulletproof Bob

You are the cancer whisperer

An epic odyssey of survival

And if you live five more minutes

Five more years, or farther

I will stay to boast of my hero’s trial

The life story of my father

**CAVITY**

My tongue tickles

It tingles and squirms

Behind my sugar loving teeth

That were bathed in coffee

Just this morning

I stare at the ceiling

Through eyes that long for glasses

There is no talking or moving

So my brain runs in circles out of boredom

And tries not to think about my bladder

Which, like my mouth is small

And always seeks attention

At the wrong time

I'm not nervous

But my heart thinks I am

Since the numbing shot

Speeds it up

I cross my feet

And think about

Not thinking about

Having to pee

Glimmering metal objects

Disappear into my mouth

And make torturous sounds

Like a thousand tiny race cars

At a tiny little Nascar

Running lap after lap

Inside my enamel

Down to my Dentin

Turning a solid piece of me

Into a fine dust

That smells

Indescribable

It's not my fault that I have soft teeth

I think

As I lie back on my soft curls

And rub a circle with my thumb

On the silk skin of my pale hand

And I can't help but wonder

if I'm soft on the inside too

**POETRY BREAK**

**Making a Living as a Writer**

You know, as I write this paragraph on a cold Sunday night before returning to work tomorrow, I thought it a good idea to tap into the discussion of writing careers during this Poetry Break.

I always wondered if it was really possible to make a career out of writing. I was an advertising/PR major in college (and an art minor). I went from college into advertising as a copy writer (person who works in advertising department writing copy for ads and checking grammar). Sounds thrilling right? Well, after a few years in advertising (and tutoring on the side) I decided to become a teacher.

I love writing and I do it in my spare time, as so many people out there do.

Despite having a solid fanfiction following…I wondered what I could do with words. And I scoffed at the idea that I’d ever even have time to write something as long as a novel!

And then one day it hit me: I’ve been writing all along! All I do is write, draw, and maintain basic human functions.

This whole time, I’ve been carving out little chunks of each day to write and draw, because I have an unending passion for these things. And while writing makes me happy, I have no idea if it will secure a solid monetary future for me. But I enjoy doing it, so who cares.

So I guess if this wordy “Poetry Break” had a point, it would be that you should continue to do what you love, even if it’s not your main profession. Do I have time to write and draw? Not really, but I make time, and you should too. Who knows…maybe one day you can throw together all of the poems or stories that you’ve written on your blog, and make a book.

**Word of Advice**

People always say to “follow your dreams,” but your dreams may not pay the bills. Don’t be quick to abandon careers that may prove more lucrative – but do what you love in your spare time.

If what you love is writing and you’re looking to get published, there’s a lot of research for you to do! Surprisingly, my high school and college teachers knew very little about getting published, so odds are that you will have to buy some books and do some legwork to find the right information.

**OXYGEN**

Do you think they can tell

I don’t belong here?

Shifting eyes, a questioning glance

Maybe they can smell

The perfume sweat

Pulsing on my neck

I could hold my breath

And dive into the sea of people

With dripping jewels

And dropping necklines

Lamb-soft suits

And crisp black bowties

Whispered seductions

And ruby red grins

But I may not be able

To come back up for air again

From these cold black depths

The pulsing shimmering sea

Stings my blue topaz eyes

The only gems that I possess

Hors d'ouvres certainly aren't enough

To feed sharks

In this tank

They can smell my heart

And for once in my life

It may not be enough

To be smart

A tangled tether is my line

Under pressure it groans and cries

As strong as a feather

Like spit and gum it holds together

My fate, my life, my lies

**AMBROSIA**

I spoke your name into your mouth

How did it taste?

