

# Poetry Prompts & Assignments for Teachers

Compiled, edited, or otherwise stolen by Taylor Mali

## Answer to an Unasked Question

**What you'll need:** Paper & pens

**Minimum time required for this exercise:** 30 minutes

**Directions:** Most poems are, on some level, the answer to a question that you might not have heard asked. Sometimes the title of the poem reveals what the poem is an answer to. Sometimes it's not that easy. [Sometimes this is NOT a useful way to look at a poem at all.]

Pick a question below and model how you might answer it in a playfully inventive way. Then hand out one question to every student being sure to tell them NOT to share them with their neighbor. If they (or you) find these questions too weird, then you can come up with any question you want. After the students have written for a while, have a few read while the others guess what the question was.

**What does electricity dream of?**

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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**If you could make a suit of armor out of any material, what would it be and why?**

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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**QUESTIONS CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE**

### Why is the sky blue?

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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### Which color of the rainbow is the loneliest?

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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### Which letter of the alphabet is the most intelligent ?

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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### Do leaves look forward to falling in autumn? Or do they hang on for dear life?

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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**QUESTIONS CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE**

**What would make the best symbol for the experience of life itself?**

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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**What form does Death take when it just wants to hang out and not kill anyone?**

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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**In what ways is death more beautiful than birth?**

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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**Everyone knows where the Funnybone is, but what other bones are there and where do they exist? Is there a Sadbone?**

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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**QUESTIONS CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE**

### What happens to the dreams you don't remember?

Answer the question above in a few artfully worded sentences. Don't give away the question in your answer; be playfully vague. On the other hand, don't make it impossible for the reader to guess what the question was. If you want, you can discuss *other* answers you decided *not* to choose, even if they are popular choices for other people who might be asked the same question. Why is your choice better? What led you there? What other questions might be raised by your answer?

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