The vowels were sweet like sugar

And round in shape

Disrupted by consonants

And the subsequent bitterness

That each voiceless stop did make

You licked at each letter

And swallowed them down

The salty sweet sting

Of your personal noun

**VANISHED**

You have a crystal heart

In a carbon cage

Ribs of branches

And eyes of sage

Leaves creak beneath

Tepid steps

On blistered feet

Into the midday

That looks more like night

A huddled mass of dense gray overhead

Chokes out all the light

The mumblings of the river bed

Seem to speak your name

And in this claustrophobic expanse

Every landmark looks the same

Smell the smoke from somewhere

Pulling from the ground and rising in the air

It hangs on your lungs like a fur coat

Winter. Hunger. And the beginnings of Despair.

Keep moving

Keep walking

Break the ice off frigid limbs

Keep hoping

Keep talking

Through the woods and whipping winds

Each breath explodes and falls away

Snapped twigs get lost and tramped

Dropped items drift with each wind blow

And every single boot print you've stamped

Disappears beneath the heavy snow

**POETRY BREAK**

**Why Do People Hate Poetry, And How Should I Read It?**

As a teacher, I can be the first to tell you that poetry isn’t very popular with the general populous. Many people see it as a lost art or a relic from centuries past. But poetry is just as powerful and relevant today as it ever was!

I find it very alarming that many young people today not only dislike poetry, but reading in general! Reading may not be as flashy as an app or video game, but it engages your brain in a way that nothing else can.

Stories can transport the reader through time and space, leading them on vivid imaginative journeys. And guess what? Poetry can do the exact same thing. Poetry can tell a story, it can reach into the depths of your emotions and pull on your heartstrings, it can perform a thousand functions. But as long as people’s attitudes remain negative towards poetry, they will never be open to experiencing just how great it is.

If your issue with poetry is that it’s hard to understand, take some time to analyze the poem. What’s the title? Read the poem once and then think about the significance of the title. Where is the poem set? Who’s point of view is the poem from? What are some concrete details in the poem that make it more effective? How does the poem make you feel?

By answering some of these questions (even quickly and internally) you can more easily understand what the poem is about.

The most important thing is to have a positive attitude towards poetry. Don’t just read some in school and forget about it, pick up a poetry book or journal, read some on your own time, figure out what you like and go from there.

**BROKEN CLOCK**

What happens when time stops moving?

Does it implode

like a bulding up in smoke?

Or crack apart and away---

Disappear?

And sink under consciousness?

Or bubble and float away---

into obscurity?

Maybe it just breaks

and sits on the floor.

In many pieces.

(Modeled after Langston Hughes' "Harlem.")

**TWENTY THREE**

Twenty-three

I'm so glad to see

that number next to my name

In the hopes of a year

that's not the same

As the one that beat me up

and ripped me down

But now it's my time,

this is my town

Heavy is the head

that wears the crown

A hero isn't a hero

without a cross to bear

And I'm no hero

but I'm halfway there

**TWENTY FOUR**

Twenty-four be good

Be gentle, take care

Tread lightly upon body and mind

Leave me whole.

Twenty four be good

Help me find purpose and way

And make every tomorrow better still

Than every yesterday

**TWENTY FIVE**

Twenty-five

I’m still alive

I’m here, I’m trying

But I don’t want to just live

I want to thrive

I want to flourish and fly

Not just survive

So God give me the strength I need

To write, to work to strive

Take this courage and make it stick

Sometime before I reach twenty-six

**BORGER, TX**

Three days of driving

Three days of riding

In the backseat

To the middle of nowhere

Where the air is brown with dirt

Crusted and thick

it sits in the cracks of trees

and chokes the sun

Black mist spews from smoke stacks

I climbed a tree wearing white

And when I came down

My clothes were black

From Pittsburgh

To this tiny town

With no movie theatre

And one high school

I wanted out of here

The Dairy Queen shut down

The bowling alley reigned supreme

With buzzing neon lights

An ancient witness to smoke-filled nights

It's where I first felt

What it was like

To not be able

To breathe

That was the night that asthma found me

And I choked in the dark

And panic flooded my heart

Here...Take an ice cube to calm down

But it didn't and...

I couldn't

breathe

In that place

In that town

From point guard

To the bench

Asbestos filled buildings sag in disrepair

In the air there's a steady toxic stench

Like rotting eggs or burning rubber

Cracked sidewalks crumble under the burning sun's glare

Dead antique shops stare at passers by

Through cataract window eyes

And black asphalt tongues

Stretched out towards nothing pretty

It's a solid hour to the nearest "city"

I left my home

Five years of this. Nothing.

Tell me what this is

If not suffering?

This is Texas.

Welcome home.

Have some asthma

Throw in some fear

How about your Dad gets cancer?

Tell me, do you like it here?

**POETRY BREAK**

**Devices You Can Use**

When it comes to poetry, there is a plethora of complicated terms to describe simple things. Simply go to a search engine and type in “Poetry Terms,” and you’ll get a whole mountain of terms and definitions. But don’t be overwhelmed!

Some of the most helpful terms are those that relate to literary devices that you can use in your own poetry. Odds are that you’ve heard many of these terms before.

**Alliteration –** The repeating of similar sounds at the beginning of words: “Willy Wonka Went to Willshire.”

**Assonance –** The repitition of similar sounds (like vowels): “Those foster kids of Dover love their gifts.”

**Consonance** – The repetition of similar consant sounds, usually at the end of words: “Stop, drop and look at the clock.

**Metaphor –** The comparing of two things, either by substitution of an expected word with a more descriptive word, or by saying one thing is another: “Her lips are two rose petals sewn together.”

**Simile –** The comparing of two things, saying one thing is “like” another. Similies always use the word “like.” “The hamburger was like a piece of gold that rained down from heaven itself.”

**Hyperbole –** Exaggerations that aren’t meant to be taken literally. “I could eat a horse.”

**Litotes –** A litotes is an understatement that is effective because the affirmative is expressed by its placement next to the contrary. Long story short, it’s an understatement. “She’s not the ugliest girl at the fair…”

Why use these things? Because sometimes it’s too difficult to express ideas or feelings using concrete language. In the example above, I said, “Her lips are two rose petals sewn together,” if I didn’t use that metaphor I would be saying, “her lips are red.” See how lackluster that basic statement is compared to the sizzling metaphor I used instead?

**WANDER**

I am a thief of daydreams

Running out of my own things

To dwell on and to hold dear

There is no excitement here

Not in the peeling blue paint

Or the cracks of floorboard dreams

Not in the smog yellow light

That flits through brown snagged drape seams

I look down past the cedar grove

At the road where travelers rove

And wonder what lies beyond

The fog that clings to the pond

And the manicured flowers that grow

But do I truly wish to know?

I am a

Fairytale fabricator

A master imitator

Of charm, wit and happiness

Safer planted here to grow

Though I let my thoughts wander

play and go

What if I did leave and find

That the best reality,

The most fulfilling destiny,

Is the one that exists within my mind

**CAN I TRUST YOU?**

I want to befriend you

I want to try to

But I can't pretend to

trust you.

Because in my experience

People either lie or leave

And I don't have the time or resolve

To recover or grieve.

What if you use the things I tell you in confidence

As cheap shots against me?

What if I reach out to you

And you let go of me?

What if you tell me all of the things

That I'll never be.

Or even worse,

What if you befriend me

Treat me nicely

Only to gossip…lie…hurt…

Turn from me, icily

I don't need anymore broken bonds

I need friends

Not a scenic ride

full of dead ends

I need a mentor

I need a tie that mends

I need a hand

that's not made of my own

fingers wrapped around

my tucked in thumb.

Pulse beating in a hand

just waiting,

just pleading,

to be able to trust someone.

**PEANUT BUTTER CUPS**

The Reese's in the vending machine at work are always melted.

Their chocolate bottoms stick to the coffee colored paper wrapper, and peel off completely, revealing squishy, sandy brown, peanut butter flesh.

Instead of a neat circle, the chocolate folds up on two sides, like the face of a child getting squished by an overbearing aunt.

It tastes gritty. Like there isn't enough chocolate and the peanut butter conceals grains of sand.

75 cents and 250 calories later, here I am.

Holding the atrociously bright orange wrapper, flapped open like a carcass, in my hand.

I take the two hollow skeleton cups and shove them inside.

The wrapper doesn't "crackle" but it "crinkles" like the laugh plastic would make if it were able to laugh.

I careen off my armless desk chair and toss it into the space between my hand and the black abyss of the trash can.

Naturally it misses and lands on the floor. Unable to escape the quiet desperation of this office, just like me.

**ELECTRIC**

You're a live-wire

with electricity that hums

beneath your skin

in veins that thrum

Put an ear to your neck

to hear a heartbeat that drums

like a string pulled tight

and I'm the finger that strums

**THE ART OF ARCHERY**

Chocolate eyes

Lips that arch like a bow

Pulled taught

Words ready to go

But they're tangled in thoughts

Not fit for an arrow

**MY SALAD**

I dislike cucumbers

And whole tomatoes

And those gross little purple things

That taste like bitter shoe strings

They like to hide under

the rich hues of my tossed greens

**IN MEMORIAM**

I wanted to write this for them

Whoever it was

That died on the sun-kissed highway

Right outside my office

In the morning, last Monday

When coworkers stood at grand glass windows to see

The crash, the reason why

frustrated drivers wondered

what was taking so long, what was going on

Sitting in a glittering line

of rumbling motionless cars

that was hundreds of headaches long

You could hear the roar of the air

being sliced by metal blades

The familiar whine of multiple sirens

Yelling above the rush hour parade

And in the building

Workers asked workers in hushed words

as they arrived up the stairs

"Did you see it? Have you heard?"

**WRECK**

Blinding oranges and reds

The flames lick up all the gasoline

with their vaporous tongues

off the jet black asphalt

Move an arm and hear a sound

like a grinding screech

of a metal monster

chewing diamonds down

Liquid life drips from a hundred cuts

And gathers in a meeting on the ground

The motorcycle lies doubled over

A slumbering silver beast, never to awake

It pulled me towards the earth with it

Trying to slip death on me, but it didn't take

**THE LAST FARMER**

the dirt is done

it lays dead cracked and tired

beneath the orange red sun

that heaves hot breaths

onto an earth on fire

You drop your broken body

onto its breaking knees

sinking leather hands

onto the gasping ground

with flesh burning hot

you scrape your fingers across it

fingernails filling with brown

and the tears your forehead cries

shimmer like a spark

and fall without a sound

the earth drinks the water from your eyes

groaning beneath

the clear blue skies

you are the last in a line of a hundred fathers

with a shattering house full of starving daughters

and your stick bone horses had no fodder

with hollowed brown eyes and bone break bodies

they each fell slowly to the ground

swallowed by the very land to which your fate is bound

**POETRY BREAK**

**The Mechanics of Poetry**

Poems are funny things. On the surface they might seem relatively simple, but in reality, a lot of thought has gone into creating what you are reading. Every poem can be broken down into certain parts, and knowing those parts will help you to better understand the poetry you read, and make your own poems better.

A **foot** makes up the smallest unit of rhythm in a poem. There are often many feet in one line of poetry, and many **lines** of poetry in one **stanza**. And a **meter** is the arrangement of a line of poetry by the rhythm of stressed/unstressed syllables. These are the basic parts that make up the structure of a poem. But we can break it down even further as we examine individual words and syllables that compose a poem.

There are stressed and unstressed syllables in every word. For example, my name, E-**liz**-a-**beth**: the “E” is unstressed, “liz” is stressed, “a” is unstressed and “beth” is stressed. Stressed doesn’t mean that these syllables need a spa day, it means that emphasis is given to those syllables. They stand out because they have longer vowels or harsher sounds. Basically, stressed syllables have MORE EMPHASIS! By strategically using words, you can develop the rhythm of your poem by paying attention to stressed and unstressed syllables. To figure out which ones are stressed, you can make marks (accents) above the words, this is called **scansion**, which is the analysis of a poem’s meter.

A **trochee** has two syllables made up of one stressed syllable and one unstressed. The reverse of a trochee is an **iamb**, which is a metrical foot of two syllables with one being unstressed and one being stressed. Two stressed syllables together make a **spondee.**

An **anapest** has three syllables, two unstressed followed by one stressed. The anapest’s reverse is the **dactyl** that has three syllables, one stressed followed by two unstressed.

I know that I broke this down pretty far and it may seem complicated, but with some studying and writing practice, you will begin to see patterns in poetry that you can attribute to trochees, iambs, spondees, anapests and dactyls.

**Examples:**

Trochee (stressed, unstressed) – **Pitts** - burgh

Iamb (unstressed, stressed) – In – **spire**

Spondee (stressed, stressed) **– Black Hole**

Anapest (unstressed, unstressed, stressed) – con – tra - **dict**

Dactyl (stressed, unstressed, unstressed) – **Bitt** – er -ly

**I NEVER CHOSE FEAR**

You don't know fear

Until it spikes in your stomach

And runs cold up your chest

Until it settles in your legs

And there is no moving

Because the world became too small

And there is no air

Your heart skip a beat and then another

They say it won't last

To wait for it to pass

But it's like breathing underwater

It's like flying underground

So you focus on the dashboard

Until it brings your breathing down

Just letting the cool ac and hot sun

Tether you to the ground

You wish you had the confidence to say to those who

Whisper tales of discrimination

That it was never your choice to live a life of trepidation

You would say to them:

Never judge that which you don't understand

Or risk alighting yourself with an ignorant glow

Becoming an errant flare in the night

Misguided, bright and cruel

Misleading others, burning in the company of fools

For if you truly knew, truly understood

Then you would surely know…

That the anxious ones are the most intuitive

The loneliest people are the kindest

That the hurt ones are the most empathetic

And the damaged people, the wisest.

**THE RIGHT KEY**

Metal hills

Gold valleys

A ragged row

Of cut teeth mountains

That catch on the ridges of my fingertip

And bump along the grooves of skin

That make up my finger print

I look without seeing

To make sure it's the right one

Holding it up to the light coming from

The neighbor's red hot tail lights

Exposing the curve

The glimmering shine

That reflects in the dark black morning

like blood red wine

Metal on metal

It stumbles through the tumblers

And a snap of the wrist

Clacks the lock shut

Putting aside my desire to stay

It's not really a choice,

I have to walk away

When I actually want to walk back in

Down the slippery sprinkler-wet sidewalk

Wishing it was the hour

That I could walk back up it again

**DESK JOB**

I sit and wait

For my future to break

For them to tell me that

I've made a mistake

And I wonder

How much longer it will take

For them to realize that I'm a creator

Just a poser here

Not an analyst, but

An innovator and a catalyst

And from analysis

I've deduced that

I don't belong

Behind a desk

So lonely and monotonous

It drains my spark

My youthfulness

I'm the furthest thing from an analyst

I'm a creative

And if I don't create

I might explode

If I don't draw

I might implode

If I lack human interaction

It's shut down mode

Because there's too many words

Built up in me

It's too hard to store them up along

With all of the ideas inside of me

Trapped behind a mouth tight shut

I don't know what to do

Or where I belong

So I wrote this for you

Or because of you

Or because at some point

I was you

And you are me

Training to be where I am

Working towards the point

Of knowing that what you've worked for

Isn't where you want to be

**WAITING ROOM**

I am a hoarder of seconds

On the border of boredom

Learning life's long lessons

Or maybe just ignoring them

The carpet is reminiscent of oatmeal

The walls are a green, yellow, beige,

In the distance keystrokes clack,

As someone talks, sniffles, turns a page

The TV on the wall is so loud

I can't focus on this poem

It goes on and on about diabetes,

In a loop, like a drone.

Take me home.

Let's go home.

In the air hangs a yawning despair,

Not even it wants to be here.

It would rather be out there

Past the portrait windows

In the open air

The longer I wait,

The more I sedate

Until I'm a fixture of the room

Like the composite desk in the corner,

The green plastic-armed chairs,

Or the fake pink flowers, forever abloom.

**CONVERGE**

There’s a steady hum

That rumbles

Through the slum

What a conundrum

Suddenly you run

They’re chasin you

Trying to erase in you

Who you are and what you’ve done

When they look at you

They see the slum

Not who you are

Or what you’ve become

Can you really out run

The buzz of the stun gun

That says

“I know who you are son”

When in fact they don’t

When in fact they won’t

Ever realize who you’ve become

The days blur by

They’re all just one

And the smog’s so dense

That it blocks out the sun

Reach out and grip

The future but don’t slip

Run faster but don’t trip

Over their reality

So blind they cannot see

That who you were

Is not who you wanna be

Through the street's

There is a steady hum

Where who you are meets

Who you'll become

And you and the

Urban humdrum

Meet in the street

And become one.

**THERE ONCE WAS A SPIDER**

There once was a spider

That got lit on fire

Maybe not roasted

But at least a little toasted

Because it has 8 legs

And is truly gross

A person grabbed a lighter

And had a spider roast

It's far too furry

And has too many eyes

And it's revolting demeanor

Led to its ultimate demise

**VERBAL INDIGESTION**

Have you ever swallowed a word?

Felt it rise up in your throat

And then gulp it down

In a capsule of air

A snap decision

To not interrupt

I wonder how the word will digest

In my stomach

What sort of nutrients it contains

How long it will stay in my system

What would have happened

If I had decided to let it out

An animal kept shut

In the warm wet cage of my mouth

Pacing behind the bars of enamel

It was fetched and jailed in a single instant

Buried by the passing moment

Its taste still salty on my tongue

**TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE BIRTHDAY**

T’was the night before my birthday, when all through the dorm

Not a creature was stirring and all was quiet and warm

The papers were written with reckless half-care

And books were stacked high upon my desk chair

There I lay all snug in my bed

With visions of Santa break dancing in my head

Soft socks on my feet, warm blanket wrapped tight

I settled my brain for a nice peaceful night

When out of my window I heard drunken laughter

I rolled my eyes at the ceaseless collegiate clatter

I didn't bother springing up to the window in a flash

Just assumed it a gaggle of students all giggling and trashed

The moon shone bright over the drought stricken grass

And peered in my blinds like a peeping tom so brash

When out of the darkness did suddenly appear

A miniature birthday fairy and eight tiny reindeer

The little weird fairy had borrowed Santa’s sleigh

And with a wee little laugh had steered over this way

He took pity in that my birthday was overshadowed by the holidays

And dropped presents within my room before going on his way

“Now finals, and papers, and projects galore

Bother this tired birthday girl no more!

To the end of this monotony to the start of the break

I order you to have fun and eat lots of cake!”

And with that he was off, fairy wings glittering in the night

And at that moment I knew that all would be right.

So I lay back against my pillows once more

In the hopes of knocking on sleep's sleepy door

I closed my eyes and what did I see

But presents and cake and friends all there for me

Streamers and glitter and boxes and bags

Alcoholic beverages and clothes, makeup and gift tags

Unknown to me I fell into a deep slumber

And in my sleep dreamed of a birthday wonder

And when I awoke to my great surprise

There was a party hat on my head and a twinkle in my eyes

**Innocence Falling**

Waxy pigment collects on the paper

Teeny feet crossed beneath the desk

Little voices in hushed collection

And tiny fingers trying their best

A little artist, in a little chair

Crafting a preschool masterpiece

With bit lip and intent stare

A wave of green

A dash of red

A squeal of orange

Or maybe blue instead

Engulfed in a Crayola world

There was no reality outside that page

And so when that brat girl drew on my art

I felt my tiny head fill with rage

For the first time I thought with malice

Racing to a daydream so cruel and callous

I thought of dragging that snot to the window

Of holding her out over the hill and letting go

I imagined her tiny frame falling

Through the air her midget fingers clawing

Never again to lay a rogue crayon

Upon my perfect drawing

**POETRY BREAK**

**Write Your Own Poem Here:**